

The Tempest



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The Play

- A *romance*, a complex story of love and adventure with a happy ending
- No definite sources have been found, but a series of analogues:
 - a. narrative motifs common to romance and folklore
 - b. classical and mythological references
 - c. materials from contemporary and classical literature
 - d. accounts of travels in the New World



The Play Deals with

- The nature of power in social and human relationships
- Colonialism
- Prospero as a projection of Shakespeare



The New World

Two opposite views:

1. natives were seen as subhumans

(Juan Sepulveda)

2. the natives' humanity and 'otherness'
were respected (Michel de Montaigne)



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Montaigne

Montaigne's *Des Cannibals* is a central work about the New World and its myth. He says that

- Europeans' crimes are greater than the Indians'
- the Indians' customs are simply different from the Europeans'



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Italy and the New World

- European writers lacked direct knowledge of the New World
- The European conquest of America was a God-inspired work
- The Conquest = instrument of divine providence to convert the American pagans to Christianity (**Ludovico Ariosto**)
- Indians are seen also as barbarous pagans and man-eaters (**Torquato Tasso**)

The Story

- The ships of the **King of Naples** and his court are caught by a terrible storm and are shipwrecked on a desert island
- They are safe, except for the king's son, **Ferdinand**, who has disappeared
- The tempest has been raised by **Prospero**, the master of the island, with the help of his attendant spirit, **Ariel**
- Prospero tells his daughter, **Miranda**, about their past life and his brother's plot to become the Duke of Milan

Prospero's Magic Art

- Thanks to the help of a friend, Prospero and Miranda were put on a boat and managed to reach the island where only spirits lived
- Thanks to his magic art, Prospero managed to subdue them all
- **Caliban**, a sort of monster half-man half-beast, is now his servant
- The shipwrecked noblemen and mariners run into marvellous apparitions, products of Prospero's art



Happy Ending

- Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love as soon as they see each other
- Prospero forgives his brother and Alonso
- They all sail towards Naples
- Caliban stays on the island and Ariel is freed by Prospero



This Island's Mine

Caliban states his point of view:

- a. the island is his because he inherited it from his mother

*This island's mine by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me*

(II 2-3)

- b. at the beginning the relations with Prospero were good

*When thou cam'st first,
Thou strok'st me and made 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 showed thee all the qualities o'th' isle*

(II 3-8)



Caliban

Things have changed and Caliban, who once was the king of the island, feels like a slave

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'th' island.

(II 12-15)

Prospero and Miranda call him

Thou most lying slave

(I 16)

Abhorred slave

(I 24)

Caliban

The play underlines Caliban's inability of being taught

*Abhorred slave,
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
Being capable of all ill!*

(II 24-26)

He has learnt Prospero's language but he has not profited from it

*You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is I know how to curse.*

(II 36-37)

