

The process of discovering can challenge our own certainty, and force individuals to reconsider something which they thought was previously known. William Shakespeare's 1611 play, *The Tempest*, communicates the process of gradual discovery of the self as testing the certainty of characters. David Malouf's 1997 novella, *An Imaginary Life*, also portrays the way in which the sudden and unexpected discovery of another individual can impact the certainty of your own understanding of the self and the world surrounding you.

William Shakespeare emphasises the process of discovery as testing the certainty of an individual through the main character of Prospero, who initially is focused on revenge on those who usurped his throne and is certain on his own power and leadership. The stage directions of Prospero to be present within every scene of *The Tempest*, mostly through Ariel, allows for his witnessing of the growth of other characters, his own discoveries. One of the catalysts was the observing of Miranda and Ferdinand. Ferdinand's commitment and love for Miranda, despite his royal status, evident within, "I am in my condition a prince but for your sake am I this patient log man," confronts and brings joy to Prospero. Within the following aside, which reveals his true feelings to the audience, he acknowledges the moving of his heart by this, "Fair encounter, two most rare affections... Heavens rain grace on that which breeds between them," Ariel's compassion and empathy despite not being human, "you would become tender... I would, sir, were I human," urges Prospero to consider his own humanity. The discovery of compassion, love and finally his own humanity causes Prospero to challenge the certainty of his initial intentions of revenge, in the end deciding, "the rare virtue is in forgiveness than revenge", epitomised in the final stage direction for Prospero to 'Embrace Alonso.'

Instances such as these which occur throughout the duration of the play, allow for a gradual but unexpected process of emotional and intellectual discoveries, which test the certainty of his own power. Prospero's control over the island and the characters within it are based upon his magical abilities. However, Prospero's revelation on the futility of magic brings uncertainty to this. The inversion of traditional post-masque speeches that usually esteem the king's power, which instead is used to reveal his revelations on magic, show evidently his self-transformation: "all the spirits are melted into thin air like the baseless fabric of this vision." His resulting pledge to "drown my books... what strength I have is my own", communicates the discoveries as providing a challenge for the permanence of his magical abilities and power. This discovery provides further uncertainty for Prospero, as he contemplates the consequential mortality of his own life, without magic, "retire me to my Milan, where every third thought shall be my grave," As shown, Prospero's discoveries of humanity, the futility of magic, and the ephemerality of human life, tests the certainty of his power and leadership.

David Malouf also reflects the nature of discoveries as testing certainty through *An Imaginary Life*, where his discoveries relating to the Child he found challenge his certainty of the superiority of the world of men. Upon finding the child, Ovid is certain of transforming the "wild boy" into "a man". He, "teaches the boy how to speak [hoping to] lead him into the world of men." He is certain that with the Child's speech, he will "discover his humanity." However, the discoveries relating to the child heavily challenge these initial thoughts, where the Child in fact transforms him, "out of his own alienation of men [and] into the landscape." The Child leads him, "deeper and deeper into the earth and further from the far, safe place he began." It is only through the discovery of the kindship with the Child that these discoveries ensure. Ovid, the persona, realises that the world of men is in fact harming the child and constraining his adventurous spirit as acknowledges, "Each day I see him retreat further... his spirit slumbers." He discovers that the Child is in fact at home in the wild, away from men and belongs, "to a world that is utterly beyond him." Not only is the certainty of the Child's sense of home and belonging challenged, but his discoveries tests his own certainty in

himself, where by the end of the novella, Ovid declares, “I shall never go back to Rome... never go back to the world of men... I have found the place where I have been truly seeking.” This discovery of his own alienation from the world of men, which he originally believed to be home, and sense of home within the landscape of the child, not only tested his certainty in who he was, but also had a deep emotional positive impact on him. He previously felt, “dead and relegated to a region of silence where all he could do was shout. However, after the gradual process of discovering his true home, the novella ends, ‘I am immeasurably, unbearably happy.’” David Malouf depicts the process of discovering being a challenge to an individual's sense of certainty/their previous understanding, and the positive ramifications of the discovery.

Both Shakespeare and Malouf communicate the challenge of uncertainty as a result of the gradual process of discovering through *The Tempest* and *An Imaginary Life*, respectively.

