

Process of discovery in the tempest and ghosts



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Both William Shakespeare and Eamon Flack cleverly invite us to experience and explore discovery through their texts, the tempest and ghosts, respectively. It appears common in both texts that a discovery of family betrayal prompts both Prospero in the Tempest and Mrs Alving in ghosts to create a false reality whereby through a process of discovery both come to embrace their realities. Both composers, through the construction of false realities, invite us to understand that we too are about to embark on a journey and watch a false reality.

Shakespeare makes it evident to us in The Tempest that Prospero's process of discovery begins as he discovers he too may be to blame for his brothers betrayal. He represents this through Prospero expressing his arts were ' Without a parallel...all my study'. The high modality of ' all' and the juxtaposing of ' neglecting worldly ends... bettering of my mind' suggests Prospero's mind was completely preoccupied by his pursuit of magic. This further highlights the beginning of his understanding that this world where he is ' rapt in secret studies' contradicts his responsibilities and is in fact, an artificially created reality. This reminds us, that we too are embarking on a ' false' journey in watching the play. The two present participle verbs ' neglecting' and ' bettering' are juxtaposed against each other to suggest his acceptance of some self-blame for the neglect of his duties. This discovery within himself ultimately foreshadows what he is going to come to discover through his discovery process.

Much like how Shakespeare invites us to experience Prospero's discovery process, Flack introduces Mrs Alving's through her discovery of her husband's infidelity that ultimately leads to construct her artificial world. We may

interpret this as Flack expressing that we too are embarking on an artificial journey. Flack presents this through the set design; ' the gloomy fiord landscape veiled in a steady rain'. This element of the set design symbolizes and invites us to understand the constant veil over the truth she has created to conceal the truth of her husband. This ' steady rain' further impacts the lighting of the set in creating a dark tone which we may interpret as a symbolic expression of the oppressive nature she has endured in being shrouded in the secrets of her unfaithful husband. This is much like how Shakespeare invites us to understand how Prospero constructed an artificial world and through his process of discovery he too comes to embrace his reality.

Shakespeare continues to invite us to experience Prospero's process of discovery as he progresses towards the realization of the meaningless of his magic. During the masque, Shakespeare's use of a self-referential metaphor of the theatre; ' our actors...were all spirits...insubstantial pageant' presents to us Prospero's moving forward from an artificial magical realm to a grounded earthly one: ' melted into air... gorgeous palaces, solemn temples...'. Despite his mournful tone, he is accepting both the meaninglessness of his magic and embracing the reality of the impermanence of his existence: ' We are such stuff as dreams are made on...our little life is rounded with a sleep.' Additionally, it is the acceptance of the meaninglessness of his magic that leads him to dispel both our fascination with the false reality of the play and Ferdinand's fascination with the magic by metaphorically deriding its nature as ' the baseless fabric of this vision'; that this is something he has conjured and it will melt ' into thin

air'. Just as the play we are watching is not real, we must reflect on the idea that it will melt 'into thin air' and we will return to reality. This particularly shows Prospero's process of discovery in determining that his magic is meaningless and his values must lie in the real world.

Whilst in *Ghosts*, Flack continues to cleverly present Mrs Alving's process of discovery through her willingness to go beyond the illusory world she has constructed. Flack intrinsically represents this idea through the prop of the round table in the living room which carries Mrs Alving's books; "Labour and capital...Woman in the World...No Chattel, I." which come to symbolize her personal growth and new ideas; that she is advancing towards becoming fully aware that there are worlds beyond her narrowly constructed one.

Whilst this also reminds us, that in watching the play we must reflect on our own personal growth and understand the play will conclude. These books come to be a metaphor for how her process of discovery has led her to a more cohesive understanding and acceptance of the truth of her husband and promote her eventual understanding of the hollowness of her duty, strengthening her desire to embrace reality.

As Shakespeare concludes Prospero's process of discovery, he presents to us, just as Flack does, the idea that falsely generated worlds cannot remain permanent. He concludes Prospero's process of discovery of his own authentic and moral existence by affirming in present tense his rejection of his 'potent art'. This shift in his values is signified in his intentions to: 'break my staff, bury it certain fathoms... drown my book' to 'abjure' 'this rough magic'. The finality of the verb 'abjure' is strengthened by the equally strong plosive sounding verbs of 'break' and 'drown' which create a

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sustained echo of his magic being irrevocably broken. These verbs are accompanied by the verb 'bury' which possesses violent connotations of death. Thus, in being symbolic representations of Prospero as the mage, the rejection of his 'potent art' symbolically represents the death of his old self that irrevocably leads to the rediscovery of the new. Additionally, Prospero's concluding epilogue serves as a transition to ease us back into reality. In crossing the fourth wall, he is reminding us of the magic he has sacrificed. The past tense of 'o'erthrown' in contrast with the present tense 'what strength I have's mine own' serves as a reminder to us of his mortality given his magic is now 'most faint'. He then invites us to applaud him; 'Let your indulgence set me free' to allow him to return to the real world so that we too may be freed to return to our worlds beyond the theatre.

Furthermore, Flack makes evident to us that the conclusion of Mrs Alving's process of discovery is, in many respects, similar to Prospero's, as she ultimately accepts the truth and no longer relies on her false world. Flack, through the stage directions, portrays this acceptance; "The light engulfs them. They are gone. The room is empty." where here the constant rain on the set and the metaphorical veil over the truth is eradicated from the set and the sun breaks into the room. The eradication of the rain from the set design and the change in lighting through the sun symbolizes both the finality of her process of discovery and ours. That it serves as a reminder for us, that the play has concluded, and we must return to our lives beyond the theatre. Her acceptance of this is almost identical to Prospero's acceptance that his magic was meaningless.

Therefore, both William Shakespeare and Eamon Flack cleverly invite us to experience and explore discovery through their texts, the tempest and ghosts, respectively.