

Identity and Alterity in *The Merchant of Venice* and in *The Tempest*: A Comparison

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Abstract

William Shakespeare's two plays *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest* are constructed through 'alterity'. The first play is an example of racial, religious, and gender alterity portrayed through the Christian dominated and Jew-unfriendly society in Venice. The second play involves the question of race and gender alterity through the colonial machination of Prospero. Both Shylock's and Caliban's attempts of revenge are consequences of the perversely formed alterity. Surprisingly, the two plays bearing two unsuccessful revenge stories do not include the occasion of redemption for the characters who actively participate in the making of alterity. Therefore, the stories serve the purpose of the powerful in the end though occasionally Shakespeare gives voice to the characters that encounter troubled existence due to the racial, social, religious, and gender alterity. The paper investigates the case of alterity in both the plays and concludes that the evil that is shown through Shylock and Caliban are but reactions of alterity and both the perverseness in the societies and the evil in certain characters complement each other. First, the paper elaborates on the concept of 'alterity' in the light of 'multiculturalism'. Secondly, the paper observes the situations of racial, religious, and gender alterity in both the plays separately. Thirdly, the two plays are comparatively positioned in one frame with a focus on alterity. Overall, how the case of alterity has generated the evil machination of revenge has been critically interpreted.

Keywords: Alterity, mistreatment, evil, revenge, dehumanization

Introduction

History suggests that the life of the Jews has been a continuous struggle and at 'mercy' of other believers. The fear of retribution, persecution and constant humiliation has been a regular reality of their life. Persecuted by the Romans, the Jews sought new lives in other countries. This leads to the formation of 'multicultural' societies with an obvious religious hegemony. The stereotypes associated with the Jews are formed and practiced as a consequence of multicultural mistreatment. Therefore, Jews might have settled in European world but the hegemonic multiculturalism incurs both political enmity and a disturbing social life. *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare appearing on stage much later in 1605, also locating itself in a multicultural environment in a historically famous city of Venice because of its

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“openness” and “civility” tells of all the social mistreatments done to Shylock throughout his life due to his religion and profession (Loomba, 2002, p. 103). The perverse reaction of revenge by Shylock is an offspring of all the humiliation he gets from the Venetian Christians. Even Jessica (who grows up hearing all the Jew stereotypes) by hating her own religion and her father proves to be another consequence of the racial and religious alterity. Apart from the Jews, the lead female character Portia, seems to be chained with paternal promises and her male disguise in the trial scene makes her a tool of gender alterity in the play.

If Shylock is a victim of ‘multicultural’ alterity, both Caliban and Ariel in the drama *The Tempest* (which comes first on stage in 1611) are the victims of colonial ‘othering’ or alterity as it is the early phase of England’s colonial expansion and the period of discovery of the ‘New World’. Prospero’s arrival in Caliban’s island due to his usurper brother, Antonio’s plan leads Prospero to find slaves among the locals. Ariel being a very ‘useful’ spirit becomes the best tool for Prospero’s future endeavor of taking back his kingdom from the dire condition on the island and Caliban being not as ‘useful’ as Ariel is given the duty of ordinary manual labor. Thus, Ariel becomes a ‘noble slave’ to Prospero and Caliban a ‘savage’ one. Noble or not, both of them are given the treatment of alterity in the play from the colonial sense. Miranda, being the innocent and obedient daughter of Prospero, is a reflection of the patriarchal teaching of her father and her marriage with Ferdinand skillfully set by her father, proves her to be a way of Prospero’s tool for future goals. In this sense, Miranda is also a case for gender alterity.

This paper elaborates on the traces of alterity in the two plays in the form of race, religion and gender. It is not the aim of the paper to side with either Shylock or Caliban or any other character that has experienced troublesome situations in the two plays. Rather, the purpose is to argue that the evils or malice are the vicious reactions resulted because of the social and political oppression through multicultural alterity. First, it explores the idea of ‘alterity’ developed from the arrival of ‘multiculturality’ in Europe and also it distinguishes multiculturalism with ‘single culture’ and ‘interculturality’. Then, the paper includes close observations of each play discussing certain events that bear the mark of alterity. After that, a comparison of some core issues raised by both the plays is given. Overall, the idea is to investigate the social condition in the two plays that has practiced alterity and thus, eventually, has invited revengeful reactions.

Problems of Multiculturalism and how it Generates Alterity

Wolfgang Ivers (1999) defines multiculturalism distinguishing it from

both single culture and interculturality in the essay "Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today". Talking about traditional singular culture, the article reads that it is "characterized by three elements: by social homogenization, ethnic consolidation and intercultural delimitation" (Welsch, p. 194). This means every action of people in a particular society unmistakably bears the testimony of their culture because culture is "folk-based" (Welsch, p. 195). This idea delimits the possibility of individual uniqueness and is based on generalized assumptions.

Interculturality, as discussed by Welsch, is a state when two geographically close societies possess communication and accept the existence of the distant culture with little recognition. It is a sort of an "island" culture where people maintain only communication to the extent it is necessary but do not grow any bond between themselves (Welsch, p. 196). Hence, the co-existence cannot eradicate isolation and generates misleading ideas about one another.

Multiculturalism is similar to interculturality where two or more cultures are in communication. But the only difference is here the cultures live in the same society and therefore collide, confront, and get close more than an intercultural society. Yet, according to Welsch, multiculturalism is unable to grow "mutual understanding" or not successful in "separating barriers" because even after living in the same society they lack social bonding which enhances the possibility of "threatening" one "particularistic cultural identity" and may "lead to ghettoization or cultural fundamentalism" (p. 196). Heinz Antor (2018) explains that living "in a multicultural environment" means to encounter "with otherness" as "part of everyday life" and in such an environment "alterity can also lead to conflicts that need to be resolved peacefully through the workings of the law" (p. 107).

Both the plays, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest*, display the problem of multiculturalism. Shylock's Jewish religion and culture live in the same society with the Christians. Hatred, dehumanization, cultural hegemony all are dominant in the play which prove that even though there is communication between the Jews and Christians, there is no recognition or social bonding. Similarly, in *The Tempest*, due to a shipwreck, two cultures (Caliban's and Prospero's) come into contact in the same space and time. But Prospero's way of treating the island culture when he enslaves both Caliban and Ariel ensures that the other culture is threatened.

What this multiculturalism is creating is, therefore, a binary: identity – alterity. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin in their book *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies* (2007) have explained that the word 'alterity' is derived from the Latin 'alteritas' which means "other" or "different" (p. 9). They have also mentioned that in French *alterité* is more common, and has the antonym *identité* (p. 9). In English, therefore,

‘alterity’ in the sense of ‘otherness’ may be used as the antonym of ‘identity’ in the sense of ‘sameness’. In the two plays, there is an instrumental construction of the binary: Antonio (Christian identity) – Shylock (Jew alterity) and Prospero (Christian identity) – Caliban (savage alterity). In both cases, identity stands for the self that is recognized as the ideal and alterity is the “other” recognized as the abominable.

***The Merchant of Venice*: Religious, Racial and Gender Alterity**

In his play *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare depicts the perverseness and double-standard of Christian society which makes Shylock, a representative of Jew society, the “other”, marginalized and dehumanized. It is observed that he has been treated badly by most of the characters in the play because he is a Jew. The relationship between Jews and Christians seems to be the relationship of masters and slaves. Shylock is a crucial victim of this alterity because of his religion and profession (usurious business). Thus, he gets insulted by the Christian characters specially, by Antonio who is cruel and the biggest rival to Shylock:

SHYLOCK: Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
In the Rialto you have rated me
About my monies and my usances.
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug
For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe.
You call me misbeliever, cut throat dog,
And spit upon my Jewish gabardine,
And all for use of that which is mine own. (1.3.98-105)

The speech bears rigorous description of the extremity of ‘religious alterity’. With the phrase “many a time and oft”, it is clear that Antonio’s criticizing Jewish religion is a regular matter, so is his other actions such as calling Shylock a “misbeliever” or “a cut throat dog”, or spitting on Shylock’s “Jewish gabardine”. From the later part of the same speech it is also known that Antonio also “did void [his] rheum upon” Shylock’s beard, “foot” him, and “spurned” him (1.3.109-119). Knowing all these, Antonio’s benevolent and selfless image given in the play seems incorrect and highly questionable. More interestingly, Antonio does not deny any of the charges and firmly asserts, “I am as like to call thee so again / To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too” (1.3.122-123). This proves that to the Christians, Jew-dehumanizing is a common and very much ‘justified’ action. Thus, when Warren D Smith (1964) claims that Antonio mistreats Shylock because of being a Jew “has no foundation in the text” and Antonio is an “innocent” opponent to Shylock, is proved altogether wrong since from the last quotation, it is clearly understood that Antonio is in no way ashamed of what he does to Shylock and looks forward to repeating his

actions even though he expects a monetary favor from him (p. 196). This is a double-standard expression from the Christian society that it creates a law and breaks the same law for its own convenience. Thus, Shylock lives in a society of extreme religious alterity.

The alterity created by Antonio also involves Shylock's profession. It is to be noted that Shylock is not breaking any law by doing the business of usury since even in the time of Shakespeare it used to be "legal by the laws of both Venice and London" (O'Rourke, 2003, p. 377). But Antonio takes it differently and makes Shylock 'other' by destroying his "well-won thrift" labeling it as "interest" (1.3.42-43). As a Christian, Antonio may not think the profession sacred but his words of humiliation to Shylock's business are not acceptable. Peter Berek (1998) mentions how usurers become the object of alterity in the Elizabethan society: "Money-lending was a fact of commerce and social mobility was becoming a fact of Elizabethan life. Under these circumstances it was particularly important to perceive the usurer as other than oneself" (p. 145). So, the apparently benevolent merchant Antonio and 'disgraceful' usurer Shylock creates a binary suitable for an anti-Semitic Christian culture in Venice.

However, the bond that demands "an equal pound of [Antonio's] fair flesh" in case he is unable to return the money within three months is a perverse reaction by Shylock resulted from the long maltreatments done to him (1.3.142-143). It is clearly understood that Shylock has murderous intention behind this claim. But this claim is as heinous as it is when Antonio spits on him, kicks him or calls him names regularly because of his religion and profession. It seems the long torments tolerated by Shylock have made him equally brutal. Evil done to Shylock has begot an evil in him.

Lancelot Gobbo, the servant of Shylock, has also 'othered' Shylock as he decides to work in the house of Bassanio. Lancelot tells his father, "My master's a very Jew; give him a present! give him a halter" (2.2.85-86). Lancelot seems to find the 'grace of God' in Bassanio which is 'absent' in Shylock and for that he wants to go to Bassanio. Lancelot believes that he will become and act like "a Jew if [he serves] the Jew any longer" (2.2.91-92). In this way, it is proved that the environment of alterity in Venice gives the chance to a servant who is normally powerless to belittle a master. It bears the testimony that religious alterity is much stronger than financial alterity.

Shylock is also othered by his own daughter, Jessica. She does not love him. Like Lancelot she has also grown up hearing different stereotypical beliefs regarding the Jews. That is why even though she herself bears a Jew name, hates her identi-

ty given by her father. As she loves Lorenzo, a Christian boy, she used to communicate with Christian society and so her Jew identity makes her feel an outcast in her principles. When bidding Lancelot, she describes her house as "hell" (2.3.2). Here, she expresses herself as an extreme outcome of religious hegemony so much so that she feels 'safer' in the Christian society. Even, she says that she is safe because her future husband will make her a Christian, "I shall end this strife / Become a Christian" (2.3.19-20). Her elopement with Lorenzo makes Shylock devoid of daughter, money and the honor of his tribe. Thus, Jessica who because of her Jewish identity falls into the category of alterity finds a 'solution' to be accepted by the recognized (Christian) identity. Moreover, Jessica is so ungrateful to her father that in Portia's palace she discloses the hidden wishes of her father that may bring danger to Shylock. She opens the path for the Christian people how Shylock can be destroyed and denied his rights and claims. In this way, Shylock is betrayed both by his servant and by his own daughter he loves and has encountered alterity in his own house.

While Jessica is fleeing from her father's house, she disguises herself as a boy. The same is found in the case of Portia and Nerissa. It is observed that the condition of women in the 16th century England was vulnerable and for this, women had to use a male disguise. Portia's thinking of acting like a man reflects the gender alterity in the society. Portia says, "And wear my dagger with the braver grace / And speak between the change of man and boy / With a red voice, and turn two mincing steps / Into a manly stride; and speak of frays" (3.4.65-68). Again Portia's passiveness about the decision of her father makes the question of gender in the play:

PORTIA: In terms of choice I am not solely led
By nice direction of a maiden's eyes.
Besides, the lottery of my destiny
Bars me the right of voluntary choosing (2.1.13-16)

She has submissively complied with her dead father's will by following the condition of letting any man choose the right casket. Portia is extremely lucky to get the man she loves because Bassanio chooses the right one. This proves that a dead man is stronger than a woman in Elizabethan society. Again, the play presents gender alterity.

The ultimate racial subjugation is found by Shylock's famous speech that says a Jew has eyes like a Christian. Through a series of rhetorical questions, Shylock argues that the Jews are the same human beings by nature but are not treated alike. Their way of superiority complex is contextually depicted here,

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passion? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is?" (3.1.46-50)

This argument is self-explanatory and proves the long tormenting alterity Shylock has encountered in his life. The questions bring the humane side in Shylock into light and position him as a victim rather than a villain. He de-establishes the multicultural hierarchy maintained through religion and thus, breaks the identity – alterity binary.

After debunking the binary, Shylock gives reasons for his actions against Antonio. Shylock says, "He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, hated my enemies. What's his reason, I am a Jew" (3.1.43-46). His claims are already proved since Antonio denies nothing and affirms of continuing his humiliation in ACT I Scene III mentioned above. Moreover, Shylock is insulted not only by Antonio but by most of the other Christian characters: Gratiano calls Shylock an "inexcrable dog" and Bassanio calls him an "unfeeling man" later in the trial scene (4.1.63-128). Shylock's revengeful nature is a brutal consequence of these inhuman treatments done by the Christian society in Venice. He justifies his avenging thought thus, "if you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that" (3.1.68-71). Most importantly, Shylock is following the path that has been created by the Christian Society. It is the boomerang effect that has been truly shown by Shakespeare with the portrayal of Shylock. Shylock describes this,

If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why revenge. The Villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction" (3.1.53-57, italics added)

This again invites the interpretation that the harsh treatment given to Shylock leads him to be what he is. The evil (villainy) is in the system and Shylock has learned the system from the Christians around him. The result is also evil which he wants to execute through the murderous bond.

Shylock in the trial scene is mostly dehumanized and becomes 'other' in terms of religion and race. Though the court should equally treat everyone in terms of cast and creed, Shylock finds the scenario different. This is a Christianity-based

court where everyone stands for Antonio so as to save the image of the Christian hegemony. The attempt of the Duke to save Antonio proves the hegemony: "Forgive a moiety of principal / Glancing an eye of pity on his losses / That have of late so huddled on his back" (4.1. 26-28). This is ironic because the Duke is asking to pity Antonio who has never left an opportunity to verbally and physically humiliate Shylock and also, the court has nothing to say about Antonio's regular humiliation towards Shylock. In the court, the Duke is more a Christian than a judge. The same can be said about Portia who readily says without much confrontation, "Then must the Jew be merciful" (4.1.178). No one from the Christian society ever tries to know the cause of this bond. Thus, Shylock is isolated, though he is still expecting justice.

Stubborn Shylock declares, "There is no power in the tongue of man / To alter me: I stay here on my bond" which proves the central argument of alterity (4.1.237-238, italics added). He has encountered alterity all through his life and now, it is his turn to show his hostility towards the very identity. This is interesting because the machination of the play is totally changed. Shylock used to be the victim of alterity, and now, getting the upper hand, he is practicing the act of alterity himself. But soon the game of alterity is shifted towards the Christians due to the shrewdness of Portia when she says,

PORTIA: "Take then thy bond, take thy pound of flesh
But in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate
Unto the state of Venice" (4.1.304-308)

Thus, Shylock loses the game which he might have thought was in his favor minutes ago. The multicultural hierarchy in the identity – alterity binary gets re-established. However, in this argument too Portia expresses racial alterity when she says "Christian blood" instead of only blood. Undoubtedly, she is proclaiming the superiority of Christianity by this argument. Shylock's situation worsens from here since the fear in him caused through alterity returns in his mind. The entrapment of Shylock by Portia through the law of Christian society in Venice justifies Shylock's fear. The Duke also adds to the tone of alterity when he says that Shylock will "see the difference of [their] spirit" (4.1.364-367). The Duke seems to establish that the Christians are not as revengeful as the Jews and that is why he spared Shylock's life but with the confiscation of half of his wealth and by giving Antonio the rest, the Duke does not become sympathetic either. However, Antonio puts the final and the most brutal sentence on Shylock that he must be converted to Christianity. Converting someone forcibly into another religion cannot be justified and this heinous task is done by Antonio, Shylock's life-time enemy. In this regard, observing Antonio's

previously uttered words in Act I Scene 3, "The Hebrew will turn Christian", becomes more interesting (1.3.171). Since he has uttered the words of conversion, it might also be possible that the revenge plan is not a readymade one. Antonio knows that the biggest revenge to Shylock would be to snatch away his Jew identity about which Shylock is very proud. Shylock's revenge plan is straightforward: murder. But Antonio proves himself to be more sophisticated in the practice of brutality and therefore, he snatches Shylock's identity altogether and wins the game of alterity. Rosenshield makes another crucial point here, "Shylock must accept conversion himself. As a Christian, Shylock will no longer be allowed to lend money at interest..... Antonio's victory is assured" (p. 46, italics added).

Therefore, the play in the name of justice provides Shylock with wild revenge just like Shylock tries to take revenge upon Antonio. No matter who wins or loses, the construction of alterity has been prevailed through every action and behavior by all the characters. Since no one shows redemption, it is also proved that the existing multicultural hierarchy is justified in the mind of the characters.

The Tempest: Colonial, Racial, and Gender Alterity

Caliban, the son of a witch-hag, the only figure of half-human half-monster, is indeed, the most complex of all characters in the play. Despite being a native on the island, Caliban is a slave to the colonial aim of Prospero. He consistently fails to uphold a ruler's position on the island even though he is the only heir to Sycorax and thus he should have been the king of the island; instead, he becomes the victim of slavery. Primarily, some of his childish, immature characteristics because of his juvenile spirit and the hardships he goes through can be spotted. There might be some arguments in terms of his being wickedly unjust and vindictively cruel; still, possibilities are that circumstances, in which Caliban cannot help his island from being usurped by others, have made him mentally restless.

Before the first entry of Caliban in the play, there are two times he has been mentioned by Prospero while talking to Ariel and in the same scene later with Miranda. Each time, it is reminded that Caliban though is "a freckled whelp, hag born - not honored with a human shape", is a "service" man and cannot be "missed" as he makes fire, fetches woods and serves in every way that "profit[s]" Prospero and Miranda (1.2.283-313). All these prove the presence of racial alterity and through the word "profit", clearly the colonial aim of Prospero gets clear as he "endorses his own rule in this island with his superior virtue and fitness for rules" (Hossain, 2019, p. 39). Moreover, Caliban is not just an ordinary creature living on the island and found by Prospero. It is because of Prospero's arrival here, Caliban is serving Prospero instead of ruling the island. This colonial interpretation is befitting

because the time of the play's creation is also the time for England's attempts of new discovery and colonization for the sake of 'profit' as stated by Meredith Anne Skura (1989), "Europeans were at that time exploiting the real Calibans of the world, and *The Tempest* was part of the process" (p. 45-46). Caliban is always addressed either by Prospero or by Miranda with epithets - "slave", "tortoise", "poisonous slave", "most lying slave", "abhorred slave" - that reminds all that he is a miserable creature and 'deserves' to live a mean life (1.2.314-351). Some epithets also involve his mother Sycorax when Prospero says that Caliban is "the devil himself/ Upon [his] wicked dam" or insults Caliban by saying "Hag-seed" (1.2.320-365). Caliban seems to be tolerating these humiliating remarks of alterity when his name is tagged with any insulting epithet. However, the humiliation taking his mother's name angers him and he replies:

Caliban: As wicked as e'er my mother brushed
With raven's feather from unwholesome fen
Drop on you both! A south-west blow on ye,
And blister you all o'er! (1.2.322-325)

In the reply of the insults given to him earlier, Caliban says that the two (Prospero and Miranda) should be drenched by an evil dew or be blown by hot south-west wind. It is to be noted that Caliban does not return any humiliating epithet tagged with the names of either the father or the daughter. Caliban feels weak before the mighty magician Prospero and his fear controls him even when he is returning a curse. Hence, Caliban's cursing is but a mild reaction of the number of humiliating epithets and insulting words he receives on a regular basis. His weakness in protesting bears the evidence of the binary: identity - alterity and the hierarchy gets clear. Later on, in reply to Caliban's retort, Prospero declares that on the very night Caliban "shalt have cramps", "shalt be pinched as thick as honeycomb" which is a despicable example of the practice of power by Prospero since as a 'master' he does not expect his slave to talk back regardless of the number of curses or punishments he is forced with (1.2.326-330).

Another such reaction showed by Caliban is very significant for the interpretation of colonial alterity:

CALIBAN: This island's mine by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou taks't from me. When thou cam'st first
Thou strok'st me and made much of me; wouldst give me
Water with berries in't, and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee

And showed thee all the qualities o'th'isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile –
Cursed be that I did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax – toads, beetles, bats – light on you!
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o'th'island. (1.2.332-344)

The image of Caliban presented here is an ambiguous one. It seems that Caliban being devoid of parental care because of the death of her mother Sycorax finds a surrogate father in Prospero when he first appears on the island. Prospero too gives Caliban wine (water with berries) and educates him the way he wants which may seem that Prospero has also been through a parental pleasure in the process. But Prospero's forceful overtaking of the kingdom of Caliban proves him to be a usurper and all the care he shows before taking the island seems fake or at least intentional. Fake or real, the care showed by Prospero moves Caliban as he says that he used to love Prospero and out of sincerity shows all the blessings that the island possesses. This also proves that the half-human half-beast Caliban is not devoid of conscience. He may have very different physical features than either of the visitors (Prospero and Miranda), he has a soft heart that trusts and loves the persons who behave generously. The only problem is that he is too innocent to understand that it is false generosity showed by Prospero which eventually befools him. Therefore, Caliban's being 'othered' by the 'others' is a case of the aboriginal against aggressive civilization dramatized before the audience much like England's colonizing North America and occupying their lands. The reply given by Prospero to the pleading of Caliban draws more attention towards the case of alterity, "Thou most lying slave, / Whom stripes may move, not kindness!" (1.2.345-46). This mentality of believing in violence to teach someone is certainly in no way humane yet in the next line, Prospero claims that he has given Caliban "humane care" (1.2.347). This is totally ironic and a presentation of perverse alterity.

However, it might be thought that Caliban attempts to rape Miranda and thus, justifiably invites his fate of slavery as Miranda believes that Caliban is "[d]e-servedly confined" and deserves "more than a prison" (1.2.361-362). In plain sense, Caliban's rape attempt towards Miranda is vicious and when it is learned from the speech of Miranda that she too has a good role in teaching Caliban and she has spent hours in the act, Caliban proves to be guilty. But without denying Caliban's fault, there is an alternative way to think about the matter. It is known that Caliban is the only child of Sycorax and there is no mention of any other human or humanlike creatures as Caliban on the island. When Prospero and Miranda appear, Miranda is

the first different sex Caliban has the chance to meet (except her mother). When Ferdinand appears, it is the same for Miranda to find a man except her father and she falls in love straightaway. It can be assumed that Caliban falls in love too with Miranda but since he is not a 'human' to Miranda, his love is not returned. It is also to be noted that the whole event is expressed in only two sentences. Audience does not really get to know if Caliban expresses his love first and gets denied or straightaway makes his attempt of the vile act. Another significant thought which is often missing is that Caliban is not 'entirely' a human and he does not know the courtesy of the human world being on the island. So, animalistic aggression in him is natural. Also, Prospero trains him with language as much as needed precisely, to make him work for him. How much composure or humane intention Prospero invests in Caliban's education is unclear and teaching 'not really a human' and expecting results like a human lacks logic. This whole matter, therefore, should have been dealt with more care. He has not been given a second chance because of the idea that his "evil race" is incapable of abiding by the rule of "good natures" (1.2.359-360). Miranda becomes judgmental while generalizing the race of Caliban based on the action of one man. This preoccupied racist stereotype becomes decisive for Prospero to compel Caliban to slavery. Thus, this exemplifies both racial and colonial alterity.

This alterity generates another ambiguous but very significant reaction from Caliban when he says, "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!" (1.2.363-365). Caliban's remark, if plainly taken, means he knows the language of his masters and now can use it to curse them and figuratively, the colonized gets the chance to revolt against the colonizers using the very language through which colonization has been in operation. Later in the play, using the language taught by his master, Caliban convinces Stephano and Trinculo to Kill Prospero in sleep though that too is unsuccessful. Yet, his spirit of protest is evident through the failed attempt. His murderous attempt may seem brutal or cruel but the way he has been treated by his colonial master Prospero, this kind of reaction is expected.

However, Caliban's acceptance of a second master in Stephano in order to get freedom from Prospero poses a number of questions. First of all, there is a sense of subservience apparent in Caliban when Caliban kneels to a mere liquor bottle and despite being called a "abominable monster" by Trinculo and "moon-calf" by Stephano, Caliban becomes so obedient that he can even "kiss" Stephano's foot, begging him to be his "God" (2.2.113-135). He solely agrees to do labors such as plucking berries, fishing, gathering woods which presumably he does for Prospero and in his mind creates a binary between Prospero ("tyrant") and Stephano ("wondrous man") (2.2.137-140). This binary may be a result of the liquor or more convincingly, Caliban's innocent mind that gets too easily and too soon impressed. He does

not seem to understand that if being a strong monster himself, he is unable to kill the mighty Prospero, how can the two drunkards make it happen? Secondly, Caliban's intense hatred for Prospero makes him ready to be enslaved by his new master but his lack of foresight does not give him the thought that by shifting masters, he is not getting his cherished "[f]reedom, high-day, high-day freedom" since he is going to do the same sort of chores for the "new master (2.2.162). Thirdly, readers might interpret that Caliban's subservience may also be a way to get rid of Prospero and later, by tricking Stephano and Trinculo, he might get his island back. But this is highly unlikely because in the whole play, it never happens that Caliban is lying. Though Prospero, Miranda, and Ariel accuse Caliban of lying, he only has his perception of seeing things which does not have to be lies. But to a colonial master every reactionary word is a lie, any logic or perception expressed by the colonized is abominable and every attempt of self-defense is heinous.

What happens to Caliban in the end of the play is not clear and this lack of clarity again brings the question of alterity. Caliban is asked to take Stephano and Trinculo towards the "cell" of Prospero and is also ordered to "to trim it handsomely" if he wants Prospero's "pardon" (5.1.289-291). Whether to take Caliban with him to Naples as he is "no doubt marketable" according to Antonio or to leave him on the island and let him rule in future is not clearly expressed by Prospero (5.1.265). Prospero's intention regarding Caliban is also unclear because he continues to harass Caliban by saying "misshapen knave", "demi-devil", "bastard", "thing of darkness", "disproportioned" in "manners" and "shape" (5.1.267-289). These are not the epithets usually uttered by a forgiver. It is interesting to notice that every other character except Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo gets clear expression of pardon from Prospero. If Prospero can forgive Antonio and Alonso who have together 'successfully' dethroned him 12 years ago, why is then in the case of Caliban who just made an 'unsuccessful' attempt on his life, Prospero maintains obscurity in forgiveness? Why is he not making Antonio or Alonso do the servile works such as cleaning his cell? Is it only because Antonio is Prospero's brother and Alonso is a powerful man and Prospero has still much to gain from him (Miranda is going to be Alonso's daughter in law)? Apart from these reasons, the factors of "race" and "body" might have worked in Prospero's mind. Due to the shape and skin color of Caliban, he has been thoroughly dehumanized in the play. Hence, the other prisoners are 'superior' in rank to Prospero though they have done more harm to him than Caliban. It seems that the enmity between the 'superior race' may end but Caliban being an 'alter' to the others are forever prone to face alterity.

Moreover, this abominable treatment by Prospero is not only given to Caliban but also to Ariel who is a spirit roaming in the air without physical entity, appears only before Prospero and performs every command given by Prospero "[t]o every article" (1.2.195). Ariel seems to be loved by Prospero since he calls Ariel

"my Ariel", "my brave spirit" etc. But as soon as Ariel first reminds Prospero about his "liberty" that Prospero "has promised" to give after "a full year", Ariel becomes a liar, "malignant thing", "[d]ull thing" to Prospero (1.2.257-285). Hence, there is effectively no difference in the treatment of both Caliban and Ariel. Both are slaves and are forced with master-slave alterity. Prospero says that he should "[o]nce in a month recount" Ariel about his previous misery under the spell of Sycorax and how Prospero with his "art" has rescued him (1.2.262-291). Thus, the act of 'rescuing' makes Ariel's slavery justified in the eyes of Prospero. But the biggest irony here is that Prospero has enslaved Ariel just like Sycorax did claiming "greater power" than her and proving to be "even more tyrannous than his predecessor" (Sanchez, 2008, p. 60). Prospero's authoritative attitude towards Ariel is also noticeable when he seems to force his judgment on Ariel. For example, Ariel denies that he lies and also ensures that he remembers what Prospero has done for him and is grateful for that, only to be charged with words such as "thou liest", "thou dost [forget]" etc. All these are plain reminders of the fact that Ariel is also a 'slave' to the 'master' Prospero just a bit lesser abominable than Caliban. Ariel seems to be amenable to Prospero when he says, "all hail, great master, grave sir, hail" and this bears a testimony of Ariel's more than sufficient obedience and firm subordination (1.2.189). Ariel's docile self is even more clear when he expresses that "[t]o answer" his master's "best pleasure", he is always vigilant and agile "To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride on the curl'd clouds" with "all his quality" (1.2.190-193). From Prospero, the promise of freedom in consideration of slavery, erupts the hegemony seen in Ariel. Just like Caliban, he wants freedom and since he has proven himself to be a 'good' slave, his liberation is promised though the fulfillment of the promise is under his master's will. However, freedom does not come easily. The service seems to be unending as Prospero says, "Ariel, thy charge / Exactly is perform'd: but there's more work." (1.2.238-239). In response, Ariel makes sure that he is ready to embrace more toil and pains after little argument on his promised freedom. On the other hand, all Prospero wants is an absolute assurance of service from his slave, Ariel. His mastery turns into a dictatorship when he threatens Ariel, "If thou murmur'st, I will rend an oak / And peg thee in his knotty entrails till / Thou hast howled away twelve winters" (1.2.294-296). This is again a clear colonial statement where the colonized are silenced with threats and violence and also is in no way less humiliating than the treatment of Caliban. The only difference in the treatment of Prospero is found by the end of the play when he says, "thou shalt have freedom" whereas Caliban has not got any direct word of pardon as mentioned above (5.1.96). Ariel being a 'better servant' to Prospero gets direct words of "freedom" but Caliban's future remains uncertain. Thus, even the characters who are 'altered' or 'othered' by Prospero get hierarchic acknowledgement.

Prospero's dictatorship and silencing are also with his own daughter Miranda. For 12 years of their stay on the island, Prospero never shares with Miran

da the full story regarding their arrival. She has not been given any idea about her lineage. She has not been allowed to see Ariel. The only entity that she sees other than her father is Caliban whom she hates. Then, suddenly, Prospero wishes to make her meet Ferdinand and fall in love. Since she has not seen any 'male human being' except her father (considering Caliban not exactly a human), she immediately falls in love making the future plan of her father successful. Her father being her "schoolmaster", thus, acts more like a master than father because just like the two other slaves, Miranda too is in full control of Prospero (1.2.172). For example, at the time of sharing their background story to Miranda, Prospero utters several times, "Dost thou attend me?", "thou attend'st not", "Dost thou hear" (1.2.78-106). In a way, this control is more despicable as she does not possess any self of her own, all she is what her father wishes her to be. She believes whatever her father tells her without having the ability to make her own opinion. Ariel and Caliban, at least have the voice to ask for liberty. The problem with Miranda is that she does not even know that she needs freedom. She is a mere puppet to her father's philosophy and wishes and it is understood when Caliban secures his wish to unite Milan and Naples through the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda. In the name of testing love, Prospero makes Ferdinand do the same servile works like Caliban and Miranda has to accept it because she has not learned how to protest against her father. Therefore, all she fulfills is her father's wish and thus, her father becomes a patriarchal father. The case with Miranda, hence, is a case of gender alterity.

Alterity in the Two Plays: A Comparison

The two plays possess arresting similarities regarding the execution of alterity and also in the reactions generated by alterity. Both the plays display the binary of identity and alterity. In *The Merchant of Venice*, it is Christian (identity) versus Jew (alterity). In *The Tempest* it is the colonizer (identity) versus the colonized (alterity). In *The Merchant of Venice*, the focused tool for alterity is religion and in *The Tempest*, it is race. Both the plays exhibit brutality and its brutal reaction in return. Both Shylock and Caliban attempt to murder their strongest and most brutal opponent as a reaction to the brutality they have received. Interestingly, in both the plays the attempts are failed and therefore, both the plays uphold the notion of the powerful. None of the plays show the oppressors redeeming or feeling sorry for what they have done. Hence, the brutality done and received, both get justification which is the main area of contention of this paper.

Shylock says, "The villainy you teach me I will execute" which bears a similar message when Caliban says, "You taught me language and my profit on't / that I know how to curse" (*The Merchant of Venice* 3.1.56) (*The Tempest* 1.2.363-365). Both Shylock and Caliban are perverse in their murderous intentions but the

perverseness is present in them because that is the way they have been treated. Shylock has been 'taught' by the dominating Christian society and Caliban by his dominating master Prospero. Evil treatment begets evil desire.

In both the plays, the appearance and the nature have been used as tools for alterity. Shylock's Jew dress has been spat on by Antonio, his profession has been humiliated. Caliban's physiognomy since he is half-human half-beast has been given humiliating epithets, his race, parenthood, and lineage have been numerously denounced. Also, Caliban's beastly nature has been focused ignoring his innocent mind that trusts the visitors. In this sense, both the plays bear stereotypes. The first one bears anti-Semitism (religious alterity), and the second one bears racial alterity.

Both the plays showcase justice but the very intention of it has questionable positions. Shylock has not only been robbed of his entire wealth, he is also forcefully converted to Christianity. Though Norman Nathan (1948) claims that there is "no evidence of anti-Semitism" "in the punishment of Shylock", the forceful conversion of religion strongly contends the idea (p. 156). Caliban has been obscurely 'pardoned' and Ariel has been given back his liberty in *The Tempest*, but all Prospero does in the entire play is to fulfill his own aim of getting back to the power of Milan's Dukedom. Also, there is no justice in making Caliban a slave first and later on pardoning (if he has really been pardoned) when Prospero wishes, or enslaving Ariel first to use Ariel's power for Prospero's personal plan and then giving back liberty when everything is achieved.

Conclusion

Identity and alterity are the two binaries represented as the driving force in both the plays. Finally, in both the plays, the rule of identity prevails and the mechanism of alterity has not been questioned except some occasional reactionary speeches or failed attempts of revolt. The plays being nonlinear in theme and ambiguous in interpretation draw "our attention to questionable aspects" (Willis, 1989, p. 279). Neither, siding with the identity claiming the antagonist characters entirely villainous nor siding with the characters who are 'altered' look sensible. There are many occasions where both the plays show that it is not the characters but the system running through the society is the culprit. The system has created Shylock and Caliban. If there is no Antonio and his spitting on Shylock, there may not be a 'flesh-demanding' Shylock. If there is no dictator magician Prospero, Caliban may well be living on the island without any servitude. There is the intention of murder or revenge because the system teaches them to be murderous or revengeful. If identity does not claim to be superior, there is no chance of alterity.

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