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THE TEMPEST: ANALYZING SHAKESPEARE'S PLAY AS A STORM IN THE TEACUP

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ABSTRACT

Proposed paper brings forth different aspects of storm from works of Shakespeare. Almost every play of this greatest dramatist of all times carries in it outer and inner turbulence in the lives of its characters. Nature of storm imagery has been explored in the political, social, and personal arena of dramatic world. Storms natural and supernatural offer a fascinating world which this paper intends to explore for their nuances. Storm as comic relief is discussed at length for bringing tragicomedy of Shakespeare to its glorious heights with its extraordinary treatment of language.

Keywords: Comedy, Tragicomedy, Comedy, Storm, Sea

Shakespeare does not seem to be fond of eye-catching titles for his plays. His thirty-nine plays come with ordinary titles that normally carry name of the protagonist: be it a historical play, a romance, a tragedy, a **tragicomedy**, or a **comedy**. He probably chose title of play under discussion for the interest that had been generated due to excitement brought by news of a shipwreck around Bermuda in 1609. Airy spirit Ariel too has spoken of a place called 'Bermoothes' in the course of the play during one of his conversations with Prospero.

Comic in tragic situation

At the very onset of this **tragicomedy**, one is confronted by scene of raging **sea storm**. Spectacular scene with high winds and foaming waters should have been eerie and threatening for readers and viewers alike. But Shakespeare uses his masterstroke to make things take another turn where people on board of this sinking ship are more concerned with belittling and cursing those in command of workings of the ship.

GONZALO: I have great comfort from this fellow. Methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him. His complexion is perfect gallows. Stand fast, good Fate, to his hanging. Make the rope of his destiny our cable, for our own doth little advantage. If he be not born to be hanged, our case is miserable.

Storm in Gonzalo's case reveals to us this old man's calm and staid nature when confronted with danger. He even manages to make light what is grave on board when he reveals through his speech his 'hope' in Boatswain; Boatswain a man who would not let the ship sink as his death seemed to be written through hanging on the gallows. Wit and sarcasm dominate dangerous tempestuous times on ship.

SEBASTIAN: A pox o' your throat, you bawling, blasphemous, incharitable dog!

Antonio: We are merely cheated of our lives by drunkards. This wide-chopped rascal...

Stink of death does not seem to be around even when there is every sign of a shipwreck. **Storms** are suggestive of death and destruction where frantic shrieks of frightened boarders are lost on the vastness of water realm. But unnamed ship of *The Tempest* does not come with 'too' chaotic a scene. Physical fight with turbulent waters does not bring grief to those amidst. The 'wreck' never takes place as Ariel informs his master:

Safely in harbor Is the King's ship. In the deep nook...and those facing death, instead, find life on the magical island.

... The mariners all under hatches stowed, Who, with a charm joined to their suffered labor, I have left asleep.

Weary passengers from ship sleep like those who have been toiling hard for long. Moreover, we see Prince Ferdinand left sitting on his own by Ariel:

The King's son have I landed by himself, Whom I left cooling of the air with sighs In an odd angle of the isle, and sitting, His arms in this sad knot.

Catalytic Effect of Storm

Instead of taking the shipwrecked passengers seriously, onlookers find them to be dazed spectacle caste out on the island by the sea waters. This **tragicomedy** of Shakespeare makes serious matters lose their sharp painful tinge through its protagonist, Prospero. **Storm** is caused by white magic of Prospero to avenge and make things move on the right track for both him and his daughter by getting all foul players in his life at one place. Shakespeare makes light of selfish and murderous acts by putting humane qualities in Prospero. After all the high drama at **sea**, players move through the rest of the play accepting their wrong deeds, seeking forgiveness and in the end by making merry through celebrations that follow betrothal and marriage of Miranda with Ferdinand.

Shakespeare skilfully uses water and **sea** imagery in his plays as tool of separating, uniting, punishing, and rewarding characters for their deeds. *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, Jacobean comedy, and tragicomedy too has its protagonist's life story fully connected to **sea** and tempest on wide expanse of water. Pericles escapes from marriage to daughter of Antiochus who is in incestuous relationship with his own daughter via **sea** route. It is the **storm** at sea that washes him to shores of his future wife's homeland. What the **sea** has given to Pericles, it soon takes away when another storm occurs while the Prince is going back to Tyre with his pregnant wife, Thaisa. Dramatic events take place on board when Thaisa appears to die after giving birth to her daughter, Marina. **Sea** accepts 'dead' body of the queen and the **storm** recedes. But Shakespeare has more to offer to his readers as Thaisa is alive and found to be living in Ephesus as devotee of Goddess Diana. Shakespeare stresses upon ordeals of man's life where danger is at every step and tragedy can happen at any time. Pericles leaves his daughter in care of a trusted couple. Marina like her parents is seen to suffer when jealousy makes motherly woman order death on sea for Marina:

*Born in a tempest, when my mother died,
This world to me is like a lasting storm,
Whirring me from my friends.*

Natural elements and upheavals of life are brought to us as uncontrollable forces that test man for his unwavering patience, his inner strength and determination. On hearing false news of Marina's death, sea gives Pericles escape from grief. Once more he sails out on the open waters. Tragic events move towards a happy ending and Pericles gets united with his long-lost wife and daughter.

Pericles: ... At sea in childbed died she, but brought forth A maid child called Marina, whom, O goddess, Wears yet thy silver livery. She at Tarsus Was nursed with Cleon, who at fourteen years He sought to murder. But her better stars Brought her to Mytilene, 'gainst whose shore riding, Her fortunes brought the maid aboard us, where, By her own most clear remembrance, she made known Herself my daughter.

Movement across heaving waters is what man's life is about, i.e., life is never smooth with its uneven paths and difficult routes.

Storm the thawing agent

Tragic tale of King Lear comes out with eternal struggle that continues to confuse and boggle mankind. Shakespeare once more hits out at pride in men that results in downfall of mighty monarchs and wreck strong kingdoms. Storm scene enacted on the heath is turning point in the life of a king and a man.

Gentleman: Contending with the fretful elements.

Bids the winds blow the earth into the sea

Or swell the curlèd water 'bove the main,

That things might change or cease. Tears his white hair,

Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage,

Catch in their fury and make nothing of.

10Strives in his little world of man to outscorn

The to-and-fro—conflicting wind and rain.

Lear faces wind and pouring rain without fear. Rage in him is nothing like that of nature in fury. **Storm** echoes inner pain and turmoil of Lear as he rants and raves against injustice that his loved ones had meted out to him:

Lear: The body's delicate. This tempest in my mind Doth from my senses take all feeling else Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude! Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand For lifting food to 't? But I will punish home. No, I will weep no more. In such a night To shut me out? Pour on. I will endure. In such a night as this? O Regan, Goneril, Your old kind father whose frank heart gave all! O, that way madness lies.

Here is tempest within and outside the heart and mind of a mere mortal. Here there is no clash of personalities but an echo of awesome power that controls humans through thunder, lightening and strong howling winds. Lear is fast moving towards psychological disaster and end of his glorious term on this earth. Helpless man magnanimously utters:

Lear: Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!

Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters.

I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness.

I never gave you kingdom, called you children.

You owe me no subscription. Why then, let fall

Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand, your slave—

King Lear becomes wiser, he becomes kinder during thawing out process on the heath. One feels sympathy for this character who has spurned away love of a loving and dutiful child. It is during this turbulent hour that Lear pities the poor and unsheltered from the lashes of natural elements. He becomes gentle and humane through his own sorrowful suffering. Storm in King Lear foreshadows political change that is about to take place. Unlike storms in other plays, here Shakespeare does not provide relief to the protagonist, there are no happy reunions after the pent-up fury of nature. Storm in Lear is reality of life and not a mere dramatic effect. Here man repents his own follies.

The devilish storms in Macbeth

Thunder accompanied by lightening provides eerie setting to evil in Shakespeare's Macbeth. Darkness is prevalent in scenes where witches speak. Shakespeare sets the tone of play with witches saying:

When shall we three meet again?

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

&

" Fair is fowl and fowl is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air."

&

"Hark! I am called. My little spirit, see: Sits a foggy cloud and it stays for me."

Shakespeare uses natural realm to comment upon unnatural occurrences. Injustice done to Lear by his daughters is seen in the raging **storm** scene in King Lear. Though a magical and created storm, storm in The Tempest is also there to punish culprits for their misdeeds. **Storm** once again rages in violation of natural order when King Duncan is put to death by the very person who was greatly regarded by the King. Powerful elements show their anger against evil committed by Macbeth for advancement of power. Duncan is killed against better judgment of the culprit and this sets free tragic events that follow. Message of Macbeth is clear, repercussion follow immoral acts.

Evil power of witches and evil act of men stir up natural calmness to trouble, chaos is incited, and fortunate times turn ironically to foul times. Much use of weather can be seen throughout this play. Good and orderly presence of King Duncan is always accompanied by good weather. The morning after his death sees chaos of the night before. Lennox comments on hard winds and destruction that accompanied them as if heavens were showing their displeasure at what had transpired in Macbeth's palace and were predicting on days to follow:

Lennox: Lamentings heard i' th' air, strange screams of death,

And prophesying with accents terrible

Of dire combustion and confused events

New hatched to the woeful time. The obscure bird

Clamored the livelong night. Some say the Earth

Was feverous and did shake.

Violation of natural order is again expressed through words of Ross.

Ross: Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act,

Threatens his bloody stage. By th' clock 'tis day,

And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.

Is 't night's predominance or the day's shame

That darkness does the face of Earth entomb

10When living light should kiss it?

Ross remarks upon darkness during daytime just after the heinous murder, there are dark clouds across the bright sun. This darkness heralds political turmoil that is about to follow.

Mention of unleashed winds by dark powers is brought forth through Macbeth when he once again visits the witches to know more about certain things. Once lovable Macbeth seems to turn into a demonic thing when he says:

Macbeth: I command you in the name of whatever dark powers you serve. I don't care if you unleash violent winds that tear down churches, make the foamy waves overwhelm ships and send sailors to their deaths, flatten

crops and trees, make castles fall down on their inhabitants' heads, make palaces and pyramids collapse, and mix up everything in nature. Tell me what I want to know.

Macbeth like Faustus seems to have sold his soul to powers of the netherworld and he acts as if he is even greater than them; and this overconfidence is his downfall as is earlier foretold by master of three witches. Thunder again accompanies the three apparitions conjured up by witches on Macbeth's demand.

Conclusion

Shakespeare's relies on natural elements of air and water to remark upon different aspects of his plays. Waters of Nile are continuously referred to by Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Nile stands for destruction of life and is invoked time and again to do so for selfish reasons. Battle on sea seals the fate of Antony as a great general who has become slave to Cleopatra's eastern passion. Nature again seems to reflect plight of lovers in *As You Like It*. Cold felt in Arden forest is again a reflection on sterile thoughts and actions of people present there. The great dramatist perhaps explores question of climatic imbalance because of changing attitudes of human beings. Weather in this play is due to behaviour of Oberon and his wife Titania. The fairy couple are cause of disruption in weather because all is not well in their own relationship.

Shakespeare certainly seemed fascinated with action of man and reaction of natural forces.

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