

✦ **The legacy of Caliban : post-colonial perspectives in a comparative study of Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace***

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“The diction of words when one is writing an academic paper must be of high concern if the subject-matter is a topic related to post-modern literature. In this article, for instance, the word “legacy”, which first appears in the title, may convey an idea of money or property which an heir or heiress is due to receive after someone else has died, or, in less restrict and direct terms, the situation and the attitudes that certain events or periods of history leave behind them, and the influence that they have on the future. I think these ideas linked to “legacy” are enough to conflate the definitions to the word found in dictionaries. Nevertheless, the meaning I want to give the term here goes beyond all that, because it must fit some characteristics and requirements of post-modern writing and criticism.

Thus, if the legacy in question is viewed as the influence that Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and one of its (unconventional) characters – Caliban – have always exerted on post-colonial fictional and critical writings, and their writers themselves, some more explanations must be attached to the term. A number of questions unfolds from this so-called legacy that both the Shakespearean romance and his “weird” Caliban have left behind them. Nevertheless, before addressing them, it is necessary to say something about Caliban himself. First of all, as I have just used the word “weird” to refer to him, I must make things clear from the beginning: when talking about such a special and uncommon character, we must be fully aware that we are not dealing with a character of noble or royal lineage, as it is so common in Shakespeare's plays, but with a wretch, an “Abhorred slave”[1]– at first sight – as Prospero refers to him.

However, thanks principally to post-modern and post-colonial reevaluations of traditional interpretations of canonical works, contemporary rewritings and appropriations of the Shakespearean Caliban have caused the appearance of many Calibans. In other words, deconstructive interpretations and daring intertextual rewritings of *The Tempest* have largely explored the immense richness of one of the most complex characters of Shakespeare. The following definition of Caliban by Margaret Drabble is a good beginning to make a little incursion into this universe of Calibans:.

Caliban, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, is described in the Folio ‘names of actors’ as a savage and deformed slave’. His name probably derives either from ‘Carib’ or ‘Cannibal’. Son of the witch Sycorax and the original possessor of Prospero's island, he is only semi- human, but has often been portrayed attractively in modern production: the poetic qualities of his speeches have facilitated this.[2]

As can be seen, despite being first described in the play as a semi-human being, Caliban has often been reinvented and portrayed (even) attractively. It is worth noting that one of the first times in which it happened was in 1864, when Robert Browning published his “Caliban upon Setebos” or “Natural Theology in the Island”, in which he uses Caliban's religiosity for alluding to some topics of interest in nineteenth century world, as Ian Ousby points out:

Browning borrowed the character of Caliban from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. His ‘natural theology’ – primitive speculation about the character of his god, Setebos – allows the poet to glance obliquely at several strands of religious thought: stern Calvinism, the higher criticism and the contemporary debate

about evolution.[3]

Nowadays, if we think in terms of contemporary fictional writing, it is probably difficult to find an instance of literary rewriting of *The Tempest* which has dared go as far as Marina Warner's *Indigo*. In this novel, the author manages to redraw the contours of Prospero's island into the extremely vigorous and expanded universes that she creates, enveloping some fictional islands in the Caribbean and London in a plot that lasts for 350 years, from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Many of *Indigo*'s characters have the same names as those of *The Tempest*, namely, Sycorax, Ariel, Miranda (even though it is not possible to find a direct and straight correspondence between their roles both in the play and in the novel all the time). However, although there is no character named after Caliban in Marina Warner's novel, it goes without saying that Dulé is the character who echoes Shakespearean Caliban. In a word, using the technique of the play-within-a-play, Marina Warner makes her characters quote the voices of Shakespeare's characters in *The Tempest*. So, Caliban's speech "the island is full of noises" (3.2.135)[4] to Trunculo and Stephano, about the diversity of sounds that abound in the island, becomes recurrent in *Indigo* either in the form of an exact quotation or slightly modified.

Dulé is then Marina Warner's Caliban. He is not exactly half-human like the Shakespearean one, but he is often viewed as such by the European people who control the island. In addition, Dulé and the Arawak girl Ariel are the two adoptive children of Sycorax, while there is no single one who is *Indigo*'s Prospero. According to Williams-Wanquet, in *Indigo*, "Prospero is nowhere named by Warner, but he is clearly the model for the male members of the Everard family (whose name evokes continuity) over the ages"[5], once this is the European family that dominates the Liamuiga Islands since the seventeenth century. But now resuming my main focus here, Dulé is not the only Caliban portrayed by Marina Warner in *Indigo*, as long as it is also possible to see Caliban in the guise of the other natives who have been exploited by the European people who dominate the islands for centuries, which matches Marina Warner's intentions with *Indigo*, as Wanquet points out:

Her aim is to explore the scars and exiles of colonialism, to illustrate the initial dislocation of lives and how 'history goes on living in the present and taking its toll on the present' (Warner, "Indigo: Mapping the Waters"), both among the colonized and the colonizers.[6]

Drawing some attention now to the critical writing about *The Tempest*, we are going to come across another variety of Calibans again. Lorrie J. Leininger, for instance, while talking about sexism and racism in *The Tempest* brings up an image of Caliban that is even endorsed by Prospero within the play itself: that of a monster of vice and lust, with its consequent post-colonial implications:

Thus, in *The Tempest*, written some fifty years after England's open participation in the slave trade, the island's native is made the embodiment of lust, disobedience, and irremediable evil, while his enslaver is presented as a God-like figure. It makes an enormous difference in the expectation raised, whether one speaks of the moral obligations of Prospero-the-slave-owner toward Caliban-his-slave, or speaks of the moral obligations of Prospero-the-God-figure toward Caliban-the-lustful-Vice-figure.[7]

Another derogatory image of Caliban is put forth by Reuben Brower, when he addresses the fact that because the island is a world of fluid, merging states of being and forms of life, there is a natural lack of dependable boundaries between states. On account of that, an interesting issue concerning alterity is brought into focus when Miranda first sees Ferdinand and has difficulty to define him, as she says: "A thing divine; for nothing natural/ I ever saw so noble" (1.2.420)[8], which works conversely when it comes to Caliban:

Ferdinand can not be sure whether she is a goddess or a maid, and Caliban takes Trunculo for a "brave god". There is a further comic variation on this theme in Trunculo's difficulty in deciding whether to classify Caliban as fish or man, monster or devil.[9]

Now, last but certainly not least, we are introduced to a turning-point-Caliban by Annabel Patterson. She starts her argument by focusing an episode from *Felix Holt: The Radical*, the novel in which George Eliot “elaborates her theories of class structure, electoral politics and the deep connections between cultural and political conservatism”. [10] The fact is that her hero and her narrator cite Shakespeare. Two of its characters, Felix and Mr Lyon, have an interview in which they are debating politics and ideology, and then Patterson comments on Felix’s ideas, which end up showing a revolutionary solution to the stigmas of Caliban:

As Felix sees it , no amount of political liberation or consciousness-raising will have any melloristic effect while the common man remains the common man:...’while Caliban is Caliban, though you multiply him by a million, he’ll worship every Trunculo that carries a bottle. I forget, though - you don’t read Shakespeare, Mr. Lyon’ [11].

Felix’s comment is of crucial importance here because it brings up the fact that if all the people around the world who endure the effects of colonialism or post-colonialism are the contemporary Calibans, a possible solution for them to get rid of their stigmas can be attained through their not being Caliban any longer. It is equivalent to engaging in a process of empowerment, acquisition of voice and political awareness, which many other theoreticians advocate, as we are going to see ahead. Anyway, Patterson still reminds us that the issue is not so crystal clear, as she says: “Following the focus, though not the opinions of George Eliot, I assume that Caliban has always represented, as well as the racial Other, those underclasses of whose low nature and inclination Felix Holt is certain [12] .

Thus, I restate that Annabel Patterson has actually delineated the contours of a turning-point-Caliban because she departs from references from an ideologically conservative work and exposes the necessity to reassess the image of Caliban. Her ideas have a lot in common with the ideas of other critics, such as Ania Loomba, which will be approached ahead.

Provided that the issues raised by Annabel Patterson really point to a shift in the interpretation, the approach, and the representation of Caliban, I guess it is the proper time to deviate the focus of the discussion to the analysis of how much the legacy of Caliban has affected or is represented in *Jasmine* and *Alias Grace*. I will be keeping in mind that both *Jasmine* and *Grace Marks*, the two protagonists of the novels, are engaged in a process of awareness and growth into maturity. However, if the novels are viewed as real instances of feminine rewriting of post-colonial topics (diasporas, migrations, subjectivity formation, just to name some of them), their main female characters are supposed to carry the burden of Caliban. So, it will be under such bases that I will analyze these two instances of post-colonial writings, in the attempt to evaluate the extent to which the so-called legacy of Caliban is present in the two characters’ (hi)stories. In a word: if they are Calibans, as Felix Holt understands it, or if they have succeeded in erasing the bad marks of subalternity, evil, and monstrosity traditionally associated with Caliban (or even if it is possible to acknowledge the mingling of these two perspectives).

If the attempt of tracing the legacy of Caliban (either in its traditional connotation of burden or its more favorable contemporary views of the subaltern post-colonial subject) is the main aim of a critical analysis of *Jasmine* and *Alias Grace*, one is likely to find a wide range of possibilities to explore. To begin with, it is necessary to explain here that burden must be understood both under the point of view of the colonized and that of the colonizer. In other words, it is possible to find in the novels both that notion of burden to which Kipling refers to in his “*The White Man’s Burden*” - in which the colored/colonized/subaltern other is the burden to the dominant/white/master colonizer - and that one in which, because of the new possibilities of expression and interpretation in contemporary criticism and fictional writing, the post-colonial subaltern subject conquers the right to speak and form an identity (even if a hybrid one).

It is also necessary to make clear that for this whole analysis to be feasible the strong intersection between the two novels must be emphasized and reexamined. It is so because at first sight both *Jasmine* and *Alias Grace* don’t seem to have much in common. While in *Jasmine* Bharati Mukherjee

dramatically exposes the meteoric story of a Hindu immigrant whose fate catapults her into a turbulent diasporic existence, Margaret Atwood presents the less turbulent (hi)story of another immigrant whose subtle condition of post-colonial feminine subject is little by little made clear in the intricate web of relations and narrative techniques she uses in the novel. Nevertheless, I am not stating that the narrative techniques used by Bharati Mukherjee are less complex than those used by Margaret Atwood, what I mean is that they are different.

Bharati Mukherjee manages to compress the life/lives of her protagonist within twenty-six relatively short titleless chapters, full of flashbacks and flashforwards, as S. Chatman points out:

'Genette distinguishes between normal sequence, where the story and discourse have the same order (1 2 3 4), and anachronous sequences. And anachrony can be of two sorts: flashback (analepse), where the discourse breaks the story-flow to recall earlier events (2 1 3 4), and flashforward (prolepse), where the discourse leaps ahead, to events subsequent intermediate events'. [13]

Nevertheless, her range of approach is as wide as to encompass the period when her protagonist was a seven-year-old girl in the village of Hasnapur in India and was called Jyoti, up to the time she is a twenty-four-year-old illegal immigrant in America and is named Jane Ripplemeyer. Margaret Atwood, on the other hand, presents the story of Grace Marks in a thick novel with fifty-three chapters arranged within fifteen parts named after the patterns of a quilting.

While in Jasmine both the precarious chronological linearity of the events and the multiplicity of personalities/identities/ "reincarnations" of the protagonist give a crucial contribution to the strategy of plot and narrative fragmentation employed by the Bharati Mukherjee; in *Alias Grace*, what becomes a puzzling for the reader is the blurring between personal story and public history. Indeed, Margaret Atwood's *Grace Marks* is not purely fictional as we take for granted that Bharati Mukherjee's Jyoti/Jasmine/Jane is (even if a sense of autobiographical inspiration is suspected in *Jasmine*). This very fact in itself justifies my use of the "hybrid" term (hi)story to refer to the fact/fiction related to *Grace Marks*, and epitomizes the major problems a reader is bound to face in *Alias Grace*.

The manifest use of historiographic metafiction in *Alias Grace* raises another difference between Margaret Atwood's and Bharati Mukherjee's novels. However, it is worth mentioning that although there is no evidence of such a narrative strategy in *Jasmine*, its use in *Alias Grace* favors topics related to post-colonialism because it is used to give an account of a tragic occurrence in *Grace Marks*'s life. As a consequence, *Grace*'s subaltern condition of a poor Irish immigrant girl in nineteenth century Toronto is aggravated by the fact that she and McDermot (the farm's stable worker, also an Irish immigrant) are accused of killing their boss, Thomas Kinnear, and his mistress/governess, Nancy Montgomery. Such a distasteful situation is masterly summarized by Margaret Atwood in a poem with thirty-four four-lined stanzas, in chapter 2, of which I transcribe the following:

O Nancy's no well- born lady,

O Nancy she is no queen,

And yet she goes in satin and silk,

The finest ever seen.

O Nancy's no well-born lady,

Yet she treats me like a slave,

She works me so hard from dawn to dark,

She'll work me into grave.

Now Grace, she loved Thomas Kinnear,

McDermot he loved Grace,

And 'twas these loves as I do tell

That brought them to disgrace.[14]

In the excerpts above, it is worth mentioning that Margaret Atwood gives hints that allow us to identify some features about Grace Marks: she is a poor maid-servant, hierarchically inferior to Nancy. She falls in love with her boss, whereas McDermot falls in love with her. In the novel, we find the piece of information that it is assumed that she has asked McDermot to kill Nancy so that she could have her way into Kinnear's heart facilitated. It is also mentioned that there was a concession of sexual favors implied in the possible reasons that made McDermot accept such a scheme. The outcome of these seemingly foul negotiations is that Thomas Kinnear arrives from town after Nancy has been killed, and then he is also murdered by McDermot, who aims at staying with Grace. They try to escape, but are imprisoned. McDermot is hanged, but Grace, on account of her youth, has her death sentence commuted into life-long imprisonment.

If we take into consideration Caliban's alleged monstrosity, as well as his condition of "Caliban-the-lustful-Vice-figure", as Lorrie J. Leininger states[15], it is possible to establish Grace's comparison with this monstrous facet attributed to Caliban for the following reasons: first of all, because she has supposedly planned (at least) the murder of Nancy Montgomery and taken part in the subsequent murder of Thomas Kinnear; second, because both crimes were committed in the name of passions (Grace's for Thomas, and McDermot's for Grace), and lust. Another extremely relevant thing that is not to be neglected here is that the situation is quite much aggravated because Grace Marks is the alien, the subaltern other in that society. In a word, even though being European and white-skinned, Grace Marks is poor and comes from Ireland, a European country which has always been victimized by the colonial devastating interests and political dominance of the British Empire, of which Canada has also been part.

In chapter 13, there is a high emblematic passage, in which Grace Marks refers to her Confession and brings about relevant questions concerning (trans)nationality and hybridity, and then casts some light on the drama of Grace, the postcolonial subaltern female subject:

What it says at the beginning of my Confession is true enough. I did indeed come from the North of Ireland; though I thought it very unjust when they wrote down that both the accused are from Ireland by their own admission. That made it sound like a crime, and I don't know what being from Ireland is a crime; although I have often seen it treated as such. But of course our family were Protestants, and that is different[16].

It is interesting to notice some important revealing aspects in Grace's speech above, and how Margaret Atwood plays with the concept of truth, which reminds us of what reads in the title of an article by Linda Hutcheon – "Historiographic Metafiction: 'The Pastime of Past Time'"[17]. Besides conveying the idea that the author may play with fact and fiction in the article cited above, she also points out that there are no distinct barriers between fiction and History. The next reference exemplifies one of the times in which she reinforces her statement:

There are non-fictional novels, however, which come very close to historiographic metafiction in their form and content. Norman Mailer's *The Armies of The Night* is subtitled *History as a Novel, The Novel as History*. In each of the two parts of the book there is a moment in which the narrator addresses the reader on the conventions and devices used by novelists (1968, 152) and historians (245). His final

decision seems to be that historiography ultimately fails experience and “the instincts of the novelist” have to take over (284).[18]

It is amazing then to realize the extent to which the novelist can echo the words of the theoretician, in Margaret Atwood’s own words below, which are part of the “Author’s Afterword”, included by her after the last chapter of the novel:

I have of course fictionalized historical events (as did many commentators on this case who claimed to be writing history). I have not changed any known facts, although the written accounts are so contradictory that few facts emerge as unequivocally “known.” (...)When in doubt, I have tried to choose the most likely possibility, while accommodating all possibilities whenever feasible. Where mere hints and outright gaps exist in the records, I have felt free to invent.[19]

Another thing here that problematizes the already intricate web of post-colonial connections and relations between colonized and colonizer is the very fact that being from Ireland in nineteenth century Canada was enough reason for discrimination; more than that, it was “treated as a crime”, as Grace Marks herself puts forth. Nevertheless, there is another detail that almost goes unnoticed in Grace’s speech: although she acknowledges and even “confesses” that she is Irish, she adds that “But of course our family were Protestants, and that is different”. The main problem here lies with the word different, as Ana Loomba brings up:

Bhabha goes back to Fanon to suggest that liminality and hybridity are necessary attributes of ‘the’ colonial condition. For Fanon, you will recall, psychic trauma results when the colonized subject realizes that he can never attain the whiteness he has been taught to desire, or shed the blackness he has learnt to devalue. Bhabha amplifies this to suggest that colonial identities are always a matter of flux and agony. ‘It is always’, writes Bhabha in an essay about Fanon’s importance for our time, ‘in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated’. Fanon’s image of black skin/white masks is not, Bhabha explains, ‘a near division’, but ‘a doubling dissembling image of being in at least two places at once which makes it impossible for the devalued, insatiable *evolué* (an abandonment neurotic, Fanon claims) to accept the colonizer’s invitation to identity: ‘You’re a doctor, a writer, a student, you’re different, you’re one of us’. It is precisely in that ambivalent use of ‘different’ – to be different from those that are different makes you the same – that the Unconscious speaks of the form of the Otherness, the tethered shadow of deferral and displacement. (...) [20]

The questions of whiteness and blackness apart here, Grace uses the fact of coming from a protestant family to endorse some identification with the British/Canadian-descendant-from-the-British. In addition, as a protestant, she assumes that she belongs to the part of Ireland which is less different from England. In that case, and just to parody Bhabha’s speech above, the colonizer’s invitation to Grace would have the following version: “You’re protestant, you’re different, you’re one of us”. Nevertheless, what really happens is that the ambivalence of different becomes a trap for the colonized, because he is caught in a web of perpetual otherness, as Ania Loomba says:

Even as imperial and racist ideologies insist on racial difference, they catalyze cross-overs, partly because not all that takes place in the ‘contac zones’ can be monitored and controlled, but sometimes also as result of deliberate colonial policy. One of the most striking contradictions about colonialism is that it both needs to ‘civilize’ its others, and to fix them in perpetual ‘otherness’.[21]

Now, before moving to Jasmine again, it is interesting to see how Margaret Atwood also included in her poem in chapter 2 an important passage which, besides bringing up a lot of irony (because there was not any apparent reason to mention to “Mr. Butcher”), also reminds us of cannibalism and makes us recall the image of Caliban. She strategically positions this stanza after the description of the murders, which

makes it even more ironical:

The butcher came up to the house

He came there every week;

O go away Mr. Butcher,

We've got enough fresh meat![22]

As can be seen, a great part of the post-colonial criticism used to analyze *Alias Grace* can also be used to analyze *Jasmine*. Nevertheless, if we come back to “Caliban-the-lustful-Vice-figure”[23], and try to apply it to *Jasmine*, we are going to have it the other way around – “Prospero-the-lustful-Vice-figure”. In chapters 15 and 16, Bharati Mukherjee describes the absolutely awful conditions under which *Jasmine*'s diasporic dislocation takes place, as a clandestine immigrant to America, and also reports the help of Half-Face, the captain of the clandestine ship. Under the guise of a protector, he offers to help *Jasmine* in her first hours as an illegal immigrant on American soil, but his real intentions are to rob and rape her, as it is subtly described by the author:

He stared. His hands were trembling and then he whooped, “Oh, God!” and tried to kiss me, but he was all hands and face in motion. I twisted, only delaying the inevitable, making it worse perhaps, more forced, more violent. I tried to keep my eyes on Gampati and prayed for the strength to survive, long enough to kill myself.[24]

In fact, this is *Jasmine*'s first traumatic contact with the other. In other words, it is “Prospero”, under the guise of Half-Face, who is the lustful figure, because Caliban is being raped. (It was probably unintentional on the part of Bharati Mukherjee, but it is worth noting how “Half-Face” corresponds to the “half-condition” of Caliban – half-man, half-monster, half-fish, etc.) Such an important episode in *Jasmine* also reminds us that the same thing happens in *Indigo*, as Eileen W. Wanquet points out:

There is an ironic reversal of the savage Caliban's desire to rape the virtuous Miranda as Everard later forces himself on Ariel and gets her pregnant – the parallel with the fish-smelling Caliban is reinforced by the fact that Ariel finds “the smell of him odd and brackish” and compares him to a “prawn shell”.[25]

As to the issue of otherness, it is strikingly and traumatically shown by the narrator in *Jasmine*, from beginning to end. Even after the passage subsequent to *Jasmine*'s rape, the very fact that she can have a hot shower confronts her with the Other on all levels (the other culture, the other thought, the other language, the other sanitary conditions, and so on), as the following excerpt illustrates:

He seemed to find it amusing. I turned on the shower, making it hot. With water pelting the shower curtain, I vomited. Then I showered. I had never used a Western shower, standing instead of squatting, with automatic hot water coming hard from a nozzle instead of cool water from a hand-dipped pitcher. It seemed like a miracle, that even here in a place that looked deserted, a place like a madhouse or a prison, where the most hideous crime took place, the water should be hot, the tiles and porcelain should be clean, without smells, without bugs. It was a place that permitted a kind of purity.[26]

The aftermath of *Jasmine*'s rape is that she finishes her shower and finds a knife among her belongings. Then she thinks of committing suicide, but she does not manage to see her own image in the bathroom's mirror, which is highly meaningful in terms of alterity. Furthermore, even though she cannot see her own

image perfectly, she can at least see the embryo of an image in the form of a dark shadow. This “failure” ends up changing her mind as to killing herself:

could not see myself in the steamed-up mirror – only a dark shadow in the center of the glass. I could not see, as I had wanted to, an arm reaching to the neck, the swift slice, the end of my mission.[27]

Instead of killing herself, Jasmine extends her tongue and slices it (acquiring a snake-like tongue), as part of the sudden ritual of her transformation into Kali, the Hindu Goddess of death. The description of Half-Face’s murder is much more dramatic than that of Jasmine’s rape. But now, differently from Grace Marks’s alleged participation in the murders of Kinnear and Nancy, there is a certain sense of equation and justice in the air, not being possible to attribute Jasmine’s action to Caliban’s “monstrosity”.

Both Jasmine and Grace Marks present enough post-colonial characteristics in their lives and trajectories to allow us to behold the spectrum of Caliban surrounding them. If we only briefly reexamine each story, we are going to find enough evidences to support such an opinion.

In Jasmine, the diasporic dislocation to which Jasmine/Jane is constantly subjected is the first sign denoting her condition. Besides that, for each new place she goes to, she ends up having a different name (which people give her, except in the case of “Kali”) and a different husband, too. She is Jyoti, Jasmine, Kali, Jazzy, Jase, and Jane Ripplemeyer. She first marries Prakash in India (and he changes her name from Jyoti to Jasmine); then is raped by Half-Face (which she acknowledges as one of her “men”) and she calls herself Kali; falls in love with “Jase’s” boss Taylor; and marries Bud Ripplemeyer in Iowa, and becomes Jane.

Jasmine is the representation of the female post-colonial subaltern taken to an extreme, because, if it is said that post-colonial subjects are entangled in doubleness, Bharati Mukherjee created a character that presents six different personalities. In other words, “doubleness” doesn’t seem to encompass the pace of transformations of Jasmine, for her personalities have different names, husbands, dwelling places, as if we were dealing with different “reincarnations”, as Jasmine’s narrator refers to more than once in the novel. So, if George Eliot’s Felix Holt has said that “Caliban is Caliban, though you multiply him by a million”[28], we can say that when Bharati Mukherjee multiplies Caliban, the result is that Caliban is not Caliban, because there is the sense of growth into maturity and acquisition of knowledge and power at each new existence Jyoti/Jasmine moves to.

As to Alias Grace, Felix Holt’s expectations are bound to be frustrated again. Grace Marks’s image gets initially handicapped by the accusation and subsequent condemnation for Kinnear’s and Nancy’s killings, but throughout the novel it is strengthened again, because Grace’s is one of the voices that speak in Alias Grace, but a definitely strong one. Grace Marks spends her whole youth between an asylum (because she is taken as mad) and the Toronto penitentiary. Thus, the sense of in-betweenness is also present in her (hi)story: she comes as a child from the North of Ireland to Belfast, with her family, in order to emigrate to Canada; she starts a sea-voyage under subhuman conditions and in which people (the migrating people) are treated as cargo to be ferried. The ship is described by Grace to Dr Jordan as follows: “The ship was after all only a sort of slum in motion, though without the gin shops; and I hear they have got better ships now”.[29] Even if Grace’s situation is taken into consideration, it is not possible to define whether she is really the murderess or not (mainly because of the contradictory records about the case).

Throughout the novel, Grace Marks has allies and some “enemies”, too. Fictional Dr Jordan is the only psychiatrist that seems really engaged in the attempt to determine whether Grace is a dangerous murderess or not. However, even Jordan, an open-minded scientist in search of the human dimensions of a supposedly monstrous woman, is caught in the web of intricate and insoluble possibilities that his interviews with Grace Marks offer. It is necessary to explain here that besides being in an inferior position, Grace Marks shows a sagacity and a cunning capacity to manipulate and control all the situations that we are forced to think of them as forms of power, a very strong power.

Ultimately, the ideas developed by Reuben Brower[30] about the fluid and merging states of being surrounding Prospero's island in *The Tempest* seem to be appropriate to justify that even the European people there, possessors of stable identities, were fixed in otherness (Ferdinand thinks Miranda is a goddess or a maid; Miranda thinks Ferdinand is "a thing divine"; Caliban thinks Trunculo is a brave god; and so on). It is beyond doubt, however, that in the fabric of *The Tempest* Caliban is the extreme Other, which reminds us of how complex colonial and post-colonial issues are. Nevertheless, as I have mentioned before, contemporary appropriations of Caliban have often depicted him less monstrous and more human than traditional interpretations of *The Tempest* would allow.

Contemporary criticism and fictional writing that approach the issues of colonialism and post-colonialism have been making a considerable effort to present "Caliban(s)" in a different and deconstructive way – by trying to exhaust the possibilities of representations and avoiding the adherence to essentialist/monolithic ways of seeing the world, the people(s), the facts, the (hi)stories, and the fictions, too. As a result, it is possible to state, without fear of mistake, that the legacy of Caliban is actually present in the characterizations of Grace Marks and Jasmine. Similarly, they themselves can be viewed as Calibans, if they are taken as colonial/postcolonial subaltern subjects enduring the effects of imperialist action.

Finally, a brief evaluation of the ends of both novels may add some more new important information to conclude this article. Grace Marks finally manages to get a Pardon, she is released, and some friends make arrangements for her to move to America. She then finds an unexpected protector, a certain Jamie Walsh, who had witnessed against her in court. In the long run, he changes his mind about her and proposes to marry. They get married and lead a relatively "happy" life in a place nobody knows about the "marks" of Grace's past.

In the end of the novel, Jasmine is tempted to "quit" her existence as Jane Ripplemeyer, wife of the banker Bud in Iowa, and come back to her existence as Jase, together with Taylor (her former boss) and Duff (Taylor's daughter of whom she had been the caretaker). It is very meaningful because it may have a multiple meaning: she may be simply returning to the happiest "existence" she has had (as Jase), simply repeating it; or is going to become Taylor's wife, as well as she had become Bud's.

So, according to the possibilities of interpretation of contemporary criticism, Jasmine and Grace Marks may be considered Calibans, but Calibans with a difference, and who have somehow found their way in and through the in-betweenness to which they have always been subjected. In a word, even under extremely painful conditions they have managed to establish a pattern of resistance and survival. As a result, there is in both novels a sense of acquisition of voice and capacity to undermine the dominant forces, as illustrated by the following quotation from the last chapter of *Jasmine*, in which Bharati Mukherjee satirizes the predictions made by an astrologer in chapter I (which perpetually fixed her in the condition of a widow - something extremely negative in Hindu society):

It isn't guilty that I feel. It's relief. I realized I have already stopped thinking of myself as Jane. Adventure, risk, transformation: the frontier is pushing indoors through uncaulked windows. Watch me reposition the stars, I whisper to the astrologer who floats cross-legged above my kitchen stove.[31]

Notas:

[1] BULLEN, A. H. , ed., (1965), p. 1140

[2] DRABBLE, M., ed., (1985), p. 159

[3] OUSBY, I., ed., (1996), p. 145

[4] BULLEN, M., ed., (1965), p. 1151

[5] W. WANQUET, E., (1999), p. 6

- [6] IBIDEM, p. 4
- [7] LEININGER, L. J., (1983), p. 61
- [8] BULLEN, A. H., ed., (1965), p. 1141
- [9] BROWER, R., (1967), p. 462
- [10] PATTERSON, A., (1989), p. 154
- [11] IBIDEM, p. 154
- [12] PATTERSON, A., (1989), p. 156-157
- [13] CHATMAN, S. (1978), p. 64
- [14] ATWOOD, M., (1997), p. 11-12
- [15] LEININGER, L. J., (1983), p. 61
- [16] ATWOOD, M., (1997), p. 103
- [17] See HUTCHEON, L., (1992), p. 105
- [18] HUTCHEON, L. (1992), p. 117
- [19] ATWOOD, M., (1997), p. 465
- [20] LOOMBA, A., (1998), p. 174
- [21] LOOMBA, A., (1998), p. 173
- [22] ATWOOD, M. (1997), p. 13
- [23] LEININGER, L. J., (1983), p. 61
- [24] MUKHERJEE, B. (1991), p. 103-104
- [25] WILLIAMS-WANQUET, E., (1999), p. 8
- [26] MUKHERJEE, B., (1991), p. 104
- [27] MUKHERJEE, B.(1991), p.105
- [28] PATTERSON, A., (1989), p. 154
- [29] ATWOOD, M., (1997), p. 116
- [30] See BROWER, R., (1967), p. 462
- [31] MUKHERJEE, B. (1991), P. 214

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