

From Prospero to Peter Palmer :
Appropriation of a Shakespearian Character
in a Contemporary Short-Story Rewriting of *The Tempest*

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Abstract

As far as its afterlife during centuries is concerned, several transcodifications have been performed on *The Tempest* to make it go beyond the textual and stage limits prescribed by its hypotext, as if it had its own border to cross. This paper tries to focus on a peculiar transcodification, a contemporary short-story, “Rough Magic”, included in the volume *Shakespeare Stories* edited in 1982 by Giles Gordon (1940-2003), and written by the British journalist, literary critic and novelist David Hughes (1930-2005). Starting from a short overview both of the cultural reception of the play and of its adaptations, this paper aims at interpreting the story through a double perspective. First, by tracing the clues of a continuing fascination of imperialist will to power nowadays and its (metaphorical?) colonialist implications through a contrapuntal reading. Second, it attempts at exploring and decoding the complex multi-layered structure of dichotomies concerning the key-concept of borders which underlie the short-story narrative strategies, given the idea that the colonizing process performed by the protagonist can be seen as a multiple sequence of crossing borders.

Key words – rewriting; Shakespeare; short-story; *The Tempest*; postcolonial

This paper aims at analysing a peculiar contemporary transcodification of a Shakespearian hypotext into a short narrative form. “Rough Magic” is a short story written by the British journalist, literary critic and novelist David Hughes (1930-2005), with the aim to propose a short-prose rewriting of *The Tempest*; the story is included in the volume *Shakespeare Stories*, edited in 1982 by the Scottish literary agent Giles Gordon (1940-2003). *The Tempest* has always been considered a complex play, since it has a multilayered structure of explicit as well as metaphorical meanings, which resisted a thoroughly univocal comprehension once that they were confronted with an audience. Therefore, various interpretations could coexist, thus clearing the way for the flourishing of hypertextual renderings up to the present day. Relatively recent rewritings by postcolonial authors are to be seen neither as a culturally isolated phenomenon, nor as an exclusively contemporary bias. In fact, the play has always been the object of rewriting along the centuries, and adjusted according to what the various authors perceived as the transcodifications needed by their contemporaries to appreciate it.

The first widely known rewriting of the play dates back to the Restoration times, and

to Dryden and Davenant's homonymous work, *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island*¹ (first performed in 1667) in which the events and the characters are thoroughly transformed in order to meet with the changing taste in the public. Just to mention the profound alterations at the level of *dramatis personae*, three more characters appear: Dorinda, Miranda's sister; Sycorax, Caliban's sister and no longer his mother; and Hippolito, a virtuous and chaste young man who, before the shipwreck, has never known women. As an obvious consequence, the plot is thus further complicated, with a stress on loving vicissitudes. In his essay on the cultural reception of Shakespeare's plays between 1660 and 1769, Michael Dobson reports that almost all his works are reinstated in the theatrical canon of those years, though many of them underwent heavy readaptations. At that time, plays such as *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet* were felt to be needing profound revisions in order to be presented to that audience².

As mentioned before, after the first rewriting performed by Dryden and Davenant, *The Tempest* has been frequently revised for the stage during the centuries. Moreover, the play has also known intersemiotic transcodifications, as with the recent film transposition, *Prospero's Books* (1991), directed by Peter Greenaway, in which Prospero is performed by Sir John Gielgud. Lately, *The Tempest* has also undergone popular adaptations through folk music, such as the song "Prospero's Speech" by Loreena McKennit, from the album *The Mask and the Mirror* (1994), and references are also to be found in comics, such as in issues 21 of *Nathan Never* and 165 of *Dylan Dog*, just to mention some widely known Italian comics³. Also the novel *Mama Day*⁴ by Gloria Naylor (1988) is not to be missed out, while attempting to give some measure of the play's afterlife.

Although infrequent in short prose narrative, further transcodifications of Shakespearian plays appear at the beginning of the XIX century, usually addressed to younger readers. As for the issue of short prose rewritings of Shakespearian plays, Carla Dente has made a diachronic and theoretical survey on such readaptation, exemplifying how it is possible to trace an ideal circular path of literary interrelation, considering narrative source texts, the theatrical hypotext, and the short fiction hypertext⁵. The two volumes by Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare*⁶ (1807), have known the greatest success, since they have been reprinted up to the present day. They aim at providing young readers with a first tool to approach the theatrical work by the playwright; therefore, the short stories in that collection are written with a prose style which is easily accessible.

Moreover, the relationship between Prospero and Caliban has often been regarded as the prototypical bond between colonizer and colonized, as many critics have pointed out in their studies. Several postcolonial authors have used *The Tempest* as a palimpsest

¹ John DRYDEN, "The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island", ed. George. R. GUFFEY, in Maximilian E. NOVAK (ed.), *The Works of John Dryden: Plays*, vol. X, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1960 [1670], pp. 1-103.

² Michael DOBSON, *The Making of the National Poet. Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660 – 1769*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995 [1992], p. 4.

³ Mariacristina CAVECCHI, Sara SONCINI (eds.), *Shakespeare Graffiti. Il cigno di Avon nella cultura di massa*, Milano, CUEM, 2002.

⁴ Gloria NAYLOR, *Mama Day*, New York, Vintage Books, 1989 [1988].

⁵ Carla DENTE, "Riscritture da Hamlet: il caso della narrativa breve", in SCARANO, Emanuella, DIAMANTI, Donatella (eds.), *Riscrittura, intertestualità, transcodificazione: seminario di studi. Pisa, gennaio – maggio 1991, Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere: atti*, Pisa, Tipografia Editrice Pisana, 1992, pp. 589-614 (p. 589).

⁶ Charles LAMB, Mary LAMB, *Tales from Shakespeare*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1995 [1807].

according to which to construct their literary creatures, were they novels, poems or plays. To give an idea of the prolific output of rewritings by postcolonial authors connected to the Shakespearian play, it would be useful to mention, for instance, George Lamming's non-fictional work *The Pleasures of Exile*⁷ (1960) and his novel *Water with Berries*⁸ (1971), Edward Kamau Brathwaite's poem "Caliban"⁹ (1969), on the side of the Caribbean context, or Robertson Davies's *Tempest's-Tost*¹⁰ (1951) and Margaret Lawrence *The Diviners*¹¹ (1974), as for the Anglo-Canadian one. In their novels, poems or plays, postcolonial authors usually perform an appropriation of those works which constitute the British literary canon, such as works by Shakespeare, Dickens, Brontë, Sterne, which were imposed as part of the cultural education programme throughout the former British colonies.

With its references to colonialism and in particular to the relationship between British colonizers and colonized natives, *The Tempest* has often served as one of the most effective examples on which to perform a contrapuntal reading. For contrapuntal reading, I mean the approach suggested by Edward Said, that is, in the words of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin:

A term [...] to describe a way of reading the texts of English literature so as to reveal their deep implications in imperialism and the colonial process. Borrowed from music, the term suggests a responsive reading that provides a counterpoint to the text, thus enabling the emergence of colonial implications that might otherwise remain hidden. [...] By thus stressing the affiliations of the text, its origin in social and cultural reality rather than its filiative connections with English literature and canonical criteria, the critic can uncover cultural and political implications that may seem only fleetingly addressed in the text itself¹².

Postcolonial rewritings of *The Tempest* have often focussed on one character in particular. John Thieme acknowledges the tendency of Caribbean literature to concentrate on the figure of Caliban, whereas Anglo-Canadian authors, for instance, seem to prefer to deal with the character of Miranda. This is due partly because, by the personification of Canada through Miranda, Canadian authors seem to identify their country as a sort of metaphorical good daughter of the British mainland¹³. Such a fecund afterlife highlights the close relationship existing between the Shakespearian hypotext and its subsequent types of hypertexts listed before. The need felt by the various authors during centuries to explore the Shakespearian play while transforming it into something else could be perceived as if the hypotext of *The Tempest* were a physical boundary the authors had to overstep, while at the same time transubstantiating it in their new works, according to their purposes.

The relationship between hypotext and hypertext, as of *The Tempest*, is further complicated by the sources that Shakespeare used to create his own work. As it is widely

⁷ George LAMMING, *The Pleasures of Exile*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1992 [1960].

⁸ George LAMMING, *Water With Berries*, London, Longman, 1973 [1971].

⁹ Edward Kamanu BRATHWAITE, "Caliban", in *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000 [1973], pp. 191-195.

¹⁰ Robertson DAVIES, *Tempest's Tost*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1983 [1951].

¹¹ Margaret LAWRENCE, *The Diviners*, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1974.

¹² Bill ASHCROFT, Gareth GRIFFITHS, Helen TIFFIN, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, London, Routledge, 1998, pp. 55-56.

¹³ John THIEME, *Postcolonial Con-texts. Writing Back to the Canon*, London, Continuum, 2001, p. 148.

known, the playwright used to draw inspiration from pre-existing narrative material, whose topics he conflated and adapted according to the dramatizing and to the subject he intended to develop within his plays. This process is clearly traceable within his historical plays, whose primary sources are usually recognized as being the *Chronicles* by Edward Hall in the 1548 edition, and the *Chronicles* by Raphael Holinshed in the 1578 edition, for the so called “English plays”; whereas, for the “Roman plays”, the main source was *Lives* by Plutarch, in the French translation made by Thomas North and printed in 1579¹⁴.

From the perspective of later rewritings, source-texts act as remote ur-hypotexts of what is generally regarded as the original hypotext of the rewritings mentioned above, that is the Shakespearian play. Unlike the historical plays, however, the sources of *The Tempest* itself have been identified in a more varied group of texts. *The Tempest* has reached us in the shape of the In-folio edition of 1623 of the Shakespearian plays edited by Heminge and Condell, both members of the company of the King’s Men, and its manuscript physically written by the scrivener Ralph Crane. Stephen Orgel reports the sources after the text of the play, in the appendixes of the Oxford edition he first edited in 1987. No definite source is eligible for *The Tempest*, but in all likelihood Shakespeare drew his inspiration from two documents, *A Discovery of the Bermudas*, by Sylvester Jourdain, and the *True Declaration of the State of the Colonie of Virginia*, published in 1610 by the Council of Virginia¹⁵. Furthermore, Orgel and Serpieri maintain that the playwright also took his cues from a private reading of the letter by William Stratchey, the secretary of the colony of Virginia, *A True Repertory of the Wreck*, dated 15th July 1610, but published in 1625 only, which Orgel quotes almost entirely. It deals with «[...] the wreck and redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight, upon and from the islands of Bermudas, his coming to Virginia, and the estate of the colony then and after under the government of the Lord La Warre»¹⁶. Among the plausible sources of the work, «not only for verbal details but more broadly for attitudes and models of behaviour»¹⁷, Orgel also points out the essay by Michel de Montaigne, “Des cannibales”, in the English translation by John Florio of 1603, and the episode of Medea in the seventh book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, translated by Arthur Golding in 1567, and he both quotes them entirely in the above-mentioned edition of the play¹⁸.

After having provided a context to this paper, which aims – as said above – at focussing on a peculiar transcoding of the Shakespearian hypotext into a short narrative form, it is necessary to provide further information on the hypertext which represents the object of this analysis. Gordon commissioned several contemporary English speaking authors to write short stories inspired both by the plot and the structure of Shakespearian plays. Two authors, David Hughes and Paul Bailey, composed their short stories drawing inspiration from *The Tempest*. The one by Hughes is particularly suitable for a contrapuntal reading, by which to discover its reflections on the colonial process, and, therefore, its hinting at the permanence of the fascination of

¹⁴ Alessandro Serpieri explores them to analyse the techniques used by the playwright while dramatizing his sources (Alessandro SERPIERI (ed.), *Nel laboratorio di Shakespeare*, Parma, Pratiche Editrice, 1988, 4 vols).

¹⁵ William SHAKESPEARE, *La tempesta*, ed. and transl. Alessandro SERPIERI, Venezia, Marsilio, 2003 [1623], p. 25.

¹⁶ William STRACHEY, “A True Repertory of the Wreck”, in William SHAKESPEARE, *The Tempest*, ed. Stephen ORGEL, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998 [1623], *Appendix B*, p. 209.

¹⁷ William SHAKESPEARE, *The Tempest*, ed. ORGEL, p. 89.

¹⁸ Both cited works are all reproduced within the Appendixes of Stephen Orgel’s edition of *The Tempest*.

British Empire nowadays. In addition, the colonizing process performed by the protagonist can be seen as a multiple sequence of crossing borders of a various kind.

“Rough Magic” is told by a third person narrator, through the point of view of the protagonist, a British actor whose name is Peter Palmer: to study and reflect upon the part he has been given in a theatrical production of *The Tempest*, he decides to go into a sort of exile in the villa of his daughter on a Greek island. In order to perform the role of Prospero, he is awaiting stage instructions by Kemp, the director of the play, since he finds himself incapable of penetrating its complex structure, at first.

Some events and situations become increasingly similar to those narrated in the play, a progressively vivid awareness rises in Palmer of his being re-enacting it as a preparation for the stage. At first, he notices details only – such as the initial storm – that parallel some aspects of the hypotext; then, as his isolation increases, together with the abstinence from food, he perceives himself as the only living person on the island. Therefore, a peculiar process occurs in his mind: he convinces himself of his complete power over the land, its wilderness and its inhabitants, who are simply conjured out of his own imagination.

The narration can be divided into five parts, according to its internal temporal subdivisions, that identifies a five-day lapse of time. The story begins during the fifth night of Palmer permanence in his daughter’s villa, when a thunder suddenly awakes him. Being soaked to the skin, he recalls the reasons why he has chosen his isolation, stressing his craving both for his daughter to come as a public before which to rehearse, and for some stage instructions from the director on how to interpret the role of Prospero. They should both come from London, therefore from the centripetal core of the former empire. It is indeed Palmer’s first time to confront with ideas and not action in a stage performance, and he is convinced to lack the necessary experience, being used to play just screen characters. At this stage of the short story, he has no idea on how to perform such a complex character without being guided through it. He feels the script useless, as long as it is in his hands only: «He had never worked with Kemp before; indeed this *Tempest* caper was his first proper go at the stage in thirty years of showbiz. He had grown to middle-aged stardom in the movies, playing men of action; now, unnervingly, he was into ideas»¹⁹.

This is indeed the first border the protagonist has already crossed at the beginning of the short story. He abandoned his usual screen performances to accept the challenge of theatre, and therefore the thrill both of the impossibility to shoot again a scene, then to make mistakes, and of the immediate contact with an audience and with its reactions. Metaphorically, this passage implies that the author needs to reach a greater maturity, since, as he says, he has to confront with a speculative role, where action is seldom fundamental for its denouement, being for the most part conjured up by Prospero’s own magic knowledge.

However, since the first day reported in the narration, some elements appear that are linked to a seemingly colonialist approach to the foreign land. It is important to highlight that the binary opposition between centre and margin underlies his daily search for the outline of the caique. The word “caique” comes from a Turkish term that indicates both a light and thin boat, used to carry people, and pirates’ craft. From the point of view of the protagonist, however, the caique is the sole link to the mainland: from there, he has newspapers sent every day, not to feel discarded from his actual life and society.

¹⁹ David HUGHES, “Rough Magic”, ed. Giles GORDON, *Shakespeare Stories*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1982, pp. 197-207 (p. 198).

Therefore, England is represented again as the centre to which Palmer, a man, and a colonizer – though perhaps still unaware of his role – turns his gaze. Moreover, the repetition of this binary scheme centre-periphery prevents it from losing its fixity as a Eurocentric value, whereas dismantling it would «call[s] into question the claims of any culture to possess a fixed, pure and homogenous body of values, and exposes them as historically constructed, and thus corrigible formations»²⁰. That is, what is strongly rejected again is a relativism of culture, and, in particular, of the European episteme with relation to other cultural and social expressions.

Such a movement from England – the centre – to the peripheral Greek island – Palmer's removal from his usual milieu, and his self-imposed exile – could be interpreted as the second border that Palmer had physically crossed before the beginning of the narration. It is a passage from a civilized world towards a wilder and unknown one, with which the actor, after the first days of isolation, inevitably feels the need to explore and to establish a contact with its inhabitants.

Therefore, the relationship between colonizer and colonized obviously emerges on the surface of the narration, echoing the bond between Prospero and Caliban. However, here it appears as a reversed connection. The hypertextual onset of Caliban is Mikis, the young native who brings food to Palmer and helps him with the villa's upkeep in the first days of his stay. The British actor welcomes his arrivals, and regrets not being able to establish a linguistic bond with him, since neither they share the same language, nor Palmer is willing to teach him his own. On the contrary, in a sheer reversal of the colonizing power of language being imposed to colonized populations, when showing the supplies, it is Mikis who, using his native speech, compels Palmer both to acknowledge its existence and to learn its rudiments, in order to enter a world from which he keeps himself secluded. Language is indeed a strong link to the hypotext, since Prospero uses it as a way of imposing his cultural dominion over Caliban, thus erasing his previous existence and freedom. On the other hand, Caliban has the power to react verbally to this imposition, having learnt to curse with the language it has been enjoined on him.

This type of relation foregrounds a concept of native which is different from the one undermined by seeing them as «[...] members of a less developed culture that required colonial nurture to bring it to modernity and/or civilization [...]»²¹. It is more a process of ignoring the fear, and dangers, of going native, that is to share indigenous knowledge and customs, than of avoiding and despising them as a contaminating experience. It must be said that, however remote this island might be, it is still pervaded by the echoes of the ancient and cultivated Greek world. Therefore, the behaviour of the English actor could be partly explained by the belonging of the native Greek to the same portion of the civilized world. Then, the cultural opposition between savage and civilized, so strong in *The Tempest*, remains restricted to a linguistic difference, at least up to the fourth part of the short story.

The previous crossed border between centre and periphery is then directly linked to a third border to be crossed, that is the one between the outsider – the British actor – and the local community. In the short story, it is a passage that will not lead to its complete fulfillment, that is, a concrete interaction between the two poles: Palmer is drawn towards the village mainly by his lack of food, and just secondarily to get in touch with

²⁰ ASHCROFT, GRIFFITHS, TIFFIN, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 37.

²¹ ASHCROFT, GRIFFITHS, TIFFIN, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 158.

the local inhabitants. But another, more engrossing passage needs to be performed by the British actor to move closer towards a full comprehension of the role of Prospero, and then to master its execution.

During the first day of narration, while diving deep in the bay his daughter suggested him to go to, Palmer sees for the first time «the prow of a boat sticking out of mud»²². Being just a glimpse in the darkness before emerging for need of oxygen, Palmer is uncertain of his vision:

[...] the breathlessness of finding something human in this element sent him rocketing upwards for air, air to gasp in, air to normalise his recovery. For an hour, long after sundown, he lay on the beach, drinking air, resisting the villa where the script was, getting bloody cold. What was that object down below? Oh yes, of course, ha-ha, the shipwreck of those mariners in the first scene. The only sane explanation was that he hadn't really seen it²³.

By dismissing his perception as a mere impression deriving from the study of the script, Palmer performs the first step towards his imaginative appropriation of the island. Indeed, by diving, Palmer has further approached the theatrical role of his character, as he has come into physical contact with the sea. Besides its symbolic nature, water is to be regarded as the element through which Prospero was exiled, since he and Miranda had been originally condemned to death by being put on a rotten vessel with little prospect of survival and marooned in the open Mediterranean sea. Therefore, water constituted the border that separated he and Miranda from the mainland and from his usurped dukedom of Milan. But the sea also became a means by which Prospero started performing his revenge through the initial shipwreck in the Shakespearian play. The narrative elements of the hypertext turn increasingly entwined with those of the hypotext. Moreover, by hinting at his conscious perceptions being possibly altered, Palmer introduces a subject which will progressively intensify its occurrence within the short story until its ending, that is, his being on the verge of madness. Edging closer to a distorted consciousness of reality can be seen as an attempt to cross a further, dangerous, border, this time again in order to acquire the necessary knowledge to understand the role of Prospero. With the alteration of his senses induced by the abstinence from food, Palmer seems to echo the state of physical and social deprivation which the Shakespearian character experienced on the island, albeit counterbalanced by his widening knowledge of magic. It is impossible, however, not to notice an ironical lowering of Prospero's magical powers to the weakness and the altered state of mind of the protagonist, which, in the rewriting, has a much more ordinary source – the lack of food.

Palmer's sensation of being the manipulator of his surrounding reality strengthens on the second day of narration, when he enters the village, whose inhabitants are all indoors, revealing their presence by their distorted voices heard through the open windows. Uselessly looking for supplies and a way to contact his centre – England – out of that peripheral world, he meets some armed sailors, whose presence he is not sure to have noticed before. They represent the unstable political situation in which Palmer is caught, and are an echo of the political dynamics that permeate the hypotext. While Palmer acknowledges his total lack of control on what he sees as the outer reality, just

²² HUGHES, "Rough Magic", ed. GORDON, p. 200.

²³ HUGHES, "Rough Magic", ed. GORDON, pp. 200-201.

as hunger starts to torment him, he performs a further attempt to cross the border between his isolated self and the local community, by going to the village: but even this attempt fails to achieve its proposals.

Being thus under a combined influence of hunger and solitude, the actor, on the third day, has the impression to catch a glimpse of a vessel carrying his daughter. Instead, at a second glance, he sees it full of soldiers. Unaware of the historical events, and disappointed that the end of his isolation has been postponed again, he stops studying the script. Later on, in the afternoon, he seeks for the sunken boat, and, once he has reached it, he touches it to master his perceptions. Suddenly, as if experiencing a revelation, he deceives himself into believing that the island is like a desert colony to be settled, and that its inhabitants are empty simulacra envisaged by his own mind and re-enacting the dynamics of the Shakespearian play. In particular, he is convinced of his intuition by the way in which he sees them on the next day, when he is confronted with what he describes as a ritual feast, concluding with orgiastic rites. The people of the village and the invading soldiers are seen by the protagonist as if they were figures populating a frieze, in which the Shakespearian masques are re-enacted, though in a trivial, brutish adaptation of the masques of the hypotext, while Palmer keeps away from the instinctual regression to which the inhabitants of the island and the soldiers seem to be prey.

With such an evolution of his mental processes, which force him to acknowledge his colonialist instincts, the protagonist thus completes the passage from a neutral presence towards the figure of a potential colonizer, which is necessary to him to perform Prospero. In his imagination, the British actor is confronted with a desert island full of silence and of the presences he creates, that are by no means real: his power is, of course, thoroughly unlike the one of Prospero, who, on the contrary, mastered the presences of his island, both magical – Sycorax, Ariel and his fellow spirits – and human – Caliban – after having deepened his knowledge of magic, thus strengthening his ruling powers over them.

During the last night of his permanence on the island, after having witnessed the rites mentioned above, Palmer tries to escape, but he is prevented from rowing away with a boat he has just stolen by a sudden storm. When the boat overturns, he feels as if the former alteration of his mind is released: after having risked his life, he has completed the required process of identification, and appropriation of the character of Prospero. Moreover, by risking his life, he approaches a further border to be crossed, the one between life and death. The British actor enacts a shipwreck, which could metonymically refer both to what Prospero and his daughter should have had suffered, according to Antonio's intentions, before landing on the island, prior to the events portrayed in the play, and to the one of the ship carrying Alonso, his son Ferdinand, Antonio and the other characters, which occurs at the beginning of the first act of the play, provoked by the storm created by Prospero himself.

The transformation of the British actor into a potential settler is complete, but his edging on the verge of madness as the sole possibility to conjure a wild colony to dominate out of a peopled land seems a clear criticism to colonial attitudes. His simmering will to power undergoes a complex metamorphosis, at the end of which its existence seems to depend on an altered perception of reality. It is evident then, while displaying his gradual appropriation of the features which are crucial to the understanding of the hypotextual character, that such appropriation also involves sharing the colonial attitudes of Prospero. By stating a dynamic of interdependence between his altered mind and its outer projection – the imagined wild island – the protagonist, then, focusses on the centrality of his self, and metonymically of British selves, while approaching other

unknown lands. Despite being incapable to actually rule the island, like the soldiers during the coup d'état he is witnessing, Palmer does not renounce to the fulfillment of his Eurocentric compulsion to dominate. Therefore, the presence of a contemporary colonialist will to power is gradually recoverable beneath the surface development of the narration, notwithstanding the dissolution of the British Empire and of its dynamics needed to impose its control over subordinated nations.

As it has been traced in the second part of this essay, the appropriation of a Shakespearian prominent character, such as Prospero, in a contemporary rewriting is performed in the short story by David Hughes through a metaphorical crossing of multiple borders. These borders, as we have seen, can refer – on a superficial level – to passages from one physical place, or from one condition of the protagonist, to a different one, all occurring within the rewriting itself. Besides, on an intertextual level of analysis, such a multiple crossing embodies the gradual process of superposing layers of meaning, through which the elements of the hypotext flood into the hypertext, and undergo those transformations chosen to steer a reflection on some issues of the source text from a contemporary, peculiar, and often complex, perspective.

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