



A Postmodern Representation of Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban in the Tempest

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Abstract

A playwright of all time and all ages, William Shakespeare sketched the character of Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban (the Trio) in *The Tempest* to represent postmodern physiognomies. Through these characters, he portrays ant-formality, conspiracy theories, intertextuality, irony, temporal distortion, paranoia, pastiche, playfulness, puns, wordplays, and supernatural elements to create a postmodern atmosphere in the play. Shakespeare, as Ihab Hassan and Brian McHale defined and characterized postmodernism, deconstructs the formal properties of the text and uses pastiche in *The Tempest*. It also observes how he crafts intertextuality and creates paranoia through Caliban, Ariel, Sycorax, Setebos, the island, the Mediterranean, the voyage, mariners, Carthage, and Naples in the play. Besides, this study examines how the Trio represents postmodern concepts: natural vs. supernatural and reality vs. dream. Focusing on Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality, Truth and Power* and *The Eye of Power*, the study also explores the Panoptical Gaze of Prospero who has assigned Ariel—as a surveillance to keep an eye on everybody and everything in the island, especially, Caliban. Finally, this paper attempts to project 'A Postmodern Representation of Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban' in *The Tempest*.

Keywords: Representation, Postmodern Deconstruct, Physiognomies, Pastiche, Intertextuality, Panoptical Gaze, Paranoia, Playfulness, Puns, Wordplays, Conspiracy Theories, Natural, Supernatural, Surveillance Camera, and Dreamy World.

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I. Introduction

William Shakespeare's works are universally acknowledged, considered the representatives of all times and all ages, and influenced global readers and audiences. Therefore, critics, scholars, academics, and students have been rereading, reexamining, retelling, and restaging his plays over the last four centuries. The allusive references to historical, mythological, geographical, and religious characters: Caliban, Sycorax, Setebos, and Dido, Shakespeare has added postmodernist features to *The Tempest*. The reference to the island, the Mediterranean Sea, sea voyages, mariners, Carthage, and Naples also enrich the play. In the end, through Caliban and Ariel, Prospero represents a very postmodern feature of freedom. His double-standard attitude towards the characters in *The Tempest* depicts the universal characteristic of the dominant elites. In the name of liberty, Prospero, with the help of magic and Ariel's surveillance, fulfills his mission of creating the storm, bringing the royal parties to the isle and enslaving Caliban, showing his superiority over other characters. On the other hand, to enjoy freedom, Ariel obeys Prospero blindly and exerts his power by doing anything and everything on the island.

With the presence of the supernatural and dreamy world, Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban added another pivotal postmodern tune to the text. The religious, mythological, geographical, and historical references to characters and their names, incidents, events, locations, and places have incorporated intertextuality and inserted paranoia into the play. The Panoptical Gaze of Prospero, who assigns Ariel—surveillance to keep an eye on everybody and everything on the island, has a vast influence on contemporary readers and audiences. Prospero deconstructs the Doctrine of the Trinity, Caliban breaks the idea of the linguistic hierarchy of Aristotle and Ariel projects the panoptical gaze of Prospero. They also enriched the passage of the play by using supernatural elements, a dreamy world, and paranoia. Therefore it is noteworthy to state that the representation of Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban is postmodern.

Deconstruction of Form and Use of Pastiche through the Trio

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) emphasized that in a play "in some portions verse only is employed, and in others song" (Warrington 1963, p. 12). In Poetics (335 B.C.), he suggests that verse and prose are better not to blend but rather to be separated in the language of the play. Moreover, he signifies that "all the characters should remain consistent throughout the play" (Ibid. p. 26). Shakespeare maintains the unity of place in *The Tempest*. It requires that the event of the play should take place without any alteration of the scene. In the majority of Shakespearean dramas, a constant change of locality, country, and sudden switch from one place to another is very prominent. The entire action of *The Tempest* occurs on the island although we find a sudden shift from one part of the island to the other. Here Shakespeare creates a new dimension of unity of place. He also tries to preserve the unity of action of the play. The unity of action never permits any underplot. *The Tempest* has some minor underplots: the conspiracies of Caliban against Prospero, of Antonio and Sebastian against Alonso, and the love affair of Ferdinand and Miranda where Shakespeare puts the magical power of Prospero in the center that ensures the singleness of impression. The storm, the conspiracies, the magic banquet, the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda, and the freedom of Ariel all these incidents are constructed and controlled by the magical power of Prospero. Shakespeare keeps the original concept of the unity of time, place, and action as simple as Aristotle did and adds new essence to the same notion as well. This sort of interplay between old and new concepts facilitates a postmodern reading of the play. Through the trio: Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban, Shakespeare deconstructs the form and uses pastiche which are two important postmodern components.

Postmodern Representation of Prospero

In deconstructing forms and using pastiche, Shakespeare eventually takes us from reality to religion, doctrine to dreamland. Prospero appears to be "god the father" who has complete control over all the events, incidents, and characters on the island. He creates the storm that displaces Alonso, Ferdinand, and others; enslaves Caliban; assigns Ariel to monitor everybody and everything; creates all climaxes and finally possesses the ownership and role of creator of the island. Like God the Father, he promises freedom to Ariel (I.ii.242-250). At the end of the play, Prospero gives power to Ariel; sets him free, and fulfills his commitment by which he empowers "the Holy Spirit as God does. By avoiding the role of 'the son', Shakespeare deconstructs the doctrine of the Trinity and incorporates postmodern features in *The Tempest*. And the role and representation of Prospero are undoubtedly postmodern.

Panoptical Gaze of Prospero and the Role of Ariel as an Invisible Close Circuit Camera

According to Foucault's understanding, 'power is based on knowledge and makes use of knowledge; on the other hand, power reproduces knowledge by shaping it by its anonymous intentions. Power (re-) creates its fields of exercise through knowledge. In *The Tempest*, Prospero knew, thus he exercised power and control. He enforces his strict watch— Ariel to possess power and have control over the royal guests and ordinary Caliban. As sophisticated societies impose more control and surveillance on people in the name of liberty and rights, so Prospero imposes the same control and observation which reinforces the postmodernist feature in the play. It also illustrates that Ariel as a postmodern surveillance camera whose eyes represent an invisible gaze of Prospero is very powerful and structured. Moreover, chapter three presents the characters in the play as prisoners of the prison cell, who are uncertain and unaware of the fact that they are under the observation of Prospero.

Prospero practices his magical power and uses his knowledge to control the plot and the plan of other characters in the play. He assigns Ariel for visualizing all the scenes of the play and imposing an invisible gaze on the island. We notice the power of Prospero's magic in four major references: the creation of the storm, the foil of Caliban's conspiracy against Prospero and Miranda, the defeat of Antonio and Sebastian's murder plot against Alonso, and the love affair and union of Ferdinand and Miranda. In Act I Scene I; Prospero admits his supernatural power to Miranda:

"Lend thy hand
And pluck my magic garment from me" (I.i.21-22)

This indicates knowledge of magic ensures power and empowers Prospero to design all the plots of the play. His magical power fosters a surveillance attitude in Prospero and deepens his suspicion of other inhabitants of the land. Thus he assigns Ariel to go around the isle to supervise and scrutinize Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian, Gonzalo, Ferdinand, Miranda, and mainly Caliban's activities and movements. Thus, Ariel becomes the security guard to protect this symbolic prison-type isle.

Describing Jeremy Bentham's eighteenth-century prison concept, the "Panopticon," in *The Eye of Power* Michael Foucault truly asserts that 'power and surveillance are tenaciously bound together.' In such a prison the guards are deployed to monitor the activities and movements of the prisoners in the prison cells. The guards enjoy an "all-seeing" view of the prison that provides them an opportunity to observe the prisoners. An outer window supplies extra days that make everything highly visible and transparent. Similarly, in *The*

Tempest, the island is a prison where all the characters are confined by Prospero who restricts their movements and observes their activities with the help of his Close Circuit Camera—Ariel.

Prospero's strict watch on Ariel who keeps eyeing anything and everything on the island represents a panoptical gaze in the play. In Act I, Scene ii, Ariel appears on the ship; observes every action; monitors everybody's movement, and returns to Prospero; informing him what exactly happened to Alonso, Ferdinand, Antonio, Sebastian, Gonzalo, and others. He also cites that Ferdinand first jumps into the wild sea to save himself, and except for the sailor everybody else on the ship dives into the sea. Ariel further narrates that none of them is hurt or lost. Even everybody seems to be fresher than before. Moreover, he updates that the rest of the fleet assembled and sailed towards the Mediterranean Sea—towards the native Naples. Ariel goes on to describe the later consequences of the storm: Ferdinand is alone in one corner of the island sitting with his arms folded and looking very gloomy; the king's ship reached the harbor safely; all fall asleep as they have gone through such exertions and struggles against the storm (I.ii.220-240).

We further observe that Prospero assigns Ariel as an invisible Close Circuit Camera on the island. So the passage narrates:

Prospero: Go make thyself like a nymph o'the sea
Be subject to no sight but mine, invisible
To every eyeball else. Go take this shape
And hither come in't; go hence with diligence!
Awake, dear heart, awake! Thou hast slept well; awake! (I.ii. 300-305)

This reference shows that Prospero sets Ariel as a postmodern CCTV Camera on the island to screen every scene; store all information; supervise every action, and inform Prospero before the action takes place. He specially orders Ariel to observe the movements of the voyagers and keep a special eye on Caliban. According to Foucault, "disciplinary power is exemplified by Bentham's Panopticon, a building that shows how individuals can be supervised and controlled efficiently. Institutions modeled on the panopticon begin to spread throughout society. Prison develops from this idea of discipline. It aims both to deprive the individual of his freedom and to reform him". Similarly, Prospero does the same treatment to every character on the island. He makes the island a prison where all the characters are confined to the isle; their actions and movements are observed and supervised; their activities are controlled and their emotions are ignored as in the prison. Like postmodern societies, they are forced to live a structured life.

It is to be noted that this island symbolizes an open prison where Ariel represents the surveillance camera and Prospero personifies the superpower that can possess complete control over everything. Prospero exercises the power through the use of high supernatural skills and forces them to follow all the rules of the island. Prospero's panoptical gaze reassures that "power and surveillance tenaciously bound together". His application of power becomes automatic and Ariel is a postmodern surveillance camera whose gaze is powerful and structured. Initially, like the prisoners of the prison cells, all the characters in the play are uncertain and unaware of the fact that they are under close observation of Prospero. As sophisticated societies impose more control and observation on the citizen in the name of liberty and rights, likewise Prospero in *The Tempest* practices the same principles in the name of safety and security. Above all, the Panoptical Gaze of Prospero and the role of Ariel as an invisible Close Circuit Camera are postmodern in features.

Postmodern Representation of Caliban

On the other, Shakespeare breaks the linguistic hierarchy by lowering the language, words, and phrases of high characters; inserting highly metrical verses and refined expressions in ordinary characters which represents a postmodern feature. The hierarchy of the language is disrupted and formed as mutant and idiolect that make the language of *The Tempest* chaotic and polymorphous. Through Caliban Shakespeare applies versal prose in *The Tempest*. This "savage and deformed slave" utters dignified, elevated, and highly musical words, phrases, and sentences that confirm his expertise and skill in utilizing the language. In Act II, Scene ii Caliban proves his ability while celebrating his daydream—freedom from Prospero. He sings the following song:

Cal: No more dams I'll make for fish;
Nor fetch in firing at requiring;
Nor scrape trenching, nor wash dish: 'Ban, Ban, Caliban
Has a new master: get a new man.

Freedom, high-day! High-day, freedom! Freedom, high-day, freedom! (II.ii. 180-187)

With his lyrical voice, Caliban shows that he is capable of composing rhythmic songs despite being a "savage and deformed slave" as Prospero introduces him to the audience. On another occasion in Act III, Scene ii when Stephano and Trinculo enjoy singing merrily Caliban finds that their song is not "in tune" (III.ii.122). Here, Shakespeare portrays a revised clone—Caliban who neither startles others as Ariel does with his abrupt appearance and ghostly sounds nor observes their movements. As Caliban goes on to say:

Cal: Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instrument
Will hum about my ear; and sometimes voices,
That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
Will making me sleep again, and then, in dreaming,
The clouds me thought would open, and show
Ready to drop upon me; that when I wak'd
I cried to dream again. (III.ii.133-141)

Here an uncivilized, dark, evil self like Caliban as Prospero sketches, utters the words: "airs, music, delight, and dream" which contradicts his character. On one hand, he is conscious of the melody of the music and on the other hand, is very sensible. This breaks the hierarchy of language and makes it anarchic. Such disorder in the diction of the play creates inconsistency in the characters. This sort of alteration and reformation of Caliban by Shakespeare is precisely postmodern.

Caliban Represents Paranoia and Intertextuality

The appearance and physical structure of Caliban is unusual and alien-type. He is a half-monster and half-human who is not civilized as Prospero terms him a "savage and deformed slave" who is an animalistic and evil creature. Thus Caliban's presence, shape, description, and personality create a paranoid aura in the play. His first instruction is very scary as he intends to rape Miranda in Act-I, Scene II. (I.ii.351-352). Plotting a murder attempt against Prospero, Caliban wishes to possess Miranda as his wife and become the monarch of the isle. His actions are 'terrestrial, earthly, evil, black and lowly' which makes him a paranoid villain. To present Caliban as a paranoid character, Prospero constantly mentions that Caliban is a "slave, villain, earth, tortoise, poisonous, abhorred, capable of all ill, savage, vile race, hag seed and devil" (I.ii.315-372).

Like Caliban, his mother Sycorax also creates fear among the characters in *The Tempest*. The reference of Sycorax—a witch, in Act-I, Scene-ii who represents 'darkness, bad luck and evil omen' (I.ii.258) is also a paranoid character. Both the mother (Sycorax) and son (Caliban) create distorted illusions and suspicion in *The Tempest*. Trinculo and Stephano call Caliban a 'monster' and 'moon calf', and refer him to as "slave, villain, tortoise, poisonous, abhorred, capable of all ill, savage, vile race, hag seed and devil" (I.ii.351-372) portray Caliban a paranoid figure in *The Tempest*. Out of fear, Caliban wants to murder Prospero and out of revenge, he wants to rape Miranda. Both the mother and son horrify other characters and create paranoia in the play.

The subtle presence of previous literary works in a story, and intertextuality is an important elements of postmodern literature. The character of *The Tempest* Caliban and Sycorax represent historical, geographical, mythological, and religious figures, events, and places that make the passage of *The Tempest* intertextual. Sea voyages, discovery, and exploration of new lands and continents refer to Shakespearean time. This theme of the adventure of the mariners and sea voyagers for a 'new world' in *The Tempest* and other Shakespearean plays are adapted from his time. So the Scholars and critics believe that Shakespeare has adopted the theme of *The Tempest*, from his time, and the character—Caliban is also borrowed from Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals" (1580) and Bermuda Pamphlets (1610).

The name of Caliban is adapted from the word 'Cannibal' (Skura 1989. p.51) which represents native Caribbean and cannibalism. The critic Chambers has suggested that the name of Caliban is derived from the gypsy word "cauliban" which means "blackness" (Kermode 1954, p.xxxviii). In *The Tempest*, we find a similar character and portrayal of Caliban who is termed as a "salvage and deformed slave" representing an evil and black monster. In Act-I, Scene ii, Caliban wants to rape Miranda (I.ii. 351-352); plots to slay Prospero, and wants to possess Miranda as his wife thus becoming the King of the island (III.ii. 85-100). Prospero treated Caliban as a "thing of darkness" whereas Stephano and Trinculo referred to him as a "monster" and "moon calf", and Shakespeare considered him a "salve, villain, earth, tortoise, poisonous, abhorred, capable of all ill, savage, vile race, hag seed and devil" (I.ii. 315-372)—all these show that Caliban's personality, language, activities, movements, and reactions are befitted with his name. In representing Caliban Shakespeare uses playful and indeterminate language and evil actions which added multi-dimensional "layers of allusiveness and intertextuality" to *The Tempest*. Here Caliban not only creates paranoia but also constructs intertextuality.

Ariel: an Agent of Creating Paranoia

The presence of Ariel—a ghost who is also paranoid and keeps eye on everybody and everything in the play. His sudden appearance and exit startle the other characters as well as the readers and audiences. He works as a surveillance camera which is a very postmodern theme. In other words, Ariel is a postmodern CCTV camera. Prospero's treatment of Caliban and Ariel is a double standard which is also a postmodern element. On one hand, he treats Caliban as a slave; on the other hand, he takes care of Ariel as his son—rewarding him with freedom in the end. The character of *The Tempest* Caliban, Ariel, Setebos, Dido, and Sycorax represent

historical, geographical, mythological, and religious figures, events, and places that make the passage of *The Tempest* intertextual and with their "terrestrial, earthly, evil, black and lowly" actions they make *The Tempest* a complete paranoid play. Ariel's sudden entry and swift departure enforced paranoia and added postmodern features to the play.

Trio's Role in Creating a Supernatural and Dreamy World

The Tempest is predominated by supernatural plots, elements, events, and characters. Magic plays a driving role in the play to govern all the actions and incidents. Prospero's magical power constructs and controls every important event of the play. The artificial tempest and assumed ship-wreck, the rescuing of the voyagers and scattering them in various small groups on the isle, bringing the ship ashore safe and keeping the sailors asleep, the union of Ferdinand and Miranda, foiling the conspiracy of Antonio and Sebastian, the defeat of Caliban's plot, the extraordinary feast of spirits and fading of a banquet, Ariel's songs and music, Juno's masque, the trial and torment of Caliban by the Prospero and Ariel—are all highly supernatural constructions.

Shakespeare has combined natural settings with supernatural elements and represented reality in a dreamy setting. Prospero creates the storm that causes no harm to anybody; controls the storm; sends Ariel now and then to create suspense and surprise; projects the imaginary setup of the island and represents everyone as he wishes. McHale defines postmodernism deals with the questions related to the notion of "being" and "existence" e.g. "what is a world, what kinds of worlds are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of worlds are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?" (Ibid.p.10).

The natural inhabitants of the island, surroundings, beauty, and description provide a realistic view. On the contrary, the presence of Ariel, Prospero's magic, Caliban's representation, and references to witches create an altered scenario of the isle. This confusion between real and supernatural continues and Shakespeare creates this dilemma and allows the readers and audiences to open their eyes and inner thoughts to distinguish the differences. As postmodernism emphasizes the notion of reality, being, different worlds, and existence, Shakespeare like McHale, carries on creating these notions in *The Tempest*.

In *The Tempest*, the ontological references confer that Shakespeare plays with reality and dreams. Keeping Aristotle's projections of the unity of time, place, and action Shakespeare create ambiguity on the location of the isle. At one point, it is indicated that this island belongs to the Mediterranean Sea as Prospero, Miranda, Alonso and all Royal guests of Milan and Naples are from Italy mentioning in the text. But Ariel reports to Prospero that all the voyagers are safe and the ship is "in the deep nook where once thou cal'dst me upon at midnight to fetch dew forms the still-vexed Bermoothes" (I.ii.226-230). Surprisingly, Ariel mentions in the same passage, the "Mediterranean flot" (I.ii.234) is thousands of miles away from Bermoothes. Referring to the Bermuda Pamphlets (1610), according to scholars and critics, where Shakespeare adopted the names "Caliban and Setebos" reveals that the voyagers from England sailed toward America. Caliban mentions twice Setebos—a Patagonians god whom he worships and seeks her help to avoid the punishment of Prospero. Setebos appears to be a safeguard in the text. As Caliban cites:

Cal: No, pray thee!

I must obey: his art is of such power, It would control my dam's god, Setebos,
And make a vassal of him. (I.ii. 370-374) O Setebos, these are brave spirits indeed!
How fine my master is! I am afraid He will chastise me. (V. I 260-264)

Setebos was the god of the Patagonians of South America. While sailing towards South America, Antonio Pigafetta, referred to Setebos in *Relations of the First Round-the-world Trip* (1536). According to the scholar and critics, Caliban's mother Sycorax is considered an Algerian who lives in the Mediterranean and gives birth (I. ii.261 & 267-282). An Algerian witch lives in a Mediterranean isle and adores a Native American god. This contradictory reference to witch questions the notion of "truth" as the postmodernists do. Putting real and dreamy; natural and supernatural together Shakespeare forms a postmodern diction in the text.

In act IV, Scene I, Prospero asks all the goddesses (Iris, Juno, and Ceres), nymphs, and reapers to make the wedding of Ferdinand and Miranda merry and happy by singing and dancing. Instead of royal servants, he orders them to arrange the celebration. Prospero himself stated that everything that has happened is pure fantasy and this is an "imaginary" play and the characters are unreal. Even at the end of the play the locations, palaces, temples, and the globe would be "dissolved". He further admits that humans are "such stuff as dreams are made on" and they are ended up by "sleep". He questions the nature of "existence and being". Finally, Prospero declares that human life is nothing but a fantasy.

The Tempest projects an interplay between the natural and the supernatural, reality and dream world that creates the postmodern diction in the play. In Act, I, Scene I, Prospero uses his magical power and creates a storm that makes everything disordered, displaced, and destroyed. This shipwreck is ghostly. With his magical power, Prospero imprisoned Caliban; fooled him, and forced him to suffer. He appoints Ariel to monitor the movements of Caliban and others. He represented Ariel as a supernatural character. The love affair of Ferdinand

and Miranda is natural and Prospero's kinship is authentic and universal. On one hand, Shakespeare represents Prospero's magical power, Ariel, Sycorax, goddesses (Iris, Juno, and Ceres), nymphs, and reapers to symbolize supernatural figures in *The Tempest* on the hand he portrays Miranda, Ferdinand, Alonso, Gonzalo, and other human characters to sketch a natural picture of the human society.

It is also further noted that Ariel's music creates a magical 'sleep' at the end of Act II, scene I, while sleeping Antonio speaks "sleepy language" (II.i.206). Granting the freedom of the readers to have their understanding of the play and allowing them to distinguish natural from supernatural and reality from the imaginary world, Shakespeare intentionally creates this sleepy, dreamy, and imaginary world in *The Tempest*. It could be justified to state that Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban made a natural plot supernatural, and a real setting dreamy thus adding postmodern physiognomies to the play.

II. Conclusion

Shakespeare constructs all the characters to represent contemporary society although *The Tempest* signifies personal, political, social, and cultural chaos and has a dubious treatment of character. Prospero's personal and royal enmity causes this storm which is created and controlled by supernatural power. Prospero designs the plot; separates Ferdinand from his father; displaces all the voyagers in three different parts of the island; creates the storm; observes everybody's actions and monitors their movements. Eventually, Prospero knows the final destiny of all and finally becomes the decider of all actions. Through magical power and knowledge, Prospero creates the storm which is undoubtedly very postmodern. In *The Tempest*, Prospero takes revenge on Antonio and Alonso, foils all the conspiracies, unites Ferdinand and Miranda, sets Ariel free, and enslaves Caliban by anticipating his master plan through magical power.

To maintain the coherence of the characters; avoid any mischief and occurrence; control and keep them under one fold Prospero sets Ariel—the postmodern CCTV camera to supervise and scrutinize every action and incident of each individual. Ariel's role as a strict watch serves three purposes: hierarchical observations, normalizing judgment, examining an individual's movement, and controlling personal space. As Michael Foucault asserts that the process of observation and examination is operated by the plan of the panopticon, Ariel represents the panoptical gaze of Prospero which is a very postmodern outlook. Finally, by examining the plot, setting, characters of the play, and related theories, it proposes to consider that Shakespeare sketched 'A Postmodern Representation of Prospero, Ariel and Caliban' in *The Tempest*.

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