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Caribbean and African Appropriations of *The Tempest*

Rob Nixon

Remember
First to possess his books.
—*The Tempest*

The era from the late fifties to the early seventies was marked in Africa and the Caribbean by a rush of newly articulated anticolonial sentiment that was associated with the burgeoning of both international black consciousness and more localized nationalist movements. Between 1957 and 1973 the vast majority of African and the larger Caribbean colonies won their independence; the same period witnessed the Cuban and Algerian revolutions, the latter phase of the Kenyan “Mau Mau” revolt, the Katanga crisis in the Congo, the Trinidadian Black Power uprising and, equally important for the atmosphere of militant defiance, the civil rights movement in the United States, the student revolts of 1968, and the humbling of the United States during the Vietnam War. This period was distinguished, among Caribbean and African intellectuals, by a pervasive mood of optimistic outrage. Frequently graduates of British or French universities, they were the first generation from their regions self-assured and numerous enough to call collectively for a renunciation of Western standards as the political revolts found their cultural counterparts in insurrections against the bequeathed values of the colonial powers.

In the context of such challenges to an increasingly discredited European colonialism, a series of dissenting intellectuals chose to utilize a

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European text as a strategy for (in George Lamming's words) getting "out from under this ancient mausoleum of [Western] historic achievement."¹ They seized upon *The Tempest* as a way of amplifying their calls for decolonization within the bounds of the dominant cultures. But at the same time these Caribbeans and Africans adopted the play as a founding text in an oppositional lineage which issued from a geopolitically and historically specific set of cultural ambitions. They perceived that the play could contribute to their self-definition during a period of great flux. So, through repeated, reinforcing, transgressive appropriations of *The Tempest*, a once silenced group generated its own tradition of "error" which in turn served as one component of the grander counterhegemonic nationalist and black internationalist endeavors of the period. Because that era of Caribbean and African history was marked by such extensive, open contestation of cultural values, the destiny of *The Tempest* at that time throws into uncommonly stark relief the status of value as an unstable social process rather than a static and, in literary terms, merely textual attribute.

Some Caribbean and African intellectuals anticipated that their efforts to unearth from *The Tempest* a suppressed narrative of their historical abuse and to extend that narrative in the direction of liberation would be interpreted as philistine. But Lamming, for one, wryly resisted being intimidated by any dominant consensus: "I shall reply that my mistake, lived and deeply felt by millions of men like me—proves the positive value of error" (*PE*, p. 13). Lamming's assertion that his unorthodoxy is collectively grounded is crucial: those who defend a text's universal value can easily discount a solitary dissenting voice as uncultured or quirky, but it is more difficult to ignore entirely a cluster of allied counterjudgments, even if the group can still be stigmatized. Either way, the notion of universal value is paradoxically predicated on a limited inclusiveness, on the assumption that certain people will fail to appreciate absolute worth. As Pierre Bourdieu, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, and Tony Bennett have all shown, a dominant class or culture's power to declare certain objects or activities self-evidently valuable is an essential measure

1. George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (New York, 1984), p. 27; all further references to this work, abbreviated *PE*, will be included in the text.

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for reproducing social differentiation.² But resistance to the hegemony of such hierarchies is still possible. In this context, Lamming's statement exudes the fresh confidence of the high era of decolonization, in which a "philistinism" arose that was sufficiently powerful and broadly based to generate an alternative orthodoxy responsive to indigenous interests and needs.

For Frantz Fanon, decolonization was the period when the peoples of the oppressed regions, force-fed for so long on foreign values, could stomach them no longer: "In the colonial context the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man's values. In the period of decolonization, the colonized masses mock at these very values, insult them, and vomit them up."³ From the late fifties onward, there was a growing resistance in African and Caribbean colonies to remote-controlled anything, from administrative structures to school curricula, and the phase of "nauseating mimicry" (in Fanon's phrase) gave way to a phase in which colonized cultures sought to define their own cultures reactively and aggressively from within.⁴ In short, decolonization was the period when "the machine [went] into reverse."⁵ This about-face entailed that indigenous cultural forms be substituted for alien ones—inevitably a hybrid process of retrieving suppressed traditions and inventing new ones. Both approaches were present in the newfound preoccupation with *The Tempest*: hints of New World culture and history were dragged to the surface, while at other moments the play was unabashedly refashioned to meet contemporary political and cultural needs.⁶

2. See Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *La Reproduction: Eléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement* (Paris, 1970), and Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris, 1979); Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value," *Critical Inquiry* 10 (Sept. 1983): 1–35; Tony Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism* (London, 1979), "Formalism and Marxism Revisited," *Southern Review* 16 (1982): 3–21, and "Really Useless 'Knowledge': A Political Critique of Aesthetics," *Thesis 11* 12 (1985): 28–52.

3. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York, 1968), p. 43.

4. Jean-Paul Sartre, preface, *ibid.*, p. 9.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

6. Shakespeare's debt to the Bermuda pamphlets and other Elizabethan accounts of the New World has been extensively analyzed, often in relation to the evolution of British colonial discourse in the seventeenth century. See especially Frank Kermode, introduction to *The Tempest* (New York, 1954), pp. xxv–xxxiv; Stephen J. Greenblatt, "Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century," in *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old*, ed. Fredi Chiappelli, 2 vols. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976), 2:561–80; Leslie A. Fiedler, "The New World Savage as Stranger: Or, 'Tis new to thee," *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York, 1972), pp. 199–253; Peter Hulme, "Hurricanes in the Caribbees: The Constitution of the Discourse of English Colonialism," in *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century: Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July 1980*, ed. Francis Barker et al. (Colchester, 1981), pp. 55–83; Barker and Hulme, "Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish: The Discursive

Given the forcefulness of the reaction against the values of the colonial powers, it may appear incongruous that Caribbean and African intellectuals should have integrated a canonical European text like *The Tempest* into their struggle; it made for, in Roberto Fernández Retamar's words, "an alien elaboration."⁷ And this response may seem doubly incongruous given Shakespeare's distinctive position as a measure of the relative achievements of European and non-European civilizations. In discussions of value, Shakespeare is, of course, invariably treated as a special case, having come to serve as something like the gold standard of literature. For the English he is as much an institution and an industry as a corpus of texts: a touchstone of national identity, a lure for tourists, an exportable commodity, and one of the securest forms of cultural capital around. But the weight of Shakespeare's ascribed authority was felt differently in the colonies. What for the English and, more generally, Europeans, could be a source of pride and a confirmation of their civilization, for colonial subjects often became a chastening yardstick of their "backwardness." The exhortation to master Shakespeare was instrumental in showing up non-European "inferiority," for theirs would be the flawed mastery of those culturally remote from Shakespeare's stock. A schooled resemblance could become the basis for a more precise discrimination, for, to recall Homi Bhabha's analysis of mimicry in colonial discourse, "to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English."⁸ And so, in colonial circumstances, the bard could become symptomatic and symbolic of the education of Africans and Caribbeans into a passive, subservient relationship to dominant colonial culture.

One aspect of this passive orientation toward Europe is touched on by Lamming, the Barbadian novelist who was to appropriate *The Tempest* so actively for his own ends. Discussing his schooling during the early 1940s, Lamming recalls how the teacher "followed the curriculum as it was. He did what he had to do: Jane Austen, some Shakespeare, Wells's novel *Kipps*, and so on. What happened was that they were teaching exactly whatever the Cambridge Syndicate demanded. That was the point of it. These things were directly connected. Papers were set in Cambridge

Con-texts of *The Tempest*," in *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis (London, 1985), pp. 191–205; and Paul Brown, "'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine': *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism," in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985), pp. 48–71.

7. Roberto Fernández Retamar, "Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America," trans. Lynn Garafola, David Arthur McMurray, and Robert Marquez, *Massachusetts Review* 15 (Winter/Spring 1974): 27; all further references to this work, abbreviated "C," will be included in the text.

8. Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (Spring 1984): 128.

and our answers were sent back there to be corrected. We had to wait three to four months. Nobody knew what was happening till they were returned.”⁹ Given the resistance during decolonization to this kind of cultural dependency, those writers who took up *The Tempest* from the standpoint of the colonial subject did so in a manner that was fraught with complexity. On the one hand, they hailed Caliban and identified themselves with him; on the other, they were intolerant of received colonial definitions of Shakespeare’s value. They found the European play compelling but insisted on engaging with it on their own terms.

The newfound interest in *The Tempest* during decolonization was, in terms of the play’s history, unprecedentedly sudden and concentrated. However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, *The Tempest*’s value had been augmented by a prevalent perception of it as a likely vehicle first for Social Darwinian and later for imperial ideas. This tendency, which Trevor Griffiths has thoroughly documented, was evident in both performances and critical responses to the play.¹⁰ A notable instance was *Caliban: The Missing Link* (1873), wherein Daniel Wilson contended that Shakespeare had preempted some of Darwin’s best insights by creating “a novel anthropoid of a high type.”¹¹ Amassing evidence from the play, Wilson deduced that Caliban would have been black, had prognathous jaws, and manifested a low stage of cultural advancement. Wilson’s text shuttles between *The Tempest*, Darwin, and Linnaeus and is interlarded with detailed brain measurements of gibbons, baboons, chimpanzees, and a range of ethnic groupings.

Ironically, it was Beerbohm Tree’s unabashedly jingoistic production of *The Tempest* in 1904 that elicited the first recorded response to the play in anti-imperial terms, as one member of the audience assimilated the action to events surrounding the Matabele uprising in Rhodesia:

9. Ian Munro and Reinhard Sander, eds., *Kas-Kas: Interviews with Three Caribbean Writers in Texas: George Lamming, C. L. R. James, Wilson Harris* (Austin, Tex., 1972), p. 6. For kindred treatments of the way British-centered curricula generated mimicry and cultural dependency in the former British West Indies, see Austin Clarke, *Growing Up Stupid Under the Union Jack: A Memoir* (Toronto, 1980), and Chris Searle, *The Forsaken Lover: White Words and Black People* (London, 1972).

10. Trevor R. Griffiths, “‘This Island’s Mine’: Caliban and Colonialism,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 13 (1983): 159–80. Although Griffiths does not tackle the question of value directly, his essay complements mine insofar as it focuses on how *The Tempest* was appropriated not in the colonies but in Britain. Griffiths’ analysis treats both the heyday of imperialism and the subsequent retreat from empire. For discussion of how *The Tempest* was taken up from the seventeenth century onward, see Ruby Cohn, *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots* (Princeton, N.J., 1976), pp. 267–309. Cohn’s account of the two adaptations of the play by the nineteenth-century French historian and philosopher Ernest Renan is especially comprehensive.

11. Daniel Wilson, *Caliban: The Missing Link* (London, 1873), p. 79.

When the man-monster, brutalised by long continued torture, begins, 'This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, which thou takest from me', we have the whole case of the aboriginal against aggressive civilisation dramatised before us. I confess I felt a sting of conscience—vicariously suffered for my Rhodesian friends, notably Dr. Jameson—when Caliban proceeded to unfold a similar case to that of the Matebele. It might have been the double of old King Lobengula rehearsing the blandishments which led to his doom: 'When thou camest first / Thou strok'dst me, and mad'st much of me; would'st give me'—all that was promised by the Chartered Company to secure the charter.¹²

Just as the Matabele uprising was a distant, premonitory sign of the anticolonial struggles to come, so, too, W. T. Stead's unorthodox response to *The Tempest* anticipated a time when the play would be widely mobilized and esteemed as an expression of "the whole case of the 'aboriginal' against aggressive civilisation."

But it was another forty-four years before any text provided a sustained reassessment of *The Tempest* in light of the immediate circumstances leading up to decolonization. That text was *Psychologie de la colonisation*, written by the French social scientist, Octave Mannoni. However much Third World intellectuals have subsequently quarreled with his manner of mobilizing the play, Mannoni's inaugural gesture helped to shape the trajectory of those associated appropriations which lay ahead and, concomitantly, to bring about the reestimation of *The Tempest* in Africa and the Caribbean. Mannoni's novel response enabled him to evolve a theory of colonialism with Prospero and Caliban as prototypes; conversely, his hypotheses about colonial relations, arising from his experiences in Madagascar, made it possible for him to rethink the play. This reciprocal process was not gratuitous but prompted by an early stirring of African nationalism: Mannoni is insistent that his theory only fell into place through his exposure to one of the twilight moments of French colonialism—the Madagascan uprising of 1947–48 in which sixty thousand Madagascans, one thousand colonial soldiers, and several hundred settlers were killed. In 1947 his ideas began to take shape, and, by the time the revolt had been suppressed a year later, the manuscript was complete. The occasional character of *Psychologie de la colonisation* is foregrounded in the introduction, which Mannoni closes by marking the coincidence of his ideas with "a certain moment in history, a crisis in the evolution of politics, when many things that had been hidden were brought into the light of day; but it was only a moment, and time will soon have passed

12. W. T. Stead, "First Impressions of the Theatre," *Review of Reviews* 30 (Oct. 1904); quoted in Griffiths, "'This Island's Mine,'" p. 170.

it by."¹³ The pressing horrors of the Madagascan crisis prompted Mannoni to find a new significance for *The Tempest*, encouraging him to weave a reading of Shakespeare's poetic drama through his reading of the incipient drama of decolonization.

Mannoni's account of the psychological climate of colonialism is advanced through an opposition between the Prospero (or inferiority) complex and the Caliban (or dependence) complex. On this view, Europeans in Madagascar typically displayed the need, common among people from a competitive society, to feel highly regarded by others. However, the Prospero-type is not just any white man, but specifically the sort whose "grave lack of sociability combined with a pathological urge to dominate" drives him to seek out uncompetitive situations where, among a subservient people, his power is amplified and his least skills assume the aspect of superior magic (*PC*, p. 102). Whether a French settler in Africa or Shakespeare's duke, he is loath to depart his adopted island, knowing full well that back home his standing will shrink to mundane dimensions. Mannoni found the Madagascans, on the other hand, to be marked by a Caliban complex, a dependence on authority purportedly characteristic of a people forced out of a secure "tribal" society and into the less stable, competitively edged hierarchies of a semi-Westernized existence. According to this theory, colonialism introduced a situation where the Madagascar was exposed for the first time to the notion and possibility of abandonment. Crucially, the colonist failed to comprehend the Madagascan's capacity to feel "neither inferior nor superior but yet wholly dependent," an unthinkable state of mind for someone from a competitive society (*PC*, p. 157). So, in Mannoni's terms, the Madagascan revolt was fueled less by a desire to sunder an oppressive master-servant bond than by the people's resentment of the colonizers' failure to uphold that bond more rigorously and provide them with the security they craved. What the colonial subjects sought was the paradoxical freedom of secure dependence rather than any autonomous, self-determining freedom. This assumption clearly shaped Mannoni's skepticism about the Madagascans' desire, let alone their capacity, to achieve national independence.

Mannoni values *The Tempest* most highly for what he takes to be Shakespeare's dramatization of two cultures' mutual sense of a trust betrayed: Prospero is a fickle dissembler, Caliban an ingrate. The nodal lines here, and those that draw Mannoni's densest commentary, are spoken by Caliban in the play's second scene. They should be quoted at length,

13. [Dominique] O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. Pamela Powesland (New York, 1964), p. 34; all further references to this work, abbreviated *PC*, will be included in the text. The centrality of *The Tempest* to Mannoni's theory was given added emphasis by the extended title of the English translation.

for they are taken up repeatedly by subsequent Caribbean and African appropriators of *The Tempest*.

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,
 The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile:
 Curs'd be I that did so! All the charms
 Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
 For I am all the subjects that you have,
 Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me
 In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
 The rest o' th' island.¹⁴

To Mannoni, it appears evident that “Caliban does not complain of being exploited; he complains of being betrayed.” He “has fallen prey to the resentment which succeeds the breakdown of dependence” (*PC*, p. 106). This view is buttressed by an analogous interpretation of Caliban’s revolt in league with Trinculo as an action launched “not to win his freedom, for he could not support freedom, but to have a new master whose ‘foot-licker’ he can become. He is delighted at the prospect. It would be hard to find a better example of the dependence complex in its pure state” (*PC*, pp. 106–7).

Such statements rankled badly with Caribbean and African intellectuals who, in the fifties, for the first time sensed the imminence of large-scale decolonization in their regions. In such circumstances, the insinuation that Caliban was incapable of surviving on his own and did not even aspire to such independence in the first place caused considerable affront and helped spur Third Worlders to mount adversarial interpretations of the play which rehabilitated Caliban into a heroic figure, inspired by noble rage to oust the interloping Prospero from his island. Fanon and Aimé Césaire, two of Mannoni’s most vehement critics, found the “ethnopsychologist’s” disregard for economic exploitation especially jarring and accused him of reducing colonialism to an encounter between two psychological types with complementary predispositions who, for a time at least, find their needs dovetailing tidily.¹⁵ *Psychologie de la colonisation*, these critics charged, made Caliban out to be an eager partner in his

14. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, act 1, sc. 2, ll. 332–44; all further references to the play will be included in the text.

15. See Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris, 1952), and Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme*, 3d ed. (Paris, 1955). See also the section, “Caliban on the Couch,” in O. Onoge, “Revolutionary Imperatives in African Sociology,” in *African Social Studies: A Radical Reader*, ed. Peter C. W. Gutkind and Peter Waterman (New York, 1977), pp. 32–43.

own colonization. Mannoni, in a statement like “wherever Europeans have founded colonies of the type we are considering, it can safely be said that their coming was unconsciously expected—even desired—by the future subject peoples,” seemed to discount any possibility of Europe being culpable for the exploitation of the colonies (*PC*, p. 86). Mannoni’s critics foresaw, moreover, just how readily his paradigm could be harnessed by Europeans seeking to thwart the efforts for self-determination that were gathering impetus in the fifties.

Fanon and Césaire’s fears about the implications of Mannoni’s thesis were vindicated by the appearance in 1962 of *Prospero’s Magic: Some Thoughts on Class and Race* by Philip Mason, an English colonial who sought to give credence to Mannoni’s ideas by using them to rationalize resistance to colonialism in Kenya (“Mau Mau”), India, and Southern Rhodesia. The upshot of this effort was Mason’s conclusion that “a colonial rebellion may be a protest not against repression but against progress, not against the firm hand but against its withdrawal” and that (for such is every “tribal” society’s craving for firm authority) “countries newly released from colonialism . . . [will experience] a reduction of personal freedom.”¹⁶

Prospero’s Magic is an intensely autobiographical and occasional work. Its author, in siding with Mannoni, was also seeking to counteract the first fully fledged Caribbean appropriation of *The Tempest*, Lamming’s recently published *Pleasures of Exile* (1960). The lectures comprising *Prospero’s Magic* were delivered at the University College of the West Indies on the eve of Jamaica’s independence and are based on Mason’s more than twenty years as a colonial employee in India, Nigeria, and Rhodesia, where he witnessed the death throes—or as he terms it, the fulfillment—of British imperialism. Rereading *The Tempest* in the political atmosphere of 1962, he was discomfited by his recognition of the Prospero in himself. Circumstances had altered: “While many of us today find we dislike in Prospero things we dislike in ourselves, our fathers admired him without question and so indeed did my generation until lately” (*PM*, p. 92).¹⁷ Mason tried to square his awareness that colonialism was becoming increasingly discredited with his personal need to salvage some value and self-respect from his decades of colonial “service.” So he was at once a member of the first generation to acknowledge distaste for Prospero and personally taken aback by his own sudden redundancy: “With what deep reluctance does the true Prospero put aside his book and staff, the magic of power and office, and go to live in Cheltenham!” (*PM*, p. 96).

16. Philip Mason, *Prospero’s Magic: Some Thoughts on Class and Race* (London, 1962), p. 80; all further references to this work, abbreviated *PM*, will be included in the text.

17. Though it is underscored by a different politics, Sartre makes a related remark in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*: “We in Europe too are being decolonized: that is to say that the settler which is in every one of us is being savagely rooted out” (Sartre, preface, p. 24).

Mason, for one, conceived of himself as writing at the very moment when the colonial master was called upon to break and bury his staff.

By the time Caribbeans and Africans took up *The Tempest*, that is, from 1959 onward, widespread national liberation seemed not only feasible but imminent, and the play was mobilized in defense of Caliban's right to the land and to cultural autonomy. "This island's mine by Sycorax my mother / Which thou tak'st from me" (1.2.333–34) are the lines that underlie much of the work that was produced by African and Caribbean intellectuals in the 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁸ Those same two lines introduce Caliban's extended complaint (quoted at length above), the nodal speech Mannoni had cited as evidence that Shakespeare was dramatizing a relation of dependence, not one of exploitation. But, significantly, and in keeping with his very different motives for engaging with the play, Mannoni had lopped off those two lines when working the passage into his argument. On this score, Third World responses consistently broke with Mannoni: Caliban, the decolonizer, was enraged not at being orphaned by colonial paternalism but at being insufficiently abandoned by it.

The first Caribbean writer to champion Caliban was Lamming. His nonfictional *Pleasures of Exile* can be read as an effort to redeem from the past, as well as to stimulate, an indigenous Antillean line of creativity to rival the European traditions which seemed bent on arrogating to themselves all notions of culture. Lamming's melange of a text—part essay on the cultural politics of relations between colonizer and colonized, part autobiography, and part textual criticism of, in particular, *The Tempest* and C. L. R. James' *The Black Jacobins* (1938)—was sparked by two events, one personal, the other more broadly historical.¹⁹ Lamming began his text in 1959, shortly after disembarking in Southampton as part of the great wave of West Indian immigrants settling in Britain in the fifties. But his circumstances differed from those of most of his compatriots, for he was immigrating as an aspirant writer. As such he was keenly aware of taking up residence in the headquarters of the English language and culture and, concomitantly, of being only ambiguously party to that language and culture, even though a dialect of English was his native tongue and even though—for such was his colonial schooling—he was more intimate with Shakespeare and the English Revolution than with the writings and history of his own region.

Lamming's reflections on the personal circumstances which occasioned *The Pleasures of Exile* are suffused with his sense of the book's historical

18. For a thematic rather than a historical survey of the figure of Caliban in Third World writing, see Charlotte H. Bruner, "The Meaning of Caliban in Black Literature Today," *Comparative Literature Studies* 13 (Sept. 1976): 240–53.

19. See C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York, 1963).

moment. Writing on the brink of the sixties, he was highly conscious that colonial Africa and the Caribbean were entering a new phase. The political mood of the book is expectant ("Caliban's history . . . belongs entirely to the future" [*PE*, p. 107]), most evidently in his account of an envious visit to Ghana, the first of the newly independent African states. That trip sharpened his anguished sense of the British West Indies' failure as yet to achieve comparable autonomy. He recalls the intensity of that feeling in his introduction to the 1984 edition: "There were no independent countries in the English-speaking Caribbean when I started to write *The Pleasures of Exile* in 1959. With the old exceptions of Ethiopia and Liberia, there was only one in Black Africa, and that was Ghana. Twenty years later almost every rock and pebble in the Caribbean had acquired this status" (*PE*, p. 7). While looking ahead to Caribbean self-determination, Lamming was also writing self-consciously in the aftermath of an action one year back that had quickened nationalist ambitions throughout the area: "Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution reordered our history. . . . The Cuban revolution was a Caribbean response to that imperial menace which Prospero conceived as a civilising mission" (*PE*, p. 7).

Lamming's relationship to decolonization is markedly distinct from Mannoni's. The Frenchman was in Madagascar as a social scientist observing and systematizing the psychological impulses behind an incipient struggle for national autonomy, while the Barbadian's reflections on decolonization are less distanced and more personal, as he declares himself to be Caliban's heir. Lamming's and Mannoni's different tacks are most conspicuous in their treatment of Caliban's pronouncement: "You taught me language; and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse" (1.2.363–64). From that quotation Mannoni launches an analysis of the role in 1947–48 of the westernized Malagasies, some of whom had become so acculturated during study abroad that they could no longer engage with their countryfellows. The cross-cultural status of yet others who were less thoroughly assimilated but had become fluent in acrimony facilitated their rise to positions of leadership in the national resistance. Lamming, by contrast, takes up Caliban's remarks on language as one who is himself a substantially Europeanized Third Worlder, a West Indian nationalist living in England, and someone reluctant to segregate his theoretical from his autobiographical insights.²⁰ Much of the personal urgency of Lamming's text

20. Given the antipathy between Trinidadian-born V. S. Naipaul and the more radical Lamming, and given Lamming's identification with Caliban, it is probable that Naipaul had the Barbadian in mind in his fictional *A Flag on the Island*, where the narrator parodies Caribbean celebrations of Caliban by citing a local autobiography, *I Hate You: One Man's Search for Identity*, which opens: "I am a man without identity. Hate has consumed my identity. My personality has been distorted by hate. My hymns have not been hymns of praise, but of hate. How terrible to be Caliban, you say. But I say, how tremendous. Tremendousness is therefore my unlikely subject" (Naipaul, *A Flag on the Island* [London, 1967], p. 154).

stems from his assimilation of Caliban's linguistic predicament to his own. As a writer by vocation, he is especially alert to the way colonialism has generated linguistic discrimination, to how, as a West Indian born into English, he is branded a second-class speaker of his first language.

Though Lamming addresses the question of the unlanded Caliban who declares "This island's mine," he dwells most obsessively on the educational inheritance which he finds enunciated in the speech "You taught me language." While the nationalist struggle provides a shaping context for *The Pleasures of Exile*, Lamming's Caliban is not just any colonial subject but specifically the colonized writer-intellectual, the marginal person of letters. Lamming's root frustration is the ostensible lack of parity between the possibilities for political and for cultural freedom. Come formal independence, the people may establish their own laws and governments, but won't Caribbean writers still lag behind, permanently shackled to the colonizer's language—whether English, French, or Spanish—since it is the only one they have? "Prospero lives in the absolute certainty that Language which is his gift to Caliban is the very prison in which Caliban's achievements will be realised and restricted. Caliban can never reach perfection, not even the perfection implicit in Miranda's privileged ignorance" (*PE*, p. 110).²¹ That is, as long as Caliban is still bound to his former master's language, he is still partly condemned to live the life of a servant.

What holds for language holds equally for culture in general. If Caliban's accent sounds sour and deformed to the British ear, so too his knowledge of British traditions—no matter how relentlessly they have been drummed into him in Barbados—will be shown up as flawed and fragmentary. Yet on this score Lamming is unevenly pessimistic, for his very appropriation of *The Tempest* testifies to his faith in the Caribbean intellectual's capacity to scale the conventional heights of British culture. Instead of deferring slavishly to a British norm, Lamming manages—with Caliban's lines at the ready—to treat that norm as a pretext for and object of abuse. To write about Shakespeare is a strategy for commanding a hearing in the West, but he values this audibility primarily because it enables him to draw attention to his ostracism. He is only too aware of the implications of quoting Shakespeare to legitimate his "illegitimate" treatment of that same hallowed author:

It is my intention to make use of *The Tempest* as a way of presenting a certain state of feeling which is the heritage of the exiled and colonial writer from the British Caribbean.

21. Cf. the remark by Chris Searle, another writer who reads Caribbean culture through the Prospero–Caliban dichotomy: "The ex-master's language . . . is still the currency of communication which buys out the identity of the child as soon as he begins to acquire it" (Searle, *The Forsaken Lover*, p. 29).

Naturally, I anticipate from various quarters the obvious charge of blasphemy; yet there are occasions when blasphemy must be seen as one privilege of the excluded Caliban. [PE, p. 9]

Lamming seizes the outcast's prerogative to impiety in part to shake the insiders' monopoly of a text that draws and bears on Caribbean history. But this destructive impulse feeds a more positive one: the desire to mount an indigenous countertradition, with a reinterpreted Caliban from 1611 and the contemporary, about-to-be-liberated Antillean of 1959 flanking that tradition. So for all its dense, original analogies between *The Tempest* and the Caribbean of the late fifties, what is at stake in *The Pleasures of Exile* is something larger than the immediate, local value of a Shakespearean play: it is the very possibility of decolonizing the area's cultural history by replacing an imposed with an endemic line of thought and action. Within the context of this grand design, the initial gesture of annexing Shakespeare was pivotal, as it generated a Caliban who could stand as a prototype for successive Caribbean figures in whom cultural and political activism were to cohere. Lamming's reconstructed tradition runs through Toussaint Louverture, C. L. R. James, and Fidel Castro to the author himself who, like many of his generation of West Indian writers, immigrated to England to embark on a literary career but while there also pressed for his region's independence. That these particular figures should have been selected to brace the countertradition points to Lamming's conviction that—linguistic dilemmas notwithstanding—Caribbean culture and politics had been and should ideally continue to be allies in each other's decolonization.

In spirit, Lamming's dissident reassessment of one of the high texts of European culture had been matched by the Trinidadian James' reverse angle in *The Black Jacobins* on one of the most celebrated periods of European history, the French Revolution. *The Pleasures of Exile* is designed to make these two unorthodox gestures seem of a piece, through remarks such as "[there] C. L. R. James shows us Caliban as Prospero had never known him" (PE, p. 119). James' Caliban is Toussaint Louverture, leader of the first successful Caribbean struggle for independence, the Haitian slave revolt of 1791–1803. As the title of his book might suggest, James was concerned to dredge up a counternarrative, from a Caribbean perspective, of events which had been submerged beneath the freight of Eurocentric history. For Lamming, James' action and others like it were essential to the establishment of a Calibanic lineage; but once established, that lineage had still to be sustained, which would require one salvaging operation after another. This apprehension was borne out when, at the time of writing *The Pleasures of Exile*, Lamming discovered that James' book, out of print for twenty years, was in danger of sinking into neglect. So he set himself the task of doing in turn for James what James had

done for Louverture: keeping afloat a vital, remedial tradition that was threatening to disappear.

During the era of decolonization, negritude proved to be one of the strongest components of this remedial tradition, and it was the negritudist from Martinique, Césaire, who came to renovate *The Tempest* theatrically for black cultural ends in a manner indebted to Lamming if fiercer in its defiance. These two writers' approaches coincided most explicitly in their determination to unearth an endemic lineage of cultural-cum-political activists; it is telling that within the space of two years, each man published a book resuscitating Toussaint Louverture and celebrating his example.²²

Césaire's *Une Tempête* (1969) exemplifies the porous boundaries between European and Afro-Caribbean cultures even within the anticolonial endeavors of the period. As an influence on Césaire's response to Shakespeare, Lamming keeps company with Mannoni and the German critic, Janheinz Jahn. Mannoni had experience of French island colonies in both Africa and the Caribbean for, prior to his stint in Madagascar, he had served as an instructor in a Martinican school where Césaire had been his precocious student. More than twenty years later, in *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Césaire upbraided his former schoolmaster for not thinking through the implications of his colonial paradigm. And Césaire's subsequent, inevitably reactive adaptation of Shakespeare further demonstrated just how far he had diverged from Mannoni's motives for valuing *The Tempest*. More in keeping with the spirit of *Une Tempête* was Jahn's *Geschichte der neo-afrikanischen Literatur*, which appeared a few years before Césaire wrote his play. Jahn's pioneering study gave prominence to the Calibanesque in Mannoni and Lamming and, by designating the negritude writers (Césaire, Leopold Senghor, and Ousmane Diop) black cultural liberators à la Caliban, hinted at ideas that Césaire was to develop more amply. Notable among these was Jahn's attempt to counteract Lamming's dejected pronouncements about the confining character of Prospero's language by exhorting Caliban to free himself through cultural bilingualism—by recovering long-lost African strains and using them to offset the derivative, European components of his cultural identity. Jahn urged further that suitable elements of European culture be transformed into vehicles for black cultural values. Along these lines, negritude could be defined as “the successful revolt in which Caliban broke out of the prison of Prospero's language, by converting that language to his own needs of self-expression.”²³

Césaire has been quite explicit about his motives for reworking *The Tempest*:

22. See Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile*, and Césaire, *Toussaint Louverture: la révolution française et le problème colonial* (Paris, 1961).

23. Janheinz Jahn, *Neo-African Literature: A History of Black Writing*, trans. Oliver Coburn and Ursula Lehrburger (New York, 1969), p. 242.

I was trying to 'de-mythify' the tale. To me Prospero is the complete totalitarian. I am always surprised when others consider him the wise man who 'forgives'. What is most obvious, even in Shakespeare's version, is the man's absolute will to power. Prospero is the man of cold reason, the man of methodical conquest—in other words, a portrait of the 'enlightened' European. And I see the whole play in such terms: the 'civilized' European world coming face to face for the first time with the world of primitivism and magic. Let's not hide the fact that in Europe the world of reason has inevitably led to various kinds of totalitarianism . . . Caliban is the man who is still close to his beginnings, whose link with the natural world has not yet been broken. Caliban can still *participate* in a world of marvels, whereas his master can merely 'create' them through his acquired knowledge. At the same time, Caliban is also a rebel—the positive hero, in a Hegelian sense. The slave is always more important than his master—for it is the slave who makes history.²⁴

Césaire's perception of Prospero as "the man of methodical conquest" and his insistence on the slave as the preeminent historical agent become the touchstones for his radically polarized adaptation of Shakespeare. Forgiveness and reconciliation give way to irreconcilable differences; the roles of Ferdinand and Miranda are whittled down to a minimum; and the play's colonial dimensions are writ large. Antonio and Alonso vie with Prospero for control over newly charted lands abroad, and Shakespeare's rightful Duke of Milan is delivered to the island not by the providence of a "happy storm" but through a confederacy rooted in imperial ambitions. Prospero is demythologized and rendered contemporary by making him altogether less white magical and a master of the technology of oppression; his far from inscrutable power is embodied in antiriot control gear and an arsenal. Violating rather than communing with life on the island, he is, in Caliban's phrase, the "*anti-Natur*."

Une Tempête self-consciously counterpoises the materialist Prospero with an animistic slave empowered by a culture that coexists empathetically with nature. Indeed, Caliban's culture of resistance is his sole weaponry, but it is more formidable than the shallow culture Shakespeare permits him, as Césaire plumbs the depths of the slave's African past to make him a more equal adversary.²⁵ Caliban's defiance is expressed most strongly through the celebration of the Yoruba gods Shango and Eshu; two of his four songs of liberation fete Shango, an African figure who has

24. Césaire, quoted in S. Belhassen, "Aimé Césaire's *A Tempête*," in *Radical Perspectives in the Arts*, ed. Lee Baxandall (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 176.

25. For the fullest discussion concerning Césaire's Africanizing of Shakespeare, see Thomas A. Hale, "Aimé Césaire: His Literary and Political Writings with a Bio-bibliography" (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1974), and "Sur *Une tempête* d'Aimé Césaire," *Etudes Littéraires* 6 (1973): 21–34.

survived in Caribbean voodoo and Brazilian macumba. And in a critical irruption, Eshu scatters Prospero's carefully ordered classical masque, making the imported divinities seem precious, effete, and incongruous.

Césaire's Caliban also goes beyond Shakespeare's in his refusal to subscribe to the etiquette of subjugation:

CALIBAN: Uhuru!

PROSPERO: Qu'est-ce que tu dis?

CALIBAN: Je dis Uhuru!

PROSPERO: Encore une remontée de ton langage barbare.
Je t'ai déjà dit que n'arrive pas ça. D'ailleurs, tu
pourrais être poli, un bonjour ne te tuerait pas!²⁶

This opening exchange between Caliban and his colonial overlord sets the stage for Césaire's conviction that the culture of slaves need not be an enslaved culture. Here he is more optimistic than Lamming, who saw Caribbean cultures of resistance as ineluctably circumscribed by the colonizer's language; one thinks particularly of Lamming in Ghana, casting an envious eye over children chatting in their indigenous tongue, a language that "owed Prospero no debt of vocabulary" (*PE*, p. 162). Even if Césaire's Caliban cannot throw off European influences entirely, his recuperation of a residual past is sufficient to secure his relative cultural autonomy. Crucially, his first utterance is "Uhuru," the Swahili term for freedom which gained international currency through the struggles for decolonization in the late fifties and sixties. And Caliban retorts to Prospero's demand for a *bonjour* by charging that he has only been instructed in the colonial tongue so he can submit to the magisterial imperatives, and by declaring that he will no longer respond to the name Caliban, a colonial invention bound anagrammatically to the degrading "cannibal." Instead, the island's captive king christens himself "X" in a Black Muslim gesture that commemorates his lost name, buried beneath layers of colonial culture. The play supposes, in sum, that Caribbean colonial subjects can best fortify their revolt by reviving, wherever possible, cultural forms dating back to before that wracking sea-change which was the Middle Passage.

Césaire's remark that the slave, as maker of history, "is always more important than his master" has both a retrospective and an anticipatory force, pointing back to Louverture, Haiti, and the only triumphant slave revolt, and forward through the present to colonialism's demise. Césaire steeps his play most explicitly in the contemporary Afro-Caribbean struggles for self-determination when he stages, via Ariel and Caliban, the debate, ubiquitous in the late fifties and sixties, between the rival strategies for

26. Césaire, *Une Tempête: D'après "la Tempête" de Shakespeare — Adaptation pour un théâtre nègre* (Paris, 1969), p. 24.

liberation advanced by proponents of evolutionary and revolutionary change. The mulatto Ariel shuns violence and holds that, faced with Prospero's stockpiled arsenal, they are more likely to win freedom through conciliation than refractoriness. But from Caliban's perspective Ariel is a colonial collaborator, a political and cultural sellout who, aspiring both to rid himself nonviolently of Prospero and to emulate his values, is reduced to negotiating for liberty from a position of powerlessness. The success of Caliban's uncompromising strategies is imminent at the end of the drama. When the other Europeans return to Italy, Prospero is unable to accompany them, for he is in the thrall of a psychological battle with his slave (shades of Mannoni here), shouting "Je défendrai la civilisation!" but intuiting that "le climat a changé." At the close, Caliban is chanting ecstatically, "La Liberté Ohé, La Liberté," and defying the orders of a master whose authority and sanity are teetering.²⁷

Césaire, then, radically reassessed *The Tempest* in terms of the circumstances of his region, taking the action to the brink of colonialism's demise. He valued the play because he saw its potential as a vehicle for dramatizing the evolution of colonialism in his region and for sharpening the contemporary ideological alternatives open to would-be-liberated Antilleans. Césaire sought, from an openly interested standpoint, to amend the political acoustics of Shakespeare's play, to make the action resonate with the dangers of supine cultural assimilation, a concern since his student days that was accentuated during the high period of decolonization. This renovation of the play for black cultural ends was doubly impertinent: besides treating a classic sacrilegiously, it implicitly lampooned the educational practice, so pervasive in the colonies, of distributing only bowdlerized versions of Shakespeare, of watering him down "for the natives." *Une Tempête* can thus be read as parodying this habit by indicating how the bard might have looked were he indeed made fit reading for a subject people.

Césaire's play was published in 1969. The years 1968 through 1971 saw the cresting of Caribbean and African interest in *The Tempest* as a succession of essayists, novelists, poets, and dramatists sought to integrate the play into the cultural forces pitted against colonialism. During those four years, *The Tempest* was appropriated among the Caribbeans by Césaire, Fernández Retamar (twice), Lamming (in a novelistic reworking of some of the ideas first formulated in *The Pleasures of Exile*), and the Barbadian poet Edward Braithwaite. In Africa, the play was taken up during the same period by John Pepper Clark in Nigeria, Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Kenya, and David Wallace in Zambia.²⁸ Among these, Braithwaite and

27. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

28. See Fernández Retamar, "Cuba Hasta Fidel," *Bohemia* 61 (19 September 1969): 84–97, and "Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America"; Lamming, *Water with Berries* (London, 1971); Edward Braithwaite, *Islands* (London, 1969), pp. 34–38; John Pepper Clark, "The Legacy of Caliban," *Black Orpheus* 2 (Feb. 1968): 16–39;

Fernández Retamar followed Lamming's lead, finding a topical, regional urgency for the play through articulating the Cuban revolution to Caliban's revolt. Braithwaite's poem, "Caliban," salutes the Cuban revolution against a backdrop of lamentation over the wrecked state of the Caribbean. The body of the poem, with its clipped calypso phrasing, knits together allusions to Caliban's song, "'Ban, 'Ban, Ca-Caliban,'" Ferdinand's speech, "Where should this music be?" and Ariel's response, "Full fadom five." But it is Caliban the slave, not the royal Alonso, who suffers a sea-change, falling "through the water's / cries / down / down / down / where the music hides / him / down / down / down / where the si- / lence lies." And he is revived not by Ariel's ethereal strains and, behind them, Prospero's white magic, but by the earthy music of the carnival and the intercession of black gods.²⁹

But it was Fernández Retamar, a prominent figure in the cultural renovation of postrevolutionary Cuba, whose interest in the play was most specifically sparked by that nation's experience of decolonization. He first brought *The Tempest* glancingly to bear on the circumstances of his region in "Cuba Hasta Fidel" (1969); two years later he elaborated more fully on this correspondence. The second essay, "Caliban: Notes Towards a Discussion of Culture in Our America," at once passionately chronicles the accumulative symbolic significance of Caliban and commemorates those whose deeds and utterances bodied forth the author's conception of the Calibanesque. This sixty-five-page exhortative history draws together many of the issues deliberated by earlier writers:

Our symbol then is not Ariel . . . but rather Caliban. This is something that we, the *mestizo* inhabitants of these same isles where

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, "Towards a National Culture," *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture, and Politics* (Westport, Conn., 1983); David Wallace, *Do You Love Me Master?* (Lusaka, 1977). In Lamming's allegorical novel, Caliban resurfaces in the form of three West Indian artists who reside in London and collectively play out the dilemmas of colonizer–colonized entanglements during the era of decolonization. Clark's reflections turn on the relation between "the colonial flag and a cosmopolitan language." Clark both follows and reroutes Lamming's insights on this subject as, unlike his Caribbean predecessor, he approaches English from an African perspective, that is, as a second language. Ngugi's essay, published in 1972, was originally delivered at a conference in 1969. In it he assails Prospero for first dismantling Caliban's heritage and then denying that such a culture ever existed. Ngugi proceeds to sketch strategies for reaffirming the value of that damaged inheritance, notably by decolonizing language and education. Wallace's play was first performed in 1971. Regional nuances aside, *Do You Love Me Master?* is much of a piece with trends already discussed: aided by rioting prisoners, Caliban, a cursing Zambian "houseboy," drives the "bossman," Prospero, out of the country. In the final scene Prospero's stick, more truncheon than wand, is broken, and the crowd encircles the master shouting "Out, out!" and waves banners proclaiming freedom. The play incorporates songs in three African languages.

29. Braithwaite, "Caliban," *Islands*, p. 36.

Caliban lived, see with particular clarity: Prospero invaded the islands, killed our ancestors, enslaved Caliban, and taught him his language to make himself understood. What else can Caliban do but use that same language—today he has no other—to curse him, to wish that the “red plague” would fall on him? I know no other metaphor more expressive of our cultural situation, of our reality. [“C,” p. 24]

Fernández Retamar proceeds to list thirty-five exemplary Calibans, among them Louverture, Castro, Césaire, and Fanon. And just as Lamming had singled out Louverture for special treatment, here José Martí, the late nineteenth-century Cuban intellectual and political activist who died in the struggle for Cuban independence, is commended at length for his fidelity to the spirit of Caliban.³⁰

Fernández Retamar, as flagrantly as Lamming, makes it apparent how little interest he has in affecting any “scholarly distance” from *The Tempest*. Far from striving to efface his personality, affiliations, and the circumstances of his reading of *The Tempest*, he steeps his essay in occasion and function and speaks consistently in the first-person plural, a voice that inflects his words with a sense of collective autobiography. His interest is in the advantage to be derived from the play by a community who, from a European perspective, could possess at best an ancillary understanding of Shakespeare and, at worst, would be likely perpetrators of barbarous error.³¹ Yet that very exclusion conferred on them a coherent identity: “For it is the coloniser who brings us together, who reveals the profound similarities existing above and beyond our secondary differences” (“C,” p. 14). Oppositional appropriations of *The Tempest* could be enabling because “to assume our condition as Caliban implies rethinking our history from the *other* side, from the viewpoint of the *other* protagonist” (“C,” p. 28). Put differently, having the nerve to push the play against the Western critical grain, marginalized Caribbeans were relieved of the struggle, unwinnable in Western terms, to gain admission to the *right* side. Their brazen unorthodoxy thus became instrumental in redefining the *wrong* as the *other* side, in opening up a space for themselves where their own cultural values need no longer be derided as savage and deformed.

Fernández Retamar’s essay is synoptic yet retains a distinctively Cuban bent, illustrative of the diversity among the consistently adversarial readings

30. The strong historical presence of Martí in the essay is redoubled by Fernández Retamar’s invocation, from the same era, of José Enrique Rodó’s *Ariel*. Published in 1900, this Uruguayan novel was written in direct response to the 1898 American intervention in Cuba. Rodó identifies Latin America with Ariel, not Caliban.

31. The European suspicion that colonized people would treat Shakespeare with, to invoke Fernández Retamar’s phrase, “presumed barbarism” was starkly evident when the Parisian critics dismissed Césaire’s *Une Tempête* as a “betrayal” of the bard. See Hale, “Sur *Une Tempête* d’Aimé Césaire,” p. 21.

of the play. For one thing, Cuba straddles the Caribbean and Latin America geographically and culturally, and Fernández Retamar's arguments are marked by this double affinity. His focus is hemispheric, and his Caliban, originally the victim of European conquistadors, now labors more directly under North American imperialism. And coming from a society where mulattos predominate, he instinctively defines "our America" as *mestizaje*, as culturally and ethnically mixed; the conflict between Prospero and Caliban is consequently seen in class rather than racial terms.³² Where for the negritudist Césaire Caliban had most emphatically to be black and Ariel, the favored servant and counterrevolutionary, to be mulatto (a correspondence between race and privilege native to Martinique and much of the formerly French and British Caribbean), for Fernández Retamar, the Ariel-Caliban split is predominantly one of class. The lofty Ariel is representative of the intellectual who must choose between collaborating with Prospero and deliberately allying himself with Caliban, the exploited proletarian who is to advance revolutionary change.

Lemuel Johnson's volume of poems, *highlife for caliban* (1973), marks the decline of *The Tempest's* value as an oppositional force in decolonizing cultures. Johnson writes out of the historical experience of Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, a forlorn city of slaves who had been liberated by Britain and had resettled there. Their freedom is announced but scarcely felt as such. The backdrop to the poems is neocolonial: Caliban is now head of state, but his nationalist ideals have become corrupted and enfeebled by power. By the same token, he has experienced the gulf between formal independence and authentic autonomy, as his nation remains in Prospero's cultural and economic thrall and the final exorcism of the master seems improbable. This condition is psychologically dissipating, for "it is the neocolonial event that finally divests Caliban of that which had kept him whole—a dream of revenge against Prospero. But how shall he now revenge himself upon himself?"³³

The Tempest's value for African and Caribbean intellectuals faded once the plot ran out. The play lacks a sixth act which might have been enlisted for representing relations among Caliban, Ariel, and Prospero once they entered a postcolonial era, or rather (in Harry Magdoff's phrase), an era of "imperialism without colonies."³⁴ Over time, Caliban's recovery of his island has proved a qualified triumph, with the autonomy

32. See Marta E. Sánchez, "Caliban: The New Latin-American Protagonist of *The Tempest*," *Diacritics* 6 (Spring 1976): 54–61.

33. Sylvia Wynter, "Afterword," in Lemuel Johnson, *highlife for caliban* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1973), p. 137.

34. Harry Magdoff, "Imperialism without Colonies," in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, ed. Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (New York, 1972), pp. 144–70.

of his emergent nation far more compromised than was imagined by the generation of more optimistic nationalists—politicians and writers alike—who saw independence in. Third Worlders have found it difficult to coax from the play analogies with these new circumstances wherein Prospero, having officially relinquished authority over the island, so often continues to manage it from afar.

With the achievement of formal independence, the anticolonial spirit of insurrection has been dampened and the assertive calls to reconstruct endemic cultures attenuated. By the early seventies the generation of more idealistic (and often more literary) leaders who bridged the periods pre- and postindependence was being replaced by a cohort of Third World leaders who in power have become preoccupied, as Edward Said has noted, primarily with technocratic concerns and defense.³⁵ Issues of national or racial identity have largely been superseded by issues of survival. In this climate, Shakespeare's play has been drained of the immediate, urgent value it was once found to have, and the moment has passed when a man like Lamming could assert so sanguinely that "*The Tempest* was also prophetic of a political future which is our present. Moreover, the circumstances of my life, both as a colonial and exiled descendant of Caliban in the twentieth century, is an example of that prophecy" (*PE*, p. 13). The play's declining pertinence to contemporary Africa and the Caribbean has been exacerbated by the difficulty of wresting from it any role for female defiance or leadership in a period when protest is coming increasingly from that quarter. Given that Caliban is without a female counterpart in his oppression and rebellion, and given the largely autobiographical cast of African and Caribbean appropriations of the play, it follows that all the writers who quarried from *The Tempest* an expression of their lot should have been men. This assumption of heroic revolt as a preeminently male province is most palpable in Fernández Retamar's inclusion of only one woman in his list of thirty-five activists and intellectuals who exemplify the Calibanesque.

Between the late fifties and early seventies *The Tempest* was valued and competed for both by those (in the "master"-culture's terms) traditionally possessed of discrimination and those traditionally discriminated against. On the one hand, a broad evaluative agreement existed between the two sets of feuding cultures, the colonizers and the colonized both regarding the play highly. On the other hand, the two groups brought utterly different social ambitions to bear on the play. Writers and intellectuals from the colonies appropriated *The Tempest* in a way that was outlandish in the original sense of the word. They reaffirmed the play's

35. See Edward Said, "In the Shadow of the West," *Wedge* 7/8 (Winter/Spring 1985), p. 10.

importance from outside its central tradition not passively or obsequiously, but through what may best be described as a series of insurrectional endorsements. For in that turbulent and intensely reactive phase of Caribbean and African history, *The Tempest* came to serve as a Trojan horse, whereby cultures barred from the citadel of “universal” Western values could win entry and assail those global pretensions from within.