

Analysis of the tempest

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The Tempest as a whole is influenced by the Masque, and hence the play may really be seen as a vehicle for stage spectacle, song and dance with a light underlying moral meaning, rather than a serious drama containing any real depth of plot and character” There is some truth in this criticism, but I believe that there is lot of hidden depth that can be explained in order to understand where Shakespeare’s ideas really came from. In this essay I intend to prove that, through the Masque and through character detail, that this play has thematic depth and richness of character. The Masque originated from Italy and came to France and England in the late 16th century. It became formalised through the work of Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones. The Masque was dramatic and musical entertainment using elaborate and expensive properties and machinery, and was usually commissioned for Great State occasions.

The debate to whether the Tempest was or even contained a Court Masque was argued by Orgel in 1987. His argument for disagreement was that, because of the time the play was written, Masques were a fluid genre, with no absolute lines between a dramatic performance and a revel. Even a less formal distinction between Masque and drama was becoming harder to see. This showing that maybe the Masque spectacle was just a piece of intricate artwork, collaborated by Shakespeare as a musical interlude to entertain the audience. It is thought that the first known performances of the play were at the Court of James (I) in 1611-13, and the presence of the Jacobean-era Masque further cements the play into this time frame. However, the first performances of the play may not have been at Court at all: and, there is some remaining evidence that the play received some revision.

The betrothal Masque in Act (VI) might have been added for the 1613 performance, since the play was staged as part of a celebration of the wedding of Elizabeth, the daughter of James (I). The Masque could have been added in order to make the play more occasion-appropriate, and thus the scene may have been carried forward onto later performances of the play. The play itself contains various references to Greek Gods and Goddesses, which all have symbolic meanings to the situation in which they arise. This could be used to argue against the idea that the play has “underlying moral meaning” as the gods and spirits are characters of symbolic importance. For instance, Prospero’s Masque for Miranda and Ferdinand consists of Juno and Ceres: the Goddess of Agriculture.

This maybe directs the play away from the savage and primitive world of Caliban, into a world of civilised nature. This Masque leads to Prospero almost fantasizing to the extent that he forgets about Caliban’s plans,” I had forgot that foul conspiracy of the beast Caliban....” Act IV, Sc (i), 139-40Read alsoCRASH MOVIE ANALYSIS ESSAYThe same principle applies to Ariel’s appearance as a Harpy. This is appropriate to the time of the play as the harpies are what tormented King Phineus by disturbing his meals and stealing his food: here food is also taken away, and in both cases the disturbance was seen as a judgment of sin. The Harpies came from the same Greek myth as Ceres and Juno. The action of the Masque was not normally limited by chronological time: their idealized figures could alter the drama, however momentarily, taking Prospero away from a world of action and passion and toward the realization of another sort of possibility in life. Prospero’s awareness (when he leaps back to reality) of the time – both the

masque's timing and the play's – constitutes both his art and power, showing his total command of the action moment by moment.

Hate, Love ; MusicThe critical statement states that the play contained no real depth in plot and character. It maybe agreed that the plot is rather basic, but the creations of Shakespeare's writings within the play express a degree of realistic feeling and emotion, especially Prospero, Ariel and Caliban. Throughout the play there is some spectacular performance from Ariel and other spirits, which all amount to adaptations of Anti-masques. Even though the plot and structure are very basic, it does not mean that the characters have no real depth. This depth can be shown through most of Caliban's poetic speeches. His character driven by so much emotion, revenge and passion, can show extremely uncivilised and brutal temperament, but can also show the beauty of his inner nature.

These two opposite sides of Caliban's nature can be shown in one of his speeches:".. Having first seized his books; or with a log Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake, or cut his wezand with thy knife...

." Act III, Sc (ii), 87-89In this same speech:"...and that most deeply to consider is the beauty of his daughter; he himself calls her a nonpareil: I never saw a woman, but only Sycorax my dam.

." Act III, Sc (ii), 96-99This shows his understandable hatred toward Prospero, but also shows that he sees the beauty in the world, and this changes his personality, although his attitude changes only for a matter of seconds. I feel that Shakespeare created Caliban in order to elicit strong views to the audience, and Caliban being described as " being but half a fish and half a
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monster” (Act III, Sc II, 27-28) makes him stand out to the audience more, which makes him the ideal tool to pass vital information to the crowd. As the critic G. L. Kittredge said, “ Caliban is superior to the charming Ariel: he has a soul, and is therefore capable of moral development, whereas Ariel is but an elemental spirit, without heart or conscience or human motives” Prospero’s character is also vital, as the whole play revolves around him.

It is his “ powers” that cause the hallucinations like the storm and the disappearing banquet. His character, although built up on revenge and anger, has a compassionate side, showing his paternal instincts (as many fathers in the audience could have related to) by accepting Miranda’s love for Ferdinand. Prospero’s real character is shown in the last act where he forgives those who caused him to be banished. 12 years of training, plotting revenge, and building a wall of anger, disintegrate within seconds. This may have been evidence that his attitude throughout the play was simply a mask, hiding his true personality. The last theme I would like to discuss is the impact of music on the play.

Music in the play is a tool used to control the new inhabitants of the island without them realising they are being “ tempted”. Music is employed through Ariel, to exercise magical control over the ships crew and also Caliban. Music is heard on occasion to draw characters mysteriously towards Prospero’s cell, for example:” Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises, sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not” Act III, Sc II, 132-33This shows the enchanting effect it has:” The sound is going away: let’s follow it, and after do our work..”” Lead, monster: we’ll follow – I would I could see this taborer!” Act III, Sc II, 145-48These quotes further cementing the idea that music was

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used to draw characters to certain destinations chosen by the enchanter, Ariel. Conclusion In Conclusion, I would only agree with the statement as far as to say that The Tempest was influenced largely by the influence of the Masque, but disagree with the idea that the characters have no real depth, as I feel I have proven to an extent that almost all of the characters had hidden depths.

In my view the Tempest was most definitely written primarily as entertainment for royalty, and that the Masque spectacle may have been added as an elaborate set piece to make the play more occasion-appropriate, but most of the characters derived by Shakespeare for this play contain depth, moral meaning and individuality, and I feel I have proven this in my essay.