

Colonial language, behavior and identity formation in two tempests

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



Colonial language, behavior and identity formation in Two Tempests

Shakespeare in his last work, *The Tempest* tells the story of Prospero, the duke of Milan who is exiled to an island. The conflicts throughout the play arise from the desire of power over nature and people. Prospero overtakes the power from the native people on the land and is fighting for his title; that has been stolen by his brother. The influence of colonization is present in *The Tempest*, and is demonstrated in the characters Caliban and Ariel; who become Prospero's servers in order to get free.

Cesaire writes *A Tempest*, based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, to help the reader understand its message better. The theme remains the same, but Cesaire emphasizes more deeply on the characters Caliban and Ariel. Cesaire presents them as people of the new world, who are under the influence of a foreign power, Prospero. Cesaire presents Caliban and Ariel with slightly different characteristics as Shakespeare, showing the important role of their language, behavior and actions.

The very first change that Cesaire made in *A Tempest* we can see at the beginning of the play where the author mentions Ariel as a mulatto slave and Caliban as a black slave. Their change in color is significant because Cesaire expresses the post-colonial influence on the characters. The example of colonization is presented by a white conqueror, Prospero, who takes over the native people on the island, Caliban and Ariel. The two Characters, Caliban and Ariel are described differently in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Cesaire's *A Tempest*.

A Tempest is a post-colonial writing, and Césaire forms his characters with stronger and more significant characteristics. Caliban's personality becomes more important than in Shakespeare's play. In The Tempest, Caliban is an insolent, uneducated slave who is controlled through magic by Prospero, while in A Tempest; he becomes an aggressive and defined black man. In The Tempest, we can see Caliban as a child of a witch, Sycorax, who is a poor judge of character, acting like an animal and willing to get free.

In Césaire's play the way he enters the scene is already telling us that he becomes a strong and brave character with a personality. Caliban's word to Prospero, " Uhuru" (Césaire 1. 2. 10-11), shows his rebellious attitude towards his master, letting him know about his eagerness to become free and independent on his island again. " Uhuru" in Swahili means freedom and for Caliban means his life. With this word, Caliban is showing to Prospero his defiance towards the situation, in which he becomes a slave of his own land.

Caliban is the one who introduced the island to Prospero, and he expects to be treated with respect. Caliban is a fighter who is ready to choose death over humiliation: " Call me X. That would be best. Like a man without a name. Or, to be more precise, a man whose name has been stolen. You talk about history and everyone knows it. " (Césaire 18) With Prospero's arrival to the island, Caliban becomes a slave of his own land. In spite of difficulties and his situation, Caliban does not easily admit defeat.

The fact that he wants to be called X rather than Caliban, shows his fight for his free will that he has as a person. In Césaire's play Caliban becomes aware of his situation and he knows that a person can be considered a

person, if that has the right to take decisions over himself. Prospero has power over Caliban, gives him a new name, and with that Prospero steals his identity and his whole being as a human. This contrasts with Shakespeare's play where Caliban's fight for his personality is less important; he just exists and obeys as a slave.

Caliban represents the suppressed category of people who are under foreign intruders' power and forced to obey their commands. The language that Césaire uses for his characters is more aggressive and eloquent than in Shakespeare's play. Caliban is arguing furiously with Prospero, showing the injustice of Prospero's power over him: " You lied to me so much, about the world, about myself, that you ended up by imposing on me an image of myself. " (Césaire 3. 5. 22-24) The way Caliban talks to his master shows the tormented relationship that they have.

Caliban uses the language that Prospero taught him in a way that expresses his anger and his suffering as a slave of his land. The way Prospero treats Caliban is an example of the colonized lands where the new rulers used the native people for their advantage. The colonizer's influence on native people is presented by Shakespeare and Césaire too, just in different languages. For Caliban, there is no importance in speaking Prospero's language: " You taught me language, and /my profit on't/Is, I know how to curse. " (Shakespeare 1. 2. -4); he is forced to do that in order to obey his commands. The colonization of the island took away Caliban's own language, his name and his home that now he calls " ghetto". (Césaire 13) Shakespeare doesn't focus as much as Césaire on Caliban's character. The

language what he uses is from 1400s, and the characters are used mostly for their role in the play and not as a symbol of the colonized lands as in Césaire's play. Changing the character's color and language, Césaire shows the essence of the diversity in people and their important role in life according to their skin and language.

Ariel's change is substantial, too. He is presented as a mulatto slave, which is another character of colonized lands. His identity is totally different from Caliban's; he is the naive and obedient slave and not the fighter like Caliban. Ariel is representing the category of people who are ready to obey the master's command and waiting for changes to happen. Ariel knows that Prospero uses him for his own purpose, and despite of all that, he approaches his tasks with enthusiasm, reporting any activities that he observes.

Even though Shakespeare describes Ariel as a sprite, he has human qualities; he is longing for his liberty. He is invisible, but his actions are important, and he reflects human emotions: " ARIEL. If you now behold them, your affections / would become tender. / PROSPERO. Dost thou think so, spirit? / ARIEL. Mine would, sir, were I human. " (Shakespeare 5. 1. 35-39) Throughout the play, Ariel, the mulatto slave, is described as a compliant server and is treated in a nice way comparative to Caliban, who is treated horribly and threatened.

The different treatment of slaves shows us that even between slaves are classifications, and they all have their place in world according to their skin color. In contrast with Shakespeare, Césaire represents the two characters

on a deeper level and focuses more on their personalities. Throughout the play, Césaire describes Caliban and Ariel as two servants with different desires and places in the colonized land. Caliban is ready to fight for what belongs to him, including his identity, in contrast with Ariel, who accommodates to the situation and waits for a better future.