"'PLAYS THUS AT BEING PROSPER":

CALIBAN AND THE COLONISED SAVAGE IN

MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN.

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ABSTRACT:

Representations of Caliban in Victorian Britain took the form of plays, performances, reviews, poems, paintings, cartoons, sketches, and commentaries. These representations predominantly involved an ambivalence between portrayals of Caliban as human, and as non-human. A similar ambivalence is apparent in Victorian representations of the savage. Taking Robert Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos" as an initial example, this thesis applies Homi Bhabha's model of colonial mimicry to these representations of Caliban in order to show that the ambivalence in them is continuous with the ambivalent aim of the colonial mission, which is both to suppress and to enlighten. This ambivalent colonial mission leads Caliban to be constructed within Victorian colonial discourse in an ambivalent fashion, and he is hence both contained within and subversive against that discourse. Caliban acts as a conceptual site at which colonial ideology can be both defended, by those interpretations of Caliban which are continuous with stereotypical Victorian representations of the savage, and challenged, by those representations which are subversive to the colonial ideology which is the basis of this stereotype. The challenges to colonial ideology come from interpretations of Caliban as an evolutionary figure and as a satirical figure. It is in the process of defending the colonial interpretation that the ambivalence inherent in the colonial model is made clear. Thus Caliban can be seen to be, in these interpretations, a representation of this stereotype of the colonial savage, functioning to justify the ambivalent colonial mission.

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INTRODUCTION: CALIBAN

Caliban, first presented by Shakespeare in *The Tempest* (1611),[1] is an intertextual character. Since *The Tempest*, there have been many reinterpretations, continuations, and adaptations of Shakespeare's story and character, from John Dryden and William Davenant's *The Tempest: Or, The Enchanted Island* (1667), through Robert Browning's poem "Caliban upon Setebos," (1864), José Enrique Rodó's essay "Ariel" (1900) and W.H. Auden's *The Sea and the Mirror* (1945), on into today's society, with such fictional works as Tad Williams' *Caliban's Hour* (1994). Similarly, Caliban has been the subject of many visual interpretations, especially during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when Shakespeare's plays were a popular subject for painters, as part of an attempt to create an English school of painting. But as well as these artistic re-interpretations, the story of *The Tempest*, and of Caliban in particular, has excited much critical debate. This debate is best exemplified in recent years by Harold Bloom's collection of pieces entitled simply *Caliban* (1992), and Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan's book, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History* (1991). So much interest has been directed towards this play and these characters that when, in 1950, Octave Mannoni wanted a metaphor to describe the psychological dependency in the relationship between the colonising French and the colonised Algerians, he entitled his book *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*: since then the relationship between Caliban and Prospero has been an important symbol in post-colonial studies.

[1] All references to *The Tempest* will be to the Oxford edition edited by Stephen Orgel, 1987.

Caliban's status as an intertextual figure in this way makes 'Cultural Poetics' an ideal vehicle for interpretation. Louis Montrose writes that Cultural Poetics "reorients the axis of inter-textuality, substituting for the diachronic text of an autonomous literary history the synchronic text of a cultural system" (17). That is, Cultural Poetics as an interpretative system does not study literary texts in isolation from the society within which such texts are produced and consumed. This contextualisation of literary representations of Caliban is an important part of this thesis' argument.

Harold Bloom introduces his collection by describing Caliban as "the grotesque and pathetic slave of the magus Prospero in Shakespeare's late romance *The Tempest*, in Robert Browning's remarkable dramatic monologue, 'Caliban upon Setebos,' and in W. H. Auden's poem, *The Sea and the Mirror*," identifying the character as the same through all three retellings. There is, however, no critical consensus concerning the nature of this single figure. Bloom writes that he "disputes the currently prevalent account of Caliban, who in the writings of New Historicists, Marxists, and other members of the School of Resentment becomes virtually a precursor of Nelson Mandela, rather than what he is, the weak and plangent sensibility that feels itself to have been betrayed by its former benefactor, Prospero" (xv). In what follows, I largely identify myself as a member of this "School of Resentment"; while the image of Caliban I present is not a heroic one, it is certainly in conflict with Bloom's apolitical account. Bloom wants to interpret the relationship between Caliban and Prosper as a personal one, not a political one: "what, all too briefly, allied Caliban and Prospero was an absolutely personal relationship" (4). I would respond, along with members of the feminist movement from the 1970s, arguing that "the personal is the political!" (Waugh 344).

This thesis investigates portrayals of the fictional figure Caliban in the mid-nineteenth century, showing the way in which they construct and are constructed by the conception of the colonial mission which was prevalent in Victorian society. This conception was dependent upon the ambivalences within the discourse of this colonialism for its meaning and coherence. The ambivalent representations of Caliban as a colonised savage are thus dependent on this ambivalence in colonial discourse, and at the same time, as constructions of a popular Victorian representation of the savage, a cause of that very ambivalence.

In using a previously identified literary figure such as Caliban, with a history dating back to Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Victorian authors and artists could not avoid the literary, political, and social history associated with the concept: any new work featuring Caliban would be dependent upon previous works which also involved Caliban. The sign "Caliban," that is, carries a prefigured signification -- at least, it carries a substantial amount of cultural baggage, in terms of expectations and preconceptions as to nature, focus, and form.

The aim of the first chapter of this thesis is to expose the ambivalences apparent in these presentations of Caliban (each of which is a 're-presentation') of the concept Caliban, particularly between descriptions of him as on the one hand "savage" and "primitive," and on the other hand as "bestial" and "monstrous."

The second chapter focuses on Robert Browning's poem "Caliban upon Setebos." Using Homi Bhabha's theory of colonial mimicry, the ambivalences within this poem's presentation of Caliban can be seen to be consistent with the ambivalent nature of colonial discourse. This chapter shows that those ambivalences within and between portrayals of Caliban which are identified in Chapter One are a manifestation of the ambivalent Victorian attitude to the colonised savage. Further,

the ambivalence in this attitude is a result of the ambivalence in colonial desire, between enlightenment and repression.

The third chapter shows that the ambivalences in mid-nineteenth-century attitudes toward the colonised savage are manifested in representations of Caliban because of the role Caliban plays as a conceptual site of contestation, where the colonial attitude is both challenged and reasserted. In concentrating on the inter-relations between these mid-nineteenth-century representations of Caliban and colonialism, there will be many other important considerations excluded: these constructions are always over-determined, in the sense that there will always be many more explicable causes than can be sensibly accounted for. However, I believe that colonialism is an important factor to investigate here, not only because of its vast influence and its far-reaching effects, but also because it is an influence which has been under-represented in critical studies of these representations of Caliban. Similarly, while *The Tempest* has been acknowledged as an important text in colonial studies, these later representations of Caliban have not received the same recognition.

As a final introductory note, it is also necessary to keep in mind the role of modern society, and this text in particular, in the construction of this history of Caliban and colonialism. As Louis Montrose writes:

> [t]he project of a new socio-political criticism is, then, to analyze the interplay of culture-specific discursive practices -- mindful that it, too, is such a practice and so participates in the interplay it seeks to analyze. (23)

That is, the "culture-specific discursive practices" that will be identified and investigated in this thesis are being so identified and investigated from another such

discursive practice, and not an objective position from which final solutions can be seen.

CHAPTER ONE: CALIBAN IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

Caliban was present to the Victorian public in various forms of artistic representation, literary and dramatic interpretation, critical analysis, and political metaphor. In this chapter I will investigate representations of Caliban in each of these different media, focusing particularly on whether such representations portray Caliban as human or non-human. Arnold Shapiro describes Caliban in Robert Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos" as a problematic figure. He asks:

> how "primitive" is Caliban? Is he a "brutish half-man," to use DeVane's phrase (p.29), or is he "a spokesman, and a very shrewd one, for what many would consider a highly developed intellectual point of view" (Timko, p.143), or is he perhaps a combination of ingredients, a "savage with the introspective powers of a Hamlet, and the theology of an evangelical Churchman"? If he is a primitive, do we sympathize with him . . . or condemn him. . . ? (54).

Shapiro's answer is that Caliban is a representation of "the man condemned by the Old Testament prophets and psalmists . . . [who] substitutes the letter for the spirit of the law" (55), and after this opening Shapiro shifts the emphasis away from the question of Caliban's primitive nature. Shapiro's answer is not mine. My answer is to interpret Caliban as all of the possibilities which Shapiro mentions, and to focus on the ambivalence between such possibilities in these presentations. As Laurence Perrine writes, Caliban presents us "not with an *either-or* possibility, but with a *both-and*" (125). The answer to Shapiro's question need not be one or the other of the options he suggests. Caliban need not be viewed as simply a primitive or as an intellectual spokesperson, an introspective Hamlet, or an evangelical churchman, but as all of these simultaneously. I will be focusing in particular on the ambivalence between portrayals of Caliban as human, and portrayals of him as non-human: on the one hand, as primitive or savage, and on the other hand, as monstrous or bestial.

The stage versions of Caliban which were available to the public in the mid-nineteenth century exhibit this ambivalence. These dramatic representations are the first of the presentations of Caliban which will be investigated in this chapter. Up until 1838, Shakespeare's version of *The Tempest* had not been performed since the lifetime of the playwright, save for a brief revival by David Garrick in the mid-eighteenth century. John Dryden and William Davenant's reinterpretation of the play called *The Tempest: Or, The Enchanted Island* (1667) made extensive adaptations to Shakespeare's original, with new characters, lines added and cut, changes in plot and role, and an altogether different focus. *The Enchanted Isle* was consistently performed throughout the late seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, and was often assumed by the viewing public to be Shakespeare's own: "it was written and performed as if it was Shakespeare 'altered' or 'adapted'" (Spencer 9).

The changes made to Caliban in writing *The Enchanted Island* relegated him to a lesser role than that which he had held in Shakespeare's *Tempest*. In the original, he was surpassed by only Prospero in the allocation of lines. In much of the early twentieth-century criticism of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Caliban has been interpreted as representative of 'natural man,' 'man in his natural state,' and this natural-ness has been seen as a redeeming feature or saving grace. For instance, Paul Brown is "concerned with the political effects" of Prospero's charge of Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda, which he sees as "circumvent[ing] Caliban's version of events by reencoding his *boundlessness* as rapacity" (62, my italics). This boundlessness, as well as Caliban's "savage" nature (which Brown interprets as not necessarily a negative quality), are a result of Caliban's "irreformable" nature: his

status as outside of civilisation — natural. In *The Enchanted Island*, though Caliban is 'natural' to the extent that he is uncivilised, he is not representative of the 'natural man' for two reasons. Firstly, in *The Enchanted Island* Caliban is not taken to be a man. Caliban and his twin sister Sycorax (Caliban's mother in *The Tempest*; I. ii. 331) are together described in the cast list as "Two monsters of the Isle" (Dryden 116). This description differs significantly from the *dramatis personae* of Shakespeare's original play, which described Caliban as "a savage and deformed slave" (Orgel, 95), where the term "slave" implies that Caliban is human.

The second reason that Caliban cannot be seen as a representative of the 'natural man' is that there is another character in *The Enchanted Island*, an 'uncivilised' man, Hippolito, who represents humanity in a state of nature. Hippolito is beautiful (this part was played by a female actor), learns to be civilised, and falls in love with Miranda's sister Dorinda; he represents humanity in a form which will rise above its primitiveness, and become civilised. Hippolito and Dorinda are an addition to Shakespeare's play. *The Enchanted Island* thus has a mirror image of Miranda, the woman who has never seen a man, in Hippolito, the man who has never seen a woman, and the shift in focus from *The Tempest* towards a more basic sexual humour is apparent in the allocation of Hippolito's part to female actors.

Thomas Shadwell slightly rewrote the Dryden-Davenant play in 1674, adding songs and music, and turning the original into an operatic production. This musical performance, according to the modern critic George Noyes, "was probably the most popular play of the Restoration period" (Noyes 1052). Keeping the same basic plot and structure as the Dryden-Davenant *Enchanted Island*, it also relegated Caliban to a minor role, again classifying him as a monster, describing him and his sister as "The Monsters *Sycorax* and *Caliban*" (Guffey 69).

Dryden and Davenant's *The Enchanted Island* remained, with Shadwell's minor adaptations, the version of *The Tempest* that audiences would have been familiar with from the late seventeenth century until 1838 (Orgel 69), when the original *Tempest* was more permanently returned. The exception is David Garrick's brief restoration of Shakespeare's original.[2] Until John Philip Kemble reintroduced story-lines, characters, and lines from the Dryden-Davenant version in 1787, effectively returning Caliban once again to the status of monster, Garrick's version was performed sixty-one times at Drury Lane. However, it is likely that, despite the differences between the two plays in Caliban's lines and role, he would remain to Garrick's actors and audience a monstrous character, on the basis of the preconceptions they would bring to a performance from their past experience of the Dryden-Davenant-Shadwell production.

The Enchanted Isle, or slightly modified versions thereof, is what Robert Browning and his contemporaries would have seen as children and as young adults had they attended a performance of *The Tempest*. In these, Caliban's role is limited, and the entire sub-plot with Stephano and Trinculo (called 'Trincalo' in the Shadwell version), was an excuse for lewd songs and rude jokes. With the shipwrecked courtiers taking many titles for themselves such as Duke, Prince, Ambassador, and Viceroy, the scenes involving this subplot, and involving Caliban, satirise commonwealth politics. Caliban is loosely portrayed as rightful owner of the island. When Trincalo wants to rule the island he declares that once he has eliminated Caliban he will marry Caliban's sister Sycorax because "she's heir of all this isle"

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[2] Garrick's version was adapted from Shakespeare's First Folio, with 432 lines cut and 14 added (Stone 5-6), so while not identical to Shakespeare's original, it had none of the extra characters or wholesale changes in plot.

(Guffey 38). The implication made is one of imperialism, of ownership, and a relationship is thus established between Caliban and colonialism. I shall return to this association in more detail in Chapter Two. Caliban, in a lesser role than he had in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, is primarily portrayed as monstrous, but he also plays a part in the human economic exchange of ownership and commonwealth politics.

After seeing a performance of Shadwell's operatic production in 1668, Samuel Pepys described Caliban as a "monster" (Pepys 195). His view is in agreement with the Dryden-Davenant cast list, suggesting that Caliban's portrayal in the musical was one which would encourage an audience to see Caliban as not human. This is a view held long before the mid-nineteenth century, but the play which Pepys describes was largely the same as that which audiences would have seen in the early nineteenth century. However, a description of Caliban's costume from the 1824 Drury Lane and 1827 Covent Garden productions of the same play, roughly 150 years later than Pepys' diary entry, reads "[e]ntire dress of goat's skin; long claws on the fingers; very dark legs; the hair long, wild, and ragged" (cited in Vaughan 180), a costume which seems less that of a monster, than that of a savage man. Much would of course depend on the actor's presentation, but there is some ambivalence in possible interpretations: Caliban is portrayed as a monster, but he is also portrayed as a savage man. While initially these might not seem to be contradictory, a monster is clearly not human, while a savage man clearly is. So Caliban here represents something of a contradiction, or at least a misnomer: human, and yet not human.

This is the major ambivalence in the various representations of Caliban in the middle of the nineteenth century. On the one hand there are representations of Caliban as monstrous or bestial, and on the other hand there are representations of

him as human — savage and primitive, but nonetheless human. The ambivalence between these two basic descriptions is not only apparent between representations of Caliban; it also exists within each individual representation.

It was not until William Charles Macready returned to Shakespeare's text in 1838 that any major change to the Dryden-Davenant version was made to a dramatic performance involving Caliban. With respect to Caliban, the return changed him from a figure of amusement back to one with tragic potential.[3] No longer was Caliban set aside from the main story, limited to a role of farce and burlesque; once more he became something of a worthy adversary for Prospero. It is clear from the contemporary reviews that there followed from this shift in representation an increased sympathy in the responses to Caliban: he became more easily identified with, more human. John Forster describes Caliban's first entrance onto the stage in his review in *The Examiner*:

> His first discovery in the hole where he is "styed" was singularly picturesque, nor less so was his manner of grabbing out of it to fly on Prospero, whose wand in a moment flung the danger of his fury down, and left him merely *dancing mad* with impotent rage. (70-71)

Here Caliban's desires and actions are curbed, limited, and controlled by the power of Prospero. He is a victim, "impotent," with no power, and Prospero is an oppressor. Prospero asserts his superior power, without showing any moral superiority which could justify either his wielding of such power or the consequent hierarchical structure of the relationship between Prospero and Caliban. Of course,

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[3] Since Kemble's 1787 version, Caliban's lines were all or almost all from Shakespeare. However, in the context of the Dryden-Davenant play, this means that Caliban is a drunken fool with poetic lines. Any identification with savage or natural humanity which could generate sympathy for Caliban will be instead directed towards Hippolito, the 'natural man.'

as the play continues, Prospero's moral superiority is asserted, but the initial picture of Caliban is a powerful one, as Forster's review attests.

In 1847 another theatre company performed *The Tempest*, with the same actor (George Bennet) playing Caliban as in Macready's 1838 production. In the stage directions, Caliban's first entrance is described as follows: "Enter Caliban. Opening L. of Flat / Crawling out on all fours as a Beast, rises and threatens Prospero, who raises his wand and checks him. Caliban recoils as if spell struck." In another scene, in fear of Prospero, Caliban exits "tremblingly"; when Ariel makes Stephano hit Trinculo, "Caliban shows a strong and savage expression of joy"; in II. ii. he rebelliously and indignantly throws down his bundle of wood (Folger *Tempest* promptbook No. 13, cited in Vaughan 181-182). Caliban is explicitly described here as being like "a Beast." However, many of the emotions attributed to him are more human than bestial: to tremble with fear and to be joyful are emotions a beast might express, but to be indignant and rebellious are emotions which seem more human in nature. But there is no strict boundary here. The openness of the potential interpretations remains. There is an ambivalence here too, between Caliban as 'bestial' or 'monstrous,' and Caliban as human.

In the prompt book for an 1854 performance of *The Tempest*, Caliban is constructed to act in a bestial manner at times: for instance, when he loses Stephano's keg of wine, he growls, and paws at Stephano's leg to get it back again. In the prompt copy of Charles Kean's 1857 production of *The Tempest*, Caliban is described in the first scene he shares with Stephano and Trinculo (II. ii.) in the following way: "Cal takes a long pull at the bottle. Trin looks at him in surprise. Cal turns and looks savagely at Trin" (Folger *Tempest* promptbook No. 10, cited in Vaughan 183). The emphasis is on the savage nature of Caliban, but he is clearly

expressing human emotions, and is not a beast or a monster. Clearly the question of what Caliban is cannot be answered easily. He is a beast, but he is also human. He remains ambivalent.

The ambivalence apparent in these dramatic representations of Caliban is also clear in the critical interpretations of Caliban in the early and mid-nineteenth century. In the literary studies of this period, Shakespeare's *Tempest* rather than Dryden's *Enchanted Isle* was the object of study. Eighteenth-century views of the play tended to claim that Caliban's enslavement was justified and even necessary on the basis of his depravity: he was "half daemon, half brute" (Schlegel 395), inferior to and hence logically slave to Prospero. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his 1811-12 lecture on *The Tempest*, although demonstrating a more sympathetic view of Caliban than was shown by such eighteenth-century commentators as Schlegel, still presents an ambivalent description:

> [t]he character of Caliban is wonderfully conceived: he is a sort of creature of the earth partaking of the qualities of the brute and distinguished from them in two ways, 1. by having mere understanding without moral reason, 2. by not having the instincts which belong to mere animals.—Still Caliban is a noble being: a man in the sense of the imagination, all the images he utters are drawn from nature, & are highly poetical. (*Collected Works* Volume I 364-365)

Caliban is here interpreted as being in some aspects human ("a noble being: a man in the sense of the imagination). But again, Caliban is also portrayed as being in some sense bestial (a "creature of the earth partaking of the qualities of the brute").

William Hazlitt in his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817) writes that Caliban is "one of the wildest and most abstracted of all Shakespear's [*sic*] characters, whose deformity whether of body or mind is redeemed by the power and

truth of the imagination displayed in it" (90). This sympathy, albeit limited, is in contrast to another comment by Hazlitt earlier in the same work, in which he paraphrases Schlegel, and describes "the savage Caliban, half brute, half demon" (89). Again we see, as well as an ambivalence between his two comments, an ambivalence within Hazlitt's second comment itself: Caliban is savage, which means human rather than demon, but also half demon and hence clearly not human, as well as half brute, which could be a human or bestial description. It is as if Hazlitt could not decide how to characterise Caliban, and so compounded several of the negative images available to him, regardless of contradictions between such images. While Coleridge and Hazlitt may disagree about specifics, they are in agreement over several major aspects: concerning Caliban's nobility or redemption, and the importance of the imagination in his construction, and most importantly, concerning their construction of Caliban as an ambivalent figure.

Coleridge, in an 1818 lecture on Shakespeare seems to have retracted many of the positive things he said about Caliban seven years earlier. He writes:

> Caliban, on the other hand, is all earth, all condensed and gross in feelings and images; he has the dawnings of understanding without reason or the moral sense, and in him, as in some brute animals, this advance to the intellectual faculties, without the moral sense, is marked by the appearance of vice. For it is in the primacy of the moral being only that man is truly human." (Volume II 270)

Here Coleridge describes Caliban as less than human in his lack of "moral sense," the same as "brute animals". In the same year Hazlitt published a response to this lecture, in which he defends Caliban against Coleridge's negative description. In this letter, Hazlitt claims that:

> "Caliban is . . . strictly the legitimate sovereign of the isle, and Prospero and the rest are usurpers, who have ousted him from his hereditary jurisdiction by superiority of talent and knowledge. . . . He is the Louis XVIII of the enchanted island in *The Tempest*: and Dr.

> Stoddart would be able to prove by civil law, that he had the same right to keep possession of it, 'independently of his conduct or merits. . . .' Even his affront to the daughter of that upstart philosopher Prospero could not be brought to bar his succession to the natural sovereignty of his dominions." (*Complete Works* 207)

To an extent, Hazlitt is setting up this picture to mock Coleridge's stance against Jacobinism.[4] But when, further on, Hazlitt asks "[w]hy does Mr. Coleridge provoke us to write as great nonsense as he talks?" (207), Caliban's "natural sovereignty" does not seem among the nonsense. As Jonathan Bate writes, "[t]he initial purpose of this [letter] is to debunk Coleridge's 'caricature', [sic] but parts of Hazlitt's self-consciously provocative reading have an irrefutable force" (179). In his important assessment, Hazlitt is "the first to read *The Tempest* in terms of imperialism" (Bate 144), and to view Caliban as a dispossessed native, thereby introducing the colonial theme into criticism of *The Tempest*. There also remains an ambivalence between the two critics who were earlier agreed, concerning Caliban's status: is he a beast, as Coleridge now claims, or a man, as Hazlitt presents?

Macready's 1838 production of the Shakespearean *Tempest* prompted a more sympathetic response from critics other than Forster, cited earlier. Patrick MacDonnell saw George Bennett's Caliban as showing the audience "the rude and uncultivated savage, in a style, which arouses our sympathies" because Caliban as he saw him was "a creature in his nature possessing all the rude elements of the savage, yet maintaining in his mind, a strong resistance to that tyranny, which held him in the thralldom of slavery: Caliban creates our pity more than our detestation" (cited in Vaughan 104-105). Following Hazlitt's interpretation, MacDonnell's emphasis on the elements of tyranny and slavery in Caliban's relationship with Prospero extends

[4] The French radical democratic movement.

the use of a colonial metaphor in the interpretation of Caliban. According to MacDonnell's interpretation, as a "savage" Caliban is "rude" and unlikely to be strong-willed, but in managing to overcome these 'faults' to resist tyranny and thralldom, he earns the audience's sympathy and identification, and hence he is here described as human rather than monstrous.

This human image of Caliban as a slave is continued in an 1848 burlesque by the brothers Robert and William Brough, called *The Enchanted Isle: or 'Raising the Wind' on the Most Approved Principles*, a play which is described in its own subtitle as "[a] drama without the smallest claim to legitimacy, consistency, probability, or anything else but absurdity; in which will be found much that is unaccountably coincident with Shakespeare's 'Tempest'" (Brough 163). In the *dramatis personae* of Brough's play Caliban is described as "a smart, active lad, wanted (by Prospero) to make himself generally useful, but by no means inclined to do so, an hereditary bondsman who, in his determination to be free, takes the most fearful liberties" (Brough 164). Caliban makes his first entrance "*with a Wellington boot on one arm and a brush in his hand*" and his first lines are in response to Miranda's call "Come here, slave!":

> Slave! Come, drop that sort of bother;
> Just let me ax, "Ain't I a man and a brother?" (179)

Later in the play, Caliban becomes a revolutionary, and he enters "*marching to music, with a Cap of Liberty on his head, a red flag in one hand*," claiming:

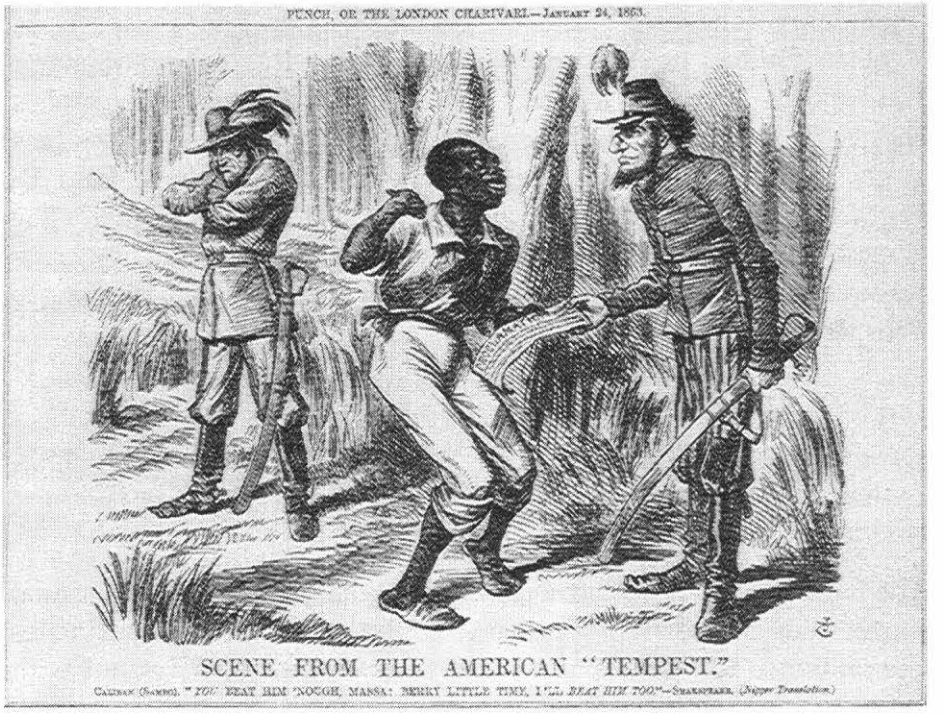
> Yes, I'm resolved — I'll have a revolution —
> Proclaim my rights — demand a constitution. (186)

Clearly this portrayal is a satirical one, yet the force of this satire is dependent upon the audience holding independent knowledge of both Shakespeare's original, which is being mocked, and of the similarities between Shakespeare's "savage and

deformed slave" and the black "hereditary bondsman" of America. The recognition of this similarity then depends, like MacDonnell's review, on an acknowledgment of the role of imperialism in the relationship between Caliban and Prospero. By making these links between *The Tempest* and imperialism so explicit, Brough treats Caliban as a very human figure: the interpretation of Caliban presented is again a sympathetic one.

This reasonably sympathetic view of Caliban contrasts with a later cartoon from *Punch* magazine, published in an 1863 issue. This cartoon, shown on the next page, also continues the image of Caliban as a slave. It clearly portrays English sympathy for the confederate cause in the American Civil War. Caliban is used as a means to this end, pictured as he is, as a black American slave according to European stereotypes (knock-kneed, cringing appearance, pidgin-English speech), dependent on and associated with Abraham Lincoln, unattractively caricatured as a Union Officer. This image also makes apparent the obvious conviction that the plight of Caliban in *The Tempest* is similar to the plight of the imperially or colonially oppressed. That the cartoonist chooses Caliban and *The Tempest* to express this viewpoint on slavery suggests that the link between Caliban and colonialism was an appropriate one for Victorian viewers. The difference between the *Punch* picture, and MacDonnell's sympathy or Brough's satire, is in the attitude to slavery, and the consequent (or continuous) attitude towards Caliban as a slave. In the cartoon, it is implied that this position of inferiority is appropriate for Caliban, as it is for the blacks in America, whereas the other representations have more sympathy for Caliban, They acknowledge, to some extent, the injustice of his position. The attitude of the cartoon, that Caliban deserves to be enslaved, is justified by a belief in

Figure 1: Cartoon from *Punch* magazine, 24 January 1863.



the inhumanity of Caliban.[5] In contrast, the more sympathetic views of Brough and MacDonnell recognise Caliban's humanity, and hence the injustice of his enslavement. So again there is an ambivalence within these representations of Caliban as a slave, between human and non-human portrayals.

The link between Caliban's status and the colonisation of America was, in the nineteenth century, becoming more widely recognised. Discussion and speculation concerning the role of the exploration and colonisation of America in Shakespeare's construction of *The Tempest* was widespread. Regardless of the significance of this relationship, the debate concerning the nature of its existence certainly added a dimension of confusion to perceptions of Caliban. For instance, Edmond Malone's posthumous variorum edition of *The Tempest* (1821) claims that Antonio Pigafetta's journal, *The Voyage of Magellan*, influenced Shakespeare's conception of Caliban. Pigafetta's account of Ferdinand Magellan's expedition of 1519-1522 claims that the voyagers met several Patagonian "giants," painted, dancing and singing, who cried to their great devil *Setebos* for help (Pigafetta 11-18). Presumably, these savage giants are an image of the 'New World' of America ("O brave new world, / That has such people in't"; V. i. 183-84[6]): that is, they are (human) Native Americans. Malone claimed that these giants were "the remote progenitor of the servant-monster in The Tempest" (Malone 12), but he also recognised many other images as being influential, including mytho-poetical creatures and the devil, so his overall

[5] Or at least, a belief in his exclusion from civilised Western humanity. Which, as I shall show in Chapter Three, amounts for the Victorian audience to the same thing as a belief in his inhumanity.

[6] Miranda's comment is directed, of course, in exactly the wrong direction to be a reference to the American New World: ironically, Miranda, trapped for her whole life on a 'New World' island, says it of the Old World of Europe which produced Ferdinand, Antonio, Gonzalo, and the other Europeans. The reference does, nevertheless, invite associations with the American New World.

interpretation of Caliban contains the same ambivalence between Caliban as human and non-human. Similarly, Samuel Weller Singer in 1837 claimed Pigafetta's story as one source for Caliban, but also recognised Schlegel's description of Caliban as a valid interpretation (Singer 4). For both of these commentators then, Caliban remained an ambivalent, contradictory figure.

Representations of Caliban in paintings in the mid-nineteenth century show thematic patterns similar to the dramatic and critical, literary and political interpretations already discussed. Painted representations of Caliban in the period immediately leading up to this time, the latter part of the eighteenth century, were, on the whole, similar to contemporary critical interpretations: that is, they were generally portrayals of monsters or demons. These paintings are mostly from the Boydell gallery collection, a series of commissioned works with Shakespeare's plays as the subject matter. Of those paintings which depict scenes from *The Tempest*, the majority portray a Caliban who inspires fear rather than sympathy. Examples of such paintings are Henry Fuseli's 1789 depiction of I. ii. which shows a monstrous, powerful, menacing, and defiant Caliban, who is nevertheless still under the power of Prospero, or Nicolaus Chodowiecki's 1780 illustration, a portrayal of Caliban as a monstrous, vaguely humanoid, tortoise. There were exceptions to this trend of portraying Caliban as monstrous, such as Reverend Matthew William Peters' 1789 picture, also of I. ii., in which a very human Caliban kneels, gathering wood, but such human identification was uncommon.

By the early nineteenth century, Caliban was being represented as human in a much greater proportion of such artworks. Robert Smirke's 1821 painting, for example, shows Caliban alone, upright, without a deformed physique — he is

decidedly human. Yet he still scowls, has a hairy face and long nails. The same ambivalence, then, as is apparent in the critical commentaries of Coleridge and Hazlitt from a few years earlier and the stage presentations of a few years later, between human and bestial representations, occurs in these artistic representations of Caliban.

This ambivalence between human and monstrous interpretations is also present in the sketches which appeared in illustrated versions of Shakespeare's works published in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Robert Cruikshank's illustration in an 1824 edition of *The Tempest*, of Caliban dancing with Stephano and Trinculo, shows Caliban as a fairly jolly person, if shaggy-haired and shaggy-clothed. John Orrin Smith's sketches from an 1840 edition, which shows a malignant Caliban crawling out of his cave, still present him as a human, albeit savage, rather than as a beast or a monster. In contrast, F. A. M. Retzsch's 1841 illustrations for *The Tempest* portrays Caliban as a monstrous blend of sea-creature ("strange fish"), dog ("puppy-headed monster"), and demon ("born devil"), in a vaguely humanoid shape.

Among these individual paintings and drawings there is an ambivalence between representations of Caliban as human and as bestial monster, and these ambivalences are further reinforced by contradictions within the individual works themselves. In many of the paintings described here as showing a bestial Caliban, the expression on his face is one of human emotion — dignity, or cunning, or rebellion, or sadness, while in many of the paintings here described as showing a human Caliban, his actions are bestial — crawling out of a cave, or clawing the air. The distinction between human and beast is not as clear as it may appear in my discussion: the line between a hairy, clawed, stooping, human Caliban and a hairy, clawed, stooping, bestial Caliban is a fine one.

The confusion of images presented in the discussion above is a representation of the portrayals of the figure 'Caliban' which were available to Victorian society, through Caliban's associations with Shakespeare's *Tempest* and its interpretations and adaptations: a monster, a primitive savage, a slave, a brute, a beast, a man, oppressed, dispossessed, rebellious.

This same confusion of images is also apparent in the reviews and commentaries which were written in response to Robert Browning's poem "Caliban upon Setebos." In themselves, these responses offer further insights into the ambivalences concerning the figure of Caliban. Not only do they suggest ambivalences within the poem, but they also present ambivalences of their own. In particular, many of them have a particular preconceived conception of Caliban which, it seems, Browning ought to have accurately captured. Consider, for example, J. Fotheringham, in 1887:

> Caliban . . . is, in fact, one of the most original and delicate [conceptions] in Shakespeare. Trembling on the dangerous edge of crude animalism and even brutality, instinctive, . . . [Caliban] was a critical task even for our greatest poet [Browning]; and his success in the impersonation, both in its consistency with itself and its fitness to the world of Caliban, is wonderful. (356-57)

Browning is here being praised for his ability to impersonate (or mimic) a world through poetry which is not just internally consistent, but which is consistent with the already established fictional world of Caliban. Fotheringham, therefore, clearly has a pre-established conception of Caliban and his world, of which Browning succeeds in presenting a copy. But it is clear that there are inconsistencies between Fotheringham's preconception of Caliban, based on Shakespeare, and Browning's portrayal of him: for instance, on a basic level, Shakespeare's Caliban uses the

language of seventeenth-century England, whereas Browning's Caliban speaks, albeit in pidgin-English, the language of England in the nineteenth century. Hence there are ambivalences within Fotheringham's conception.

Fotheringham claims that Caliban has "the love of mastery and the caprice of the savage" (359), clearly expressing his imperial and colonial preconceptions: the savage, it is implied, loves power, but should never be allowed to exercise it. At the same time, he makes clear Caliban's status as human, albeit savage, rather than beast or monster. But he also claims that the poem is "from those parts of the 'Tempest' [*sic*] which present that strange creature" (Fotheringham 354), indicating that Caliban's nature is not strictly human. So Fotheringham's conception of Caliban has the same ambivalence identified earlier. This ambivalence is indicative of the nature of the cultural history of readings of Caliban.

Fotheringham describes Caliban as "[t]rembling on the dangerous edge of crude animalism and even brutality" (356). But it is not clear where this edge lies: what is it the edge between? At first glance, it seems sensible to say that the review is claiming that Caliban is human, but only just: that he is on the edge of animalism, which is not human. But Caliban is also on the edge of "brutality," and this is not so clearly a bestial trait: animals described as brutal are usually being personified, being giving human motives and intentions.[7] It would seem that the edge Caliban is on is both the edge between human and animal, and the edge between humane and brutal. The review, however, implies (with its use of the word "even") that to be brutal is worse than being an animal. So the hierarchy of human over non-human becomes confused in this comparison; to be human is better than to be animal, but to be brutal

[7] The term "brutal" is investigated more fully in Chapter Three.

(and human) is worse. The review is uncertain about whether Caliban is humane and almost brutal, or whether he is human and almost bestial, and about the comparative moral value of each.

A reviewer in *The Reader*, on 4 June 1864, describes Caliban's perception of Setebos as "dimly perceived in his brutish mind" (705). As an indication of the type of being the reviewer holds Caliban to be, this is a fairly clear statement: Caliban is a brute, just as for Fotheringham he was on the edge of brutality. What is unclear, however, is the way the term "brute" relates to the terms that I have been investigating, which have been used to describe Caliban. Does "brute" have bestial and monstrous connotations, or primitive and savage connotations, or in fact both of these simultaneously? All of these things can be implied by the term "brute," and often are at one and the same time. This unexplained ambiguity within the language of the review is consistent with the ambivalence in the figure of Caliban.

R. Bell, in the July 1864 issue of the *St. James Magazine*, says that "clever as 'Caliban' is, it [the poem] is a mistake" on the grounds that "[t]he subject is exceedingly repulsive," and "what grounds can [Browning] . . . set up for mere ugliness — ugliness so extreme as to fill the gazer with instinctive detestation and loathing? What would Mr. Millais make of a gorilla" (486)? With this reference to the painter Sir John Everitt Millais, Bell makes an association which is different, perhaps, to what was intended. The gorilla is an already existing subject (or at least it is a discursive construct of which there are many existing instantiations), which Millais can choose to paint or not to paint. The parallel which Bell constructs encourages us to assume that Caliban is also an already existing subject, one which Browning chooses to inscribe. Bell's decision that Caliban is ugly is based not on the poem but on the pre-existing object Caliban, just as his decision that the gorilla is

ugly is not based on any particular ugly painting, but on the original animal itself. So again, as with Fotheringham's comments, the poem itself is not what is being judged, nor even Caliban as Browning constructs him within the poem. Rather, what is being judged is the preconceived idea of Caliban held by the reviewer. Bell's claim is not that Browning's poem is ugly, just as Millais' paintings are not ugly: but that Caliban, as an already existing figure, is too ugly to warrant being a poetic subject. Again, as in the other reviews as well as the alternate representations of Caliban, there is an ambivalence — in this case, between Caliban as he appears in the poem and Caliban as he is described in a review. Interpretations of Caliban are repeatedly ambivalent. The question remains — who or what is Caliban?

A reviewer for the *Dublin University Magazine*, in November 1864, is more aware of the history which the figure of Caliban carries. The review says that the poem presents us with the "theories of a primitive mind" (577), which is nonetheless "an advance from the state in which we first formed his acquaintance in Shakespeare's 'Tempest ;' [*sic*] his brutal mind has developed, he has begun to make his surroundings — his present and future — the object of his thoughts" (*Dublin University Magazine* 577-78). Here is recognition that Browning's Caliban is not simply a repeat of Shakespeare's original creation, but is a development — linked, but not continuous. The review does not acknowledge the role of other portrayals of Caliban in prefiguring the image which appears in Browning's poem, but it is expected that a review of this nature excludes these other literary and non-literary pieces from consideration in order to be concerned specifically with 'higher' literature. What can be noted yet again is the use of the ambiguous word "brutal" to describe Caliban.

In engaging in natural theology, as Caliban does in the poem, thinking about Setebos and finding answers to his questions in the natural world surrounding himself, he is thinking "in the manner of savages" (*Dublin University Magazine* 578), and not, apparently, in the manner of Victorian natural theologians. This reviewer claims that Caliban's monologue represents "the lowest form of feticism [*sic*]" and also comments on "the uncouthness of the style in which [Browning] . . . makes the half bestial savage utter his reflections" (578). Here, we are dealing with the poem quite specifically, in that these comments apply to Caliban's actions (particularly his speech) within "Caliban upon Setebos." But descriptions of Caliban are again in conflict. He is a "half bestial savage," and he has already been, within this review, described as having a "brutal mind." But is he a savage or not? How bestial is half bestial? And again, is "brutal" a human or a non-human epithet? This ambiguity blurs the line between savage and bestial: the ambivalence between a human and a non-human description of Caliban is further maintained.

It is clear from the discussion so far that my concern is with the concepts of the savage and the primitive as they are applied to Caliban. As a cultural concept of the mid-nineteenth century, Caliban is closely related to contemporary representations of the savage and the primitive. Dorothy Mermin, in her article "Browning and the Primitive," recognises the relevance of the primitive to "Caliban upon Setebos":

> One of the central organizing principles in Robert Browning's late poems . . . is the opposition of primitive and modern, savage and civilized, nature and culture. Many of these poems form part of the great intellectual movement that had gathered strength in the preceding decade [the 1860s] and was producing the beginnings of modern anthropology, best represented by Edward Tylor's *Primitive Culture*. (202)

Browning's poems, Mermin maintains, "shared the common attitude of mixed horror, contempt, and fascination" with the primitive, and they "presuppose the evolutionary view that became current in the seventies: that primitive peoples and barbaric myths represent early rather than degenerate stages in cultural development of the human race, and furthermore that fragments of primitive thought and behaviour survive in higher cultures" (202). For this reason, both Browning's poem and Tylor's book offer textual evidence for the inter-relatedness of these presentations of Caliban and Victorian portrayals of primitive people. Browning's poem is the focus of the next chapter, but I will introduce Tylor's work here in order to establish a similar ambivalence to that presented earlier in the representations of Caliban. This similarity is central to my discussion as a whole.

Two major theories were central to late nineteenth-century anthropological debate: evolutionism and diffusionism. Tylor was among the leading evolutionists, but more importantly, he was also part of a group of writers who, in the middle of the century, began to make structured studies of cultural systems. So while Tylor's work is to some extent pioneering, it is also representative of a school of thought which was part of a "great intellectual movement" (Mermin 202), and to that extent can be seen as representative of Victorian cultural attitudes:

> In the decade between 1861 and 1871 there appeared books which we regard as our early theoretical classics: [these included] Tylor's *Researches into the Early History of Mankind* (1865) and his *Primitive Culture* (1871). . . . It was McLennan and Tylor in this country, and Morgan in America, who first treated primitive societies as a subject which might in itself engage the attention of serious scholars. It was they who first brought together the information about primitive peoples from a wide range of miscellaneous writings and presented it in systematic form, thereby laying the foundations of social anthropology. In their writings the study of primitive societies and speculative theory about the nature of social institutions met. (Evans-Pritchard 28)

Tylor, as an evolutionist, held the view that "the phenomena of Culture may be classified and arranged, stage by stage, in a probable order of evolution":

> [e]ven when it comes to comparing barbarous hordes with civilized nations, the consideration thrusts itself upon our minds, how far item after item of the life of the lower races passes into analogous proceedings of the higher, in forms not too far changed to be recognized. (5-6)

For Tylor, "barbarous" people are grouped into "hordes," while "civilised" people form "nations." Primitive cultures, it is intimated, are to be studied for what they can teach us about our own Western history, not because they offer valid alternatives or interesting interpretations in their own right.

Tylor writes further that:

> [t]he educated world of England and America practically settles a standard by simply placing its own nations at one end of the social series and savage tribes at the other, . . . [where t]he principal criteria of classification are the absence or presence, high or low development, of the industrial arts. (23)

This 'standard' is not, we note, settled in any impartial, objective manner, but is explicitly settled by "[t]he educated world of England and America." Tylor's language establishes that these value judgements are imposed on the world by specifically Western civilised nations in an act which denies any alternative interpretations.

The terms "savage" and "primitive" when used in the context of Victorian discussion, do not always refer simply to the "low development of the industrial arts," as Tylor claims that they do. There is an ambivalence between this meaning and a moral implication, which Tylor also invokes when he claims later that "civilization may be looked upon as the general *improvement* of mankind by higher organization of the individual and society, to the end of promoting at once man's

[sic] *goodness, power, and happiness*" (24, my italics). The goodness, power, and happiness of "man," Tylor clearly states, will improve as technology advances.

This presupposition is one which would be more vigorously challenged today than it would have been in Tylor's time, but my purpose is not to question Tylor's anthropology. Rather, I intend to show that the same basic ambivalence is apparent in Tylor's description of the 'savage' as is apparent in contemporary descriptions of Caliban. Tylor makes this clear himself when he identifies humanity together as a whole, but then splits this group into separate "barbarous hordes" and "civilized nations," humanity being represented by the "educated world of England and America," with the "savage tribes" being the 'Other' against which civilisation (and humanity) is judged.

Tylor continues:

> The white invader or colonist, though representing on the whole a higher moral standard than the savage he improves or destroys, often represents his standard very ill, and at best can hardly claim to substitute a life stronger, nobler, and purer at every point than that which he supersedes. (26)

Tylor describes the role of the "white invader or colonist," who brings civilisation to the (savage) ends of the earth. The colonist, when he (because for Tylor, at least, the colonist — and the colonised — is always male) encounters these savages, "improves or destroys" them. While Tylor acknowledges that the colonist often abuses the position his superior moral condition grants him, Tylor's attitude contains an ambivalence in the colonial ideal: the role of the colonist is, on the one hand, to improve the savage he colonises, and, on the other hand, to destroy this same savage. That is, Tylor identifies the colonial mission in an ambivalent way, as both improving and destroying the savages encountered and civilised by the colonists.

This ambivalence is an important one which I will develop in more detail in the next chapter.

Tylor's work is ambivalent in other places. For instance, he writes:

> [w]e may, I think, apply the often-repeated comparison of savages to children as fairly to their moral as to their intellectual condition. (27)

This moral position of the child in Victorian society was an ambivalent one also. Children were seen as morally pure —in a state of innocence, as yet untainted by moral degradation. But children were also seen as born into sin — and they would remain in this state of sin until they were baptised. The ambivalence here in the nature of the child remains when Tylor uses the child as an analogous description of the savage: both the moral purity and the moral sinfulness of the savage can be seen to be asserted by Tylor.

It can thus be seen that the Victorian image of Caliban, both as a preconception within society before the audience or reader approached a work, and within the response of critical consciousness to works once performed or published, was not a homogeneous entity. It involved contradictions, anomalies, ambiguities, and imprecision. Similarly, as is clear from Tylor's work, the Victorian concept of the primitive was a problematic one, and, since Caliban was often described as "primitive" or "savage," an important one for this thesis.

In the next chapter, using Robert Browning's poem as a focus, I will outline a late twentieth-century model which can be used, if not to make a coherent reading of

Caliban in the poem and in other Victorian representations and receptions, then at least to make sense of these conflicts within and between them.

CHAPTER TWO: THE COLONIAL DISCOURSE OF BROWNING'S CALIBAN

> Our archetypal, politically correct article on Shakespeare these days is likely to be called "Caliban and the Discourse of Colonialism." (Bloom 1)

The focus of much twentieth-century criticism of Robert Browning's poem "Caliban upon Setebos" is on the issue of Natural Theology and the satirising or parody of this issue within the poem. Thomas Wolfe, however, takes a different stance, saying that we need to look at what is being said around or through the discussion on religion: "[i]t could be said that religion is not so much the 'subject' as it is the 'occasion' for the poem" (7). I agree with Wolfe, and in this chapter my focus is the relationship between Caliban and Prosper. Despite the prevalence of colonial or postcolonial interpretations of Shakespeare's *Tempest* since the 1950s, no such analysis of Browning's poem is available, despite the suggestive nature of the expression which Caliban uses within the poem to refer to Prosper — "lord now of the isle" (line 151). A colonial model for his relationship with Prosper is here implied: Caliban lived alone on the island until Prosper arrived, asserted control, and subjugated Caliban to his rules. The consequences of such a model for reading the poem need exploration and elaboration if the relationship between Caliban and Prosper is to be adequately politicised.

Edward Said claims, in *Culture and Imperialism*, that "scarcely any attention has been paid to . . . the privileged role of culture in the modern imperial experience, and little notice taken of the fact that the extraordinary global reach of classical nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European imperialism still casts a considerable shadow over our own times" (3-4), and that "we must also try to grasp

the hegemony of the imperial ideology, which by the end of the nineteenth century had become completely embedded in the affairs of cultures whose less regrettable features we still celebrate" (12). Said is here emphasising what he sees as the extremely widespread effects of imperialism and colonialism: any discourse which arises out of a society or culture involved in an imperial or colonial process, including academic or creative writing, will be a part of the broader discourse of colonialism, a discourse which Paul Brown describes as "ambivalent and even contradictory" (48). Yet many critics of Browning's poem, and of Victorian poetry generally, do not pay adequate attention to the political nature of colonialism, or its broad-reaching effects. For instance, Isobel Armstrong, in *Victorian Poetry*, sees the "double poem, with its systematically ambiguous language" (16) and its nature as "an expressive model and an epistemological model simultaneously" (13), as representative of Victorian poetry. "Caliban upon Setebos" may be interpreted as one such "double poem," with its exploration of both Caliban's psyche and his epistemology, but to do so would be to ignore the background in colonial discourse which informs these ambiguities. To say that the "double poem" is attributable to the "self conscious moment of awareness" (Armstrong 16) of the poet is to historicise the poem, but it does not adequately or accurately politicise it.

Several twentieth-century critics writing about "Caliban upon Setebos" have noted the importance of mimicry within the poem. David Shaw writes:

> In mimicking Prosper, Caliban combines three kinds of pretension: verbal, sexual, and social. . . . The verbal extravagance with which Caliban would imitate Prosper's "prodigious words" is symptomatic of his limitations. . . . Caliban's mimicry gratifies a desire to play the tyrant-leader. (*The Dialectical Temper* 197)

Similarly, Clyde Ryals, in his critical biography *The Life of Robert Browning*, uses a stage metaphor to describe the poem, wherein Caliban is self-consciously "more or

less playing a role" (152). Ryals describes the framing of the spoken part of the poem by the introductory and concluding sections, enclosed within brackets like stage directions, as an indication of the appropriateness of this model. Within the drama, Caliban is seen as orchestrating a smaller play, wherein he pretends to be Prosper, and the whole concludes with the dropping of "a curtain o'er the world at once" ("Caliban upon Setebos" line 284). The play is ended, Ryals, claims, "with the actor playwright's admission that 'it was all fool's play, this prattling'" (152). While acting is not mimicry, the two are similar enough that Ryals' preoccupation with acting offers support for an interpretation concerned with mimicry.

This notion of Caliban 'playing at' being Prosper is developed by other critics. Arnold Shapiro calls Caliban a "spiteful mimic, [who] 'plays' at being Prospero [sic]

. . . in order to vent his rage" (60). Daniel Karlin, in *Browning's Hatreds*, talks about the "bauble-world" (line 147) Setebos creates, which is an imitation of the "real" world Setebos looks up to and sees the "something quiet" (line 132) inhabiting (83). Anne Wordsworth, in "Browning's Anxious Gaze," talks about mimicry against a background of Lacanian psychoanalysis in the context of Browning's poetry more generally.

The importance of mimicry within the poem, as noted by these critics, together with the colonial nature of the relationship between Caliban and Prosper, justify the invocation of a theoretical model put forward by Homi Bhabha, a model which emphasises the importance of the role of mimicry in colonial relationships from a postcolonial perspective. Bhabha develops this model in "Of Mimicry and

Man,"[8] describing, briefly, an ambivalence in colonial discourse which is due to a discrepancy between "the high ideals of the colonial imagination" (234) and the low effects of colonial practice: between "the reforming, civilizing mission [and] its disciplinary double" (235).

The epic intentions and high ideals of colonising peoples involve bringing civilisation and enlightenment to the people being colonised. But this vision is a limited one. Possibly because of a desire to maintain power, or a belief that the colonised people are not intelligent or strong or Western enough to sustain such ideals without the ruling hand of the colonisers, this ideal is never fully actualised. Hence there arises an ambivalence between two colonial aims: on the one hand, a desire to reform, enlighten, and civilise the colonised people; on the other hand, a desire to repress, enslave, and subjugate them. As Joseph Conrad wrote in *Heart of Darkness*:

> The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea. (31)

This ambivalence is not just a split between an ideal and a reality, but a split between desires: the colonist has a desire for *both* colonial ends. Bhabha explains that it is as a consequence of this split, this ambivalent colonial desire, that the colonised person is placed in a position where he or she cannot *be* a civilised person, but can only *mimic* one.[9] Whether because of skin colour, facial structure, accent, or some other

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[8] "Of Mimicry and Man" will be hereafter cited as OMM.

[9] It would be easy here, because of my focus on two male characters, to leave the masculine pronoun only, and justifying this as appropriate to Victorian colonial discourse. However, this would be to continue to pretend that it is possible to exclude women from the process of colonisation, as they have

subtle distinction, the colonised person is always excluded from a position within civilisation, and instead mimics the actions of the civilised person. This mimicry menaces the power of the colonisers: "in 'normalizing' the colonial state or subject, the dream of post-Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and thus produces another knowledge of its norms" (OMM 235). That is, mimicry makes a mockery of the colonial goal by introducing a new knowledge of it, a knowledge that involves repression rather than enlightenment. This mockery brings into question the right of the colonising people to assert disciplinary power, and thereby menaces colonial power.

Mimicry is not only a menace to this power, however. It is also a form of it: from the ambivalence between the colonial aims, "mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (OMM 234-35). Colonial mimicry, in order to be sustainable, must continually fall short of its professed aim. The relationship between mimicking colonised and mimicked coloniser must always be not quite what it idealistically purports to be. As Paul Brown writes, "colonialist discourse voices a demand both for order and disorder, producing a disruptive other in order to assert the superiority of the coloniser" (58). This involves a paradox of sorts: the colonisers seek to impose order on the colonised, whether through enlightenment or repression, and yet the colonised are characterised by the colonial discourse of the colonisers as a disordered rabble. Bhabha explains this gap or lack more fully:

> [c]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an

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been excluded by the discourse of colonialism in the past. I therefore leave such pronouns in this inclusive form.

> *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. (OMM 235)

The result of this slippage is a falling short: through mimicry the professed goal of colonialism becomes unattainable. But at the same time the slippage also produces an excess: while the colonial relationship does not morally measure up to the high aims of the coloniser, it nevertheless contains more than the implied intention.

Bhabha continues:

> Mimicry is . . . the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers. (OMM 235)

Mimicry, that is, signifies two things. Firstly, that the colonised person has been inclusively constructed, *appropriated* by the colonial discourse to serve as 'other' for the construction of colonising selves, to be an object against which the colonising person can judge himself or herself and reinforce his or her superiority. And secondly, mimicry signifies that the colonised person has been exclusively constructed, that the mimicking colonised person is *inappropriate* to fulfil any other role in his or her relationship with the colonising person. The difference between the coloniser and the colonised is identified within the discourse of colonialism as signifying the superiority of the coloniser, and therefore reinforces the belief of both colonised and coloniser in the coloniser's right to colonial power.

The colonial subject, the colonised person, is not wholly appropriated, not just an object for the coloniser to construct him- or herself as subject against. The discursive process of mimicry "does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a partial presence.

By 'partial' I mean both 'incomplete' and 'virtual'" (OMM 235). The colonial subject is an incomplete presence in the sense that the colonised person will never exactly be the colonising person, regardless of how good a mimic she or he is, because mimicry does not repeat, it re-presents. That is, mimicry presents a new object, which is deliberately in simulation of and therefore not identical to the original, rather than repeating an identical copy, which would have the same intentions, rather than the intention to be the same. A colonised person is only complete, according to colonial discourse, if she or he is identical to a colonising person, and hence the process of mimicry makes being "the same" as a mimicked object unachievable. As Lacan writes:

> [m]imicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camoflage. . . . It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background of becoming mottled — exactly like the technique of camoflage practised in human warfare. (Epigraph to OMM)

The colonial subject is a virtual presence in the sense that as an incomplete subject, the colonised person's perspective can be ignored or marginalised by colonists as being inferior and secondary. Hence colonised people, as inappropriate subjects *for* colonial discourse (though appropriate to be, and appropriated to be, subject *to* colonial discourse), have only a virtual presence; they are the object of, but not the subject of, discourse. More simply, it is a problem of mimicry in itself that by the very act of mimicking one constructs one's difference, because the act of 'trying to be like' admits and perpetuates the actuality of not 'being.'

Even as a partial presence, however, the colonised person does have an effect: an effect of menace to colonial discourse. The unequal relationship founded in colonial discourse leads colonists to believe that colonised people are affected by,

but do not affect, the colonial situation. For instance, as Bhabha points out, Eric Stokes' *The English Utilitarians and India* (1959) claims that "[c]ertainly India played no central part in fashioning the distinctive qualities of English civilisation" (xv). But the active effect of the colonised people is only denied, not removed, by colonial discourse: "[i]n many ways, [India] acted as a disturbing force, a magnetic power placed at the periphery tending to distort the natural development of Britain's character" (xv). Clearly the colonised people do have an effect. They are established within colonial discourse through mimicry as a presence of some sort, even if that presence be only negative or partial. Stokes' colonial discourse, by defining such effects as that of the Indians as 'not effects at all' on the basis that they are not 'positive,' is able to disguise but not dismiss the profound effect of India and the Indian people on English civilisation: the effect of menace, as Bhabha suggests.

The perspective of the colonists is not the only viewpoint from which the colonial process is being viewed as it occurs. In order to be able to mimic the coloniser, a colonised person must be in a position from which she or he can observe the coloniser, and act on these observations. Being a presence in this way, having a gaze, constructs colonised people as:

> the appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, authorized versions of otherness. But they are also . . . the figures of a doubling, the part-objects of a metonymy of colonial desire which alienates the modality and normality of those dominant discourses in which they emerge as 'inappropriate' colonial subjects. (OMM 238)

That is, if the colonised person was simply an empty (metaphorical or figurative) mirror, as earlier postcolonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon suggest, effectively reflecting back the coloniser's own images of himself or herself, then this ambivalence would not occur. Mimicry menaces the discourse of colonialism because it reveals the very ambivalence in attitude which makes that discourse

possible — the ambivalence between the colonial desire for the colonised person to be an enlightened and educated alterity, and the simultaneous colonial desire for the colonised person to be a repressed object. Colonial mimicry is a subversive action against colonial power because it explicitly excludes the colonised person from ever achieving the colonial goal of enlightenment, bringing into question the justification for the process of colonisation:[10] "The *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (OMM 237). As Robert Young summarises the point, "[c]olonial discourse does not merely represent the other . . . so much as simultaneously project and disavow its difference. . . . Its mastery is always asserted, but it is also always slipping, ceaselessly displaced, never complete" (143).

By introducing this new knowledge of the colonial process, which is in conflict with the professed goal of enlightenment colonialism, mimicry challenges the right of the coloniser to assert colonial power over colonised people. If the goal of colonialism is not in actuality based solely on the ideal of sharing and spreading Western enlightened civilisation, but rather involves an ambivalence between this and the alternate ideal[11] of repression and authority, then the justification for asserting disciplinary power is threatened by the new knowledge of this alternative ideal, which mocks the first, enlightening, ideal.

Yet mimicry functions not only as a threat to colonial power, but also as a form of it: as Bhabha concludes, "[t]he success of colonial appropriation depends on

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[10] Bhabha also emphasises that the menace of mimicry arises from the grotesque and parodic elements perceived in the colonised by the coloniser. While this may seem a worthwhile point in a thesis concerning the grotesque character Caliban, it is not relevant to the larger focus of this work.

[11] Perhaps 'ideal' is not the best word here, since this idea of repression and authority is a somewhat negative impulse to be called an ideal. But I use the word, rather than 'desire' or 'aim' because I want to convey a more societal or institutional, rather than personal level, to the 'desire' involved.

a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (OMM 236). That is, the existence of these mimicking colonial subjects menaces the colonial process by showing it to be failing in its aim. In showing this failure, these subjects also ensure that the colonial process is never completed, and simultaneously justify the continuation of colonial appropriation. The mimicry of these colonial subjects thereby acts as a form of colonial power.[12]

In order to have these effects, as menace and as containment, mimicry works through various media: most notably, language. The ambivalence that "emerges between mimicry and mockery is a *writing*, a mode of representation" (OMM 237). Language, discourse, is an important and powerful cultural tool. As Isobel Armstrong points out, "[t]he link between cultural complexities and the complexities of language is indirect but can be perceived" (*Victorian Poetry* 11). But language is more than just a tool; language is the power which is at issue here. Frantz Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, repeatedly emphasises the importance of language, writing that "[m]astery of language affords remarkable power" (14), and "[e]very dialect is a way of thinking" (19). It is through the use of language, *in* the discourse itself, that the colonised person is excluded from a role as subject *of* the language, and constrained or confined to a position as object, subject *to* the discourse. "To speak a language is to take over a world, a culture. The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is"

[12] This analysis may seem to construct the perpetrator (coloniser) as unconsciously cunning in ensuring the continuity of his or her role of dominance: but it needs to be remembered that I am talking not about individuals, but about a cultural system.

(Fanon 29). Fanon's point here is that no matter how 'white' the Antilles Negro becomes linguistically, she or he will never actually be, genetically, a white person. As he suggests, there develops a split between the black (colonised) person, who is being spoken by the discourse which is not his or her own, and the white mask which the colonised person adopts in speaking this language. It is through language that the inappropriateness of the colonised person for any role other than that of 'Other' is made clear, and it is *in* language that this inappropriateness is exercised. In his or her attempt to *represent*, discursively, the colonist, the colonial subject is labelled inappropriate by colonial discourse, and simultaneously menaces the colonial process.

The colonial relationship which Bhabha describes, as outlined above, is directly relevant to the relationship between Caliban and Prosper in "Caliban upon Setebos" in terms of three of its main features: firstly, the way in which the discourse of mimicry within the colonial relationship both appropriates the colonised person, and makes him or her inappropriate; secondly, the dual role of the partial subjecthood of the colonised person as both a menace to the stability of the colonial relationship and a contributing factor to its continuation; and thirdly, the role within the mimic relationship of language and the gaze as a location of conflict and a source of power. These aspects of the mimic relationship, when used to analyse the poem and the relationship between Caliban and Prosper therein, reveal within the language of the poem the same ambivalence which informs colonial discourse: an ambivalence between the colonial ideal as "reforming, civilizing mission" and the actualised alternative of repressive, authoritarian imperialism.

In the following passage from the poem, Caliban describes a part of his response to Prosper's position of power:

> Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books
> Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:
> Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,
> Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words;
> Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;
> Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's robe
> The eyed skin of a supple oncelot;
> And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling mole,
> A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,
> Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,
> And saith she is Miranda and my wife:
> 'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane
> He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge;
> Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared,
> Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,
> And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge
> In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;
> A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.
> 'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
> Taketh his mirth with make-believes: so He. (lines 150-169)

Here, mimicry is explicit: Caliban "Plays thus at being Prosper."

Mimicry, as discussed above, is both a sign that the discourse appropriates Caliban, and a sign of his inappropriateness. This ambivalent role of mimicry is the basis of the first of Bhabha's three points. In terms of this point, the discourse of colonialism constructs Caliban *inclusively*, within its boundaries. He is constructed to desire the power of Prosper, thus placing him in a subject position which fulfils the needs of Prosper as coloniser; a need to be admired, to have his position desired, to feel powerful.[13] Caliban has also, however, been constructed *exclusively*, within colonial discourse but excluded from it, constructed to desire a position for which he

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[13] Avoiding in depth psychology, it is nevertheless clear that Prospero's nature and role in *The Tempest* are at least partly determined by, and in response to, his exclusion from Venetian society, his subsequent loss of power, and his isolation from all other people except for his daughter.

is inappropriate. This leaves Caliban "vexed": he is angry, and wants a return from the present, when Prosper is "lord *now* of the isle" (my italics), to a previous time, when Caliban was lord himself. Caliban has now been appropriated by colonial discourse: he speaks Prosper's language,[14] and his desires are constructed in the terms of this language. So the way in which Caliban wants to be lord of the isle *now* is not as it was before. Desiring the position of power which Prosper has over him, Caliban therefore mimics Prosper. That is, Caliban's desire to be Prosper is expressed through mimicry, as a desire to be like Prosper, because this is the way in which colonial discourse constructs Caliban, as colonial subject, to believe that his desire for power will be fulfilled.[15] But to mimic is explicitly not to be the thing being mimicked. There is always a not-quite-the-same-ness about the copy: in terms of colonial discourse, the other is "*almost the same but not quite*" (OMM 235). As Bhabha says, speaking of the Indians colonised by the British, "to be Anglicized, is *emphatically* not to be English" (OMM 237). This remaining element of difference is exactly what identifies Caliban as inappropriate for the position of power which he wants. He is inappropriate for a role in which he would be the subject to be mimicked, but only appropriate to be (and appropriated to be) a mimic.

In the passage from the poem quoted above, one of the desires for power which Caliban expresses is the desire to have Miranda as a wife. Marriage becomes a form of male ownership, and as such, according to the discourse of colonialism

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[14] Of course, in theory, Prospero does not speak English. Dramatic license and convention allows writers to have characters "play at" speaking a foreign language, while writing or speaking English.

[15] The character who was "Prospero" in *The Tempest* has become "Prosper" in Browning's poem. What is missing from Prospero? The 'o', the hole, the whole, the unity, the identity, the independence from Caliban himself? Possibly, but more obviously the new name is a symbol for the position which Prosper explicitly fills, in which one literally 'prospers', in comparison to the role Caliban fills, again as described in the *dramatis personae* of *The Tempest*, in which he is "a savage and deformed slave" (Orgel 95).

shared by Prosper and Caliban, is an appropriate method for increasing one's power. Caliban's desires conform to the colonial discourse he is part of: he mimics Prosper by mimicking his relationship with Miranda. Prosper has Miranda as daughter rather than wife, but their relationship is one of ownership and thus a parallel can be drawn.[16] Marriage to Miranda is almost the same for Caliban as Prosper's fatherhood of her. As Prospero tells Ferdinand in *The Tempest*: "Then as my gift, and thine own acquisition / Worthily purchased, take my daughter" (IV. i. 13-14).

Prosper's relationship with Miranda is not the only relationship of ownership that Caliban mimics. Caliban's desire to have Ariel and Caliban (represented in this passage of fantasy by a mock Ariel and a mock Caliban, just as it is a mock Miranda) as slaves, is again in mimicry of Prosper's method of having and expressing power. "Keeps for his Ariel a tall-pouch-bill crane / . . . / Also a sea-beast." Further aspects of Prosper's power that Caliban mimics in order to achieve that power are the ownership of magic books, enchanter's robes, and a magical wand, and the possession of impressive words.

The power Prosper has over Caliban, and which Caliban mimics, is not only an expression of their relationship, but also a foundation of it. The responsibility for fulfilling the "reforming, civilizing mission" (OMM 235) is Prosper's in part, it seems, because he has the power to enforce it. Similarly, Victorian English colonists believed they had an obligation as well as a right to assert colonial power because of their pre-existing possession of the capacity to express that power. As Sir Edward Cust wrote in 1839, if any British colony

[16] The relationship between Caliban and Miranda, and between Prosper and Miranda, is a possessive one: Caliban "*hath* an ounce . . . / And saith she is Miranda and my wife" (my italics); in the patriarchal economy of which these figures are a part, women are considered property of this sort, to be traded amongst men, from fathers to husbands, in return for a dowry.

> has dared to defy the mother country, she [the British Empire] has to thank herself for the folly of conferring such privileges [as a mimic copy of the British Constitution] on a condition of society that has no earthly claim to so exalted a position. (epigraph to OMM)

Ironically, according to Bhabha's model, Prosper only continues to have that power over Caliban as long as he never achieves the mission which morally justifies the exercise of his power: Caliban's enlightenment. There remains then a distinction and an ambivalence between the moral justification for Prosper's position of power — the reforming, civilising mission he is undertaking for the benefit of Caliban — and the pragmatic justification for it — the "disciplinary double" of that mission which ensures the continuation of Prosper's position of power in their relationship.

Colonial discourse constructs Caliban as 'other,' mimic, appropriated and therefore inappropriate, and hence the "disciplinary double" of the colonial mission justifies Prosper's actions in disallowing the actuation of Caliban's desire for power outside of the mimic "bauble-world." Caliban is placed in the position where he is to mimic, but not fulfil, Prosper's role, and because of the nature of mimicry, he will never by this method achieve his aim of possessing Prosper's power. To paraphrase Bhabha, to mimic Prosper successfully *is* to be colonised successfully in the sense in which Prosper's desire is repression, but to mimic Prosper successfully is equally *not* to be colonised successfully in the sense in which Prosper's desire is to bring enlightenment to Caliban. Caliban is both successfully and unsuccessfully colonised, according to each of the colonial aims. So colonial discourse, through mimicry, both appropriates Caliban and defines him as inappropriate: Caliban is appropriated, because Caliban is constructed to choose mimicry as a means of achieving Prosper's power, and in being constructed this way, he is simultaneously inappropriate, because mimicry is a method which cannot succeed in gaining him this power.

Specifically, mimicry is a means of colonial power which prevents the professed end of colonialism, bringing enlightenment and freedom to the colonised people, from ever being achieved: so the reason that "any print of goodness wilt not take" Caliban (*The Tempest*, I. ii. 351) is a result of Prospero's imperial domination of him, not because, as Miranda claims, Caliban's "race / . . . had that in't which good natures / Could not abide to be with" (I. ii. 357-59).[17]

The second of Bhabha's three points to be adopted in this postcolonial interpretation of the poem, is the role of the partial subjecthood of the colonial subject as both a menace to the stability of the colonial relationship, and simultaneously a contributing factor to the stability of that very relationship.

Because he is a partial subject, having a gaze and a viewpoint from which to observe Prosper, Caliban as a mimic menaces the stability of his relationship with Prosper. In order for him to mimic Prosper effectively, colonial discourse constructs Caliban as a presence who observes and comments. The poem itself, in Caliban's 'voice' and giving Caliban's perspective, is an explicit example of this ability.[18] In being a presence (even if, as discussed above, only a "partial" presence of some sort), Caliban's gaze discloses an alternative perception of the nature of Prosper's power — alternative to the Western colonial goal of enlightenment. Instead, Caliban's gaze reveals Prosper's colonialism as oppressive, hierarchical, even tyrannical. Caliban's

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[17] This description of the relationship between Caliban and Prosper is decidedly 'colonist-centric.' Focussed as this thesis is on the role of the Western constructed image of the colonised figure, as represented or personified in the fictional figure 'Caliban,' such a viewpoint is unavoidable, much as a reciprocal description of the coloniser in the terms of the colonised may be desired.

[18] On another level, of course, the poem is an equally explicit example of the way in which colonial discourse constructs Caliban: the 'voice' of Caliban presented in the poem is enscribed by an English Victorian poet. But here it is more important to focus on the ability this construction allows Caliban, rather than the limitations it imposes.

oppressive domination of the ounce (which "he makes cower and crouch"), the pouch-bill crane (which he pre-emptorily "bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge"), and the sea-beast ("which he snared, / Blinded the eyes of"), is all done as he "Plays thus at being Prosper," implying that Prosper's methods of domination provide a model which is similarly tyrannical. Earlier, Caliban says that Prosper and Miranda presume that he "drudges at their task" (line 21) — he is Prosper's servant or slave, not student.[19] It is the knowledge of this ambivalence as revealed by Caliban's gaze — between the colonial desire for an enlightened alterior subject and the colonial desire for a repressed object — which menaces colonial discourse.

Caliban's partial subjecthood challenges Prosper's power in that what Caliban mimics of Prosper is his exercise of power through possession, dominance, and exploitation, rather than any higher ideal (particularly that of enlightenment). Caliban's partial subjecthood and mimicry thereby present "another knowledge of its [post enlightenment civility's — which we can interpret as, in this instance, Prosper's civilisation's] norms" (OMM 235). Knowledge of these norms does not equate to that knowledge which is established from Prosper's gaze. That is, the reader can come to see the norms, the desires and expectations, of Prosper's colonial power as Caliban sees them: as tyranny and repression, not as guidance and instruction. Caliban's mimicry implicitly challenges Prosper's right to wield that power, in that through mimicry Caliban will never become enlightened, and it is the

[19] Or at least, he is a servant as well as a student: for students, too, 'drudge' at their tasks. Similarly, the earlier claim that occasionally Caliban's oppression in mimicking Prosper definitively indicates that Prosper too is oppressive, is not strictly true. It could be that Caliban's oppression of the creatures is a result of his failure to effectively mimic Prosper — an example of him falling short of successful mimicry of the high moral standards of the colonist. However, the ambivalence in interpretation is exactly my broader point — both interpretations are possible, and are in fact correct. But in order to draw out this ambivalence, I need to make each point separately, and hence the one-sided interpretation presented here.

goal of enlightenment which morally justifies Prosper's exertion of colonial power over Caliban.[20]

Caliban's mimicry, however, is not only a menace to his relationship with Prosper: it also acts to perpetuate that relationship. As has already been established, within the poem Caliban expects to become more powerful through mimicking Prosper. By extending Bhabha's model outside of the immediate context of the poem, it can be supposed that in the same manner, through mimicking Prosper, Caliban is expected to become enlightened. Because Caliban wants to be (like) Prosper, he mimics Prosper. But of course, the method of mimicry explicitly excludes Caliban from ever achieving the goal which he has been conditioned to expect his mimicry will achieve for him: the power which Prosper holds over him. As Brecht says, of a similar situation: "Copying the methods of these realists, we should cease to be realists ourselves" (71-2). His point is that through copying, and similarly mimicking, one can never attain the position of the original. For this reason, mimicry is "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial knowledge and power" (OMM 234-235) — the challenge Caliban's mimicry offers to the relationship between Caliban and Prosper is absorbed within the colonial process. In not allowing Prosper's mission of enlightenment (or Caliban's mission for power) to be fulfilled, mimicry perpetuates the colonial relationship. Caliban still feels that he needs to mimic Prosper to achieve the power he wants, and Prosper still feels that he needs to exert power over Caliban in order to bring him to

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[20] Of course, even this is a dubious claim: is it one's duty to become reformed and civilised (meaning Westernised), if one is not currently so civilised? And does one have an obligation to bring reform and civilisation to those who do not have it, if one is so civilised? But the colonial mission here is in enough moral strife without these further queries: it is sufficient here to agree with Conrad that what redeems colonialism is 'the idea only.'

enlightenment. At the same time Prosper needs to exert such power over Caliban to maintain his own self-image. Any potential for enlightenment in the poem is dashed towards the end, with Caliban cowering in superstitious fear and dejection:

> 'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,
> Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month
> One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape! (lines 293-295)

This ending stands in contrast to *The Tempest*, where Caliban does reach some higher, 'more Western,' level of civilisation: "I'll be wise hereafter, / And seek for grace" (V. i. 294-95). Caliban's mimicry, then, serves simultaneously as both a menace to Prosper's colonial power, and a means of perpetuating that power.

The third feature of colonial discourse which is important in establishing the relationship between Caliban and Prosper in the poem is the expression of power in the mimic relationship through language and the gaze. Language is clearly an important part of the civilising mission. In this relationship, Caliban has been 'civilised' by Prosper, to the extent that he has been taught a 'civilised' tongue, and in entering into the discourse of colonialism he has come to construct his desires in the terms of that discourse. The language which Prosper and Caliban share can be termed a discourse of colonialism primarily because it is a discourse which arises out of (as well as enabling and modulating) their physical relationship, which is colonial. Further to this fact, however, the discourse of Caliban and Prosper also involves several preconceptions which clearly identify it as colonial: the paternalism, the assumption of moral roles based on power positions, and the presupposition of moral and intelligence standards based on levels of civilisation (as identified in Tylor's *Primitive Cultures*). Caliban, for instance, despite the obvious mental agility demonstrated in his use of allegory, his vivid imagery, and his knowledge of nature,

is restricted by Prosper to work he describes as drudgery; Prosper's moral education has taught Caliban such paradoxes as that it is "good to cheat" (line 22), revealing more about Prosper and his presuppositions about Caliban (that he will be immoral) than about Caliban's nature. Further, as has already been observed in citing Edward Said, every discourse which arises out of a society which is involved in the colonial process is itself colonial.

To say that Prosper taught Caliban a civilised language is not to say that Caliban had no language or expressed no desires before that time, since he obviously communicated with Sycorax: "His dam held that the Quiet made all things / Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so" (lines 170-71). That Caliban now speaks Prosper's language shows rather that Caliban previously had no language which Prosper could understand. In teaching Caliban a new language, Prosper gives him a power. Specifically, he gives him entry into a new discursive community, and the power within that community of naming, or invoking in name: "Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!" (line 24) Caliban cries. His invocation is empty because Caliban knows that Setebos is absent, but the symbol of his rebellion is the act of naming. This power of naming is also alluded to in *The Tempest*: "[thou wouldst] teach me how / [t]o name the bigger light, and how the less" (I. ii. 334-35).[21]

Language is an important, powerful, tool, but it is more than that; language is the power which is at issue here. The ambivalence that "emerges between mimesis and mimicry is a *writing*, a mode of representation" (OMM 237). Caliban's role as a user of the language system of colonialism in his relationship with Prosper is

[21] It is problematic to cite Shakespeare's play as substantive evidence for how the relationship between the characters in Browning's poem functions, or had been established. However, in the sense that every new representation builds on, incorporating and responding to previous ones, such usage can be justified. In the context provided by Chapter One, the boundaries of the poem blur.

constructed in at least two ways: language both promises power to him, and limits his power. Caliban accesses power, in the bauble world he has imagined or created, through words, as in the "prodigious words" he writes into his book of leaves[22] — the book is not an object of power (even imaginary power) to him without the linguistic element. The same applies to other objects of his mimic world. Caliban has gained power not through just having a wand, but in having "*called* it by a name" (my italics); it is not simply to have Miranda as a wife that he wants, but to "*saith* she is Miranda and my wife" (my italics); his power over Ariel is to have Ariel obey when he "*bids* go wade for fish" (my italics); it is when he "*calls* him Caliban" (my italics) that Caliban expresses his power over the sea-beast. The creatures that Caliban has control of, has power over, are without the power of language for themselves — they cannot 'name' him in return. This imbalance is not just indicative of the power relationship; it is the extent of the power relationship. Caliban has power over these creatures because he can name them. While he takes pleasure in his ability to crush any or all of the crabs, it is his ability to describe the indifferent feeling he has as he does so which Caliban revels in, and it is in language that he expresses his pleasure (lines 100-103). Hence, Caliban is led to believe, if he can but name Prosper (and Setebos) in ways which limit their ability to name him in return — for instance, talking about Setebos when he can't be heard and spying on Prosper unseen — he will have the power he wants: the power of naming, of

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[22] Perhaps the leaves are "arrow-shaped" as an indication of Caliban's 'primitive' nature, and so represent through a focus on primitive warfare his savage and violent nature, or perhaps they show the barbed nature of the words written thereon, or the potential for damage such linguistic power offers. The book is a powerful symbol, filled with words, according to Caliban's interpretation of Prosper's discourse, but for Caliban, as a primitive or savage, power resides in instruments associated with hunting and killing. So the book of arrow-shaped leaves may be something of a compromise, or representative of Caliban carrying some traces of his pre-colonised nature into his interpretation of the book and other symbols of Prosper's power. However, in the context of this discussion, it is the explicitly language-related aspects of the book that are important.

language, the power which Prosper has. However, in imitating Prosper's use of language, Caliban fails to achieve Prosper's mastery of it — a simple example being Caliban's awkward and clumsy use of the third person to describe himself. This failure, this gap, reinforces within the discourse Prosper's superiority to Caliban, and thus Prosper retains power over Caliban.

In attempting to possess Prosper's language as a tool, prize, and form of power, Caliban mimics Prosper's value system and therefore remains limited within the colonial discourse which structures and limits that system. Within colonial discourse, Caliban is limited to his role as mimic: though linguistic mimicry is a challenge to colonial power, that challenge is simultaneously absorbed by colonialism. Caliban's linguistic power can never be the power he wants — linguistic power over Prosper — precisely because the power which language allows him is a mimicked copy of Prosper's own power: the very power which he sees him as appropriated and inappropriate in the first place.

In this "bauble world" passage of the poem, power is clearly accessible through, expressible through, and present in not only words, but also vision. As established earlier, Caliban, as a subject, albeit a partial one, does occupy a position within the mimic relationship from which a gaze is directed. He is constructed as possessing his own vision, although it is a limited one, which itself becomes an apparatus for his mimicry. In this passage, Caliban several times refers to the eye, associating it with power. As a partial presence only, Caliban's gaze is imperfect, as is every subject's: but colonial discourse, as Stokes did in his account of the disruptive role of colonised India, covers this up, dissociating the colonising gaze from imperfection by defining the gaze of the colonised people as lacking in contrast to the colonising gaze. Caliban himself suggests this colonised lack: with his

imperfect gaze, and in his preoccupation with mimicry, he focuses on the trappings, the external features of Prosper's power — or at least, these are what he imitates. He "peep[s]" at Prosper, "eye[s] Prosper at his books," and in gaining this picture of Prosper, gains a knowledge of Prosper's power, power which is imitable. The enchanter's robe which Caliban puts on, as a symbol of power, is the "eyed skin" of an oncelot, a creature which varies in definition according to critics, being any one of an ocelot or jaguar, (Pettigrew and Collins 1159), a young ounce or lynx (Pinion 208), or a mountain leopard (Harper 242). The importance lies rather in what these various critics agree on — all of the animals have spotted skins and Caliban's description represents these spots as eyes. Therein lies the power of the robe, for Caliban: from the spots looking like eyes, rather than their simply being spots.[23]

It is not only in the robe that the power of vision for Caliban is clear. He also, for example, tells the four-legged serpent, when he is exerting power over it, to "mind his eye." Further, one of the ironies of the poem is that Caliban, in "observing" Setebos in order to gain power over him, fails to see anything other than himself projected into a larger sphere. This irony is emphasised in the "bauble world" passage by Caliban blinding his sea monster, his 'Caliban.' Caliban himself is similarly blinded, metaphorically, by Prosper, through the discourse of colonialism, Prosper's discourse, and the way in which it limits Caliban's role, language, time, environment: that is, his power. Here it can be seen that both language and vision function within the poem as symbols of power as well as forms of power.

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[23] To some extent, the robe possibly also represents power partly because it is the skin of a powerful animal, in a way similar to the book of "arrow-shaped" leaves which represents power in both Prosper's world and the world of the pre-colonial Caliban.

Extending the analysis of Caliban's relationship with Prosper in terms of Bhabha's model of colonial mimicry to the remainder of the poem, which is not so obviously dealing with mimicry, this model can be used to suggest several other points. One of these concerns the philosophical or theological nature of the way in which Caliban speaks. In the broader context of the poem, Caliban is a figure who, on one level at least, is a mimic representation of a natural theologian. This, however, is not mimicry in the sense with which I am concerned: this is Browning mimicking the thought patterns of the natural theologians in order to parody their beliefs. Caliban, on the other hand, is not mimicking natural theology; he shows no awareness of Victorian natural theology, and he is not making a conscious effort to be like natural theologians. But the idea that Caliban is not mimicking Victorian natural theologians cannot justifiably be used to argue that the philosophical and theological nature of Caliban's discourse is not mimicry: in using this sort of language, Caliban mimics Prosper.

Given that the language which Caliban uses is the language of Prosper, even in speaking this language Caliban is to some extent mimicking Prosper. Every assertion Caliban makes is to some degree an attempt to gain control and power through mimicry, regardless of the explicit purpose for which Caliban uses the assertion, as well as an enactment of the parameters of that power. Caliban's preoccupation with words and language has been pointed out by many critics, among them John Lammers, who observes that "Caliban is concerned constantly with 'words,' 'speech,' 'talk,' and 'tongue(s)'" (118), and Caliban uses these terms repeatedly throughout the poem. Stephen Shaviro also investigates Caliban's language, noting that:

> Caliban's relative powerlessness organizes his speech in terms of a traumatic fixation: he can speak of nothing but 'Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!'(24). The role of such speech is to bind and master a too-powerful impulse, to overcome the external force (Setebos) which is oppressing the speaker. (7)

However, Caliban does not overcome the force of colonialism which is at work on him. Caliban's relationship with the imaginary (or at best intangible) Setebos is modelled on his relationship with the less absent and more obviously dominating Prosper: Caliban wants to "vex" (line 18) Setebos because, he reasons, if "it is good to cheat" (line 22) Prosper, then it must also be good to cheat Setebos.

Caliban's language largely takes the form of detailed metaphorical description, as can be seen here:

> He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams cross
> And recross till they weave a spider-web
> (Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times). (lines 12-14)

From time to time throughout the poem, however, Caliban speaks in a very philosophical tone, in contrast to his general use of descriptive observation-based language. With phrases like "Put case" (lines 75, 122), "Well then, 'supposeth" (line 109), "But wherefore . . . ? / Aha, that is a question" (lines 127-128), "'holds not so" (line 171), "'Conceiveth" (line 241), Caliban is obviously attempting to create or espouse some sort of reasoned argument, in mimicry of the reasoned arguments of Prosper. John Lammers, although writing in a different context, continually emphasises Caliban's use of logic in the poem: Caliban "use[s] logic to reject and pervert his intuitive experiences . . . showing that logically such natural events as 'hurricane[s]' and thunderstorms . . . indicate that the God of nature is actually 'terrible.' . . . [Caliban makes a] logical rejection of Christianity" (14-16). A model for this abstract rational language on Caliban's part can be found in *The Tempest*, where Prospero consistently argues rationally and logically (Hazlitt describes

Prospero as "that upstart philosopher;" *Collected Works* 207), using similar philosophical language to that which Lammers identifies as used by Caliban. For instance:

> . . . . Well demanded, wench:
> My tale provokes that question, (I. ii. 139-40)

or:

> Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, feeling
> Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
> One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
> Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
> Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th'quick,
> Yet, with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
> Do I take part. The rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further. (V. i. 21-30)

Prospero's approval of careful and logical thought is obvious in the first extract, and his emphasis on reason and logic over feeling and emotion is apparent in the second.

Caliban's reasoning is all by analogy with the objects which surround him. Setebos is described in terms of being like something else: most often, Caliban himself. Caliban repeatedly follows a description of some scene from his world on the island with "So He," drawing an analogy between that scene and Setebos (lines 43, 97, 108, 126, 169, 199, and 240). The self-centred nature of such analogical description denies any objectivity Caliban may be trying to invest in his language, and his discourse is revealed as somewhat clumsy.[24] This notion of clumsiness has been discussed briefly earlier, and is a common point in critical analyses. Obvious, though timeworn, examples are found in his continual changing between using the

[24] This self-centred-ness also further reveals the extent to which Caliban is constructed as part of colonial discourse, and mimicking Prosper, whose participation in the colonial process is, on some level, self-centred. Again, Caliban is appropriated at the same moment and for the same reasons as he is made inappropriate.

first and the third person pronoun to talk about himself, and his frequent dropping of the pronoun altogether.[25] This clumsiness has the effect of drawing to the reader's attention the "*almost the same but not quite*" (OMM 235) nature of Caliban's discourse, in comparison with Prosper's philosophical language ("prodigious words;" line 153).

But despite this clumsiness, it remains clear that in using Prosper's language, Caliban is, to use Stephen Greenblatt's term, experiencing "linguistic colonialism": "following a colonial encounter, the native speaker . . . must articulate his identity in another's language" (Pease 111). Or as Fanon writes, "[e]very colonized people . . . finds itself face to face with the language of the civilising nation" (14). As already explained, there develops a split, as Fanon describes it, between what speaks (the white mask, the colonial discourse), and what gets spoken (the black skin, the colonized identity). This distinction, brought about in part by the elements of mimicry involved in the colonial relationship, leads to an ambivalence in the identity of the colonized speaker. In order for Caliban to assert his independent identity, he uses the colonial discourse — speaks in Prosper's tongue. In using this language, he mimics Prosper. Further, the desire to articulate in language this sense of identity is mimicked from Prosper's culture. In being linguistically colonised through speaking the language of the coloniser, Caliban implicitly limits himself to remaining within the boundaries of this colonial discourse. He can have no independent identity, because he is constructed to be dependent on the coloniser as a model for mimicking.

[25] See, for instance, E. K. Brown, C. R. Tracy, C. DeVane, and John Howard.

There are other ambivalences within the poem which are not dependent on mimicry, but are nevertheless relevant to the focus of this thesis because they are a consequence of the colonial nature of the relationship between Caliban and Prosper. As E. K. Brown writes, "Paul de Reul, among others, relates Caliban's third personal speech not to that of children, but to that of primitive peoples — 'il parle de lui-même à la troisième personne comme un vrai sauvage!'" (392-93). Brown's conclusion is that to acknowledge and investigate Caliban's few uses of the first person singular "need not mean that one denies . . . the effectiveness of the poem as a rendering of savage or immature character" (395), but that Caliban speaks in the first person to express the pleasure he feels in "the exercise of arbitrary power" (393).[26] Thomas Wolfe agrees in part, adding:

> the infantile [or primitive] quality of Caliban's mind is conveyed not only by the use of the third person, but also by the deletion of the grammatical subject — as in ''Will sprawl.' The effect of this syntax is to make the verb seem to subsume the subject. The subject, the 'self,' is equivalent to the performed activity. (9)

Wolfe, however, qualifies Brown's claim, pointing out several places in the poem where a shift from third to first person in Caliban's speech does not seem to indicate or involve Caliban's expression of pleasure in power, but rather occur at moments when Caliban is being subjected to such power; for instance, lines 212-13 of the poem (Wolfe 9). Whether or not this invalidates Brown's point is debatable: in either case Caliban is still experiencing power. When he is subjected to Setebos' power, his identification with Setebos involves Caliban identifying more closely with

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[26] It is another example of the continued power of the discourse of colonialism that these reasonably recent writers continue to identify the primitive with the child-like. Or, as may be the case, if they would claim that they are simply representing Caliban 'as Browning would have seen him,' that such an identification needs no explanation, and that they make no effort to draw out the ways in which such a parallelism is not accurate — or at least ambivalent, as I point out in Chapter Three.

Setebos as the active agent than with himself as victim. For instance, when Caliban remembers the ball of flame which Setebos hurled down and which almost killed Caliban himself, his reaction involves more admiration ("there is force!"; line 213) than fear. Similarly, each description of Setebos' power is in terms of a comparison to the power Caliban has over the other creatures of the isle.

Caliban's confused identification of himself with Setebos leaves him as object, not subject. That is, Caliban's identification with Setebos as an active agent leaves the Caliban which Setebos acts upon as the object of that agency. Caliban's unsuitability for the subject position within discourse is further alluded to in Caliban's own use of language. Caliban's third person speech symbolically represents his lack of familiarity with the subject position within colonial discourse. He is conditioned within this discourse to think of himself as object, not subject: to be viewed, not viewing, to be marginal, and hence spoken of rather than speaking. To be spoken of is to be in the third person, not the first, and this distinction adds to the explanation of those passages where Caliban does break into the first person. In speaking of himself as 'I,' he is imagining himself in a position of power. As Joseph Dupras writes, "on an island which he no longer rules, Caliban dominates lower creatures to compensate for and enact his own subjection" (75). Part of this enactment is his assumption of the position of power within discourse, the position of subject. Identifying with Setebos allows him to subject someone or something else, even if that something else is, in fact, Caliban himself.

Caliban's interactions with the animals of the island are also dependent for their form on his colonial relationship with Prosper. Dupras' comment applies equally well here; Caliban dominates and oppresses the crabs, the ounce and the pouch-bill crane, the squirrel and the urchin, the flies and the beetles, for at least two

reasons: firstly, he vents his anger at his own powerlessness upon them, proving his superiority over them in order to compensate for his inferiority to Prosper; and secondly, through his relationship with these animals he recreates Prosper's relationship with him, taking Prosper's role as his own in line with the sort of relationship which colonial discourse supports and condones as appropriate. As Bhabha describes the colonial process more generally:

> the great tradition of European humanism seems capable only of ironizing itself. At the intersection of European learning and colonial power, Macaulay can conceive of nothing other than 'a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern — a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect'" (236).

In terms of the enchanted island of the poem, Caliban is to be an 'interpreter' between Prosper and the animals of the island, and so repeats (mimics) Prosper's behaviour towards himself in his own behaviour towards the animals.[27] So Caliban's mistreatment of these animals can be seen as another way he tries, through mimicry, to gain the power he wants, the power Prosper has.

The image of Caliban created by his own words (which were initially, of course, Prosper's words) is an ambiguous one in many ways. In different ways, Caliban is identified within the poem as on the one hand a part of nature, immersed within and surrounded by it, and on the other hand separate from nature, observing it, part of a culture. In the opening of the poem, as Thomas Wolfe points out, the sounds of Caliban's words identify him with the nature he is surrounded by:

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[27] Caliban himself claims to be mimicking not Prosper, of course, but Setebos. However, all of the powers Caliban attributes to Setebos are powers of nature: storms, lightening bolts or meteor strikes, fossilisation — it seems clear that Setebos is non-existent. But even if, in the fictional world of the poem and the play, he is a real figure, Caliban, as a natural theologian, models Setebos' behaviour a upon what he sees of the tyranny in Prosper's behaviour; so Setebos is, in the terms of the poem, tool for enforcing and teaching Prosper's colonial message to Caliban, regardless of his actual status as real or imagined.

> Beginning with "much mire" the "ch" and "sh" sounds take on associations with comfortable ooze, with womb-like security and softness. These slush sounds become, so to speak, the environment encompassing the speaker: "Mu*ch* . . . clen*ch*ed . . . *ch*in . . . slu*sh* . . . ea*ch* . . . tou*ch* . . . cat*ch* . . . crun*ch* . . . whi*ch* . . . me*sh*es . . . fi*sh* . . . tou*ch*ing." (10)

And yet at the same time Caliban, through his actions, presents an alternate image, a thinking, observing, postulating figure: he has his fist "clenched to prop his chin" (3), much like Rodin's statue "The Thinker."[28] Hence he appears as non-instinctive, cultured, even somewhat civilised, as is the poem itself, in being an expression of Caliban's philosophical and theological thought. There is, then, an ambivalence in the portrayal of Caliban, between his identification with nature, and his representation as a separate, thinking and observing figure.

The images of 'eyes' and 'tongues,' already mentioned, are the source of yet another ambivalence. In his description of the animals of the island (lines 46-53) Caliban identifies the auk's "fire eye," the badger's "slant white-wedge eye," and the pie's "long tongue" which "says a plain word" (Wolfe 12-13). And of course it is Caliban's own eye which is observing all this, and his own "rank tongue" which "blossom[s] into speech" (the nature imagery is again apparent; line 23) to give this description. Yet, at the same time as this parallelism of eye and tongue imagery identifies Caliban with these creatures, it separates him from them: their eyes and tongues are used for hunting, killing, eating, whereas Caliban, by his very performance of describing this, is clearly undertaking quite a different set of actions.

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[28] Rodin's statue was not created for some time after the publication of "Caliban upon Setebos," but the symbolism involved in the chin-on-fist image is certainly not something Rodin first expressed — it dates back to the ancient Greeks, whose vase-paintings and sculpture also involved this image in portrayals of thinking characters.

Caliban is the civilised observer, not a part of the action, but a commentator on it: again, he is involved in nature, and yet separate from it.

Earlier in the poem, Caliban describes the way the cave he is in or near is like an eye, with "a pompion plant / Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye" (lines 7-8). Kenneth Maclean describes this metaphor as "sinister . . . — . . . Caliban's vision extending out of a hollow darkness" (214), and he goes on to describe the prevalence of "death's head" (217) imagery in the poem, but in the terms of Bhabha's colonial model this is not the best interpretation. Rather, Caliban focuses on the eyes of the animals he describes because the eye, to Caliban, is a source and focus of power, like the robe he wears, "[t]he eyed skin of a supple oncelot." Similarly, the mock Caliban is "blinded" as a representation of his powerlessness in relation to Caliban, and, by analogy, as a symbol of the real Caliban's powerlessness in relation to Prosper. The cave, Caliban's hiding place, is therefore seen by Caliban to be like an eye because it is his place of power, a place where he is hidden from Setebos and can observe ("peep" and "eye") the world unknown. It is Caliban's position within colonial discourse that gives rise to his preoccupation with power, and hence to the importance he places on such images as the eye. The way in which Caliban simultaneously identifies himself, with both the blinded sea-beast and with the figure who holds power over that beast, is ambivalent, and is parallel to his identification as a part of and simultaneously parted from nature.

These further ambivalences within the poem's portrayal of Caliban stem from the colonial discourse of which it is a part. This discourse is in itself ambivalent; it is, as Bhabha explains, split because of the ambivalence between the "reforming, civilizing mission" and its "disciplinary double" (OMM 235). This ambivalence

gives rise to and arises from conflicting desires: the desire to see the colonised person as, on the one hand, a figure with the potential to be enlightened, and on the other hand, a figure deserving of discipline and repression. These conflicting desires, in turn, give rise to and arise from contradictory constructions of colonised people. Thus Caliban, as representative of colonised people, is identified both as a figure with the potential to be enlightened —that is, as a thinking and observing person — and at the same time as a figure deserving of discipline — that is, as bestial, a part of nature, thus justifying both ambivalent aims of the colonial process.

Isobel Armstrong has written that "[t]oo often to 'revalue' the Victorian poets is to claim that they were like us, but inadvertently" (*Victorian Poetry* 2). This is not my aim. I do not aim to draw any conclusions about Browning's intentions, desires, or knowledge. Nor do I wish to say anything definitive about the nature of "Caliban upon Setebos." My intention rather is to examine the poem within the context of Victorian colonial culture and to show how Victorian representations and receptions of Caliban as "savage," in contrast to "civilised" readers or viewers, are a function of Victorian colonialist attitudes. As such, Caliban is "savage" to the extent that he represents the ambivalent stereotype attached to the "savage," and thus the poem both justifies and reinforces the belief of Victorians that colonisation is beneficial for savages, and is informed by that very belief. When Armstrong writes that a " crisis of representation both engenders and is engendered by this act of division" (*Victorian Poetry* 6), she could well be talking about Caliban as a site of such a crisis of representation, and the ambivalence within colonial discourse as the division which is engendered by and engenders that crisis.

In the third and final chapter of this thesis these colonialist terms shall be adopted to explore the ambivalences in the portrayals of Caliban identified in Chapter One, and in doing so, the importance for this interpretation of the role Caliban played in mid-nineteenth-century Victorian colonial discourse as a contested conceptual site shall be established. The emphasis here then is rather on the Victorian context of which these representations are a part, not on any authorial intent which may or may not underly each.

CHAPTER THREE: CALIBAN AS CONTESTED CONCEPT.

> [I]f there is any point of agreement among deconstructionists, structuralists, reader-response critics, pragmatists, phenomenologists, speech-act theorists, and theoretically minded humanists, it is on the principle that texts are not, after all, autonomous and self-contained, and that the meaning of any text in itself depends for its comprehension on other texts and textualized frames of reference. . . . Current literary theory constitutes a sustained effort to overcome the disabling opposition of texts and their cultural contexts. (Graff 256)

The textual analysis of Chapter Two is necessarily commingled with contextual analysis: a description of Caliban's actions within Browning's poem as colonial mimicry does not make sense without the simultaneous recognition that the society which produced such a text was involved in a colonial process. In Chapter Two I used the colonial context to help explain Browning's poem. In this chapter I will discuss the role of the concept 'Caliban' more broadly in the society of mid-nineteenth-century England. As the epigraph to this chapter states, the recognition that any opposition between text and context is "disabling" to a fuller understanding of either is an important one in modern literary theory. Louis Montrose writes that recognising the significance of the terms "the historicity of texts and the textuality of history" (20) refigures "the relationship between the verbal and the social, between the text and the world" (23). That is, to recognise these terms is to acknowledge the importance of the context in the production of the text, and the importance of the text in the production of that context.

Montrose continues: "to speak of the social production of 'literature' or of any particular text is to signify not only that it is socially produced but also that it is socially productive — that it is the product of work and that it performs work in the

process of being written, enacted, or read" (23). In terms of Caliban and colonial discourse, this argument suggests that not only is each mid-nineteenth-century representation of Caliban a product of the colonial society out of which it arises, but that it also produces (or at least, contributes to the production of) the ideology which informs the colonial discourse of that society.

Neither text nor context can be investigated from outside a theoretical framework, be it explicit or implicit. In this thesis, that framework is provided by Homi Bhabha's theory of colonial mimicry. Bhabha's theory is itself a problematic conception of the state of colonialism and so it is first necessary to consider some objections with which this model has been faced. Only after doing so will I return to the texts and to the context, the representations of Caliban and the colonial society within which these representations were originally constructed and presented.

Bhabha's model of the colonial relationship set out in "Of Mimicry and Man" appropriates psychoanalytic tools to portray the colonial relationship, particularly that of 'desire.' Bhabha is certainly neither the only nor even the first theorist to use psychoanalysis as a tool for interpreting the colonial relationship: the most important of his precursors being Fanon himself. However, in Fanon's work there is a clear distinction between the effect of colonisation on male and female colonial subjects (Fanon 31-58) while Bhabha's analysis pays no heed to gender roles: as Young asks, "how can you talk about the structures of desire in psychoanalytic terms outside the structures of sexuality?" (154)

However, in the context of an analysis which focuses primarily on Caliban in terms of his relationship with Prosper, the gender issue is a minor problem, which, even if it cannot be resolved, does not take precedence: in Bhabha's writing, the

concept of desire functions very much within the Foucaltian discourse of power. Within his relationship with Prosper, the desire that Caliban expresses is desire for power, and for Foucault, power is not a gender specific or relative concept. Thus defined, colonial desire can sensibly be discussed and analysed with no reference to sexuality.[29]

Mimicry functions within "Caliban upon Setebos" simultaneously as both a form of colonial power, defining and delimiting the role of Caliban in his relationship with Prosper, and a menace, destabilising the colonial relationship. As a result of this continuing ambivalence, Caliban is not only subject to colonial discourse, determined by its parameters and interpretative standards, but also a subject within colonial discourse, actively pursuing his own ends. This simultaneity of Caliban's position as subject to and subject of colonial discourse raises a more serious problem with Bhabha's theory. It seems to suggest that effectively subversive action is impossible (or at best problematic) for anyone in Caliban's position. As Young writes, the question posed

> is whether these apparently seditionary undoings in fact remain unconscious for both colonizer and colonized, who are nevertheless inexorably locked into a constant movement of destabilization which only Bhabha can articulate, or whether the colonized can detect such slippages in the speech of the colonizer and consciously exploit them. . . . Bhabha himself in fact vacillates between these two possibilities. (152)

That is, Young detects an ambivalence in Bhabha's work between the possibility that the colonised subject is *inevitably* subject to colonial power, and the possibility that an ambivalent mimic role can allow such a subject to be an active agent. This is the same ambivalence that has been detected in Browning's Caliban.

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[29] This is too brief an explanation to be complete, but as the problem is not central to my argument, any further digression would be a distraction.

The simultaneity of subversion and containment recognised here is problematic. In much of Bhabha's later work, such as "Signs Taken for Wonders," mimicry is a symbol of active subversion: "[m]imicry marks those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility: signs of spectacular resistance" (121). But if Bhabha's theory, as applied to Caliban, shows that Caliban is both a subversive agent and simultaneously contained within colonial discourse, then, as Robert Young asks, "what political status can be accorded the subversive strategies that Bhabha articulates?" (152). Or as Stephen Greenblatt comments:

> we may feel at this point that subversion scarcely exists and may legitimately ask ourselves how our perception of the subversive and orthodox is generated. ("Invisible Bullets" 28)

If Caliban's discourse is both subversive and contained, then that subversion seems to have little or no revolutionary value.

A similar problem concerns the texts which present Caliban, and their interpretations: what role does this 'subversive' reading of Browning's poem, and of these other representations of Caliban in mid-nineteenth-century England, play? "Is it simply a question of historical reinterpretation? How is the historical situation placed in relation to that of the interpreting critic?" (Young 155). However, Young's question concerning the relationship between historical situation and interpreting critic is one which Bhabha's theoretical model does not acknowledge as appropriate. The idea that there are such things as a discrete history and an objective critical position for there to be a relationship between is something to be denied: histories are created through the relationships between culturally located texts and culturally located critics, and these very texts and critics themselves emerge from discursive processes. Nevertheless, the same problem concerning the value of subversion

where or when it is simultaneous with containment is as apparent with regard to Caliban as it is in the more general discussion.

This ambivalence in Bhabha's theory between a portrayal of the colonial relationship as one of subversion and as one of containment is inappropriately described by Young as a "vacillation." "Vacillation" is an inappropriate term because it implies an indecision on Bhabha's part, rather than a genuine ambivalence, dynamism, or indeterminacy. Concerning the way in which Bhabha simultaneously uses and switches between several different theoretical models, Young himself presents a different interpretation, asking "[c]ould his eclectic use of theory itself be an example of colonial mockery? A teasing mimicry of certain Western theorists and discourses that is like, but not quite?" (155). Bhabha's shifting use of theory, with his varied and various appeals to Foucault and discourse analysis, Derrida and deconstruction, Lacan and psychoanalysis, Fanon and postcolonial theory, can be seen to be not so much reinterpreting the colonial situation as enacting it — perhaps mimicking it: his work is postcolonial to the extent that it is in mimicry of these other Western theorists (whether this mimicry is eclectic necessity or conscious mockery).

Similarly, in explaining the colonial relationship, Bhabha alternates between different models. Mimicry is one, but there are others: fetishism, hybridisation, paranoia, each of which presents as complete and as complex a model of the colonial process as does mimicry. Each of these characterisations is seemingly timeless: for instance, Bhabha claims that "colonial mimicry *is* . . ." (OMM 235, my italics), rather than 'was' or 'can be,' and he also argues for an ahistorical definition of these other models. Each model thus seems to be presented as a unique and complete

explanation of colonisation, but each is replaced, in the succession of Bhabha's publications and theoretical descriptions, by another concept.

In the larger body of Bhabha's work, understood this way, there is no problem accommodating both subversion and containment. However, since I am using Bhabha's model of mimicry on its own to explain the nature of the colonial relationship between Caliban and Prosper, Greenblatt's problem remains a serious one: if there is both subversion and containment within colonial mimicry, what political role can the subversion play? A solution can be adapted from the model which is offered by Louis Montrose in "Professing the Renaissance." Montrose writes about power in the context of the British Tudor-Stuart Monarchy, rather than power in the context of nineteenth-century colonialism or imperialism, but he too points out an ambivalence in discourse between subversive action and containment. Montrose begins with what he calls a "subject/structure problematic" within Renaissance studies. This problematic or ambiguity resides in the term "subject," between an emphasis on the individual as endowed "with subjectivity and the capacity for agency," and an emphasis on the individual as subject to "social networks and cultural codes that ultimately exceed [his or her] comprehension and control":

> "Subject," a simultaneously grammatical and political term, has come into widespread use not merely as a fashionable synonym for "The Individual" but precisely in order to emphasize that individuals and the very concept of "The Individual" are historically constituted in language and society. (Montrose 20-21)

Montrose claims that this problematic leads to a split within the group of academics working in Renaissance studies. But more relevant to this discussion, he sees this subject/structure problematic as a split between subversion and containment, and

argues that this split must be seen not as a sterile polarisation, but as a dynamic relationship:

> [o]n the one side are those who emphasize the possibilities for effective *contestation* or *subversion* of the dominant ideology — that is, for the agency of subjects; on the other side are those who emphasize the hegemonic capacity of the Tudor-Stuart state, as personified in the monarch, to *contain* apparently subversive gestures, or even to *produce* them in order to contain them. . . . we should resist the inevitably reductive tendency to constitute such terms [as 'subject' and 'structure'] as binary oppositions, instead construing them as mutually constitutive *processes*. (21)

In explaining this split, Montrose uses, in a different context, almost exactly the oppositional terms which Young suggests that Bhabha "vacillates" between. I believe that Montrose's solution here is also a solution to Young's problem with Bhabha's theory. That is, the concepts of "subversion" and "containment" have meaning only in terms of the process by which each constructs the other.

Ideology, as Montrose uses it here, is "associated with the processes by which social subjects are formed, re-formed and enabled to perform as conscious agents in an apparently meaningful world" (16). That is, it is within ideology thus construed that the subject/structure problematic occurs. As Montrose writes:

> In *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams has helpfully construed ideology in dynamic and dialogical terms, emphasizing "interrelations between movements and tendencies both within and beyond a specific and effective dominance" (121). Williams has in mind the existence, at any point in time, of residual and emergent, oppositional and alternative values, meanings and practices. The shifting conjunctures of such "movements and tendencies" may create conceptual sites within the ideological field from which the dominant can be contested, and against which it must be continuously redefined and redefended. (22)

He draws attention to the way in which the shifting balance of power within any societal structure may cause certain concepts to become a focus for conflict between competing interpretative paradigms. Such a contested conceptual site will be

"constituted as a terminological site of intense debate and critique, of multiple appropriations and contestations within the ideological field" in which the term has meaning (Montrose 19). As the number and diversity of representations Caliban presented in Chapter One suggest, he was certainly such a site of "multiple appropriations and contestations." The ideological field within which Caliban has meaning in these representations is Victorian colonial discourse. Caliban, particularly in his relationship with Prospero, is a conceptual site at which the colonial representation of the colonised savage as an ambivalent 'human-and-not-human' figure can be both challenged and reasserted. Caliban is both a subversive agent and a contained entity. In fact, the role Caliban plays in colonial discourse ensures that Caliban must be such an ambivalent figure: the dialectical relationship between Caliban as active subject and as subject to colonial structure requires, ensures, and constructs a dynamic relationship between Caliban's actions as subversion and containment.

I am not investigating Caliban as such a "conceptual site" in order to reveal a contestation between a dominant and a subversive interpretative paradigm of Victorian colonial discourse. Caliban was a site at which subversive ideological interpretations were possible, and it was against these potential subversive interpretations that the dominant ideology was "continuously redefined and redefended." The purpose of this investigation, at this point, is to show that in the process of this redefense, the ambivalence inherent within colonial discourse is revealed. Caliban was occasionally presented or interpreted in such a way as to question the value of the colonial mission, but the dominant interpretative paradigm was defended against any such potential subversive redefinition through an interpretation of Caliban which acted to support and condone the colonial mission.

As explained in Chapter Two, the colonial mission requires for its success an ambivalent portrayal of colonised people. As a popular fictional representation of the colonised savage, Caliban is represented in this way by the dominant colonial ideology. He is ambivalent: both human, worthy of enlightenment, the moral justification for the continuation of colonisation, and simultaneously non-human, deserving of repression, the pragmatic justification for the continuation of colonisation. Any interpretation of Caliban which presented a challenge to this ambivalence, such as an interpretation of Caliban as a Darwinian 'missing link,' or as a satirical portrayal of a Westerner, required a redefinition of Caliban in order to reassert this dominant interpretative paradigm.

The ambivalences discussed in Chapter One were those between human and non-human representations of Caliban in the plays, reviews, commentaries, and paintings of the mid-nineteenth century, and between human and non-human representations of the colonised savage in Tylor's anthropological work. The ambivalences found in these representations of Caliban can be shown to be, much as the ambivalences in Caliban in Browning's poem are, the result of the colonial discourse within which they are constructed. Through such a reintegration of text and context, Tylor's ambivalent portrayal of the savage can be viewed in the same way: as a result of Tylor's position within a colonial culture. Hence the ambivalent representations of Caliban as a savage discussed earlier and reintroduced here, can be understood as a manifestation of this ambivalent portrayal of the savage.

One portrayal of Caliban which contains this ambivalence is Richard Simpson's review of "Caliban upon Setebos" in the *North British Review* (reprinted in Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies*), in which Caliban is described as

representative of "phases of intellect which are even beneath humanity, . . . the lower and more bestial currents of thought and feeling" (263). In an attempt to draw a sympathetic link between Caliban and Victorian readers, Simpson goes on to say that "[i]n all men, civilized or savage, there is a possibility of the generation of superstition out of sottish ignorance or panic terror" (263). Here Caliban presumably represents the savage, and Victorian readers (including Simpson himself), the civilised, but at least two observations can be made about Simpson's review which expose the limitations of such a relationship of binary oppositions and thus are important to an interpretation of Caliban according to Bhabha's colonial model. Firstly, there is an ambivalence in the competing descriptions of Caliban as, on the one hand, representative of thought which is "beneath humanity," and, on the other hand, as a man, even if a "savage" and not a "civilised" man. Simpson thus describes Caliban as both human and not human. Secondly, in describing the whole of humanity (or "all men," at least) as having such a potential for superstition, Simpson qualifies his claim in a way which very clearly splits this momentarily unified group into two distinct sections — the civilised, and the very different savage. He thereby divides these two groups neatly(groups split much the same way as Tylor's "barbarous hordes" and "civilized nations"; 6), through the very description he uses to unite them, and which unite the human and non-human interpretations of Caliban. To be a member of the savage portion of humanity, rather than the civilised, is nevertheless not to be human at all. To be human is by implication to be civilised, and to be uncivilised is, it can be inferred using basic argument forms, to be non-human.

These descriptions are consistent with the colonial mission as Bhabha describes it, as speaking "in a tongue that is forked" (OMM 234). The labelling of

the savage or primitive as monstrous or non-human is continuous with the repressive, disciplinary, colonial aim, and the labelling of the savage as human is continuous with the enlightening, civilising, colonial ideal. Each description justifies one of the two ambivalent goals of the colonial mission. The point is now familiar: colonial discourse constructs the framework within which Caliban's behaviour and character is seen and judged, limiting the audience of colonial England to seeing Caliban's behaviour in terms of an imitation of Western Victorian characteristics, and therefore to seeing Caliban as inferior, secondary, imitative, yet simultaneously as mimic and hence dangerous.

J. Cotter Morison, in his address to the Browning Society in 1884, describes Browning's Caliban thus:

> Caliban . . . is a monster, but he has a human element within his monsterhood; he can hate, fear, lie, curse, and grovel under the dominion of the basest lusts; but he can also show the rudiments of pride, revenge, and love of power, foresight and prudence too. (493)

Morison describes Caliban's character in terms of these same two distinct aspects. He identifies certain characteristics as definitively monstrous ("hate, fear, l[ying], curs[ing], and grovel[ling]"), and certain other characteristics as definitively human ("pride, revenge, and love of power, foresight and prudence"). However, the boundaries are more blurred than Morison would have his audience believe. All of these characteristics can, in fact, be human characteristics. In fact, of the monstrous characteristics, Caliban in *The Tempest* explicitly identifies one as being learnt from Prospero: "You taught me language: and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse" (I. ii. 362-63). The first set, the so-called monstrous ones, are those which Morison and his English audience would identify as savage characteristics, and the second set are those which they would identify as civilised characteristics. As Bhabha writes,

"[b]lack skin splits under the racist gaze, displaced into signs of bestiality, genitalia, grotesquerie, which reveal the phobic myth of the undifferentiated whole white body" (OMM 241). That is, it is only through the projection of these negative aspects of their own personalities away, onto the colonised person, that the colonisers justify their self-professed superiority. English civilisation produces a stereotype of the colonial savage, and in doing so "produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (Bhabha, "The Other Question" 156). The problem with this stereotyping, as Young points out, is not that the stereotype is simply too crude, not complex enough, but rather that it creates a "reality" independent of colonial encounters (143). Thus every encounter with a "real" colonised person is a challenge to the Western constructed concept, but it is a challenge which, as Young points out, though "increasingly apparent abroad when it is away from the safety of the West," remains largely "invisible at home" (143).

The ambivalence identified in the reviews written at the time of the poem's publication can be similarly explained. Identifying the target of the poem's satire, a reviewer in *The Reader* writes that Browning "has grimly in mind the Natural Theology of a race of beings that do not consider themselves of the type of Caliban" (705). This "race of beings" to which the natural theologians belong is, presumably, humanity — or more specifically, Western Victorian civilised humanity. Caliban, it is assumed by this race, is of a different species: he is other than and 'Other' to human (or other than civilised, which, as is clear from the analysis of the Simpson review above, amounts to the same thing in Victorian colonial discourse). However, at the same time as Caliban is not seen as a member of the race of British Victorian natural theologians, he is seen as similar enough to them to enable his thought processes to be recognised as a satirical representation of their theology. He is

simultaneously different and the same. That is, in order to make sense of the satire within the poem, this review constructs Caliban as both human, which allows it to identify him with human natural theologians and as non-human, which makes this very identification satirical.

The same ambivalence occurs in a review in the *Dublin University Magazine*. Caliban is described as idealising "in rude fashion" (578): savage thought is clearly not rational Western thought. But at the same time as Caliban's thought is described in this negative way, it is clear that what is being described is Caliban's natural theology: "[i]n speculating on his god, Setebos, in the manner of savages, he . . . idealizes . . . a powerful being who made all things less potent than himself" (578). This passage is as apt an analysis of Victorian natural theology as of Caliban's 'savage thought': Simon Blackburn's *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, for example, describes natural theology as "[d]octrines concerning God that are attainable by natural processes of reasoning," a definition which seems to apply equally well to this description of Caliban's thought processes. And yet it is in performing exactly this sort of philosophical investigation that Caliban is behaving "in the manner of savages." His thought processes are thus portrayed ambivalently: as both deeply philosophical, very much like Victorian natural theology, and at the same time rude, savage, and this is part of what makes the poem a satire on natural theology, in that it identifies natural theology with a point of view which is not expected or desirable. This ambivalence at the same time is a "redefense" of the colonial discourse within which both the poem and the review are produced.

The ambivalences mentioned in the first chapter, in paintings, plays, performances, critical studies, and reviews, can all be explained within the same framework. They emerge from a discourse which sustains a reading of Caliban that

supports the colonial enterprise. In each of these representations, the concept 'Caliban' is a site for contestation between the dominant colonial ideology, and alternative subversive interpretations of the colonised savage. That is, each of these subversive interpretations presents Caliban as representative of the colonised savage in such a way as to challenge the justifications presented within colonial discourse for the colonial mission. I shall return to the nature of this challenge once I have outlined what form these alternative interpretations take.

At least two mid-nineteenth-century representations of Caliban which are alternative to the ambivalent one presented so far challenge the colonial enterprise. The first of these is the portrayal of Caliban which presents him as a Darwinian or evolutionary 'missing link' figure, somewhere between beast and human. For instance, this review of an 1854 production of Shakespeare's *Tempest* quite explicitly emphasises Caliban's nature as a link between human and animal:

> A wild creature on all fours sprang upon the stage, with claws on his hands, and some weird animal arrangement about the head partly like a snail. It was an immense conception. Not the great God Pan himself was more the link between the man and beast than this thing. It was a creature of the woods, one of nature's spawns; it breathed of nuts and herbs, and rubbed itself against the back of trees (John Russell Brown 109).

Although this review dates from before the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, there were other publications in circulation at the time which discussed evolutionary theory and the idea of "progress" more generally. These included Sedgwick's address to the Geological Society in 1830, in which he stated that "the occurrence and distribution of organic type through the successive strata of the earth 'prove most conclusively the theory of a gradual progressive development of life'" (Roppen 10), as well as John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic* (1843), and the work of Compte and Spencer, including Spencer's defence of evolution in *The Leader*, "The

Development Hypothesis" (1852). The issues of evolutionary theory dealt with in these works were very much a part of the Victorian intellectual environment: they are the context from which the texts cannot be separated. As Dorothy Mermin writes of Edmond Tylor, "[his] subjects [primitive cultures], like Darwin's, were unavoidably part of the intellectual atmosphere, available for anyone who was interested" (203).

In some ways, this 'missing link' portrayal may seem to support the colonial mission in the same way as the ambivalent portrayals considered thus far: this representation, like those, constructs Caliban in an ambivalent fashion, oscillating between the human and the bestial. However, this evolutionary portrayal is in fact a challenge to colonialism, because biological evolutionary theory breaks down the human-animal dichotomy, constructing it instead as a continuum. This reconstruction of the human-animal dichotomy in itself does not challenge the justifications for the colonial mission, since Caliban can still be constructed within this model as human enough to justify pragmatically the colonial attempt at enlightenment and bestial enough to justify morally colonial repression. But in explicitly locating Caliban at one point along this human-animal continuum, this sort of representation is not an ambivalent portrayal of the figure Caliban: it is instead a portrayal of the ambivalent figure Caliban. That is, the justification for colonial repression requires not only the premise that the colonised subject is bestial; it also requires the simultaneous premise that the colonised subject is not human. Similarly, the justification for colonial enlightenment requires not only the premise that the colonised subject is human; it also requires the simultaneous premise that the colonised subject is not bestial. Each of these pairs of premises assumes that the human and the bestial are the opposite poles of a dichotomy, not positions of varying intensity along a continuum. While an ambivalent portrayal of Caliban can justify

both of these colonial aims, by suppressing recognition of one while focusing on the other, a portrayal of Caliban as an ambivalent figure involves recognising both aims at the same time. Thus while the evolutionary representations of Caliban do not challenge the colonial enterprise in any direct way, they do present a challenge to the justifications for that enterprise, by revealing the ambivalence involved in it.

This trend toward seeing Caliban as a Darwinian 'missing link,' is also apparent in paintings of the same period. Sir John Gilbert's 1856 illustration of Caliban, for instance, shows him carrying wood, with long hair and jutting eyebrows, sunken eyes and a gorilla-like jaw and nose. Clambering in the trees above him is a monkey, suggesting Caliban's link to these more primitive life forms. Other Darwinian Calibans show a more amphibious trend than a simian one: Thomas Henry Nicholson's 1856 engraving and Wilhelm von Kaulbach's illustration (1855-1858) show Caliban as vaguely reptilian, with scales and a back fin, as well as hands and a humanoid face. Both also hint at his lower evolutionary position, showing Caliban crouching at the feet of Trinculo and Stephano, crawling in or out of the primeval ooze.

The second notable alternative interpretation of Caliban which presents a challenge to the dominant colonial ideology can be seen in both Browning's poem and in the reviews surrounding it. It is that which presents Caliban as a satire or parody of contemporary civilised thought. J. Cotter Morison, for instance, writes:

> The truth is, that *Caliban upon Setebos* [*sic*] is an indirect yet scathing satire of a rather painful class of reasoners who, while beginning with the admission that the nature of the Godhead is an inscrutable mystery, proceed to write long books to prove their special and minute knowledge of its character. . . . "Very well," the poet seems to have said, "you complacently draw God after your own image. . . . But if your method is legitimate, you cannot pretend to a monopoly of it. . . ." (494-95)

Such an interpretation denies the bestial identity of Caliban: for Caliban to present a theological argument concerning the nature of Setebos which is similar to the style and form of the natural theologians' arguments concerning the nature of God, Caliban cannot be an animal figure. To construct Caliban as a satirical representation of a natural theologian in the way Morison sets out is to construct Caliban as fully human — a savage human (and hence the satirical nature of the interpretation), but a human nonetheless.[30] A reviewer in *The Athenaeum* also acknowledges this interpretation of Caliban, arguing that "the reader will hardly fail to make out a good deal of the satire which Caliban's theology reflects upon ours" (767). Similarly, J. Weiss states in *The Atlantic Monthly* that "[t]he grave irony of this poem so bespatters the theologian's God with his own mud that we dread the image and recoil" (646).[31]

The challenge which these interpretations present to the colonial mission is not an explicit challenge to the process of colonisation. Rather, this challenge threatens the complacent and accepting attitude towards colonisation of those civilising people who are not actively encountering those 'savages' being colonised. These interpretations present an alternative to those of the colonial process as simultaneously justifying the aims of both enlightenment and repression and thus open the latter interpretation to questioning. Rather, this challenge is a threat to the complacent. The social effect of this challenge is not of concern here. It is uncertain, in fact, whether this is a challenge which is occurring in the moment of creation, during contemporary public performance or consumption, or in the moment

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[30] Defining 'humanity' by the capacity to construct a theological argument may seem to beg the question. But it must be remembered that my aim is to present the argument as constructed within Victorian colonial discourse, and such an assumption is therefore justified.

[31] Also, the savage's capacity for satire, as for mimicry, mentioned earlier, threatens to reverse his or her role relationship with the civilised target. That is, the satire (and the mimicry) exposes the civilised theologian as foolish and the 'savage' as clever enough to do it. However, this particular challenge steps outside of the basic ambivalence with which this thesis is dealing.

of modern critical study, or in some interaction between these. Such an investigation is outside the boundaries of this thesis. The aim, rather, is to indicate the way in which the challenge these subversive representations of Caliban present to the colonial mission draws out the ambivalence in the dominant colonial ideology. These subversive representations present a challenge to the ambivalent ones and to the colonial ideology of which they are a part, not in any particularly confrontational manner, but in the sense in which every representation is a challenge to the denial or negation of that very representation. These subversive interpretations offer a genuine alternative which implicitly challenges the unity and encompassing wholeness of the dominant colonial representation.

A frequently repeated example of the way colonial discourse is defended against these subversive interpretations is the way in which the ambiguous word "brutal" is frequently used by commentators, critics, reviewers and writers in descriptions of Caliban. A reviewer of "Caliban upon Setebos" in *The Reader*, cited earlier, describes Caliban's perception of Setebos as "dimly perceived in his brutish mind" (705). For Coleridge, Caliban is a creature who "partakes of the qualities of the brute" (Volume I 364). For Hazlitt he is "half brute" (*Characters* 89). The reviewer for the *Dublin University Magazine* describes Caliban as having a "brutal mind" (577). Caliban is thus constructed by these commentators as a brute — but this term is an ambivalent one. Does it have bestial and monstrous connotations, or primitive and savage associations, or does it indeed have both of these simultaneously? That there is a grey area here, a fudging or blurring of boundaries, is a function of the role of the term "brute," as well as derivatives such as "brutal" and "brutish," in colonial discourse. Because of the ambivalence in the ideal of colonialism toward primitive people, between the desires for reform and for

repression, the word itself is ambiguous. It has two sets of meanings which work to support the colonial aim: that of savage, but human, which justifies the reforming mission, and that which is suggestive of the monstrous or bestial, and thus justifies the repressive mission. So in reviews and depictions of Caliban which describe (and effectively prescribe) him as "brutal," the ambivalent goals of colonialism are masked and suppressed by the use of a single unified term. In this way, the ambivalence which underpins colonial discourse is also masked, and colonial discourse itself is opened to multiple reinterpretations and redefinitions, which serve to redefend it from potential subversive alternatives.

This same ambivalence is apparent in Tylor's portrayal of the primitive or savage. In Chapter One it was shown that the ambivalences which are present in mid-nineteenth-century representations of Caliban are present also within the broader context of Victorian colonial discourse concerning the savage, as represented by Tylor's work. These ambivalences are also consistent with the ambivalence in colonial discourse: the textual constructions of Caliban are dependent for their meaning upon the colonial context, which is itself dependent for its meaning upon those very textual constructions.

It may seem that *Primitive Cultures* is an inappropriate text to have chosen, given the focus of this argument, since Tylor writes about these savage people almost completely outside the context of colonisation, avoiding almost any explicit mention of colonialism. However, Tylor's experiences of such cultures are explicitly colonial, and the interactions of savage people with him or with those whose reports his work is based on are of a colonial nature, because of the necessarily colonial roles and attitudes of those involved in such meetings. Also, as an acculturated member of

a colonial society such as Victorian England, Tylor's writing is necessarily part of the broader Victorian colonial discourse. Much of his language reveals this colonial background, and it becomes explicit in one of the few extended passages directly devoted to interaction between these savage peoples and the colonising English.

This passage begins with a sentence which could, out of context, be taken as a late twentieth-century description of Caliban:

> The savage who adopts something of foreign civilization too often loses his ruder virtues without gaining an equivalent. (Tylor 25-26)

Through being civilised, this sentence suggests, Caliban lost his savage nobility and became a degraded, second-rate Westerner. Again, as Shakespeare's Caliban says, "You taught me language: and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse" (*The Tempest* I. ii. 362-363), and as Browning's Caliban acknowledges, his tongue, when it "blossoms" into speech, is "rank"; to extrapolate from Fanon, the white mask of language worn by Caliban experiences a dissociation as he speaks, from his black skin which, in speaking, is being spoken. The difference between Tylor's interpretation and a later (postcolonial) interpretation is that Tylor does not blame the colonist or colonisation generally for this 'failure' on the part of the savage, but rather blames the savage, much as Shakespeare's Miranda does:

> . . . . Abhorred slave,
> Which any print of goodness will not take,
> Being capable of all ill!
> . . . . . .
> . . . thy vile race,
> Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures
> Could not abide to be with. (*The Tempest* I. ii. 350-352, 357-359)

That is, Tylor does not identify the failure of the mimic process in colonialism to adequately civilise and enlighten the colonised people (for that is the process he describes) as being inherent within the system itself. He instead attributes the failure

of the savage to become more fully or appropriately civilised, in much the same way as do Miranda and imperial Western nineteenth-century discourse in general, to something inherent within the savage: a failure of nature, rather than of the nurturing process.

Something inherent, Tylor claims, prevents the savage from being properly socialised, from attaining acceptable levels of morality:

> [a]mong accounts of savage life, it is not, indeed, uncommon to find details of admirable moral and social excellence. . . . [B]ut it must be remembered that these rude people are on their best behaviour with foreigners, and that their character is apt to be foul and brutal where they have nothing to expect or fear. (Tylor 26-27)

The idea of an assumed social contract as the basis for social interaction between people was common in many earlier philosophical texts, notably those of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. The idea suggests how standards of morality in Western society are sustained, and Tylor projects this notion onto his concept of the savage: without the social contract possessed by Western society, it is presumed that there is nothing to stop savage people being "foul and brutal" to each other, and so it follows that this is how they will behave without a colonial influence. In light of this, Tylor's comment says more about the colonising Westerners than about the colonised savages: away from the centralised control of tightly ordered government, such colonisers may become immoral, "foul and brutal": too many documents of colonial 'history' reveal the collapse of Western morality in the colonisers far from home for the truth of this claim to be doubted. Civilised Westerners have taken this negative image of themselves, and projected it onto savages, in order to distance such immoral actions and people from themselves. The Western fable of unity and purity of selfhood is maintained by the projection of multiplicity and impurity onto these

stereotyped figures against which the West defines itself, and which are then used to reinforce the moral superiority of the West.

Tylor claims that savage people are "on their best behaviour" for (Western) foreigners, and that they are "foul and brutal" when such Westerners are not present. Obviously, this assertion cannot be based on observation, since to observe, as a Westerner, would be to falsify the initial conditions; it is rather a clear example of the racial stereotyping described by both Bhabha and Young. Any coherence between such a stereotyped concept and any actual savage people seems to be at least irrelevant, if not an outright distraction from his assertions.

Tylor continues:

> [t]he ideal savage of the 18th century might be held up as a living reproof to vicious and frivolous London; but in sober fact, a Londoner who should attempt to lead the atrocious life which the real savage may lead with impunity and even respect, would be a criminal only allowed to follow his savage model during his short intervals out of gaol. Savage moral standards are real enough, but they are far looser and weaker than ours. (Tylor 27)

The savage whose life would be a "living reproof" to life in Victorian London is, Tylor admits, an "ideal" which is in contrast to the "atrocious life" of the "real savage." That his construction of the "real" savage is based on stereotype and assumption, however, makes it clear that Tylor's "real" savage is no less a constructed concept, divorced from reality, than is his "ideal" savage.

The major ambivalence in these two extracts from Tylor is within the concept of the savage, who is seen as both "foul and brutal" to be feared and repressed, and at the same time "admirable," to be respected and enlightened. This is the concept of the savage as it is presented in the dominant ideology of colonialism, and as it justifies the ambivalent colonial mission. However, the justification of this colonial

mission is threatened by the actuality of colonialism, by colonised people who do not fit this stereotype.

Tylor's construction of stereotypes can be noted throughout his work. He goes on to argue that:

> [s]urveyed in a broad view, the character and habit of mankind at once display that similarity and consistency of phenomena which led the Italian proverb-maker to declare that "all the world is one country," "tutto il mondo è paese." (5)

Ironically, Tylor's use of a foreign language to make this point, when considered in the light of Derrida's often repeated observation that nothing is translatable, makes exactly the opposite point. Tylor here uses a stereotype construction of the savage which justifies the enlightening colonial mission, which balances his use in other places of a stereotype which justifies the repressive colonial mission.

One final comment of Tylor's is helpful in drawing this series of observations together:

> that any known savage tribe would not be improved by judicious civilization, is a proposition which no moralist would dare to make; while the general tenour of the evidence goes far to justify the view that on the whole the civilized man is not only wiser and more capable than the savage, but also better and happier. (Tylor 28)

The "civilized man" which Tylor constructs here is clearly just as much a stereotype as his 'savage', continuous as it is with Bhabha's "phobic myth of the undifferentiated whole white body" (OMM 241), and in contrast to Tylor's 'colonist' who "often represents his [moral] standard very ill" (26). The stereotypical nature of this construct is further emphasised by the language Tylor uses to claim the inferiority of the savage people. Tylor argues that no moralist would deny the effect of improvement that "judicious civilization" (for which we can understand him to mean colonisation) would have on any savage tribes who experienced it.

Specifically, he claims that no moralist would "dare" argue that any savage tribe would not be improved by colonisation. His use of the word "dare" suggests that the issue is not so much one of facts, or of right and wrong, but of public opinion, which is so biased and focused in the direction of the dominant colonial ideology that opposition would be both futile and dangerous. Again, it is clear that the process of colonisation is being defended on the basis of the stereotype of the savage, independently of the nature of any existing colonised people. And it is in this capacity — as an image of the savage present to the Victorian public — that Caliban serves to defend, as well as challenge, this stereotype.

Simpson's review, the reviews in *The Reader* and the *Dublin University Magazine*, Fotheringham's commentary — as well as the representations of the first chapter — all present an image of Caliban which, while ambivalent in certain ways, reasserts the superiority of Prospero and the Western colonial reader. Caliban functions as a conceptual site through which the ambivalent and stereotypical Victorian concept of the savage can be reasserted: Caliban, as presented in these texts, is a continuing "redefense" of the Victorian colonial concept of the savage. This is not an attitude peculiar to the mid-nineteenth century: throughout the twentieth century critics such as E. K. Brown, DeVane, Howard, Perrine, Crowell, and Tracy express a similar viewpoint concerning Caliban's savage inferiority, and as recently as 1993, Isobel Armstrong describes "Caliban upon Setebos" as a poem about "the elementary cognitive processes of what we define as 'primitive' consciousness" (*Victorian Poetry* 316). Armstrong acknowledges that this label is placed upon Caliban by readers, but the open "we" she uses to identify these readers is a timeless, cultureless (even genderless) term: it includes the members of colonial

societies which have existed continuously from the time of Browning's poem to the present.

The reintegration of text and context which is presented in this thesis is an important step towards a more complete understand of each. The images of Caliban presented here function within and through Victorian colonial society, and that society functions within and through each of these images. It is precisely the ambivalent nature of these images of Caliban, as revealed through the challenges presented by alternative, subversive representations such as the evolutionary and satirical interpretations, which supports, condones, and justifies the Victorian colonial mission.

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