

# COLONIAL REPRESENTATION IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S THE TEMPEST AND DANIEL DEFOE'S ROBINSON CRUSOE

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**Abstract:** Colonialism is a practice of the powerful over the less powerful. It is the policy of a country seeking to extend or retain its authority over other people or territories, generally with the aim of economic exploitation, political domination and civilizing mission. Colonialism is strongly associated with the European colonial period starting with the fifteenth century when some European states established colonizing empires. Colonialism began much earlier with the discovery of America. It was a big issue during Shakespeare's time. The opening up of new frontiers and new land being discovered stimulated European information. Exploration of new geographical spaces and control of those lands by the explorers is basically what we know by colonialism. In this paper I have analyzed *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare and *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe to show how these writers have imposed their Eurocentric attitude. In both the novels, the central theme is racialism, the power of white people over the colonized.

**Keywords:** Colonialism, discourse, domination, exploitation, power.

Colonial representation is a political representation that cannot be natural or true. It is constructed with false images, images that relate with colonizers ideology. Generally colonial representation relies on political images which are constructed by the ideas of power and domination over others. This type of representation is 'man made'. So, colonial representation is a kind of discourse which creates a false ideology. Ideology represents some images, ideas, values which are part of our life and these ideas, beliefs, values are invisible as well as implicit but this invisible power constantly governs our life, society and our mind

William Shakespeare's last play *The Tempest* has often been interpreted as a play about colonialism. The protagonist of the play Prospero was exiled to an unknown island along with his daughter Miranda. Being isolated in the middle of the sea he reached an unknown island which happens to be the property of the native called Caliban. After reaching the island Prospero befriends Caliban and uses all types of crafty process to know about the details of the island. Prospero uses his knowledge and power to capture the island and then enslaves Caliban. Prospero's character, actions, reasoning and the way he deals with the inhabitants reflects the attitude of the colonizer. His magical powers not only ensures the enslavement of Caliban, but also demands the servitude of a spirit named Ariel to put his magical designs into action. Putting Caliban under slavery and undermining him as a monster, we can take Prospero as a representation of the Europeans who usurped the land of native Americans and enslaved them. He, as a sense of superiority, takes Caliban as half man. Pushing the native to the side, he places himself at the helm of affairs. He makes Caliban work as his servant and calls him a thing of darkness :

"This thing of darkness, I call my own"(Act 5, scene 1)

This shows the colonizers attitude of looking down on the colonized people.

Prospero takes the power of the inhabitants, establishes new order in the island and makes himself the ruler of it. When seen through the lens of post-colonialism, Caliban represents the colonized native who is betrayed by the colonial ruler. The play gains the interest of the critics as it interprets the exact way in which colonizers treated the native people. Prospero gives freedom to Ariel for the service it had rendered to him, but not to Caliban because of his rebellious nature. He treats Caliban as a slave and forces him to do whatever he commands. Whenever Caliban refuses to obey his words, he is punished physically by the spirits.

The typical attitude of the colonizers is to civilize the natives. The following passage states that Prospero's address to Caliban resembles the colonizers attitude of civilizing the natives:

“I pitied thee, Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour...With words that made them known. (Act 1,Scene 2)

Prospero displays how his presence on the island is valuable for Caliban which indicates the attitude and supremacy of the colonist over the natives. Prospero believes that Caliban's existence is bound to serve his order. He expects Caliban to be grateful to him for educating him and making him learn the superior language. Caliban's behaviour towards Miranda leads Prospero to imprisoned and punished him physically. This makes Caliban feel oppressed and exploited in his own land.

The Tempest challenges the current colonial discourses by giving a critical discussion about the ideology of colonization and represents the issue of colonization by its examination of indigenous, colonized peoples. By dramatizing a 'native' on the stage the playwright lets English audiences ponder about the effects of colonization and the legitimacy of the act. The interaction of contemporary rhetoric and dramatization of colonization on the London stage calls into question existing colonial discourses and ideologies, and it is the humanization of Caliban which best dramatizes the debates of colonization for the audiences. Caliban is a complex and problematic character who has both desirable and undesirable sides. While Prospero and his daughter believe in innately evil nature of Caliban, many of his other qualities arouse sympathy from the audiences. Deborah Willis in his "Shakespeare's Tempest and the Discourse of Colonialism"(1989) explains how Caliban's qualities humanize him:

“As 'wildman', he is also a composite, possessing qualities of the noble savage as well as the monster. He is capable of learning language, of forming warm attachments; he is sensitive to beauty and music; he speaks-like aristocratic characters-in the rhythms of verse, in contrast to the prose of Stephano and Trinculo; he can follow a plan and reason”.

These qualities emphasize his humanity and ever while audiences are warned of his violent and evil nature, they see him as equal to other humans and feel sympathy for him in some situations, especially when injustice done upon him by Prospero:

“For every trifle are they set upon me,  
Sometimes like apes that mow and chatter at me  
And after bit me, then like hedgehogs which  
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way and mount  
Their pricks at my football; sometimes am I

All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues

Do hiss me into madness. (Act2, scene 2)

Now we will look at the colonial aspects of Robinson Crusoe where an Englishman asserts and reasserts his Christian moral and British superiority in order to consider his sense of identity and we will look at how subjugation, domination, profit and power are reflected in the adventure fiction Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe. Robinson Crusoe is an excellent adventure story. The surface of this novel tells only an adventure story, but a deep reading of the novel shows that colonialism is technically presented underneath the storyline where issues such as race, power, identity formation and so on are presented from a colonial perspective.

Robinson Crusoe is a story in which a European man gradually masters his own compulsion and extends his control over a huge, indifferent, and hostile environment. Defoe deals with colonialism by portraying a wonderful fictional picture of an adventurous man, who gradually becomes a master over an island and established his own colony. Crusoe, the protagonist of the novel, is a typical colonial character. He sets on a distant Caribbean island to establish his own colony, his own civilization and his own culture. Defoe represents imperialistic attitude of a European man, who wants superior position to authorize or to dominate others. The relationship between Crusoe and Friday shows the relationship of master and slave.

Defoe represents Crusoe as a savior. He rescues the only native of the story and named him 'Friday' though Friday already had a name. Also Crusoe introduced English language as the medium of teaching and learning on the island. This is an important aspect that colonizers tried to impose their language, their civilized culture upon others lands. Crusoe taught Friday as Prospero taught his own language to Caliban in Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. Crusoe orders Friday to call him 'master' and started to teach him some English words. He teaches him only those words which are useful for the master-slave relation. When Friday calls him 'master', Crusoe consciously or unconsciously accepts his colonial identity and a political symbol of racial injustice.

Crusoe is the representation of a colonial figure and colonial mind in this fiction, and Friday is a symbol of all those natives who were dominated in the age of 'European imperialism'. Crusoe's transformation from 'survivor' to 'master' shows a power relationship\_ one is superior and other is inferior. Defoe's representation of the cannibal is very much contradictory that creates the whole ethos of colonial relations between Crusoe and Friday. As a civil European it is hard for Crusoe to believe Friday at first because he is horrified by Friday's cannibalistic practice. Crusoe's dilemma exposes when he realized that Friday is grateful to him but still he is concerned about his precaution. But soon he changes his mind and finds that no precautions were really necessary because Friday already has proved himself as a faithful, obedient and sincere servant and asserts his separate identity from the savages. After close observation Crusoe finds Friday quite different from other cannibals because physically Friday is fairer and superior than the 'ugly skin' native. It is a process by which a European separates him from native to represent him a pure civilized Christian.

After giving language Crusoe also instructs Friday in religious knowledge. Crusoe not only saved the life of Friday but also tries to save Friday's 'savage soul' by imparting to him the true knowledge of religion and the Christian doctrine. It is obvious that Crusoe imposed his own culture on Friday to make him a civilized European man like him.

“The soul of a poor savage, and bring him to the true knowledge of Religion, and of the Christian Doctrine, that he might know Jesus Christ, to know him is Life Eternal. I say, when I reflected Upon all these Things, a secret Joy run through every Part of my Soul, and I frequently rejoiced that ever I was brought to this place”(220)

After teaching Friday to speak his language, Crusoe also tries to change his cannibalistic eating habits. Friday enjoyed consuming flesh but Crusoe made it clear to Friday that this is not acceptable behavior for human society. ‘I found Friday had still a hankering Stomach after some of the Flesh, and was still a Cannibal in his Nature....I had by some Means let him know, that I would kill him if he offer’d it’. Crusoe, as a colonizer, changes Friday’s language, religion, habits, culture and even his name.

According to Peter Hulme, Crusoe and Friday’s relationship is an image of capital and labor. Friday is also represented as productive, normative code, and an unpaid labor. Being a calculative man Crusoe accepts Friday not as a companion but as a servant and establishes his superiority. Friday, a cultural inferiority is a perfect colonial figure of black skin white mask. He does not have his own voice; he speaks with his master’s words and imitates his actions.

In Robinson Crusoe representation of the cannibal as a figure of radical otherness indicates the politics of empire which contributes to the creation of a rich colonial imaginary. Through this ‘otherness’ process Defoe represents Crusoe’s distinct identity from savages and creates two groups\_ one is Civilized/Christian and other is Cannibal/Savages. The aim of Crusoe’s civilizing mission is just to show the discursive nature of cannibalism by blending fact and imagination. The relationship between Crusoe and Friday clearly reflects the binary construction of British and Cannibal, civilized and uncivilized evil. At first we see that Friday’s body becomes a symbol of fear to Crusoe. But after meeting him and observing him deeply, Crusoe overcomes it by domination and subjugation. Crusoe’s authority over him erase Friday’s identity, and gives him a new ‘English identity’ and ‘an English voice’.

At the opening of the novel we find Crusoe as an adventurous man but at the end he declares himself as king/leader of the land with military force.

“My island was now peopled, and I thought myself very rich in subjects and it was a merry Reflection which I frequently made, How like a king I look’d”(241)

Discovery and adventure is an important aspect of colonialism and a major theme of any colonial novels. Crusoe’s eagerness to discover other lands and people makes him a perfect explorer and his ideology is the ideology of colonizers. After a close analysis of his whole adventurous journey it seems that Defoe represents Crusoe as a typical European bourgeois, rational, religious and mindful of his own profit. His trip on a merchant ship refers to his capitalistic tendency. Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe actually reveals his political and economic view relating to colonialism. In colonialism, geographical exploitation works behind economic success. It is a process by using the natural resources of other countries, colonizers established new markets for extending their culture beyond its national borders. It is clearly reflected that the voyages of Robinson Crusoe demonstrates the ‘economic aspect of colonialism’ and his character represents imperialistic attitude of a European man, who wants superior position to authorize or to dominate others. Crusoe is this kind of adventurous man whose main purpose is to gain commercial success. Through his voyage to Guinea, Crusoe introduces himself as a good sailor and a successful merchant. To Crusoe it was

the only voyage which was full of success. This attitude of Crusoe represents him as commercial and rational white man.

If we analyze Crusoe's second voyage to Brazil, it appears an economic success. He learns about sugar plantation there and finds that sugar planters grow rich, so he becomes a planter. He then starts to import labors from Guinea. During Defoe's time slave trading is a colonial issue. At that time European traders were in search of gold, tropical products and slaves for the expansion of their trade. And we see that as a member of the middle class, Crusoe did not bother to support slavery and set up a colony. It clearly shows the colonial inclination in his mind. The voyages of Robinson Crusoe illustrate the economic aspect of colonialism. By depicting the survival picture of the protagonist in the island, the author presents him as a man who belongs to an ordinary middle class family. As a member of a capitalist bourgeois society, he shows his imperial mentality towards the natives. He is an example of an imperialist; who behaves like empires while the others in the island are represented as his 'subjects'. He converts the island into a kind of commercial investment which makes him a successful businessman.

The novel explores the actual intention of white men and its effects on the culture of the people of natives. By colonized others the colonizers at first change the language of the colonized, their education, political views, law, commerce, and even their religion. When Crusoe reaches Lisbon island and meets the Spanish ship captain, he takes an account of his prosperity from him. He declares that he would give one third of his wealth to the king and two third of his wealth to St. Augustine, which will be spent for the benefit of poor and conversion of the Indians to the 'Catholic faith'. Here it is clear that his intention is not to help the poor but to change their religion, their beliefs and finally their existence. The protagonist of the novel acts both as a producer to increase profits, as well as consumer to increase his utility. As a ration, economic man Crusoe is not family loving man rather he is more concerned about making money and getting power. Crusoe's civilizing mission reveals his ambition of capitalism, imperialism and racialism. Thus, it is clear that *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe* deals with the issue of colonialism, imperialism and racialism. The writers politically represent the images of 'us' versus 'them' by creating a system of structure that shows that the human world is divided into two groups \_ 'self' and 'others'.

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