

Power Struggles In 'The Tempest Play'

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Introduction

The Tempest is one of the masterpieces played by Shakespeare, where the primary focus of the play is on the ensuing power struggles within the country's established political settings. In fact, the play depicts a clear struggle between the new world and the old world, which is clearly brought out by the political themes that are largely prevalent throughout the play. On the one hand, there is Caliban's conspiracy and plan to usurp power from the ruler of the island. (Shakespeare) On the other hand, Prospero is the current ruler and exercises colonialist control of the island. In this case, Prospero acts through dictatorship and authoritarianism in his reign, which creates many enemies across the kingdom, including Caliban, who plans on taking over control from him.

Power Struggles In The Play

The play is full of a myriad of rebellions, treacheries, conspiracies, and mutinies against the authority. This is largely attributable to the high degree of dissatisfaction that the citizens have towards the totalitarian rule exercised by the authority over their homes, livelihoods, and businesses. As such, this provides the play with a complex overall view that is not only shrouded in dramatic action but also in the integration of a diverse range of themes, including illusion as well as the supernatural or magic. Conversely, this sets a stage for struggles, struggles between [good and evil](#) in society, as well as the struggles to control and hold power. As mentioned above, Prospero, who is the current ruler of the island, struggles to maintain his power and exercise his authority over the island's citizens. On the other hand, there is Caliban, who is leading the conspiracy and plans to usurp power from the leader, largely because of the dissatisfaction of the people with Prospero's autocratic style of leadership.

Conversely, there are power struggles evident in the play, beginning all the way back in the play when Antonio, Prospero's brother, seized his status as the Duke of Milan and banished him from the island. (Shakespeare) He was banished to a barren place and left for the dead. This is evidenced in Scene 2.1 of the play, pp.141. The following quotations are picked from the play, showing how Antonio admits to banishing his brother and leaving him for the dead.

Sebastian remarks: *'I remember, you did supplant your brother Prospero.'*

Antonio replies: *'True, and look how well my garment sit upon me.'*

In the above statements, it is evident that Antonio clearly admits to his betrayal of his brother by conspiring to banish him to a far-off land so that he could take over his seat of power. Now that he is

in control of the island, he prides himself in the manner in which his royal garments sit properly on him. The funny thing is that even though he betrayed his own brother, Prospero, he does not feel any sense of guilt or remorse for what he has done in his act of treachery. On the contrary, he considers his act as beneficial as it enables him to usurp power from his brother. This is a perfect scene showing the high prevalence of power struggles in the play and probably the reason behind the poet's admirable choice of words as the befitting title for the play, *The Tempest*.

Furthermore, it is also very clear from the feelings and perceptions that Antonio has that democracy and other lenient procedures followed in taking over power do not actually matter as long as one is in the seat of power. It is, therefore, possible that the primary cause of Prospero's totalitarian rule over the island is largely attributable to his experience of betrayal at the hands of his own brother. As such, he uses the dictatorial leadership style to reign over his people in order to thwart any other attempt to unseat him from power. Judging from Antonio's remarks, he relished every moment he was in the seat of power after usurping his brother, as evidenced by the following quote from the play.

Antonio says: *I feel not this deity in my bosom.*

This means that regardless of the fact that he betrayed his own brother to unseat him from power, he does not feel any kind of remorse. On the contrary, he was probably enjoying every moment of it, gloating over the wistfulness that enabled him to seize power from his brother. His conscience is, in fact, very clear and not at the least bothered by his betrayal of Prospero. When Prospero eventually returns to the island and takes his rightful place as the leader, he is bitter at heart because of his brother's misdemeanor, which leads to him being banished to a barren land and left for the dead. In fact, it was by sheer luck that he survived the atrocities and dangers that he faced on the deserted island until he was in a position to return to his home and retake his position. Nonetheless, this made him a cruel leader, oppressing and maltreating his people, subsequently leading to a series of other power struggles, including Caliban's conspiracy to take over. Caliban presented the most prominent degree of resistance to his authority, yet he was just a slave.

Conclusion

The power struggles make the play both humorous and intriguing, as people struggle to keep their authority while others fight to take it from them by force.

Works Cited

Shakespeare. *The Tempest*. Available at <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/full.html>