

‘Othering Each Other’ in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*

Sheikh Saifullah Ahmed

Lecturer, Department of English and Modern Languages, IUBAT-International University of Business Agriculture and Technology, Dhaka, Bangladesh

saifullahahmedku@gmail.com

Abstract— This study includes Postcolonialism in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. It aims at examining Bhabha’s notions of ambivalence and hybridity that he estimates as to be great forms of resistance against the colonial agency. Ambivalence generates a controversial position and viewpoint both for Caliban and Prospero in the play. Caliban is a colonized other and unable to replicate himself accurately to the European colonizers. It inflames Caliban to be ‘turbulent for liberty’ that results in his resistance and insurgency against Prospero and the colonial authority. It confirms his hybrid nature that terrorizes Prospero to lose his exclusive authority on the island and challenges the ‘monolithic power’ of the invaders. Ariel is a subservient spirit unlike Caliban, though his craving for liberty brands him turbulent too. The paper explores the ambiguities of portraying the ambivalent non-European characters and investigates each non-European character in the play is figured within a given geopolitical context that relates to ambivalence, an outcome of hybridity. Hybridity enables the colonized to absorb and mimic the norms of the dominant culture and may result in psychological forms of coercion by backbiting and by othering each other. Consequently, the colonized turn out to be a blend of intricate individualities in a hybrid formation, that enables the others to fight back by othering the settler.

Keywords— Ambivalence, third space, hybridity, othering, postcolonialism.

I. INTRODUCTION

The ambivalent renderings of Ariel and Caliban in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* turn out to be a postcolonial discourse to the critics to research on. Shakespeare categorizes Caliban as a half-animal (semi-human) non-European screwball with an inscrutable figuration that confronts their anthropological identity. With a sly motive to enlighten the entire world, the West subjugates the native both substantially and psychologically. The invaders vehemently impose their language and culture upon the colonized psyches. They sneakily circulate a political dissection between *self* and *other*, *master* and *slave*, *civilized* and *savage*, *white* and *black*, *good* and *evil*, *strong* and *weak*, *occident* and *orient*, *elite* and *subaltern* in terms of knowledge and culture of the colonized humanities.

However, Prospero appears to be a prevalent colonial agent and the approaches he deals with the inhabitants of the island expose the boldness of the colonizer. He seizes the island from the natives and shortly, enslaves them at their land. After grabbing the authority from them, he inaugurates a newfangled order on the island and proclaims himself the monarch. Caliban can be acknowledged as the archetypal of the colonized *other* subjected to the imposed decrees of his subjugator. His fragmented language can be

a crucial device to study on and to obtain an insight regarding his uniqueness that is double, divided, hybrid and ambivalent. This fluid self serves as the weapon to fight back against the colonial invaders. Nevertheless, the problem arises when the *others* unearth themselves with an unsolidified self, a fusion of discrete selves in a hybrid composition.

The physique of Caliban can be envisaged as the emblem of the primitive human race. A disintegrated and deteriorated semi-human personality seems to reveal his greed, disorder and lust. Therefore, Caliban and Ariel can be scrutinized as the imaginary forms of the non-European *orients* as imagined by the European *occidents* to legitimize their unscrupulous invasion. Due to the nebulous description of Caliban’s portrayal, there remain numerous varieties of the original, that epitomizes Caliban from a half-animal to a Third World inhabitant. The diverse *stereotypical* exposures of Caliban become attainable not only for Shakespeare’s ambiguous description but also for the physique of Caliban being a performative type involves “cultural stories, traditions, and political contestations that comprise our sense of history” (Diamond, 1996, p. 1). Therefore, Caliban simultaneously magnets cultural and political contestations. He is decomposed into a political

and cultural vehicle by which the colonial authors keep interpreting him to attend their political ends.

Baker and Hulme's (2005) "Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish" illustrates that Prospero's extreme anger towards Caliban's rebellion and resistance displays his anxiety regarding the foundation of his legitimacy in ruling the island (p. 195). However, another shift in figuring Caliban takes place with the prevailing influence of Darwin's theory of evolution. Daniel Wilson links Caliban's abnormality with Darwin's notion of the 'missing link'. In this new scientific perspective, Caliban can be labelled as half-fish and half-human. Wilson mentions that Caliban's fish-like appearance is related to Darwin's view that humans evolved from some species of aquatic animal (as cited in Vaughan & Vaughan, 1991, p. 184).

Joseph Roach's introduction to *The Cities of the Dead* and Elin Diamond's *Performance and Cultural Politics* that are quite suitable in conceptualizing the various manifestations of Caliban, exhibit the results of cultural surrogation involving cultural and political contestations. The various representations of Caliban may be examined as a series of cultural surrogates, a process in which culture "reproduces and re-creates itself" (Roach, 1996, p. 2). Caliban, for instance, embodies the traits of the *other* as imagined by Shakespeare. The diverse illustrations of Caliban echo the *occident* European's mindsets towards the *orient others*, that are profoundly coloured by the political and cultural situations of the time. These procedures of rewriting and reinterpreting that Joseph Roach terms as 'cultural surrogation' convey that any sort of representation may function as a surrogate for other kinds of representations. It postulates that existing writings on Caliban can be the probable surrogates for other kinds of writings that may have different cultural and political agendas. It embodies cultural and political contestations in which certain political and cultural viewpoints get extra privileged than others, though the subordinated viewpoints are not exterminated.

Caliban's participation in political and cultural circumstances reminds of Edward Said (1935-2003) who argues why literary critics are always ready to receive the influences, conventions, and rhetorical styles from their predecessors. It may limit the author's creativity in engineering his/her works. However, Caliban is regarded as a figure of endless surrogation that permits the anti-colonial resistance to interfere. A reformation of Caliban's figure appears in the work of Aime Cesaire (1913-2008). Cesaire's Caliban represents 'unsuspected modes of being' (Roach, 1996, p. 2) that emerged as a form of critique to the preceding Caliban. The characters that appear in Cesaire's *A Tempest* (1969) are the same as those in

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) with two modifications, namely, that Ariel is a mulatto slave and Caliban is a black slave. The plot is also slightly changed in the term of determination when Prospero decides to stay on the island instead of returning to Milan. As a rewriting, *A Tempest* reformulates and answers back to what *The Tempest* states in dealing with race and global politics. In other words, as a surrogate, *A Tempest* fills the gaps so that those forgotten non-European *others* may rise and speak up.

Critics define postcolonial discourse as "...the discourse of resistance to colonialism which begins from the first moment of colonization" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2003, p.163). Ashcroft's definition signifies that colonialism is still working and the postcolonial theory is written in resistance to colonialism. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) aids in heightening the political aspect of colonialism because Orientalism provides a way to expose how a colonized *other* is created and manipulated to justify colonialism. Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) demonstrates a fundamental theoretical base of postcolonialism. His study of dominations, subjugations, oppressions, colonial traumatic feelings, and impact of other powerful factors that produce another culture, creed, doctrine, habit and civilization is deeply influenced by Edward Said. He defines the ways in which the colonized *others* resist and rebel against the power of the colonizer, a power which is not as secure as it seems to be. It emphasizes the present situation, in a world marked by a contradictory mixture of violently proclaimed cultural difference and the complexly interconnected networks of globalization. Instead of seeing colonialism as something locked in the past, Bhabha illustrates how its histories and cultures constantly interrupt the present, challenging that we transform our understanding of cross-cultural relations. The authority of dominant nations is never as complete as it seems because it is always marked by anxiety, something that empowers the dominated to fight back (Huddart, 2006, p. 1).

'Hybridity' usually refers to the formation of a new transcultural form within a contact zone founded by the establishment of colonization. It is acknowledged in 'horticulture' to refer to the cross-breeding of two species by attaching or cross-fertilizing to frame the third one. Hybridization may occur in linguistic, cultural, political and racial structures. However, Bhabha's investigation of colonizer-colonized relationship highlights their interdependence and reciprocated construction of subjectivities, that correlates with 'ambivalence' and 'hybridity'. Bhabha contends that all the cultural announcements, speeches, statements, dialogues, and systems are created in a space that he terms the 'third space

of enunciation'. Cultural identity always develops in 'this contradictory and ambivalent space' and, for Bhabha, hierarchical inherent 'originality' or 'purity' of cultures is 'untenable' (Bhabha, 2002, p. 37). Ambivalence essentially refers to a mental, social, cultural or behavioural state of people. Bhabha clarifies that hybridization of any culture creates an ambivalent condition. It creates such a condition in which individuals feel their culture and behaviours belonging to 'no one's land'. One is the outcome of the other. Therefore, ambivalence is a fundamental aspect of hybridity.

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Prospero is a European who takes over the control of a secluded island by the agency of sorcery and enchains the indigenous inhabitants, Ariel and Caliban, to labour for him. He maintains his ascendancy by the assortment of intimidations, terrorizations, enchantments and spells. By seizing the authority of the island, he pretends to enlighten the uncivilized, barbaric, mysterious, unreasonable, strange, and backward non-Europeans. Therefore, Prospero can be identified as a colonial agent who upholds the colonial legacy of enslaving the natives and diffuses the colonial power over the aboriginal groups. Prospero's power of magic allegorically signifies the political power of the Europeans, that he employs over the non-Europeans to be benefited. Though Prospero can be identified as the heroic figure in colonial literature, Caliban can be distinguished as the hero in postcolonial reading. Caliban is the native inherent of the island, as he claims himself the legal owner of the place and exposes his subversive insolences towards Prospero. He candidly states:

This island's mine by Sycorax, my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first,
Thou strok'st me and made much of me;
... And then I loved thee
And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle:
... For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o' th' island (Shakespeare, 2000, 1.2.332-345).

Caliban is compelled to serve Prospero and his daughter Miranda against his will. Prospero outspreads to Caliban his ambiguous European friendliness and teaches him the very European language, and, in response, he is revealed all the natural resources of the island by Caliban. However, Caliban refuses to obey Prospero's rules and instructions and tries to molest Prospero's daughter Miranda.

ISSN: 2456-7620

<https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.53.11>

Consequently, their relationship turns out to be the relationship of *master vs. slave, self vs. other, occident vs. orient, civilized vs. savage, good vs. evil, or elite vs. subaltern*.

The concept of the *other* is propagated by Said. He points out that by the oriental scholarship of *othering*, the 'orient' or the 'non-Europeans' along with their specific and traditional cultures are categorized as the unreachable, uncivilized and barbaric. Said defines the entire procedure of *othering* and remarks on how the colonized *others* are not permitted to grow and prosper within their societies with a complete and cohesive sense of identity. They are frequently portrayed as cruel, sensual, idle, corrupted and driven by instinctive emotions, inherent incorrigible flaw, lust and so on. Caliban is portrayed with all the exclusivities of an *other* as defined by Said. Shakespeare epitomizes Caliban as an 'ignoble savage'. Trinculo elucidates Caliban as a specific kind of fish-like monster at the very first sight of him. Then Trinculo plans for carrying the monster back to England where the strange creature can be exhibited in a freak show:

What have we here, a man or a fish? Dead or alive? A fish: he smells like a fish, a very ancient and fish-like smell, a kind of not of the newest-poor-john. A strange fish! Were I in England now... there would this monster make a man; any strange beast there makes a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian. Legged like a man and his fins like arms! (Shakespeare, 2000, 2.2.24-33).

This speech by Trinculo can be criticized under postcolonial perspective. The major subjugated figures in the play are Caliban, a semi-human fish-like creature and Ariel, an airy spirit having no concrete shape. It is believed that the name 'Caliban' is chosen from Roman word 'Cauliban' that symbolizes 'the colour of black' as Prospero calls Caliban "this thing of darkness I/Acknowledge mine" (Shakespeare, 2000, 5.1.275-76).

Ariel, an airy spirit, is another native inhabitant of the island, who is forced to submit himself to Prospero and to obey his order. Though Prospero liberated Ariel from his imprisonment, Ariel never owns his liberty throughout the play. It is Ariel who generates a fierce storm 'Tempest' at the very beginning of the play. He performs all the necessary tasks to entertain his master. When he urges for his liberty, Prospero cunningly denies. Prospero promises his liberty to make him obey the rest of his commands. Caliban is a very significant 'ambivalent' creation of a mastermind to interpret various aspects of postcolonialism. Shakespeare portrays Caliban to illustrate significant expositions of numerous subjects, such as orientalism,

colonialism, racism, slavery, etc. Caliban is chiefly regarded as an almost typical representation of the Third World colonized subject. He can be analyzed as a figure of aboriginal primitive humanity, a disintegrated collapsed soul that reveals greed, anger, chaos, unreasoning, and lust. He signifies the imaginary *other* as imagined by the occident to celebrate differences. Framing of Caliban's nonhuman figure displays the colonial 'ambivalence' that creates duality and offers a split in the individual identity of the colonized *other*. It permits Caliban's beastly features in human nature that is contaminated with two distinct cultures.

Prospero calls Caliban a tortoise: "Come, thou tortoise" (Shakespeare, 2000, 1.2.317). He too addresses Caliban as a 'mis-shapen knave' (Shakespeare, 2000, 1.2.268). For Caliban's fiend-like appearance and his fish-like features, Trinculo, a consistently drunken jester, misinterprets Caliban as a fish-like monster having "legged like a man; and his fins like arms" (Shakespeare, 2000, 1.2.32). He eventually identifies Caliban as an islander who must be deformed by the thunderbolt. Similarly, Stephano, another drunken butler, also misinterprets Caliban as an animal: "This is some monster of the isle, with four legs, who hath got, as I take it, an ague" (Shakespeare, 2000, 1.2.64-65). Caliban's origin also obscures the attempt to recognize his nature and appearance. Prospero remarks that his mother, Sycorax, a 'damn'd witch', could control the moon, make flows and ebbs, while his father was the devil himself. This ancestry helps to portray the image of Caliban as half-human and half-devil. These ambivalent descriptions of Caliban's malformations invite to interpret Caliban's character numerous times. Numerous productions document Caliban's various strange depictions. These ambivalent descriptions permit no particular identity for Caliban and brand him an ambivalent creature, the mixture of the original and the dominant values. He is wild, barbaric, uncivilized, deformed, unreasonable and neither man nor brute. He is a sort of creature of the earth and Ariel is a sort of creature of the air. He participates in the qualities of beasts but he is distinct from them, as he occupies the capability of understanding without having moral reason and he does not possess the instincts possessed by the absolute animals. He is a man in the sense of imagination. It unfolds the colonial ambivalence in portraying the ambivalent self of Caliban and Ariel. Said's model may aid to illuminate Caliban's ambivalent exposure that is profoundly modified with the ideology of colonialism. He defines 'orientalism' as "a will to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate even to incorporate the *other*" (Said, 1978, p.5). The orientalist do not only define the

orient, but they also create and maintain the orient by the process of *othering* like Caliban and Ariel.

However, as this ambivalent representation of Caliban seems to be coloured by the Europeans' prejudice against the non-Europeans, it often offers the critics from the colonized nations to refashion and recreate Caliban in a way that conveys new political possibilities. Caliban seems to be by nature an ambivalent slave who makes a plot with Stephano and Trinculo to slay Prospero. He is a slave of his desire that illustrates his ambivalent nature, the duality or split in his nature. He proclaims: "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" (Shakespeare, 2000, 1.2.364-366). Caliban's abnormalities exemplify the kernels of a colonial attitude. Shakespeare lets Caliban speak and rebel, though his rebellion against colonial authority is shown as useless, futile, and ambivalent. It is apparent that Caliban is not merely a comic character rather he possesses a binary role that offers a split in his individual and cultural identity and creates a 'third space' that enables him to terrorize Prospero by *othering* him too. By *othering* Prospero, Caliban develops an indecent, striking, vengeful, cursing and passionate beastly human nature.

Ariel, as the very name implies, is a spirit of the air. Being also an elemental spirit, he is equally at home in all elements such as he can penetrate the earth, mix with fire and dive into the sea. He can change himself into all shapes, from a figure of fire to a water-nymph, from a harpy to Ceres. He is also presented as the colonized *other* who works for the colonial agent and retains harmony among the subordinate spirits. Subordinate spirits suggest the remaining colonized characters. Ariel is a child of colonial imagination. He can be regarded as a link between the human and imaginative worlds. Said's concept of the *other* may also aid to illustrate his ambivalent, imaginative and non-concrete portrayal that is profoundly modified with the ideology of the occident. Hence, there is a unique blend in him. He is a spirit, but he moves in the human sphere. He occupies spirit-like qualities with human attributes. It confirms ambivalence in the nature of Ariel.

Ariel has a great yearning for freedom. He is unwilling to serve Prospero. Prospero reminds him of how he had once released him from the curse of Sycorax. To stimulate Ariel, he keeps repeating his promise of freedom in the play. Simultaneously, Ariel's longing for freedom juxtaposes the pleasure that he takes in performing his duties and receiving his master's appreciation. He feels flattered when Prospero calls him his brave spirit. This conduct of Ariel is an additional confirmation to his paradoxical and ambivalent nature. Though Ariel is a spirit of the air, he

retains some human attributes. Giving human touches in the portrayal of Ariel, Shakespeare creates additional ambiguities in defining him as a character. Ariel is a spirit and therefore, incapable of feeling human emotions. Though his non-human nature excites and his music pleases the audience, he remains ambivalent that lacks the depth and complexity of human nature.

Hybridity is the political change in the entire system by creating something new. Prospero's identity, nationality, ethnicity and other colonial elements shift Caliban to a hypocritical hybrid self that emerges from a 'third space'. He along with other inhabitants of the island has to compromise to adopt the *occidental* ethics, social structure, supremacy, religion, or even clothing. The effort is taken by Prospero to teach the European language to Caliban to spread colonialism. In this way, Caliban undergoes a process of hybridization as "hybridity occurs in post-colonial societies both as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control, or when settler-invaders dispossess indigenous peoples and force them to 'assimilate' to new social patterns" (Ashcroft et al., 2003, p. 183). Therefore, it is obvious that Caliban is not a singular self but the blend of the two. His self is formed under the influence of Prospero's identity, nationality, ethnicity, and other colonial elements. It ensures 'cross-fertilization' between their (Caliban and Prospero's) 'constitutive elements' (Ashcroft et al., 2003, p. 184).

The revolutionary and antagonistic approaches of Caliban such as the attempt to rape Prospero's daughter Miranda; to curse Prospero in the language which is taught by him; to make a plot against Prospero with Stephano and Trinculo; and to try to seize the power, authority and right of the island from his master ensure his hybrid nature. He asserts: "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" (Shakespeare, 2000, 1.2.364-366). It seems Caliban could be succeeded if Ariel does not overhear the conversation when Caliban reveals his plan. He reveals: "Having first seized his books, or with a log / Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake, / Or cut his wezand with thy knife" (Shakespeare, 2000, 3.2.88-90). Stephano and Trinculo ruin the plan by falling into the trap that Ariel sets up despite Caliban's objection. In this way, Caliban is hybridized by the colonial invader and made to recognize his rights by providing European language and education that may result in several futile revolts against Prospero's ascendancy. It affrights Prospero too.

The consequence of ambivalence is to produce a profound tension between the authority and the colonized *other*. This tension is quite obvious in the relationship between

Prospero and Caliban. Therefore, in *The Tempest*, ambivalence creates a controversial position and outlook both for Caliban and Prospero because the colonial relationship is always ambivalent. Caliban for being a colonized *other* never can replicate himself exactly to the colonizers and this ambivalence infuriates Caliban to be 'turbulent for liberty' (Bhabha, 2002, p. 87) ensuing his resistance and revolt against Prospero and the colonial legacy. This situation of Caliban ensures his hybridization. This hybridization threatens Prospero to lose his authority and creates an ambivalent situation that challenges the 'monolithic power' of Prospero. In this way, *hybridity* and *ambivalence* are exploited in *The Tempest*. *Ambivalence* works with intimidating and *othering* Prospero and aids to 'decentre' from his position of power resulting in Caliban's hostility and uprising against him. Caliban confronts Prospero's monolithic dominance by *othering* him too.

III. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the paper attempts to locate the ambiguities of portraying the ambivalent and hybrid portrayal of non-European characters and the notion of *othering* each other by both the orient and the occident. It is transparent that Caliban loses his territory. Conversely, he gets European education that confirms his entrance to power. He takes an effort to employ this ability to dissipate his master Prospero and his mandate. These inexplicable identical issues of Caliban and Ariel corroborate their complex identities with a hybrid and ambivalent disposition. Therefore, they challenge and terrorize each other by *othering* each other. The study is limited within some boundaries. It does not employ other approaches or techniques rather than a qualitative content analysis method. It is limited to the exploration of 'ambivalence' and 'hybridity' in *The Tempest*. However, it can benefit the existing knowledge and simultaneously, can add new knowledge to the reading of literature. Accordingly, this research venture supplements a new postcolonial insight into the interpretation of *The Tempest*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The amplest of gratitude goes to the Almighty Allah for His benevolence in giving me the faculty to accomplish this research endeavour and for keeping me hale and hearty throughout the venture. Successively, I express my deep regards to my parents, especially to my mother who served me throughout the month to carry out the study. Her kind mental support encourages me to stick to my work. Afterwards, I acknowledge the seminar library of English Discipline, Khulna University, the library of IUBAT-

International University of Business Agriculture and Technology and Google that made my research effort much easier. They gave me the access to get the lion's share of research works, books, journals, articles, etc.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (Eds.). (2003). *The post-colonial studies reader*. Retrieved from Taylor & Francis e-Library database.
- [2] Barker, F., & Peter, H. (2005). Nymphs and reapers heavily vanish: the discursive con-texts of *the tempest*. In J. Drakakis (Ed.), *Alternative Shakespeare* (pp. 194-208). Retrieved from Taylor & Francis e-Library database.
- [3] Barry, P. (2009). *Beginning theory: an introduction to literary and cultural theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- [4] Bhabha, H. K. (2002). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- [5] Diamond, E. (Ed.). (1996). *Performance and cultural politics*. London: Routledge.
- [6] Huddart, D. (2006). *Homi k. Bhabha*. Retrieved from Taylor & Francis e-Library database.
- [7] Roach, J. (1996). *Cities of the dead: Circum-Atlantic performance*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- [8] Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- [9] Shakespeare, W. (2000). *The tempest*. In V. M. Vaughan, & In A. T. Vaughan (Eds.). London: The Arden Shakespeare. (Original work published in 1611).
- [10] Vaughan, A. T, & Vaughan, V. M. (1991). *Shakespeare's Caliban: a cultural history*. New York: Cambridge University Press.