



## The Enigmatic Nature of Shakespeare's The Tempest

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**Abstract**

*Prospero in Shakespeare's last play, The Tempest, written around 1611 and first published seven years after the dramatist's death, in 1623, is not a duke who has failed in his task of ruling, but a man who has gained power to direct and discipline others. To that sense, he tends to be the god-man like who rightly castigates and strictly scourges. The magician appears to be so humane at times and too harsh at other times that he dazzles, leads astray or terrifies the island's dwellers, an ambivalent mission that further intensifies the enigmatic nature of the play. While he has intentionally raised a storm to cause the disorder of the drunken sailors' minds and bodies, thus leaving them on shore at the mercy of chance, instead of winds and waves as before, he has laboriously established order towards the end of the play. Prospero's white magic helps him bring together characters speaking their true character irrespective of their social classes: princes, courtiers, and sailors. When disharmony begets harmony, humanism emerges from the tragi-comic elements, and when the concept of colonization exists, it strikingly embodies the notion of resistance, where the relationship between the self and the other, the centralized and the marginalized, is perhaps blurred. Such are some of the facets the reader is presented with in The Tempest. This paper is yet an attempt to explore the many facets of Shakespeare's last masterpiece. Within the framework of being a keynote to harmony, the paper would study the play in light of humanism, colonialism, drama genres and other aspects.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Being a last masterpiece, of a dramatist considered to be the canon of dramatic writing throughout history, the play has exceptionally reflected Shakespeare's variety of powers; full of grace and grandeur, "that perennial pseudo-finale, is indeed the culmination of a key theme, and a new direction too" (Lyne, 2007, p. 30). Utterly bewildered, the reader / audience is intriguingly urged to know and question the existing knowledge; to think of the originality of the work and the dramatic elements found to be reworked. The oxymoronic tableaux do present striking scenes where objects and characters are intensely grouped to intensify our perplexity when reading / watching *The Tempest*. Where the autobiographical elements allure attractions to highlight the personal allegory of a mature artist composing his life final literary piece of work, other dramatic essentials tend to shed enough light on the various facets of the diamond, the play; disorder begets order, white magic opposes black magic, power is met with resistance, knowledge opposes ignorance, and romance is melted with tragedy. Said (1992, p. 3) views the role of literature, in relation to the duality opposing the notion of the colonizer to that of the colonized, "as the shaper, creator, agent of illumination within the realm of the colonized." The play, within such a framework, is an agent to illuminate the wor(l)ds Caliban and Ariel in relation to Prospero. The island where such characters meet is a platform with explicit colonial connotations; the hero dexterously uses his heuristic tasks, which he refers to as white magic, to castigate the subalterns. What he views as phronesis, a required wisdom to determine ends and the means to attain them, is a hateful hegemony for the subalterns, Ariel and Caliban. But from this dichotomy between power and resistance

emerges the principles of penitence, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The impersonal pardon Prospero implored is dramatically juxtaposed with his appeal to the audience to forgive him for involving them into such a dramatically complicated dilemma. Humanism is at its best here! In articulating that “in *The Tempest* there is no center, nor indeed any firm sense of geographical location at all” Rhodes (2004, p. 142) firmly endorses Goran’s (2006, p. 91) belief that the “dominant discourse in this play is humanism, embodied in Prospero as a teacher and narrator. Yet the play is also a critique of humanist practices of education and government, with Prospero playing a failed governor who valued humanist principles but fell short of applying them to the practice of governing.” Its enigmatic nature makes it quite contortional, likely to be seen from different angles, with various perspectives: the romance to oppose the anti-romance, the natural to embody the supernatural, the self to invoke the other, the autobiography to reflect on the biography, and the disorder to beget the order. This is what the present paper will strive to explore and expound in the course of its analysis.

## 2. DISCUSSION

### 2.1. “[T]HIS THING OF DARKNESS, I ACKNOWLEDGE MINE” (V.I. 309)

The very first words of Prospero on Caliban pithily encapsulate a world of two poles: the self-pole and the ‘other’ pole, the embodiments of the self in Prospero and the representations of the other in Caliban and his mother Sycorax, a world viewed traditionally as an emblem for the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, between the west and the rest. Addressing ‘his’ angel Ariel, we hear words, surprising words when connected with a human being, of deep hatred, malicious insult, exposing the other as despicable, black, ignorant; say a slave “[t]hen was this island- / Save for the son that she did litter here, / A freckled whelp, hag-born-not honored with / A human shape” (I.ii.329-331). Humanity is reduced to the level of animality! A view of humanity as suspended between infinite superiority and infinite inferiority: a denigrative speech that is defamingly sweeping indigenous identities. Papia (2015) has interestingly noted that:

The way different cultures were talked about within colonial discourse relied on the hegemonic and stereotypical concepts of race, age and gender differences. The association of blacks with notions of evil and bestiality and the rendering of “whites” as innocent and pure continually helped to justify the system of exploitation and the plundering and conquering of lands by the colonizers.

The glimpse we get, upon his arrival to the island in the opening scenes, is the prologue to know the nature of Prospero in relation to the other. Irritated with Antonio’s vehement usurpation of power, and shocked by the malicious stratagems that caused him to lose his dukedom, he gets indulged into a sorrowful bereavement that ironically makes of him another usurper of power: the island once belonged to Sycorax, Caliban’s mother, but he subduably conquered it, to associate her with heinous witchcraft for “her earthy and abhorred commands” (I.ii.321) and her son with deformed humanity, born as evil and destined to live like that “Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam: come forth!” (I.ii.376-377). Prospero never fails to dehumanize Caliban: “Dull thing, I say so: he, that Caliban / Whom now I keep in service” (I.ii.334-335), “Come thou tortoise!” (I.ii.372), and “Thou shalt be pinched / As thick as honeycomb, each pinch more stinging / Than bees that made’ em” (I.ii.385-387). Caliban, on the other hand, never fails to remind Prospero of his manipulative colonial attitude and hateful mischief when first coming to the island:

*This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,  
Which thou takest from me. When thou camest first,  
Thou strokedst me and madest much of me, wouldst give me  
Water with berries in't, and teach me how  
To name the bigger light, and how the less,  
That burn by day and night: and then I loved thee*

And show'd thee all the qualities o' the isle,  
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile:  
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms  
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!  
For I am all the subjects that you have,  
Which first was mine own king: and here you sty me  
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me  
The rest o' the island. (I.ii.389-402 Italics added)

The overwhelming authority of the introduced despot projects well an inexorable servitude where the two slaves accept the slavery bondage; one, Ariel, willingly, and the other, Caliban, unwillingly. Prospero's unequivocal control of the scenes from raising the tempest till asking for forgiveness from the audience has prevalently introduced him as the imperialist vehement oppressor, definitely not the hero of the play! Caliban is the hero to represent all the oppressed voices from Africa to Latin America. Rodriguez Monegal (1977, p. 78), has extensively written about this character in relation to the Latin American general view to conclude that "after three hundred and fifty years of abuse, Caliban is beginning to be recognized as the true hero of *The Tempest*." To that, we see him purposely marginalized, like the oppressed victims, left on the periphery. On the other hand, we see Prospero drawing equivocal parallels with Sycorax to justify his unjust command of the island; she is exiled to the island from Algiers for her witchcraft and wrong deeds while he is forced to leave Milan due to the treachery of his brother, he comes with Miranda, his legitimate daughter, but Sycorax arrives pregnant with Caliban, considered to be the devil's son, both of them can command the spiritual world where Ariel is nicely used with Prospero and horribly abused by Sycorax.

In light of the cultural imperialism concept, and within the sphere of the post colonialism, as informed by Edward Said, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gayatri Spivak, Fredric Jameson and others, language, as a main culture constituent, is yet another quite decisive tool to sweep indigenous cultures. In line with such ideas, Chrisman (2003, p. 52) notices that Said's understanding of the theory of imperialism is essentially derived "from the notion of geo-political domination ... [while] Spivak addresses instead its manifestation as a territorial and subject constituting project... [and] Jameson is interested in style and language [in] ...compensation for the existential losses incurred by overseas expansions." When culture is transferred through language, being bound up in it, Prospero will be keen to educate Caliban who, reflecting the image of the 'post colonialists', takes the opportunity to resist, refuse, and curse: "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse. The red-plague rid / For learning me your language" (I.ii. 423-425). While the on-island continuous sounds, noises, and sweet airs are but harmless illusions, Prospero is not an erroneous perception of reality; he is a non-manipulative force that poses a certain physical as well as psychological threat. Addressing Trinculo, the jester, and Stephano, the drunken butler, Caliban confidently states:

Be not afeard, The isle is full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not:  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,  
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,  
Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming,  
The clouds methought would open and show riches  
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked  
I cried to dream again. (III.ii. 118-126)

Unsurprisingly enough, Prospero seems to have failed in his mission to fully make Caliban obey his rules on the island, thus leaving the oppressor / oppressed, say colonizer and colonized, dispute open. His vigorous onslaught on Miranda, with the intention to people the

island with Calibans, “O ho, O ho! Woud’t had been done! / Thou didst prevent me: I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans” (I.ii.408-410) is yet a firm sign of resistance, probably from the Mediterranean to the Caribbean. But the colonialism concept, implicitly or explicitly conjured up in the play, is not its only epithet, definitely not the only facet, not the only color in the diamond.

## 2.2 THE TRAGI-COMIC REALM OF THE TEMPEST

The literary treasure we got from Aristotle in his *On the Art of Poetry*, famously known as the *Poetics*, is an unrivalled treatise for the valuable commentaries we receive on tragedy essentially, for the part on comedy is lost. We learn from him that, as Mishra (2013) states, “plot (mythos), character (ethos), thought (dianoia), diction (lexis), song (melos), and spectacle (opsis) are six constituents of a tragic play.” Where tragedy is an imitation of a complete real sorrowful action, the protagonists are to be of noble characters, moving from rising to an ultimate death through a severe climax that marks their error of judgment, and the diction is usually embellished with a sensitive yet quite tragically sad tone. Raising the feelings of pity and fear while enjoying the pleasurable unforgettable tragic story is what a true tragedy aims to achieve. Comedy, however, imitates an inferior action where laughter purposely emanates from ridiculous situations. McKinney (1998) aptly clarifies that comedy for Aristotle is:

[A]n imitation of men worse than the average; worse, however, not as regards any every sort of fault, but only as regards one particular kind, the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly. The Ridiculous may be defined as a mistake or deformity not productive of pain or harm to others.

But the mistake in an Aristotelian comedy is not, and should not be, as grave or harmful as it is in the tragedy. Buffoons or boors may unmannerly amuse by tricks or jokes, where embarrassment is likely to happen, but certainly don’t harm. Where celebration of all that is ridiculous in relation to humans is a major feature, revealing virtue can ultimately be a major objective. The comic hero ridiculously laughs at and with humans to identify the aberrant situations where virtue requires to be further fostered. Without being very excessive or defective, comic heroes can be buffoons or boors and are hence agents to provide, with much hilarity and much humanity, laughter and virtue.

*The Tempest* is a tragi-comedy *par excellence*. The play is dramatically mixed up with elements of tragedy and comedy where noble characters, Prospero and Miranda, are grouped with people of a low class, Caliban and his team. The funny jocularities are laboriously juxtaposed with the serious adversity to make the play not comic enough to be considered as a pure comedy and not tragic enough to be categorized as a pure tragedy. The opening scene is just a case in point: the impending danger, a ship being tossed by the waves, is paralleled with a funny levity, sarcastic remarks from Gonzalo. While the horrified boatswain, addressing the fearful storm, cries “Heigh, my hearts! Cheerly, cheerly, my hearts! Yare, yare! Take in the topsail. Tend to th’ master’s whistle. - Blow, till thy burst thy wind, if room enough” (I.i. 5-6), Gonzalo passes quippish comments to the mariners and courtiers: “I have great comfort from this fellow: methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him: his complexion is perfect gallows” (I.i.24-25). Deepened into a sad atmosphere, where Prospero recounts the perfidy of his brother with the connivance of malicious courtiers, Act one scene two presents us with a tragic realm envisaging the protagonist’s real conflict. Miranda sorrowfully utters her words: “O, my heart bleeds/ To think o’ the teen that I have turn’d you to,/ Which is from my remembrance! Please you, father” (I.ii. 71-73). Prospero sadly clarifies:

My brother and thy uncle, call’d Antonio--  
I pray thee, mark me--that a brother should  
Be so perfidious!--he whom next thyself

Of all the world I loved and to him put  
The manage of my state; as at that time  
Through all the signories it was the first  
And Prospero the prime duke, being so reputed  
In dignity, and for the liberal arts  
Without a parallel; those being all my study,  
The government I cast upon my brother  
And to my state grew stranger, being transported  
And rapt in secret studies. Thy false uncle--  
Dost thou attend me? (I.ii. 80-92)

A horrifying scene upon which Suner (2019) aptly comments:

The first instance of horror concerns Prospero's story of his fallen career and his eventual exile, told to an alternately hyper and nodding Miranda, a tragic story of humanity hopelessly embroiled in intrigue and back-stabbing.

The extremely harrowing story is inducible of a gloomy atmosphere where tragedy seems to prevail and the sense of fear tends to be both ubiquitous and proliferating; Prospero might have understandably failed to distinguish between popularity and governance, but the fact is that his brother proves to be seriously false, which intensifies the tragic mood. Shakespeare, however, has artistically toned down such a climax through the Miranda-Ferdinand love story, a smooth dramatic passage from tragedy to comedy through romance. The protagonist genuinely plans for the love story, but the prize should not be so light. The fine apparition has made the scene musical and interactive; his sweet romantic song: "Come unto these yellow sands, / And then take hands: / Curtsied when you have, and kissed/ The wild waves whilst ... (I.ii. 439-442)" is met with Ferdinand's passion: "This music crept by me upon the waters, / Allaying both their fury and my passion / With its sweet air: thence I have followed it-" (I.ii. 455-457). Miranda is impressed: "I might call him / A thing divine, for nothing natural / I ever saw so noble" (I.ii. 483-485) and Prospero speaks to himself: "They are both in either's powers: but this swift business / I must uneasy make, lest too light winning / Make the prize light-" (I.ii. 439-442).

The tragi-comedy epithet is again apparent in Act two, scene one; a combination of the rapturous jollity and the tragic dimness where poetry is omnipresent throughout the scene. The setting is quite ambivalent, and it is meant to be like that for the characters to dispute. While Adrian and Gonzalo poeticize their journey on the island: "[t]he air breathes upon us here most sweetly" (II.i. 41), as Adrian utters, and "[h]ow lush and lusty the grass looks. How green!" (II.i. 47), as Gonzalo perceives it, Antonio and Sebastian tend to give sarcastic notes: "The ground indeed is tawny," (II.i. 48) and "With an eye of green on't" (II.i. 49). Comedy emanates from the ridiculous debate between these characters, especially when Gonzalo makes fun of both of them: "You are gentlemen of brave metal: You would lift the moon out of her sphere, if she would continue in it five weeks without changing." (II.i 170-171), while irony is further taken to deepen the sense of fear and tragedy when they start plotting to get rid of him:

Gonzalo: What's the matter?

Sebastian: Whiles we stood here securing your repose,  
Even now, we heard a hollow burst of bellowing  
Like bulls, or rather lions: did't not wake you?  
It struck mine ear most terribly. (II.ii 320-325)

We can't but laugh upon seeing Stephano and Trinculo making fun of Caliban in Act one, scene two. Prospero calls him a slave and the son of devil, but now he turns to be a weird monster for them. Stephano is probably the funniest of them, a comedy generator. Laughter with him stems from a number of ridiculous situations; first, when he gives Caliban a drink: "[o]pen your mouth: this will shake your shaking, I can tell you and that soundly:

you cannot tell who's your friend:" (II.ii 320-325), second, when surprised upon seeing unfamiliar legs and hearing unknown voices: "[f]our legs and two voices: a most delicate monster!" (II.ii 72), then, when asking Trinculo to drink liquor: "[h]ere kiss the book. Though you canst swim like a duck, thou art made like a goose" (II.ii 99) or when answering Caliban's question: "Hast thou not dropped from heaven?" (II.ii 104) by reverting to mention the moon instead: "[o]ut o' th' moon, I do assure thee: I was the man i'th' moon when time was." (II.ii 105), and also, when not refraining from asking Caliban, upon his request, to kiss his foot: "[c]ome on then: down, and swear" (II.ii 119). The scene is so funny that concepts seem to be ambiguously blurred; while liquor is associated with the holy book and the celestial type of drink, Stephano is recognized as a brave god and Caliban as a brave monster. Within such a comic realm, of Trinculo and Stephano, who dramatically appear to be another Prospero's parodic version, emerges Caliban's tragic behavior. Scared of the spirits, he unconsciously feels they are always following him, we see him cursing all the time: "[h]is spirits hear me, / And yet I needs must curse" (II.ii 3-4), trying to find how to hide: "[h]ere comes a spirit of his, and to torment me / For bringing wood in slowly" (II.ii 15-16), or seeking the pity of his new god: "I'll show thee every fertile inch o' th' island: and I will kiss thy foot. I prithee, be my god" (II.ii 114-115) and "I'll kiss thy foot: I'll swear myself thy subject" (II.ii 3-4). Caliban is unknowingly objectifying himself, being ignorant of the newcomers and of the nature of drink Stephano provides him with. The so called civilized triumphs again over the primitive, the uncivilized. But Caliban is probably innocent in such a context; his lack of knowledge is sufficient enough not to blame him. In this line of thought, Hunt (2011) has interestingly noted that "Caliban's release from a jesting spirit is a major piece of business in the comic subplot of *The Tempest*. Separated, he stands free of an occasional corrupter of speech and knowledge."

Once again, the romance and tragi-comedy elements are artistically brought together in Act three where various aspects of servitude are dramatically tackled. The only romantic encounter between Ferdinand and Miranda brings up a sort of love servitude. He expresses his love thus,

O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound,  
And crown what I profess with kind event  
If I speak true: if hollowly, invert  
What best is boded me to mischief: I,  
Beyond all limit of what else i' the world,  
Do love, prize, honour you. (III.i 80-85)

While she replies enchantingly:

I am your wife, if you will marry me:  
If not, I'll die your maid: to be your fellow  
You may deny me, but I'll be your servant  
Whether you will or no. (III.i 80-85)

We laugh when seeing the way love servitude is being established; Ferdinand is resisting to serve both Prospero and Miranda while the latter is amusingly striving to support him. We also laugh at the way Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano are humorously entertaining one another while Ariel is invisibly interfering to get them confused. Within such a realm of romance and comedy, a tragic plot ironically tends to loom ahead with the three characters preparing to harm Prospero and Miranda at the suggestion of Caliban; "I say, by sorcery he got this isle: / From me he got it" (III.ii 40-41), "Yea, yea, my lord: I'll yield him thee asleep, / where thou mayst knock a nail into his bead" (III.ii 48-49), "And that most deeply to consider is / The beauty of his daughter" (III.ii 82-83), and "Ay, lord; she will become thy bed, I warrant" (III.ii 89). Such a mixture firmly enhances the claim that the play is a tragi-comedy in the Aristotelian way; the innocent characters triumph in the end while the wicked ones are brought to an 'embarrassing' end. Laughter is omnipresent throughout the play,

Prospero and his team are safe and happy, Caliban is dramatically put in danger together with his new god Sebastian and his friend Trinculo, and the power usurper and his malicious folks lose their authority for the righteous people. The romance elements, Ferdinand and Miranda love story and the Act four bridal masque, the humorous sub-plots led by low-class funny characters, and the serious themes revolving around power usurpation and revenge do present us with a play that exceeds the very issue of genres.

### **2.3 A TEMPEST ON HUMANISM?**

When taking Ariel's 'paradoxical' words "the still-vexed Bermoothes" (I.ii. 230) as an allegorical reference for the Jacobean colonization plan in the New World, with the meaning that the weather on Bermuda islands is always stormy, and when considering the Mediterranean geographical location of the island in the play, somewhere between Tunis, used to be called Carthage, and Naples, one may at once agree with Rhodes (2004, p. 142) that "in *The Tempest* there is no center, nor indeed any firm sense of geographical location at all." The unequivocal reference to the Mediterranean and the ambiguous allusions to the Caribbean sets the play between worlds, the old one and the new one. Such a setting "connects *The Tempest* to the world of the humanism" (Stanivukovic, 2006). With the events taking place both at sea and on the land, the play tends to tackle the human affairs in various aspects, the human worlds and words, including the negative ones. In addition to the political issues, essentially the question of ruling and power usurpation, the philosophical ones, the ones pertaining to rhetoric and probably aesthetic, the dramatist has introduced, and for sure broadened, "other humanist topics, such as pedagogical instruction, reading, memory, and visual aesthetics." (Stanivukovic, 2006)

Historically, humanism, as a particular way of thinking that dominated Europe during the fourteenth century and later on the Renaissance era, and based essentially on the idea of reviving and restoring the classical literary heritage, mainly the Greek and the Roman, aimed at coping with the various new historical, cultural, social, religious, and philosophical upheavals. While favoring individuality, as a sense to humanity, over virility, considered to be of the Plantagenets' masculinity, humanism seems to have both coped with the new age, with its new principles and emerging values, and traced such a process as well. Samuel Daniel, in his brilliant treatise *The First Part of the Historie of England*, tells us that the new age was:

[A] time not of that virility as the former [of the Plantagenets], but more subtle, and let out into wider notions, and bolder discoveries of what lay hidden before. A time wherein begin a greater improument of the Soverraingntie, and more came to be effected by wit than the sword: Equall and iust incounters, of State, and State in forces, and of Prince, and Prince in sufficiency. The opening of a new world, which strangely altered the manner of this, inhancing both the rate of all things, by the induction of infinite Treasure, and opened a wider way to corruption, whereby Princes got much without their swords: protections, and confederations to counterpoise, and prevent overgrowing powers, came to be maintained with larger pensions. Leidger Ambassadors first imployed abroad for intelligences. Common Banks erected, to return and furnish moneys for these businesses. Besides strange alterations in the State Ecclesiastical: Religion brought forth to bee an Actor in the greatest Designes of Ambition and Faction.

Daniel's criticism of the new era, and probably humanism, as paving the way for corruption in the state, while sweeping the old, known as heroic masculine values, is reflected in *The Tempest*. While Antonio usurps, thus favoring individuality, the political power by treachery, Prospero, though drowning his book of magic at the end, rules the island of Caliban by his heuristic activities, to highlight another form of claiming individuality. Individualism has

become a concept attached more to selfishness and ambition than to noble values and principles. Caliban is quickly misled by the wine, he sees it as a celestial type of drink, and Sebastian's garments to swiftly have him as a new god. On the other hand, both Trinculo and Sebastian are easily misled by the new garments show Ariel has purposely created.

Irrespective of what may be viewed as the negative elements of humanism, *The Tempest* appears to be profoundly grounded in its historical milieu where the elements of such a concept are undoubtedly incorporated in it. The values of humanist dramas, as informed by Gresh and Roest (2003, p. 154) include "linguistic correctness, appreciation of old literature and poetry in general, personal and interpersonal morality, and the corresponding types of political action." While humanists are to fluently portray a good command of the language, a basic necessary skill without which humanity is belittled, their education is to reflect a complete comprehensive way of life where the theoretical knowledge of rhetoric is definitely insufficient. Since poetry is fundamentally decisive in the moral as well as political progress of the humanist, it has thus become the farthest thesaurus humanists are to draw from the classical literature. "In this art of rhetoric, poetry is presented as the first form of philosophy: poets – except only writers of elegiac poetry – are the heralds of virtue (*praecones virtutum*) and censors of vice (such as *metus, ignavia, luxuria, incontinentia, impietas, perfidia* etc.)" (Gresh and Roest, 2003, pp. 161-162). The values gained from humanism are to depart from the limited circles, educational or even social ones, and reach the political level where various necessary political actions are correspondingly taken.

When the aspects of humanism are raised in *The Tempest*, one may strikingly address the political ethics issue in relation to philosophy and poetry. The complicated tapestry connections between politics, philosophy and poetry, as introduced by Shakespeare, do reflect the old quarrel between philosophy and poetry in relation to the political decision. Socrates, the well-known proponent of philosophy, advocates that politics is dependent on philosophy in its success, not on poetry, for the second is all about revealing a comic or tragic condition of human situation in the world. Socrates, as translated by Bloom (1968, pp. 426-434), firmly believes that "unless ... philosophers rule as kings or those now called kings, and chiefs genuinely and adequately philosophize ... there is no rest from ills for the cities ... nor I think for human kind." Aristophanes, on the other hand, defends poetry on the ground that philosophy, when considered as the highest form of knowledge, may derail to legitimize unethical principles and values. *The Tempest* is at the core of such an intricate debate with opposing views over poetry and philosophy in relation to politics. While Prospero, the wise magician 'philosopher', is proponent of the rights of wisdom-philosophy to rule politically and lead socially, his brother Antonio tends to be in favor of advocating the rule of politics over both philosophy and poetry. Put simply, one, Prospero, is to make wisdom-philosophy rule both poetry and politics while the other, Antonio, is to make politics rule both philosophy and poetry. In this line of thought, "*The Tempest* interweaves strands of philosophy and poetry into a tapestry that illustrates the subject of wise and legitimate rule" (Coby, 1983) where Prospero is greatly embodied in Plato's cave of political contemplations; Plato favors philosophy over poetry, but laments true philosophers for being socially detached, when considering the political engagements as a heavy burden on them.

*The Tempest* presents us with an equivocal image that both parallels and contradicts the Platonic view. On the one hand, Antonio's usurpation of power results in Prospero, the emblem of wisdom-philosophy and poetry, losing his dukedom, to indicate politics rule over the other domains, where philosophy is left for mere abstract contemplations. On the other hand, Prospero's control over the island, the tempest, all the characters, and the dramatic action in general does reflect his political rule – action through wisdom-philosophy and hence poetry. Ariel's illusory images of the sinking ship as well as all the other tasks done at behest of his master tend to stress Plato's view that wisdom is to be placed above all other domains especially politics and that wise philosophers are to make things right only when compelled



to. Such a view would well suggest that Prospero is the wise philosopher, and also the poet, who is compelled to interfere in order to set the course of action right. That he is attracted by one sort of power, that of knowledge, which causes him to lose the political power, is hence out of question; rather, it is the opposite, that he dramatically drives events through knowledge and wisdom to get back to secular power. The claim that he “translates knowledge into failed government” (Stanivukovic, 2006) is therefore questionable. But there are other usurpations within the main power usurpation dramatic action; Caliban, not a wise philosopher, has lost his island for Prospero while the latter seems to lose Caliban for Stephano, his new lord. When Caliban works to rape Prospero’s daughter, usurping thus Miranda’s and Ferdinand’s right for Platonic love, Stephano and Trinculo are in favor of taking the island from Prospero. “A hierarchy is established by which authority is transferred to the agent whose knowledge has rendered more powerful” (Coby, 1983). This is yet another image of Hamlet, the prince-scholar, whose loss for the political power results from what Stanivukovic (2006) has aptly called the full trust of a “pragmatic politician.” Prospero is a Renaissance scholar-governor who is trapped between his noble scholarly habits and his brother’s demonic ambitions. Where King Claudius plays the role of the pragmatic politician in *Hamlet*, Antonio vehemently does this in *The Tempest*.

The layers of (dis)obedience within the structure of the play tend to ground Prospero in the educational humanist sphere where (inter)personal morality issues are addressed in various ways. The Aristotelian principle of the humanist narrating past incidents is achieved through rhetorically recalling the past and memory plays a tremendous role in this regard. In the same line of thought, Hardy (1997, p. 131) believes that Prospero becomes “one of Shakespeare’s most remarkable narrators and his memory is the vehicle and tenor of his narration.” We hence see the narrator chronologically, and also romantically at times, narrating the whole power usurpation process as it has happened; starting with a stable lovely life to Antonio’s malicious coup and his exile to the island. Trained well in the art of rhetoric as humanism implies, Prospero masters the techniques of telling the story of his life to his daughter Miranda. Recalling thus becomes a way of learning while memory is the effective tool to transfer both the past details as well as the learning outcomes to the learner, Miranda primarily. The humanist educator is to consider well the connection between the flow of eloquence and the morality doctrine with the purpose to address individuals as well as the public. The directive precept related to the memory art during Renaissance highlights that it “freely adopts everything which could be useful in the construction of effective images capable of making a lasting impression” (Bolzoni, 2001, p. 254). This is what Prospero as a humanist aspires to do; the injustice he has faced is to be the vehicle for a good ethical speaking, for a good moral lesson.

But the main questions to be answered here are: Who is concerned with such a moral lesson? Has Prospero achieved the desired learning outcomes he has already set as a wise philosopher and a poet previously? The answer is probably another in-depth investigation of “the vocational aspect of humanism.” Stanivukovic (2006) All the characters in the play, in addition to the audience, are concerned with Prospero’s moral lessons. Being a charismatic orator, with a great influential eloquence, Prospero plays the role of the noble teacher to educate his daughter, Ferdinand, Caliban, Ariel and the rest as well. His words to Miranda “’Tis time / I should inform thee further” (I.ii. 27) invoke a master-pupil relationship that starts with an informative approach towards teaching and learning and ends with a transformative method where learning outcomes are achieved and Miranda moves from receiving information to acting according to the shifts in her emotions, thoughts, and experience in general. The same approach is applied to the other learner, Ferdinand. Prospero’s moral lesson to him is that:

Then, as my guest, and thine own acquisition  
Worthily purchased, take my daughter: but  
If thou dost break her virgin-knot before

All sanctimonious ceremonies may  
With full and holy rite be minister'd,  
No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall  
To make this contract grow; but barren hate,  
Sour-eyed disdain and discord shall bestrew  
The union of your bed, with weeds so loathly  
That you shall hate it both. Therefore take heed,  
As Hymen's lamps shall light you. (IV.i 13-21)

Now, their discussion of the virginity of Miranda serves to stress the humanist philosopher role to transfer his knowledge to the other with the intention to make it a way of life, that taking her chastity before marriage will result in but chaotic loathsome breeding.

While Miranda and Ferdinand accept well the role of the obedient learners and take the lesson from Prospero, Caliban tends to reject it. In fact, they have quite different opinions towards teaching and learning; while the wise philosopher believes it a duty to transfer his knowledge, teaching the language in Caliban's case, the enslaved sees it yet another way to conquer and control his territory. When Prospero stresses he is refining Caliban's English, the latter reminds him of his ignorance of the island, if it were not for his support to show him all its secrets. Stanivukovic (2006) has interestingly commented on the duality opposing colonization to enlightenment in relation to Prospero-Caliban context:

Prospero teaches Caliban some of the humanist skills, such as the foreign language and ornamented poetry (in addition to cursing), representing his engagement in the task of cultural transmission as one of humanism's goals. Caliban is Prospero's experiment in humanist education, especially as it relates to acquiring discursive abilities for making a point. Yet it is difficult to know quite where to draw the line between enslavement and education, the colonization of the body and the enlightenment of the mind.

Caliban has nicely acquired the language, but used it only in cursing and plotting to get rid of Prospero. He violently instructs Stephano to do away with him: "I'll yield him thee asleep, / Where thou mayst knock a nail into his head" (III.ii.48-49), "I do beseech thy greatness give him blows / And take his bottle from him" (III.ii.52-53), "Beat him enough: after a little time, / I'll beat him too" (III.ii.68-69), and most importantly "Remember / First to possess his books; for without them / He's but a sot." (III.ii.75-76) What is striking about these instructions is the last one: burning his books, which he considers as the most dangerous elements for subjugation. In doing so, he will both deprive Prospero of utilizing them against him and prove he is a creature of free will to decide for his future.

Despite all dramatic conflicts, forming in the play what may be called as the humanism's discontents, the magician-philosopher has ultimately proved he is a humanist *par excellence*. Having "the power to rise above the material world," (Grafton, 1990, p.101) Prospero announces: "Yet with my nobler reason gainst my fury / Do I take part: the rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance" (V.i.30-32). The storm is perhaps associated with destruction and death, but it ironically works to gather all enemies and friends for a last, lasting for long, reconciliation scene: a liberating storm embodying the seeds of life, freedom and justice. Unlike the ambivalent beginning, where we are uncertain about the dramatic action, the end seems to be quite unequivocal; humanism, at its best, is represented in the liberating imperative sentence "Go, release them, Ariel." (V.i.34) The tempest is past, and has become of the past, whereas the present provides new optimistic horizons for all; forgiveness is humbly granted and, most importantly, his book, which kept continuously terrifying Caliban, will be drowned while his magic stuff is to be relinquished: "I'll break my staff, / Bury it certain fathoms in the earth, / And deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book" (V.i.59-62). Lois (1997) has written that: "divesting himself of his magic

robe and the superhuman power it represents, he will appear in his former social role ... returning to the human level." When the devilish characters are released and forgiven, Ariel is set free, Miranda is to have Ferdinand as her future husband, and Caliban is to get back to his territory, Prospero's sole concern will therefore be his focus on the dukedom, his real human political engagement. Philosophy and poetry are to rule politics, not the other way round.

#### **2.4 "NOW MY CHARMS ARE ALL O'ERTHROWN" (V.I. 356)**

Prospero's standing alone on stage, to ask the audience forgiveness, analogically projects Shakespeare's composing of his final masterpiece before retiring from the stage. Both of them address the audience, theatergoers, but with different tones; one is asking for permission to end the play while the other is asking for permission to end his craft. Living only for around five years after his retirement, one may easily argue that Shakespeare would leave drama, his life stage, the way Prospero would do for the enchanted island, his temporary stage. Scholars haven't scientifically proved the autobiographical elements in the play, for they remain essentially speculative, but have extensively written about the analogy between Prospero and Shakespeare with reference to *The Tempest's* epilogue. Howard Felprin, as quoted by Lois (1997), says:

While Prospero labors, finally with only partial success, to create a brave new world, Shakespeare is creating his own, with complete success, in the form of the play itself. And Prospero's partial failure becomes the condition of Shakespeare's total triumph, for ... the ultimate validity of any romance world depends on an implicit recognition that romance is all but impossible to achieve while remaining faithful to life.

Edward Dowden, as informed by Jordison (2014), comments that:

We identify Prospero in some measure with Shakespeare himself ... because the temper of Prospero, the grave harmony of his character, his self-mastery, his calm validity of will ... and with these, a certain abandonment, a remoteness from the common joys and sorrows of the world, are characteristic of Shakespeare as discovered to us in all his latest plays.

Hinting at the Prospero-Shakespeare analogy, and even long before Dowden, the England Restoration era leader, John Dryden noted in his *Prologue to The Tempest* Shakespeare's unique magic:

The Storm which vanish'd on the Neighb'ring shore  
Was taught by Shakespear's Tempest first to roar.  
That Innocence and Beauty, which did smile  
In Fletcher, grew on this Enchanted Isle.  
But Shakespear's Magick could not copy'd be;  
Within that Circle none durst walk but he. (*Prologue to The Tempest*,  
15-21)

It seems that like Hamlet who urges Horatio to "draw thy breath in pain and tell my story" (V.ii.383-84), Shakespeare exhorts his mouthpiece Prospero to ask the audience to set him free: "As you from crimes would pardon be, / Let your indulgence set me free" (V.i.374-375). If we are to find Shakespeare in the play, then he can be but Prospero, not Ferdinand or even Gonzalo, not definitely Antonio and his team or Caliban and his fellows. Though flexible enough for interpretation, which makes it in Coleridge word apt for all ages, the dramatist, the original poet, we are dealing with cannot be but Prospero.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

*The Tempest* is the play's title and its focal dramatic action around which other related major or minor sub-themes recur in different ways from beginning till the end. The storm happens in at least three manifestations: the one which is physically taking place at sea and

leading all characters, friends and enemies, to Sycorax's island, the spiritual one that is ironically happening in the minds of the island's new and old dwellers, and, last but not least, the one we paradoxically face upon interpreting the play. With its music, romance, comic reliefs, tragic moods, riddles, secrets, just like the ones Caliban knows on the island, paradoxes and ironies, the play invites us to pluck out the heart of its mysteries. Like a diamond with many colors, converge and diverge depending upon the observer's position, is *The Tempest* with many facets; numberless explanations depending on the reader's perspective.

There is more romance in this play than in any other of the dramatist's plays; Miranda is innocent to the realm of men while Ferdinand humbly accepts serving her father and having her as wife. Their encounter projects the juxtaposition of love, innocence, and sacrifice: some of the major values humanism, in general, and humanists, in particular, strive to transform to the other as part of their educational mission. While romance kindles fun, music accompanies almost all the dramatic incidents with all characters having their own music. Ariel makes the air sweet, fills it with 'celestial' melodies, Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo have their own songs to celebrate plotting or doing away with whom they consider as foes. It tends to be the tool to comfort the unsettled souls, invite sleep and awaken the sleeping. It allays the comic elements and the tragic ones to reflect the situation of mankind in the world; our situation amidst conspiracies and human conflicting passions where the fine line between enlightenment and usurpation is purposely blurred.

*The Tempest* tells what Prospero has learned and what he has taught as well, and from there what Shakespeare has learned and what he has passed as well. It is the story of the so called wicked in relation to the so called innocent: Caliban and his defenders on the one hand and Prospero, the mouthpiece of Shakespeare, on the other. But these characters are us in the end and are ultimately our affairs. We are in them and the play projects all of us; all of them! We usually hear, and read that scholars, since the age of Shakespeare, praise *Hamlet* for its variety and enigmatic nature, *King Lear* for the much madness and the much wisdom, *Macbeth* for its equivocation and probably strategies of betrayal, and *Othello* for its pride and prejudice. Classified as a comedy, a genre of a low action, and sometimes a tragi-comedy, the play might not have been praised like the tragedies. Irrespective of all categorizations, this is Shakespeare's last work, last world, last word! *The Tempest* is about humanity and is a doctrine for humanity throughout history.

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### **The Enigmatic Nature of Shakespeare's The Tempest**

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### **AUTHOR'S BIO:**

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