

PREMONITORY VISIONS IN THE TEMPEST

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Zeki ÖZBİLLİK
D.E.Ü.Buca Eğitim Fakültesi
Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Bölümü
İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı Öğretim Üyesi

ÖZET

William Shakespear'ın oyunu, *The Tempest*'in dokusu içinde Rönesans Politikası ve Sömürgecilik üzerine iç içe geçmiş paralel konular işlenmektedir. Oyundaki Rönesans sahne sanatı politik evlilik, gasp, doğa ve medeniyet, doğa ve "Sanat," iyilik ve kötülük, intikam ve affetme ile insan varlığının içsel doğası gibi konuları sadece 17nci yüzyıl dünyası bakımından değil, aynı zamanda, bunların geleceğin dünyasındaki olası sonuçları bakımından da sorgular.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Rönesans Politikası, Sömürgecilik, Uygarlığa karşı Doğa, Sanata karşı Doğa.

ABSTRACT

Throughout the context of William Shakespear's play, *The Tempest*, there are parallel themes of Renaissance Politics and Colonization. The Renaissance stagecraft in the play questions such topics as "politique" marriage, usurpation, nature and civilization, nature and Art, good and evil, vengeance and forgiveness, and the inner nature of human being, not only in the sense of the 17th century world, but also in the sense of their potential outcome in the future world.

Key Words: Renaissance Politics, Colonization, Nature versus Civilization, Nature versus Art.

It has been suggested that some of the literature related to the New World influenced Shakespeare's writing. William Strachey (1572-1621), English colonial historian, wrote an account of an adventure that occurred at the beginning of the 17th century after the formation of the Virginia Company in 1607. Another company was sent across the Atlantic in 1609, but during a hurricane near the Virginia Cost, the Governor's ship was separated from the rest of the fleet, and was driven to Bermuda. However, all the passengers got ashore and wintered comfortably there. Stracey reported seeing dancing flames on the ship. The shipwreck in I.1, Ariel's description of St. Elmo's fire in I.1-206, and some other details derive from this document.¹ Other public accounts emphasize the providential survival of everyone aboard the vessel and the fact that Bermuda, previously notorious as an abode of devils and other evil spirits, turned out to be a pleasant and productive island.² Suffice it to say that Shakespeare used New World literature to satisfy his own creative purposes, for although the play is entitled "*The Tempest*," it is the island that is the central to the development of plot, theme and character. The short opening act of the play is packed with dramatic bustling activity, sound and conflict which reveals Shakespeare's genius for arousing the interest and expectation of his audience. The storm scene recalls *King Lear* both in its natural violence and in the larger issues it raises about the relation of nature to human authority—issues that are succinctly expressed in the Boatswain's question, "*What cares these roarers for the name of king?*" (I.1-16, 17). So the Boatswain of the ship shows little regard for the status of the King and his men who hinder the work as they struggle to "*take the topsail*" (I.1-6). He tells Gonzalo, the honest old councillor to "*command these elements to silence*" (I.1-21) or prepare to drown.

The Boatswain's question is, in the context of the Second Scene, ironic, as we see the storm under the control of the magician of the island. The ship has come within the supernatural forces of the island's otherworldliness. During the storm, Antonio and Sebastian display their brutal natures that they are to exhibit throughout the play. The text presents Prospero as a complex, erratic, and even contradictory figure, though the 18th century's attitude was, for the most part, as announced by Rowe, not as hard as that since for him the play seemed "*as perfect in its kind as almost anything we have*" of Shakespeare's, and Prospero's magic had "*something in it very solemn and poetical.*"³ Prospero's island is enchanted, but it could be said that it was subject to supernatural forces before his arrival. His long monologue near the beginning of Act I, Scene 2 is crucial not only to an understanding of the play's action, but in

determining our attitude towards it and towards its protagonist. To narrate his history is to gain control of it, to revise and rectify the past.⁴ The story Prospero tells is a mixture of guilt and blame. His usurping younger brother, Antonio is presented as the villain, but also acting essentially as Prospero's agent:

*"Of all the world I loved, and to him put
The manage of my state, ... "* (I.2-69, 70)
"The government I cast upon my brother," (I.2-75)

Prospero presents his voyage to the island twelve years ago as a way of starting life all over again both for himself and for his daughter Miranda. He has been banished by his wicked, usurping, possibly illegal younger brother by letting his enemy, King of Naples into Milan "*one midnight*" (I.2 -128). Prospero's aim now on the island is to undo the usurpation. Political legitimacy and the effects of usurpation is one of the issues of the play. Antonio's original usurpation is re-enacted on the island, as Antonio offers Sebastian the prospect of a kingdom if he murders Alonso, and as Caliban recruits Stephano against Prospero.⁵ Each of these conspiracies is finally defused by Prospero as order is systematically restored. Just as important, they all lead to the reconciliation with which the play closes. However, the island is not Prospero's alone. When he arrives, he finds Caliban, child of the witch Sycorax. In Prospero's account Sycorax was the embodiment of wickedness, but her history is curiously parallel with his. She, too, was a victim of banishment, and the island provided a new life for her, as it did literally for her son, with whom she was pregnant when she arrived. Like Prospero, she made Ariel her servant and controlled the natural spirits of the island. Sycorax died some time before Prospero's arrival. Prospero never saw her, and everything he knows about her is what he has learned from Ariel. Sycorax, Prospero says, was possessed by "*unmitigable rage*" and kept Ariel in bondage and ultimately penned the spirit up "*into a cloven pine*" (I.2-276, 277), from which even her own magic was not powerful enough to release him. From Caliban's point of view, and even at times, from Ariel and Ferdinand's point of view, Prospero looks very much like Sycorax. However, at the end of the play, the return to Milan and the reassumption of his dukedom necessitate the renunciation of the "Art."

It is Ariel who, under Prospero's instructions, causes the shipwreck and insures that "*not a hair perished. / On their ... garments not a blemish,*" (I.2-217, 218). The spirit also arranges that the King's son, Ferdinand is separated from the others in order to suit Prospero's plan. In order to establish the line of succession in his conflict, Prospero is marrying his daughter to Ferdinand, the son of his enemy. However, Prospero's great scheme is not to produce illusions. The crimes Prospero charges Ferdinand with, during their encounter, are those of his brother Antonio: usurpation and treason. In a broader scope, the shipwreck engineered by Prospero brings to the island the world of Renaissance politics. In the context provided by Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian, family quarrels are public politics, and private motives become matters of state. The wedding of Alonso's daughter Claribel to the King of Tunis was not a happy occasion since the bride went unwillingly and much of the court disapproved it. That wedding in the play's background is very different from the happy union of Ferdinand and Miranda. Both are affairs of state, and the account we are given of Claribel's fate comes immediately after Miranda's first meeting with the man her father has chosen as her husband. Claribel's marriage gives us notice that more is at stake in the match Prospero is arranging than the happiness of two young people. Throughout Shakespeare's lifetime the "**politique**" marriage seemed the likeliest means of resolving the European power struggles.⁶ There are no apparent religious overtones to the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda, but it is designed to resolve "inveterate" territorial enmities. Nevertheless, King James had similar plans both for his daughter, Princess Elizabeth and the Protestant Prince Frederick. The play appears in a list of fourteen performances at court during the festive season preceding the marriage of Elizabeth.⁷

The renunciation of the rage and vengeance that have determined so much of Prospero's tone throughout the play is not in fact wholly realised. Alonso is penitent, but the chief villain, Antonio remains unchanged. This may be because Prospero's efforts in the play have been much more powerfully directed towards Alonso rather than towards Antonio. Since nothing can redeem Antonio from his badness, Prospero's magic has not been employed to bring about the reform of Antonio. To renounce magic may suggest renouncing vindictiveness and vengeance. Despite all the evident pain of losing his daughter, Miranda's marriage to Ferdinand is brought about by magic as part of Prospero's plan. Leaving the island and reassuming the dukedom is part of the same plan, too. Both of these are presented as acts of renunciation, but they are in fact more important in their final effect, and they represent Prospero's triumph. Madeline Doran quotes that the action of the play is Prospero's discovery to his enemies, their discovery of themselves, the lovers' discovery of a world of wonder, Prospero's own discovery of an ethic of forgiveness, and the renunciation of his magical power.⁸ The crime that Prospero holds in reserve

for later use against his brother is the attempted assassination of Alonso. Prospero has sent Ariel to put all shipwreck victims to sleep except Antonio and Sebastian. Antonio then persuades Sebastian to murder Alonso and so become King of Naples. Sebastian agrees, on the condition that Antonio kills Gonzalo, but at the moment of the murders, Ariel appears and wakes Gonzalo:

*"My master through his art foresees the danger
That you, his friend, are in, and sends me forth—
For else his project dies—to keep them living."
(II.1-295, 296, 297)*

So it is obvious that Prospero created this murder conspiracy as part of his project, and this is why Antonio and Sebastian are not put to sleep. Prospero is restaging his usurpation, and this time, he is maintaining his control over it. At the end of the play, he still has usurpation and attempted murder to hold against his brother, things that still disqualify Antonio from his place in the family.

Shakespeare raised an issue that concerned thinking people throughout Europe: the relative merits of nature and civilisation. Many of Shakespeare's contemporaries viewed "*natural man*" as a healthy counter to the ills of civilisation—an attitude that has survived to the present day—but the playwright disagreed. One of the chief spokesmen for the admiring view of natural man was Michel de Montaigne, and Shakespeare gave his position a place in *The Tempest*—a passage from Montaigne's essay "*Of the Cannibals*" is echoed in Gonzalo's remarks on an ideal commonwealth in (II.1-143-164), but only as a foil to the play's point of view.⁹ The ineffectual Gonzalo envisions "*all men idle [and] women... innocent and pure*" (II.1-150, 151), but Caliban, whose name is a pointed anagram of "cannibal," has in his idleness attempted to rape Miranda and thus represents a standing refutation of Montaigne's thesis. Caliban cannot, like Ferdinand, make the commitment of a "*patient log-man*" (III.1-67), and his undisciplined lust is naturally rejected by Miranda. Gonzalo's Utopian fantasy brings into the play a whole range of Renaissance thought about the relation of Europeans to newly discovered lands and to their populations. Yet another important theme is the contrast between **Art** and **nature**. Prospero rules through his magical "*Art*" (I.2-1), which in the conventional 17th century usage associated with the Renaissance image of the magician as philosopher. The contrast of "Art" and "nature" is furthered by the comparison of Prospero, whose learned sorcery is "Art", and the "natural" Caliban, with his lust and his beast like resistance to education.¹⁰ In the dramatic structure of the play, Caliban is even more significantly contrasted with Miranda. The two children have been educated together on the island, the objects of Prospero's devoted care; Miranda has developed into a wonder of civilised grace, Caliban into a surely, malicious and—what is most upsetting to Prospero—a lustful monster. Prospero concludes that Caliban, therefore, is monstrous by nature; but once again the issue is complicated by Prospero's and Miranda's claim that they have taught Caliban everything he knows, and by the clear parallel in Prospero's mind between Caliban and the other wicked child for whose education he claims responsibility, his younger brother Antonio. Prospero's charge of ingratitude against Caliban, and Miranda's startling denunciation of him, are provoked by the recollection of an attempt by Caliban to rape Miranda.¹¹ Caliban compounds the offence by acting both unrepentant and retrospectively lecherous:

*"O ho, O ho! Wouldn't had been done
Thou didst prevent me—I had peopled else
This isle with Calibans." (I.2-348-350)*

The practice of free love in the New World is regularly treated by Montaigne and his contemporaries, not as an instance of the lust of savages, but of their Edenic innocence; and it may help to explain why Caliban is not only unrepentant for his attempt on Miranda, but incapable of seeing that there is anything to repent for.¹² Caliban's naturalness leads him to attempt rape, whereas Prospero and Ferdinand, with civilised sensibilities believe in celibacy before marriage. Ferdinand, Miranda and Prospero all exercise the self-discipline that Caliban lacks, and their success and happiness are compared with his misery. Nature is insufficient and must be built upon by civilisation.¹³ Charles Frey believes that at least some of the literature relating to the New World is somewhere behind the play.¹⁴ Caliban represents the "*natural*" man that enthralled Europeans as the New World was opened up and its natives became known. He is pointedly associated with the New World through allusions to the Patagonian god Setebos, the island of Bermuda, and such familiar anecdotes of exploration as the reception of explorers as gods and their offering liquor to the natives.¹⁵ Caliban also represents a significant counter-claim to Prospero's authority. The island, he asserts, is rightly his, and Prospero is an invader and usurper. As for the legitimate sovereignty of the island, Caliban himself complicates an initially simple issue by deriving

his claim from inheritance: "*This island's mine by Sycorax my mother*" (I.2-331). He need not do this; the claim could derive from the mere fact of prior succession: he was there first.¹⁶ Whatever merit the claim has philosophically, it is allowed to have little dramatically: Caliban is not presented as a noble savage, and his immediate attachment to Stefano is sufficient to confirm Prospero's view of him as a natural servant.¹⁷ Caliban has generally been seen as a foil to Ariel—the airy spirit, the earthy monster—and Prospero confirms his servant's place in an elemental hierarchy by referring to him as "*earth*" (I.2-314). Both long for freedom, and, while only Ariel is offered the hope of obtaining it, in fact both Prospero's servants receive it at the same time, when Prospero resumes his dukedom at the play's end.¹⁸

It is, of course, possible to see in this corrupt behaviour the consequences of Caliban's experience with Prospero—the consequences, that is, of nurture, not nature. In this line of argument, the relation of master and servant, European and native, is modelled on the colonial experience. And in fact, if the dramatic action seems to trivialise the question of Caliban's proper status, the philosophical and legal aspects of his claim to the island have a good deal of resonance throughout the play. They bear not only on the question of Caliban's rights but even more significantly on the nature and sources of Prospero's—or of any ruler's—authority. In significant sense, it is Caliban who legitimates Prospero's rule. When Caliban tells his master that "*I am all the subjects that you have*" (I.2-34), he reminds us that authority may claim to derive from heaven, but in practice it depends on the acquiescence, whether willing or compelled, of those who are governed by it.¹⁹ Aristocracies require proletariat; hierarchies need people at the bottom as well, as at the top. There is a great deal of physical labour to be done on the island, and except for the brief hour of Ferdinand's servitude, only Caliban can be made to do it. What Prospero's magic chiefly enables him to do is control his servants. Prospero's total control over the events of the play, combined with Ariel's and Caliban's desire for freedom from his rule, has suggested political readings to many commentators, especially in the 20th century, with its concern for oppression and imperialism.²⁰ The revelation of Aristotelian mimesis that is defended by Hannah Arendt depends on a notion of community that is largely in mutual consent: "*where people are with others and neither for nor against them—that is sheer human togetherness.*" When people are passionately for or against one another, then human togetherness is lost as they deny the fullness of Aristotelian mimetic time. Social violence is, then, the denial of the disclosure of agency, the point at which "*speech becomes 'mere talk,' simply one more means towards the end.*"²¹ According to Homi K. Bhabha, the productive influence on postcolonial scholars, from Australia to India, by the contemporary theory provided by Michel Foucault in his *Man and His Doubles* has not been qualified, particularly in its construction of modernity. Foucault's genealogy of power has limited uses in the developing world. The combination of modern and archaic regimes of power produces unexpected forms of disciplinarity and govern-mentality that make Foucault's epistemes inappropriate, even obsolete. What stops the narrative thread from breaking is Foucault's concern to introduce, at the nexus of his doubling, the idea that "*the man who appears at the beginning of the 19th century is dehistoricized.*"²² The dehistoricized authority of *Man and His Doubles* produces, in the same historical period, those forces of normalization and naturalization that create a modern Western disciplinary society. The invisible power that is invested in this dehistoricized figure of Man is gained at the cost of those "others"—women, natives, the colonized, the indentured and enslaved—who, at the same time but in other spaces, were becoming the peoples without a history.²³

As a conclusion, *The Tempest* is about the inner nature of human beings revealed in circumstances of crisis and change. The characters are subject to startling personal transformations. Moreover, all the island's visitors are subjected to a purging experience of some sort. Even Prospero, the agent of transformation in others, is not immune to change, although this occurs largely before the time of the play. His decision that "*...The rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance*" (V.1-27, 28) implies a temptation to avenge himself from which he has refrained.²⁴ We recognise that he has undergone a series of changes: from a student of magic, he became a seeker of revenge through it, and finally he has found his way to transcendence of it. At the end he abandons his godlike status on the island and embracing his own humanity, returns to Milan and his proper position as duke. It has the virtue of excluding Antonio from any future claim on the ducal throne, but it also effectively disposes of the realm as a political entity. If Miranda is the heir to the dukedom Milan, it will become part of the kingdom of Naples through the marriage, and not the other way around. Prospero's final assertion that "*Every third thought shall be my grave*" (V.1-311) may be something more than his old age and diminishing power. The remark is a forecast of victory since he has arranged matters in such a way that his death will remove Antonio's last link with the ducal power, so his grave is the ultimate triumph over his brother. If we look at the marriage in this way, giving away Miranda may be a means of preserving Prospero's authority, but on the other hand, a means of relinquishing it. The lovers have each other,

Prospero is the Duke again, Alonso is repentant, Antonio is, if not defeated, at least at bay, Caliban announces that he will "*be wise hereafter, / And seek for grace,*" (V.1-294, 295) and Ariel is free at last. The play is in fact, as much concerned with tragic as with comic themes: the nature of authority and power; the conflicting claims of vengeance and forgiveness, of justice and mercy, the realities of reconciliation and the possibility of regeneration.²⁵

Shakespeare, however, never accepted a single, simple point of view on life's complexities, and *The Tempest* does not provide a clear and unambiguous conclusion. Prospero does not entirely succeed in effecting his reconciliation, for Antonio remains silent (except for one snide witticism). The defeat of evil is not complete; perhaps Prospero's dry response to Miranda's "*O brave new world*" (V.1-183)—"*'Tis new to thee*" (V.1-184)—reflects his awareness of this. And while Prospero brings happiness to others, he himself remains melancholy. As in the other late plays, Shakespeare in *The Tempest* acknowledges that an evil once committed can never be entirely compensated for. The marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda is especially significant in the light of this reconciliation: the daughter of the victim of an injustice marries the son of its perpetrator.²⁶ The auspiciousness of the marriage is strengthened by the declaration that the couple will inherit the crown of Naples. The focus on the future suggests the rebirth of the world. But on the other hand, Prospero interrupts this optimism by a foreshadowing about the future. The play seems to suggest that the possibility of reconciliation among all conflicting themes is relative and ambiguous, for the promised end is neither easy to come by nor the road is clear and steady. As the play draws to its conclusion, Ferdinand and Miranda play out, at chess, a brief game of love and war that seems to foretell in their lives all the ambition, duplicity and cynicism of their elders:

MIRANDA: Sweet lord, you play me false.

FERDINAND: No, my dearest love, I would not for the world.

MIRANDA: Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, and I would call it fair play.

(V.1.172 -175)

Miranda in this exchange is accusing Ferdinand of cheating, and is declaring her perfect complicity in the act. Italian *Realpolitik* is already established in the next generation.²⁷ Could it be, however, that Prospero is also aware, and so implies behind the lines, of a future, which will always bring similar disasters before man's eventual reconciliation?

KAYNAKÇA

Arendt, Hannah. **The Human Condition**. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958.

Bhabha, Homi K. "*Postcolonial Criticism*," **Redrawing the Boundaries**, Stephen Greenblatt & Giles Gunn, Eds. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1992.

Boyce, Charles. **The Wordsworth Dictionary of Shakespeare**. New York: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1996.

Chambers, E. K. **William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems, Vol. II**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936.

Doran, Madeline. **Endeavours of Art**. Madison: Madison University Press, 1964.

Frey, Charles. "*The Tempest and the New World*," **Shakespeare Quarterly** xxx, I. London: 1979.

Furness, Horace Howard. **The Tempest: A New Variorum Edition**. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1892.

Orgel, Stephen. **The Oxford Shakespeare: The Tempest**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Rowe, Nicholas. **The Works of Mr. William Shakespear, Vol. I**. London: 1709.

DİPNOTLAR

- ¹ Charles Boyce, **The Wordsworth Dictionary of Shakespeare** (New York: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1996), p. 635.
- ² Ibid, p. 636.
- ³ Nicholas Rowe, **The Works of Mr. William Shakespear, Vol.I** (London: 1709), p. xxiii.
- ⁴ Stephen Orgel, Ed., **The Oxford Shakespeare: The Tempest** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 15.
- ⁵ Op. Cit., Charles Boyce, p. 633.
- ⁶ Op. Cit., Stephen Orgel, Ed., p. 30,31.
- ⁷ E. K. Chambers, **William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems, Vol. II** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 90-92.
- ⁸ Madeline Doran, **Endeavours of Art** (Madison: Madison University Press, 1964), pp. 366,367.
- ⁹ Op. Cit., Charles Boyce, p. 634.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p. 633.
- ¹¹ Op. Cit., Stephen Orgel, Ed., p. 28.
- ¹² Ibid, p. 34.
- ¹³ Op. Cit., Charles Boyce, p. 633.
- ¹⁴ Charles Frey, **"The Tempest and the New World," Shakespeare Quarterly xxx, I** (London: 1979), pp. 29-41.
- ¹⁵ Op. Cit., Charles Boyce, p. 635.
- ¹⁶ Op. Cit., Stephen Orgel, Ed., p. 25.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, p. 24.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 26, 27.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, p. 24.
- ²⁰ Op. Cit., Charles Boyce, p. 635.
- ²¹ Hannah Arendt, **The Human Condition** (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), p. 180.
- ²² Homi K. Bhabha, **"Postcolonial Criticism": Redrawing the Boundaries**, Stephen Greenblatt & Giles Gunn, Eds. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1992), pp. 460-462.
- ²³ Ibid, p. 463.
- ²⁴ Op. Cit., Charles Boyce, p. 635.
- ²⁵ Op. Cit., Stephen Orgel, Ed., p. 5.
- ²⁶ Op. Cit., Charles Boyce, p. 635.
- ²⁷ Op. Cit., Stephen Orgel, Ed., p. 29.