



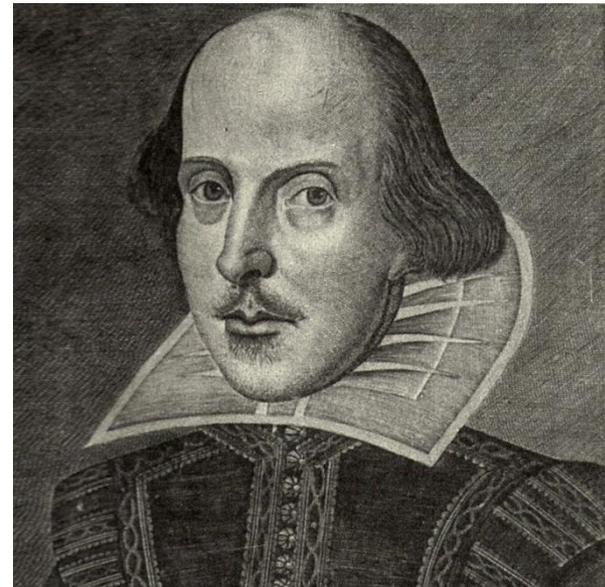
Shakespeare's Comedies: *The Tempest*

Dr. Alan Haffa

- Family
- Education
- Marriage to Anne Hathaway
- Established in London theatre by 1592
- 1594: Lord Chamberlain's Men
- 1597: Purchased New Place in Stratford-upon-Avon
- 1603: King's Men

William Shakespeare

1564-1616



Shakespearean Comedy

- Theme of Love
- Mistaken Identities
 - Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well*
 - Twins: *A Comedy of Errors*
- Gender Play
 - Rosalind in *As You Like It*
- Comic word play

“Problem Plays” or Dark Comedies

- *Measure for Measure, All's Well That End's Well and Troilus and Cressida*
- Highlights problems and contradictions in society
- Abuse of Power and Gender Inequality in *Measure for Measure*

Romance Plays

- 1608 Shakespeare wrote 4 plays: *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*
- These plays are more concerned with reconciliation, magic, renewal, forgiveness, providence, music, and community.

The Tempest and the Unities

- All of the action takes place on the island
- The action unfolds in 24 hours
- The plot is more complex:
 - Restoration to the dukedom of Milan
 - Marriage of daughter, Miranda, to the prince of Naples
- Restoration of Political and Social Unity and Order

Storm and Disorder

- Who is in charge? Nobles interfere with the sailors
- “You are a counselor: if you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more; use your authority.”
- As the ship is wrecking, Gonzalo: “Mercy on us! We split, we split, we split!”
- Metaphor for social division

Miranda: Natural Compassion

- The child of Prospero, exiled duke of Milan, raised in the state of nature
- She represents the good in mankind when we are not corrupted by ambition, greed, and society.
- Seeing the ship wreck, she feels compassion and assumes those on board are “noble creatures”
- When she meets Ferdinand, she falls in love immediately, seeing only the good in him.
- Is he, like her, the younger generation, good? Are they different in kind from their parents and uncles? Or is it just that her native goodness sees and brings out in him what is best?

Theme of Division

- Prospero's plan splits the group from the ship up again
- Ferdinand, prince of Naples, is brought to the camp so he can meet and fall in love with Miranda
- The nobles are in one group
- The servants in another

Is Prospero truly virtuous?

- Or, is he as ambitious as his brother and as prone to manipulating those around him to his own ends?
- He DOES manipulate Miranda, Caliban, and Ariel
- Did he “steal” the island from Caliban?
- It seems Caliban tried to rape Miranda and one way of looking at Prospero is he shows restraint in dealing with Caliban
- Another view: Post-Modern interpretation—Prospero (white colonizers) and Caliban (native people enslaved and disenfranchised)

Caliban as Social Outcast

- P: “thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself upon they wicked dam...”
- Reminiscent of Grendel from *Beowulf*
- “This island’s mine, by Sycorax, my mother, which thou tak’st from me. When thou camest first, thou strok’st me, and mad’st much of me...[and Caliban showed him all the good things of the island]...I am all the subjects that you have, which first was mine own king;”

Prospero and Ariel

- In Act I Ariel reminds Prospero about his promise to set Ariel free
- We learn how Prospero set Ariel free from imprisonment in a pine tree
- Prospero: “If thou murmur’st I will rend an oak and peg thee in his knotty entrails, til thou hast howl’d away twelve winters.”
- This shows a potentially vengeful side of Prospero

Plot among the Nobles

- Prospero's brother, Antonio, plotted with Naples, to steal the dukedom of Milan
- In Act II, Antonio plots with Sebastian, brother of the King of Naples
- The parallel between the two plots is highlighted:
"Sebastian: "They case, dear friend, shall be my precedent; as thou gott'st Milan, I'll come by Naples. Draw thy sword: one stroke shall free thee from the tribute which thou pay'st; And I the king shall love you."
- Ariel disturbs the plot
- Bottom line is that with the exception of Gonzalo, all the nobles are Machiavellian usurpers.

Low Class Characters: Revolt and Treason

- Caliban discovers the servants of the ship's nobles: Stephano and Trinculo
- He pledges his service to them like gods (similar to how the Native Americans saw the Spanish as gods)
- They plot to murder Prospero and become lords of the island
- High and low alike are possessed by boundless ambition and are willing to betray and divide society to achieve their ends.

Reconciliation and Unit

- In the final scene, everyone is brought together by Prospero and Ariel
- The king begs forgiveness
- Prospero forgives his brother, but...
- The honest, innocent, and chaste love of Miranda and Ferdinand transforms the scene:
- Miranda: “O, wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world that hath such people in it!”

Summary

- Comedy ends happily with a marriage
- The end of *The Tempest* does resolve the social division through love and forgiveness, magic and renewal.
- Are we to take Miranda's idealistic view of things as the authoritative view?
- Is Prospero as kind and compassionate as he appears?
- Is the magic of love as powerful as Miranda imagines it?