

Film or play



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Slave-holding Architect in Paul Mazursky's *Tempest* As a loose adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Paul Mazursky has reinvented Prospero as a renowned architect in New York facing a mid-life crisis. While he is struggling with his successful yet unfulfilling career, his wife Antonia (alluding to Prospero's brother Antonio) is returning to the performance industry as an actress. Philip is pushed over his threshold when he discovered that Antonia is having an affair with his employer Alonzo, a tycoon who owns numerous casinos and hotels. With his boyish teenage daughter Miranda, Philip leaves New York in search of a new life. In order to avoid Antonia and Alonzo, he proceeds to create his own kingdom in a remote island in Greece with Miranda, Aretha, his mistress, and Kalibanos, a goat herder and the only inhabitant on the island before Philip arrives. On this magical island with surreally beautiful scenery, the obsession of Philip unfolds. His exercise of power affects the agency of characters who are already marginalized by their race, gender, and social status. In addition, Philip's character also serves as a critique of an upper-middle class male who occupies a high social status but is oppressed by people who possess even more wealth and social capital than him.

Unlike Shakespeare's Prospero, the protagonist of the film Philip, performed by John Cassavetes is portrayed as a miserable middle-aged man who is tired of his career and social life. On the other hand, his employer Alonzo is extremely upbeat and ambitious, even though he appears to be much older than Philip. Instead of having an Antonio figure in the film to rebel against the protagonist, Mazursky chooses to transform that character into Antonia. This is an interesting move that will affect the audience's feeling towards Philip as Antonia is a loyal but frustrated wife instead of an antagonistic

character, the audience is less likely to be sympathetic towards Philip. Antonia's hair style and clothing highlights her confidence and femininity, which seems to intimidate Philip. Another interesting female character in the film is Aretha, the Ariel figure in Shakespeare's original play. She dons an airy white and half transparent gown throughout the whole movie, complementing the serenity of the island. Here Mazursky once again plays on the idea of masculinity and femininity. Philip explicitly refuses to have sex with Aretha without explaining the reason. It seems that Philip remains insecure about his power as a man after being oppressed and cheated respectively by Alonzo and Antonia.

Mazursky's adaptation can be seen as a dark comedy, and most humorous lines come from Kalibanos, played by Raul Julia. In one scene, he is shown singing "New York, New York" while the camera jump cuts to his ecstatic goats first stopping, then jumping up and down with his music. His strong accent and clothing also add to the comedy as they construct Kalibanos into a clown like character who thinks he is smart enough to get everything he wants. The audience finds him funny also because he seems very out of place in such a beautiful and peaceful island where Aretha and Miranda wash their clothes in the sea, and Philip took a rest on top of the mountain with a panorama view of the natural scenery. However, even though Kalibanos is portrayed in a negative light, the audience would still find him extremely likable, unlike Shakespeare's Caliban on which people have mixed comments. The audience would warm towards Kalibanos as the play progresses while begin to find Philip's authoritative and infatuated behaviors alienating.

Paul Mazursky's adaptation offers a critique on the mid-life crisis of modern

middle-class males through transforming Shakespeare's character and placing them in two drastically different sets—New York and a Greek island. His film also gives females and the Other more agency as they are represented as round and likable characters who have a mind of their own.

Works Cited

Tempest. Dir. Paul Mazursky. Perf John Cassavetes, Gena Rowlands, Susan Sarandon. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1980.