

**Postcolonialism in *The Tempest* & *Oroonoko*: Issues of Race and Power**

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This Thesis is dedicated to my parents whose contribution in my life cannot be compared with anything.....

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## Abstract

This paper analyses William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* in the context of Postcolonialism. It is an attempt to analyze issues such as subjugation, dominance and language in relation to power. It also discusses the complex relationship that exists between the master and slave. The two texts have dealt with each issue in its own way. Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask*, Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of knowledge*, Edward Said's "*Orientalism*" have been used to interpret the text from Postcolonial perspective. Apart from these texts as primary sources, journals, articles and other reference books have been used as secondary sources.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is a good study of the post-colonial literary theory. Many Postcolonial scholars and theorists have focused their attention on this play. The play reinforces many post-colonial ideas like, language, power and knowledge, resistance, identity, hybridity, patriarchy, etc. generated by the portrayal of characters and incidents. It produces a narrative which combines Michel's Foucault's idea of the discourse analysis along with other postcolonial values. Foucault's theory is of such a universal nature that it is applicable to human nature and society. In accordance with his theory, power is productive and it comes from knowledge. That means knowledge is the ultimate instrument of power<sup>1</sup>. *The Tempest* indicates Shakespeare's as well as Foucault's universal vision of power. Therefore, the protagonist struggles to have supreme power to rule over the land. The colonizers use various kinds of power tools, such as political, military, physical, intellectual, legal, lingual, and so forth. The paper will attempt to show how the play's discursive formation reproduces statements and facts related to Foucault's theory regarding language, power and knowledge.

This thesis would also aim to take a detailed look at the way the issues of cultural differences are highlighted in the play. Frantz Fanon gives a universal idea about racism which is another important post-colonial issue. Fanon expresses the complexities of Black psyche developed by the colonial environment and reveals White men's use of language that results in oppression of the Black mind. In Fanon's theory the more the black becomes a master of white man's

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<sup>1</sup>Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*, P.186

language, the more 'human' he gets. The success or achievement is measured by how much the black man can forget about his own self completely and closely mimic another white person. Fanon argues that the "European has a fixed concept of the Negro" who are "classifying, imprisoning, primitivizing and decivilizing"<sup>2</sup> the black people. For Fanon, the relationship between the black and the white is almost like the relationship between an adult and a child. Many whites speak brutally to blacks and address or behave exactly like an adult with a child. Moreover, Fanon criticizes Octave Mannoni's concept of inferiority complex in the black mind which is supposed to be innate to the primitive' or uncivilized people. Fanon emphasizes that the inferiority complexes are not innate rather "occurring phenomenon of discrimination encountered by colonized peoples"<sup>3</sup> that means, the inferiority complexes in people of colour are nothing but the result of the white man's arrival.

### **Postcolonial Literature**

Western literature cultivated and promoted White, Eurocentric norms and practices in writing. Post-colonial literature looks at the cultural and political impact of European conquest upon colonized as well as indigenous societies and their responses. The history of postcolonial criticism can be traced back to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) where Fanon talks about 'cultural resistance' in Africa. He argues that "the first step for 'colonialised' people in finding a voice and an identity is to reclaim their own past".<sup>4</sup> In a similar way, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) criticises 'Eurocentric universalism' that expresses the superiority of the West which is regarded as the 'Occident' and the inferiority of the East which is regarded as the

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<sup>2</sup> Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Chapter 1, P.32

<sup>3</sup> Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Chapter 4, P.85

<sup>4</sup> Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*, P.186

‘Other’ or the ‘Orient’<sup>5</sup>. This kind of writing presents the East to the Occident as exotic, mystical and seductive. Said discusses the whole process of ‘othering’ and mentions how the colonized people are not given a chance to grow and prosper within their own societies with a complete and cohesive sense of identity. They are usually portrayed as cruel, sensual, lazy, corrupted, driven by ‘instinctive emotions’ and so on. The colonized characters are portrayed as people whose emotions are ruled by their racial backgrounds rather than by their individual social conditions. Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* is a good example of postcolonial criticism in which the character Caliban represents a racial ‘Other’. Here, language is an important tool of study to help gain an insight into the powerful-powerless dichotomy. Identity –double, divided, hybrid or fluid—or the lack of it, is another important concern of the postcolonial writers.

### **Colonial Ambitions of England**

During the process of colonization, the British Empire subjugated the colonized lands as well as the people. In the name of ‘civilization’ they suppressed the colonized people both physically and psychologically. Especially by using the “Bible” and the “sword” they forced their language and culture on colonized minds. They used their language and literature in the formal education system and preached Christianity through missionary activities. Therefore, the colonizers created the distinctions like “self vs. other, master vs. slave, civilized vs. savage, white vs. black, good vs. evil, strong vs. weak, occident vs. orient, elite vs. subaltern and so forth in terms of knowledge, culture and in the daily life of colonized societies.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, in the attempt to civilize the whole world, the West created ‘surrogate and even underground self’ through the process of mimicry and hybridity.

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<sup>5</sup> Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*, P.187

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.academia.edu/2475238/Theme\\_of\\_otherness\\_and\\_writing\\_back\\_A\\_contrapuntal\\_analysis\\_of\\_colonial\\_and\\_postcolonial\\_novels](https://www.academia.edu/2475238/Theme_of_otherness_and_writing_back_A_contrapuntal_analysis_of_colonial_and_postcolonial_novels)



## **Books and incidents that inspired Shakespeare to write *The Tempest***

William Shakespeare is renowned for his plays but most of the time sources are unidentified. It is believed that *The Tempest* was written in 1610-11. Shakespeare was inspired to write the play *The Tempest* from some sources. Among them Erasmus's *Naufragium* (1523), Richard Eden's 1555 translation of Peter Martyr's *De orbo novo* (1530), William Strachey's *A True Reportory of the Wracke and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight* are the main. Of these three sources, William Strachey's *A True Reportory of the Wracke and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight* is considered to be the main source of *The Tempest*. Moreover, it is important to look upon other sources. The traditional Italian *commedia dell'arte* is one of them in which the characters Magus and his daughter as well as their supernatural power is almost similar to Prospero and Miranda in *The Tempest*. The poem *Metamorphoses* written by Ovid is another source which inspired Prospero's speeches.

Apart from that, Shakespeare read many other writings which were borrowed in this play. Henry David Gray argues in his essay *The Sources of The Tempest* (1920) that, Shakespeare "did not invent even the very slight plot about which *The Tempest* is built"<sup>7</sup>. For example, Shakespeare read the English translation *Of the Cannibals*, written by the French writer Michel de Montaigne (1533-92). In this essay Montaigne showed the artificial values of the 'civilised world' in which a society of American Indians is unaffected by Western civilization but its citizens are noble as well as superior. In *The Tempest* there is Montaigne's view of a Utopia which Shakespeare directly collects and transmits by the speech of Gonzalo, the honest old Councilor (in Act II. Scene II).

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<sup>7</sup>David Gray, Gray, Henry, *The Sources of The Tempest* (Jun, 1920), PP. 321-330

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is also a fine example of Fanon's black and white theory in which Prospero portrays the white, the civilized and the colonizer whereas Caliban represents a black, a colonized and an uncivilized inhabitant. The purpose of Prospero's taking an attempt to teach Caliban language is only to subjugate and to make him a servant. But in Prospero's account, there is nothing good about Caliban, he is not even a good servant. Caliban's accomplishment to rape Miranda, Prospero's daughter, proves again his incapability of being a civilized man. On the contrary, Caliban suffers a lot especially psychologically. He learns nothing at his master's hands but only to obey Prospero's orders. Thus, the consequence of Caliban's experience with Prospero is, of nurture, not nature and this argument focuses the relation of master and servant, European and native that is modelled on the colonial experience. As the colonizers have the right to write the rules and make the laws, Prospero controls the island as the master and dehumanizes Caliban like a slave. It seems that Caliban's existence with dark skin is to be exploited for the benefit of his master. Though the colonizer's target is to achieve economic gain, it is the colonizer's major ambition to turn the colonized in to an object to serve their needs.

## Chapter 2

### **Postcolonialism and Shakespeare's *The Tempest***

#### **2.1 Significance of the Title and the Setting**

The whole play *The Tempest* takes place on an unnamed island though the location is unknown. Many postcolonial critics have the opinion that the island is located in the Mediterranean sea. But the main point is, wherever it is located, the island stands for the representation of any colonized land. The literal meaning of the name or title of the play *The Tempest* is “storm”. But “tempest” has a deeper meaning that is a violent disturbance upon nature as well as standard of living people. The play opens with a storm scene that is very close to the nature of human authority. The protagonist Prospero, a scholarly magician of the island controls the storm to disrupt the peaceful life of isolation. The disruption indicates Prospero's authority and power over the island or his enemies. It seems that Prospero has a preplanned mission to establish forgiveness and justice. Therefore, the “storm” becomes the only path to reconciliation and to make the possibility of regeneration in the play. Thus, Shakespeare chooses this magical occurrence to indicate the political authority and the effects of usurpation.

## 2.2 The Politics of Subjugation in *The Tempest*

Prospero's brother Antonio had usurped his kingdom and forced Prospero to go into exile to save his life. He ended up in this island inhabited by Caliban and the others and subsequently by virtue of his knowledge, manages to attain a position of power in the island.

The main subjugated as well as colonized characters of *The Tempest* are Caliban, Ariel and Miranda. Prospero rules over the island and dominates all its inhabitants by using his knowledge of magic. It is thought that, the name 'Caliban' is taken from Romany word 'Cauliban' which means 'black' as Prospero calls him "thou earth"<sup>8</sup> (1,2.42) and says "This thing of darkness / I acknowledge mine"<sup>9</sup> (5.1.20). From another source Caliban's name is an anagram of the word "Cannibal" which is a term derived from "Carib"<sup>10</sup> in other word the Carribean. Therefore, the inhabitants of Carribean Island, like the Island in the *Tempest* were associated with savagery and cannibalism. Caliban however, does not easily accept this position of inferiority in his own domain and always attempts to claim his rightful ownership of the island. Caliban says: "This island's mine by Sycorax my mother, Which thou tak'st from me."<sup>11</sup> (act, 1.scene2. line 330)

On the contrary, the dramatic tension of the play is occurred by the speech of Prospero: "I am the husband, and the whole island is my lawful wife; I am the head, and it is my body."<sup>12</sup> In addition, as a ruler Prospero cannot deny Caliban's contribution to the island. Miranda would like a world without Caliban, but Prospero is aware of that, ".....as 'tis, We cannot miss him. He does make

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<sup>8</sup>Orgel, Stephen. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*.

<sup>9</sup>Orgel, Stephen. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*.

<sup>10</sup> Fernandez Retamar, Roberto, *Caliban and Other Essays*. (September-October 1971)

<sup>11</sup>Orgel, Stephen. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*.

<sup>12</sup>Orgel, Stephen. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*.

our fire, Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices That profit us.”<sup>13</sup>(act1,scene2,310-13), thus, the relationship between Prospero and Caliban indicates the colonial experience as master and servant as well as European and native.

A spirit, Ariel is another inhabitant who is bound to obey Prospero’s order. Though Prospero rescued Ariel from his imprisonment, Ariel never gets his freedom properly throughout the play. It is Ariel who creates a violent storm “Tempest” in Act One by the command of Prospero. Ariel worked almost like the meaning of his name “Lion of God” that is found in the Bible. In this play only Prospero can see Ariel and Ariel does all the important tasks to satisfy his master. Once Ariel requested for freedom and Prospero rejected at that moment. In addition, it is ridiculous that Prospero assures Ariel’s freedom to follow the rest of his commands.

Miranda, Prospero’s one and only child is another good example of a subjugated character in *The Tempest*. Prospero plays the role of a dominant patriarch who controls Miranda’s thoughts and activities. His first and foremost responsibility is reflected by teaching and controlling Miranda only to fulfill her role as his inheritor. Miranda has never left the island as Prospero raised her. Even before meeting Ferdinand, she had never been attracted to another man. Once Miranda states: “I do not know, One of my sex ; no woman’s face remember, : Save, from my glass, mine own;” <sup>14</sup>(Act:3, Scene1). Miranda has neither a sister nor a mother in her life. For this reason, she cannot understand or communicate with another woman and does not know how to act as a woman in the patriarchal structure. Moreover, Prospero takes control over Ferdinand and warned him against breaking her “virgin-knot before/ All sanctimonious ceremonies”

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<sup>13</sup>Orgel, Stephen. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*.

<sup>14</sup>Orgel, Stephen. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*.

<sup>15</sup>(Act:4, Scene1,6-15). Thus, throughout the play even Miranda is treated as an ‘Other’ by Prospero.

“A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro”<sup>16</sup>. It is because a black man discriminates the white man and with another black man which is the ultimate result of colonialist subjugation. In *The Tempest* Ariel and Caliban both are subjugated characters and it’s their duty to obey Prospero’s order. Ariel listens to Prospero without any question or objection but Ariel never likes Caliban. Fanon states, “the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man”<sup>17</sup>. In the same way, Prospero tries to make Caliban civilized and educated and Caliban is intelligent enough to think it is nothing but one form of subjugation. But Fanon feels sorry that intelligence has never saved anyone just like Caliban.

Moreover, Fanon refers to Sir Alan Burns who says,” the black man is inherently inferior to the White, or that he comes from a different stock....”<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in *The Tempest* Prospero refers to the witch Sycorax as “blue-eyed hag”<sup>19</sup>(act1, scene2, line 269) which is the mark of imperfection on a woman and Caliban is her half- human son. Therefore, Prospero also refers to Sycorax’s Illegal pregnancy, he says: “....was hither brought with child....”<sup>20</sup> (act1, scene2.line269) Fanon explains the statement of Burns with an excitement which is “It is laid down in the Bible that the separation of the white and black races will be continued in heaven as

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<sup>15</sup>Orgel, Stephen. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*.

<sup>16</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Chapter1, P.17

<sup>17</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Chapter1, P.26

<sup>18</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Chapter1, P.30

<sup>19</sup>Orgel, Stephen. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*.

<sup>20</sup>Orgel, Stephen. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*.

on earth”<sup>21</sup> and “We are the chosen people- look at the color of our skins. The others are black or yellow: That is because of their sins.”<sup>22</sup> Fanon opines that there is no difference between Colonial racism and any other racism. Fanon argues that, “Yes, European civilization and its best representatives are responsible for colonial racism”<sup>23</sup> The psychology of colonialism is clearly expressed when Mannoni gives it a name “Prospero complex”. The witch Sycorax tortured Ariel with magic and Prospero does the same with Caliban. It is almost like that “one kind of inhuman behavior differs from another kind of inhuman behavior”<sup>24</sup>. Prospero shows his unawareness of Others in the island as well as the colonial environment as like the colonizers forget that the Others must be respected. The consequence shows the feeling of inferiority in Other’s mind.

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<sup>21</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Chapter1, P.35

<sup>22</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Chapter1, P.31

<sup>23</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Chapter1, P.33

<sup>24</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Chapter4, P.86

### 2.3 Power Relationship and Language.

Language is one of the main concerns of postcolonial studies. In the process of colonization the colonizers usually imposed their language upon the colonized people. Even they forbade the natives to speak their mother language. James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a fine example in which the character Stephen tells himself "the language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine.....My soul frets in the shadow of his language"<sup>25</sup> (*Portrait*, chapter five). Moreover, in the poem "The Ministry of Fear" the Irish poet Seamus Heaney reminds the problem of pronunciation of English in his early childhood. It makes him feel that the language as well as the linguistic furniture possesses only for the colonizers and it must be used with their authorization<sup>26</sup>. However, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has the same field of self-consciousness about language that indicates the power relationships specially between Caliban and Prospero. Here Michel Foucault's theory of Discourse Analysis works out exactly that, the colonizers use language to express the dominance and ask for obedience and respect from those subordinate in return. This analysis makes clear to understand "how individuals view the world and studies categorizations, personal and institutional relationships, ideology and politics"<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, Foucault comes up to use language as a form of resistance to those in power. For instance, In *The Tempest* Prospero teaches Caliban how to speak specially the vocabularies consist of 'I', 'you', 'food', 'love', 'master', 'slave'. But the last two words affect Caliban more and helps to express his resistance contained within power. As Foucault argues that, "language is used as a form of resistance to those in power"<sup>28</sup>. The inner conflict is reflected in the dramatic tension when Caliban addresses Prospero: "You taught me language,

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<sup>25</sup> Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*, P.188

<sup>26</sup> Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*, P.186

<sup>27</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Archeology of knowledge*

<sup>28</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Archeology of knowledge*



and my profit on't. Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you. For learning me your language ! ”<sup>29</sup>( act,1.Scene2, line 366-8)Moreover,Foucault’s analysis of power structures discusses the struggle against inequality. Caliban and Ariel both are the slaves of Prospero. But Prospero maintains relationship towards Caliban differently and praises Ariel for all the works. As a result, Ariel remains submissive in comparison to Caliban. Ariel’s language remains as like an indentured slave. On the other hand, Caliban’s rebellious attitude is the result of his feeling of subjugation.

In the time of Shakespeare Europe was spreading out worldwide,Industries were expanding and searching for scholarly knowledge.Many adventurous sea-voyages were being undertaken and people gradually moved around luxuries.Shakespeare’s writings also show the exploration as well as deconstruction at that period.A pioneer postcolonial theorist HomiBhabha gives his concept of ‘mimicry’<sup>30</sup>, taken by Jacques Lacan that affects the psychology of an individual. Bhabha says, “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite”<sup>31</sup>, In *The Tempest* Caliban is to learn the language, attitude as well as behavior and culture of the colonizer Prospero. Even Miranda helps a lot to change Caliban.But Caliban remains unchanged and he loses his sense of identity. He is wise enough that his skin and everything is colonized. Caliban,the right owner of the island cannot accept the culture of his enemy and refuses to imitate the so called artificial lifestyle. As a deformed creature by nature, it is Caliban’s fate to listen to his master. During the colonial period the ruling group, the European started to dominate without direct oppression that means established the hegemony. In the play *The Tempest* Prospero’s attitude presents domination

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<sup>29</sup>Orgel,Stephen. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*.

<sup>30</sup>Bhabha.Homi.*Of Mimicry and Man*.PP.85-92

<sup>31</sup>Bhabha.Homi.*Of Mimicry and Man*.PP.85-92

without violence that indicates Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony. Prospero's awkward arrival in the island and manipulation of all the inhabitants and their activities proves him as a colonial imperialist. This situation creates 'hegemony' that means dominating by consent. Shakespeare shows Prospero's hegemonic power to make him the subject of the island.

At the end of the play when all the incidents with reconciliation, justice and forgiveness are done, there remains one question. That is, the colonized minds can ever regain their own identity or culture? If the process of colonization is a mindset then how can a decolonized mind get relief from the tortured mind and give a new utopian world?

## 2.4 Knowledge and Power

Michel Foucault shows the power relationships in society by using language and behavior. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis indicates how the colonizers use language to express their dominance to the colonised. The existing power relationship is paying attention to the society which is constructed by language.<sup>32</sup>

In the essay *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o refers to Chinua Achebe's statement that is, "Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's?....But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it."<sup>33</sup>(Achebe 1975: 62)

Ngũgĩ states, "language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner..... Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation"<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, Ngũgĩ mentions in his *Decolonizing the Mind*, "Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture." Language also shows the history of a country.

Thus, the language English is being used in every way of life like, the arts, the sciences, and all the other branches of learning that influences the culture as well as the mind of the people. Those who can use the language perfectly are praised highly and that is the measure of their intelligence and ability. So, the language is a weapon and it is both of a communication and a carrier of

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<sup>32</sup>Foucault, Michel. *Archeology of knowledge*

<sup>33</sup>Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "The Language of African Literature", *Decolonizing the mind*, pg-285-87

<sup>34</sup>Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "The Language of African Literature", *Decolonizing the mind*, pg-285-87

culture. The purpose of colonialism is clear that is to control the people's wealth; what they produce, how they produce it and how it is distributed only to control.

Fanon strongly protests Mannoni and says "colonialism is the business of adventurers and politicians"<sup>35</sup> In *The Tempest* Prospero's knowledge of magic is used to produce power. As Tennyson gives the idea that, knowledge comes and wisdom lingers<sup>36</sup>. So, knowledge cares about power but wisdom does not care about power. The relationship between power and knowledge can be categorized :

Power ( Authority control, like hegemony) ----- Knowledge ( Exploration-----  
-----Accumulation/collection----- to reach destination)

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<sup>35</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*.Chapter1, P.35

<sup>36</sup>The idea of the graph is taken from the lecture of Prof, Syed Manzoorul Islam sir

## Chapter 3

### **Postcolonialism and Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko***

#### **3.1 Title and Setting**

The full name of novella *Oroonoko* is, *Oroonoko; or, the Royal Slave*. The title is perfect with the name of the protagonist who is the grandson of an African king. Behn depicts the true story of Oroonoko that touches the soul of the readers and helps to realize the true history of colonial setting.

*Oroonoko* has two sections- life in Surinam and life in Coramantien. In the first part the protagonist Oroonoko is a warrior-prince in his African country, named Coramentien. He fell in love with Imoinda but soon after his Grandfather, the king of Coramentien becomes interested in Oroonoko's beloved Imoinda. But all the efforts to gain Imoinda's love failed and the king takes a decision to sell her as a slave. Therefore, Oroonoko was told that Imoinda is dead. In the second part of the story Oroonoko is brought to the English colony, Surinam as a slave. He and his beloved Imoinda both are reunited surprisingly and meets the narrator whom Oroonoko tells all his own story. His attempt at rebellion was unsuccessful and he is brutally killed by the English colonists.

### 3.2 Slavery and Subjugation

Aphra Behn's, *Oroonoko: or, the Royal Slave* which is written in late seventeenth century (1688) and considered as the first novel by a female writer. It is a true story of an enslaved African black prince in a colonial setting. In this novella, the protagonist Oroonoko plays the role of a colonized as well as a subjugated character who is desirable as well as admirable to the white colonizer in the English plantation colony, Surinam. He is rebellious, not a typical Negro rather he is Royal. "He was pretty tall, but of a shape the most exact that can be fancied: the most famous statuary could not form the figure of a man more admirably turned from head to foot... His nose was rising and Roman, instead of African and flat....."<sup>37</sup> Here Oroonoko's physical description observed as the combination of the phrases 'rising and Roman' and 'African and flat'. There is the distinction while 'rising and Roman' suggests nobility, 'African and flat' suggests inferiority. Oroonoko is royal in his country and in his character. At the same time, he remains a slave because of colonization and slavery. Thus, the arrival of white colonizers on the island creates "the feeling of inferiority" to the Black. Fanon argues that "Yes, European civilization and its best representatives are responsible for colonial racism"<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, Fanon strongly protests Mannoni and says "colonialism is the business of adventurers and politicians"<sup>39</sup> and one of the victims is Oroonoko whose given name is Caesar. A British slave trader caught the African prince Oroonoko and enslaved him and afterward brought him to Surinam "in the West-Indies". Oroonoko is being betrayed over and over again and finally ordered him to be put to death. The

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<sup>37</sup>Behn, Aphra. *Oroonoko*.

<sup>38</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Chapter 4, P.90

<sup>39</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Chapter 4, P.91

British colonizer Bannister whom Behn recognizes as “a fellow of absolute barbarity” captures Oroonoko and tells him honestly that he will “die like a dog”<sup>40</sup>. The African prince Oroonoko replies in return gratefully that, he has finally heard a white man tell the truth. However, the cruelty of killing Oroonoko knows no bound. The real brutality and unjust is seen vividly from the narrator’s description, the whites who whip Oroonoko and torture him by rending the flesh from his bones: “when they thought they were sufficiently revenged on him, they untied him almost fainting with the loss of blood, from a thousand wounds all over his body...and led him bleeding and naked as he was, and loaded him all over with irons and then rubbed his wounds, to complete their cruelty, with Indian pepper which had like to have made him raving mad”<sup>41</sup>. These descriptions would have horrified seventeenth-century Europeans and proved Fanon’s argues of civilization in a bloody sea. Aphra Behn sets the story in the backdrop of seventeenth century as it is mentioned earlier, when Africa was a land of wonders, innocence and real greatness of soul. The narrator explains vividly that before the arrival of the British the native people are almost like the first biblical parents in the Garden of Eden living in “the first state of innocence, before man knew how to sin”<sup>42</sup>. Moreover, Behn refers to the native people that they even do not understand the concept of sin. A male person might be attracted to a female but there will happen only eye contact while his hands remain folded. His eyes reflect love but never talks to her. At the same time, the young woman also keeps her eyes lowered modestly.

Behn explains the scenery of peaceful Surinam with full of various exotic tropical birds: “parakeets, great parrots, macaws, and a thousand other birds and beasts of wonderful

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<sup>40</sup>Behn, Aphra. *Oroonoko*.

<sup>41</sup>Behn, Aphra. *Oroonoko*.

<sup>42</sup>Behn, Aphra. *Oroonoko*.

and surprising forms, shapes and colors,"<sup>43</sup> as well as a wide variety of insects." Therefore, the native people are very creative that "we (the Europeans) dealt with them with beads of all colors, knives, axes, pins and needles." They wear beaded aprons "as Adam and Eve did the fig leaves."

The colour of their skin looks reddish yellow as the narrator explains: "They are very modest and shy and despite living practically naked, there is never seen among them any improper or indecent behavior"

The background and introduction of Behn's life story provides her feelings towards the native or local things as a source of amusement: "If there be anything that seems Romantic, I beseech your Lordship to consider, these Countries do, in all things, so far differ from ours, that they produce unconceivable wonders; at least, they appear so to us, because New and Strange".

Thus, except the European standards of beauty, Others are 'wonder' or 'strange'. As Said says, "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity 'a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.'"<sup>43</sup> In a similar way, the phrase 'differ from ours' proves the white Eurocentric idea that the world must have two different stages: the Colonizer and the Colonized. Said shows this division of the world in to two distinct categories called 'us' and 'them' in his *Orientalism*.

Behn also uses some pronouns in her novella like, 'they' for the 'natives', or 'African slaves' and 'we', 'us' or 'our' to represent her White superior race. As a result, the European or the English 'self' remains superior than the 'natives'. The novella *Oroonoko* also represents the conquests of the Western world. As Edward Said opines that without empire there would have been "no European novel as we know it".....as "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West)"

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43. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*



At first the arrival of the British makes a good relationship as Behn mentions, "greatest tranquility and good understanding". The reason behind that the natives know the location of all the food in the forest, they can climb the trees to get mouth-watering fruits, they can swim like fish and run as fast as deer when they hunt. The narrator includes, "they are very useful to us" so that the British can take care of the natives very well. The actual consequence can be seen in the field of sugar plantation: "plantations of sugar are Negroes. Black slaves all together, who are transported".<sup>44</sup> As they (the Black) are made to work in, the plantation owner (the white) simply orders to the indentured slaves and delivers them to Surinam by ship. Behn says, "of these slaves so taken, the general only has all the profit,"<sup>45</sup> The British selected the country Coramantien because the place was involved with wars and supplying the captives as slaves. The most sufferer was the poorer ones who cannot bear payment.

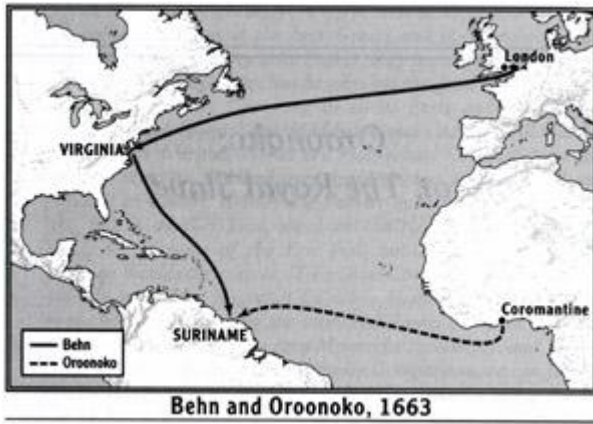
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44. Behn, Aphra. *Oroonoko*.

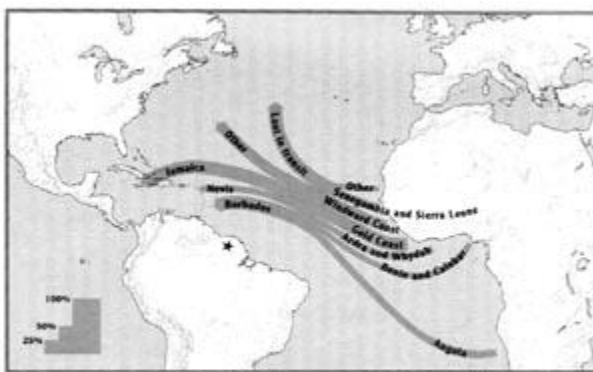
45. Behn, Aphra. *Oroonoko*.

“European goods to Africa for slaves to Caribbean for sugar and tobacco production to Europe

Behn's and Oroonoko's journey to Surinam”<sup>46</sup>



The transport of lives



This map shows the proportions of slaves shipped from the various parts of West Africa by the British Royal African Company between 1673 and 1689, as well as their destinations. The majority were from the Gulf of Guinea, many from the Gold Coast, the location of Oroonoko's "Coromantines," and almost all were destined for the West Indian sugar islands. By 1673, England had lost its colony in Suriname, which was the setting for Oroonoko. Suriname is southeast of Barbados, on the northern coast of South America; on this map, its location has been marked with a star. Copyright © 1969 The University of Wisconsin Press. Reproduced with permission.

46. <http://oldsite.english.ucsb.edu/faculty/warner/courses/w00/engl30/Oroon1.html>

### 3.3 The Play of Power

Behn's *Oroonoko* is a short novel that means a novella and it is a field of analysis of power. The protagonist prince Oroonoko can never allow himself as a slave. Behn gives him a new name Caesar which is a symbol of a power and nobility. It is very difficult for a prince to accept the authority of colonizers who had already the taste of power and position. In consequence Oroonoko has always a hidden desire to get freedom and to get back his position as a king. The most important fact that hits Oroonoko's heart that he cannot see his royal blood, his and Imoinda's child to be born as a slave.

AphraBehn refers to Oroonoko as a royal slave and in Surinam Oroonoko really is treated in a royal way. Trefry, the overseer of Lord Governor Willoughby's plantation, discovers that Oroonoko has superior physical appearance and who can speak English well. Trefry becomes a good friend of Oroonoko "ever after loved him as his dearest brother and showed him all the civilities due so great a man." Oroonoko believes Trefry honestly but all his trust and works for him goes in vain. Oroonoko is betrayed by him as he was betrayed by another British slave trading captain before. At first every British pretends friendship with Oroonoko and assures his freedom but later on they all lie to him over and over again. And finally, he is caught and killed by the colonizers.

Thus, there is a complicated psychology occurs between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonized always wants to get back their rights properly by revolting or any other processes whereas the colonizer always apply their superiority over the colonized. As a result, the colonized can neither compare with the colonizer's identity nor regain his own identity. He becomes a hybrid living thing.

## Chapter 4

### Conclusion

In this thesis I am trying to understand the postcolonial criticism through the texts and focus the condition of the colonizers who are regarded as the colonial masters and the colonized who are regarded as the 'Other'. The Others are subjugated by the colonizers who have superiority of power and who subjugate in their every way of life like, language, religion, culture, skin color etc. Year after year the British exploit the colonized by their so-called civilizing process. Some of 'colonized subjects' accept the subjugation as well as slavery willingly whereas some of them revolt.

In *Oroonoko*, Behn as a woman colonizer takes the marginal position in colonial society and seems very passive in whole action whereas in *The Tempest*, Prospero takes the strong position of a colonizer. Behn remains always sympathetic but takes the side of the colony when the conflict breaks out. The racial differences come up with the European woman and the enslaved African man.

In *The Tempest* Prospero as a colonizer uses his strong power, language as well as knowledge and Caliban is his slave. Caliban wants his freedom and the right ownership of the island. Similarly Oroonoko also wants his freedom and respect. But both Caliban and Oroonoko are deprived of their rights. Oroonoko is gentle enough and he knows the formation of revolt. The other 'colonized subjects' are inspired by seeing his bravery and are capable to fight against the colonizers. On the other hand, Ariel willingly obeys his Master Prospero's order.

There is another similarity between Oroonoko and Caliban. Though once Oroonoko himself was a slave owner, he never gets his freedom. He is superior in all sides than the whites. But as he is black, he never gets back his earlier life. Caliban also has inner superior complexity but as a deformed creature he is also treated as 'Other'. For this reason Homi Bhabha says: "But there is

always a gap between a colonized(black) and a colonizer(white); the native and settler zones,like the juxtaposition of Black and White bodies are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. No conciliation is possible.”<sup>47</sup>(Bhabha120)Thus, the colonized ‘Other’ loses his “true” self or own identity.

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47.Bhabha.Homi.*Of Mimicry and Man*.P.120

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