

often to an animal, or a thing, a view picked up by the critic Still, but the text supports this: “Mooncalf” (II.II.111), “strange thing” (V.i.290), “fish” (V.i.266), and more elaborately, “thing of darkness” (V.i.275). There is a supernatural feel to these comments. For those critics looking at these through a New Historicist perception, I can of course understand the idea of a demonology of natives. However I resist accepting this myself. These descriptions to me seem to show the playwright’s desire to show his character as different from the other characters. Not only physically but also in a different plain of being. He is the ‘other’, against which the other characters can be represented against. Caliban, by his crime, becomes the subhuman, and by those standards he has created his own subjugation. Caliban is grateful for his education:

“Thou Strok’st me and made much of me...and then I loved thee” (I.ii.332-6).

However, the reader can question whether his savagery arose from the alleged abandonment of his master. He is a strange character; he uses the word “love” and yet he is capable of evil. He is seen by many characters as a “thing”, yet Miranda recognises him as a man. And yet there are some who justify his actions because of colonial intent. As a reader I struggle to make sense of Caliban as one individual. It is perhaps in his fragmented and diverse nature we have different renderings of his behaviour. Of course, it can be viewed that Caliban is guilty of the same intentions of English colonial ambitions – in effect ‘peopling’.

I turn my attention now to New Historicist/ Postcolonial theory and its intentions. The writers Ngugi Lamming sees the text as a “paternalistic ideology that is basic to the material aims of Western imperialism” (14). In Lamming, the reader can see the writer regenerating his experiences of colonization through Shakespeare as a formative ideology. I ask whether this can be justified, given the evidence I have brought in this essay. “Ngugi employs Prospero as a figure who would “naturally” appeal to an idealistic Englishman seeking a high-minded rationale for his own and his nation’s imperial designs in the repository of his cultural heritage” (15). This could be true. Prospero is written in such a way that this opinion could have credence. But this view is narrowed only to the fact that Prospero has in effect subdued Caliban, ignoring the interpretation that this was punishment to the attempted rape, and Ngugi’s view ignores Prospero’s magic tampering as heresy. This brings me to a concurring worry for me in my analysis of the play. The extent to which the theory can exploit the text is entirely down to the renderings of the critic in question. It no longer seems to matter if the text itself was not written in the spirit of imperialism; it has taken on new representations through history due to the nature of Shakespeare’s characters.

The argument between Sovereignty and Status continues. This is taken largely by the reader to mean master against slave. I consider whether it is this particular power play that brings about the characters to a simplistic level – merely a hierarchy to which they have no control over. An example can be found in the text, A quote taken from Caliban: