

Candidate 11

Dissertation Topic	A critical analysis of Swiftian pessimism in A modest Proposal and Gulliver's Travels
Dissertation Texts used	Jonathan Swift - A modest Proposal Jonathan Swift - Gulliver's Travels

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24	<p>Central characters are crucial pieces in the jigsaw of drama. Their vices and virtues mirror the play's concerns and offer insights into human follies and change.</p> <p>This is particularly true of two of Shakespeare's most complex protagonists: Lear, the central character in the Winter's Tale is first portrayed as a morbidly jealous tyrant, but later - after a gap of sixteen years - is restored ^{reborn}, and through his penitence is restored.</p> <p>The Tempest - Shakespeare's island tragedy about forgiveness - Prospero too undergoes a radical transformation from vengeful magus to forgiving human. It is the transformations that these characters</p>

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	<p>undergo which brings about the true realism and meaning of these plays: evil though or regretful though these men may be time heals all. That is the message of the tragicomedy.</p> <p>At the beginning of both plays the protagonists are appear to be malevolent and divorced from humanity. Leontes the Sicilian king in The Winter's Tale, transforms into a jealous husband over the course of a single speech. Despite no. Shylock's are in the Shakespearean text (directors have often taken the liberty to add in their own visual cue), he accuses his wife of being "slippery" then claims it is a bowdy planet. In a sense the tyrant is so overcome by his morbid jealousy that the audience may begin to feel a</p>

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	<p> pang of sympathy for him but it is only fleeting and as he creates tragic concentric circles of suffering around him - himself, his family, court country and cosmos are all affected - he death is as labelled by the oracle a "jehon tyrant" in our action filled few acts he undergoes a nervous breakdown - his heart dances but not for joy - his son, it is told "is dead" His queen according to the noblewoman Paulina, "the sweetest dearest creature's dead" He banishes his baby daughter Perdita and in the Act sends Antigonus to be consumed by a bear. The wide world is "bedimmed" By the turning point of Act III Scene iii, the audience feels more a strongly unsympathetic towards Leontes and leaves him in the "storm perpetual" he justly deserves </p>

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<p>The Tempest. Prospero is guilty of neglect and abuse of power. The play starts very much 'in medias res' - in the middle of the action, and as he relates the story of his usurpation from power to his daughter Miranda, the audience learn that Prospero lost his Dukedom as he spent more time with [his] books than [his] court. Even despite the subjectivity of the story, it is clear that Prospero's diligence to learning his magic was a catalyst for his downfall. Even in the Modern day 'up to date' action of the play's timescale it is still clear to the audience that Prospero is not a benign king. He in turn, usurped Caliban, who believes "the island's mine, by Sycorax my mother" and forces slavery on the him with threats of "a thousand pinches" and "clamps". Prospero is slightly kinder to</p>	

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the spirit Ariel - a servant rather than a slave - but even Ariel constantly demands his "freedom". One of Shakespeare's sources for *The Tempest* - Montaigne - focussed his essays on perspective and how what is right or wrong to us may not be to other people. The same is true of magic in the play: Prospero assures the audience - and himself - that Sycorax was "a foul witch" who "ensnared [Ariel] in a pine" for twelve years. But by Prospero's supposed 'white magic' Ariel has been a servant for the same length of time. The way Prospero managed the two places that have been under his rule - Milan and the island - is unappealing to the audience.

It is the way these ^{characters} ~~plots~~ change in the plays that brings realism and meaning.

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	<p>Prospero's change comes towards the end of the action. Having "put the wild waters in this roar" and "brought all [his] enemies together" then then the Prospero appears ready to be the vengeance-taker in a revenge tragedy. But it is Ariel who makes him stop and think. "If you now saw them," he claims, "your affections would become tender." After a long pause Prospero recognises realises and admits that "mine shall." After a slight pause, he relates that "this rough magic I here abjure" ("rough" being at least a subconscious recognition that he wasn't as benign as he claimed). He forgives his enemies, restores their senses, frees his slaves and returns to Milan. In his own words, he recognises that "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance."</p>

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	<p>Prospero's change is is one of tragicomedy. He has driven the tragedy - forcing his enemies together and meta-theatrically controlling them - but at the end he is driven by the comedy - he forgives his "brother" (unnatural though though art) and relinquishes his powers returning instead to Milan where he must come face to face with his mortality: "every third thought shall be my grave". The audience sees that Prospero is a changed man in a changed play and that is what brings the realism to the tragicomedy.</p>
	<p>Similarly, Leontes' change in <i>The Winter's Tale</i> is one of humanity. But while Prospero learns he must forgive, Leontes learns he must be forgiven. He too is driven by the comedy. It is almost</p>

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	<p> unheard for a character so dominant in the first three acts to disappear entirely for Act IV. But that is what Learner does. The action moves on without him. The interlude in Pastoral Bohemia brings a freshness and sense of "spring" to what has been a play dominated by "northern winds" of winter. But the change in Learner from unappealing the "monster" to reconciled lover is more potent, and for that the audience must wait for Act V. There they see a "penitent king" who has performed "a saint-like sorrow." He has become more decent more human but his his true "recreation" has not happened yet. That comes when Perdita and Florio arrive from Bohemia "as is the spring to the earth." He begins to use imperative commands, telling them to "follow me" and </p>

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behaves more like a King than of any time throughout the play. The "jaded tyrant" is no more. He becomes like Prospero, done the ~~man~~ tragedy at the beginning of the play, and both undergo a radical transformation where they saw their flaws, and then both are driven by their play's comedy.

And these changed Protagonists embody the genre of tragicomedy. It is these glimpses of humanity in seemingly evil characters that make the genre sing-true. Once Prospero has changed from wishing revenge and conning and controlling until he has achieved it to "the rarest action" of virtue and dramatically forgiven those who wronged him twelve years previously, he comes to represent the most human of all tastes: bitterness

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	<p>He is victorious. He has his "dukedom restored" and his daughter pledged to Florizel, "a worthy king's son". But at the same time he recognises that time has moved on without him. When he returns he knows that "every third thought shall be my grave".</p> <p>Time, which has played such an important role within the play, with Prospero demanding all "must be done by the sixth hour", must carry on. The play is also never finished. Alonso demands to hear "particulars of your preservation", which are retold offstage. The characters presumably return and continue their lives offstage but that is unseen and lies beyond the fleeting window of art. The mixture of tragedy and comedy in Prospero translates as a mixture of tragedy and comedy throughout the</p>

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rest of the play and - in a play so concerned with the nature of art and reality - it represents the mixture of tragedy and comedy in life. Nothing - in Prosper, The Tempest, or life, is ever dead-cut.

The triumph of 'fine' is even more evident in Leontes. The final scene of The Winter's Tale ~~is~~ has been called a "coup de theatre". Despite "Paulina assuring Leontes and the audience that the queen is dead" Shakespeare breaks the unwritten contract between playwright and audience and reveals Hermione as a statue. It is the final part of Leontes' reconciliation. He has come in a full circle where ~~was~~ once the queen and Polixenes were "too lost too lost!" now he exclaims.

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	<p> "o she's warm". Where once he crouched her of "banging round [Blixier] rock, the the was to Camillo. It is now Camillo who says says "she hangs about [Lantes'] rock." Before the revelation, heantes saw the stone statue as mocking him for being more stone than it. Now he is restored to the glory of a king. But like in <i>The Tempest</i>, it is the protagonist's inner change which truly drives the tragicomic genre. It is still a sore wound to remember "the young prince" and time - so important in this play that it is even a member of the cast - has still passed. "Helimione was not so much wrinkled" before the sixteen years of the play. With To have the bitter-widowess resounding around the theatre Lantes' last line is "dissevered. Hastily head away". The cruel, cutting sound </p>

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<p>"disseid." is left as a haunting reminder that the play's resolution is though characters are united - is not comic. Recent productions have brought a ghostly Prince Maanillius back onstage to emphasise this tragicomic bitterness. For Leontes and Prospero, their changes have merged tragedy and comedy, and they are central to plays about change and tragicomedy.</p>	
<p>Leontes and Prospero are characters in two very different plays. One play stretches time, the other squeezes it. One shifts setting, the other stays still. But at the same time, the plays are similar. Both are centrally concerned with change. Both deal with death and loss, and power and time. Both are led by</p>	

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<p>Protagonists who though at first appearing monstrous to the audience are transformed into decent, life-affirming characters. Leontes in the White's tale is the epitome of the "jealous tyrant" - he drives the tragedy in himself and the world around him. But unlike the jealous Othello or the tyrant MacBeth, Leontes lives and becomes driven by the comedy of the play. He changes and becomes a "penitent king" and shows humanity that is cut off from solely tragic heroes. Prospero - a heart-like figure who regains his kingdom - also also lives through the tragedy. After twelve years he drives the then revenge tragedy of the Tempest and but then changes to be driven by the comedy. He changes. He gains humanity. He forgives. And the changes - humanity despite evil - in these two characters embody the</p>	

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	bittersweet genre of tragicomedy. Things come together, but other things remain apart. This is the most realistic genre because time carries on. It is not the despair of tragedy or the joy of comedy but it is realism. That realism comes from the change in the protagonists and the long time that they endure. That "sea-change" into something rich and strange - the realism of characters in a tragicomedy - is the true triumph of time.