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A Tempest[1] and *The Tempest*[2]: Aimé Césaire and Shakespeare

Abstract: Through an analysis of the play, the article seeks to demonstrate that Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* is a "reinscription" of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as "a drama of rebellion." It is told from the point of view of "the loser", Caliban, the "colonized", who confronts and defies Prospero who has usurped the island and deprived him of his patrimony. He demands his freedom and refuses to accept the "hegemonic europocentric vision of the universe." Césaire "demythifie[s]" Prospero who is not the benign Magus figure of traditional criticism but the "prototypical colonizer," a despot, "the complete totalitarian." The paper argues that, although he never mentions him, Césaire is influenced by George Lamming's radical reading of Shakespeare's play through "colonial" and "national" lenses, a reading that anticipates that of Stephen Greenblatt and the New Historicists and pre-empts the question of "linguistic colonialism" which is so crucial to them. While the colonial paradigm has featured in recent discussions of the plays and Césaire and Lamming have been grouped together, the article analyzes and applies Lamming's reading to both Shakespeare and Césaire and provides a fresh reading of both. The article also goes beyond the argument of Greenblatt and the New Historicists. *A Tempest* ends equivocally, on a questioning note, and Lamming observes that the Epilogue in *The Tempest* leaves the latter work, too, somewhat open-ended, a point that is taken up and discussed. The article in conclusion gives a significant, new interpretation, of the titles of the two plays which ties up with and highlights the theme of colonialism which is the focus of both plays.

Keywords: reinscription, colonizer, colonized, Lamming, "linguistic colonialism."

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[1] All references to *A Tempest* are to the Editions du Seuil *Une Tempete*, trans. by Richard Miller. Act, scene and page numbers follow the quoted passage in the text.

[2] All references to *The Tempest* are to the Arden edition, Third Series, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan. Act, scene and line numbers follow the quoted passage in the text.

Aimé Césaire (1913-2008), born in Martinique, the French Caribbean, was a renowned French poet, politician, and the progenitor together with Léon Damas and Léopold Senghor (first President of the Republic of Senegal) of "Negritude," the first diasporic "black pride" movement and tract against racism.[3] In the 1960s he turned to the genre of drama and composed three major plays. The first two were *The Tragedy of King Christophe* and *A Season in the Congo* and the "third panel (*volet*)", as Césaire called it, was *Une Tempete* (*A Tempest)*. He conceived these plays, in Gregson Davis's words, "as reflecting major sectors of the black world (Africa, the Caribbean and the USA)." However, as Davis continues, "This neat triangular articulation is […] misleading, for *A Tempest*, which is purportedly representative of black America, exhibits elements of all three major theaters of the African homeland and diaspora" (Davis, 156-157).

In an interview in *Le Nouvel Observateur* Césaire states, "I have been strongly influenced by the Greeks, Shakespeare and Brecht. But my theater is above all a political theater because the major problems in Africa are political problems" (qtd. in Ojo-Ade, 17). Brecht's theatre, too, is political theatre, and Shakespeare's play, especially as it has been seen and interpreted in the past sixty to seventy years, is a political play, and it is not surprising that Césaire should have been influenced by both. What is also not surprising is that Césaire should be one of several writers and intellectuals during the late fifties and early sixties of the twentieth century when there was a "burgeoning," as Rob Nixon puts it, of black consciousness and nationalist movements in Africa and the Caribbean, to "[seize] upon *The Tempest* as a way of amplifying […] calls for decolonization" and "unabashedly" refashion it "to meet contemporary political and cultural needs" (557-559). *Une Tempete* foregrounds the political and racial theme.

The subtitle of *A Tempest* is *An Adaptation for the Black Theatre*. "In essence," Ojo-Ade observes, "Césaire Africanizes and negrifies Shakespeare's play to deal with the eternal theme of his political theater: Africa's past and present and the dilemma of the encounter with the European master" (252). As Césaire declared in another interview, this time in *Callaloo*: "*Une Tempete (A Tempest)* is the point of view of the loser (Caliban), not that of Prospero, the viewpoint of the colonized, not that of the colonizer. It is the reversal that appeals to me" (qtd. in Ojo-Ade, 249). A "reversal" that allows Césaire, as Roger Toumson observes, to make "Caliban's monstrosity […] disappear and Prospero's to manifest itself" (qtd. in Sarnecki, 279).

In 1954, Frank Kermode, in his Introduction to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in the New Arden series, identified Caliban as the "core" or "ground"

[3] Césaire deliberately chose the confrontational word "negre" which, as he declares in his *Resolutely Black: Conversations with Francoise Verges*, served as both a "rallying cry" as well as "a stark reminder of slavery and colonialism" (viii).

of the play, the savage, bestial creature whose function is to "illuminate […] the world of art, nurture, civility", and New World material as central to it (xxiv-xxv). However, beyond these comments, his interpretation is the traditional one which sees Prospero as the Magus figure and his "Art" as benevolent, and Caliban as born to slavery, incapable of growth and education in humanity. Subsequent readings of *The Tempest* departed radically from this kind of view and saw the play as "shaped by" and a "contributor to […] the discourses of colonialism" (Goldberg 7). In the Introduction to the Arden *Tempest* in 2011, Virginia Mason and Alden T. Vaughan point out that two major interpretations of the play in the late 19th century insist that it is essentially about the New World and symbolizes European and United States imperialism (98). These views have dominated recent critical thinking and Greenblatt's influential essay, "Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century" which appeared in 1976, marked the beginning of New Historicist readings of the play.

Césaire's *A Tempest* was published in 1969, much before Greenblatt's essay, the same year that the Barbadian poet, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, published a collection of poetry entitled *Islands* which included the poem "Caliban," and the Cuban poet, essayist, and Professor of Philology at the University of Havana, Roberto Fernandez Retamar, writing in Spanish, identified Caliban with the Cuban people. Two years later, in his book, *Caliban and Other Essays*, Retamar stated, "Our symbol […] is not Ariel […] but rather Caliban", for "what is our history, what is our culture, if not the history and culture of Caliban?" (13-14).

Retamar credits George Lamming, the well-known Barbadian novelist, as "the first writer in our world to assume our identification with Caliban" (12). In her Introduction to Jonathan Goldberg's Sedgewick Memorial Lecture of March 2001, Sherrill Grace states that Goldberg is placing *The Tempest* "in a modern, indeed a *postmodern* setting by reading the play through the colonial and national lenses of the great Barbadian writer George Lamming" (5). In Lamming's The *Pleasures of Exile* (1960), a collection of political essays, "the relationship of Prospero and Caliban," in Goldberg's words, "is used throughout as a shorthand for the relation of colonizer to colonized," and he goes on to say, Lamming not only anticipates New Historicist interpretations of *The Tempest* but goes much further than the "New Historicist inquiry" (8).

Colonialism and post-colonialism are the predominant themes in Césaire's work in the 1960s. In his first play, *The Tragedy of King Christophe* (1963), he focuses on post-colonial corruption and the tyrannical Francois Duvalier who ruled Haiti from 1957 to 1971 and exploited the black masses. In the second play, *A Season in the Congo* (1965), his subject is Patrice Lumumba and the struggle for independence in the Congo, and he emphasizes that only revolution and the violent overthrow of military dictatorships can bring about

any real change. In his final and most meaningful exploration of colonialism and exploitation, Césaire "retreated from modern history and turned to Shakespeare as his vehicle" (Kelly, xiv). *A Tempest* (1969) explores the relationship between Prospero, the colonizer, and his two colonial subjects, Ariel and Caliban.[4] And in this as in other aspects of the play Césaire, although he never mentions the Barbadian novelist in any of his writings, is influenced by Lamming's seminal reading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. He is perhaps, in Nixon's words, "fiercer" in "defiance" (570).

Césaire retains Shakespeare's setting, an uninhabited island, the characters, with minor alterations (as already mentioned, Ariel is a mulatto and Caliban a black slave and he adds a black devil-god, Shango), and follows the main lines of the action beginning with the storm and shipwreck with which Shakespeare's play opens. The "tempest," as in the original, is "brewed up" by Prospero (1.2.15).

Césaire's play, however, is, as Nixon observes, a radically polarized adaptation of *The Tempest* (572). Judith Holland Sarnecki puts it more strongly: *A Tempest* "is truly subversive in both intent and execution" (279). It foregrounds Caliban and the struggle between him and Prospero. The emphasis is on difference not reconciliation. "Caliban's culture of resistance is his sole weaponry," Nixon states, it is "formidable" (572), and the success of his uncompromising strategies is "imminent" at the end of the drama (573).

Davis calls Césaire's adaptation a "reinscribing" of Shakespeare's play as "a drama of rebellion" (158). Reinscription is closely linked to intertextuality. A text is retextualized in a contemporary situation in which a writer finds himself and out of which he is writing. Césaire reads, reinterprets, reinscribes and adapts Shakespeare's play to make his own political statements to contemporary readers and audiences. It is, to quote Rob Nixon again, "a radical reassessment" aimed at exploring its "potential as a vehicle for dramatizing the evolution of colonialism in his region and the alternatives open to would be liberated Antilleans" (573).

His Caliban enters saying "Uhuru" (1.2.17), one of the slogans adopted by the Black Power movement in the United States in the 1960s. He is confrontational and announces that he will no longer "answer to the name of Caliban" because it "*isn't*" his name, it is the name given him by Prospero's "hatred, and every time it's spoken it's an insult." He tells Prospero:

[4] Ariel, in Césaire's version, is a mulatto slave, compliant, even complaisant, and Caliban a black slave, rebellious and hostile. Interestingly, in an adaptation of another Shakespeare play, *Othello*, Charles Marowitz's *an Othello*, Iago is the hero, is black, a Black Power agent, and tries to alert Othello to the racism and hostility of the white characters who ultimately destroy him.

> Call me X. That would be best. Like a man without a name.
> Or, to be more precise, a man whose name has been stolen. […]
> you've stolen everything from me, even my identity. (1.2.20)

"X", it will be recalled, was the name Malcolm X took, another reminder of Caliban's association with the Black Power movement.

Caliban rejects as untrue Prospero's claim that he "educated, trained," and "dragged [him] up" from "bestiality." Prospero, he declares, took care to impart no "learning" or "science" to him. He taught him nothing,

> Except to jabber in your language so that I could understand your orders:
> chop the wood, wash the dishes, fish for food, plant vegetables, all because
> you are too lazy to do it yourself. (1.2.17)

The aim was not to improve, to raise, to edify, but to exploit, and language is the tool Prospero uses to exploit Caliban and enslave him.

Citing the Bishop of Avila's assertion in the late 15th century that "language is the perfect instrument of empire," Stephen Greenblatt states that "linguistic colonialism" is central to the colonial enterprise (17). Lamming anticipates Greenblatt:

> This is the first important achievement of the colonising process. …
> Prospero has given Caliban Language […] This gift of Language
> meant not English, in particular, but speech and concept as […] a
> necessary avenue towards areas of the self which could not be
> reached in any other way. It is entirely Prospero's enterprise. (109)

But he goes on to make the further important point that loss of identity and the learning of a new language are linked:

> Caliban is […] colonized by language, and excluded by language. It is precisely this gift of language, this attempt at transformation, which has brought about the pleasure and paradox of Caliban's exile. Exiled from his gods, exiled from his nature, exiled from his name! (15)

He is "exiled," too, from his patrimony. He has no past. Caliban, Lamming states, "has no self which is not a reaction to circumstances imposed upon his life." He is seen as "a state of existence which can be appropriated and exploited for the purposes of another's development" (107). This is how he is seen, it is important to emphasize, by the colonizer, this is how he *must* be seen and *made to see himself* so he can be exploited and made subservient. He has been *recreated, reinvented*, by Prospero, by the *colonizer* and *colonialism.* "[T]his thing of darkness," Shakespeare's Prospero declares, "I / Acknowledge mine"

(5.1.275-276). If Prospero had not come to the island he would have been, Césaire's Caliban says in lines that echo Shakespeare's, "the king, that's what I'd be, the King of the Island. The King of the Island given me by my mother, Sycorax" (1.2.17). Prospero has usurped his kingdom and made him a slave and a drudge, a slave whom he mistreats and constantly punishes.

Ojo-Ade states that while there is conflict between Prospero and Caliban, there is "harmony" between Prospero and Ariel in Césaire's play and Ariel is Prospero's "ally and accomplice" (269). That is true of Shakespeare's Ariel not Césaire's. Ariel does Prospero's bidding as Caliban does, "most unwillingly." He calls him "Master" (1.2.16), but he is not a lackey. He intercedes for Caliban. More important, he, too, wants his freedom. When we first see him in Act 1, scene 2, he reminds Prospero that he "promised" him his "freedom, a thousand times" and he is "still waiting" (1.2.16). However, he is altogether more moderate, more conciliatory, in his approach as the debate between him and Caliban makes clear.[5] He states that they are "brothers in suffering and slavery, but brothers in hope as well." Both "want [their] freedom" but "just have different methods" (2.1.26). He is prepared to wait for it, Caliban wants "Freedom Now!" (2.1.26). Ariel does not "believe in violence:" "No violence" but what is important, "no *submission* either" [italics added]. If Caliban is like Malcolm X, Ariel is like Martin Luther King, determined, but using non-violent means to secure his goal. He is something of an idealist. Prospero, he says, "is the one [they've] got to change," and he is "not fighting just for *my* freedom, for *our* freedom, but for Prospero too, so he can acquire a conscience," and he asks for Caliban's help "to build a wonderful world" to which each of them would contribute "patience, vitality, love, willpower […] and rigor" (2.1.27). From Caliban's point of view, he is a collaborator, negotiating for liberty from a relatively powerless position rather than fighting for it as an equal. But that is not really true. He is more cautious, perhaps his idea of freedom is less inclusive and complete than Caliban's, but he does not compromise, he continues on the nonviolent path as leaders like Mandela and King did, and he is liberated.

Caliban's response is that Ariel does not "understand" Prospero at all: "He's not a collaborating type. He's a guy who only feels something when he's wiped someone out. A crusher, a pulverizer, that's what he is!" (2.1.27). Prospero, in Ariel's opinion, is "invincible," and Caliban's "struggle" is "doomed" (2.1.26). He cannot, he believes, be defeated in an armed struggle; he can be defeated only through persuasion and by applying mental pressure. But for Caliban, "Better death than humiliation and injustice" to which they are

[5] Philip Mason sees the same distinction between Ariel and Caliban in Shakespeare's play: "Ariel is the good native, the moderate rationalist, the gradualist […] content to wait until it pleases Prospero to give him his freedom. Caliban is the bad native, the nationalist, the extremist" (88-89).

being constantly subjected, and he is prepared to blow up the island and Prospero and himself with it rather than remain in bondage (2.1.28).

He ceaselessly explores all avenues for rebellion and, indeed, is so desperate to get rid of Prospero, that he tries to get Stephano and Trinculo, his "new-found friends," to help him achieve his goal. Césaire's Caliban is not as naïve as Shakespeare's, he is more aware than the latter but wrongly assumes that being underdogs like him, they might also want to win back their "dignity" (3.4.55), might bond with him, show class solidarity. He is unable to see that they, like their originals, are racist and exploitative (3.2.41), that for them race transcends class. The rebellion, of course, fails, and he realizes that he was "an idiot" to think he "could create the Revolution with swollen guts and fat faces" (3.4.55). Peter Hulme states that Caliban reenacts Antonio's "usurpation" (239). That may be how Shakespeare's Prospero sees the "foul conspiracy" (4.1.139), but what Caliban seeks to reenact, it seems to me, is *Prospero's* usurpation of the island that belongs to him, a fact that he repeats to Stephano and Trinculo to get them to act with him: "I am subject to a tyrant, a sorcerer, that by his cunning hath cheated me of the island" (3.2.40-42). Prospero incidentally never denies the usurpation, he bypasses it.

At this moment, in a significant departure from Shakespeare's play, Caliban gets an opportunity to destroy Prospero. He has a weapon, Prospero does not. As he advances Prospero bares his chest and bids him "Strike! Go on, strike! Strike your master, your benefactor! Don't tell me you're going to spare him!" Caliban hesitates even though Prospero taunts him: "You don't dare! […] you're nothing but an animal […] you don't know how to kill" (3.4.55). It is true; he does *not* know how to kill. Ojo-Ade suggests that he spares him because of "the complex created and cultivated in him by the master" (278), that is, by the master-slave relationship. But, in my opinion, Caliban spares Prospero because he is unarmed: "Defend yourself! I'm not a murderer." Prospero's response is, "The worse for you. You've lost your chance. Stupid as a slave!" (3.4.56). Caliban shows himself superior to Prospero and distinguishes himself from him. He spares him because he cannot kill in cold blood. He wants Prospero to be in a position to "defend" himself (3.4.55), to be on an equal footing with him, something Prospero does not understand and a thought the colonizers certainly would not and did not entertain. The uncivilized "brutish monster" as Césaire's Prospero calls him (3.5.63) shows greater humanity and compassion than the civilized colonizer. Although he subscribes to violent overthrow, he eschews violence when confronting or confronted by an individual, rejects it outright.

In Shakespeare's play, Caliban sees through Stephano and Trinculo in the final scenes but not Prospero. In Césaire's play, however, he is no longer deluded. He sees and understands Prospero's reality and functioning. In his last

great speech, he sums up his years of mistreatment at Prospero's hands, the brutality he has endured:

> For years I bowed my head
> For years I took it all […]
> your insults, your ingratitude …
> and worst of all, more degrading than all the rest,
> your condescension.

The "worst of all" actually is not "condescension" but what he mentions later: Prospero's lying to him about himself and demoralizing him:

> you ended up by imposing on me
> an image of myself:
> underdeveloped, in your words, undercompetent,
> that's how you made me see myself!
> And I hate that image […] and it's false!
> (5.5.61-62)

Prospero's domination of Caliban is based on race and his success in exploiting him depends on how far he can succeed in imposing a sense of inferiority on him.[6] Caliban now understands that Prospero's construction of him is a lie, that Prospero is a master of "deception." And since he knows him, simultaneously and significantly he also knows himself, frees himself from Prospero's thrall. He knows of what he is capable, he knows that "The old world is tumbling down," and one day his "bare fist" will be enough to "crush" Prospero's world (5.5.61-62). And he demolishes Prospero's self-delusions in what Sarnecki describes as "a volcanic eruption of words" (282).

In a special issue of *Massachusetts Review*, Robert Marquez writes: "Against the hegemonic, europocentric, vision of the universe, the identity of Caliban is a direct function of his refusal to accept […] that hegemony" (qtd. in Alden Vaughan, 254). In Césaire's own words, Caliban is "a rebel—the positive hero in the Hegelian sense. The slave is always more important than his master—for it is the slave who makes history" (qtd. in Belhassen, 176). "In Césaire's refashioning," Davis states, "the figure of Caliban is no longer a caricature of the savage, noble or ignoble; rather it incarnates the irrepressible will of the colonized to be his own master" (161-162).

We turn now to the other side of the equation, to Prospero. Césaire "demythifie[s]" Prospero who is "a prototypical colonizer" (Davis, 158).

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[6] It is a tactic Iago uses. He harps on Othello's "otherness," on his racial inferiority, and his schemes work because he makes Othello see himself in that image.

> To me (Aimé Césaire declares) Prospero is the complete totalitarian […] Prospero is the man of cold reason, the man of methodical conquest—in other words, a portrait of the "enlightened" European. (qtd. in Belhassen 176)

He is a despot. The Master of Ceremonies tells us, "He has reserves of willpower he's not even aware of himself" (Prologue: 7). Actually, it is not that he has "reserves of willpower" but that he is driven by the *will to power*, absolute power. What he wants is total submission. We see this in his first encounter with Ariel who is disgusted with having to destroy the ship carrying Alonso and the other Milanese, asks to be spared "this kind of labor," and presses for the freedom he was promised. Prospero's response is to shout at him, accuse him of being an "ingrate," remind him that he freed him from the pine in which he was imprisoned by Sycorax, and tell him that he will have his freedom when he (Prospero) is "good and ready" (1.2.16).

Prospero, Caliban tells us, is "the Anti-Nature." Nature is "kind and gentle […] You've just got to know how to deal with it" (3.4.52). He is the opposite, in Caliban's view, of Sycorax and himself, both of whom are associated with Nature. James Arnold states that while Césaire's Prospero struggles against the natural world of the island, Caliban is represented as its ally (247). Caliban, Aimé Césaire declares, "is the man who is still close to his beginnings, whose link with the natural world has not yet been broken" (qtd. in Belhassen, 176). Trinculo calls him "a real Nindian! An authentic Nindian from the Caribbean!" (3.2.41); he is a New World inhabitant, in a close relationship, like all indigenous peoples, with Nature and the elements. Prospero violates Nature whereas Caliban's culture gives him the values Prospero lacks, a oneness with Nature and the earth that makes him constructive not destructive. Prospero exploits the land as he exploits Caliban. Prospero thinks Sycorax is "dead" and "the earth itself is dead," therefore he can "walk on it, pollute it […] tread upon it with the steps of a conqueror" (1.1.18) Caliban "respect[s] the earth" because he knows that "Sycorax is alive," and he sees her everywhere—in the rain, the lightning, "the stagnant pool" (1.2.18).

Earlier in the article, I had cited Lamming on Caliban's loss of identity, his being "exiled" from his patrimony and having no past. Césaire does not agree as the quotation from him makes clear. Caliban's "link with the natural world has not yet been broken" *because* he "is still close to his beginnings." Lamming, interestingly, contradicts himself and his earlier statement when he remarks that one reason Prospero treats Caliban harshly is because he "has not lost his sense of original rootedness" (101), and Nixon attributes Caliban's "relative cultural autonomy" to his "recuperation of a residual past" (572). He recuperates it through his memory of his mother. The island is his through

Sycorax, he associates her with it, and his closeness to it and everything surrounding it is due to his closeness to her.

Prospero could not have survived on the island without Caliban. It is not Prospero who "taught" Caliban; it is the other way round. It is Caliban who "taught" Prospero about "the trees, fruits, birds, the seasons." However, once "the juice" has been "squeezed […] from the orange" the "rind" is tossed away, once Caliban has served his purpose the "sweet talk: dear Caliban here, my little Caliban there" is replaced by "Caliban the animal, Caliban the slave!" (1.1.18-19). Prospero abuses Caliban all the time, tells him that he is a monster, bestial, ugly, barbaric, constantly whips and punishes him to keep him in his place and make him feel abject, inconsequential, worthless. And yet, Caliban defies him, answers back, and Prospero cannot tolerate his standing up to him. His "insubordination," he tells Ariel, is "calling into question the whole order of the world" (3.3.50). Caliban belongs to an inferior race, he is the "Other," and Prospero will not forgive him as he does the "men of his [own] race, and of high rank" (1.2.21). He will not compromise with him for he will not "compromise with evil" (3.3.50).

The truth is, Lamming states, that "Prospero is afraid of Caliban." He is afraid for the reasons given above but much more so because, Lamming continues, "he knows that his encounter with Caliban is, largely, his encounter with himself" (15). He hates him because he has made him "doubt" himself "for the first time" (3.5.63). Caliban challenges his assumptions about himself and makes him question them. He can no longer cast himself as a hero, construe his actions and attitudes to himself in the most positive light. He can describe himself as "indulgent," as not a "master" but "the conductor of a boundless score" who creates intelligibility "out of confusion" (3.5.65, 3.5.64), but he knows he is lying. What is more he knows and realizes that his greatest project is a failure. Caliban is his failure:

> from a brutish monster I have made man!
> But ah! To have failed to find the path to man's heart …
> if that be where man is. (3.5.63)

He has not won his affection. Caliban hates him and has planned to kill him. Small wonder he is shaken. He is "perturbed," his "old brain is confused," and he has a sudden realization that "Power! Power! Alas! All this will one day fade […] My power has gone cold" (3.3.49-50).

He tries to reassert himself. He frees Ariel, and the intoxicated Ariel, intoxicated with liberty, leaves with an agenda to "let fall" sweet notes that will arouse "a yearning" for "freedom" in "the heart of the most forgetful slaves" (3.5.58). In other words, he will strive to spread the message of freedom, work

for emancipation and liberation through nonviolent means as has been his stated objective throughout. "That," Prospero declares, "is a very unsettling agenda" (3.5.59). Left alone with Caliban, Prospero postures with him. He changes his tactics, he is in a "forgiving mood," he offers "peace" (3.5.60-61). But Caliban who fully understands Prospero's game sees through the sham and rejects the overture. He is more strongly committed than ever to getting back his island and regaining his freedom. He will work to "get rid" of Prospero, "spit" him out (3.5.60), the vision of a future without Prospero being a step towards what Ojo-Ade calls "self-affirmation" (285). Caliban laughs at the concept of the White Man's Burden, at Prospero's "mission," his "vocation" (3.5.62); at the assertion that he alone can "draw music" from the isle which will be "mute" without him; his "duty […] is here" and he has to remain to "protect civilization" (3.5.64-65). He knows the truth. Prospero will stay on because "like those guys who founded the colonies" he "now can't live anywhere else;" he is "an old addict" (3.5.62). He is addicted to wielding power and enjoying privilege; he is addicted to self-importance and self-aggrandizement, and he realizes that in Milan he will be subservient to Alonso, he will be disregarded, he will be a cipher.

"Césaire believes," in Belhassen's words, that Prospero

> would no longer be able to leave the island over
> which he has exerted so much control […] He
> would have become a prisoner of his own "creation,"
> Caliban. (177)

He is unable to leave the island but, I believe, for the reasons outlined in the previous paragraph, not because he is a "prisoner" of his own "creation." "Prospero and Caliban," Belhassen states, "are *necessary* to each other" (177). I am not sure I agree. The truth, as we see throughout *A Tempest*, is quite the contrary. Caliban does not need Prospero; Prospero needed Caliban as Caliban reminds him: "what do you think you'd have done without me in this strange land?" (1.2.18), and now he needs him even more. He is dependent on him physically and psychologically. He is old, he is debilitated, he is "struggling," as Davis comments, "against the encroachment of the jungle" (161). He is cold and needs a fire. He calls for Caliban as he did at the beginning of the play, calls repeatedly, but Caliban stays away. He will no longer heed Prospero's summons. Prospero hears "snatches of Caliban's song:" "FREEDOM HI-DAY! FREEDOM HI-DAY!" (3.5.65-66). It is a militant song in contrast to Ariel's softer cadences. Freedom has yet to be attained. We have seen how the movements for freedom and independence in *King Christophe* and *A Season in the Congo* end by becoming a mockery and result in greater enslavement. True freedom is a difficult goal to attain and achieve and the play ends on an equivocal note. In an interview to *Callaloo* Césaire declared:

> I think that nobody can tell how the problem
> will be solved […] one can only try to imagine
> the conditions of a solution to the problem.
> (qtd.in Ojo-Ade 292)

Caliban, Jonathan Goldberg affirms, is "locked with [Prospero] in a dialectical struggle whose outcome remains to be seen" (15).

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* contains in essence all the issues that *A Tempest* focuses on and points the way to Césaire. It exemplifies, to quote Paul Brown, "a moment of *historical* crisis […] the struggle to produce a coherent discourse adequate to the complex requirements of British colonialism in its initial phase" (48). In Walter Cohen's words, "*The Tempest* uncovers, perhaps despite itself, the racist and imperialist bases of English nationalism" (401). It is the first work, Meredith Anne Skura tells us, to show an encounter with a New World native; Shakespeare is the first to show the *mistreatment* of a native by Europeans (72). And the first person to see the play through "colonial" and "national" lenses was, as I have mentioned before, George Lamming. "I see *The Tempest*," Lamming writes, "against the background of England's experiment in colonisation." In view of the participation in the slave trade of John Hawkins and Walter Raleigh, the issue of the European enslavement of native populations was very topical, and Lamming observes:

> Considering the range of Shakespeare's curiosity [… it] would most certainly have been present in his mind […] And it is Shakespeare's capacity for experience which leads me to feel that *The Tempest* was also prophetic of a political future which is our present. (13)[7]

The island, Lamming remarks, is "a remarkable example of a State which is absolutely run by one man" (98). He is a despot and rules over his two subjects, Ariel and Caliban, with an iron hand. Césaire, it will be recalled, calls him a "complete totalitarian" driven by the will to power and demanding complete submission. Absolute power and absolute control. That is Prospero's "magic" which Sarnecki aptly describes as "none other than the delusion and rationalization of 'white superiority'" (280).

Ariel, too, serves Prospero but, like Césaire's Ariel, is more compliant. Lamming calls him "a lackey" (99), and he is more of a lackey in Shakespeare than in Césaire. Unlike Caliban he calls Prospero "great master" and "noble master" (1.2.189, 1.2.300), but he does remind Prospero, as forcefully as

[7] Skura says something similar in her 1998 essay: "if the play is 'colonialist,' it must be seen as 'prophetic' rather than descriptive" (72).

Césaire's Ariel does, that he has done "worthy service" and demands his "liberty" (1.2.247, 1.2.245). The incensed Prospero becomes abusive—Césaire's Prospero is *sarcastic*, not abusive—and threatens him: he is a "malignant thing" (1.2.257), a "dull thing" (1.2.285), whom Sycorax confined in a "cloven pine" (1.2.277), and whom he will "peg" in the "knotty entrails" of an oak if he does not cease his complaints (1.2.295). Shakespeare's Ariel immediately asks for his pardon and promises obedience.

Shakespeare's Prospero is, in my opinion, more brutal, more sadistic, than Césaire's. Caliban is his slave, essential to him for his survival. He cannot do without him for

> he does make our fire,
> Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices
> That profit us. (1.2.312-314)

But he never speaks to him without abusing him, insults him and his mother, calls him "poisonous slave" (1.2.320), "filth" (1.2.347), "Hag-seed" (1.2.366).[8] He torments him with "cramps," "[s]ide-stitches" that will "pen" his "breath up," and pinches that sting and are "As thick as honeycomb" (1.2.326-330), torments, Lamming reminds us, like those inhuman tortures inflicted on the slaves transported from Africa to the Caribbean, to Haiti (97-98). Despite the unendurable suffering to which Caliban is subjected, however, he stands up to Prospero, remains defiant, and in Lamming's words, "the spirit of freedom never deserts him" (101).

Prospero, Caliban states, is a usurper: "This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me" (1.2.332-333). Caliban is "all the

[8] Margaret Atwood's novel, *Hag-Seed: Shakespeare's The Tempest Retold*, was published in 2016. Shakespeare, she said in an interview to *The Guardian*, is her "favourite" author and he is "infinitely interpretable." *Hag-Seed* is set in a prison, and the prisoners, who are being taught *The Tempest* and will act in it, are asked to make a list of the "curse words" used in the play, one of them being "Hag-seed," one of Prospero's insulting names for Caliban. In a sense the prisoners are all Calibans, but the novel focuses not on them but on the producer/director, the Prospero figure who stages the play. And in her book, *Negotiating With the Dead*, while granting that "Caliban is not without insight," Atwood offers a fairly traditional reading of Prospero's character, quite positive, very different from that of Lamming, Césaire or the New Historicists: "Prospero uses his arts […] for purposes of moral and social improvement. That being said it must also be said that Prospero plays God. If you don't happen to agree with him—as Caliban doesn't—you'd call him a tyrant, as Caliban does […] You might also call him a usurper—he's stolen the island from Caliban […] We—the audience—are inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt, and to see him as a benevolent despot. Or we are inclined most of the time" (115).

subjects" that Prospero has "Which first was mine own King" (1.2.342-343). Shakespeare does not use the noun "colonizer" (which was first used in the early 1700s, in 1723 to be exact)) but Prospero behaves like one and uses the methods colonizers used to win other Calibans over. In lines far more poetic and moving than those in *A Tempest*, Caliban describes Prospero's behaviour when he first came to the island:

> When thou cam'st first,
> Thou strok'st me, and made much of me; wouldst give me
> Water with berries in 't; and teach me how
> To name the bigger light, and how the less,
> That burn by day and night: and then I lov'd thee,
> And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle. (1.2.333-338)

The giving of water with berries in it, the stroking, the teaching of words, established a bond between them, and Caliban feels abandoned, and Prospero's subsequent treatment of him, his being "sty[ed]" in a hard rock, seems an utter betrayal.

Prospero ascribes this altered treatment to Caliban's attempt to rape Miranda. Césaire's Caliban scoffs at the charge: "Rape! Rape!" and puts the blame on Prospero: "Listen, you old goat, you're the one who put those dirty thoughts in my head" (1.2.19). He implies that Prospero, obsessed with the fear of miscegenation, warned him against any such attempt and took the pre-emptive step of imprisoning him in a rock. Lamming dismisses it as a "Lie" but Shakespeare's Caliban does not deny the accusation; he says it was prevented, but

> would 't had been done! […]
> I had peopled else
> This isle with Calibans. (1.2.350-352)

Lamming, contradicting his earlier comment, wonders whether this reveals a "political intention," whether Caliban means that, had he succeeded, he might have increased the population, and "have numbers on his side" to "organise resistance against this obscene, and selfish monster" (102).

At this point Miranda enters the discussion and, as critics beginning with Dryden have noted, uncharacteristically attacks Caliban in language that echoes Prospero's but also uses racist slurs: he is an "Abhorred slave," "a thing most brutish," a member of a "vile race" (1.2.352, 1.2.358, 1.2.359), who deserves more than imprisonment. And Caliban replies:

> You taught me language; and my profit on 't
> Is, I know to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language! (1.2.364-366)

Sarnecki declares that "Caliban uses Prospero's own language to denounce him, to show his contempt for him, and to demonstrate that he understands the full extent of what Prospero has done to him" (279). And commenting on the lines, Greenblatt states:

> [the] retort might be taken as self-indictment: even with the gift of language, his nature is so debased that he can only learn to curse. But the lines refuse to mean this; what we experience instead is a sense of their devastating justness. Ugly, rude, savage, Caliban […] achieves for an instant an absolute if intolerably bitter moral victory. […] a momentary victory that is, quite simply, an assertion of inconsolable human pain. (25-26)

Greenblatt sees the imposition of a foreign tongue as a violation from which Caliban, the colonized, will never recover. He does concede, however, that "The rich irreducible concreteness of the verse compels us to acknowledge the independence and integrity of Caliban's construction of reality" (31). Lamming puts it much more strongly and points out that the "gift" of language transforms Caliban, it is a tool of advancement, and makes him "aware of possibilities" (109). At the same time, however, he observes that Prospero believes that "Caliban can learn so much and no more. […] Language […] is the very prison in which Caliban's achievement will be realised and restricted." It "will not allow his expansion beyond a certain point" (110). Critiquing Lamming, Janheinz Jahn states that the former sees Caliban as no more than a "child of Nature" (15), whereas he "is also a part of a culture, a different culture unfamiliar to Prospero" (240). Sycorax's "powers, the voices, the instruments and the riches that drop in dreams […] form a culture," a point I have made earlier in the article. Caliban must "consciously recognize it. He does this through language, Prospero's language, for he possesses no other" (241). But "in the process," Jahn continues and makes the crucial point, "*the language is transformed* [emphasis added], acquiring different meanings which Prospero never expected […] Caliban breaks out of the prison of Prospero's language" (242). *It becomes his own* and he is able not only to curse but also to express his inwardness and connectedness with the island he loves:

> The isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
> [. . . . . .
> . . . . . .] And then, in dreaming,
> The clouds methought would open, and show riches
> Ready to drop upon me; that, when I wak'd,
> I cried to dream again. (3.2.135-143)

"[M]ultilinguism" and "multiculturalism," to use Sarnecki's words, replace monolingualism and monoculturalism (282). It is not only in "Césaire's re-fashioning," then, that "Caliban is no longer a caricature of the savage" (Davis 161). He is not a caricature of the savage in Shakespeare's play either.

Shakespeare's Caliban, Lamming comments, tends to take people at face value. He is "the epitome of a pure and uncalculated naivete" (114) and opens himself to Trinculo and Stephano as whole-heartedly as he did to Prospero. He does not see that they are, as Lamming calls them, "scum," and plots "revolution with them" (115). At the end he is ashamed of himself for taking a "drunkard for a god" and worshipping a "dull fool" (5.1.297-298), and in complete contrast to Césaire's Caliban, is contrite and will "seek for grace" (5.1.296).

Prospero continues to regard him as "a thing of darkness" (5.1.275), "disproportion'd" in "manners" and "shape" (5.1.291-292). He can generously forgive his brother who usurped his dukedom and whom he barely prevents from killing Alonso and Gonzalo, but he cannot forgive Caliban whose island he has taken from him. He gets into a "passion" and is "distemper'd" when he remembers Caliban's conspiracy (4.1.143, 4.1.145). Is it "ingratitude that bothers Prospero," Lamming asks, or "the shattering kind of self-knowledge […] that he really deserves such ingratitude?" (116). The knowledge that he has been indifferent, callous, has exploited Caliban and then abandoned and betrayed him?

Césaire's play ends, as we have seen, equivocally, on a questioning note: "I offer no solution," Césaire says. "The function of a work of art is to state a problem—and that's all" (qtd. in Belhassen 177). Lamming suggests that Shakespeare's play, too, is open-ended: "the Epilogue […] reminds us that the Voyage is not over. Indeed, we are right back where we started" (96).[9] There are notes struck that are reminiscent of Césaire's conclusion. Prospero's strength is "most faint" so he "must be here confin'd by you, / Or sent to Naples;" and he pleads,

> Let me not,
> […] dwell
> In this bare island by your spell;
> But release me from my bands (Epilogue: 3-9).

Will he reach Milan? Will he retire? And where, Lamming wonders, is "our excluded Caliban? And what fearful truth will Caliban discover now the world he prized has abandoned him to the solitude of his original home?" (96).

[9] So do Virginia Mason and Alden T. Vaughan. They, however, see Prospero "In his final words [erasing] the distinction between actor and audience, island world and our world" (5).

Caliban remains alone on the Island as he was before Prospero arrived. He has been "excluded" from the company and the voyage back to Naples. But would he want to be included? Does he at any point show that he "prized" the world Prospero created? After the mistreatment he has undergone, would he feel "abandoned"? The "foreign appropriation," as Lamming calls it (96), is over. He is where he was, on the island, he now has access to the *whole* of it, and it is his again. He has no master; he is his own master. He is free and will have to determine what freedom is and decide what he will do with that freedom.

The title, *The Tempest*, highlights, I believe, the theme I have been outlining in the paper. It refers to the tempest of Colonization, the whole colonial enterprise which shook and damaged so much of the non-Western world. Ariel's account of the wreck of Alonso's ship, Lamming says, "appropriately parallel[s] […] the unforgettable transport of slaves from Africa to the Caribbean" (97). Like Caliban, Alden Vaughan states, colonized people were

> disinherited, exploited, and subjugated. Like him they learned a conqueror's language and perhaps his values. Like him, they endured enslavement and contempt by European usurpers and eventually rebelled. (247)

A Tempest, as I have tried to point out, leans heavily on the original which is as radical in some ways as Césaire's play. The latter is "the point of view of the loser," "the viewpoint of the colonized" not the "colonizer," but then is *The Tempest* entirely the "viewpoint" of the "colonizer"? Current readings of the play are possible because it lends itself to these readings.

Shakespeare saw the beginnings of the colonial enterprise. He could only divine what might happen. He was "prophetic" not "descriptive." Césaire, writing at a time when several colonies had gained independence and others were struggling for it, had the benefit of witnessing the phenomenon, seeing successes and failures before him. He saw the disappointing outcomes of the movements for liberation in Haiti and the Congo and other former colonies which resulted in further exploitation and the tyranny of neo-colonialism. His Caliban wants real freedom, freedom in every way, safeguards that will ensure that people will never again be tyrannized, exploited, or subjugated.

The title, *A Tempest*, Sarnecki says, is related to Caliban's being "an ally of the natural world […] Storms are not an end in themselves […] they are part of an ongoing process […] destruction and renewal" (283). It is, as I have tried to indicate, far more and more blatantly, political. Césaire's play is modestly entitled *A Tempest*. It describes *one* struggle for freedom. And it is FREEDOM, spelled in capital letters, not mere independence, that is the goal.

There will continue to be tempests, tempests in countries and states all over the world, tempests raised by all marginalized and enslaved groups and communities, so that everyone, everywhere, will experience and enjoy FREEDOM HI-DAY.

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