

## Conference Paper

# Supernatural Power in William Shakespeare's *the Tempest*

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## Abstract

This paper analyzes about supernatural power which is found in the Drama *The Tempest*. It is a play comedy or romance works written by William Shakespeare around the year 1610-1611 which is one of Shakespeare's best works. There are some protagonist characters in *The Tempest* who use supernatural power to defeat their enemies for a purpose. It is absolutely full of magic. Prospero is the main character who uses magic as a supernatural force to regain his position as Duke of Milan. However, he is helped by his fairy servant, Ariel, throughout the play, whom he saved and liberated from a cloven pine tree by using his magic and supported by some other spirits. There are several theories of supernatural including magic given by Marcel Mauss who describes about magic. Magic is one of supernatural power which is very useful in Prospero's life as the protagonist person in the story of Drama *The Tempest*.

**Keywords:** supernatural; power, magic.

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## 1. Introduction

*The Tempest* written by William Shakespeare tells about the Duke of Milan, Prospero, and his daughter, Miranda, doing survival for their life using supernatural power. It is a kind of Drama. Orkus (2012) states that Drama is one of those neat words that can be used in several different ways. It can be used to describe a certain type of play or movie where lots of stuff happens. Also, a person or an event can be described as dramatic.

Drama has many characters of the play. In *The Tempest*, Some of the characters have supernatural power. The main characters who use supernatural power are Prospero and Ariel. Prospero, as the first actor, uses his supernatural power to survive in the island and to return his position as duke of Milan. He uses magic and some other spirits to help him to revenge without harming the people. He uses supernatural power as called supernaturalism. Supernaturalism is belief in supernatural forces or agencies as producing effects in this world [2].

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In this research, supernatural power which is used by some characters in the story is discussed. This is significant to discuss to make sure that supernatural power can be a positive thing to learn in Literature. Long time ago, some people told that supernatural power is a negative thing to learn and can injure other people. But in this story, the supernatural power does not show that it is a harmful thing to learn but it is very useful to return the life of Prospero.

## 2. Literature Review

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 1995: 1199) supernatural means something that cannot be explained by the laws of science. It relates to superstition which cannot be explained by science, Supernatural is beyond the approach of science. It has been evident by the nature. It is considered either above nature and the powers of nature or an answer to the unanswered events. Thus, it is contradiction with naturalism. In addition, superstition (Hornby, 1995: 1199) is the belief that certain events cannot be explained by reason or science, or that they bring good or bad luck; fear of what is unknown or mysterious. The use of the Supernatural in Shakespeare's work is generally well-known. In *The Tempest*, Prospero uses magic as a supernatural force in the story.

In A General Theory of Magic, Mauss (1972: 24) classifies magic as a social phenomenon, akin to religion and science, but yet a distinct category. In practice, magic bears a strong resemblance to religion. Both use similar types of rites, materials, social roles and relationships to accomplish aims and engender belief. They both operate on similar principles, in particular those of consecration and sanctity of objects and places, interaction with supernatural powers mediated by an expert, employment of symbolism, sacrifice, purification and representation in rites, and the importance of tradition and continuation of knowledge. Magic and religion also share a collective character and totality of belief. The rules and powers of each are determined by the community's ideals and beliefs and so may slowly evolve. Additionally neither supports partial belief. Belief in one aspect of the phenomena necessitates belief in the whole, and each incorporates structural loopholes to accommodate contradictions.

## 3. Research Method

This research is done by analyzing data in the form of description. The method used is Descriptive Method in which the discussion will be described to show that the supernatural power can be discussed scientifically. Type of this research based on the

approach is called as qualitative research. Qualitative research collects large amounts of information on subjects that are often too complex to be analyzed. Judith Preissle in Cresswell, J (1998: 24) stated that qualitative research is a loosely defined category of research designs or models, all of which elicit verbal, visual, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory data in the form of descriptive narratives like field notes, recordings, or other transcriptions from audio and videotapes and other written records and pictures or films. The data used in such research are usually text that has been collected. There is one main kind of sources of data in this research, that is, Drama *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare. The research focuses on the supernatural power in the story. The topic becomes significant thing to study and analyze. Thus, by using this approach, this is a descriptive qualitative research.

#### 4. Discussion

The play tells a big tempest which is made by Prospero who is the protagonist character using supernatural power. Duke of Milan and a master magician who was ousted by his opponent ended up stranded on an island was uninhabited. He has a daughter. Her name is Miranda. Prospero's brother, Antonio is jealous with him. He does not want Prospero to ascend the throne so conspiracy scenario started organized. Thus, Prospero and his daughter who was still three years old are abandoned on the island. His supernatural magic skill is considered as a dangerous thing for all countries. They use a boat. Undetected by any other people, Gonzalo, the King's counselor, had secretly supplied their boat with plenty of food, water, clothes and the most-prized books from Prospero's library. They lived on the island for twelve years. Prospero has some magician power, and with the study of magic, and the help of his power, he will be able to get what he wants. One day Prospero's enemies have sailed at sea. All these passengers are returning from the wedding of Alonso's daughter Claribel with the King of Tunis. They are on a ship with sailors caught in a tempest. The storm comes to them. It scares all of the noblemen to abandon the ship, fearing it split in half. When the storm subsides, the exiled Duke Prospero and his daughter Miranda appear on the island which they have inhabited. Miranda tells him she saw the ship crack in the storm, but Prospero calms her, explaining it was a magical illusion he created. Caliban, a son of Sycorax, a deformed monster and the only non-spiritual inhabitant before the arrival of Prospero, was initially adopted and raised by him. He taught Prospero how to survive on the island, while Prospero and Miranda taught Caliban religion and their own language. Caliban became Prospero's slave.

The main factor in which Shakespeare makes up the atmosphere of the island is around the supernatural: the magic of Prospero is based in the tradition of the alchemy with which he controls all that occurs on the island, including the captivating music of Ariel, the references to Sycorax (the previous master of Ariel), etc. Magic is the only tool that Prospero uses to exercise his power. But finally Prospero will refuse his power, because he gets the Duke of Naples for his daughter, so it won't be necessary any more to practice that power. Shakespeare did not really explain why Prospero refused to his magic, but he gave Prospero a God-like status to return to the world.

There are some characters who use supernatural power. They are Prospero, Ariel, and other spirits such as Iris, Ceres, and Juno. We can't exactly see the action of Iris, Ceres and Juno in the story but they help Ariel do all Prospero's command.

Prospero is the central character of the play. He controls the action and ends it with happy ending. He is Duke of Milan, was so transported and rapt in secret studies that he grew stranger to his state. He is not altogether a likeable person. He is like a tyrant when he is in the island to control all includes Caliban and Ariel. He is not a very attractive or sympathetic character. In such moods he becomes a terrible old man as tyrannical as Lear. Prospero has a supernatural power. He learned it by using his book. He increased his supernatural power in the island by learning the book and by helping some spirits which he found there. To survive in the island Prospero used his magic. In the drama, it is called as his art. Prospero and his daughter Miranda overcame many obstacles to survive in life. His surviving started from leaving the affairs of his duke of Milan which was managed by his brother Antonio who was an ambitious man to become the ruler of Milan. He set creatures of his own, then he plotted with Alonso, King of Naples. One mid night a certain man who had been hired by Antonio for a purpose came to Prospero at his studies. They seized Prospero and hurried him and his daughter Miranda, a child of three years old, in a rotten little boat. The boat reached to an unknown island. In this island, Prospero starts to survive with his daughter Miranda and he built himself a cell. After waiting for the time for twelve years, Prospero knew that the day comes, he used his supernatural power to make his enemy came to him. He does not use his supernatural power for any evil purposes. He makes use of his power only to reach the best results. The waves sucked the ship of his enemy and carried on the rocks. Miranda protested to his father what Prospero had done to the people of the ship. Miranda did not know what happened in the past time thus his father, Prospero did it by using his supernatural power. It is seen in the following scene:

Miranda:

If by your art, my dearest father, you have

Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them,  
They sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,  
But that the sea, mounting to the welkin's cheek,  
Dashes the fire out, O I have suffer'd  
With those that I saw suffer! A brave vessel,  
Who had, no doubt, some noble creatures in her,  
Dash'd all to pieces. O, the cry did knock  
Against my very heart! Poor souls, they perish'd!  
Had I been any god of powers, I would  
Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere  
It should the good ship so have swallow'd and  
The fraughting souls within her,  
Prospero:  
No more amazement: tell your piteous heart.  
There's no harm done  
Miranda:  
o, woe the day! (Act I, Sc II, Lines 1-17)

Miranda asked his father, Prospero, to calm the sea from violence by his magic to help the passengers who were on the ship which became his enemy who had made him leaving the affairs of his duke that was managed by his brother Antonio. Prospero convinced his daughter that no harm had been done to the passengers who were on board. He created it himself by using his magic art. He created a great storm. It arose. It made their ship was carried to Prospero's island. It is explained like in the following dialogues:

Prospero:  
No harm  
I have done nothing but in care of thee,  
Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter, who  
Art ignorant of what thou art, nought knowing  
Of whence I am, nor that I am more better  
Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell,  
And thy no greater father.

Miranda:

More to know

Did never meddle with my thoughts

Prospero:

Tis time

I should inform thee father. Land thy hand

And pluck my magic garment from me-so:

(Lays down his mantle)

Lie there, my art-wipe thou thine eyes; have comfort

The direful spectacle of the wreck, which touch'd

The very virtue of comparsion in thee

I have with such provision in mine art

So safely ordered, that there is no soul

No, not so much perdition as an hair

Betid to any creature in the vessel

Which thou hears't cry, which thou saw'st sink

Sit down;

For thou must know farther (Act I, Sc II, Lines 18-39)

The conversation above states that Prospero convinced his daughter Miranda that there had been no harm on the ship. He told Miranda that she does not know who she is. She does not know who Prospero is. Prospero told about them more. The fact is that Prospero just used his magic power to survive in that island by helping Ariel. Miranda just knew the fact about them. But the time has come when Prospero should enlighten Miranda about it.

Prospero is helped by Ariel. Ariel is the first supernatural element that appears in the play of *the tempest*. He is the main and most important supernatural character. He is the spirit of the island.

Ariel was pinned and imprisoned in a cloven pine tree where Sycorax had left him twelve years before. Prospero released him by using his magic art hence Ariel became his servant to do everything whatever Prospero wanted. He made Ariel as the source of his magical powers and became Ariel's master. Ariel helped Prospero much. He used many ways to trick the enemies of Prospero, Gonzalo, his usurping brother and others. He used music to captivate others.

The supernatural spirits summoned by Ariel can be classified as those of fire, air, water, and earth. Ariel created all of incidents which came to the ship using his supernatural power. Ariel got into the King's ship. In the shape of a flame, he appeared on the bow of the ship, then in every cabin and thus he terrified everybody. Fire is evoked in lightning and the forms taken by Ariel as flames on the masts of the ship. The spirits of the air, which include Ariel, are of the highest type. The music, noises, thunder, sounds, and sweet airs which flood the island pertain also to the air. A reference to these is given by Caliban.

Ariel:

All hail, great master! grave sir, hail! I come  
To answer thy best pleasure; be't  
to fly, To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride  
On the curl'd clouds, to thy strong  
bidding task Ariel and all his quality.

Prospero:

Hast thou, spirit, Perform'd to point the tempest that I bade thee?

Ariel:

To every article.

I boarded the king's ship; now on the beak,  
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,  
I flamed amazement: sometime I'd divide,  
And burn in many places; on the topmast,  
The yards and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly,  
Then meet and join. Jove's lightnings, the precursors  
O' the dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary  
And sight-outrunning were not; the fire and cracks  
Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune  
Seem to besiege and make his bold waves tremble,  
Yea, his dread trident shake. (Act I, Sc II, Lines 223-243)

From the sentences above, Prospero asked Ariel to execute all task from him. He assigned Ariel to make a storm in sea when his enemies are shipping after going back from the wedding. Ariel will do everything what his master, Prospero wishes, whether it to be fly, to swim, to plunge into fire, to ride on the curling clouds. Ariel will do whatever his master wants although it is the most difficult thing to execute. Prospero

ask for Ariel to execute every particular the task which he has given to Ariel with connection with the storm.

In few minutes, Ariel got into the King's ship. He appeared suddenly on the bow of the ship in the shape of a flame. He also appeared on the waist, on the deck, in every cabin of the ship and terrified everybody there. He appeared into several flames and at several places. He also showed himself as a burning on the ship simultaneously and combine into one single flame. He took out lightning and thunder bolts. The flashes of lightning and the loud roar looked as the powerful God of the sea.

Prospero:

My brave spirit!

Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil

Would not infect his reason?

Ariel:

Not a soul

But felt a fever of the mad and play'd

Some tricks of desperation. 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-staring,--then like reeds, not hair,--

Was the first man that leap'd; cried, 'Hell is empty

And all the devils are here.'

Prospero:

Why that's my spirit!

But was not this nigh shore?

Ariel:

Close by, my master.

PROSPERO

But are they, Ariel, safe?

Ariel:

Not a hair perish'd;

On their sustaining garments not a blemish,

But fresher than before: and, as thou badest me,

In troops I have dispersed them 'bout the isle.  
The king's son have I landed by himself;  
Whom I left cooling of the air with sighs  
In an odd angle of the isle and sitting,  
His arms in this sad knot. (Act I, Sc II, Lines 224-266)

Prospero praised his brave spirit for what he has done well. Everyone on the ship behaved like a mad when the fit is upon him. All of them jumped into the wild oceans except the sailors. They left their ship when it seemed to be burning because of Ariel's flames. The first person who jumped into the sea is Ferdinand, the son of the King of Naples.

Prospero praised Ariel more. He is his trust-worthy spirit! Prospero wished that all the people will swim to the shore. Ariel left them close to the shore. But Prospero is afraid if they are not safe. Ariel told him that nobody has lost even a hair. Ariel ordered all. He makes Ferdinand, the son of King Naples separated from his groups but others are in the same group.

Prospero:  
Of the king's ship  
The mariners say how thou hast disposed  
And all the rest o' the fleet.  
Ariel:  
Safely in harbour  
Is the king's ship; in the deep nook, where once  
Thou call'dst me up at midnight to fetch dew  
From the still-vex'd Bermoothes, there she's hid:  
The mariners all under hatches stow'd;  
Who, with a charm join'd to their suffer'd labour,  
I have left asleep; and for the rest o' the fleet  
Which I dispersed, they all have met again  
And are upon the Mediterranean flote,  
Bound sadly home for Naples,  
Supposing that they saw the king's ship wreck'd  
And his great person perish.

Prospero:

Ariel, thy charge

Exactly is perform'd: but there's more work.

What is the time o' the day?

Ariel:

Past the mid season. (Act I, Sc II, Lines 267-285)

Prospero asks Ariel what he has done with the sailors and how's the ship? Ariel answered that the ship is safe in the harbor. All the sailors have been packed away by him in the lower deck to prevent their escape to the sea shore. Ariel made them fall asleep because of the exertions and his spell. All of the sailors back to their native Naples. They are sailing sadly. They are under impression that the King's ship was wrecked and the King was drowned.

Prospero:

This blue-eyed hag was hither brought with child

And here was left by the sailors. Thou, my slave,

As thou report'st thyself, wast then her servant;

And, for thou wast a spirit too delicate

To act her earthy and abhorr'd commands,

Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee,

By help of her more potent ministers

And in her most unmitigable rage,

Into a cloven pine; within which rift

Imprison'd thou didst painfully remain

A dozen years; within which space she died

And left thee there; where thou didst vent thy groans

As fast as mill-wheels strike. Then was this island-

Save for the son that she did litter here,

A freckled whelp hag-born-not honour'd with

A human shape.

Ariel:

Yes, Caliban her son.

Prospero:

Dull thing, I say so; he, that Caliban  
Whom now I keep in service. Thou best know'st  
What torment I did find thee in; thy groans  
Did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts  
Of ever angry bears: it was a torment  
To lay upon the damn'd, which Sycorax  
Could not again undo: it was mine art,  
When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape  
The pine and let thee out. (Act I, Scene II, Lines 328-355)

Prospero told that Ariel claims to be his servant or slave was at the time Sycorax's servant. He is old, ugly, malignant witch with pale-blue, sunken eyes. Ariel was imprisoned in a cloven pine tree. Ariel suffered for twelve years. During that period, Sycorax died leaving Ariel a prisoner in cloven tree. No human lived in that island until Prospero comes except Caliban, son of Sycorax who was born with spotted body was no better than a dog. Caliban now is kept as his service. Ariel is saved by Prospero when he and her daughter came first to the island. Ariel groaned so pitifully. Prospero saved him by his magic and liberated him. Prospero used magic as his tool to exercise his power. Prospero is successful to make his enemies on the ship to strand in the island by helping of Ariel. They are safe. Nobody is harm. But finally Prospero will refuse his power, because he gets the Duke of Naples for his daughter, so it won't be necessary any more to practice that power. Shakespeare didn't really explain why Prospero refused to his magic, but he gave Prospero a God-like status to return to the world.

## 5. Conclusions

After doing analysis of the story of Drama *The Tempest*, some results are found. From the results, conclusions can be described. First, supernatural power is exist in the story. It can be seen from the act and scene. The story is full of supernatural power. There are some characters using supernatural power. The main character, Prospero use magic or supernatural power. The second, the supernatural power is used by the main character for a purpose. He is Prospero. It is done to reach his position as Duke of Milan. He does not use his power for negative thing but for his and his daughter future. To reach it, Prospero is helped by some spirits who have supernatural power. First spirit is Ariel. Prospero is like his master for Ariel. Prospero has saved Ariel from the tree when first

Prospero heard Ariel' groans where he was imprisoned by Sycorax, a wicked witch, in a tree. The third, some characters have supernatural power in spite of Prospero. One of them is Ariel who has big contribution for Prospero. Prospero is also supported by some other spirits who do not have any dialogues in the Drama *The Tempest*. Finally, the story ends with happiness. Prospero did all well using supernatural power without harming either any other people or his enemy.

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