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Eng 162W

Illusion of power in A tempest

In the playwright “A Tempest”, the power struggles between Prospero and Caliban show an illusion of power. In the playwright, Prospero is the leader of an island and holds the most power in that island. Caliban is a slave on this island who attempts to rival Prospero’s power. The two characters undergo a fight for power throughout the play. Prospero tries to implement his dominance by saying, “My dear Ariel, did you see how he looked at me, that glint in his eye? That’s something new, well, let me tell you, Caliban is the enemy. As for those people on the boat. I’ve changed my mind about them. Give them a scare, but for god’s sake don’t touch a hair of their heads. You’ll answer me if you do “(Cesaire, Act 1: line 186-190). Prospero is manipulating Ariel to take his side over Caliban’s side. By doing this Prospero reinforces the power he has over his fellow slaves Ariel and Caliban. Caliban attempts to remove himself from his subservient position under Prospero by saying, “Call me X. that would be best. Like a man without a name. Or to be more precise, a man whose name has been stolen. You talk about history... well, that’s history, and everyone knows it! Every time you summon me it reminds me of a basic fact, the fact that you have stolen everything from me, even my identity! Uhuru!” (Cesaire, Act 1: 181-185). In these lines Caliban is attempting to get out of his underlying position as a slave by telling Prospero to not call him by his slave name Caliban. instead he wants to be called X, a name that he himself came up with. By calling himself X, Caliban is trying to fight out of his subservient position. These two incidences illustrate a sense of not only animosity between Caliban and Prospero but also a struggle for power. Towards the end of the

play Prospero and Caliban are the only ones remaining on the island and Prospero says, " ...But I shall stand firm...I shall not let my work perish! Now, this way I'll be able to have some peace and quiet for a while. But it's cold. Odd how the climate's changed. Cold on this island... Have to think about making a fire... Well Caliban, old fellow, it's just us two now, here on the island... only you and me. You and me. You-, me... me-you!"(Cesaire, Scene 5: lines 215-220). In this scene Prospero realizes that the people that he ruled over in this island have all left except for Caliban. This makes him wonder things he has never thought he'd imagine like, making a fire for the cold island. He then turns to Caliban calling him an old fellow as if they were friends. This is an act of desperation shown by Prospero that is indicating weakness without his reliance on Caliban. Without people to rule over the ruler is as powerless as the slave he ruled. The closed-out illustration of this island on which Prospero ruled also adds on to the illusion of power. This island became a canvas by which Prospero could easily paint his kingdom ruling over the handful of people he did.

In the supplemented oil canvas painting I intended to illustrate the power struggle between Prospero and Caliban as well as the illusion of power in *A Tempest* using the theme of nature. In the painting, I have depicted a natural mountainous landscape. In this landscape, I have illustrated two trees in the foreground. They are intertwined with each to see which tree can grow the longest and bloom the most. This illustrates a fight for power between the two trees similar to that of Prospero's and Caliban's fight for power. One tree however, is shown to be very animate while the other is shown to be very dull and deathly. The lively tree represents Prospero while the deathly tree represents Caliban. Moreover, we can also see some chunks of the deathly tree fall off onto the ground which serves to nourish the lively tree, Prospero. This relationship

demonstrates how without Caliban Prospero is powerless, similarly without the dead tree providing the lively tree with nutrients, the large lush tree cannot survive. Lastly, I illustrated the illusion of power by creating a juxtaposition between the foreground and the background. The foreground shows two trees elevated on a small dune of soil. In the background hundreds of trees are elevated onto mountains. This contrasts the power Prospero though he had against the power that is attainable. it's a humbling depiction that shows that you are never the greatest there can be.

The methods I used to construct this project were by using various oil painting techniques. One technique that was helpful in creating a sharp and realistic contrast between the foreground dune and the background mountain was by using darker, vibrant colors in the foreground while using dull colors in the background. I also painted the foreground with much more detail to draw attention to the power struggle that is occurring between the two trees. I also made sure to make the contrast between the two trees apparent by adding bright colors to the lively tree and dull colors to the deathly tree. Using these tactics, I was able to construct a meaningful artwork that helped supplement my thesis.

This artwork has a humbling effect on a viewer. The contrast between the vast mountain range and the small dune in the foreground with the trees engaged in a fight for power illustrates a meaningless fight for power. it tells a reader that there will always be someone greater than you are. This artwork is targeted towards those that may be blinded by power such as kings and those in authority. it gives them a modest view of life where you understand that the power you possess is not the greatest power of all.

The conception of this project consisted of coming up with accurate ideas that can be illustrated. In this play the notion of power is quite apparent through the interactions between Caliban and Prospero. Behind the facades of this apparent theme, is the image of illusionary power. When beginning my artwork, I solidified my theme with textual supports in order to help give me a mental picture of power in *A Tempest*. I then modify this idea into a meaningful oil painted illustration. General themes such as power, illusion, fighting, and dependency are all terms from *A Tempest* that have been illustrated onto my canvas work. Finishing up my project I made sure these themes were accurately portrayed with meaning and realism.