
Prospero's Use Of Paternal Power In Shakespeare The Tempest

Paternal power is an important theme in Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*. Similar to most fathers, Prospero tends to his daughter's needs and will go to any length to ensure she is secure and well protected. However, an important question to consider is what marks the line between the binding of protection and love and limiting the fulfillment that external relationships bring to an individual? He demonstrates his affection for his daughter through controlling and manipulating her decisions and everyday life. As the play progresses, the reader is able to recognize that the use of Prospero's power over Miranda, may not be for the good of his own daughter, but rather for himself. The use of Prospero's paternal power in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, demonstrates that his interference in his daughter Miranda's life manifests itself as an act of control rather than solely an act of paternal love.

It is said that Prospero is the only human that Miranda has ever interacted with. That being said, the word of her father is always valid to Miranda considering there is never a counterargument. As a result, she believes what he says and does as he commands her to do. The use of Prospero's power is first seen in Act 1 Scene II when he commands Miranda to "Be collected. / No more amazement. Tell your piteous heart. / There's no harm done" (1.2.13-15). She expresses her concern for those on the boat that has ended up on their island, and her father is quick to silence her and invalidate her feelings of apprehension. This clearly demonstrates that Miranda is obedient to Prospero and pushes aside her personal feelings in order for them to mirror the one's of her father. This indication of constantly being shut down by her father highlights one of the main ways in which Prospero abuses his power as a father.

Prospero displays a constant need to remind others that he is superior and holds power over them. He does this not only with his servants, but equally with Miranda. Prospero goes on to tell Miranda about their past, he tells her the story about how he was once the Duke of Milan but that his brother Antonio unseated him from his position and drove them out of town. Prospero emphasizes mostly on the things he has done for Miranda, "I have done nothing but in care of thee, / Of thee, my dear one- thee my daughter who, / Art ignorant of what thou art..." (1.2.16-18). This clearly demonstrates the need for Prospero to be seen as Miranda's saviour, making her see the many sacrifices he has made. Prospero additionally acts as though she owes it to him to follow his commands and believe his every word. He also mentions that she is not aware of who she really is, suggesting that it is only him that truly knows. Clearly, Prospero wants to remind his daughter of the hardships he has been through for her, putting her in a more vulnerable position. This makes it easy for Prospero to have full control over her and more difficult for Miranda to be disloyal.

As the play develops, Miranda interacts with one of the men from the shipwreck, Ferdinand, the King of Naples. As soon as she sees him, she is charmed by his good looks, "I may call him / A thing divine, for nothing natural / I ever saw so noble" (1.2.411-413). Miranda has fallen in love with Ferdinand. Prospero is not surprised because it was all orchestrated by him, attending to part of his plan, "It goes on, I see, / As my soul prompts it" (1.2.414-415). This displays that Prospero's control goes beyond his daughter's demeanor and actions, and manifests its way through her love life. By planning her encounter with Ferdinand, her father ultimately oversteps

many boundaries. It is reasonable to agree that paternal love should never involve interfering with romantic relationships, as it comes across as inappropriate.

As the play continues to unveil, Prospero realizes Miranda and Ferdinand have fallen in love, making him feel threatened. He makes the decision to cause conflict between them by accusing Ferdinand of lying about his title of King and as a result threatens to imprison him. This results in Ferdinand drawing his sword and Prospero casting a spell over him (1.2.450-470). Miranda chooses to defend Ferdinand, rather than her father, "Sir, have pity, / I'll be his surety" (1.2.477-478). Prospero is infuriated by Miranda's response to the situation and responds, "Silence! One word more / Shall make me chide thee, if not hate thee. / What, / An advocate for an imposter? Hush" (1.2.479-482). Once again, we see Prospero silencing Miranda, not allowing her to stand up for Ferdinand and threatening to punish her for defending Ferdinand rather than siding with him. The use of Prospero's paternal power here is abusive and is clearly coming from a place of control rather than a place of love. If it were coming from a place of love, he would allow Miranda to pursue Ferdinand as a lover, but the reader can see it is essential for Prospero to have the sense he is in complete control over his daughter.

Later in the play, Miranda secretly goes to visit Ferdinand as he is slaving away for her father. Little do they know; Prospero is secretly watching from a distance. In Act 3 Scene 1, Ferdinand and Miranda confess their love for each other and agree that they will soon marry. As Prospero watches from a distance he is happy for his Miranda, "So glad of this as they I cannot be, / Who are surprised with. But my rejoicing / At nothing can be more" (3.1.95-97). This shows an abuse of Prospero's paternal power, by showing that Miranda does not have privacy. Her father is always there, watching over her and eavesdropping. Although this could be argued that he is coming from a place of love because he is happy for his daughter, it can also be argued that Prospero must always be included in all aspects of her daughter's life. He is not able to let Miranda live her life without him being over her shoulder, listening and watching her every move.

In essence, all throughout Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Prospero demonstrates the many ways in which he controls Miranda's life and her choices. He manages to manipulate and use his magical powers to maintain power over her. The few instances where Miranda challenges her father's authority, Prospero's behaviour shows that he does not like to be confronted and he turns to threats and punishment whenever he feels as he is losing control over his daughter. Prospero's hunger for power is not only shown through his treatment towards Miranda but also when he enslaves Ferdinand, the King of Naples. Ultimately, Prospero's use of paternal power does not come from a place of love, it is purely due to his hunger for power and need to be in control of Miranda's life in all aspects.