The Different Representation of Postcolonial Magic Realism in William Shakespeare’s The Tempest and Franz Kafka’s The Metamorphosis

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Abstract
This paper, from postcolonial magic realism’s vantage, examines the function of postcolonial magic realism as a means of resistance and decolonization to the hegemonic discourse of the colonial mechanism. Analyzing William Shakespeare’s The Tempest and Franz Kafka’s The Metamorphosis, the magic realist hero in each text shows different potentials and awareness of dismantling the colonial discourse. Caliban, the magic realist hero in Shakespeare’s play, shows more powerful deconstructing efforts to dismantle, decolonize and challenge the reality of the colonial master than the twentieth-century magic realist hero, as represented by Gregor in Kafka’s The Metamorphosis. Shakespeare’s dramatization of the magic realist hero traverses the geopolitical limitations of colonialism and reveals the simultaneously powerful combination of fantasy and reality to dismantle the reality of the colonizer. In Shakespeare’s The Tempest, the magic realist hero is more revolutionary and dynamic agent of liberation than Kafka’s Gregor, who succumbs helplessly to the reality and subordination of the master.

Keywords: postcolonial magic realism, colonial discourse, and resistance

Introduction
The function of the term “magic realism” has been developed to share postcolonial theory conceptions. In his prominent article “Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse,” Stephen Slemon (1988) shows that magic realism offers the colonized “other” a space of resistance to the hegemonic Western colonialism: “Read as post-colonial discourse, then, magic realism can be seen to provide a positive and liberating response to the codes of imperial history and its legacy of fragmentation and discontinuity” (p. 21). While this paper aims to analyze the function of postcolonial magic realism in William Shakespeare’s The Tempest (1611/2008) and Franz Kafka’s The Metamorphosis (1915/1996), it traces the development and disparity of postcolonial magic realists protagonists’ resistance—namely, Caliban’s in Shakespeare’s The Tempest and Gregor Samsa’s in Kafka’s The Metamorphosis—to the atrocious discourse of “Othering” of the dominating masters—that is, Prospero in Shakespeare’s play and Gregor’s father in Kafka’s novella. In this paper, I posit that the Renaissance Shakespearean magical realist protagonist—namely, Caliban—shows more powerful deconstructing efforts to dismantle, decolonize and challenge the reality of the master-slave production than the twentieth-century magic realist protagonist, as represented by Gregor in Kafka’s The Metamorphosis. Whereas Shakespeare’s The Tempest empowers magic realism as a means of powerful and revolutionary resistance to the colonial master, Kafka’s magic realist hero surrenders easily to the authoritative discourse of the master.

Magic Realism and the Concept of Resistance:
In his book Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts, Bill Ashcroft (2000) points out that Stephen Alexis’s essay, “Of the Magical Realism of the Haitians” (1956), is the first critical work which analyzes
magic realism in relation to postcolonial situation. For Aschcroft, Alexis’s essay is “the first used in a wider post-colonial context” in Latin America to promote “that in many post-colonial societies a peasant, pre-industrial population had its imaginative life rooted in a living tradition of the mythic, the legendary and the magical” (p. 132). However, the term expanded its use to include worldwide locations of western-nonwestern colonial confrontations where the colonized people’s precolonial culture and language are substituted by the colonizers’ reality. In this context, magic realism enables the colonized characters to confront the authoritarian and hegemonic reality of the colonizers. Slenon describes the continuous opposition of magic realism’s two elements—fantasy and reality:

The term ‘MAGIC REALISM’ is an oxymoron, one that suggests a binary opposition between the representational code of realism and that, roughly, of fantasy. In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the ‘other,’ a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences. (pp. 10-11)

Like Slenon, Wendy B. Faris (2002) emphasizes the resistance function of magic realism. In her article “The Question of the Other: Cultural Critiques of Magical Realism”, Faris shows the power of magic realism in challenging the “empirical” language of Europe: “It has therefore served a decolonizing role, one in which new voices have emerged, an alternative to European realism” (p. 103). To Faris, the language of the colonizer is associated with realism: “an association between realism and colonialism” (p. 103). In other words, magic realism offers a space of anti-discursive, anti-colonial and “liberating” practices—what Faris calls “liberating poetics” (p. 103). Such revolutionary and powerful function of magic realism is to “destabilize established structures of power and control” (p. 111). It destabilizes the fixity of European realism and reveals, instead, the shifting of fantasy vs. realism and fixity vs. uncertainty.

In her book Ordinary Enchantment: Magic Realism and the Remystification of Narrative, Faris (2004) coins the term “defocalization” to describe magic realism’s function to destabilize and dismantle the empirical narratives of colonialism:

In magic realism, the focalization—the perspective from which events are presented—is indeterminate; the kinds of perceptions it presents are indefinable and the origins of those perceptions are unlocatable. That indeterminacy results from the fact that magical realism includes two conflicting kinds of perception that perceive two different kinds of event: magical events and images not normally reported to the reader of realistic fiction because they are not empirically verifiable, and verifiable (if not always ordinary) ones that are realism’s characteristic domain. Thus magical realism modifies the conventions of realism based in empirical evidence, incorporating other kinds of perception. In other words, the narrative is ‘defocalized’ because it seems to come from two radically different perspectives at once. (p. 43)

For Fairs, the of “defocalization” of magic realism is to “destabilize” the empirical representations of the Western canon: “it does not empirically verify through sensory data, within a realistic, empirically based, fiction, the narrative voice seems to be of uncertain origin, and the narrative is ‘defocalized’” (Faris, 2004, p. 3).

Moreover, magic realism fosters multiculturalism since it includes both the elements of reality and fantasy: “it has played a significant role in the development of a multicultural literary sensibility” (Faris, 2004, p. 1). For Faris, such incessant interaction between realism and fantasy contributes in the formation of hybridity, which is a main trait of postcolonial literature: “the combination of realistic and fantastical narrative, together with the inclusion of different cultural traditions, means that magical realism reflects, in both its narrative mode and its cultural environment, the hybrid nature of postcolonial society” (Faris, 2004, p. 1).
Magic realism’s indeterminacy, heterogeneity, hybridity and “in-betweenness” strengthen the resistance function of magic realist texts. In their “Introduction” to Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community, Faris and Lois Parkinson Zamora (1995) emphasize the decolonizing and resisting power of magic realism: “Magic realist texts are subversive: their in-betweenness, their all-at-onceness encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures, a feature that has made the mode particularly useful to writers in postcolonial cultures and, increasingly, to women” (p. 6). For Faris and Zamora, magic realism is a liberating tool of freedom and equality since it contributes in erasing binarism, oppression, marginalization, and colonialism: “mind and body, spirit and matter, life and death, real and imaginary, self and other, male and female: these are boundaries to be erased, transgressed, blurred, brought together, or otherwise fundamentally refashioned in magical realist texts” (p. 6). In his book Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies, John Charles Hawley (2001) shares Faris’s notion of magic realism’s power of hybridity and resistance: “the subversive power of magic realism comes from this juxtaposition of objective and subjective realities in ways that call the objective into question, allowing authors to challenge official readings of social, political, and historical events” (p. 283).

In this context, magic realism, postcolonialism, and postmodernism share issues like “marginalization” and “centrality” (p. 153). They deconstruct the fixity of the colonial tropes of “centrality” and “universality” since they critique and resist the colonial discourse, which enforces imperial and colonial values and reality on the colonized: “the regionalism of magic realism and the local and particular focus of postmodern art are both ways of contesting not just this centrality, but also claims of universality” (p. 153).

In this paper, my theoretical approach will focus on the theme of resistance in postcolonial magic realism. I will trace the different forms of resistance in magic realist texts—namely, William Shakespeare’s The Tempest and Franz Kafka’s The Metamorphosis. This study intends to bridge the gap left by postcolonial critics, who focus mainly on applying postcolonial theory on Shakespeare’s The Tempest and neglect the impact of magic realism as a decolonizing technique. Of course, since magic realist texts encourage multiculturalism—as noted by Faris—this study analyzes diverse multicultural magic realist texts—Franz Kafka’s The Metamorphosis along with Shakespeare’s The Tempest—to examine the extent to which each writer develops differently the concept of resistance in magic realist locations. The magic realist heroes—namely, Caliban in Shakespeare’s play and Gregor in Kafka’s novella—respond differently to the shifting elements of realism and fantasy of magic realism. Whereas Caliban challenges the empirical realism of the colonial master, Gregor surrenders to the realism of the master.

The Magic Realist Hero in Shakespeare’s The Tempest:
Most of the recent modern scholarship on Shakespeare’s The Tempest focuses on applying postcolonial theory to examine the power relation and domination between Prospero and Caliban. To bridge such gap, I will shed light upon the function of magic realism as a space of resistance to the colonial master since Shakespeare empowers the magic realist hero—Caliban—to confront and destabilize the empirical reality of the colonizer. In their “Introduction” to Post-Colonial Shakespeares, Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (1998) show that Shakespeare’s works serve the needs of both the colonizer and the colonized: “Colonial masters imposed their value system through Shakespeare, and in response colonized peoples often
answered back in Shakespearean accents‖ (p. 7). Even though “colonial educationists and administrators used this Shakespeare to reinforce cultural and racial hierarchies‖ (p. 1), his works offer a space for colonized subjects to resist colonialism. Since Loomba and the contributors in the book do not refer to the notion of magic realism as a resistance technique in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, I will discuss its importance in examining Prospero-Caliban relationship.

Much scholarship on Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* refers to Shakespeare’s ambivalence in recognizing the value of colonialism. In his article “‘This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine’: *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism,” Paul Brown (1985) comments on the ambivalence of the colonial discourse in Shakespeare’s play:

*The Tempest*, then, declares no all-embracing triumph for colonialism. Rather it serves as a limit text in which the characteristic operations of colonialist discourse may be discerned—as an instrument of exploitation, a register of beleaguerment and a site of radical ambivalence. (p. 68)

For Brown, even though Prospero is perceived as the “master” and redeemer for all the island’s subjects, the text is “fraught because it reveals internal contradictions . . . and because it produces the possibility of sites of resistance in the other precisely at the moment when it seeks to impose its captivating power” (p. 59). In this context, Caliban is a “producer” of resistance since he “greets the colonizers with a curse . . . proceeds with his own narrative, in which Prospero himself is designated as usurping other to Caliban’s initial monarchy and hospitality” (p. 61). In his article “Shakespeare’s *Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism,” Deborah Willis (1989) points out that the play intends to present Antonio rather than Caliban as the “threatening other” since “*The Tempest* celebrates what Wallerstein calls the ‘colonialism of the core,’ while rendering the ‘colonialism of the periphery’ in more problematic terms” (p. 280). In other words, Willis argues that the play does not encourage colonizing Caliban’s island since Shakespeare offers a space for Caliban’s resistance and audience’s sympathy: “While Prospero clearly views Caliban as a threatening ‘other,’ the audience does not; the play invites us to sympathize with and to laugh at Caliban, but not to perceive him as a real threat” (p. 279).

The European historical narratives written about the New World and the natives were characterized by ambivalence. In her article “‘Making this Place Paradise’: Prospero and the Problem of Caliban in *The Tempest*,” Karen Flagstad (1986) points out that Shakespeare, in his play *The Tempest*, made use of the travelers’ accounts of the New World: “*The Tempest* is rich with reference to the New World, and Shakespeare borrows extensively from the hyperbole of contemporary travel accounts of the new hemisphere . . .” (p. 218). For example, Flagstad explains that the Council of Virginia’s *True Declaration of the Estate of the Colonie in Virginia* (1610), which describes the “Virginia Indians as ‘humane beasts,’ no more to be trusted than ‘Lions, Beares, and Crocodiles’” was “one of Shakespeare’s immediate sources” (p. 218). Moreover, in *A True Reportory of the Wrecke, and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates Knights*, John Smith (1610) labeled the Indian natives as “perfidious, inhuman, all Savage” (as cited in Flagstad, 1986, p. 218). However, Flagstad shows that other Western historical narratives about the American Indians showed sympathy and praise. For example, Amerigo Vespucci abandoned the discourse of demonizing and distorting the natives:

They live amongst themselves without a king or ruler, each man being his own master, and having as many wives as they please. . . . They have no temples and no laws, nor are they idolaters. What more can I say! They live according to nature . (as cited in Flagstad, 1986, p. 219)

In her article “Caliban: The Primitive Man’s Evolution,” Sister Corona Sharp (1981) adopts the view of Shakespeare’s ambivalent treatment of Caliban. She argues that the play offers Caliban a space for “evolution from a merely sentient primitive to a responsible, rational human” (p. 280). Again, for Sharp, Shakespeare’s ambivalent treatment of Caliban rejects any simple configurations of Caliban as the weak and savage “other.” Rather, “Shakespeare’s native, Caliban, is rational and claims equality to the white man” (p. 280). For Sharp, Shakespeare does not deprive Caliban of the use of “blank verse,” the style of nobles, throughout the play: “But if Caliban is only a bestial demi-devil, then Shakespeare is
guilty of a glaring inconsistency in style as in dramatic action‖ (p. 277). In their book *Shakespeare’s Caliban: A Cultural History*, Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan (1991) comment on the ambiguity and indeterminacy of Caliban’s origin and function in Shakespeare’s play:

What did Shakespeare intend when he fashioned his puppy-headed monster? Was his paradigm the American Indian, for example, or an African perhaps, or Europe’s mythical wodewose? And if he had American Indians in mind, were they Montaigne’s noble savages or their ignoble opposites or combination of both? Or, on the other hand, did the playwright shun obvious exemplars and contrive instead a creature unrelated to existing figures or types? The answer, of course, is elusive and endlessly debatable. (p. xx)

To some critics, Shakespeare is tolerant towards Caliban and Ariel. In his book *Shakespeare and Tolerance*, B. J. Sokol (2008) claims that Prospero’s oppression in subduing Caliban and Ariel as slaves is a reminder of the Spanish unmerciful colonization to the New World: “On one level, both of these figures are seen to be forced unwillingly, in the manner of Spanish New World slavery, into service of a European settler” (p. 155). For Sokol, Shakespeare and the British political elite were antagonistic to the Spanish cruelty towards the Indian natives. Therefore, the play juxtaposes the Spanish corrupt and inhuman colonialism with the British settlers’ tolerant and merciful treatment to the New World natives:

Indeed, a 1610 Virginia Company promotional tract which Shakespeare probably consulted while composing *The Tempest* boasted that the English who intended to settle in Virginia would not enslave Native Americans, while the Spanish in their plantations had set out to ‘preach the Gospell to a nation conquered, and to set their soules at liberty, when [they] have brought their bodies to slavery’. (p. 155)

In his book *Reinaldo Arenas, Caliban, and Postcolonial Discourse*, Enrique Morales-Diaz (2009) applies postcolonial theory to figure out the modes of Caliban’s marginalization and resistance to the western colonialism. Morales-Diaz refers to Caliban’s marginalization:

In the New World, he has been described as a being without a culture, without religion; in his own country, Caliban has been treated as a second or even a third class citizen. This citizen is the Native/Amer-indian in the Americas, robbed and ransacked of his land . . . living in the peripheries of society. (p. 28)

For Morales-Diaz, Prospero develops his modes of resistance by adopting the language and culture of the colonizer: “by adopting both Prospero’s language and culture, he has not abandoned his past but has instead manipulated the tools of oppression to counterattack that control” (p. 24).

The colonizer’s language is paradoxical since it is simultaneously utilized as a tool of subordination and liberation. In his book *The Pleasures of Exile*, George Lamming (1960/1992) refers to Caliban’s paradoxical situation in Prospero’s realm. At one time, Caliban is subordinated by Prospero’s language: “Caliban is his [Prospero’s] convert, colonized by language, and excluded by language” (p. 15). At other times, Caliban, who masters the colonizer’s language, is capable to resist the colonial hegemony of Prospero:

It is precisely this gift of language, this attempt at transformation which has brought about the pleasure and paradox of Caliban’s exile. Exiled from his gods, exiled from his nature, exiled from his own name! Yet Prospero is afraid of Caliban. He is afraid because he knows that his encounter with Caliban is, largely, his encounter with himself. (p. 15)

Prospero’s fear stems from the feeling that Caliban’s tools of resistance transform the colonizer’s language into a productive decolonizing technique.

Similarly, in his book *Caliban’s Voice: The Transformation of English in Post-Colonial Literatures*, Bill Ashcroft (2009), from a postcolonial vantage, explores the function of the colonizer’s language, as represented by Caliban’s use of Prospero’s language, as a means of resistance and self-representation by the colonized subjects. For Ashcroft, Prospero controls and dominates the island’s subjects by the use of language:

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There can be no doubt that the key to the moral superiority manifested in Prospero’s art is the language with which he names and controls the island. His function as an educator nurtures the prototypical settler colonial—his daughter Miranda—but it has a very different effect on Caliban. (p. 20)

However, Caliban, through the medium of the colonizer’s language, is able to confront the colonial master’s authority and to get involved in the process of liberating himself from colonialism: “The center of this complexity, of the contending issues of class, race, nation, is the language he speaks. For in this language freedom resides, if only he can find the discourse that will liberate it” (p. 19).

Away from viewing Prospero as the symbol of the European colonialism, Robert C. Evans (2010), in his article “‘Had I Plantation of this Isle, My Lord—’: Exploration and Colonization in Shakespeare’s The Tempest,” argues that Prospero does not have colonial intentions on Caliban’s island:

A man with Prospero’s wondrous powers could easily have transformed the island into a pleasant and splendid colony if he had wished; he could even have populated it with hundreds of compliant colonists. Instead, his main concern seems is to return to Milan and reestablish his ducal authority in Italy. (p. 180)

For Evans, the play presents two models of colonial aspirations on the island—the first model is represented by Gonzalo, while the second one is represented by Antonio and Sebastian. Gonzalo’s colonial model is ethical:

Gonzalo, in short, is precisely the sort of man who might . . . make a good colonist, and who might help establish a successful colony. He is an embodiment of some of the best qualities of Western European civilization, and he who would make a good member of a commonwealth just about anywhere. (p. 182)

However, Antonio’s and Sebastian’s colonial model is cruel and corrupt:

Just as the European colonists arrived in America with hopes of spreading the blessings of Christianity among supposedly unenlightened heathens, but inevitably brought with them their own perversities and innate corruptions, so Antonio and Sebastian symbolize the predictable futility of any effort to . . . create a brave new world different from or better than the world the explorers and colonists have left behind. Just as the European colonialists in America introduced devastating physical infections unknown to the native inhabitants, so Antonio and Sebastian bring with them, to this seemingly uninhabited island, their own . . . moral corruptions and spiritual flaws. (p. 182)

Even though the above mentioned critics tackle the issue of colonialism in Shakespeare’s The Tempest from different angles, the case of magic realism as a resistance technique is ignored in their discussions. In this study, I argue that Shakespeare’s The Tempest presents Caliban as the only magic realist hero, while Ariel as a magical protagonist. While the play dramatizes Caliban as a powerful and revolutionary colonized subject, Ariel is seen as a passively obedient colonized subject. In such analysis, I claim that Caliban is more powerful than Ariel since the former enjoys the function of magic realism—that is, he is both realistic and imaginary hero. Ariel’s existence, on the other hand, is restricted only to the imaginary realm. Ariel never comes to the realistic realm of the characters except to Prospero. His invisibility shows that he is excluded from reality and contact with other characters. Therefore, Ariel remains a silent and passive colonized subject, who begs the mercy of his colonial master for freedom.

Caliban, as a magic realist hero, exists in the magical and realistic realms. The play rejects consistent and static depiction of Caliban. At one time, he is perceived as the supernatural monster, while at other times, he is a real man. Such inconsistency of depiction is similar to what Faris calls the “indeterminacy” and “defocalization” of magic realism, as noted earlier. For example, Prospero at the beginning of the play deprives Caliban of humanity belonging: “A freckled whelp, hag-born—not honoured with / A human shape” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 1.2.285-86). Also, Prospero, calling Caliban “This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 5.1.278-79), insists on
dehumanizing Caliban as a “thing.” Moreover, Prospero demonizes Caliban as the “devil”; “A devil, a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 4. 1. 189-90). At other places in the play, Caliban is perceived by Prospero as a mere animal “tortoise” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 1.2.318). However, in the unconscious of Prospero, Caliban is a man. For example, he admits that his daughter, Miranda, has not seen any men except Caliban and Ferdinand: “Thou think’st there is no more such shapes as he, / Having seen but him and Caliban” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 1.2.482-83). Furthermore, Miranda confesses that she has not seen any man other than her father, Caliban, and Ferdinand: “Why speaks my father so ungently? This / Is the third man that e’er I saw” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 1.2.448-49).

In the play, Trinculo and Stefano, when meeting Caliban for the first time, show a state of indeterminacy about the precise nature of Caliban. For them, he is both a realistic man and supernatural monster. Trinculo shows a clear hesitation and confusion about the real nature of Caliban—“a man or a fish?” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.24); “A strange fish!” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.26); “this mon- / ster make a man” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.28-29); “dead Indian” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.31); “This is no fish, but an islander” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.33); “puppy-headed / monster” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.146-47); “half a fish and half a / monster” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 3.2.26-27). For Stefano, Caliban is one of the “devils” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.55); “savages and men of Ind” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.56); a “monster of the isle with four legs” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.62); a “devil, and no monster” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.92); a “moon-calf” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.100); and “man-monster” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 3.2.11). Even Antonio, Prospero’s usurping brother, confirms Trinculo’s and Stefano’s theory of Caliban’s origin as a “fish”: “Very like; one [Caliban] of them / Is a plain fish, and no doubt marketable” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 5.1.268-69).

Unlike Caliban, Ariel remains within the imaginary circle. He is excluded from direct contact with humans except with Prospero: “To no sight but thine and mine, invisible / To every eyeball else” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 1.2.305-06). In the play, there is no indeterminacy in deciding upon the nature of Ariel since his description reveals that he is a supernatural creature but not a human being. Ariel, the “brave spirit” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 1.2.208) as described by Prospero, is rescued by Prospero from the imprisonment of Sycorax and, in return, serves him obediently. Unlike Caliban, Ariel does not ask for dismantling the authority of the colonizer nor look for restoring his native land. In the play, Ariel dissociates himself from any human affiliations: “Mine would, sir, were I human” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 5.1.19). In this context, I assume that Ariel loses the sense of resistance to Prospero’s colonialism because he is not a magic realist hero like Caliban. His existence remains in the imaginary and magical perception and does not switch with the realistic realm the way we see in Caliban and magic realist protagonists.

Each of Ariel and Caliban look differently for the concept of salvation from the colonial power of Prospero. For Ariel, redemption from colonialism is granted by the colonizer with non-violent means. Ariel always begs his freedom from Prospero: “All hail, great master, grave sir, hail. I come / To answer thy best pleasure. Be’t to fly, / To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride / On the curled clouds, to thy strong bidding task / Ariel and all his quality” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 1.2.190-94).
Even though Ariel is given freedom by Prospero, it is still tainted with colonial affiliations. Ariel endeavors to have his own redemption but not his native land’s independence from colonialism. In the play, he works against the native subjects’ resistance to colonialism. Ariel, taking the colonizer’s side against Caliban, gives privilege to Prospero’s legitimacy to rule the island: “Caliban. As I told thee before, I am subject to a tyrant, a sorcerer, that by his cunning hath cheated me of the island. / Ariel. Thou liest” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 3.2.40-42). Also, he obstructs Caliban’s plot along with Trinculo and Stefano to dethrone and decolonize Prospero’s colonial rule. Ariel shows selfishness against his own native land and subjects because I claim that Ariel, as a magic rather than magic realist character, lacks the realistic part of his character. Resisting colonial regimes is part of the realistic rather than imaginary realm. The combination of both magic and realism fosters magic realist heroes’ and heroines’ resistance, as discussed in the theory part of this study.

Caliban, as the only magic realist hero in the play, holds responsible for redeeming not only himself but also his native land from colonialism. The concept of freedom for Caliban is more comprehensive than Ariel’s since he endeavors to achieve independence for every element on his native land: “Freedom, high-day! High-day, freedom! Freedom, high-day, / freedom!” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 2.2.177-78). For Caliban, freedom is a song to be chanted and celebrated. Caliban, playing the role of the savior, is fully aware of Prospero’s comprehensive colonial domination over the colonized subjects and environment. Unlike Ariel, Caliban, who is passionately loyal and attached to the natural resources of his native land, blames Prospero’s confiscation of the natural riches of his native land:

And showed thee all the qualities o’th’ isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile—
Cursed be I that 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. (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 1.2.340-47)

As a magic realist hero, Caliban switches between fantasy and reality. For example, he refers to the magical part of his island:

Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices
That if I then had waked after long sleep
Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again. (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 3.2.130-38)

Such magical description of the island enchants the listeners as it does with Stefano: “This will prove a brave kingdom to me, where I shall / have my music for nothing” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 3.2.139-40). Caliban, who is aware of the colonizers’ perception of him as a supernaturally magical and animalistic character, makes use of the mixture of fantasy and reality as a means of resistance. He does not seem to object such supernatural description of him as a “fish,” “sot” and many others. On the contrary, he adopts such magical labels to advance his revenge. For example, he, while encouraging Stefano and Trinculo to revenge against Prospero, refers to himself as a “sot” or a fool:

First to possess his books, for without them
He’s but a sot as I am, nor hath not
One spirit to command—they all do hate him
As rootedly as I. Burn but his books. (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 3.2.87-90)

Caliban is clever enough to behave simultaneously as a “sot” and a “king” or as a magical and realistic character. In the magical realm, he is the animalistic monster, “fish,” “tortoise” and others, while in the realistic part; he is a freedom-fighter, savior, avenger and “king.”

The battle between Caliban, the magic realist hero, and the colonizer Prospero does not finish at the end of the play because Prospero does not release Caliban as he does with Ariel: “This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 5.1.278-79). Caliban, however, feels self-confident that he is able to maintain his war of independence against Prospero. For him, independence is not given by the colonizer’s will; rather, it is acquired by resistance. Therefore, he announces preparation and willingness to decolonize the hegemonic regime of Prospero: “Ay, that I will; and I’ll be wise hereafter” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 5.1.298). Caliban is able to shift between a “sot” and “wise” person the way he moves between fantasy and realism to restore his freedom and independence of his native island.

The Twentieth Century Helpless Magic Realist Hero in Franz Kafka’s The Metamorphosis

Kafka’s novella, The Metamorphosis (1915/1996), presents a transformation of the heroic role of the Renaissance Shakespearean magic realist hero. Even though Kafka’s novella adheres to the rules of magic realism, it presents an impotent and helpless magic realist hero, as represented by the character of Gregor Samsa. Unlike Caliban in Shakespeare’s The Tempest, Gregor lacks the element of resistance to the authority of the master. Gregor, following gradual self-alienation and exclusion from family and society, surrenders to death and humiliation.

Modern scholarship has examined that the agony of the transformed Gregor represents the distress of modern man. In his article “From Marx to Myth: The Structure and Function of Self-Alienation in Kafka’s Metamorphosis,” Walter H. Sokel (1983/2011) explores the effects of capitalism on the dehumanization and exploitation of workers like Gregor. Sokel shows that Gregor is victimized by the capitalistic boss and father:

Gregor’s relationship to his father thus represents an exact paradigm of the worker’s exploitation by his capitalist employer, as described by Marx. The worker is alienated from the product of his labor because he has to yield it to the capitalist. (p. 218)

According to Sokel, Gregor loses “freedom of creativeness” under capitalism because his work is “imposed upon him by the necessity of bailing out his bankrupt family, supporting them, and paying back his parents’ debt to the boss of his firm” (p. 217). In Sokel’s Marxist analysis, Gregor “plays the same role that the proletariat, in Marx’s vision, performs in the macroscopic social and universal society of the bourgeois-capitalist system” (p. 226). However, Kafka’s proletariat does not achieve victory nor restore freedom: “Marx’s proletariat redeems itself by redeeming mankind. In Kafka, liberation can be achieved only by the total sacrifice, the self-eradication of the scapegoat” (p. 227).

Other critics have looked at Kafka’s novella from Anti-Semitism’s vantage. In his article “The Cultural and Historical Context of Kafka’s Metamorphosis: Anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Yiddish Plays,” Iris Bruce (2011) historicizes the anti-Semitic atmosphere at the time of writing The Metamorphosis: “the religious associations of vermin with impurity and uncleanness, especially in a Jewish context, identify Gregor as something unclean, someone in a sinful state” (p. 71). In other words, as a Jew, Kafka creates the character of Gregor to allude to the suffering of Jews from marginalization, excommunication and alienation, as represented by the tragedy of Gregor.

In this context, The Metamorphosis speaks the experience of any marginalized ethnic group in a certain society and culture. In her article “Reading for the Constructions of the Unspeaking in Kafka’s Metamorphosis,” Margaret Sonser Breen (2003/2011) explains that Kafka’s novella “offers students an allegory for the dehumanizing social construction of non-normative groups” (p. 120). Breen brilliantly connects between Kafka’s novella and the events of September 11, which aroused somehow the American feelings of suspicion and hatred to the “‘Middle Eastern’ or ‘Arab’ or ‘Muslim’” (p. 121): “The
shift in cultural mood in the United States after September 11 seems as sudden and as irrevocable as the change accorded the protagonist of Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (1915)” (p. 122). For Breen, both of Gregor and Muslims after September 11 become “non-normative groups” within their society and subject to dehumanization.

For some critics, Kafka’s novella reflects Nietzsche’s philosophy of the centered and Godless universe. The transformation of Gregor resembles the modern man’s search for meaning amid chaos and uncertainty. In her article “Wisdom and the Tightrope of Being: Aspects of Nietzsche in Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* (1915),” Edith H. Krause (2005) illustrates that Gregor’s unexpected and eerie transformation reflects Nietzschean philosophy:

Gregor as a bug is utterly human in his desperation and desires. . . . In his frustrated efforts to grapple with loneliness, anxiety, and misunderstandings, he becomes a paradigm of modern man who faces the endless question of how to create meaning against an overwhelming climate of negation. (p. 28)

Much ink has been spilled about the notion that Gregor, as a magic realist character, combines between human and non-human traits. In his article “The Human Vermin: Kafka’s Metaphor for Extreme Alienation,” Ramon G. Mendoza (2011) points out, “the vermin’s characteristics are realistic enough. Kafka was not creating a mythical creature; he simply took the popular vermin-image, blew it up to human proportions, and endowed it with human sensibility” (p. 135). Also, in her article “Anxiety in Kafka: A Function of Cognitive Dissonance,” Christine W. Sizemore (1977) illustrates Kafka’s technique of mixing reality and fantasy:

Kafka’s work reflects simultaneously a realistic and yet a dreamlike situation. At first the reader thinks he recognizes Kafka’s world as that of his own. . . . No sooner does the reader acknowledge the reality of Kafka’s world, however, that the events change. The new events contradict the reader’s understanding of reality. (p. 380)

Even though Gregor is a magic realist protagonist, modern scholarship does not focus on the issue of Gregor’s lack of resistance to the dominating discourse of hegemony and exclusion. Moreover, scholarship has been engaged in showing the anguish and tribulation of Gregor without showing his odd state of helplessness, as a magic realist hero, when compared to Caliban in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Therefore, in this study, I try to show the similarities and differences between two canonical figures of magic realist heroes—namely, Caliban in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Gregor in Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*. Even though the coinage of magic realism is modern, as noted earlier, I take Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* as an exemplar model of the genre since it includes all the characteristics of the term.

Caliban and Gregor, as magic realist heroes, share some characteristics. Both of them are subject to demonization as monsters and threats to the family and are victims of exploitation by the masters. Moreover, they are prevented from getting marriage partner. In Kafka’s novella, Gregor is perceived by his family as a burden, threat, and monster. Gregor’s sister declares:

We can’t go on like this. If you perhaps don’t realize it, I do. In front of this monstrous creature I refuse to pronounce my brother’s name, and therefore I merely say: we have to try to get rid of it. We’ve tried all that’s humanly possible to take care of it and put up with it; I think no one can reproach us in the slightest. (p. 47)

Gregor, who is formerly an active member of Samsa family, is perceived now as the “enemy” (p. 39). Even his parents show no mercy to their son’s pitfall. His father “decided to bombard him” by the “apple” causing him “severe injury” (p. 38). Also, his mother fears to look at him, as he once makes her “faint” (p. 36).

Gregor, like Caliban, is subject to exploitation by the master. Gregor devotes his life to pay off his father’s debts and to secure financially the Samsa family. Gregor forces himself to work with a haughty boss in order to protect the Samsa family:
If I didn’t hold myself back because of my parents, I would have quit long ago; I would have walked right up to the boss and let my heart out to him. He would surely have fallen off his desk! That’s a peculiar habit of his, too, sitting on his desk and talking down to his employees from up above. . . . Now, I haven’t given up all hope yet; once I have the money together to pay off my parents’ debt to him—that should still take five or six years—I’ll definitely go through with it. Then I’ll make the big break. (p. 12)

Gregor, however, is not compensated fairly by his family at the time of distress and transformation. Just as Prospero in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* exploits Caliban to show him “all the qualities o’th’ isle” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 1.2.340), and to “make our fire, / Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices / That profit us” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 1.2.314-16), Gregor’s father and the Samsa family exploit Gregor as their slave.

Both Caliban and Gregor are prevented from marriage. In Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Caliban’s attempts to have marriage partner is punished as an action of rape. Caliban tells Prospero of his wish to have Miranda as his marriage partner: “Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans” (Shakespeare, trans. 2008, 1.2.353-54). Caliban and Gregor are allowed only to work and serve their masters and not to establish marital life. In Kafka’s novella, the only woman whom Gregor is attached to is captured in a picture. Gregor decides to protect the woman’s picture from being emptied out from his room:

> And then he saw hanging . . . on the now otherwise bare wall the picture of the lady dressed in nothing but furs. He crawled up to it in haste and pressed against the glass, which held him fast and felt good on his hot belly. That picture, at least, which Gregor was now completely covering, surely no one would now take away. (p. 35)

In this context, for Caliban and Gregor, marriage remains fantasy not a reality.

Caliban and Gregor, however, have some differences in terms of resistance, language possession, and social class. Unlike Caliban, Gregor is not self-confident enough to challenge or resist the master’s—namely, Samsa family’s—humiliation and exclusion to him despite all the effort he makes to develop them. Gregor expresses his willingness to adapt with his body transformation and to keep as an active family member and worker as he is before the transformation: “But if they accepted everything calmly, then he, too, would have no cause to be upset, and, if he hurried, he could really be at the station at eight o’clock” (p. 18). However, he surrenders easily to the reality of the master’s wish of executing him: “His opinion about the necessity for him to disappear was, if possible, even firmer than his sister’s” (p. 49). Of course, the social class of Caliban, as the heir of Sycorax and the legitimate ruler of the island, seems to raise somehow his self-confidence to disgrace the colonial project of Prospero and to endeavor to reclaim the right of the island’s leadership. Gregor’s low social class, however, does not exceed the ambition more than the chance to work and live in peace.

Unlike Caliban, Gregor does not possess language to communicate and resist outer hegemonic discourses. Even though Gregor understands other persons’ talking, he does not have the ability to speak the language: “because the others, even his sister, not understanding him, had no idea that he could understand them” (p. 27). Therefore, I think because Gregor is a speechless magic realist hero, he is unable to resist persecution and humiliation. Unlike Caliban, who uses the colonizer’s language to defend his case, Gregor’s agonies and pitfalls remain secret to himself. No one knows what happens to him or how he feels. Without the means of language, Gregor is restricted within the domain of secrecy and helplessness.

Postcolonial magic realist literature examines the magic realist hero’s “indeterminacy” of existence and power to deconstruct colonial projects and masters, as discussed mainly by Slemon and Faris. Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*, however, presents two different models of magic realist heroes—namely, Caliban in *The Tempest* and Gregor in *The Metamorphosis*. Caliban’s and Gregor’s reactions to the process of the “Othering” are different, whereas
Caliban shows resistance to subordination to the master’s authority, Gregor surrenders easily to helplessness and exclusion. The Renaissance Shakespearean magic realist hero, as represented by Caliban, is more powerful and revolutionary than the twentieth century magic realist hero, as represented by the character of Gregor.

References

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The Tempest, written in 1611, was one of William Shakespeare’s last plays. It has a combination of superb characters, interesting settings, and a good plot line—all held together by the running theme of magic, and its ever-present importance. A closer examination of the magic in The Tempest, and the public’s view of magic at the time, will give insight as to Shakespeare’s choice of magic as a theme, and why it has made the play so successful and timeless. Magic presented itself to Shakespeare as a controversial topic, as it had been the persecution of those believed to perform ‘black magic.’