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***SHAKESPEARE'S GONZALO MORE'S AND HIS PROSPERO  
PLATO'S: THE TEMPEST***

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We cannot form a coherent vision of *The Tempest* without some knowledge of the influences from where those values come from, the struggles in which they were forged, and the historical contexts which generalized those struggles. Such analysis necessitates a great deal more than merely close attention to the words on the page, or the text as it immediately confronts us. We need to know why a text was written, what religious, moral or political purposes motivated it, as well as its historical and cultural backdrop.

William Shakespeare's last play, *The Tempest*, presents originality in the different plots and themes of the story. Shakespeare has been successful in creating a world of imagination, illusion and conflict between the real world and the new world. The play unravels an important idea of Utopianism and Republicanism at social, political and religious levels. *The Tempest*, illustrates a series of themes, or dwells on particular issues important from the view of Plato's *The Republic* and Thomas More's Utopia. Some of the dominant themes in the play are authority, power, usurpation and the relevance of Prospero's Republic on the enchanted island or Gonzalo's Utopia.

In the play, Prospero is a ruler, a former and would be duke of Milan, and the present master of the captivated island. The play undoubtedly seems about the rule of the good and the bad government. The tumultuous storm scene especially attracts with the debate over who has authority on a ship rather than on land. Plato's Prospero had proved himself to be a bad ruler by neglecting the worldly affairs of state, and subsequently learns the art of ruling in the simple and experiment of the island (here too, he proves to be a failure by not being able to control conspiracies), a learner to be good ruler of Milan after his earlier two innings as a ruler in the making.

Power has been an important theme in this play and there is no denying the fact that power over people is politics, and power over objects is technological control, and in all these Prospero is champion. He exhibits his ability at power right from the opening scene in which he raises a storm, to the masque. He speaks about his art himself:

I have bedimmed  
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,  
Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder  
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak

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With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory  
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up  
The pine and cedar, Graves at my command  
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth  
By my so potent art.

(V.i.41-7)

On the whole Prospero's magic power is exemplified, as power over children: Miranda, his own daughter, Caliban, the horrific child, Ariel, the subservient but edgy, Ferdinand, the adolescent, Antonio, the wicked brother, and, certainly the shipwreck sufferers as a whole, who are just bad children for Prospero. He also powerfully controls other characters with his magic on the island. He freezes Ferdinand in mid-thrust, brings to a halt the court party at will, and juggles a set of hounds to hound the conspirators. Through this physical control of his subjects, Prospero undoubtedly endeavours to manipulate the mind of Alonso, and in this he succeeds too.

In one of the scenes of the play, Prospero stands above the stage, undetected to those below him, and conjures up a banquet for Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio and their party. At this moment Ariel as per commands of Prospero appears on stage like a Harpy and, with a clap of his wings and a burst of thunder and lightning makes the table disappear. Ariel at this point seriously recollects their crime against Prospero and sentences the culpable in the names of powers of Destiny and Fate:

Thee of thy son, Alonso,  
They have bereft; and do pronounce by me  
Ling'ring perdition (worse than any death  
Can be at once).

(III.iii.75-8)

Prospero is able to transform everything with his magic as per his wishes except Caliban where he experiences failure. Prospero accepts:

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature  
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,  
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost;  
And as with age his body uglier grows,  
So his mind cankers.

(IV.i.188-92)

Undoubtedly the ancient Greek philosophers, particularly Plato, have shaped the western perception. And there are great possibilities that Shakespeare was aware of Plato's *The Republic*, even through secondary sources of basic Platonic notions. *The Republic*, indisputably echoes in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and most powerfully in the character of Prospero.

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Prospero is Plato's philosopher king in the enchanted island of *The Tempest*. He is inclined towards wisdom and knowledge in his narration to Miranda of how it is that they came to the island. He recounts, that being transported and engrossed in secret studies he had cast the government of Milan upon his brother Antonio and had awakened in him the evil nature and ultimately this led Antonio to usurp Prospero's dukedom, although Prospero is rightly and technically still the duke of Milan. Prospero's eagerness for learning had led him to neglect worldly ends and hunt for solitude for the training of his mind. Even the meager minded Caliban knows that if one wants to conquer Prospero one cannot do it very easily but only after "having first seized his books" (III.ii.88).

*The Tempest*, also reveals the effect of Thoms More's work *Utopia* in the plot in general and in the character portrayal of Gonzalo in particular. Vinisha Varughese, in her essay,

**"Hidden Utopianism in The Tempest" defines Utopianism:**

Utopianism derives from the book named Utopia written by Thomas More. It is a state of visionary schemes for producing perfection in social or political conditions. A Utopian society is basically a society, which has surpassed aggression, war, hate, and crime while establishing "peaceful" and orderly communities. A Utopian society could not exist with the individuality that nature has bestowed on the human race. As long as humans remain unique in their state of mind, utopia is a mere fantasy. Utopia is a nonexistent, but absolutely perfect place, as we can see from the book by Sir Thomas More. More was one of Henry VIII's main councilors. He fell out of favor with the king when he did not sign a letter urging the pope to divorce Henry and Catherine. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London because his going against the king was treason; he was beheaded. It is strange that a man with such a life, and such an end, was the creator of the perfect world as well as a commonly used word in our language. In his writings, utopia was a place of absolute perfection.

Gonzalo is the character in *The Tempest*, who most impressively propagates Thomas More's Utopia as he envisions, "[a]ll things in common nature should produce without sweat or endeavor. Treason, felony, Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need for any engine Would I not have; but nature should bring forth of its own kind, all foison, all abundance, to feed my innocent people." (162-167). Gonzalo's utopia signifies everything that he finds on the island. His utopia is very much like the one mentioned by More. Gonzalo says, "Would I admit; no name of magistrate; letters should not be known; riches, poverty, and use of service; none; contract; succession, bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none... no occupation; all men idle, all, and women too, but innocent and pure; no sovereignty." (150-159) Gonzalo's utopia negates status, property, and profession which leads to the unity and uniformity of all human beings.

Prospero treats the island of which he is a philosopher king. Gonzalo treats the same island as a commonwealth where he also crowns himself as a king and soon he sums up the reasoning of a stateless state in the phrase, "No sovereignty," which means no one will have dominion over anyone else. Gonzalo mends his concept of a utopia and he allows himself to become the king over the island just long enough to abolish both kingship and sovereignty. On

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the other hand, the philosopher king, Prospero, doesn't believe that everyone is equal; he thinks that he is superior than everyone else. Prospero's republic on the island is established on war against Sucorax, hatred of Caliban and desperation of Ariel. Gonzalo's vision of utopia offers a democracy of peace and prosperity which is at present is contrasted by Prospero's republic glittering with anarchy, conspiracy and rebellion as Caliban, Antonio, Trinculo, Stephano and Sebastian are busily plotting murder being out of the control of Prospero. There is no denying the fact that Prospero does not have the order the happiness that comes from a just life on his island because he is over busy in his magical conspiracies against everyone else. Gonzalo has a better utopia than Prospero's republic as the former would not have any of these problems by virtue of being a system where everyone would love each other and have peace as well as success. Gonzalo's utopia also has a way out if any of his utopian had a problem, his utopians would talk it out and solve it. Gonzalo's utopia offers a guile less and evil less system which is directly contrasted by Prospero's republic where evil is prowling everywhere and he is also party to it. In the end Gonzalo's utopia is more appealing as a place where there is no rebellion, and where every body is ready to forgive each other for the sake of love, peace and pure perfection.

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