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Anti-colonial *Tempest*: Theory and Practice of Postmodernist Shakespearean Reinscriptions

Janja Ciglar-Žanić
Faculty of Philosophy
University of Zagreb

The paper purports to examine dominant semiotic and ideological propositions underlying recent re-readings/re-writings of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. A range of these new reinscriptions, both critical and creative, have in the past two decades made Shakespeare's text into a paradigmatic cultural site of struggle over the definitions of power and authority, linking the play unequivocally to the issues of colonization, subordination and hegemony. The radical novelty of these interpretations of *The Tempest* and their potential to stir controversy over crucial contemporary cultural issues make them, in the author's view, particularly deserving of attention.

By reference to the potentially subversive elements in the structure of the play itself, by reference to the history of the play's various readings, as well as by reference to the relevant epistemological and socio-political concerns of contemporary theories of culture, the author tries to demonstrate how these factors – in their unique contemporary fitment – lend the recent reinscriptions of Shakespeare's late romance their unmistakable anti-colonial and counter-hegemonic thrust.

In conclusion, the author attempts to point to the wider cultural implications of the interpretive practices under discussion, emphasizing their import on the understanding of the historicity of our own reinscriptions of the past as well as on our inscriptions of the present.

To achieve recognition is to rechart and then occupy the place in imperial cultural forms reserved for subordination, to occupy it self-consciously, fighting for it on the very same territory once ruled by a consciousness that assumed the subordination of a designated inferior Other. Hence, reinscription.

Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*

It is a familiar fact that Shakespearean meanings have almost unslackeningly continued to attract the interest of literary scholars and general public alike for a strikingly long period of time. To those watching the scene of Shakespeare studies, another fact bound up with the Shakespearean meanings is becoming no less obvious:

the last two or three decades have witnessed hectic and concentrated re/interpretive activity, repeatedly focused on a selected few among Shakespearean texts, and firmly rooted in a recognizable, relatively common, set of semiotic and ideological propositions of a kind, which have by now almost generally earned them the designation of political, alternative, subversive or revisionary readings of Shakespeare. As a consequence of these new interpretive practices, controlled by new »theoretical regimes«, the very configuration of the area of Shakespeare studies has been reshaped, the boundaries of literary versus cultural studies redrawn, the notions of both making and response to cultural texts redefined.

Numerous recent reinscriptions of *The Tempest*, literary-critical as well as theatrical and cinematic, carried out with remarkable intellectual probity, marked emotional engagement and a most impressive imaginative daring, have turned Shakespeare's late romance into an exemplary locus for the exploration of the characteristic strategies of these new interpretations as well as of their epistemological and ideological foundations.

The very titles of the recent re-readings of *The Tempest* will at times in themselves be a sufficient indication of their unmistakably anti-colonial, or more generally speaking, counter-hegemonic thrust. The thrust has occasionally been so explicit as to open these reinscriptions to a repeated charge of unduly politicizing Shakespeare or of using him to promote certain ideological programmes and openly political agendas. The titles include, to quote just a few notable examples: »Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization« (D.O. Mannoni); »Colonial Encounters: Prospero and Caliban« (Peter Hulme); »Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century« (Stephen Greenblatt); »This Island's mine«: Caliban and Colonialism« (Trevor Griffiths); »The Case of Colonialism in *The Tempest*« (Meredith Anne Scura); »The Miranda Trap: Sexism and Racism in Shakespeare's *Tempest*« (Lorie Jerrell Leininger), etc.

»There are, of course, many« – Thomas Cartelli remarks in his »Prospero in Africa: *The Tempest* as colonialist text and pretext« – »who would quarrel with the notion of a *Tempest* that speaks the predatory language of colonialism on behalf of the governing structures of western power and ideals. But there is another, nonwestern interpretive community for whom *The Tempest* has long served as the embodiment of colonial presumption. The development of »new literatures«, both critical and creative, in the newly independent nations of Africa and the West Indies has witnessed the repeated use of *The Tempest* as a site on which the age-old conflicts between colonizer and colonized continue to be played out and rehearsed.« (Cartelli, 1987:101)

Many outstanding recent European and American reinscriptions of *The Tempest* possess an equally distinct anti-colonial and counter-hegemonic bent. Today these re-writings of Shakespeare's late romance present an impressive body

of texts, both critical and creative, and include studies by such outstanding literary critics, theorists and cultural studies scholars as Jan Kott, Edward Said, Stephen Greenblatt, Stephen Orgel, Howard Felperin and a host of others, as well as memorable theatre productions by such distinguished theatre directors as Peter Brook and Peter Hall, in addition to two highly controversial revisionary »adaptations« of Shakespeare's play directed by two famous British avantgarde film directors, Derek Jarman and Peter Greenaway.

When, for example, in his 1979 cinematic version of *The Tempest*, Derek Jarman emphatically freely rearranges the text of Shakespeare's play, when he selects a blind mime-actor, Jack Birkett, to portray a very physical Caliban, »aptly, but almost embarrassingly clinical delineation of the Freudian *id*« (Greenblatt, 1992:22), de/formed through repression and in turn threatening to the hegemonic ego, we are obviously faced with an instance of present-day reinscription of the canonical text at its clearest and its most radical.

Transposition of scenes, cutting out of numerous lines of Shakespeare's text, rearranging of speeches and related procedures mark Jarman's version of *The Tempest* on the most immediate level. More importantly, his cinematic techniques include mannered distortion, overstylized (baroque) ornamentation, conscious obliqueness as well as insistence on the images of dream-like movement and prominent bodily visibility. Unsympathetic critics have called Jarman's images »outrageous«, »bizarre«, have referred to them as »precious, disgusting, monstrous arrangements« (Kilb, 1992:28). There is, however, no denying the fact that an intense and consistent intent underlies these radical semantic rearrangements of Shakespeare's text, an intent Kilb denounces as »Jarman's obtrusive and desparate furtherance of his theology of liberation« (Kilb, 1992:31). Far from being mere technical conveniences, Jarman's cinematic procedures aim at shattering, ruination and reconstruction of the dominant discursive construct of the human body and human sexuality – the construct which privileges homophobic masculinity, heterosexuality, and the notion of anatomically structured sexual differences, mercilessly applying the strategies of repression, censorship and exclusion to alternative concepts and practices.

Jarman, to be precise, locates the issues of colonization, subordination and domination on the territory of the human body, and uses *The Tempest* to speak for those repressed Others, whose subordination and repression has been effected through the deployment of the dominant ideological construct of human sexuality. In other contemporary reinscriptions, the issues are – as previously mentioned already – located elsewhere, frequently on colonized territories in a more concrete sense of the word. The fact, however, remains that these vigorous re-writings of *The Tempest's* 'fairy tale' in accordance with the new concepts of race, class, family and gender relations have made the Shakespearean play into a prime cultural site of struggle over the definitions of power and authority, have used it with remarkable

cogency to inscribe powerful and memorable comments on the workings and nature of colonization and hegemony into the text of our culture.

Two things are by now obvious about these newly-emerged *Tempest* re-readings, destabilizing/subversive in relation to the canonical text of European culture as well as strongly at issue with certain aspects of that culture as a whole. On the one hand, these reinscriptions, through their sheer quantity as well as through their intellectual rigour and unmistakable ideological direction, undoubtedly transcend any one individual critical idiosyncrasy or directorial whimsy. On the other, there is still too much epistemological, even axiological confusion surrounding them, too much at-cross-purposes debate concerning their strategies and motivations. In view of both, it would seem worth while examining in some detail the principles on which these »revisionary« readings proceed. The examination will further gain in importance for anyone who believes that in readings of Shakespeare are to be found the critical pulse-points of any period.

It will be the initial premise of the following analysis that several interrelated, mutually reinforcing factors in the contemporary cultural context have had crucial bearing on the emergence of this new, counter-hegemonic *Tempest*. Each re-reading, indeed each reading, of a cultural text – this is the contention on which the examination will rest – is always the product, and is disciplined by, at least three things: (a) the dominant paradigm of reading and response predicated on the concepts of cultural representation and meaning upheld by a culture at a certain moment; (b) the structure of relations of the text and the history of its readings; (c) the ideological configuration of the historical moment. The discussion will focus here on the processes which have made the three mentioned factors, in their unique present-day fitment, inducible to what Howard Felperin aptly terms »the (contemporary) wave of political allegorization« of *The Tempest*. (Felperin, 1992:174).

In their presentation of Jarman's »adaptation« of *The Tempest*, Alden Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan succeed in pinpointing some of the techniques Jarman uses to rechart the discursive territory of Shakespeare's text, but they largely fail to recognize his fundamental impulse. What they obviously miss altogether is a definite sense of an epistemologico-ideological framework underpinning Jarman's reinscriptive effort, when they write: »Instead of simply presenting Shakespeare's text, this version rearranged the speeches and the sequence of events«, until »the final product seemed little akin to Shakespeare's drama«. (Vaughan and Mason,

1993:200) What Mason and Vaughan, in fact, fail to recognize behind Jarman's radical freedom with the text, which »abandon(s) Shakespeare's text altogether« (Vaughan and Mason, 1993:200) is not only his fierce ideological contention with (psychological) colonization and repression, but a highly conscious and consistent attempt to inscribe his own meanings into Shakespeare's text, an attempt which is – apart from its other premises – demonstrably also rooted in a specific notion of meaning and meaning-production, shared by most modern theories of text and culture.

The vast majority of these theories will argue with persuasive unanimity that the meanings of texts are never self-formulated, fixed. Instead, they will almost axiomatically uphold the notion that textual meanings are interminably variable, contingent upon the multiple and shifting contexts and dependent strongly on the historical and cultural situation of the reading subject. Meanings are, in other words, never definitive, but rather invite the reader's collaboration in their constantly shifting re-production. Moreover, the production of meaning as a part of the interpretive practice will be strongly contingent on what tasks have been intended on the part of the reader for a text to perform, on the uses to which the text will be put. »Discourses, sign-systems and signifying practices of all kinds, from film and television to fiction and the languages of natural science«, as Terry Eagleton asserts, »produce effects which are closely related to the maintenance or transformation of our existing systems of power. They are thus closely related to what it means to be a person.« (Eagleton, 1983:210) There is no way, Eagleton's argument runs, in which either literary meanings or their critical re-writings/interpretations can be extricated from their involvement with the social and political realities or with the political interests of the moment: »The idea that there are »non-political« forms of criticism is simply a myth which furthers certain political uses of literature all the more effectively«. (Eagleton, 1983:209)

Discussing the notion of textual meanings expounded by some poststructuralist theories (deconstructionist, new-historicist, cultural-materialist, Marxist, feminist) in special relation to canonical cultural texts, Robert Weimann summarizes, what he terms 'the deconstructionist counterproposal' for the understanding of meaning-production in the following, rather extreme terms: »According to that counterproposal, Shakespeare's plays have no meanings, only uses; truth in them is conceived, not perceived. The reader or spectator, far from identifying with some authorial or canonized meaning, is in fact called upon to resist both author and canon in order to make the text meaningful to him.« (Weimann, 1988:76)

Such notion of meaning as function of a historically changing ideological practice aimed at stabilizing existent hierarchies and powers-that-be in their place is directly linked to, indeed derives from a notion of discourse as appropriated

language. There is, thus, no history of texts, only history of the uses to which the texts have been put, of interests – social, cultural, political – which the texts have been made to serve. The proposition is, in turn, linked up with the commonly shared poststructuralist premise that the construction of meanings, especially of the canonical ones, is possessed of a special kind of teleology, that it is guided by the pragmatic need of powerful social groups to design effective discursive instruments for the legitimation and containment of power. Hence the need of subordinated social Others to attack the canonizing strategies and unmask their ideological ends. »For the newest criticism«, it is Weimann's belief, »to have made us aware of these quite ordinary political uses of transcendence is, I think, a singular achievement, even when – let me not mince words – the proposed alternative smacks of an agnosticism and a pragmatism. (...) Even so, the most basic thrust of deconstruction, fortified by more than a decade of reader-oriented criticism, can (I submit) be considered as a helpful and a timely reminder that centuries-old sources of authority and uses of representation can today on no account be taken for granted.« (Weimann, 1988:76) The focus, in all these discussions, has moved shifted from concern with *authenticity* and *authorship*, to the concern with *authority* and *authorization*.

One could at this point justifiably raise the question of epistemological validity of the proposition which seems to imply that there is nothing inherent in the text itself, especially a great, canonical text, to guide the reading/interpretive practices, to influence in some relevant way the construction of meanings the text provokes.

Varying terminology notwithstanding, there is an unanimous agreement on the part of reader-response theorists and semioticians, that there is, indeed, a structural matrix inherent to the text, a kind of »textual prefigurement« (Weimann), »*Rezeptionsvorgabe*« (Iser), a »grammar« of signals or text's instructions, which more readily trigger some meanings than some others. There is also a difference, as argued by Umberto Eco in his *The Role of the Reader*, in the degree of independence or predetermination in the reader's act of interpretation, dependent on whether the text belongs to the category of »open« or of »closed« texts respectively. In case of the category of »open« texts – and great, canonical texts belong to the latter category – the themes, attitudes and values are never defined with the linearity of a philosophic proposition. Instead, such literary texts refer to the extra-literary world by selecting certain norms, value systems or world-views, adopt a »repertoire« of these, and

suspend their validity within their fictional world. Unlike the »closed« texts, they invite the reader's collaboration in the production of meaning.

Only the reader, in accordance with his/her historical position as a reading subject can actualize the degree to which the particular norms are to be rejected or questioned, others furthered and promoted. Both the historical position of the reader and the available conventions of reading at a given moment play part in the actual historical results of the reader's activity performed on the textual material in order to produce meaning. To construe the inherent structures of meaning of a canonical text in Eco's way is, of course, only to re-assert, as Howard Felperin justly observes, the irreducibility of the canonical text to the momentary interests that constitute and re-inscribe it (Felperin, 1992:XII), to re-assert, in other words, the obvious and undeniable transhistoricity as distinct from transcendence or ahistoricity of the canon. Greenblatt speaks of »the cunning of representation« in a similar context.

Upon attentive analysis it will appear that it is precisely a potent, delicately suspended semantic ambiguity of *The Tempest*, frequently observed and pointed out as a conspicuous feature of the play, which has made the text capable of serving a range of demonstrably diverse and conflicting interests, not only over time but at any given moment. Paradoxically enough, the same feature seems to have been largely responsible for the play's 'complicity' in the construction of competing appropriations/ideologies it has provoked, including the latest ones, consistently anti-colonial and counter-hegemonic in bias.

In his Introduction to the 1954 Arden edition of *The Tempest* Frank Kermode, for example, repeatedly emphasizes this systematic ambivalence of the play, with a full awareness of its implications for the play's complex, dialectical rendition of its themes. Commenting on Shakespeare's treatment of what he pinpoints as the main theme of *The Tempest* (Nature versus Nurture), Kermode, thus, concludes: »And we see that Nature is not, in *The Tempest*, defined with the single-minded clarity of a philosophic proposition. Shakespeare's treatment of the theme has what all his mature poetry has, a richly analytical approach to ideas, which never reaches after a naked opinion of true or false.« (Kermode, 1962:xxxviii)

Stephen Orgel's view of the subject, albeit couched in somewhat different terms, strikes very much the same note: »*The Tempest* is a text that looks different

in different contexts, and it has been used to support radically differing claims about Shakespeare's allegiances. In recent years we have seen Prospero as a noble ruler and mage, a tyrant and megalomaniac, a necromancer, a Neoplatonic scientist, a colonial imperialist, a civilizer. Similarly, Caliban has been an ineducable brute, a sensitive savage, a European wild man, a New-World native, ugly, attractive, tragic, pathetic, comic, frightening, the rightful owner of the island, a natural slave. The question of correctness is not the issue in these readings; the play will provide at least some evidence for all of them, and its critical history is a good index to the ambivalences and ambiguities of the text.« (Orgel, 1987:11)

Orgel decides to conclude his extensive Introduction to the 1987 Oxford Shakespeare edition of *The Tempest* with a critical survey of two famous, radically unconventional theatrical versions of the play (Peter Brook's 1968 Roundhouse production; Peter Hall's 1973 Old Vic production), asserting that »such productions seem perverse only in relation to the play's history in the theatre: the text itself provides ample support for them.« (Orgel, 1987:86) He uses Brook's reading of Shakespeare's play, described as dominated by the director's attempt to strip the play of preconceived language patterns connected with classical interpretations of Shakespeare, and thereby resulting in the release of energy »primarily sexual and rebellious« (Orgel, 1987:87), to re-assert in no uncertain terms the unmistakable relevance of the structure of relations in the play for the revisionary and transgressive readings the play triggers off: »And, once again, it is only in the context of stage history that a reading such as Brook's will be found perverse: it is designed to bring into the theatre a recognition of how powerfully subversive much of the play's energy is, how incompletely it controls its ambivalences and resolves its conflicts.« (Orgel, 1987:87)

In his »Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century« Stephen Greenblatt lends convincing support to this view of the play's structure, albeit through the deployment of somewhat different theoretical and methodological propositions. In his analysis, Greenblatt sets out with the new-historicist concept of meaning of the cultural text as resulting from a creative interplay of heterogenous cultural co-texts, some »containment«-oriented, some subversive in relation to the dominant discourses the text purports to engage with. By reference to the textual instances in the play which – due to their rhetorical configuration – refuse to yield the expected meanings, i. e. those predominating at the time, he compellingly argues for the presence of strong subversive co-texts in *The Tempest*. As it transpires from his reading of the play, these co/sub-texts undermine the contemporary cultural concepts of social order, justice, even of the overall structure of social, ethical and psychological superordination and subordination. Analyzing several passages in the play, which ostensibly affirm some aspect of the dominant ideological paradigm, he shows how the very textual articulation of these

sentiments and beliefs jeopardizes, challenges or at least renders problematic their overtly unquestionable, universal validity. One conspicuous instance of such textual contravention of the expected, dominant meaning can, in Greenblatt's view, be found in the segment of the play which culminates in Miranda's angry reproach of Caliban for his ingratitude and his irredeemably brutish conduct:

Abhorred slave,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
Know thy own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
With words that made them known. But thy vile race,
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures
Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
Deservedly confin'd into this rock,
Who hadst deserv'd more than a prison.

To which, Caliban replies:

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!
(I.ii.353–67)

»Caliban's retort«, Greenblatt argues, »might be taken as self-indictment: even with the gift of language, his nature is so debased that he can only learn to curse. *But the lines refuse to mean this* [emphasis mine]; what we experience instead is a sense of their devastating justice. Ugly, rude, savage Caliban nevertheless achieves for an instant an absolute if intolerably bitter moral victory«, a »victory that is, quite simply, an assertion of inconsolable human pain and bitterness«. (Greenblatt, 1992:26)

But perhaps the most outstanding instance of this textual contravention, the one firmly asserting that »Caliban's consciousness is not simply a warped negation of Prospero's« is for Greenblatt contained in the following lines spoken by Caliban:

I prithee, let me bring thee where crags grow;
And I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts;
Show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how
To snare the nible mamoset; I'll bring thee
Young scamels from the rock.
(II.ii. 167–72)

»The rich, irreducible concreteness of the verse«, Greenblatt comments, »compels us to acknowledge the independence and integrity of Caliban's construction of reality. We do not sentimentalize this construction – indeed the play insists that we judge it and that we prefer another – but we cannot make it vanish into silence. Caliban's world has what we may call opacity, and the perfect emblem of that

opacity is the fact that we do not to this day know the meaning of the word 'scamel'.« (Greenblatt, 1992:31)

It may be worth noting that the three presented contemporary attempts at the affirmation of the inherent semantic potential of *The Tempest* to elicit conflicting interpretations are far from exceptional in the history of the play's readings.

Let us now examine the third forementioned factor, which according to the present line of argument significantly impacts upon the meanings the text provokes. The factor we turn to now, has earlier been termed »the ideological configuration of the historical moment«. Our primary concern will, in other words, be with those circumstances of the text's synchronic or historical context, which have made the play potentially allegorical of all hegemonic structures, that of colonial imperialism being only one of them. As a number of the recent reinscriptions of *The Tempest* will easily show, the feminists, the proponents of alternative sexuality as well as various other 'colonized' subjects have selected the same play as an apt discursive instrument in the fervent battle for the rehabilitation of their kind of oppressed Otherness.

Careful readers/interpreters of *The Tempest*, even in the periods dominated by the »homogenizing and naturalizing« theoretical and hermeneutic »regimes«, have not remained blind to the thematico-ideological tension at the heart of Shakespeare's romance. Kermode explicitly emphasizes the tension and clearly ascribes it to »the paradox in the Renaissance attitude to natural man, which is examined in the play«. (Kermode, 1962:xxxi) Two apparently antithetical views on the natural life: one that the Natural Man is purely virtuous and the other that he is purely vicious – both current in the Renaissance, both deeply rooted in the European mind – seem to control the tense semantic dynamics of the play. These two attitudes to primitive man derive from the two opposing versions of the natural: »on the one hand, that which man corrupts, and on the other that which is defective, and must be mended by cultivation – the less than human, which calls forth man's authoritative power to correct and rule«. (Kermode, 1962:xxxvi)

An urgently felt need on the part of the Europeans to justify and defend »the lawfulness of Discoveries« took on the form of strangely mixed and at times surprisingly sophisticated arguments. Various Renaissance documents, travel-records and sermons concerned with the task of persuading the public that exploration was an honourable and indeed a sanctified activity, effect a characteristic union of theological,

moral and political implications. They infrequently combine theological allegory of man fallen and redeemed, nature divorced from Grace, with mystagogy and political propaganda to construct an argument for the propriety of usurping the rights of the native populations and imposing European tutelage of underdeveloped natives in colonial territories. Such attitudes comfortably co-habit with the opposed, utopian images of the natives as the people of the golden-age society, of the temperate fruitful nature of the New World and the unspoilt purity of its inhabitants. But the former »is the view«, as Kermode observes, »which suits best the conscience of the colonist«. (Kermode, 1962:xxxvi)

Howard Felperin persuasively traces back the point of change from the pro- to the post-colonial moment of the *Tempest* criticism to the time when »with Furnival and Dowden, the recently established Shakespeare industry turns its ideological apparatus to the production of an English subject fitted to the needs of empire.« (Felperin, 1992: 179) At the end of the last century, by then already a canonical text with the consequent vast ideological potential, *The Tempest* is constructed as a document of the highest civilization, »in which the noble vocations of English imperialism and English literature coincide.« (p. 180) From that point on, Felperin affirms, *The Tempest* »takes on a kind of complicity in the making and legitimizing of that colonial history, if only by masking the actual barbarism it entailed«. (Felperin, 1992:180)

It should come as no surprise then, that at the counter-moment of decolonization, a cultural project which involves a revision of monopolizing, hegemony and manipulation, and mercilessly denounces the misconstruction of Otherness in the process, be it in terms of inferiority and deformity or else in terms of cultural opacity, *The Tempest* – »this fable ... that stands guard over the imagination of the New World« (Said, 1994: 256) – should turn, at the hands of its post-colonial interpreters, into a paradigmatic cultural site of struggle for the repossession of the rights of the dominated and repressed Others.

Several analysts of the changing history of *Tempest* readings have convincingly linked the post- and anti-colonial thrust of the play's recent reinscriptions to the text's canonical status. It is at the moment of recognition of the vast hegemonic potential of cultural icons for the containment of power – and Shakespeare's plays are a paradigm-case of modern and secular canonicity – that *The Tempest* begins to be viewed as a 'responsible party' in the development of the colonialist ideology through which it is read. That is the reason why it becomes vital to the proponents of an anti-colonialist campaign to denounce violently Prospero's act of dispossession and domination of Caliban – either hidden or indirectly justified (in the name of cultural, moral and even biological superiority) by the former traditions of »a-political« readings of the play. It is precisely the text's power to serve as an instrument for the

containment of hegemony and domination, on one hand, and for the consequent perpetuation of subordination and repression – social, political, economic and cultural – on the other, that has made *The Tempest* into such an exemplary discursive battlefield on which to fight out the issues of power, colonization, domination, repression and hegemony.

»At a moment when colonialism and canonicity are seen to be in close cahoots«, Howard Felperin claims, »when the latter is widely suspected of being little more than an ideological reflex or tool of the former, and when the function of criticism is held by many to be that of unmasking such interests and complicities«, (Felperin, 1992:180) *The Tempest* commends itself most persuasively as a perfect discursive space for the projection of new, anti-colonial and counter-hegemonic ideological images. It becomes a site on which the clashes with the powerful former appropriations of the text for the affirmation of all post-colonial and anti-hegemonic ideologies can best be played out. The battle still rages. The indictments are flouted both ways – for misappropriation, misconstruction, explicit or surreptitious use of the text in the promotion of quite specific political interests, for implicating the text in pragmatic politics and the consequent distortions of the great literary text as a compelling embodiment of timeless and universal truths.

It has been the aim of the present discussion to highlight and examine the set of circumstances, relating both to the text's linguistic and semiotic dimensions as well as to its social and cultural functions, which have significantly contributed to the striking burst of anti-colonial reinscriptions of *The Tempest* in recent years.

As far as the justification of the ideological thrust and the discursive strategies of these practices is concerned, we could hardly find a more compelling and a more eloquently argued one than the justification encountered on the pages of Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*: »To call this reinterpretative zeal merely simpleminded, vindictive or assaultive is wrong, I think. (...) The core of Aimé Césaire's Caribbean *Une Tempête* is not *ressentiment*, but an affectionate contention with Shakespeare for the right to represent the Caribbean. That impulse to contend is part of a grander effort to discover the basis of an integral identity different from the formerly dependent, derivative one.« Caliban, according to George Lamming, »is the excluded, that which is eternally below possibility ... He is seen as an occasion, a state of existence which can be appropriated and exploited to the purposes of another's own development«. If that is so, then Caliban must be shown to have a history that can be perceived on its own, as the result of Caliban's own effort. One must, according to Lamming, »explode Prospero's old myth« by christening »language afresh«; but this cannot occur »(...) until we make available to all the result of certain enterprises undertaken by men who are still regarded as the unfortunate descendents of

languageless and deformed slaves'.« (Said, 1994: 256–257) »For natives to want to lay claim to that terrain (i. e. the common terrain of colonial history)«, runs Said's, possibly somewhat defeatist conclusion, »is, for many Westerners, an intolerable affront, for them actually to repossess it unthinkable.« (Said, 1994:256) The reason seems to lend the competing interpretative practices their unflagging confrontational fervour and intensity.

The final outcome of the battle over the rights to appropriate the meaning of the canonical text may not be in sight yet. But the consequences of numerous efforts to reinscribe Prospero's story from Caliban's perspective cannot be either silenced or dismissed. The effort has, above all, left a visible mark on our understanding of the inevitable historicity of our own reinscriptions of the past as well as of our inscriptions of the present.

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ANTIKOLONIJALNA *OLUJA*: TEORIJA I PRAKSA POSTMODERNISTIČKIH REINSKRIPCIIA SHAKESPEAREA

U članku se nastoje propitati temeljne semiotičke i ideološke pozicije najnovijih čitanja/pre-ispisivanja Shakespeareove *Oluje*. Niz tih novih reinskripcija, književnokritičkih i kreativnih, u posljednja je dva desetljeća pretvorio ovaj Shakespeareov tekst u paradigmatični kulturni prostor sučeljavanja različitih definicija autoriteta i moći, smještajući Shakespeareovu dramu čvrsto u kontekst rasprava o pitanjima kolonizacije, represije i hegemonije. Radikalna novost recentnih interpretacija *Oluje*, te njihova sposobnost da potaknu kontroverze o nekima od ključnih pitanja suvremene kulture, po autoričinu sudu, čine te interpretacije vrijednima iznimne pažnje.

U svojoj raspravi autorica upućuje na potencijalno »subverzivne« elemente u samoj strukturi drame, na ključne trenutke u njezinim povijesno različitim čitanjima, te na bitne epistemološke i sociokulturne naglaske suvremenih teorija kulture, nastojeći pokazati kako upravo ovi činioci – i to upravo u njihovoj specifičnoj današnjoj konstelaciji – presudno utječu na antikolonijalni i antihegemonijski ton najnovijih čitanja Shakespeareove kasne romanse.

U zaključku, autorica nastoji naglasiti šire kulturološke implikacije razmotrenih interpretacijskih praksi, ističući osobito njihov utjecaj na to kako suvremena kultura poima svoje vlastite reinskripcije povijesti, ali i svoje inskripcije sadašnjosti.