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Césaire and Shakespeare: Two Tempests

IN 1969 the Martinican playwright Aimé Césaire published *Une Tempête: d'après "La Tempête" de Shakespeare—adaptation pour un théâtre nègre*.¹ Critical opinion of the play has for the most part fallen into two types of hasty generalization. The subtitle has led some commentators to believe that Césaire's play should be considered as but one more modern version of Shakespeare, this one having ethnic overtones. Others have concluded, on the basis of an earlier statement by Césaire that he intended to write a play on the contemporary racial situation in the United States, that his *Tempest* must be read allegorically. These readers choose to see Martin Luther King in Césaire's Ariel and Malcolm X in his Caliban.² Both groups underestimate the significance of the play as contemporary drama and fail to assess critically its relationship to the Shakespearean model. Césaire's initial impetus came from the director of his two previously staged plays, Jean-Marie Serreau, who had in mind a straight adaptation. Having insisted upon a free hand in his approach to the *Tempest*, Césaire proceeded to compose a play in which the question of originality is intimately linked to that of

adaptation. Comparison of these two plays leads necessarily to considerations of theater as a critical reflection on the value system of western humanism. Césaire has adopted a strategy of systematic selectivity and reordering of priorities; considerations of a more technical nature are subordinated to a basic shift in vision. In stating that his *Tempest* is an adaptation for a black theater Césaire has suggested his governing principle: the master/slave relationship, incidental and justified in Shakespeare, is made preeminent by the Martinican. Césaire's island is not the *theatrum mundi*; it is a model of a Caribbean society in which human relations are determined by a dialectic of opposites grounded in "master/slave" and extending to "sadism/masochism."

The reader of the play is informed at the outset of some major alterations. Césaire has added an African god, Eshu, to counterbalance the divinities of classical antiquity in the masque of Shakespeare's Act IV. In designating Ariel as a slave (ethnically a mulatto) and Caliban as a black slave, Césaire has set the action within a recognizable set of Caribbean problems of material and cultural dominance. Not so identified is "Le Meneur de jeu" who holds forth as the players choose the masks of the characters whose roles they are to assume. The atmosphere of play which he suggests is reinforced by the stage directions specifying psychodrama as the generic type of play. Although contemporary in the appeal it makes to the audience, Césaire's *Tempest* in this respect does have a distant analogue in Shakespeare. Prospero's Epilogue functions in part to draw the audience into the illusion, requesting their collaboration by way of conclusion. Prospero thus identifies himself as the masque presenter. Césaire solicits his audience before the curtain rises on Act I, in the speech of "Le Meneur de jeu."

The first impression one has on comparing the two texts is that Césaire has condensed considerably with a substantial loss in the variety and poetic suggestiveness of Shakespeare's language. This is not simply a result of that rationalizing, analytical tendency of the French language that has regularly plagued translators of Shakespeare since Voltaire. One has only to recall the much richer texture of *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* to be reassured of Césaire's talent for expanding the range of the language. We shall see in due course that this narrowing of the focus of the play responds to a quite different set of exigencies.

Shakespeare's marvelous opening scene with its direct presentation of the storm at sea has been largely rewritten by Césaire, who has cut out the nautical stage business almost completely. Furthermore, details which in Shakespeare are related by Ariel to Prospero (I.ii) are reassigned by Césaire to Gonzalo and Ferdinand at the end of Scene i. The first of Césaire's systematic anachronisms occurs here as well: he has the crew of the presumably sinking ship raise a chorus of "Nearer My

¹ Paris, 1969. Collection Théâtre, No. 22. *Présence Africaine* had published the preoriginal, which presents some variants, the preceding year.

² See René Richard, "Césaire et Shakespeare . . .," in *Le Théâtre négro-africain* (Paris, 1971), pp. 122-34; Rodney E. Harris, *L'Humanisme dans le théâtre d'Aimé Césaire* (Ottawa, 1973), p. 14; Richard Bonneau, "Comparaison entre 'La Tempête' de W. Shakespeare et 'Une Tempête' d'Aimé Césaire," *Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan*, 4, Série D-Lettres (1971), p. 81; and Michel Benamou, "Demiurgic Imagery in Césaire's Theatre," *PA*, No. 93 (1975), 165-77. This identification is set within its proper socio-political matrix by Thomas A. Hale in "Sur *Une Tempête* d'Aimé Césaire," *ELit*, 6, No. 1 (April 1973), 21-34.

God to Thee." When the play was staged at the Cité Universitaire of the University of Paris in October-November 1969, the two colonizing drunken sailors Trinculo and Stephano in a later scene sang the "Internationale" to the great distress of the reviewer for the Communist *Lettres françaises*.³ Since this detail does not appear in the printed text of the play it may well have been introduced by Jean-Marie Serreau, as the same reviewer surmised. We may initially interpret these occasionally jarring devices as formal reminders that we are not to rely on the play's Shakespearean origins for our understanding of it. The derisive function of this and related techniques may in fact be a legacy of Brecht by way of Serreau, whose stage practice he has strongly influenced.

In the second scene Césaire has economized on the exposition of the plot while introducing two non-Shakespearean themes: colonialism and religious fanaticism, the latter functioning in collaboration with the former. Prospero's relation of their history to Miranda is interrupted by a retrospective scene, presumably announced by a lighting change, in which an agent of the Inquisition reads the charges brought against Prospero. In Césaire's version it was this arm of the Church which abandoned Prospero and his daughter on the desert isle rather than face a trial in which Prospero would presumably have made a good defense of his humanist practice. Nor is this the only change in motivation on which Césaire has based his plot. Shakespeare's palace revolt has been displaced in favor of a grander scheme more in accord with the thematic complex of exploration, conquest, exploitation, and enslavement, all of which are closely related and finally inseparable for Césaire. Alonso and Antonio sought to divide between them the colonial empire Prospero himself had intended to found in the lands recently explored as a result of his own projections and mapping. At this very early point in the play Césaire reorients our understanding of the complete Renaissance man: he is the learned humanist who is suspect to the Church but, more importantly, he is the explorer-navigator whose enormous energies are directed toward territorial expansion through colonization. On a more personal plane this motivation will later be supplemented by the revelation in Prospero of a quite Adlerian complex of domination. For Césaire this psychological trait is a personal development of the expansion of Europe, not in any sense its cause. Our latter-day Prospero is presented as the agent of European capitalism at its inception. Alonso and Antonio are not essentially different from him in this respect. Quite consistent in their actions, they have merely dispossessed Prospero so that they may better exploit his lands for their own profit.

Several elements essential to the plot of Shakespeare's *Tempest* either disappear entirely or are pushed discreetly into the background as a result of this major shift of emphasis. Césaire's Prospero is not primarily a magician; the important references to his art, his robes, and his books have no significant function here. Aside from the magical pass which immobilizes the sword arm of Ferdinand, Césaire has ignored the magical import of numerous phenomena in the play. Whereas Ariel informs Ferdinand that Prospero is a magician, Caliban refers to him as an inventor. The illusions of Shakespeare's Prospero become weapons in the arsenal of Césaire's, who is already a Cartesian rationalist in his approach to problem solving. The reconciliation theme, which for many Shakespeare scholars has assumed paramount importance,⁴ builds to its climax and resolution in the final scene of the Elizabethan play. With the union of Ferdinand and Miranda, itself related to the theme of reconciliation, and Prospero's renunciation of his magic, it constitutes the whole of Shakespeare's dénouement (V.i). Césaire of course has quite another end in view. This explains the haste with which he dispatches the reconciliation much earlier in the play (II.iii) at the close of the second act.

In Act I, Scene ii, Césaire appears to accumulate a series of inconsistencies any one of which would stand out as a flaw in more conventional dramatic terms. Even assuming the motivation assigned to Alonso and Antonio, we find our sense of verisimilitude stretched beyond reasonable bounds when we are invited to accept that they themselves, as reigning heads of Renaissance city states, should have made a perilous sea voyage to supervise the progress of colonization. Césaire expects his audience to grasp this inconsistency and to draw appropriate conclusions. The time being played out before us is not to be taken as a historical moment in the development of colonialism. If Alonso and Antonio stand symbolically at the beginning of that history, Césaire's Caliban prefigures its end in his cry of "Freedom! Now!" Prospero draws together these otherwise incompatible characters on the psychological, not the historical, plane. The time of Césaire's play is itself a symbol of history achieved by telescoping the several moments of its process. Again we find ourselves at a great remove from the sense of the symbolic in Shakespeare. In the same way we are obliged to correct our perspective on Ariel when (in I.ii) he expresses his concern that the ship bearing the royal party may indeed have been lost in the storm. Ariel himself is identified as an "intellectual" by Prospero, who has only disdain for Ariel's attack of conscience. Insofar as we may con-

⁴ Frank Kermode, "Introduction" *Arden Edition of the Works of William*

tinue to regard Césaire's Ariel as a spirit, he now appears in the guise of a Hegelian pure spirit, as reviewed and corrected by Marx. There has been no agreement beforehand concerning the term of Ariel's service to Prospero. Our colonial ruler will consult only his own advantage and good pleasure in deciding to grant freedom to Ariel at the end of the play. History as it has been understood by positivist scholarship is likewise of questionable assistance in the interpretation of Caliban's shout of "Uhuru!" That an African slave in the Caribbean is unlikely to have spoken Swahili is true enough. But the aim of this detail is, like the foregoing examples, not narrowly historical. The cry "Uhuru!" has gained a universal currency since it first shook European colonialism in the 1950s. It is a contemporary symbolic import that Césaire strives to achieve. A remarkable economy of means has enabled him to provide his audience with these various guides to interpretation by the end of Act I.

The essentially comic scene (II.i) in which Shakespeare pits Sebastian and Antonio against Gonzalo does not survive adaptation intact. Some elements are segmented and redistributed by Césaire (in II.ii), notably Gonzalo's monologue—deriving from Montaigne—on the ideal commonwealth. However, the Utopian elements are submerged so as to render Gonzalo's position as a mere variation on colonialism. Gonzalo, too, intends to colonize the island but without corrupting the noble savage by importing European values. He would keep his Utopia as a place of rest and recreation for tired Europeans: in terms of contemporary Martinican reality a prototype for the Club Méditerranée (idyllic but rigidly set apart from "native" life). Césaire's derisive critical spirit thus spares not even the good Gonzalo, who emerges (in II.ii) as a Renaissance proponent of international tourism.

Césaire has chosen to open his second act at the moment of Act II, Scene ii, in Shakespeare. He substitutes for Caliban's opening soliloquy on Prospero's magic a work song honoring Shango the African war god and Voodoo loa. This thematic Africanization is strongly reinforced by its position as the opening scene, which in all other respects is entirely of Césaire's invention. It is transformed into a dialogue on slavery and freedom between Caliban and Ariel. The Africanization of Caliban, who has already begun to assume the position of protagonist, is again reinforced by his affirmation of indigenous cultural values and most particularly by his insistence on the necessity of seizing his freedom. Ariel's role now becomes clear. He articulates coherently the position of moderation, conciliation, and nonviolence. He persists in believing that Prospero will eventually grant them their freedom if only they are clever and patient enough to appeal to his better nature. This is an absurd and self-defeating position in Caliban's view. In terms of the broader dia-

lectic of colonialism in Césaire's theater Ariel's is the position occupied by Hammarskjöld in *Une Saison au Congo*. Ariel's position is quite untenable in that he recognizes a bond with Caliban (their common enslavement) while attempting to play Prospero's game. His attitudes and behavior are of course discredited by Césaire in the unfolding of the play. The overall thrust of this scene in dramatic terms is to give special prominence to the political and racial themes by subordinating those elements of Shakespeare's play which occupied this crucial position. The comic treatment of the meeting between Stephano and Trinculo, their joint project of dominion over the island and exploitation of Caliban (Shakespeare's II.ii), is held in reserve by Césaire for the second scene of Act III, where it will not assume comparable importance.

Césaire's second act, unlike Shakespeare's, is comprised of three scenes. At first view it might seem that Césaire has simply pushed back the opening scene of his model with the alterations already mentioned. This would be far from accurate. An important ideological shift is implicit in the motif of the noble savage as Césaire's Gonzalo articulates it. In Shakespeare the inhabitant of the island, our Caliban, has a double genealogy through the Wild Man of Renaissance drama, "an inverted pastoral hero" (Kernode, p. xliii), and through the neo-Platonic doctrine according to which Caliban's "deformity is the result of evil natural magic" (p. xli). The implications of this set of assumptions, the foremost being the justification of Caliban's enslavement, are unacceptable to Césaire; indeed they are repugnant. Therefore he has drawn Gonzalo's commonwealth in the direction of a reading of Montaigne such as we might attribute to a Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. The aspect of Gonzalo's commonwealth that Césaire stresses appears then as a caricature of the edenic vision of this naïve disciple of Rousseau. He can satisfy thereby two requirements of his play: satirizing a humbug version of colonialism while avoiding the nastier implications of the scene in Shakespeare. Having accomplished this, Césaire cuts to Shakespeare's Act III, Scene iii (p. 84 of the 1954 Arden edition of *The Tempest*), with Alonso's fatigue as his only transitional device. The fairy banquet, like the other scenes of a spectacular nature, is treated somewhat perfunctorily. The modern stage as Césaire uses it does not call for the kind of elaborate machinery common to Renaissance court entertainments of the type Shakespeare was practicing here.⁵ More importantly Césaire could ill afford to keep intact scenes that represent digressions from the

⁵ It should be noted in this regard that J.-M. Serrean, in staging Césaire's *Une Tempête*, employed techniques used earlier by J.-L. Barrault for Claudel's *Le Soulier de satin* in order to create a multimedia effect: projection of slides, music, and figurative rhythm. See E. Bruno, "Une tempête," *Approdo*, No. 48 (Oct.-Dec. 1969), 156.

very spare elements of plot which he had retained from the Shakespearean play. We can attribute to thematic concerns (in the absence of a developed reconciliation motif) his dropping of Ariel's reprimand to Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio. Finally Shakespeare has the banquet table removed without permitting the royal party to dine. In Césaire's corresponding scene Prospero forces them to eat against their will. Here he takes advantage of a situation imposed by Shakespeare (the illusory banquet) to develop an aspect of a character which is quite lacking in Shakespeare and which profoundly modifies our conception of that character. It is at this point that Prospero reveals in a sadistic act that he is driven by a need to dominate: "Qu'ils se sentent manger dans ma main comme des poussins. C'est une marque de soumission que j'exige d'eux."⁶ To Ariel's observation that it is wrong to toy with the legitimate appetites and emotions of those already in his control Prospero retorts: "C'est à cela que se mesure la puissance. Je suis la Puissance" (p. 44).

Césaire has introduced a third and final scene in Act II which takes up the theme developed by Shakespeare in II.i: the abortive plot against Alonso's life. Once again, since the theme of reconciliation has been dispensed with, the significance of the plot is drastically altered. Shakespeare's Ariel intervenes only by waking Alonso and Gonzalo, thus staying the hand of the conspirators. Césaire's Ariel reveals immediately to Alonso that Prospero has just spared his life. Rather than signify something like the spiritual reconciliation so important to Shakespeare and presumably to his audience, this gesture by Ariel serves to indicate that Alonso is entirely in the power of Prospero who has, for his own reasons, spared the life of his rival. Taking Act II as a whole we find that Césaire has placed Caliban solidly in the position of the protagonist with Prospero as his antagonist. Consequently the affairs of Prospero, Alonso, and Antonio—and their eventual resolution—are reduced to the status of a secondary plot in which the Europeans, colonialists to a man, are seen not as different in their nature but as occupying different positions on a scale of power: from the impotent but greedy Stephano and Trinculo to the all-powerful, godlike Prospero.

In Shakespeare a fourth and fifth act of one scene each conclude the play. There is an internal logic to Césaire's incorporating both within a structure in three acts. The fourth act included the masque and, according to some interpreters, the antimasque in which Caliban's crew is chased by Prospero's hounds. These elements of Renaissance drama had no place in Césaire's poetics. As we shall see, the introduction of

Eshu into the ballet of goddesses serves to transform what little he does retain of the Shakespearean masque. The purpose of Act V, devoted to the pardon and reconciliation of one generation and the union of the second through Ferdinand and Miranda, has already been summarily treated by Césaire (in II.iii). The result is an important gain in concentration of the dramatic action as it has been conceived by Césaire, who opens his third and final act in a way designed to incorporate these modifications so as to enhance the role of Caliban.

Just as Caliban is given the first word in Act II, so he is present at the interview (III.i) between Ferdinand and Miranda, thereby denying even momentary prominence to their courtship, which Césaire handles in a very un-Shakespearean manner. Taking up once again the working hypothesis of a caricature of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, we can readily see its usefulness in aiding the transformation of the young lovers Ferdinand and Miranda into an ironic portrayal of Paul and Virginia. It is possible although by no means self-evident that Césaire has suggested this parallel (in III.ii), following the first interview between Ferdinand and Miranda. The name Virginia occurs in Trinculo's song ambiguously and can refer either to a woman or to the colony in the New World. The suggestion would in this case be a subliminal one for the reader or spectator. This parallel is far more likely to occur to a French audience, for whom Paul and Virginia function as the cultural archetype of the innocent young lovers on a remote and naturally beneficent island. A sophisticated French audience could likewise be expected to accept the caricature of this Rousseauist idyll in an ironic spirit. Whether or not this ironic reading of the scene occurs to a particular audience, Césaire has provided an effective critical parallel in the relation to labor of Ferdinand and Caliban. The latter, as a slave, is ordered by Prospero to complete Ferdinand's task when he is satisfied that Ferdinand has withstood the trial in proper gentlemanly fashion. For Ferdinand labor is occasional and nonessential; for Caliban it is the principle which defines his existence. Césaire underscores the difference quite deftly in this scene through Caliban's African chant, "Ouendé, Ouendé, Ouendé Macaya."⁷

Césaire has further trivialized the courtship of Ferdinand and Miranda through their language, that of Miranda in particular. In Césaire's play she expresses herself in a decidedly vulgar manner. When Ferdinand speaks her name, whispered to him by Caliban, she snaps: "Ah!

⁶ Aimé Césaire, *Une Tempête* . . . (Paris, 1969), p. 43; hereafter cited in the text by page number.

⁷ Thomas A. Hale has identified this chant as a borrowing from H. E. Krehbiel's *Afro-American Folksongs* (New York, 1914), which includes the complete text of the song as collected by Lafcadio Hearn in Louisiana around 1880. Hale has reprinted Hearn's letter to Krehbiel and the text of the song—in Creole and English—as an appendix to his article in *Études littéraires* (see n. 2 above).

ça alors! Le vilain tricheur!" Or, when her father approaches: "Faudrait pas qu'il nous surprenne." These are words more appropriate to a shop girl in a naturalistic novel than to the princess of pastoral tradition. Had Césaire been in the least concerned with the conventions of pastoral he would have adopted here the language of d'Urfé or possibly, in a somewhat more modern guise, the badinage of Marivaux. But as we have seen in several instances already, Césaire is prepared to modify every element of composition and stagecraft to his own end. It was surely important to Césaire not to follow Shakespeare here since to do so would have been to risk introducing linguistically the doctrine of high birth predisposing toward virtue, a doctrine he had taken care to exclude both structurally and thematically.

The question of language is in fact a broad one with implications for each major character and for the drama as a whole. Césaire has differentiated the characters linguistically according to social position. Probably in no other respect is his departure from Shakespeare so evident. Prospero's speech varies in a range from something approaching the tone of a Balzacian lawyer to the crude expression of a coarse military officer in his more domineering moods. When Prospero explains to Miranda (I.ii) the reasons for her sojourn on the island he is nearer the former: "C'est un peu de tout cela à la fois qu'il s'agit. Et d'abord d'inimitiés politiques, d'intrigues aussi, d'un cadet ambitieux . . . Comment leurs ambitions se conjuguèrent, comment mon frère devint le complice de mon rival, comment celui-ci promit à celui-là sa protection en même temps que mon trône, le diable seul sait comment ces choses s'arrangèrent" (p. 20). In the same scene Prospero, angered by Ariel's doubts, drops even the semblance of respectability: "Allons bon! Ta crise! C'est toujours comme ça avec les intellectuels! . . . Et puis zut! Ce qui m'intéresse, ce ne sont pas tes transes, mais tes œuvres" (p. 23). And later, still more brutally: "Ecrase! Je n'aime pas les arbres à paroles. Quant à ta liberté, tu l'auras, mais à mon heure" (ibid.). We are given to understand that in both cases we are witnessing aspects of a phenomenon of class.

Ariel, although a slave, aspires to the bourgeois values of Prospero. His adoption of a purer form of speech represents an imaginary identification with the power that Prospero wields in fact. His lyrical flight of fancy on the theme of freedom, which elicits Prospero's brutal "Ecrase!" is patterned on a neosymbolist model: "Palmier! Fusant très haut une nonchalance où nage une élégance de poulpe. Baobab! Douceur d'entrailles des monstres! Demande-le plutôt à l'oiseau calao qui s'y claustré une saison. Ceiba! Eployé au soleil fier! Oiseau! Les serres plantées dans le vif de la terre!" (p. 23). One is struck here by the suggestion that Césaire's critical representation of the colonized man

as lyric poet may apply to himself, the more so as he has taken some pains to draw out the Caribbean elements of *A Tempest*. Primarily, however, we see in Ariel another embodiment of the phenomenon of black skin, white mask on which Fanon has written so brilliantly. Thus Ariel's mode of speech in the play functions to situate him just as effectively as do his statements to Caliban on moderation and patience.

The language of Caliban is proletarian as befits his station, and it possesses its own nobility. The term nobility in this context is paradoxical only if it be taken in its connotation of a norm established by the dominant class. In the present case nobility refers to that quality of spirit that refuses to be crushed. Césaire's Caliban possesses that quality. In this sense Césaire has attributed to Caliban a human authenticity which he denies to the highborn characters in the play. His soliloquy at the close of Act III, Scene i is typical of this function of his speech: "Merde, la pluie! Il ne manquait plus que ça! *Brusquement, une voix, Caliban sursaute.* Tu entends, fiston, cette voix à travers l'orage . . . Bah! C'est Ariel . . . Non, c'est pas sa voix . . . Alors quoi! Faut s'attendre à tout avec un gaillard comme Prospero . . . Un de ses flics, sans doute! Bon! Me voilà bon! Hommes et éléments contre moi! Mais bah! J'ai l'habitude . . . Patience! Je les aurai. En attendant, cachons-nous . . . Laissons passer Prospero, son orage, ses flics, et aboyer les sept gueules de la Malédiction" (p. 56).

The language of Stephano and Trinculo is of course proletarian as well, but completely lacking in those qualities present in Caliban's. Stephano's initial reflections on finding Caliban (and Trinculo) under a blanket are typical in this regard: "Mais il est tout froid! Je ne sais pas la température du sang zindien, mais celui-là me paraît bien froid! Pourvu qu'il n'aille pas crever! Vous vous rendez compte de la malchance: trouver un Zindien et il crève. Une fortune qui vous file entre les doigts" (p. 59). The term *zindien* adds a distinctly Caribbean flavor to Stephano's greed. In the Creole idiom of Martinique a *Zindien* designates a member of the local East Indian merchant class, there being no surviving indigenous West Indians (Caribs) in the area. Césaire has adapted this term to the present context. Allowing for modifications of this type, the language of Stephano and Trinculo is doubtless more like that of Shakespeare's originals than that of any other character or group in the play.

Act III, Scene ii of Shakespeare's *Tempest* is essentially comic, with extended word games played between Stephano and Trinculo and with much groveling by Caliban. The conspiracy against Prospero is devised in so burlesque a manner that it can never be taken seriously. For Césaire, on the other hand, it is a very serious business. He therefore cuts the entertaining but dramatically unimportant witticisms and moves

directly, in his corresponding scene, from the meeting of Caliban and the two Europeans to Caliban's proposition that together they overthrow Prospero and destroy his tyrannical power. Caliban's song toward the end of the scene has no analogue in Shakespeare:

Ramier halte dans ces bois
Errant des îles c'est ici le repos
Le miconia est pillage pur
du sang violet de la baie mûre
de sang de sang barbouille ton plumage
voyageur !
Dans le dos des jours fourbus
qu'on entende
la Liberté ohé ! La Liberté !

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The conjunction of a natural order (Ramier . . . îles . . . repos), violent action (de sang barbouille ton plumage) and ultimate Freedom is characteristic of Césaire's practice of surrealism in the collection of poetry *Les Armes miraculeuses* and specifically recalls the ternary structure of the long poem "Les Pur Sang." The formal link this song establishes between Caliban and surrealism is as significant as the one established (in I.ii and again in III.v) between Ariel and neosymbolism. The former carries a distinctly positive valuation whereas the latter functions to relate effusive lyricism to a self-defeating refusal of one's real condition.

Césaire's Act III, Scene iii corresponds to the beginning of Act IV (one long scene) in Shakespeare. The goddesses of classical antiquity are not the voluble ladies of the Renaissance play. They speak the briefest of lines and their graceful ballet seems to exist only to be disrupted by Eshu, the uninvited African god. The sharp change in tone wrought by Eshu's Priapic song reminds us anew that neither classical antiquity nor Europe in general provides the cultural norm for this play. Not surprisingly Césaire's rewritten scene leaves little trace of its original thematic purpose in Shakespeare, the blessing of the union of Ferdinand and Miranda. Indeed, in the opening speech of Prospero to Ariel we sense a strong element of derision. Prospero's evocation of a rationalist, humanist paradise is ludicrous in context, if not in itself. The eruption of Eshu into this idyll precipitates its final disintegration.

Throughout this presentation of Césaire's play in parallel with its Shakespearean ancestor I have striven to treat each on its own terms, seeking through the process of comparison to reveal the inner logic of Césaire's adaptation for a black theater. I have consequently avoided global judgments of value where they would be meaningless or unjustifiable, or both. On one point, however, it is possible to make a com-

parison of this type and it is Césaire's version which comes out ahead. I refer to Shakespeare's extraordinary abrupt transition (in Act II, Scene i) from the masque to Caliban's conspiracy against Prospero. Whatever may be the justification of this break in the scene—Frank Kermode devotes several pages to the history of this question in terms of Renaissance conventions—it remains a weakness in dramatic terms. By introducing Eshu into the masque proper, albeit as a foreign element, Césaire has brought about a satisfying transition to the next scene: Ceres, Juno, and Iris retire in high dudgeon. Césaire further prepares the reference to Prospero's troubled mind; if Prospero cannot foresee or control an interloper like Eshu his powers must be ebbing. Thus his concern follows directly from the disturbing appearance of Eshu in the masque. The transition to his intention to quell Caliban's revolt is psychologically an easy one: Prospero, having seen his omnipotence challenged, must reassert himself by crushing Caliban.

The fourth scene of Act III is another of those entirely invented by Césaire. It appears at first to be something of an intermezzo. Voices are heard in the night responding to Ariel's roll call. The beasts, birds, and insects are being enrolled against Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo. As the light is restored Caliban rouses from sleep and calls upon the same creatures of the forest to acknowledge his combat against the common enemy, Prospero. Exploiting an allusion to Rabelais, Césaire has Caliban present Prospero in the guise of anti-Nature. In order to establish Caliban firmly as the ally of Nature Césaire next makes Stephano inquire concerning the muffled sound of the sea heard in the distance. When his answer that the sound is his "copine" elicits only further confusion from Stephano, Caliban replies using a peculiarly evocative series of metaphors: "Ben quoi ! La houlante, la pas tellement patiente, la ruminante, qui brusquement se réveille dans un tonnerre de Dieu et vous plaque au visage, la lançant des fins fonds de l'abysse, sa gifle de lessive hystérique. La mer, quoi !" (p. 76).

What began as an apparently theatrical device is now revealed to be of real thematic importance. Césaire has used the combined effect of stagecraft and poetic suggestion to present the animist world view in a respectable and desirable light. By contrast the traditional European misunderstanding of animism as primitive superstition fares quite badly in the mouth of Trinculo: "C'est ça, la sauvagerie . . . Tout est toujours à quelqu'un ! Le soleil, c'est le sourire de Prospero. La pluie, c'est la larme à l'œil de Prospero . . . La boue, je parie que c'est la merde de Prospero" (p. 76).

Césaire's sharply defined opposition of Caliban, Nature's ally and grateful son, to Prospero, the antagonist of Nature, must be seen as another important modification of a basic theme in Shakespeare. Art,

specifically Prospero's, is taken to be the noble corrective to the condition of fallen man in Shakespeare's play. Césaire could doubtless subscribe to Kermode's conclusion that "Prospero is, therefore, the representative of Art, as Caliban is of Nature. As a mage, he controls nature" (p. xlviii). But as we have seen, Césaire has inverted the value system implicit in that statement. Lest we miss this fundamental point, Prospero himself makes it, in jest to be sure, just before the dénouement: "Décidément, c'est le monde renversé. On aura tout vu: Caliban dialecticien!" (p. 87). As symbol, Césaire's *Tempest* represents the moment of negation in the dialectic of colonialism: Caliban must negate the value system of the colonialist (exploitation, repression, enslavement) in order eventually to achieve a new synthesis in freedom.

Caliban is not to be accorded an easy victory, however. At the close of Act III, Scene iv he proves himself incapable of killing Prospero in cold blood when the occasion presents itself. Two points are made here, I think. As Prospero points out, Caliban does not have the ability to commit murder, a characteristic of Prospero's own humanity. Further, and perhaps more importantly for the play as a whole, Césaire does not choose to represent the liberation of the island as a night of the long knives. Given the presence in the play of Black Power slogans like "Freedom now!"—in English in the text—at a time when that movement appeared on the verge of direct action in several areas of North America and the Caribbean, Césaire in this respect has opted for a longer process. While it was not within the scope of this play to chart a course (ideology would in that case have overwhelmed the symbol), the final scene does provide a strong sense of the meaning of revolutionary theater as Césaire conceives it.

Or, to paraphrase G. Durozoi's notes on Césaire's adaptation: if the skeleton is Shakespearean the flesh is the work of Césaire, and it is finally the flesh that counts.⁸

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⁸ Gérard Durozoi, "De Shakespeare à Aimé Césaire: notes sur une adaptation," *ALA*, 10 (1969), 15.

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"Ultima Thule": Ghosts and Borderlines In Yeats and Rilke

THE numerous affinities of image, attitude, and theme between W. B. Yeats and R. M. Rilke are not often noted;¹ Yeats is seldom discussed in European terms and Rilke is more often compared with Valéry or Eliot. Some of their affinities are biographical, some aesthetic, but the only explicit influence of either upon the other was Yeats's attempt to refute a partially understood intermediary text about Rilke's views on death by writing the lines that became his epitaph. Perhaps there are ways of seeing how Yeats and Rilke expressed the interconnections between the worlds of the living and the dead, especially in the imagery of ghosts and borderlines, that will make them seem less opposed than Yeats believed at the time.

Literary history has surprisingly little to show that might connect two such well-known contemporaries. Rilke, ten years younger, seems never to have read any Yeats,² although he knew other Irish authors. He may or may not, in 1923, have been hoping for the Nobel prize to crown the completion of the *Duino Elegies*; he can hardly have failed

¹ There is chiefly a clutch of symbolic props: rose, swan, doll, rider, mask, mirror, portrait, tower, bridge, running water—some of which I will discuss—most of which await elucidation. Only the Leda theme has so far been fully explicated: L. R. Lind, "Leda and the Swan: Yeats and Rilke," *ChiR*, 8 (Spring 1953), 13-17. There are also curious resemblances between specific poems, e.g., "Vorgefühl" and "Tha the Night Come," or "The Moods" and "Schlußstück," which might merit explanation.

² But see E. M. Butler, *Rainer Maria Rilke* (Cambridge, 1941), p. 274, for the claim, preceded by a list of sixteen writers, including Yeats, that during the war Rilke "could forget himself and his personal miseries in these writers."