



“THIS ISLAND’S MINE”: A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF SHAKESPEARE’S *THE TEMPEST*

Faizan Shahid faizshahid077@gmail.com	BS English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Chiniot Campus, Chiniot, Pakistan.
Husnain Abbas sunnyhanjra138@gmail.com	BS English Literature, Government College University, Faisalabad, Chiniot Campus, Chiniot, Pakistan.
Adeel Shahzada adeelshahzada@gcuf.edu.pk	Incharge, English Literature Programme, Government College University, Faisalabad, Chiniot Campus, Chiniot, Pakistan.

Abstract

This paper uses the theories of William Shakespeare and postcolonial criticism in particular, as I mostly focus on the work of Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (2003) to see *The Tempest* (2015) in the light of postcolonialism. It points to the manner in which the play, in dramatic economy, dramatises the gestures of the colonial encounter: the appropriation of land, the representation of the native as a savage “other” (Said, 1978), the use of a coloniser's language, and the response to this colonisation that it precipitates. The analysis shows how the text rehearses imperial ideology whilst also providing materials for its critique, based on Prospero and Caliban's relationship in the text, and how, in the text, Caliban defiantly states “This island's mine by Sycorax, my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me” (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 37). In the wake of Loomba's discussion of colonial discourse, hybridity, and an uneven distribution of power, and Orkin's focus on institutional and political histories of empire (1987), the paper argues that *The Tempest* is not simply colonial or against colonialism, but an unsettled space that has been possessed by different subjects and whose meanings have been redefined in the formerly colonized world. The conclusion considers the relevance of a postcolonial analysis today.

Keywords: *Caliban, Colonial Discourse, Empire, Other, Otherness, Postcolonialism, Resistance, The Tempest.*

Corresponding Author: Adeel Shahzada (Incharge, English Literature Programme, Government College University, Faisalabad, Chiniot Campus, Chiniot, Pakistan.)

Email: adeelshahzada@gcuf.edu.pk

1. Introduction

William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is one of the most prophetic plays in the history of English literature on the postcolonial question. It was first performed at the court of King James 1 in 1611, and was later published in the 1623 First Folio. (*Dates and sources: The Tempest*) The play recounts the almost unchecked rule of the exiled Duke of Milan, Prospero, over the spirits, creatures, and shipwrecked nobles who come to his aid. The play was read for a long time as a calm late romance, a reflection on art, forgiveness, and the giving up of power, which culminates in Prospero's "drown my book" and his "break my staff" (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 149). However, the European magus Prospero and the island-born Caliban that he enslaves became one of the seminal allegories of colonialism in Western literature in the middle of the twentieth century as the European empires collapsed and the colonized world started to write back (Loomba, 2002).

The colonial dimensions of *The Tempest* are not postmodern or antihistorical readings of the innocent text. (Abu-Shomar, 2022) The text is rich with the vocabulary and concerns of early-modern colonization. (Zahoor & Irrum, 2023) Written at the very moment when England was setting up its first permanent colonies in the Americas, it is based on recent reports of Atlantic voyages, including that of the wrecked Sea Venture of 1609 on the Bermudas, "still-vexed Bermoothes" that Ariel refers to directly (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 129). Through the dialogue, planter vocabularies, peopling, man and monster, "savage" (81), transformed by the gift of language, are layered. Postcolonial criticism has not generated, but resisted the subordination of, such themes; it has demanded that the play not be aesthetically and/or morally evaluated alone, but that its history also be considered within the framework of the history of power to which it contributes and reflects. (Gilbert, 2001)

These three intersecting issues frame the postcolonial perspective on the play: power, otherness, and resistance. (Hossain, 2019) The theme of power is introduced in the first scene, where the storm itself is an artifact of Prospero's "art", his technology of control, which makes him the master over nature and spirit, as well as men. Prospero's dominance over Ariel and Caliban is applied without symbols, but rather by the threat and infliction of physical pain: cramps, pinches, and imprisonment. (Vaughan, 1988) The problem of otherness is the discursive apparatus used to create Caliban as an Other to the human subject: he is described as a "freckled whelp, hag-born" (33), a "thing of darkness" (149), a "mooncalf" (83), a "monster" (85); and a creature whose "nature / Nurture" can never be "stick." (135) These epithets perform ideological functions, producing that which they purport to describe, which is the inferiority itself. A problem of resistance has already arisen in Caliban's denial of this construction: his counter-history of the island, his cursing, and his insurrection, all expose the self-serving and partial account of the events provided by the colonizer. (Vaughan, 1988)

Two scholars mainly provide the theoretical resources for this reading: Ania Loomba (2002 & 1989), who has influenced a generation of early modern criticism with her two books, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* and *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*, provides a description of colonial discourse as a complex of representational practices that creates the objects of rule for the colonizing culture. Loomba is particularly sensitive to how race, gender, and class intertwine in the kinds of discussions he is analyzing, and to the idea of hybridity, that of a state where cultural purity is impossible as colonizer and colonized become entangled. Moreover, *Shakespeare against Apartheid* (Orkin, 1987) and *Postcolonial Shakespeares* (Loomba & Orkin, 1998), which Martin Orkin edited and which was also authored by him, have placed the politics of Shakespeare's reading and dissemination in colonial and postcolonial institutions at the forefront. For Orkin, *The Tempest* cannot be separated from the uses to which *The Tempest* has been put.

Reading these two critics together yields two movements. On the other hand, Loomba (2002 & 1989) focuses inwardly rather than outward and draws attention to the representational strategies of the text: the racialization of Caliban, the gendering of the island, and the threat it poses to Miranda, as well as the naturalization of Prospero's rule. Orkin's focus, in contrast, is outward, to the institutional history of the play, how it's been taught, performed, rewritten, and how, by those once imagined as the play's inferior, have they taken up Caliban as a symbol of anti-colonial defiance. Caliban's line, "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 39), exactly describes this dialectic: the colonised subject learns the language that he was subjected to and uses it to curse the master.

We need to reflect on the historical frame in which the play was written, since it is not the colonial reading that is imposed on the horizon, but the colonial reading is situated in the horizon. The first half of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the era of English overseas expansion. (Porter, 1992) By 1606, the Virginia Company had been granted, the settlement at Jamestown had been established in 1607, and the pamphlets, sermons, and travel narratives that were swirling in London during these years were focused on the interaction of English explorers and the New World peoples. (Appelbaum & Sweet, 2012) The image of the "savage" who could be civilized or who could be destroyed, the controversy over whether the lands of Native peoples were held for them by the right, and the discourse on providence and the providential roles of English settlement—such factors were topical concerns. (Mazlish, 2004) *The Tempest* is not a straightforward transcription of one source, but it evokes the ambience of this discourse, while transposing the Atlantic experience through a Mediterranean island to universalise and disguise its colonial content.

Concurrently, an anachronistic reading must be avoided in a responsible postcolonial reading. Against this background, one must emphasize that colonial structures

were not the same in the early modern era as those in the high imperial age, and that later colonial races cannot be retrodated into a play from 1611. It is important against this background to stress that colonial structures were different as early modern as those of the high imperial age, and that colonial races of later times cannot be read back into a play. It is not the idea that Shakespeare was a ‘modern theorist of empire’ that is the key to the value of a postcolonial approach, but rather the demonstration, as this book does, that such a structure of domination and resistance can be constructed from the conceptual materials that he had at his disposal, and that a postcolonial approach can later make it starkly legible. In this sense, the play is a rehearsal, foreshadowing in a manner, but never articulating the relations, which would be expanded and again, brutally, over the next four hundred years.

The following thesis is, therefore, proposed in this paper. *The Tempest* is a very ambivalent piece of literature, which both demonstrates and criticizes the rationality of colonial power. It dramatizes, through Prospero, the legitimising claims of the colonizer with respect to his supposed superiority (over Caliban and the islanders), the civilizing gift of language, and his monopoly on force, and it keeps alive, through Caliban, a counter-discourse that names the colonial project as theft and dispossession. Taking up where Loomba leaves off with colonial discourse and hybridity, and where Orkin's concerns with "institutional politics of Shakespeare" begin, the paper claims that the play does not promote or simply denounce empire but is a contested space whose differences are never resolved, and its very lack of resolution is what has allowed it to be so easily queered by post-colonial interpretation. The analysis unfolds in three ways:

- 1) an overview of the theoretical context.
- 2) an in-depth analysis of the play through the lens of power, language, and resistance.
- 3) a final consideration of the contemporary implications of reading *The Tempest* as a colonial text.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Colonial Discourse is also known as Postcolonial Criticism.

Postcolonial theory refers to a general area of study related to the cultural, political, and economic effects of colonialism and imperialism. It is a post-colonial Trimester (PCT) of the representation of relations of domination between “metropole” and “colony” that is the object of the study field, the emergence of which is marked by the anti-colonial writings of authors like Frantz Fanon (1963), and the crystallization of which is expressed in the literary academy with Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). It is a neat and simple definition, says Loomba (2002), “conquest and control of other people's land and goods”, but she immediately complicates this economic definition by stating, “conquest was never just a material affair”. It needed, and was supported by a complex frame of meaning, if

you will, that allowed the colonized to be made known, controlled, and inferiorized, what is known as colonial discourse.

Loomba's (1989 & 2002) account of colonial discourse is the system of statements, images, and assumptions that create the colonized and the colonizer as specific subjects. It does not simply describe a given reality but is a productive force: it creates the categories of 'savage' and 'civilised,' of 'master' and 'slave,' and sets them out as natural and inevitable. With Foucault's (2008) theory of the relationship between power and knowledge in mind, Loomba (2002) states that to represent the colonised was to assert power over them, as their representation authorized and legitimate power. By naming a people as incapable of self-government, for example, their governmentability by others is also justified.

2.2. Loomba: Race, Gender, Hybridity, and Power.

What Loomba brings to this work is her refusal to binary and monolithic thinking of the colonial power. In *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (1989) and in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (2002), she asserts that colonial discourse is always a discourse of race and gender, and that these elements of domination are inextricably linked. The colonized subject is often raced as degraded, feminized, and sexualized as a threat, the land is raced as a woman, and it is desirable for penetration and for possession; the safeguarding of the colonizer's women is used as a justification to police their body of the colonized men. Without such an intersectional analysis, no one could read *The Tempest*, where an alleged rape of Miranda constitutes the moral basis of Caliban's enslavement, or where his body is racialized in the play's politics of terror and his sexuality is never separated from the body.

Another important aspect of Loomba's research is hybridity. To dispel any idea of purity and of self-contained cultures, colonizer and colonized, postcolonial theory acknowledges complexity and hybridity as the result of the colonial encounter, the blending, the mingling, the transmuting. The colonized subject who becomes familiar with the language of the colonizer changes the subject, as does the language and the culture it has brought. Loomba (2002) warns, however, that hybridity is not symmetrical and innocent; it is an affair of asymmetrical power relations, and celebrating the hybridity is a masking of the violence that led to its creation. The Ambiguous Hybridity of Prospero's tongue, acquired by Caliban, is the play's most exact symbol of this tension: of his dispossession, and of his ability to resist.

Loomba, too, refrains from taking the concept of race for granted. The early modern ideas of human difference did not neatly fit into the nineteenth and eighteenth-century biological racism; instead, they were expressed in the intersecting language of religion, lineage, climate, and monstrosity (Loomba, 2002). As it is in history, it's important here for *The Tempest* because Caliban is never characterized in the modern

parlance of skin color only. In his combination of Hag, fish, earth, and monster, he is “hag-born” (33) and other than himself; an “otherness” that collages together a variety of early modern fears concerning the non-European, the non-Christian, and the non-human. To read him as just a 'black' colonial subject risks obfuscating the historically particular manner in which his difference is constructed.

Orkin: Postcolonial Shakespeare and the Politics of the Institution is a notable new book. Orkin: Postcolonial Shakespeare and the Politics of the Institution is one of the outstanding new books.

In other words, Martin Orkin provides the conceptual vocabulary for reading the text's afterlife, while Loomba supplies the framework for the thinking behind the colonial discourse in the text. One of Orkin's earliest forays into the interpretation of Shakespeare in the context of a colonial and racially ordered society, apartheid South Africa, was his Shakespeare against Apartheid (1987). In this work, Orkin brings this concern into a programmatic statement in the volume Postcolonial Shakespeare (1998), co-edited with Loomba, that there is no innocent, apolitical Shakespeare, since the works have always been firmly situated in the institutions that established and reproduced colonial and postcolonial societies.

The kernel of Orkin's argument is that Shakespeare served as a colonial educator. In the British Empire, learning Shakespeare was a sign of civilization and a way of generating cultural authority: understanding Shakespeare was a precondition for belonging to the world of the coloniser, and the canon established the superiority of the English culture. The class contentment of learning *The Tempest* could then be used to consolidate exactly those hierarchies that the play represents; the colonial student as a "Caliban" being subjected to "Europe's improvement. In order to attend to this institutional dimension, Orkin calls on critics to realize that the meaning of the play is not predetermined by the play itself but constructed in the places where the play is transmitted (Loomba & Orkin, 1998).

Meanwhile, Orkin is cognizant that all of these institutions can be used against themselves. The colonial authority, which assigned Shakespeare to colonial discipline, was also its source of resources for anticolonial writers, who could claim and inscribe with their own voice his plays. Caribbean and African intellectuals' re-readings of the mid-20th century (rediscovering Caliban as a hero of decolonization) are representative of this counter-appropriation. For Orkin, however, it is not about the "prior dispute" between those who were convinced that Shakespeare was a racist or a "colonialist" (Loomba & Orkin, 1998), but about how he has been politically exploited over the years.

Combined, Loomba and Orkin provide a framework, a textual and contextual one. The analysis of colonial discourse and the intersection of race and gender comes from Loomba, the notion of hybridity in unequal power comes from Orkin, and the insistence

that the content of the text lives in its institutions and its appropriations. The above framework is then applied to *The Tempest* and examines how the play shows an understanding of power, its colonial discourse, and dramatization of resistance.

3. Critical Analysis

3.1. Prospero and the Architecture of Colonial Power

Prospero is the sovereign of the play, and his sovereignty has been established before anyone can talk without restriction. In the first scene, the ship is a wreck, the normal structure of rank breaks down: the Boatswain challenges the kings with, “What cares these roarers for the name of king?” (p. 8-9) In the first scene, the storm is a natural occurrence, only for the second to make clear that Prospero's “art” is what made it happen: “If by your art, my dearest father, / You have put the wild waters in this roar” (13). The colonial point is structural, a nature that is in reality the exercise of a hidden and full power. This play is built entirely around his role as a ruler over the elements, the island's spirits, and the bodies of the inhabitants.

This power is material and discursive as per Loomba (2002). Its material basis is in the control of force: Prospero's magic garment, staff, and book, as well as his ability to inflict pain. In a discursive manner, it is based on a story of legitimacy that Prospero rehearses with great length for Miranda. He tells how he was the rightful Duke of Milan but was displaced by his brother, Antonio, and set on a ship, and now he finds himself on the island. This narrative puts Prospero in the position of a victim of bad fortune; it is an important stage in the ideological play of the narrative in the play for the audience to first meet Prospero as a victim of bad fortune. But the same story does a second coup d'état. After being kicked out of Milan, Prospero comes to an already populated island and takes possession of it as its “lord,” in the same easy way he mourns his previous expropriation.

The use of Ariel as a symbol of Prospero's domination is one that has been carefully measured. Ariel is a willing but conscripted servant, who is given his release permission several times and told what he must do to get it. If Ariel will “Remember” the promised freedom, Prospero threatens them back to his prison again: “If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an oak / And peg thee in his knotty entrails till / Thou hast howled away twelve winters” (33). It is obviously a colonial framework: the colonizer must convince the native that he or she is a liberator, a savior, who has delivered the native from a former domination, and then justify an endless form of servitude. Gratitude is required, as the price of freedom, which is itself bondage.

Caliban is a much more overtly forceful machine. Caliban is ruled by pain, while Ariel is ruled by the promise of freedom. The summonses are repeatedly somatic, as Prospero threatens to give limbs “cramp, / side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up” (37); to “rack thee with old cramps / fill all thy bones with aches / make thee roar that beasts shall tremble at thy din” (39). The colonized subject recognizes not only the superior power

of the colonizer but the supremacy of the colonizer's gods, an insight into cultural as well as physical domination, in a way that echoes Loomba's explication of the way in which colonial powers intrude into the colonized subject's cosmology.

3.2. This Island's Mine': Dispossession and the Counter-History

The most immediate statement of the colonial relation in the play is when Caliban claims his ownership of the island. He obstinately challenges Prospero with "This island's mine by Sycorax, my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me" (37). It is genealogical and territorial: it is Caliban's by right of his birth from Miranda, and Prospero is the one who has taken it. The play occupies one line that names the colonial act of dispossession, and names it in the tongue of the dispossessed. But Prospero's account of legitimate rule will have to be suppressed; part of the ambivalence of the play is that it is possible to hear this counter-history.

This is Caliban's counter-history and a story of betrayed hospitality. He remembers a first encounter in which Prospero cajoled him into letting him drink of water filled with berries, and tutored him in the naming of the greater as well as the lesser light. Caliban recounted his learned knowledge as a gift to the reader, the knowledge that made survival possible: "And then I loved thee / And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle, / The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile" (37). The sequence mimics the classic colonial narrative from the perspective of the colonized: a greeted welcome and the transfer of critical local information, followed by appropriation and/or enslavement after information has been extracted. Caliban's resentment towards the ending: "Cursed be I that did so!" (37)—recognizes that his own hospitality was the reason for his downfall.

Prospero and Miranda provide an alternative history, rather than contesting the facts, to the counter-history. In their account, it is impossible to say that the island belongs to Caliban, as Caliban is not capable of a moral and rational life that would give him the right to it. "Abhorred slave, Which any print of goodness wilt not take, Being capable of all ill!" (39), Miranda's speech, assigned in the Folger edition to her instead of Prospero, brings the colonial logic into multifaceted starkness. She remembers the work upon him, and pities him for having to be civilized: "I pitied thee, / Took pains to make thee speak" (39); and decides that "thy vile race" has "that in 't which good natures / Could not abide to be with" (39). The vocabulary of 'race' and innate moral incapacity is illustrative of just such a colonial discourse as Loomba (2002) characterizes: difference is made into a given, and an immutable part of reality, and the failure of the civilizing project is blamed not on the violence but on the greater problem of the irredeemable nature of the project's object.

The importance of the theme of race and gender throughout Loomba's work cannot be overstated here: Caliban's enslavement is based on an argument about sex. Prospero justifies himself in putting Caliban in prison, calling Miranda his 'child,' since Caliban tried to have sexual relations with him: "thou didst seek to violate / The honor of my child"

(37). Caliban is not guilty, but he replies in an unconvinced boast: “O ho, O ho! Would ’t had been done! / Thou didst prevent me. I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans.” (37). In the exchange, the racist/fascist has combined the racial and the sexual: the colonized man is simultaneously depicted as a sexual threat to the colonizer's woman, and the protection of that woman provides the moral justification for colonization. Caliban's land and the woman he is accused of attacking are networked together in the colonial imagination; they are twin objects of possession, and it is threatening Miranda who poses the threat towards the entire colonial order, rather than dispossessing the indigenous subject.

Note that, as the Folger textual introduction points out, the earlier editions appropriated Miranda's “Abhorred slave” speech for Prospero, seeing the speech as being “improper” for a youthful female to label attempted rape (Mowat & Werstine, 2015). The editorial history itself is a type of institutional politics Orkin speaks of: the text was brought to terms by the propriety of its readers, and the work of civilizing the “savage” was cleaned up into the father's mouth. Replaying Miranda restores her to a role as an active participant in colonial pedagogies, disturbing any interpretation that may position her as the object of the men's desires.

3.3. Timothy O. Feeney, Language, Naming, and the Hybrid Subject

The colonial relationship is at the heart of *The Tempest*, and it is in relation to language that Loomba's notion of hybridity is most accurate. Prospero and Miranda offer the gift of language as the greatest gift ever given to Caliban—the gift which transcended his animal inarticulacy. Caliban, who “When thou didst not, savage / Know thine own meaning” (39), was the one who “endowed thy purposes / With words that made them known” (39). For the colonizer, language is a gift—it is what makes Caliban human, and his lack of gratitude is more monstrous.

The most often quoted line in the play is Caliban's reply to Prospero's teaching: “You taught me language, and my profit on ’t / Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!” (39) It does a couple of things. It will tolerate the possibility of language change (Caliban can now speak Prospero's words), but not the moralism that sets it up as a gift. It shows how language is not benign, but a tool of domination, and how Caliban has been called slave and monster through it. Turner and it turns that instrument back on to the master, the only “profit” of the coloniser's language is the ability to curse the coloniser in it. In Loomba's (2002) sense, this is hybridity: the point of the encounter is to alter the colonized subject, make him neither fully himself nor fully assimilated to the colonizer; and it is from there that resistance can be expressed.

The use of naming, to which language belongs, is thematised in the play. Caliban has been taught to “name the bigger light and how the less” (37) by Prospero, the colonizer, who fascinates the world in his colonial ways. It is to take their names that is to take their

ordering of reality. The multiple names that are given to Caliban, “slave”, “monster”, “mooncalf”, “hag-seed”, “thing of darkness” (Shakespeare, 2015) are evidence of the technology of naming as a technology of subjection. Significantly, Caliban's own name has often been read as an anagram or near-homophone of cannibal, a colonial invention hanging on the Caribs of the New World, carrying with it the burden of colonial imagination of the ‘savage other’.

Caliban's most famous speech adds layers to an easy dichotomy between an eloquent colonizer and an ineloquent native. He promises to try to comfort his drunken friends and, in a couple of lines of remarkable lyricism, tells them that the island is teeming with noises, sounds, and sweet airs, which delight but do not hurt. He goes on to say that “the clouds methought would open, and show riches / Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked / I cried to dream again.” (107) It is these poetic lines that make the reading of these lines a postcolonial reading. They show that Caliban has an aesthetic and emotional inner life, denied to him by the colonizer's discourse of brutishness; that he knows his island intimately, sensuously, more than the colonizer does; that his relationship with his land is more significant than the colonizer's; and that he is more than an animal, more nearly a god than the colonizer is convinced. Caliban's counter-claim of belonging is restated in his hybrid tongue, the one Prospero gave him to command his obedience.

3.4. Resistance, Revolt, and Its Containment

As Caliban opposes Prospero, his opposition escalates from cursing to an organized revolt. Joining the shipwrecked servants Stephano and Trinculo, he schemes Prospero's death, demonstrating a good sense of the power of the colony. Before everything else, he tells his co-conspirators to take his books: “Remember First to possess his books, for without them He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not One spirit to command.” (105). Caliban realizes that Prospero's power is based on his control of knowledge: It is in the books that he found the “art” by which he has dominated the island. Burning of the books equals destruction of the technology of colonial rule. Again, a strikingly accurate appreciation of the linkage between knowledge and power, which Loomba (2002), following Foucault, sees as central to the colonial discourse.

The rebellion, too, is told in a manner that encloses and disproves it. The reason for Caliban's rebellion is drunkenness and folly; all his allies are a jester and a buffoonish butler – and when the rebellion fails, due to Caliban's distraction over the “glistening apparel” (135) and his subsequent conquest by the spirit-hounds, the rebellion itself is a farce. The play thus allows the expression of anti-colonial revolt, while at the same time making it ridiculous and doomed. The double gesture appears throughout the text and reveals what the text is really about. The type of legitimate grievance statement is clearly made, yet the grievance's agent is made comic, the allies contemptible, and the defeat inevitable. Any postcolonial interpretation should keep both these elements in mind, not

so much to resolve the tension between them, but because the play's resistance is realized through speaking, and its attempt to neutralize the same resistance is realized through speaking.

More troubling than anything else about Caliban from a resistance perspective is his willingness to replace one master with another. He addresses Stephano as god and promises him service as he once did Prospero. His libatory song, "' Ban, 'ban, Ca-Caliban / Has a new master. Get a new man. / Freedom, high-day" (87), poignantly meshes the gaining of a new master with freedom itself. This is one of the play's most profound observations about the psychology of the colonized, in which the act of domination dominates Caliban's world, leaving him no room for the idea of freedom but that of being transferred into another kind of servitude. What is sad is not that he is not free of desire for freedom, but that his understanding of what freedom might mean has become twisted by the colonial order.

The resolution in the play portrays the persistence of the colonial relation as well as a flicker of its unsettlingness. The character of Caliban is acknowledged in the final scene by Prospero's use of the words: "This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (165), which have sparked immense critical discussion. The line is read as just another statement of ownership: Caliban is Prospero's property, his "thing," a more sinister form of ownership than in the other line, but one that implies ownership as well as recognition, as though Caliban were the dark side of Prospero himself, the one that he can no longer disown. It's not quite clear, and just as texts open up at a fissure, postcolonial criticism is exactly what reads into that ambiguity. The epithet "thrice-double ass" (167) of Caliban's own last words certainly suggests a retreating spirit. It is not clear if this is an act of real self-awareness or if he simply becomes part of Prospero's system, and the play doesn't make any attempt to answer the question of what eventually happens to Caliban.

Importantly, the play is not about decolonization. Prospero denies his magic and is ready to leave the island, but the island itself is not returned to Caliban (though he is not freed and is certainly not re-enslaved). Prospero's big abdication, "I'll break my staff, / Bury it certain fathoms in the earth, / And deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book" (149), is an abdication of power, but leaves the colonial relation conceptually untouched throughout the retreat of the colonizer. Orkin (Loomba & Orkin, 1998) suggests that this lack has been fruitful in later plays: since *The Tempest* never attempts to envision the possibilities of an emancipated Caliban or a decolonized island, future writers were allowed to do so. The twentieth-century re-readings that redefine Caliban as the hero in his own liberation are not distortions of the play but completions of a question which the play cannot answer.

This is what Reading Prospero brings to the fore when viewed through the lens of Orkin. Prospero is not just a ruler, but also a teacher, to Miranda and to Caliban; he has

“made thee more profit / Than other princes can” (25) and his pedagogical relationship with Caliban centers on lessons, language, and the schooling of a reluctant disciple. The colonizer as educator is a direct parallel to the colonial schooling role played by Shakespeare that Orkin studies. Thus, it is doubly problematic to read this play in a post-colonial classroom since it is a study of colonial education in a place that was, historically speaking, an instrument of colonial education. This reflexivity, if you like, is not a hindrance to the analysis but its most cutting edge; it puts us in mind of the fact that the meanings of *The Tempest* are constructed, not only on the page, but in the location of the page's reading.

4. Conclusion

This paper has suggested that *The Tempest* is an ambivalent text that both establishes and reveals the logic of colonial domination, and that by engaging with postcolonial criticism, such as that of Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, its ambivalence can be examined but not effaced. The play represents power, concealing Prospero's whole “art”, which exemplifies the colonial “art” Loomba theorizes; the play represents otherness, racialized and sexualized in Caliban, who would be colonial discourse's “other”, or that of colonialism; and the play represents resistance, the resistance of Caliban's counter-history of dispossession to the forces of dispossession and his abortive revolt to Prospero's “art”.

The analysis leads to three conclusions. It is hard to understand the central relationship of the play without the application of the newer critical concepts of art, forgiveness, and reconciliation, for these terms tacitly purport to be Prospero's perspective and assume his sovereignty. When Caliban's statement “This island's mine” is treated as a counter-history, not just the voice of a monster, then the harmonious resolution of the play becomes a lot more complicated, perhaps even more disturbing: the nobles of Europe are restored to their hierarchies, and the “dispossessed” islander's fate remains unspoken. Second, Loomba's focus on the intricate intersection of race and gender highlights how race and gender are indelibly linked to the other two features of colonization, which are intertwined in Caliban's enslavement, that is, the land and the women, creating a colonial logic that binds the two together. How the colonised subject, Caliban's acrimonious mixed legacy, is altered by contact with the coloniser and how this alteration is itself the basis of resistance is demonstrated in language acquisition.

Third, in terms of the institutional life of Shakespeare, as Orkin reminds us, the meaning of *The Tempest* is not uniform within the text, but it is created in the contexts of its transmission and appropriation. The play was used to establish a cultural dominance of the colonizer and was used by anti-colonial writers throughout the Caribbean, Africa, and Latin America to make a call for liberation. It isn't a contradiction for the same text to have both purposes; it is the main fact that a postcolonialist reading must acknowledge. By

denying that Caliban could be an inhabitable island, their play used the space to be filled by subsequent generations in their restitution of Caliban's inheritance. Their marginalization of the potential of Caliban's inheritance is the space later generations filled in their restitution of Caliban's inheritance.

What is there about this reading that has something to tell us now? Colonial structures that still persist today (economically, in cultural, language, and narrative forms) continue to resound with the questions *The Tempest* poses, neither confined to the seventeenth century, nor to the decades of formal decolonization. Caliban's remark on the coloniser's language "to curse", in addition to the ongoing question of whether the formerly colonised can ever really outwit the conceptual structure of the coloniser, is what Loomba is sort of alluding to with the concept of hybridity: the more realistic and the more radical task is to inhabit it subversively, to embody it unmastered by its author. The writer in a postcolonial situation who writes in English (the language of the colonizer) is in the same plight as Caliban.

Likewise, the centrality of an institution to the study of Shakespeare remains as powerful in a college/ university setting, which keeps Shakespeare poised at the heart of literary research globally. Study and teaching *The Tempest* is to engage in the current life of a canon who asserted his authority in part by the power of the empire. A postcolonial reading of the play doesn't call for rejection of the play, but rather for "reading it" with "full consciousness" of its histories: reading it that is, both for what it represents and for what it has been made to do. This is Loomba and Orkin's doubled vision: analyzing the discourse within the text as well as the careers of the text.

It is also important to note again what a postcolonial reading does not say. It is not claiming that Shakespeare deliberately intended to write an anti-colonial tract or that Caliban is an easygoing hero who supports the play's every word. Its sympathies are divided, and its framing devices are on the go most of the time to keep its viewers on Prospero's side. One of the achievements of the approach adopted here is that the seams in that alignment are revealed, the moments when Caliban's counter-history intrudes, when the colonizer's self-justification extends beyond its boundaries, when the language of nature and nurture becomes circular. Loomba's critique of colonial discourse provides the tools for a reading that would not be considered coincidental, while Orkin's focus on institutions reminds us that the practices of a culture can be far from those the text seems to express at the surface. The meaning of the play is learned in the clash of the two.

The Tempest that lives on for all the reasons it poses the question of colonialism with clarity and discomfort that has not been resolved. His staff breaks, and he drowns his book; his island disappears; Caliban is not freed nor accounted for. Into that silence the postcolonial reader—and the postcolonial writer—continues to speak. The phrase that titles this paper to this play is the most over-meaning and unanswerable: "This island's

mine.” But now, after four hundred years, the issue of ownership, narrators, and the language of its narration has not lost its urgency.

References

- Abu-Shomar, A. (2022). The enemy other: discourse of evil in William Shakespeare's "The Tempest". *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 25(1), 95-113.
- Appelbaum, R., & Sweet, J. W. (Eds.). (2012). *Envisioning an English empire: Jamestown and the making of the North Atlantic world*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Dates and sources: *The Tempest*. Royal Shakespeare Company. (n.d.). <https://www.rsc.org.uk/the-tempest/about-the-play/dates-and-sources>
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth* (C. Farrington, Trans.) [Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre].
- Gilbert, H. (2001). *Postcolonial plays*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hossain, E. (2019). Pitfalls of Caliban's Resistance: A Study of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* from Postcolonial Perspective. *Green University Review of Social Sciences*, 5(2), 37-44.
- Loomba, A. (1989). *Gender, race, Renaissance drama*. Manchester University Press.
- Loomba, A. (2002). *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. Routledge.
- Loomba, A., & Orkin, M. (2003). Introduction: Shakespeare and the post-colonial question. In *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* (pp. 13-32). Routledge.
- Loomba, A., & Orkin, M. (Eds.). (1998). *Post-colonial Shakespeares*. Routledge.
- Mazlish, B. (2004). *Civilization and its Contents*. Stanford University Press.
- Orkin, M. (1987). *Shakespeare against apartheid*. Ad. Donker.
- Porter, A. (1992). Religion and empire: British expansion in the long nineteenth century, 1780–1914. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 20(3), 370-390.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.
- Shakespeare, W. (2015). *The Tempest* (B. A. Mowat & P. Werstine, Eds.). Folger Shakespeare Library.
- Vaughan, A. T. (1988). Caliban in the "Third World": Shakespeare's Savage as Sociopolitical Symbol. *The Massachusetts Review*, 29(2), 289-313.
- Zahoor, U., & Irrum, S. (2023). Power Relations in the Literature of the Early Modern Period. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, 6(4), 111-122.
- Foucault, M. (2008). Power/knowledge. In *The New Social Theory Reader* (pp. 73-79). Routledge