# Creative Interrogation of Shakespeare's The Tempest

**Srikanth Kandula (97342)**

**Creative Interrogation:**

- Main Page of **The Naples Herald** dated 13'th February 1620

The fateful Tempest

On this fateful day, it pains us greatly to inform the citizenry of Naples of the sad demise of their beloved King Alonso and the very popular Prince Ferdinand. The king and prince were returning to Naples after attending the marriage of Princess Claribel with the King of Tunis in Tunis. It was reported that during this voyage, the king's ship got embroiled in a great tempest and sank somewhere in the Meditteranean. The escort ships searched in vain for the missing king and prince. However the King's brother Sebastian and the Duke of Milan Antonio were miraculously rescued. Both the survivors are in a state of mental trauma and could not add any details about the mishap.

- Main Page of **The Naples Herald** dated 20'th February 1620

King Sebastian

After a week of mourning on the sad demise of his brother and nephew, Sebastian has accepted the demand of the public to ascend the throne of Naples. He will be the 31'st king from the House of Lotti and may King Sebastian rule a prosperous Naples for a long time in the steps of his illustrious brother. Citing Princess Claribel's location at a great distance from Naples, Sebastian has been chosen as the heir to the throne owing to his being the closest kin to Alonso. Upon his ascencion to the throne of Naples, King Sebastian freed the city-state of Milan from being allied to the throne of Naples as a gift to his good friend Antonio. Both the King and the newly-sovereign Duke have expressed their grief at this loss and have prayed for the well-being of both Milan and Naples.

- Lead story in **The Milan Tribune** dated 13'th November 1620

Mysterious Occurrences

Place officials in the service of Antonio, the Duke of Milan, under the condition of anonymity have reported seeing a bent-up old woman with a singularly repulsive face on the balcony of the Duke's bedroom. When guards rushed in to check on the condition of the Duke, this lady was found to have mysteriously disappeared from the roof-top and the Duke was found in a mentally disturbed state. Highly placed sources said that the Duke was heard crying out repeatedly "O Sycorax, please stop this pain. I will do as you bid me to."

- Main Page of **The Naples Herald** dated 1'st February 1621

The unprecedented Rise of the nobleman Clariban

This last year has seen nobleman Clariban's rise from a little-known person to one of great power in the courts of both Milan and Naples. This person whose ancestry is not known is rumoured to be kin to both the Duke of Milan and the King of Naples and has been increasingly seen in the courts of both Antonio and Sebastian. Singularly known for his repelling features and bad manners, rumours have it that his opponents in court mysteriously disappear overnight.

The reporter of this piece of information was found lying dead in a by-lane of Naples early the next day

- Joint lead story of both **The Naples Herald** and **The Milan Tribune** dated 3'rd June 1621

Clariban- the new King of Naples and Milan

In what has been a successful confirmation of the rumours spreading like wild-fire through the cities of Naples and Milan, the Duke of Milan and the King of Naples in a joint press statement yesterday declared that they would be renouncing their thrones. Both of them have cited a newly awakened thirst for knowledge which could not be sustained in their present position in which the management of the day-to-day affairs of the state was a huge draw on their resources, as the reason for their renunciation. It is common belief that their closest of kin, Clariban would succeed both of them.

No more publication of either The Naples Herald or The Milan Tribune or any other newspaper from the twin states of Naples and Milan.

- On page 13 of **New York Times** dated 3'rd May 2001

A new island discovered in the Meditteranean

In what has been a surprise to many geographers, an as-yet unmarked island was found in the Meditteranean sea. Extensive exploration of the island revealed no live occupants. The only mark of civilization is the existence of four tomb like structures lying close to each other in the center of the island at the entrance of two caves that appear to have been lived in. A mass-grave has also been found at a small distance from these tombs. All the tombs are un-marked, except for the prescence of a single scrawled line on one of them. Experts of Medeival Italian were promptly put to the job, and the writings were deciphered to be a badly scawled line saying "You'd be king o' the isle, sirrah?". Several experts are surprised at the location of this island and the more eccentric ones have linked it to be the birth-place of the medieval tyrant who ruled from Milan, one by the name of Clariban, who unleashed a short reign of terror on the city-states of Milan and Naples. Surprisingly no explanations could be given by historians about the dramatic rise to power of Clariban and his equally sudden fall. A singularly fascinating aspect of this island has been the plaintive cries that emanate from a stone cliff on the northern edge of this island. Both geologists and biologists are at a loss to explain the origin of these cries which are potent enough to move even a hard-hearted man to tears. A neo-Nazi-Falun-Gong cult based in Southern California has claimed these cries to be the message of approaching apocalypse sent out by their guardian angel Ariel. Police in the city of Oxnort, the base of this cult, are in a heightened state of alert owing to warnings by the FBI of a possible mass-suicide attempt by members of this cult.

**Explication Essay:**

Shakespeare's The Tempest is a five act play that deals with the return to power of the wronged duke of Milan Prospero. Coupled with this is the proposed wedding between the heirs to the thrones of Milan and Naples. These two incidents are the crux of the Utopia that is envisioned by Shakespeare in this text. Construction of a Utopia is a very delicate and pain-staking effort that can easily be ruined by a single fault in the ideology of the author of such a vision. Though this explication essay deals with flaws in both the process as well as the product of this Utopia, the flaws in the product are relatively well-known, so the creative interrogation exploits the flaws in the process. The rest of this essay starts out with a description of this identified flaw which is followed by an explanation of the events leading up to those presented in the creative text and a justification of the choice of the framework of newspaper articles. I then, point out the relatively famous flaws in the product, i.e. the Utopia constructed in this text. An attempt is then made to analyze my own assumptions in the construction of the dystopic vision portrayed in the creative text and finally I end with possible corrections of the several flaws in this Utopia.

The title of a text is usually reflective of the crux of the text. Here, The Tempest refers to the storm that is raised in the calm seas by the magic of Prospero. Prospero's return to power is seen as the good-thing, the precursor to an Utopia but the means which he uses to get back his own power fall well-short of being anywhere near Utopian. Prospero lacks a strong army, lacks public support so the only power he can now exert on his enemies is that of magic and charms. Prospero schemes, threatens, charms and manipulates people into creating a state of society that is well-suited to his own ideas and Shakespeare palms this off as being Utopic. I argue that while Prospero is depicted as the rightful Duke of Milan and his getting back the Dukedom is seen as the vision of an Utopia, the means by which Prospero achieves this triumph show him in the same light as Antonio if not worse. Thus I argue that there is a grave internal inconsistency between the Utopia that is depicted and the process by which this Utopia is achieved.

If Antonio used guile and force to remove Prospero from Milan, so does Prospero use guile and magic in getting back his Dukedom of Milan. While Antonio gets the support of Alonso by appealing to the latter's greed for money and power (tribute), Prospero enlists the support of Ariel and its several minions by dangling the carrot of freedom. If Antonio is seen as an oppurtunist and a schemer, Prospero's means of getting back his Dukedom show the evidence of a greater oppurtunist and a more skillful schemer, one who stoops as low as using his magical powers to force people into falling in line with his vision.

The tempest is raised by Prospero's individual magic. The survivors are cleverly split up according to the scheme of Prospero. Ferdinand is subjected to extreme trauma at the perceived loss of his father. He is in the throes of a great passion at the loss of his father, furious at the elements and dis-oriented by his lonely prescence in a new place. All this is pre-calculated by Prospero and fits into his game-plan. The affection that sprouts up between Ferdinand and Miranda is also cleverly initiated by Prospero's magic. The sad, dis-illusioned Ferdinand is lead to where Prospero and Miranda lie by the magical charms of Ariel, as instructed by Prospero. Ariel's magic causes him to construe Miranda to be a goddess of the isle. Prospero explicitly charms Miranda into looking at Ferdinand, and creates a favourable impression of Ferdinand in Miranda while introducing Ferdinand as a "gallant" and "a goodly person". Thus succeeding in igniting a passion between the naive Miranda and Ferdinand-who had been reduced to a very emotional state, Prospero schemes to strengthen this budding affection by acting as a tyrant to Ferdinand. By doing this, Prospero not only causes Miranda to start pitying Ferdinand (a pity on top of the initial attraction) but he also casts Miranda in the role of a fair maiden. A maiden who rebels against the tyranny of her father and who helps him whenever the father is away, would obviously be more attractive to Ferdinand. By pitting both of them together as the sufferers of Prospero's tyranny he explicitly conditions them into being more attracted towards each other. Thus every step in this budding romance is "fixed" by Prospero's guile and magic.

The manner in which Prospero wreaks vengeance on Antonio, Sebastian and Alonso also marks the guile of Prospero and the excessive use of magic. Prospero clearly understands that the route back to power lies through Alonso, which he ensures by the clever scheme of using his own daughter Miranda to entrap Ferdinand. Alonso is subjected to extreme pain and suffering as he is caused to believe that his son Ferdinand is dead. Ariel's role as a harpy is another instance of Prospero's use of magic and guile. The clincher is his presenting the hungry, tired group with a luscious banquet, which has a great dis-orienting effect, just prior to Ariel's coming in. Ariel seals the fate of the co-conspirators by driving them into an emotion frenzy and this is made more real by the disappearance of the banquet as soon as Ariel leaves. Thus Prospero uses every guile that he can, puts his magic to the greatest use and explicitly conditions Alonso into a such a frenzy of sorrow and despair that he readily gives back Prospero his Dukedom at the first moment he meets him. His great use of magic is seen in the instance wherein Alonso's affliction of mind reduces only after he gives back Prospero his Dukedom and after he readily accepts the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda.

The control that he exercises over Caliban is also one of guile and magic. As Aime Cesaire aptly puts it: "Prospero, you are the master of illusion. Lying is your trademark. And you have lied so much to me (lied about the world, lied about me) that you have ended by imposing on me an image of myself. underdeveloped, you brand me, inferior, Thatís the way you have forced me to see myself I detest that image! What's more, it's a lie! But now I know you, you old cancer, and I know myself as well." He conditions Caliban into despising himself by teaching him Prospero's own version of morality and measuring him against rules to which Caliban's stubbornness could never conform. Prosper then uses Caliban's youthful indiscretion towards Miranda as a valid oppurtunity to usurp him of all his rights under the name of a necessary act of civilizing the savage. Prospero uses his magical powers and Ariel as well as the other fairies to keep Caliban in perpetual slavery to him.

Prospero's treatment of Caliban is exactly similar to Antonio's usurpation of Prospero's Dukedom and Stephano's attempt to become the king of the island. While both the latter attempts are overt use of force, the former is a covert use of conditioning and magic. While the latter two are shown as bad and un-natural, the former is shown as the natural order of things. This is another instance of the above-mentioned internal inconsistency in the novel.

While Prospero's return to power is seen as Utopian just because he was born earlier than Antonio and had a right to it, the means which Prospero uses to achieve this Utopia and the means which he uses to gain power over the island are rotten at the core and are similar, if not worse than the means used by those that are pointed out by Shakespeare as being incarnations of evil.

My primary opposition to Shakespeare's The Tempest is then in the portrayal of magic and guile as valid means of achieving an Utopia and in the inherent internal inconsistency which upholds a supposed utopia created by magic and guile while at the same time declaiming other very similar visions that were constructed or attempted to be constructed by more overt force. If a force A can be used to create B, can it not be said that B is sub-ordinate to A or A could also be used to ruin B. The use of magic and guile as valid foundations for an Utopia begs the question whether this Utopia is subordinate to the forces that created it; namely magic and guile. Will not a greater magician, a greater schemer be able to overthrow what Prospero built by his own magic and guile? How valid is a Utopian vision that is constructed through magic and guile and how stable will this be? If the means are rotten, can the ends be anything other than rotten?

This is the bubble that I intend to prick with the creative text, and I do so by exploiting several other silences in this book. No character of the book is shown to be personally aware of Sycorax's death. We are told of it by Prospero who himself was never in contact with Sycorax, Sycorax was not present on the island when Prospero had landed there. Ariel was imprisoned in the tree, and so could not possibly have witnessed Sycorax's death. Caliban was an infant and he never claims personal knowledge of his mother's death. Thus I provide for the fact that Sycorax was somehow away from the island for all this time, fancy ideas for achieving this are many. Sycorax arrives on stage just after Prospero has given up his magic and finds all the noblemen having a sumptuous banquet in Prospero's cave while Caliban waits on them. Sycorax now, is then a greater manifestation of the magical powers that Prospero used with such a great affect and the use of which Shakespeare approves. On top of it, I assume that Sycorax is also blessed with a mind that can scheme better than what Prospero could ever do, and one which can easily foil the schemes of the several people whom she is pitted against now. Sycorax, easily overpowers and imprisons Alonso, Ferdinand, Prospero, Miranda and all their loyal minions. Antonio and Sebastian are freed from the power of Prospero, just as Prospero sets Ariel free from the curse of Sycorax. Prospero uses Ariel as a slave (with approval from Shakespeare) just because he freed it, Sycorax then uses Antonio and Sebastian as slaves after freeing them from the grip of Prospero. They are allowed to return to their successive kingdoms through the aid of Sycorax's magic as they are found by the king's escort ships that returned to search for the lost ship, just as Prospero uses his magic to split the tree in which Ariel was imprisoned. Having gone back to their islands, Sebastian and Antonio enjoy a brief period of freedom, before the witch Sycorax starts visiting them on her broom. In return for their freedom, Sycorax asks them to groom her son and to finally give their kingdoms to him. Antonio has a brief bout of energy and tries to rebel against Sycorax, just as Caliban tries to rebel against Prospero, and is pinched for it magically just as Caliban is pinched by Prospero's fairies. Like Prospero's approved use of his magic to gain back his dukedom, Sycorax's use of magic to get kingdom's for her son Clariban should also be approved by Shakespeare.

To give Shakespeare a greater push, Sycorax was a blue-eyed dame, so we could add the segment that Sycorax was a noblewoman who was cheated by say Alonso's father, i.e. Alonso's father had an illicit affair with Sycorax and later dumped her to Algier and caused her to be tainted as a witch. In frustration and out of loneliness, Sycorax went bad and learned magic all by herself just as Prospero learned his magic on the island. So Sycorax and her son, Caliban have suffered a greater wrong than Prospero, not just the fate of being deprived off power and luxury which are all that Prospero seems to be missing but the greater ignominy of being a witch and a bastard. Thus, by Shakespeare's own codes of morality, if Prospero's use of magic is approved because he was wronged by Antonio and used magic to correct this wrong, then so would Sycorax's use of her magic to give back to her wronged son what should have rightfully been his (atleast a part of it) be approved. Caliban is then the un-challenged tyrant who rules with the iron hand of his mother's magic over both Naples and Milan.

Thus through this creative interrogation, I have effectively proven that the foundations on which an Utopia is built are as important as the Utopia itself. No skewed vision of morality could sanction the use of un-ethical means like the use of guile, magic, kidnapping and emotional trauma and the use of such means would never cause a stable future leave alone an Utopia. The state that such a use would create would be one that is just waiting precariously on the edge of a cliff, waiting for one who could use the same powers in a more effective fashion to push it over the cliff.

The use of newspaper headlines over an extended period of time, has been used to create the notion of an on-going sequence of events that lead to the rise of King Caliban. They also serve the purpose of demonstrating how bad a king Caliban is, one who rules with an iron hand and brooks no criticism. The epitaph is on the tomb of Prospero and is a satirical reference to what Prospero did on the island (usurping Caliban) and what he intended to do in Milan. It is also a comment on Shakespeare who has become the king of the island's (England's) morailty. The tomb of Prospero is also the tomb of

Shakespeare and that is where they deserve to lie. The sudden fall of Caliban is caused due to his mother's death at which he presumably has gone insane. (His purpose is already served and he is an expendable pawn). Time comes a full circle and this time, Ariel finds that it is much more difficult to split open a stone cliff than a pine tree. The final references to the cult are modern day parallels of the Shakespearean era.

There are also several other inconsistencies in this text. Why is the bookish Prospero, who committed the grave mistake of being an indifferent ruler and one who had no use of power earlier, so thirsty for his Dukedom now? Is it because of an appreciation of luxury and power which he has been deprived off for so many years, or is it just greed for the sake of his daughter? Does he really care about the welfare of his people? Does Shakespeare really care about the welfare of the ordinary people of Milan? We have mentions everywhere about aristocrats (Kings and Dukes) but there is not a single mention of the way each of them would be treating his subjects. If Antonio could give more time to his subjects than what Prospero had done earlier, or what Prospero could be expected to do now (he says his every third thought would be of his grave) would'nt he be a better king and a more worthy one despite the fact that he was born younger to Prospero? Is Shakespeare at all interested in the welfare of people and how a king rules his subjects, or is he just using Kings and Kingdoms to write a morality play which stripped off all its melodrama says that if you are wronged, then Shakespearean morality allows you to wrong any number of people, use any means to counter this wrong and get back what has been taken from you.

The standard inconsistencies of the product of this Utopia, is that it does not accomodate people who are perceived to be physically different and who have a different set of guidelines (Caliban), it also assumes that all its woman are plain fools who are easily lead by suggestions of their father/male guardian to fall in love with whoever looks great. What Shakespeare really needs is a strong dose of Emily Bronte. Her reference to the taming of the brute by love and affection of a woman in Wuthering heights effectively portrays a deeper humanity, one that can look deeper than the skin and one that has the energy to recognize innate humanity and nourish it rather than one that simply measures others on the scale of his own morality and relegates the other to an inferior position if the other does not conform to it. There are umpteen similarities between Caliban and the two young brutes in Wuthering heights . One of them, say A, is an orphan who is ostracized by the family of the man who gives him shelter, the other, say B, is the son of A, who is lead astray by his vengeful father. All three have suffered in their childhood and need love, affection and acceptance before they can begin to be expected to conform to rules.

Finally, I conclude by arguing that no Utopia can be forced upon people or created explicitly by a force. Regardless of what this force may be, it would only make it susceptible to a greater force that would rock it. Instead the most optimal manner of creating an Utopia is the Utopia created by the Odonians on Anarres, one that is based on the foundation of an idea, a way of life. Each person is fit to critically examine the vision and accept it only if he or she finds it rational. The bond that creates a Utopia then is the bond of rational conscience of umpteen individuals and this would be in existence as long as the idea is conformant to the individual visions of the several participants. An utopia is then by definition ambiguous, one that sprouts up in the mind as a vision, and its strength lies in its ambiguity because if there is a concrete vision, a material utopia then it could easily be built by force, by money, by power. More force, more money, more power would then rock this utopia questioning whether this is indeed an utopia.