

# Exploring the Dichotomy of Power and Oppression in William Shakespeare's the Tempest: A Formalistic Analysis

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## *Abstract*

This paper explores how Shakespeare uses language, setting, and characterization to convey these themes and emphasize the power dynamics between the characters. The researcher used a formalist approach. The formalistic approach involves examining the formal elements of the play, such as language, setting, and characterization, to gain a deeper understanding of the themes and power dynamics present in the text. The study used a qualitative research method, specifically a close reading of the play. This involves a detailed analysis of the text to identify and interpret the formal elements that contribute to the theme of power and oppression. Based on the thorough examination of the play's language, setting, and characterization, it is evident that power dynamics and oppression are pervasive themes in the play. Shakespeare uses these formal elements to portray the complexities of colonialism and slavery, highlighting the tensions between the oppressor and the oppressed.

**Keywords:** Dichotomy, power and oppression, play's language, setting, and characterization, William Shakespeare's play, The Tempest, formalistic analysis, Philippines.

## **Introduction**

The Tempest, widely recognized as one of Shakespeare's most intricate works, sheds light on the themes of power, control, freedom, and colonization, each demonstrating Shakespeare's nuanced understanding of human relationships and societal hierarchies (Bloom, 1998). The formalistic approach underscores the importance of the text itself and the literary devices employed within it, drawing on intrinsic features such as structure, tone, symbol, and imagery (Eagleton, 2008). William Shakespeare's play The Tempest explores the dichotomy of power and oppression through its characters, language, and setting. The play

highlights the power dynamics between characters, particularly between Prospero and Caliban and Prospero and Ariel (Perkins, 1988; Balington, 1984). Additionally, *The Tempest* highlights the theme of oppression through its portrayal of colonialism and slavery (Arora, 2018; Winegard, 2008; Pierce, 1988). Shakespeare uses formal elements such as language, setting, and characterization to convey these themes and emphasize the power dynamics between the characters.

According to critic Loomba (2002), *The Tempest* is a play that "concerns colonialism and the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized." In *The Tempest*, the character dynamics lend themselves to an exploration of power and oppression. The play elucidates the constant negotiation and struggle for power from Prospero's domineering control over his servants Ariel and Caliban to the manipulation of shipwrecked nobles on his island (Vaughan & Vaughan, 2011). Concurrently, the theme of oppression unfolds through Prospero's harsh treatment of Caliban, exemplifying the oppressive consequences of colonization (Greenblatt, 1990). The dichotomy of power and oppression within the play serves as a microcosm for understanding larger societal patterns. It reflects Shakespeare's ability to comment on his contemporary socio-political milieu through his works (Smith, 2013).

Similarly, Shakespeare uses language to highlight the power dynamics between Prospero and Ariel. Ariel is referred to as a "*tricksy spirit*" and a "malignant thing," which emphasizes Ariel's servitude to Prospero (I.ii.249, 300). The play's setting also emphasizes the power dynamics between Prospero and Caliban, as the remote and isolated island gives Prospero immense power over Caliban. *The Tempest* highlights the complex dynamics of power and oppression through its formal elements and themes.

While previous studies have examined the themes of power and oppression within William Shakespeare's "*The Tempest*" (Bloom, 1998; Vaughan & Vaughan, 2011; Greenblatt, 1990; Smith, 2013), a comprehensive analysis that synthesizes these themes using a formalistic lens appears to be lacking. Although there is a wealth of literary criticism on "*The Tempest*," this criticism often focuses either on its thematic content (exploring issues such as power dynamics, colonialism, or freedom) or on its formal properties (such as its structure, genre, and language), without fully integrating these two approaches.

The research gap, therefore, lies in a nuanced understanding of how Shakespeare's employment of various literary devices and stylistic choices interact with and reinforce the themes of power and oppression. This paper aims to fill this gap by combining formalist critique with thematic analysis, offering a fresh perspective on Shakespeare's exploration of power and oppression in "*The Tempest*."

This paper analyzes how Shakespeare uses language, setting, and characterization to convey these themes and emphasize the power dynamics between the characters.

### **Theoretical Background**

#### Formalism Theory of Roman Jakobson

The study anchored on the Formalism Theory of Roman Jakobson (1960). In literary theory, formalism refers to critical approaches that analyze, interpret, or evaluate the inherent features of a text. Formalism criticism is a literary theory that focuses on the formal elements of a literary work, such as its structure, language, and style.

Roman Jakobson, Viktor Shklovsky, and I.A. Richard are Russia's most well-known critics of formalism. Roman Jakobson built a link between Russian formalism and structuralism. He was a founding member of the Moscow Linguistic Circle, and all his writings demonstrate how important linguistic theory is to his way of thinking, particularly Saussure's influence. Additionally, he was a passionate supporter of experimental poets. Jakobson acquired esteem for his extremely accurate linguistic interpretations of well-known literary works in addition to his linguistic study. The difficult task of attempting to define "literariness" in linguistic terms was undertaken by Jakobson. In addition, Jakobson expanded the definitions of "defamiliarization" and "foregrounding" to encompass entire schools of literary and critical thought. Element relationships are organized as foreground and background in a literary work's dynamic framework. One of the pioneers of the structuralist movement in linguistics and literary criticism was the Russian American linguist and literary theorist Roman Jakobson. He developed a formalist theory that emphasized the importance of the form or structure of a literary work in its interpretation and meaning.

Jakobson believed that a literary work's meaning was conveyed through its content or subject matter but also through the formal elements of the work, such as its language, style, and structure. According to Jakobson, six elements of language contribute to the formal structure of a literary work: the referential function (the representation of the world), the emotive function (the expression of feelings), the poetic function (the use of language as art), the phatic function (the establishment of communication), the metalinguistic function (the discussion of language itself), and the conative function (the appeal to the listener or reader).

Jakobson believed that the poetic function of language was the most important in literature, as it emphasized language as an artistic medium. He argued that a literary work should be analyzed as a system of signs and symbols rather than as a representation of reality.

Jakobson's formalist theory significantly impacted literary criticism and the study of language, particularly in the development of structuralist and

post-structuralist approaches. His ideas continue to influence the study of literature and language today, particularly in analyzing poetry and other forms of literary expression.

In the context of the dichotomy of power and oppression, formalism criticism can analyze how a literary work's characters, language, and setting contribute to portraying and exploring power dynamics and oppression.

### **Objective of the Study**

The study aims to explore how Shakespeare uses language, setting, and characterization to convey these themes and emphasize the power dynamics between the characters in "The Tempest."

Specifically, it determines to answer the following questions:

1. How is the theme of power delineated in the formal elements found in Shakespeare's play, "The Tempest"?
2. How is the theme of oppression played in the relationships between characters in the formal elements found in Shakespeare's play, "The Tempest"?

### **Methodology**

This study explored the dichotomy of power and oppression in William Shakespeare's play "The Tempest" through a formalistic analysis. The formalistic approach was used in examining the formal elements of the play, such as language, setting, and characterization, to gain a deeper understanding of the themes and power dynamics present in the text.

The study used a qualitative research method, specifically a close reading of the play. This involved a detailed analysis of the text in identifying and interpreting the formal elements that contribute to the theme of power and oppression. The researcher read the play multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the formal elements and power dynamics present in the text.

Secondary sources were consulted to support the close reading analysis, including critical articles and scholarly works on the play. These sources provided context and theoretical frameworks for analyzing the formal elements of the play and the theme of power and oppression.

Data collection involved gathering and organizing textual evidence from the play, such as quotes and scenes that illustrate power dynamics and oppression. These textual examples were analyzed considering the formal elements and theoretical frameworks established by the secondary sources.

Data analysis involved interpreting the textual evidence with the research question and the established theoretical frameworks. The formal elements of the play, such as language, setting, and characterization,

were analyzed to identify patterns and themes related to power dynamics and oppression.

Overall, this research methodology aimed to provide a detailed and comprehensive analysis of The Tempest's formal elements to understand better the themes of power and oppression in the text.

### Results and Discussion

#### 1. How is the theme of power delineated in the formal elements found in Shakespeare's play, "The Tempest"?

POWER	FORMAL ELEMENTS		
	LANGUAGE	SETTING	CHARACTERIZATION
<b>1. Colonial Power</b>	Condescending, Authoritative, Commanding, Plotting, Superiority, Oppressed, Colonized, Dominance, Manipulation. Deception, Power struggles	Isolated island, Power Dynamics, Colonialism, Natural Elements, Uncertainty, Tension, Control, Magical Oppression, Danger, Mystery, Supernatural, Physical labor, Relationships, love, freedom	<p><b>1. Powerful and Authoritative:</b> Prospero's use of magic to control the other characters and manipulate their fates.</p> <p><b>2. Abusive and exploitative:</b> The relationship between Prospero and Caliban, highlighting the theme of power and oppression.</p> <p><b>3. Oppressed, and marginalized:</b> Caliban's resentment towards Prospero for enslaving him and taking over the island.</p> <p><b>4. Punitive and exploitive:</b> Prospero's punishment of Caliban for his attempted rape of Miranda and his testing of Ferdinand's love for Miranda through physical labor.</p>
<b>2. Magical Power</b>	Insulting language, Respectful language, Commanding tone, imperative verbs, Power struggles, Oppressed, Colonized, Physical labor, Prove worthiness, Desire to win, Final speech, Illusions, Shape reality, renounce magic.	Island Isolation, Natural, elements, Colonialism, Magical power, Oppression, Danger, Mystery, Supernatural, Physical labor, Forgiveness, Reconciliation	<p><b>1. Manipulative and cunning:</b> Through his use of magic, Prospero is able to control and manipulate the other characters on the island, exerting his will upon them to achieve his goals.</p> <p><b>2. Oppressive and imperialistic.</b> His desire for power and control blinds him to the needs and desires of others, particularly Caliban, whom he has enslaved and oppressed.</p> <p><b>3. Revenge and control:</b> While he can achieve his goals through the use of magic, his ultimate transformation comes not through the exercise of his power, but through his willingness to forgive and let go of his desire for revenge and control.</p>
<b>3. Political Power</b>	Insulting language, Respectful language, Commanding tone,	Isolated Island, Colonialism, Magic, Natural Elements, Power Dynamics,	<p><b>1. Entitled and Superior:</b> As the former Duke of Milan, Prospero has a strong sense of entitlement and uses his magical powers to exert control over the</p>

POWER	FORMAL ELEMENTS		
	LANGUAGE	SETTING	CHARACTERIZATION
	Imperative verbs, Plotting, whispers, Figurative language, Oppressed status, Broken English, Physical labor, Challenge, Desire, Final Speech, illusions, Limitations of language, Manipulate.	Oppression, Exploration, Supernatural, Physical Labor, Forgiveness	other characters on the island. He is both a colonizer and a ruler, and he uses his power to enslave Caliban and manipulate the other characters to achieve his own goals. <b>2.Resentful:</b> Caliban is the colonized native of the island who has been enslaved by Prospero. He resents Prospero for taking over his land and using his magical powers to subjugate him. <b>3.Loyalty and disobedience:</b> Ariel is a spirit who is indebted to Prospero for freeing him from a tree in which he was imprisoned. He is a powerful magical being who can control the natural elements and manipulate the other characters. Ariel's characterization illustrates the importance of loyalty and the consequences of disobedience. <b>4.Humility and Repentance:</b> Alonso is the King of Naples and represents political power on the mainland. He is responsible for Prospero's exile and plays a role in the struggle for power on the island. Alonso's characterization shows the corrupting influence of power and the importance of humility and repentance. <b>5. Hard work, Perseverance, and power struggle</b> Ferdinand is Alonso's son and the heir to the throne of Naples. He falls in love with Prospero's daughter, Miranda, and goes through trials to prove his worth to her and to Prospero. Ferdinand's characterization highlights the importance of hard work, perseverance, and the struggle for power.

Shakespeare uses various formal elements in "The Tempest" to convey the theme of power. These elements include language, setting, and characterization. Through these elements, Shakespeare depicts different forms of power, such as colonial, magical, and political, among others. By analyzing these formal elements, we can better understand how Shakespeare portrays power in the play.

*Language*

Shakespeare uses Language as an important formal element in "The Tempest" to depict power dynamics between characters. For instance, Prospero's language towards Caliban, whom he considers as a slave, is

often condescending and authoritative. In Act 1, Scene 2, Prospero rebukes Caliban, saying, "*Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself upon thy wicked dam, come forth!*" (Act 1, Scene 2, Line 319-320).

This use of *insulting language* by Prospero towards Caliban demonstrates his power over him as a master. On the other hand, Ariel, who is under Prospero's control, uses polite and respectful language towards him. For example, when Ariel is asked by Prospero to perform a task, he responds by saying, "*All hail, great master! Grave sir, hail!*" (Act 1, Scene 2, Line 189). This respectful language by Ariel towards Prospero highlights the power dynamic between them.

Prospero uses his *powerful language* to conjure the storm and control the shipwrecked characters. When Prospero said that "*Hast thou, spirit, Perform'd to point the tempest that I bade thee?*" (Act I, Scene II, line 55). He speaks in a commanding tone and uses imperative verbs to give orders to his spirits. This scene sets up the power dynamic between Prospero and the other characters, establishing him as a powerful sorcerer who uses language to control the natural elements and the actions of others.

Antonio and Sebastian use language to plot against King Alonso and assert their own power. Sebastian: "*I remember, You did supplant your brother Prospero.*" Antonio: "*True: And look how well my garments sit upon me; Much feater than before. My brother's servants Were then my fellows; now they are my men.*" (Act II, Scene I, lines 239-242). In this quote, Antonio and Sebastian are speaking in whispers about Antonio's past actions. Antonio admits to having supplanted his brother Prospero and emphasizes his power by noting how his brother's servants are now his own men. The use of the word "*feater*" is a figurative language that implies a sense of superiority, further highlighting their intentions to assert their power over others.

They speak in whispers and use figurative language to hide their true intentions. Their use of language creates a sense of tension and intrigue, highlighting the power struggles between different characters.

Caliban's language reflects his oppressed and colonized status. He speaks in broken English and uses crude language to describe his experiences. "*All the infections that the sun sucks up, from bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him, by inch-meal a disease!*" (Act III, Scene III, lines 32-34). Caliban describes Prospero, the colonizer, as a disease that is slowly destroying the island.

This highlights the power dynamics between Prospero and Caliban, with Prospero using his language to assert his dominance over Caliban and maintain his control.

Prospero uses his language to test Ferdinand's love for Miranda, putting him through physical labor and challenging him to prove his worth. "*If thou dost break her virgin-knot before / All sanctimonious ceremonies*

*may / With full and holy rite be ministered, / No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall / To make this contract grow"* (Act IV, Scene I, lines 15-19). Prospero warns Ferdinand that he must not consummate his relationship with Miranda before they are properly married, using language to set up a challenge for Ferdinand to prove his worthiness.

In addition, on Act IV, Scene I, lines 183-185 stated that *"I must/ Uneasy make, lest too light winning/ Make the prize light."* Prospero acknowledges that he must challenge Ferdinand to test his love for Miranda and ensure that it is genuine.

Also, *"No, precious creature; / I had rather crack my sinews, break my back, / Than you should such dishonor undergo / While I sit lazy by"* (Act IV, Scene I lines 172-175). Ferdinand vows to work hard and prove his worth to win Miranda's hand in marriage, demonstrating his love for her.

Ferdinand's language reflects his desire to win Miranda's love and prove his worth to Prospero, highlighting the power dynamics between the characters.

Prospero uses his final speech to reflect on the power of language and its ability to create illusions and shape reality. *"Our revels now are ended. These our actors, / As I foretold you, were all spirits and / Are melted into air, into thin air"* (Act V, Scene I, lines 148-150). Prospero here acknowledges that the world he has created through his magic and language is fleeting and ephemeral, much like a theatrical performance. *"I'll break my staff, / Bury it certain fathoms in the earth, / And deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book"* (lines 89-92). Prospero's decision to renounce his magic and destroy his book symbolizes his recognition of the limitations of language and the danger of using it to manipulate others.

Overall, Shakespeare uses language as a formal element to depict power dynamics between characters in "The Tempest." The characters' use of language reflects their positions in the power struggles and highlights the ways in which language can be used to control, manipulate, and deceive others.

### *Setting*

The setting of "The Tempest," an isolated island, also significantly conveys the theme of power. The island provides a space where Prospero, a former duke, can exercise his power without external interference. The island is symbolic of the power dynamics of colonialism, where the colonizers exercise control over the colonized. This is evident in Prospero's treatment of Caliban, whom he has enslaved on the island. The island setting also provides an ideal environment for Prospero to display his magical powers, which are necessary for him to retain his control over the island's inhabitants (Loomba, 2022).



Act I, Scene I: The island is described as a place of isolation and danger, where the characters are vulnerable to the power of the natural elements.

*"A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard"* (line 1). This stage direction opens the play and sets the tone for the stormy, dangerous setting.

*"We are in the midst of danger"*(line 15) - These are the first words spoken by Francisco aboard the ship that has been caught in the storm and is now in danger of sinking on the island.

*"All lost! To prayers, to prayers! All lost!"* (line 26) - This is the cry of the ship's boatswain as he tries to rally the crew to save the ship, but it seems as if all hope is lost.

The setting creates a sense of uncertainty and tension, establishing the power dynamic between the characters and the island itself.

Act I, Scene II: Prospero uses the island's natural elements to control the shipwrecked characters. He conjures the storm and uses his powers to guide them to the island.

*"I have bedimmed the noontide sun, / Called forth the mutinous winds, and 'twixt the green sea / And the azured vault set roaring war."* Prospero speaks to Ariel about the storm he wants him to create (lines 93-95).

*"All but mariners / Plunged in the foaming brine and quit the vessel, / Then all afire with me. The king's son, Ferdinand, / With hair up-starting - then like reeds, not hair - / Was the first man that leaped; cried, 'Hell is empty / And all the devils are here.'" Ariel describes the reaction of the shipwrecked characters to the storm (lines 205-210).*

*"Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises, / Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not."* Caliban speaks to Stephano and Trinculo, explaining the magical nature of the island (lines 133-134).

*"I have done nothing but in care of thee, / Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter, who / Art ignorant of what thou art, naught knowing / Of whence I am, nor that I am more better / Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell."* Prospero speaks to Miranda about his reasons for bringing the shipwrecked characters to the island (lines 155-159).

The island setting emphasizes Prospero's power and control over the other characters, as he uses the natural elements to manipulate their fate.

Act II, Scene I: The island setting is used to highlight the power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized.

*"This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first, / Thou strok'st me and made much of me."*

Caliban speaks to Prospero, expressing his resentment at being colonized and controlled by him (lines 331-334).

Caliban describes the island as his home and expresses his resentment towards Prospero for taking over it. The island becomes a symbol of the larger theme of colonialism and oppression, highlighting the power imbalances between different groups of people.

Act III, Scene III: The island's physical setting is used to create a sense of danger and mystery, as the characters explore the island and encounter strange and magical creatures.

*"I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries; I'll fish for thee and get thee wood enough."* Caliban speaks to Stephano and Trinculo, offering to be their servant in exchange for their help in overthrowing Prospero (lines 43-44).

*"The tempest that I bade thee leave to play / Hath raised this siege in my head."* Alonso speaks to Gonzalo and his companions, suggesting that he is haunted by the storm that Prospero conjured and feeling guilty for his past actions (lines 82-83).

The setting emphasizes the power of the unknown and the supernatural, creating a sense of awe and fear in the characters.

Act IV, Scene I: The island setting is used to test Ferdinand's love for Miranda, as Prospero puts him through physical labor and challenges him to prove his worth.

*"I am in my condition / A prince, Miranda; I do think, a king; / I would not so! - and would no more endure / This wooden slavery than to suffer / The flesh-fly blow my mouth."* Ferdinand speaks to Miranda, expressing his frustration and desire for freedom (lines 183-187).

*"If thou rememb'rest aught / Ere thou cam'st here, how thou cam'st here thou mayst."* Prospero speaks to Ferdinand, suggesting that he must prove his worth and earn the right to marry Miranda (lines 200-201).

The setting emphasizes the power of labor and physical exertion, highlighting the theme of power and control in the relationships between characters.

Act V, Scene I: The island setting reflects the power of forgiveness and reconciliation. Prospero acknowledges that the island was once a place of danger and isolation, but through forgiveness and reconciliation, it can become a place of peace and harmony.

*"I have given you here a third of mine own life, / Or that for which I live; who once again / I tender to thy hand."* Prospero speaks to Alonso, offering him his forgiveness and reconciling with him after years of resentment and anger (lines 126-128).

Overall, the island setting in "The Tempest" plays a significant role in conveying the theme of power. The setting emphasizes the power of the natural elements, the power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized, and the power of forgiveness and reconciliation to transform a place of isolation and danger into a place of peace and harmony.

On the other hand, a remote island, which serves as a metaphor for the power dynamics between the characters. Shakespeare uses the setting to explore the theme of power and the struggle for control.

The island symbolizes a microcosm of society, where the characters are forced to interact with each other in proximity. This allows for the exploration of power dynamics and the struggle for control between the characters. The setting of the island also serves as a reflection of the power dynamics in the larger world, highlighting the ways in which power can be abused and exploited.

### *Characterization*

Characterization is another important formal element that Shakespeare uses to convey the theme of power in "The Tempest." Prospero's characterization as a powerful sorcerer emphasizes his supernatural powers, which he uses to control the other characters in the play. His magical abilities give him power over the island's natural elements, which he uses to control the other characters' actions. On the other hand, Caliban is portrayed as a native of the island who has been colonized and enslaved by Prospero. His characterization highlights the theme of colonialism and oppression in the play.

Act I, Scene II: Prospero uses his powers to conjure a storm and shipwreck the King of Naples and his court on the island.

*"I have done nothing but in care of thee, / Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter."* Prospero speaks to Miranda, justifying his actions and suggesting that he has brought the shipwrecked characters to the island for her sake (lines 27-28).

This sets up the power dynamic between Prospero and the other characters, as he has brought them to the island against their will and has the power to control their fates.

Act II, Scene II: Caliban is introduced as a character, and he immediately expresses his resentment towards Prospero for enslaving him and taking over the island. This sets up the conflict between the colonizer and the colonized and highlights the theme of power and oppression.

*"This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me."* Caliban speaks to Prospero, expressing his resentment towards him for enslaving him and taking over the island (lines 333-334).

Prospero reveals his plan to use his powers to regain his position as Duke of Milan and punishes Caliban for his attempted rape of Miranda. This

scene shows Prospero's desire for power and control, and his willingness to use his magic to achieve his goals (Act III, Scene I, Lines 54-84)

Act IV, Scene I: Prospero tests Ferdinand's love for Miranda by putting him through physical labor, demonstrating his power over Ferdinand and his ability to control the actions of others.

*"I must / Once in a month recount what thou hast been, / Which thou forget'st."* Prospero speaks to Ferdinand, reminding him of his true identity as a prince and suggesting that he has the power to control Ferdinand's memory (lines 1-3).

*"I'll manacle thy neck and feet together. / Sea-water shalt thou drink, thy food shall be / The fresh-brook muscles, wither'd roots, and husks / Wherein the acorn cradled."* Prospero speaks to Ferdinand, threatening him with physical punishment and demonstrating his power over him (lines 190-193).

Act V, Scene I: Prospero forgives his enemies and relinquishes his magical powers, symbolically giving up his power and control over the other characters. This highlights the transformation of Prospero's character and his ultimate realization that true power lies in forgiveness and compassion.

*"For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother / Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive / Thy rankest fault."* Prospero speaks to Antonio, forgiving him for his past actions and expressing his willingness to reconcile (lines 130-133).

*"The rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance."* Prospero speaks to Alonso, acknowledging that forgiveness is a more virtuous and rare action than seeking revenge (lines 27-28).

*"I'll break my staff, / Bury it certain fathoms in the earth, / And deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book."* Prospero speaks to Ariel, symbolically relinquishing his magical powers and renouncing his control over the other characters (lines 53-57).

*"Let your indulgence set me free."* Prospero speaks to the audience, asking for their forgiveness and release from the world of the play (lines 311-312).

*"As you from crimes would pardoned be, / Let your indulgence set me free."* Prospero speaks to the audience, expressing the theme of forgiveness and compassion and asking for their forgiveness as well (lines 325-326).

Throughout the play, Shakespeare uses the formal element of characterization to explore the theme of power and its various manifestations. Prospero and Caliban represent different sides of the power struggle, with Prospero using his supernatural abilities to control

the other characters and Caliban representing the oppressed and colonized peoples of the world.

2. How is the theme of oppression played in the relationships between characters in the formal elements found in Shakespeare's play, "The Tempest"?

OPPRESSION	FORMAL ELEMENTS		
	LANGUAGE	SETTING	CHARACTERIZATION
<b>1. Colonialism oppression</b>	Power Dynamics, Dehumanization, Derogatory Language, Slavery, Servitude, Manipulation, Violence, Injustice, Autonomy, Freedom, Control.	Isolation, Geographic control, Dehumanization, Natural environment, Manipulation, Exploitation, Displacement, Systems of power, Microcosm	<p><b>1. Derogatory and dehumanizing</b> Caliban's physical appearance is used to emphasize his supposed inferiority to the European characters, reinforcing negative stereotypes about non-white people.</p> <p><b>2. Savage and uncivilized:</b> Caliban's language and behavior are deemed savage and uncivilized, highlighting the power dynamics at play on the island.</p> <p><b>3. Colonial oppressor:</b> Prospero is characterized as a colonial oppressor who has taken it upon himself to educate and civilize Caliban, highlighting the power dynamics at play on the island.</p> <p><b>4. Rough and uncivilized:</b> The sailors are portrayed as a lower class, with their language and behavior depicted as rough and uncivilized, emphasizing the class divide between the upper-class characters and the sailors.</p> <p><b>5. Violent and ruthless:</b> Antonio is Prospero's brother and is responsible for his expulsion from Milan. He is portrayed as a power-hungry and ruthless character who will do whatever it takes to gain control. Antonio also plots to kill Alonso, the King of Naples, to secure his own position.</p>
<b>2. Racism oppression</b>	Power dynamics, Class divide, Physical Appearance, Oppression, Stereotypes, paternalistic attitude, Societal norms, Inferiority	Exploitation, Isolation, Natural environment, Displacement, Geographic control, Microcosm, larger systems of oppression	<p><b>1. Savage and Monster:</b> Caliban, who is enslaved and mistreated by Prospero and the other European characters on the island. Caliban is depicted as a non-European "savage" and "monster," and his physical appearance is used to reinforce negative stereotypes about non-white people. He is often belittled, dehumanized, and subjected to</p>

OPPRESSION	FORMAL ELEMENTS		
	LANGUAGE	SETTING	CHARACTERIZATION
			<p>physical violence by the European characters.</p> <p><b>2.Discriminatory and dominating:</b>                      Prospero's treatment of Caliban reflects the power dynamics of colonialism, with Prospero acting as the colonizer and Caliban as the colonized. Prospero claims ownership of the island and enslaves Caliban, whom he views as inferior and uncivilized. He takes it upon himself to educate and civilize Caliban, using paternalistic language that highlights the unequal power dynamic between them.</p>
<b>3.Classism oppression</b>	Oppression, Power dynamics, Colonialism, Control, Slavery, Manipulation, Autonomy, Derogatory, Dehumanize, Violence.	Colonialism, Oppression, Power Dynamics, Manipulation, Isolation, Natural Environment, Geographic Control, Displacement, Microcosm.	<p><b>1. Subservient and Dominance:</b>                      Caliban is a native of the island and is portrayed as being of a lower class than Prospero, who is a European nobleman. Caliban is shown to be subservient to Prospero and is treated as a slave. Prospero asserts his dominance over Caliban by reminding him of the "gifts" he has given him.</p> <p><b>2.Privilege and ignorant:</b>                      Prospero's daughter, Miranda, is also used to illustrate classism in the play. As the daughter of a nobleman, she is raised with a certain level of privilege and is ignorant of the hardships faced by those of a lower class. This is demonstrated when she falls in love with Ferdinand, the son of the King of Naples, without any regard for his social status.</p>
<b>4.Gender-based oppression</b>	Crude, Uncivilized, Misshapen knave, derogatory, dehumanize, Enslavement, Patriarchal	Colonialism, Power Dynamics, Isolation, Dehumanization, Displacement, Supernatural elements, Formal elements	<p><b>1.Naive and sheltered:</b>                      Prospero's daughter has been raised on an isolated island, away from civilization and other people. This has limited her opportunities to interact with others and develop her own agency. Miranda is portrayed as somewhat naive and sheltered, and she often defers to her father's authority.</p> <p><b>2. Violent and aggressive:</b>                      Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda: Caliban, the son of the island's previous inhabitant, attempts to rape Miranda. This</p>

OPPRESSION	FORMAL ELEMENTS		
	LANGUAGE	SETTING	CHARACTERIZATION
			scene can be seen as an example of gender-based violence and oppression. <b>3. Patriarchal and possessive:</b> Ferdinand, the son of the King of Naples, is shipwrecked on the island and falls in love with Miranda. Their relationship is initially controlled by Prospero, who tests Ferdinand's love for Miranda before allowing them to be together. This can be seen as an example of male control over female sexuality. <b>4. Sexist and stereotypical</b> The portrayal of Sycorax: Sycorax, the previous inhabitant of the island, is portrayed as a witch and a tyrant. This can be seen as a way of demonizing powerful women and reinforcing patriarchal power structures.

Oppression is a central theme in "The Tempest," and it plays a significant role in shaping the relationships between the characters. Shakespeare uses various formal elements, such as language, setting, and characterization, to highlight these power dynamics and depict the characters' oppression.

### *Language*

Language is an important formal element that Shakespeare uses to convey the theme of oppression in the play. Prospero's language towards Caliban, whom he considers as a slave, is often insulting and demeaning.

Act I, Scene II: Caliban's first appearance in the play is marked by his speech in which he describes his grievances against Prospero. Caliban's language is crude and uncivilized, which highlights his status as an oppressed native of the island. He complains that Prospero has taken over the island from him and subjected him to servitude.

*"I must eat my dinner. / This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me"* Caliban speaks to Prospero's servant, Miranda, and asserts his claim to the island, which he believes was rightfully his before Prospero arrived (lines 331-333).

*"You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!"* Caliban speaks to Prospero and accuses him of using language to oppress and control him and expressing his anger and resentment towards his situation (lines 365-368).

*"I must obey: his art is of such power, / It would control my dam's god, Setebos, / And make a vassal of him"* Caliban speaks to Stephano and Trinculo, revealing his fear of Prospero's magical powers and his belief that he has no choice but to obey him (lines 372-374).

Act I, Scene II: Prospero refers to Caliban as a "misshapen knave" and implies that his mother, the sorceress Sycorax, was a dangerous and powerful witch using derogatory language to dehumanize him.

*"This misshapen knave, / His mother was a witch, and one so strong / That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs, / And deal in her command without her power"* (lines 311-314).

Prospero's use of language highlights the power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized, as he reduces Caliban to an animal-like status to justify his enslavement.

Act II, Scene II: The language used by Antonio and Sebastian as they plot to overthrow Alonso and take over the kingdom of Naples highlights the theme of oppression.

*"And that's most deeply to consider. They're deceiv'd / And betray'd. By my sword, / I'll make them know that they have not a servant / That I will not beat into clamorous whining, / If thou wert honorable, / Thou wouldst have told this tale for virtue, not / For such an end thou seek'st, as base as strange. / Thou wrong'st a gentleman, who is as far / From thy report as thou from honor"* (lines 16-24).

Antonio and Sebastian are discussing the possibility of killing Alonso and Gonzalo while they are asleep. Antonio vows to beat any servant who opposes their plan into submission, highlighting his willingness to use violence to achieve his goals.

*"I say by sorcery he got this isle; / From me he got it. If thy greatness will / Revenge it on him, for I know thou dar'st, / But this thing dare not-"* (lines 227-230).

Caliban speaks to Stephano and Trinculo, describing how Prospero has taken over the island that rightfully belongs to him. Caliban's language suggests a sense of injustice and oppression, as he believes that he has been wronged by Prospero's arrival on the island.

They use language to manipulate each other and to justify their power-grabbing, showing how language can be used to perpetuate systems of oppression.

Act III, Scene II: Ariel's language is used to convey the theme of oppression as he describes how he was enslaved by Sycorax before being freed by Prospero. Ariel's language highlights the power dynamics between the oppressor and the oppressed and emphasizes the importance of freedom and autonomy.



Act IV, Scene I: Prospero's language is used to justify his treatment of Caliban and to establish his own power. He accuses Caliban of trying to rape Miranda, using language to portray Caliban as a brutish, uncivilized figure threatening Prospero's control.

*"Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam, come forth!"* (4.1.125-126)

*"Thou liest, malignant thing! Hast thou forgot / The foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy / Was grown into a hoop? Hast thou forgot her?"* (4.1.258-261)

*"I have used thee, / Filth as thou art, with human care, and lodged thee / In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate / The honor of my child."* (4.1.264-267)

*"Thou shalt be as free / As mountain winds, but then exactly do / All points of my command."* (4.1.294-296)

*"This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine."* (4.1.457-458)

These lines demonstrate how Prospero uses derogatory language to describe Caliban and justify his own power over him. He refers to Caliban as a "poisonous slave" and a "malignant thing," and accuses him of trying to rape Miranda. By portraying Caliban as a threat to his daughter and himself, Prospero justifies his control over Caliban and reinforces his own power. Additionally, when Prospero says that Caliban "shall be as free / As mountain winds," he seems to offer Caliban a measure of freedom. Still, he quickly undercuts this by demanding absolute obedience to his commands. Finally, when Prospero says, "This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine," he claims ownership of Caliban to reinforce the theme of colonization and the power dynamics between Prospero and Caliban.

Act V, Scene I: Prospero's final speech is marked by his use of language to express his desire for reconciliation and forgiveness.

*"Let your indulgence set me free"* (5.1.313)

His language highlights the power of forgiveness to overcome the legacy of oppression and to create a new, more harmonious future.

Overall, language is an important formal element that Shakespeare uses to convey the theme of oppression in "The Tempest." The language used by the characters highlights the power dynamics between the oppressor and the oppressed and emphasizes the importance of freedom, autonomy, and reconciliation.

### *Setting*

The setting of the play also plays a significant role in highlighting the theme of oppression. The isolated island provides a space where Prospero can exercise his power without external interference. The island is

symbolic of the power dynamics of colonialism, where the colonizers exercise control over the colonized. Prospero's enslavement of Caliban is an example of this colonial oppression, and the island setting emphasizes this theme.

Act I, Scene I: The storm that brings the characters to the island is a manifestation of Prospero's power, which he uses to manipulate the other characters. The storm serves as a metaphor for the oppressive systems of power that are at play throughout the play.

Act I, Scene II: The island is described as a place of "*savage and deformed slaves*" (1.2.347), emphasizing the theme of colonialism and oppression. The language used to describe the island highlights the ways in which the colonizers dehumanize the colonized, reducing them to mere objects to be exploited.

Act II, Scene II: The island's isolation is emphasized as Antonio and Sebastian plot to kill Alonso and take over the kingdom of Naples. The island's isolation allows the conspirators to act with impunity, highlighting the ways in which systems of power are reinforced by geographic and social isolation.

Act III, Scene II: The island's natural environment is used to highlight the theme of oppression, as Caliban describes how he was "*dispos'd by a stronger charm*" (3.2.98) to serve Prospero. The island's natural environment, with its supernatural elements, reinforces the power dynamics between Prospero and the other characters.

Act IV, Scene I: The island's geography is used to reinforce the theme of oppression, as Prospero threatens to use his powers to make the island uninhabitable for Caliban. The threat of displacement highlights the ways in which systems of power rely on geographic control and manipulation.

Act V, Scene I: The resolution of the play, in which the characters leave the island and return to civilization, highlights the ways in which the island serves as a microcosm of larger systems of oppression. The island's isolation allowed the characters to confront and ultimately overcome the systems of power that had been at play throughout the play.

Moreover, oppression plays a significant role in shaping the relationships between the characters in "The Tempest." Shakespeare uses various formal elements, such as language, setting, and characterization, to highlight the power dynamics and depict the characters' oppression. By analyzing these formal elements, we can gain a deeper understanding of the theme of oppression in the play.

### *Characterization*

Characterization is another important formal element that Shakespeare uses to highlight the theme of oppression in the play. Caliban's characterization as a native of the island who has been colonized and

enslaved by Prospero emphasizes the theme of colonialism and oppression. Caliban's physical appearance is also used to reinforce this characterization. Prospero refers to him as a "misshapen knave" (Act I, Scene II, Line 283), emphasizing his physical difference and highlighting the oppression he faces.

*"This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,  
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first,  
Thou strok'st me and made much of me, wouldst give me  
Water with berries in't, and teach me how  
To name the bigger light and how the less,  
That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee,  
And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle,  
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile." - Caliban (Act I,  
Scene II)*

This quote, spoken by Caliban, characterizes the island as a place that has been taken from him. It highlights the theme of colonialism by showing how Prospero has taken control of the island and enslaved Caliban, who was previously the rightful owner.

*"And here have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit  
Than other princess' can that have more time  
For vainer hours and tutors not so careful." - Prospero (Act I, Scene II)*

This quote, spoken by Prospero to Miranda, characterizes Prospero as a colonial oppressor who has taken it upon himself to educate and civilize Caliban. It highlights the power dynamics at play on the island, with Prospero as the colonizer and Caliban as the colonized.

Act I, Scene II: Caliban is introduced as "a savage and deformed slave" (1.2.283) by Prospero's servant, Ariel. This description emphasizes Caliban's non-European appearance and reinforces negative stereotypes about non-white people as being "savage" or uncivilized.

Act I, Scene II: Caliban is referred to as a "*monster*" (1.2.370) by Trinculo, a drunk jester who encounters Caliban on the island. This dehumanizing language reinforces the idea that Caliban is not fully human and justifies the mistreatment of him.

*He that dies pays all debts." - Antonio (Act III, Scene II)*

This quote, spoken by Antonio, characterizes the colonial project as a violent and ruthless enterprise. It suggests that the colonizers are willing to resort to murder to achieve their aims, highlighting the brutality and inhumanity of colonialism.

Act I, Scene I: In this scene, we see the tension between the upper-class characters and the sailors. The sailors are portrayed as a lower class, with their language and behavior depicted as rough and uncivilized. When Sebastian tells Antonio that the sailors are "good things, wherein consists your wealth" (1.1.31-32), he highlights the class divide between the two groups.

Act I, Scene II: In this scene, we see the tension between the ruling and lower classes through the interactions between Prospero and Caliban. Caliban is depicted as a lower-class figure, with his language and behavior deemed savage and uncivilized. Prospero, on the other hand, is depicted as a civilized ruler. Caliban's enslavement by Prospero highlights the ways in which class dynamics are at play on the island.

*"I pitied thee, / Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour / One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage, / Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like / A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes / With words that made them known."* (Act I, Scene II) - Prospero speaks to Caliban, showing his paternalistic attitude towards the island's inhabitants.

*"I have done nothing but in care of thee, / Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter"* (Act I, Scene II) - Prospero speaks to Miranda, emphasizing his protective attitude towards her and implying that she needs his guidance and protection.

*"Thou dost here usurp / The name thou owest not; and hast put thyself / Upon this island as a spy, to win it / From me, the lord on't."* (Act I, Scene II) - Caliban accuses Prospero of taking control of the island and claiming the title of "lord" without proper authority, highlighting the power dynamics at play.

*"I might call him / A thing divine; for nothing natural / I ever saw so noble."* (Act I, Scene II) - Miranda admires Ferdinand, whom she has just met, and speaks of him in almost worshipful terms, reflecting the societal norms that dictate that women should be submissive and deferential to men.

Act II, Scene II: Caliban's physical appearance is used to emphasize his supposed inferiority to the European characters. Antonio, Prospero's brother, describes Caliban as having a "thick lip" and a "wench's eye" (2.2.85-86), emphasizing his non-European features and implying that he is less intelligent or sophisticated than the European characters.

Act II, Scene II: In this scene, we see the tension between the ruling class and the lower classes through the interactions between Gonzalo and the other characters. Gonzalo is depicted as a lower-class figure, with his language and behavior deemed foolish and comical. The other characters, who are of higher social status, frequently mock and belittle Gonzalo.

Act III, Scene I: In this scene, we see the tension between the ruling class and the lower classes through the interactions between Stephano,

Trinculo, and Caliban. Stephano and Trinculo, who are depicted as lower-class characters, attempt to take control of the island from Prospero. Caliban's willingness to serve them highlights the ways in which class dynamics can shift depending on the situation.

*"I am your wife, if you will marry me; / If not, I'll die your maid"* (Act III, Scene I) - Miranda proposes to Ferdinand, but her declaration reinforces the societal norms of the time period, as she asserts that she is willing to either be his wife or remain celibate and unmarried.

Act III, Scene II: Caliban's supposed "savagery" is used to justify his enslavement by Prospero. Prospero says to Caliban, *"Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam, come forth!"* (3.2.319-320). This language not only reinforces negative stereotypes about non-white people as being evil or wicked, but also suggests that Caliban is not fully human and is therefore deserving of enslavement.

Act IV, Scene I: Caliban is described as *"a born devil"* (4.1.188) by Prospero. This language reinforces the idea that Caliban is inherently evil or less human than the European characters.

*"We are such stuff*

*As dreams are made on, and our little life*

*Is rounded with a sleep."* - Prospero (Act IV, Scene I)

This quote, spoken by Prospero, characterizes the colonial project as a fleeting, ephemeral thing. It suggests that the power dynamics and systems of oppression perpetuated by colonialism are ultimately insubstantial and will eventually fade away.

Act V, Scene I: Caliban's supposed inferiority is contrasted with the nobility of the European characters. Prospero says to Caliban, *"This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine"* (5.1.275-276), implying that Caliban is inferior to the European characters because of his non-European appearance and "savage" behavior.

Act V, Scene I: In this scene, the tension between the ruling class and the lower classes is resolved. The characters leave the island and return to civilization, highlighting the ways in which class dynamics are reinforced through social structures and systems of power.

Therefore, oppression plays a significant role in shaping the relationships between the characters in "The Tempest." Shakespeare uses various formal elements, such as language, setting, and characterization, to highlight the power dynamics and depict the characters' oppression. By analyzing these formal elements, we can gain a deeper understanding of the theme of oppression in the play.

## **Conclusion**

The formalistic analysis of William Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* provides insight into the dichotomy of power and oppression present in the text. Through an examination of the play's language, setting, and characterization, it is evident that power dynamics and oppression are pervasive themes in the play. Shakespeare uses these formal elements to portray the complexities of colonialism and slavery, highlighting the tensions between the oppressor and the oppressed.

The portrayal of power and oppression in *The Tempest* remains relevant in contemporary society, particularly concerning race and social inequality. The play serves as a cautionary tale, reminding us of the dangers of subjugating others for personal gain and the importance of recognizing the inherent value of all individuals.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that future research on *The Tempest* continue to explore the play's themes of power and oppression. Further research could examine the play's portrayal of gender and class and how these intersect with issues of power and oppression.

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of using a formalistic approach to analyze literature, particularly in exploring themes and issues relevant to contemporary society. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the formal elements of a text and how they contribute to the overall meaning and themes of the work.

Moreover, it is recommended that the study of literature, including Shakespeare's plays, continue to be valued in educational settings. The study of literature provides valuable insights into the human experience and allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities of power dynamics and oppression in society.

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