Review

Canonical colonial approaches in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*

Ali Abdullah Mohammed Alzuhairi and Luo Yimin

College of International Studies, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

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Colonialism is the single most powerful force shaping the world we dwell in. It is a policy of supremacy, which involves the subjugation of a superior country to another inferior country. Colonizing nations by and large are primarily concerned with usurping the resources, labor, and markets of the colonial territory, and may, in the long run, impose socio-cultural, religious and linguistic structures on the indigenous population. Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* is one of the most prevailing plays in literature that reveals the elements of the colonial life, mainly through the relationship between the colonist Prospero and the native Caliban. This paper aimed to investigate the colonist’s attitude and the way he contemptuously looks at the native and the native’s rebellion and revolution against such maltreatment resulting in hatred, scorn, loath, cunning and enmity due to the feeling of settler’s superiority over aborigine’s inferiority. The study also investigated the dimensional aspects of such phenomenon that surprisingly became much more significant in the contemporary analysis.

**Key words:** Colonialism, Prospero, Caliban, aboriginal, colonialist, settler.

**INTRODUCTION**

The word colonialism, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), comes from the Roman ‘Colonia’ which means ‘farm’ or ‘settlement’, and refers to the Romans who settled in other lands but still retained their citizenship. Accordingly, the OED describes it as, a settlement in a new country. Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world but everywhere it locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history (Ania, 1998).

World history is full of examples of one society gradually expanding by incorporating adjacent territory and settling its people on newly conquered territory (Margaret Kohn, 2014). This phenomenon shapes the world we live in today. It is not a modern observable fact since the ancient Greeks commence settlement as did the Romans, the Moors, and the Ottomans, to name just a few of the most famous examples. Colonialism, then, is not limited to a specific era or place. Nevertheless, in the sixteenth century, colonialism changed decisively because of technological progress in navigation that began to control more isolated parts of the world. The British claimed the credit for a number of achievements in the colonies: economic growth, law and order, government free of corruption, free institutions, civil liberties, an end to tribal and communal warfare, the
The development of infrastructure, all of which attracted British and foreign investment (Johnson, Robert, 2003). The modern European colonial policy occurred when it became potential to move large numbers of people across the ocean and to maintain political sovereignty in spite of geographical dispersion. English became, for example, the primary language of the United States because the vast majority of the colonists spoke English (Darrell, 2010).

Accordingly, the colonialism, in its merits and disadvantages in addition to its consequences exceedingly occupied a very significant place in the world of literature, most notably, Shakespeare’s The Tempest. Throughout the play, Shakespeare was perceptively attempting to deal with one of the most controversial and crucial issues during his era displaying his own stand and perspective towards such issue. The discovery of Columbus to America actually inspired Shakespeare’s creativity to write such a heroic work. His imagination, that has taken this into account the exploration of new geographical spaces and control of those lands by the explorers, is basically what we know presently about the empirical nature of colonialism and its dimension. In The Tempest, for example, Prospero powerfully controlled the land and its natives through the use of knowledge and power. Hence The Tempest has, to a great extent, provoked many critics, historians and other writers to classify it as the most notable earlier works portraying the fundamental aspects of colonialism.

Propero as Shakespeare’s settler

Shakespeare’s The Tempest is a play about different issues during Shakespeare’s time. One of these issues is concerned with British colonialism which recently has become a matter of great debate, whether Colonialism is present in The Tempest and whether it incites the condemnation of this practice. Prospero is one of Shakespeare’s most powerful protagonists. Prospero’s character, his actions and reasoning, and the way he is dealing with the native cannot either provoke the condemnation or the conviction of colonialism. If Shakespeare attempts to denounce colonialism, he would present Prospero as being insulting, tyrant and aggressive to prove that such colonial practices are harshly uncivil and not acceptable. Caliban’s attempted rape of Miranda, for example, is a good example of how he acts according to impulse, without the control of civilization. Prospero, according to critics, is a character of a civilized man, rightly establishing and maintaining order on the island and in the small community of himself, Miranda, Ariel and Caliban. Shakespeare shows in The Tempest that Prospero is not the leader of the island because he set out to be so, but because he is the most competent one to do so being educated civilized and enlightened. Such values were highly represented through Prospero’s addressing to Caliban

…I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endow’d thy purposes
With words that made them known. (1.ii.17)

In this passage, Prospero displays how beneficial and valuable his presence on the island for Caliban is. It shows the attitude and the supremacy of the colonist over the natives. However, the readers seemingly could look at Prospero from entirely different prospective as ruthless, cruel, bushy, usurping other’s rights, selfish and egoistical. The colonist considers the native not only as slaves but aggressively also as laborers, domestic servants, followers, travelers and the colonial masters as administrators, soldiers, merchants, settlers, travelers, writers, domestic staff, missionaries, teachers and scientists (Ania, 1998). Prospero views Caliban as lesser being than himself. He firmly believes that Caliban’s existence is circumscribed to serve and worship Prospero’s order and not to show any annoyance or grumbling of his mission. Besides, Caliban should be grateful to Prospero for educating him and lifting him out of the savagery.

Shakespeare’s aboriginals: Caliban and Ariel in The Tempest

British colonialist views of the American natives or Irish as being lazy, uncivilized, and impulsive and thieves - “that a brutal side of colonialism is that ‘natives’ were considered inferior, scarcely human – closer to animals than to civilized people – their presence was ignored, treated as a minor inconvenience, walled off from view or physical intrusion, or made the subject of genocidal projects (Fiona and Lionel, 2011). One could obviously see in The Tempest that at first Prospero builds up tender bond with Caliban as Caliban addresses him

"when thou first came to the island, thou strok’st me and made much of me, wouldst give me water with berries in it and teach me how to name the bigger light, and how the less that burn by day and night. And then I loved thee” (act I, scene ii, line 335).

Then this relationship Changes after Caliban comes to his impulsivity reproduce;

"I have used thee, filth that you art, with humane care and lodged thee in mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate the honor of my only child” (Act 1, scene 1, line 348).
In this, we see Caliban not as being a victim, but as being someone who determined his own fate unlike those being colonized by the British at Shakespeare's time. While his physical nature is described as deformed, as the text suggests that he is both lecherous and treacherous, he is eloquent in his protests against the mistreatment brutality of Prospero and others, having some of the most poetic passages in the play especially once when he describes the island. Caliban soon realizes that Prospero views him as a second class-citizen fit only to serve and that by giving up his control of the island in return for education.

Consequently, the native powerfully demonstrates different ways of resistance and rejection against the colonist's aggressive mistreatment and condescension. Ariel and Caliban can be regarded as the "the substantial objects" of the colonizer, and the opposing thoughts of such objects towards their boss reflect the contradictory conduct in which the nature of the mankind reacting to modern civilization. Both undoubtedly individuals were used negatively by their master, however each provoke a dissimilar practice of behavior which is based on their instinct nature as well as their distinct circumstances. Some natives find that the best way for getting independence and freedom is only through the policy of non-violence resistance. In other word, the diplomatic ways are more effective and instrumental than the use of violence and struggle.

Therefore, Ariel skillfully displays this peaceful theory. No doubt that Ariel has excessive desire to be free and independent from the oppression and humiliation of Prospero. But he finds that he can achieve such independence and freedom through his diplomatic performance and attitude. This tactful ways for accomplishing such freedom are represented through his unconditional willingness to serve Prospero and be under his command on the condition that after some years Prospero should grant him independence. Through his first occurrence, Ariel seemingly forms his distinguished personality as an obedient, a submissive and flexible subject. His speech and the way he addresses Prospero is very identical to that of a slave who renders himself entirely to his master without any questioning:

"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 curled clouds. To thy strong bidding task Ariel and all his quality."--(I, ii, 189-93)

On the other hand, other natives have a totally different prospective in their resistance against the colonist. They found out that the most effective and instrumental ways for gaining freedom and independence is through struggle and violence against the oppression of the colonizer. This is the theory used by Caliban in his resisting against Prospero. Caliban shows his resentment and resistance through struggle as it is the most authoritative way for getting liberation. When the man-monster, brutalized by long continued torture, he revolts against Prospero by saying:

"This island's is mine, by Sycorax my mother, which thou takest from me", Caliban, thereby, takes the advantage of the language to abuse and curse his master:

"As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed With raven's feather from unwholesome fen Drop on you both! A south-west blow on ye And blister you all o'er!"--(I, ii, 321-24)

Caliban's apparent hatred for Prospero is evident in much of his speech, which overwhelmingly indicates the unhealthy atmosphere in their relationship. Hence, the whole case of the aboriginal against aggressive civilization is highly presented and entirely employed in the play. Ariel's self-effacing willingness to serve Prospero strongly contradicted with Caliban's attitude of scornful rebelliousness.

Unlike Ariel, Caliban has no guarantee of liberty that would rationalize the attitude of reverence. His revolutionary reaction is a response to his mood that he is being unjustly used and dominated. Remarkably, Ariel's language is entirely different of Caliban's. Each employs his style according to his dimension and stand. Whereas Caliban converses almost utterly by means of offensive curses and grumble, Ariel communicates through poetic words and song. Whereas Ariel's language is prearranged and stylistic which skillfully betrays a mind at ease with his environment, a mind in which creativity and wit have sufficient room to develop, Caliban's language is the product of a mind surely in a state of wide-ranging discomfort and ill ease. According to some writers, the most effective and powerful way for getting independence is through struggle, protest and resistance. Since the natives are miserably marginalized, the peaceful way of resistance would be futile and purposeless.

Accordingly, Caliban's notable struggle and resistance against his master is clearly more effective and successful than Ariel's. Besides, the reader could possibly perceive in Caliban's character good qualities and noble values such as honor, self-respect, pride and dignity. On contrary, the signs of treachery, misery, cowardice and hypocrisy are the demonstration of Ariel's character.

The ideology of colonialism and colonist/native relations

During the 16th century, the European people were highly paying attention to the efforts of English and other European settlers colonizing those remote lands around the globe. Colonialism led to crucial conflict as
consequence of its dangerous effects (Norrie MacQueen, 2007). The Tempest examined the problematical and complicated relationship between the settlers and the native. Prospero's approach on the island is similar to the attitude of the colonizer who goes through the colonies. The colonizer thinks that it is his right to do whatever he desires in the occupied land and not even to admit the native's presence. Therefore, he believes that he can make use of the land's recourses and its people through the use of power since there is no resistance against him from the aboriginal. The settled People, thereby, have no other choice but to obey them and to hand over their land to them. The natives are aggressively usurped mentally and physically through the destructive power of the colonizer. They then realize that they are no longer the owners of their properties and lands, and painfully become as servant to the will and desire of their masters.

Besides, the colonizing country intentionally looks for usurp resources and takes advantages of the native's land control for its own interest. This is obvious in European colonial record mostly in Africa, India etc. Prospero succeeded in employing the inhabitants and the sources of the island all the way through using both intellectual mind and powerful magic. He made use of his power only to serve his interest and to gain more and more profit from the prosperous island. The land and its people were considered to be as real human resources and natural resources respectively for The Colonist. Thus, the exploiting of the native's resources is one of the top motives behind the occupation and invasion of other's lands.

Furthermore, among the procedures of settlers after occupying the land is the process of brain-wash aiming to destroy the native's culture, customs, and belief and replace them with the colonizer's language, culture and belief. The language of the colonizer is the most and the foremost representative of the settler's culture, thought and opinion. Such brain wash styles reflect and alter the identity of the colonized people and played a very crucial role to colonialism to be successful. Therefore, the settler could easily confuse his thought and, opinions on others. Throughout the history of colonialism, the language of the colonizer is forcibly imposed on the colonized people and those colonized were obliged to ignore their mother tongue and use the language of the colonizer. The native thus miserably is forced to internalize and adopt himself a new identity through the reinforcement of stereotypes by the colonizer, which is easily understandable if one thinks that the colonized finds him/herself in a circumstance they have never experienced before, after having been obliged to abandon all what constitutes his/her "world".

The colonized then has no option other than emulate the colonizer as a sole model in front of him. So the colonized loses his former identity but he is also not supported in building a new one. Thus, he lives in a complete oblivion. All at once, he is casted out from his history, memory and citizenship.

Nonetheless, through colonialism identity is not totally lost, but set in the unknown ground temporarily placed between prior and after the colonizers came. In the Tempest, Caliban is forcibly devoid of his identity and his own style of life. Prospero deliberately demolishes Caliban's identity and replaces it by his own and original identity. So the colonialism doesn't mean merely conquering the territories and resource but most importantly demolishing the native's identity by replacing the colonizer's one. Hence, the Tempest was considered to be as Shakespeare's most overtly controversial and ingenious work. Today the colonialism comes in a new model of economic and cultural domination, and a remarkable number of the discussions about colonialism that took place a hundred years ago are pertinent today.

Conclusion

Shakespeare's The Tempest, draws the most crucial lines of the colonialism and sheds its light substantially through the relationship between the settler and the native highlighting the contempt, loathing, constant fighting, disrespect, dispute, hatred, etc against each other. The Tempest is considered to be among the most universal and leading plays as it reveals extremely critical issues, including the colonial issues that dominantly shape the new world and play a very influential part in every field of our life especially after the 16th century and discovering new lands around the globe in which most of the countries in almost all over the world were occupied by some of the European Nations most notably England. Hence, the characters of Prospero and Caliban are constantly repeated themselves in the 19th century and 20th century representing the genius and the greatness of Shakespeare and his powerful potential in understanding the aspects and the nature of human being as a whole. Based on that, the study concluded that the substantial relationship between the colonist and the natives and attempted to attach such relation with the colonial aspects occurred dominantly in the 19 and 20th century. Besides, the Shakespeare's theory in The tempest Implies the relationship between Western political theory and the idea of colonialism as it was as the turning point in the future of European countries in general and British Empire in particular. Above all, The Tempest indicates that Shakespeare's writing is the creative power, the responses to us and the sympathetic emotion which has a just and lively image of human nature.

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