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Decolonizing Shakespeare: Race, Gender, and Colonialism in Three Adaptations of Three Plays by William Shakespeare

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Decolonizing Shakespeare: Race, Gender, and Colonialism in Three Adaptations of
Three Plays by William Shakespeare

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English
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ABSTRACT

What role did identification play in the motives, processes, and products of select post-colonial authors who “wrote back” to William Shakespeare and colonialism? How did post-colonial counter-discursive metatheatrical function to make select post-colonial adaptations creative and critical texts? In answer to these questions, this dissertation proposes that counter-discursive metatheatrical resituates post-colonial plays as criticism of Shakespeare’s plays. As particular post-colonial authors identify with marginalized Shakespearean characters and aim to amplify their conflicts from the perspective of a dominated culture, they interpret themes of race, gender, and colonialism in *Othello* (1604), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1608), and *The Tempest* (1611) as explicit problems. This dissertation combines post-colonial theory and other literary theory, particularly by Kenneth Burke, to propose a rhetoric of motives for post-colonial authors who “write back” to Shakespeare through the use of counter-discursive metatheatrical. This dissertation, therefore, describes and analyzes how and why the plays of Murray Carlin, Aimé Césaire, and Derek Walcott function both creatively and critically, adapting Shakespeare’s plays, and foregrounding post-colonial criticism of his plays.

Chapter One analyzes Murray Carlin’s motivations for adapting *Othello* and using the framing narrative of *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* (1967) to explicitly critique the conflicts of race, gender, and colonialism in *Othello*. Chapter Two treats why and how Aimé Césaire adapts *The Tempest* in 1969, illustrating his explicit critique of Prospero and Caliban as the colonizer and the colonized, exposing Prospero’s insistence on controlling the sexuality of his subjects,

and, therefore, arguing that race, gender, and colonialism operate concomitantly in the play. Chapter Three analyzes *A Branch of the Blue Nile* (1983) as both a critique and an adaptation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, demonstrating how Walcott's framing narrative critiques the notion of a universal "Cleopatra," even one of an "infinite variety," and also evaluates Antony as a character who is marginalized by his Roman culture. The conclusion of this dissertation avers that in "writing back" to Shakespeare, these authors foreground and reframe post-colonial criticism, successfully dismantling the colonial structures that have kept their interpretations, and the subjects of their interpretations, marginalized.

INTRODUCTION:

THE ROLE OF IDENTIFICATION IN INTERPRETATION: COUNTER-DISCURSIVE METATHEATRE AS CRITICISM

In the Apotheosis scene of *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1967), by Derek Walcott, Shakespeare, and what Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins refer to in *Post-Colonial Drama* as “other chief promulgators of white western culture” (22), are tried and almost hanged before “the wife of the devil, the white witch . . . the white light” (319) is beheaded. Basil, the play’s figure of death, insists that these men should be banished from the archives of the bo-leaf and papyrus because they are white (312). He follows Shakespeare’s name as one of the many accused individuals with an additional list that includes Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, Galileo, Abraham Lincoln, and Florence Nightingale. Although Shakespeare is spared, the white witch—the mother of civilization, and the confounder of blackness . . . the colour of the law, religion, paper, [and] art” (319)—is beheaded, figuratively symbolizing the death of Shakespeare and the host of other white icons of Western culture. And yet, in his essay “Meanings,” Walcott advocates a theater where someone can perform Shakespeare or sing Calypso with equal conviction (Walcott qtd. in Lowenthal and Comitas 306). This optimistic view towards hybridity is not present in the trial of Shakespeare in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, however, leading scholars to explore the view of Walcott and other post-colonial writers towards Shakespeare and his plays in an era of decolonization. To complicate this goal, as Stephen Greenblatt notes in *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, aside from Shakespeare’s actual plays and poems, the

surviving traces of the playwright's life are "abundant but thin" (12); thus scholars do not have much information about this controversial symbol of Western culture.

What, then, did William Shakespeare do to deserve a dishonorable mention—and a figurative death—in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*? How did Shakespeare become a symbol of white law, religion, and art? I propose that in the mission of colonization "Shakespeare" was reframed and appropriated by the British Empire to tout British literature, culture, and white Europeans as superior to non-European people, culture, and literature. One result of the encounters between Shakespeare and colonized people has been the identification of colonized people with literary figures who signify dominated societies. As such, the Corporal in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* describes the white witch as "the mirror of the moon that this ape [Makak] looks into and finds himself unbearable" (319). *Dream on Monkey Mountain* provides one of the many examples of how post-colonial theorists and dramatists have responded to the Bard and his plays, which authors such as Walcott encountered through colonial education. Rejoinders to Shakespearean drama by post-colonial dramatists is the subject of this dissertation. Thus, as in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, the overlaps and tensions, as well as the possibilities of a dialogue between Shakespearean and post-colonial studies (Loomba and Orkin 2) become part of my discussion. More specifically, however, this dissertation analyzes a process by which dramatists formulate these responses to Shakespeare—particularly to aspects of his plays pertaining to race, gender, and colonialism—as well as how these post-colonial plays seek to decolonize Shakespeare's texts. In this introduction, therefore, I will briefly map the intellectual histories of this dialogue.

Prior to offering a theory for analyzing these post-colonial plays, one must confront the objection of anachronism and argue persuasively that Shakespearean plays lend themselves to a

post-colonial reading. For example, Meredith Skura notes in her article about *The Tempest* that Shakespeare could not have had access to the records of England's colonial ventures into the Mediterranean (42-69).¹ Moreover, Brian Vickers takes aim at poststructuralist critics who, in his view, have improperly appropriated Shakespeare for non-altruistic and commercial purposes. Addressing post-colonial views of *Othello*, Skura also contends that Moors in English Renaissance drama derived from Mediterranean discourse, that their blackness signified exoticism but not inferiority (302), and that "the others most occupying the minds of Shakespeare's country men were people wanting to colonize *them*, specifically the Ottomans" (301), since, together, the Ottoman and Spanish Empires defined a Mediterranean world in which a white slave trade became central to England (301).

And yet English mercantile and colonial enterprises were developing during the early modern period. David Bevington's description of life in Shakespeare's England depicts a fledgling empire in which England's territories in France were no longer as extensive as they had been during the fourteenth century and earlier (xi). In fact, Bevington observes that by the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign (1558-1603), England had "virtually retired from the territories she had previously controlled on the Continent, especially in France" (xi). However, Wales was a conquered principality, and England's overseas empire in America had just begun with the Virginia settlement established in the 1580s (xi). Scotland was not yet a part of Great Britain, and Ireland was declared a kingdom under English rule in 1541 but was "more a source of trouble than of economic strength," all of which made the England of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries "small and isolated" (xi).

How did the fledgling empire of England conceive of colonization during the early modern period? Loomba observes that analogies between sexual and colonial contact worked to

define both forms of contact in terms of male possession (30), arguing that colonial space was sexualized, and women's bodies figured as colonies (30). Extending this analysis, Loomba contends that, increasingly, European Christian identity is expressed in terms of masculinity: "its superiority and power are described and comprehended as the penetration, rape, or husbanding of an inferior or feminized race" (31). Toni Francis also focuses on the concept of possession, contending that "as the principal vehicle of English colonial expansion and the most rewarded approach to maritime war in the colonies, the practice of piracy became the prime metaphor for early modern colonialism and imperialism" (112).² In contrast, Mark Netzloff persuasively asserts that the idea of a British Empire first gained currency during James I's joint rule of Scotland and England from 1603-25 (9), maintaining that England's colonies were initially devised as a form of social organization intended to extract surplus from agricultural production" (11). Additionally, he reasons that the means through which these colonies were formed, the confiscation or "escheating"³ of tracts of lands, originated in capitalist practices of agriculture and land management in England (11). However, Netzloff also addresses the role of proselytization in domestic and foreign colonization.

Indeed, proselytization and colonial education, which were not always unrelated, led to the circulation of Shakespeare throughout the world, though Shakespeare was not celebrated everywhere and at all times. Tompkins reminds us that Shakespeare's plays figure prominently as targets of counter-discourse because "the circulation of 'Shakespeare's Books' within educational and cultural spheres has been a powerful hegemonic force throughout the history of the British Empire" (19). Thus a brief overview of the role that British Literature played in England's early endeavors in colonialism and imperialism may help to sharpen our perception of how Shakespeare became a significant hegemonic force. Significantly, Gauri Viswanathan traces

the trajectory of the English language and literature within and outside of Europe in *Masks of Conquest*, the seminal text regarding the roles of the English language and literature in colonial education. According to Viswanathan, English Literature made its appearance in India with a crucial act in Indian educational history: the passing of the Charter Act in 1813 (23), the same year in which the opening of India to free trade also occurred (35). England undertook the education of the natives in India; and yet this was not a responsibility it bore for its own people (23). Viswanathan comments, “Thus in the course of the argument the question of how England can serve the people of India blends indistinguishably with the question of how power can best be consolidated” (26). The English Education Act of 1835, proposed by the Governor-General William Bentick on Thomas Babington Macaulay’s advice, made English the medium of instruction in Indian education (44). The English literary text, therefore, became a mask for economic exploitation, camouflaging the material activities of the colonizer (20). This trend persisted in colonial education outside of India as well, particularly as the rise of British nationalism and the institutionalization of the English language and literature coincided with the colonization of Non-European countries. It is under these distinct types of circumstances that the post-colonial writers this dissertation examines encountered Shakespeare, and each chapter of this dissertation will analyze the specific educational experiences of these post-colonial authors.

It is instructive to point out that the meaning of the term “post-colonial” has been, and continues to be, a point of debate. Following Bill Ashcroft *et al.* in *The Empire Writes Back*, I employ the term “post-colonial” to address all culture affected by the colonial process from the moment of colonization to the present day (2). I concur with Ashcroft *et al.* that “there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression” (2). Scholars such as Anne McClintock, however, have averred that colonialism is

not a monolithic entity. McClintock critiques Ashcroft *et al.* for anachronistically approaching the preoccupations initiated by imperial European endeavors: she disagrees with “inscribing history around a single ‘continuity of preoccupations’ and a ‘common past,’” thereby running the risk of disavowing crucial international distinctions (87). As Linda Hutcheon argues however, what unites all of these different or even opposing positions on the meaning of “postcolonial” is a shared stake in the psychological and social analysis of colonial identity on the collective and individual levels (“Colonialism and the Postcolonial Condition” 11). This dissertation focuses on psychological analyses of colonial identity, relying frequently on psychoanalytically informed post-colonial theory to draw attention to the psychological effects of colonialism as they are dramatized in select early modern and post-colonial plays that write back to Shakespeare’s texts and the discursive fields of race, gender, and colonialism they engage.

As I analyze these select dramatic post-colonial appropriations of plays by Shakespeare, I assert that these post-colonial plays “write back” to Shakespeare through identifying and challenging dominant narratives that represent the colonized and, therefore, perform a dual function by critically commenting on Shakespeare’s plays while also reconfiguring aspects of the plays within the context of decolonization. This niche of the dramatic afterlives of Shakespearean characters, burgeoning during a period of global decolonization that included the dismantling of the British Empire—or as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o has argued in *Moving the Centre*, the transition from colonialism and imperialism to neo-colonialism (60)—has recently proved especially significant to Shakespearean studies, due particularly to globalization. Specifically, this dissertation treats *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* (1967), an appropriation of Shakespeare’s *Othello* (1604) written by the South African dramatist and poet Murray Carlin; *Une Tempête* (1969), an adaptation of *The Tempest* (1611) written by the Martinican dramatist, poet, and

philosopher Aimé Césaire; and *A Branch of the Blue Nile* (1983), an appropriation of *Antony and Cleopatra* (1608) written by the Saint Lucian poet and dramatist Derek Walcott.⁴ Although penned at varying times and in three different countries, all three of these post-colonial plays employ the strategy that Salman Rushdie coined as “writing back” (qtd. in Ashcroft *et al.* 32), and in “writing back,” the protagonists in these plays—and in some cases their creators (or authors)—identify with yet challenge representations of “othered” figures within Shakespeare’s plays. As such, these post-colonial plays begin to decolonize Shakespeare’s by exposing and dismantling colonial structures.

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin identify “writing back” as a literary technique utilized by Anglophone post-colonial authors who address the political conflicts between a dominated and dominating society (32). *The Empire Writes Back* focuses on the writing of peoples formerly colonized by Britain, yet, as Ashcroft *et al.* point out, a significant amount of their work can be applied to countries colonized by other European powers, including France (1). This dissertation builds on their theories, drawing on Kenneth Burke’s *A Rhetoric of Motives* to develop the technique of “writing back” from a descriptive model into a theory of the motives and process of this strategy. This theory will prove central to understanding how an authorial motive contingent on “identification,” combined with a politically charged creative and critical process, unite to produce texts that function as both post-colonial drama and post-colonial criticism of Shakespeare’s plays.

To date, scholars have not fully developed aspects of “writing back” that pertain to texts that function both critically and creatively. Post-colonial critics like Reed Way Dasenbrock thereby deem the paradigm of “writing back” a simplistic descriptive model (104).⁵ However, I argue for the complexity of the strategy of “writing back” in a post-colonial context. Evidence

for the sophistication of the model includes the contingency of the motive, process, and product on the post-colonial author's dramatized interpretation of Shakespeare's plays, as well as his or her intention to reconfigure the plot and characters so that the implicit features of the original play become explicit in the appropriation. Moreover, the act of appropriation amplifies the irony of the contingency of the author's motivation on his or her identification with characters of the original canonical play that the author interprets and contests yet also assimilates into the appropriative text; this irony points to a complex, rather than a simplistic, technique.

In discussing "appropriation" and "adaptation," I acknowledge my use of slippery terms that have yet to be agreed upon amongst scholars. Ashcroft *et al.* define appropriation in post-colonial writing as "the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages," thereby marking a separation from the site of colonial privilege (37). To complicate this definition, in their Introduction to *Adaptations of Shakespeare*, Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier eschew the use of the word "appropriation," insisting that this term suggests a "hostile takeover" or politicized "seizure of authority" that they are certain does not do "justice" to "other, more respectful aspects of the practice" (3). However, the third definition of the verb form of "appropriate" that *The Oxford English Dictionary Online* provides, "to take possession of for one's own, to take to oneself," is not contingent on the "hostile" motive that Fischlin and Fortier attribute to the practice of "appropriation." Additionally, the image that Fischlin and Fortier's description of appropriation engenders—an image of an entity on the margins of, or external to, an "authority," or center—reifies the prejudicial premise of colonial ideology: that a privileged center exists outside of which everything else is "other." Finally, the irony of Fischlin and Fortier's assertion is that most post-colonial authors encountered Shakespeare through colonial education, which oftentimes entailed the British Empire's "hostile takeover" of a Non-

European country. I thus propose that the motives of these post-colonial authors render their textual processes and products more akin to appropriation than adaptation. These authors make Shakespeare their “own”; and yet these acts of appropriation prove more similar to the concept of a strategic assimilation than to a “hostile takeover” (3). Additionally, an act of strategic assimilation may simultaneously involve adaptation, whether culturally or literarily. Thus the focus of this dissertation precludes privileging the term “appropriation” over “adaptation,” and this dissertation uses the terms interchangeably while simultaneously recognizing the contentious debate regarding the use of these terms.

This concept of strategic assimilation proves particularly evident in *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*, *A Tempest*, and *A Branch of the Blue Nile*, which all stage rehearsals of their original Shakespearean counterparts, making the canonical site a feature—and target—of the rewritten play. Joanne Tompkins designates this device as counter-discourse that “rewrites (or re-represents) a ‘classical’ text (or part thereof)” (“Spectacular Resistance’: Metatheatric in Post-Colonial Drama” 42-43). Coined by Richard Terdiman, the term “counter-discourse” characterizes the theory and practice of symbolic resistance (Ashcroft *et al.* 56). According to Terdiman, who analyzes nineteenth-century French writing, “confrontation between constituted reality and its subversion” occurs at the point where cultural and historical change occurred (13). Post-colonial critics have adapted Terdiman’s concept of “Counter-Discourse” to describe ways in which particular post-colonial authors mount challenges to dominant discourses, though these critics theorize “counter-discourse” less in terms of historical processes and literary movements than in terms of challenges posed to imperial ideologies inculcated, stabilized, and specifically maintained through texts employed in colonialist education systems (Ashcroft *et al.* 56).

To develop her specific conception of counter-discourse in metatheatre, Tompkins adapts Helen Tiffin's discussion of counter-discourse in the post-colonial novel.⁶ Tiffin observes that post-colonial writing interrogates discourses and discursive strategies, and that re-reading European historical and fictional records enables scholars to pinpoint the subversive maneuvers that post-colonial writers use to subvert notions of literary universality. Tiffin focuses on the counter-discursive strategies of post-colonial novels within the field of canonical counter-discourse, asserting that canonical counter-discourse is a strategy "in which a post-colonial writer takes up a character or characters, or the basic assumptions of a British canonical text, and unveils those assumptions, subverting the text for post-colonial purposes" (22). In Tiffin's theoretical framework, post-colonial authors do not just "write back" to a text but to a whole discursive field within which a text originally operated. Tiffin also notes that some subversive strategies employed in canonical counter-discourse, a form of "writing back," may involve multiple ironic inversions which pervade the text or draw attention to major effects of colonialism (32).

I draw on Tompkin's theory of counter-discourse in metatheatrical post-colonial drama to assert that counter-discursive metatheatre functions as a specific type of "writing back." This dissertation therefore develops a theory of "writing back" and explores applications of the theory within drama that employ canonical counter-discursive metatheatre. I opt to focus on plays that utilize the strategy of counter-discursive metatheatre because this technique encourages the characters (and actors) and audience to engage the play(s) both critically and creatively. In Tompkin's words, counter-discursive post-colonial metatheatre assists in the re-reading, re-structuring, and re-situating of the larger "base" play (44-5). These three purposes, or functions, cannot be conflated. I suggest that re-reading—and sometimes re-structuring—correlates with

the function of offering a critical interpretation. These post-colonial authors re-read, and thereby offer critical commentary on, Shakespeare's plays; and yet they also re-structure the plays to emphasize their critical re-readings. "Writing back" in a post-colonial context therefore does not prompt the question of imitation versus contestation; rather, "writing back" entails a process of identification, imitation, assimilation, and contestation. Although critics may plausibly argue that other literary forms, such as satire, possess a multi-faceted function as well, the fact that these post-colonial plays also "write back" to Shakespearean plays differentiates the purpose of these subversive dramas even further, since these plays foreground and thus resonate with post-colonial criticism of Shakespeare's plays.

In pondering how post-colonial authors "write back" to Shakespeare, critics tend to overlook the fact that many post-colonial authors identify with "othered" figures in Shakespeare's plays—characters such as Othello, Cleopatra, and Caliban—and, in contesting how the plights of these characters remain implicit rather than explicit in Shakespeare's plays, use counter-discursive metatheatre to amplify issues concerning race, gender, and colonialism. This dissertation therefore emphasizes "identification" as a strategy for "writing back." Rob Nixon initially signaled the importance of "identification" to the process of Shakespearean appropriation in "Caribbean and African Appropriations of *The Tempest*." Nixon contrasts Eurocentric interpretations of the play with the "sympathetic identification with Caliban" expressed by George Lamming (567),⁷ and he contextualizes these post-colonial interpretations that rely on "sympathetic identification" within a larger political context: between the fifties and early seventies of the twentieth century, a feud between the cultures of the colonizer and colonized occurred, and as a result, *The Tempest* emerged as a metaphorical Trojan horse through which the dominated cultures could "win entry" and "assail global pretensions" from

within (578). Although they do not discuss “identification,” Ashcroft *et al.* also relate the technique of “writing back” to the political conflicts between a dominated and dominating society (32). Additionally, Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer designate Kenneth Burke as the central theorist of the rhetoric of identification in types of Shakespearean appropriation in which actors possess a personal or political relationship to the drama they perform (8). *A Rhetoric of Motives* also addresses relationships between literary authors and their works, however, particularly in producing “literature for use” (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 5), and Burke’s text thus provides an apt theoretical framework through which to analyze the subject of writing back to Shakespeare.

According to Burke, the function of rhetoric is to persuade, and a speaker persuades his audience by “the use of stylistic identifications” (46) since one persuades another only in so far as one talks the other’s language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, and idea (55). In each of the Shakespearean plays this dissertation examines, identity is constructed in contrast to an “other”: The Duke and the Court of Venice distinguish themselves from “the Moor,” Prospero’s authority rests on his view of Caliban as inferior, and Caesar and other principal characters in *Antony and Cleopatra* describe Cleopatra and her court as contrasting with Roman values and culture. Thus, in drawing on Burke’s theory of identification, I am first proposing that Shakespeare encoded his plays with arguments concerning the social perception of what Englishness was *not* by tapping into xenophobic attitudes pertaining to the topic of England’s relationship with the non-European world. To his audiences, then, his plays were thought-provoking, but they also reified spectators’ identities as English, not because Shakespeare necessarily viewed England as superior, but because he implicitly illustrated the dialectical tension that underscored the burgeoning construction of England’s national identity.

This proposal receives critical support from Greenblatt, who in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare*, explores how Renaissance aristocratic and upper classes formed their identities at least partly against the images of the newly discovered “natives” of the New World (9). Unpersuaded that common ground existed between them and the other, they constructed an identity around disassociation.

Burke successfully tests his theory in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, in which he re-reads John Milton’s *Samson Agonistes* to argue that it evokes a relationship between Milton’s and Samson’s blindness, or between the poet’s difficulties with his first wife and Delilah’s betrayal of a secret (4). In connecting Milton’s personal circumstances with those of Samson, Burke thereby contends that Milton identifies with Samson, a “self-destructive hero” (4). Additionally, Burke proposes that by positing that a blind Biblical hero *did* conquer, he (Milton) is “substantially” saying that, in his blindness, *he* will conquer, and that Milton thus produces “literature for use” (5) by encoding implicit personal and political experiences into *Samson Agonistes*. This process of identification operates similarly in the post-colonial plays this dissertation examines. Nixon observes in his analysis of post-colonial appropriations of *The Tempest* that a “sympathetic identification” with Caliban informs post-colonial authors’ motives to appropriate Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*; a similar “identification” with Othello, Caliban, Cleopatra, and even Antony, motivates Carlin, Césaire, and Walcott to “write back” to Shakespeare’s *Othello*, *The Tempest*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, suggesting through reinterpretations of these characters and changes to these plots that an alteration of colonial structures is possible.

The concept of division also plays a critical role in Burke’s theory of identification; thus these post-colonial authors retain the aspects of the characters and plays with which they identify yet alter those qualities from which they disassociate. As Burke explains, properties define

entities (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 23) and human beings surround themselves with properties that establish their identity (24). Human beings exist in relation to one another, however, forming their identities in terms of differing properties. In Burke's words, "in pure identification there would be no strife (25); identification inherently involves division, however (45), and rhetoric thereby entails faction" (45). This dialectical relationship between identification and division proves apparent in all three of these post-colonial plays. Carlin, Césaire, and Walcott identify with "othered" characters—Othello, Caliban and Cleopatra—and therefore make the otherwise implicit (and thus debatable) plights of the Shakespearean characters explicit; however, these post-colonial authors also disassociate from the European representations of these "othered" or "colonized" figures and thus reconfigure the Shakespearean characters within the context of decolonization. To quote Nixon, "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" (558; emphases added). Nixon's observation underscores the identification of Carlin, Césaire, and Walcott with suppressed narratives as well as intimating the disassociation from some aspects of the Shakespearean narratives that these authors experience, particularly those elements that oppose independence, thus explaining why these authors desired to "extend" the Shakespearean narrative "in the direction of liberation" (558). Nixon's viewpoint also amplifies the urgent rationale these post-colonial authors evinced for attuning to plays by Shakespeare during the era of decolonization.

Although I am building on both Nixon's brief reference to and Burke's elaborate theory of "identification," it strikes me that I ought not use Burke's theories from *A Rhetoric of Motives* while ignoring his theoretical and critical work on the whole, particularly since Burke has

contributed substantially to Shakespearean scholarship.⁸ In the application of Burke's theory of identification to these post-colonial plays, two key questions arise: 1.) Can Burke's theory be applied to examine both intrinsic and extrinsic elements of these post-colonial plays; 2.) Does this process of identification work consciously or unconsciously in these occasions of "writing back?" In Burke's view, the pentad of "dramatism" (agent, act, scene, agency, purpose) offers a schematic approach by which discourse can be analyzed. Thus Burke's purpose in *A Grammar of Motives* is to demonstrate how the designated functions of these terms operate in the imputing of motive. Burke, therefore, was influenced by Aristotle; as M. Elizabeth Weiser notes in *Burke, War, Words: Rhetoricizing Dramatism*, some scholars have dismissed Burke's theory of dramatism for purportedly restating Aristotle's four causes of natural objects (118).⁹ And yet Burke eschewed the reduction of human behavior to motion (Lindsay 2). Thus Aristotle influenced Burke, but Burke also diverted from Aristotelean theory.

It is also significant to observe that Burke produced both theory and criticism. Burke is often, though not always, deemed a "New Critic." And yet for Burke, biographical information may pertain to the relationship of an act (writing) and to an author (poem); and historical information may pertain to scene and act. As Desmet points out in her review of *Kenneth Burke on Shakespeare*, Burke is most interested in how Shakespeare's plays work (126); however, like other New Critics, he does not altogether reject the influence of an author's biography. Even T.S. Eliot, in "The Tradition and the Individual Talent," remarked on the relationship of a poet's biography to his work, yet this approach emphasizes a writer's experiences, not his or her personality traits, as what he or she brings to an external object. Certainly, Shakespeare is among the "experiences" of these post-colonial authors in a distinct way that differs from even Burke's general conjecture of Shakespeare as surpassing epochs, centuries, whole populations and

cultures (*Grammar of Motives* 84). I am, therefore, asserting that these authors “labored”¹⁰ to procure a consciousness of their relationship to Shakespeare, the type of laboring Eliot refers to in “The Tradition and the Individual Talent.” I propose that their labor is conscious; however, the influence of the unconscious cannot be denied.

My conjecture above aligns with the type of tension between the conscious and unconscious that emerges from remarks by Aimé Césaire. For example, in one interview, Césaire posits that it seemed evident to him that Prospero was a totalitarian, and that “what is most obvious, even in Shakespeare’s version, is the man’s absolute will to power” (Césaire qtd. in Frassinelli 175);¹¹ and yet, by his own admission in *Un poète politique*, Césaire originally intended to translate Shakespeare’s play into French, but, he [Césaire] notes, “When the work was done, I realized there was not much Shakespeare left” (qtd. in Frassinelli, 174).¹² This latter quote highlights the unconscious nature of aspects of appropriating Shakespeare, contrasting with the former assertion in which Césaire evinces that he is conscious of his view of Prospero. Thus this dissertation acknowledges the uncharted psychological territory of whether these instances of “writing back” are either altogether conscious or unconscious, choosing to focus on the works themselves and how they re-read, re-structure, and re-situate Shakespeare’s plays, thereby offering both literary criticism and creative adaptations.

Thus historical data, biographical criticism, and post-colonial criticism all prove critical to the analysis of each play this dissertation examines. Each chapter draws on biographical criticism, inclusive of pertinent historical information, to build a case for the operation of a dialectical relationship of “identification” and “division” between the post-colonial author and particular characters in the Shakespearean plays. This dialectical relationship compels select post-colonial authors to highlight and alter particular aspects of a character and a play. Each

chapter, therefore, also refers to post-colonial criticism of the plays by Shakespeare in order to demonstrate the correspondence between the criticism and the critical function of the post-colonial plays, thus illustrating the similarity of their views to critical views.

Chapter One analyzes Murray Carlin's *Not Now Sweet Desdemona*, proposing that by identifying with his West Indian Actor who evinces a relationship to Shakespeare's Othello as a male victim of racism, yet by disassociating with what Carlin views as the European "liberal" view of the "black" Othello, Carlin "writes back," by deploying counter-discursive metatheatre and by using the Actor-Othello to argue that racism is the central theme of the play. Carlin also reconfigures Othello as a black man who confronts racism within the context of apartheid politics. I posit that Carlin thus employs the Actor-Othello to advance criticism of Shakespeare's play, to dramatize the psychological effects of colonialism and racism in both the early modern and contemporary eras, and to illuminate the power of the theater to both construct and to deconstruct representations of the "other" in Shakespeare's plays.

Chapter Two treats Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* to assert that by identifying with Caliban as colonized yet disassociating from Caliban's use of language to "curse"¹³ Prospero, Césaire "writes back" to Shakespeare by explicitly identifying Prospero as a colonizer and Caliban as a colonized figure while also reconfiguring Caliban as a character who "talk backs" to Prospero. Césaire thus transforms Caliban from a character who occupies a position of constructed alterity into a figure who asserts agency and his psychological independence from Prospero. Additionally, Césaire presents Miranda as less dependent on Prospero than in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Césaire critically interprets Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and also creatively appropriates the play in order to engage contemporary global politics that span the Caribbean to Great Britain to the United States.

Chapter Three analyzes Walcott's *A Branch of the Blue Nile* to argue that Walcott's protagonists identify with both Cleopatra and Antony as constructed figures of alterity; and yet Walcott also alters Cleopatra's lack of subjectivity and Antony's inability to overtly challenge sexist and racist hegemonic ideals. Walcott thus "writes back" by using counter-discursive metatheatre, engaging the critical debate surrounding the orientalist construction of Cleopatra, depicting the complicity of the British in the construction of her role and the pejorative associations of that construction, and commenting on Antony's ultimate refusal to affirm the hegemonic ideals of the center. Additionally, Walcott creatively appropriates Shakespeare's play to extend the characters of Antony and Cleopatra into post-colonial afterlives that span the Caribbean to Great Britain to the United States, and dramatize the politics of race and gender in the theater of contemporary Trinidad and the United States.

The conclusion of this dissertation emphasizes appropriation as interpretation and magnifies this interpretive act in a post-colonial setting. By appropriating Shakespeare's plays through a process that involves both identification and division and by using strategies of post-colonial counter-discursive metatheatre, these post-colonial authors compose "post-colonial" interpretations of Shakespeare's plays while also recovering submerged and oft-debated narratives within the original plays. We must further expand the boundaries of post-colonial criticism of Shakespeare's plays by examining more literary texts that "write back" to Shakespeare, yet I propose that scholars use both an explanatory and a descriptive approach, suggesting that merging the heretofore segmented fields of post-colonial theory and Shakespeare and Appropriation makes this task possible.

Notes

1. See Meredith Skura in “Discourse and the Individual: The Case of Colonialism in the *Tempest*.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989): 42-69. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Aug. 2012.
2. See Toni Francis in “Imperialism as Devilry: A Postcolonial Reading of *Doctor Faustus*.” *Doctor Faustus: A Critical Guide*. Ed. Sara Munson Deats 111-123. Print.
3. The term “escheat” referred to the practice wherein land could be acquired as a marketable commodity without reciprocal feudal duties and services binding landlord and tenant (11).
4. I have opted to treat the plays in the order in which they were composed and produced, even though Martinique had become a department of France before South Africa, Uganda, and Saint Lucia gained their independence. Additionally, this sequence enables me to analyze in successive order the two plays from the Caribbean, in which French colonization played a role.
5. Reed Way Dasenbrock proposes that post-colonial criticism has proved much more invested in the concept of “writing back” from an oppositional stance than have post-colonial writers. In her view, the emphasis on “writing back” as a form of contestation depicts the paradigm as simplistic. Reed proposes that the manner in which post-colonial writers rewrite classical texts entails a “complex mixture of emotions” that is “in crucial respects a continuation of the heritage of modernism” (104). I concur with Dasenbrock regarding the complexity that “writing back” entails; as a theory of the method will propose, the process involves more than contestation. I disagree, however, with viewing these post-colonial plays as continuation of a heritage of “modernism” that is largely European.
6. See “Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourses” in *Kunapipi* 9.3 (1987): 17-34.
7. Although Rob Nixon briefly refers to Lamming’s “identification” with Caliban, it can be properly inferred that this process of identification applies to other authors as well, including Aimé Césaire, and Roberto Fernández Retamar, among others.
8. As a Review of *Kenneth Burke on Shakespeare* in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* points out, Kenneth Burke exerts a durable influence in the field of Shakespearean studies, but “scholars of Shakespeare often cite Burke solely in footnotes and less often engage him by name or quote him directly in the main text of their books and essays” (308). I can attest to this curious fact regarding Burkean scholarship of Shakespeare: in my reviews of criticism of these Shakespearean plays, Burke does not emerge as a central—or even a minor—player within the field.
9. See *Physics*, Book II, Chapter III.
10. In “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” T.S. Eliot speculates that tradition cannot be “inherited”; rather, it is obtained through labor (34).
11. See S. Belhassen, “Aimé Césaire’s *A Tempest*.” *Radical Perspectives in the Arts* 175-4.
12. Pier Frassinelli directs the reader to *Un poète politique* (31) for the original text of his translation.
13. Caliban’s use of language to “curse” Prospero (see 1.2.366-367 in *The Tempest*) has been the subject of much scholarship, including Stephen Greenblatt’s *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (1990), among other books and essays.

CHAPTER ONE:

“A PLAY ON THE THEME OF RACE¹”: RACE, GENDER, AND COLONIALISM IN *NOT NOW, SWEET DESDEMONA*

Murray Carlin’s play *Not Now Sweet Desdemona* (1967), written in 1967 by a white South African playwright living in Uganda,² shares a kinship with the Anglo-American post-colonial criticism of *Othello* (1604) that developed in North America in the mid- to late-1980s.³ During the same year in which G.K. Hunter delivered his landmark lecture “Othello and the Color Prejudice” (1967) as the British Academy Shakespeare Lecture, South African author Murray Carlin decried a lack of race-focused criticism of *Othello* in the introduction to his memorable dramatic adaptation *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*.⁴ Hunter persuasively argued that Iago reduces the “white” reality of Othello to the “black appearance of his face” (54). Two years earlier, in 1965, Eldred Jones had argued that Iago uses the racial difference between Othello and Desdemona as a weapon against Othello (99-100) to incite jealousy. Jones also contended that Shakespeare turned a Moor with unfavorable associations into a hero (109), a dramatic feat that had not previously been accomplished in early modern drama. One year before Jones commented on race in *Othello*, in 1964, G.M. Matthews had offered his striking race-based critique, devoting the first line of his essay to declaring that “The most important feature of *Othello* is the colour of the hero’s skin” (qtd. in Kettle 123). Carlin’s adaptation, however, sharply censures the racism that operates in *Othello*, admonishing this early form of xenophobia, connecting it to the contemporary issue of racism, and abasing the abject institution of apartheid. And yet although

Matthew's essay, Eldred's book, Hunter's lecture, and Carlin's play all emphasize the relevance of race to *Othello*, only the work of Matthews, Jones, and Hunter has been lauded as the first race-based criticism of the play. For example, Emily Bartels describes Jones as the "first to challenge the otherwise whitewashed Elizabethan picture" and credits Hunter for addressing the "colour prejudice" in *Othello* (*Speaking of the Moor* 10). Bartels does not mention Carlin's play. But the proximity of the dates and the motivations of these approaches to *Othello* raise significant questions that challenge the boundaries of genre: do Matthew's essay, Jones's analysis of *Othello*, Hunter's lecture, and Carlin's play share something significant, particularly given the disparity of their genres and audiences? Do differences in genre and audience take precedence over authorial motive, even when both authors seek to explore the same critical line of inquiry?

This chapter proposes that Carlin's play, race-based criticism of *Othello*, and post-colonial criticism of *Othello* overlap in their critical inquiries, despite their generic differences. I assert that Carlin takes an implicit and thereafter much-debated issue in the play—race—and demonstrates how that issue may be viewed as explicit, or as central, to the play's plot. Moreover, this chapter also analyzes Carlin's treatment of race, gender, and colonialism in *Othello*, thereby demonstrating how his post-colonial interpretation of Shakespeare's play "writes back" to the critics that, in his view, had neglected the theme of race in the play. Carlin also "wrote back" to a British Empire that, through literature and theater, had propagated a stereotypical representation of a jealous "Moor" who lost his temper and tragically murdered his innocent wife.⁵ Thus Carlin's play foregrounds the large-scale explorations of the last three decades that address how race, gender, and colonialism operate concomitantly in *Othello*. *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*, therefore, initiates a critical debate regarding the roles of race, gender,

and colonialism in Shakespeare's *Othello*, an intriguing venture considering the meticulousness with which the tenability of a case for colonialism in *Othello* has been tested.⁶ Carlin, who sides with his West Indian actor's view of race as the play's central theme, dramatically articulates his argument through the use of post-colonial counter-discursive metatheatre,⁷ demonstrating a rhetoric of motives that distinctly differs from other popular postmodern forms of intertextuality.

Questions remain regarding how Carlin was introduced to Shakespeare and Shakespearean criticism; yet, critics can speculate that Carlin encountered a laudatory version of Shakespeare in South Africa. No source definitively pinpoints where and when Carlin was born.⁸ However, based on information provided by a former friend and academic colleague of Carlin's, I surmise that Carlin was born and educated in South Africa, where he may have been expelled for his radical beliefs before accepting a teaching post at Makerere University in Uganda. In *Brokie's Way: An Anthropologist's Story*, David Brokensha, Professor Emeritus at UC Santa Barbara, avers that he attended the then all-white Rhodes University College⁹ with Carlin in South Africa during the late 1940s. In *Shakespeare and South Africa*, David Johnson notes that it was taken for granted that in the 1950s Shakespeare was a part of the syllabus (172). Johnson's observation applies to the curriculum in South African high schools; yet, one can deduce that the curriculum at Rhodes in the late 1940s also included Shakespeare. Hunt Hawkins speculates, "Shakespeare would have almost certainly have been on the curriculum at Rhodes" ("Question about Interview Procedures for University Dissertations."). In the Introduction to *Shakespeare and South Africa*, Johnson juxtaposes two different "versions" of Shakespeare that he encountered in South Africa in 1989: The first type was based on the presupposition that Shakespeare was a genius and could enhance one's pleasure in life (1-3). In contrast, the second version of Shakespeare represented a site of contestation for post-colonial critics such as Rob

Nixon, who discusses the contentious nature of appropriations of Shakespeare in “Caribbean and African Appropriations of *The Tempest*” (3). As addressed in the introduction to this dissertation, Nixon contrasts Eurocentric interpretations of the play with the “sympathetic identification with Caliban” expressed by George Lamming, Aimé Césaire, and Roberto Fernández Retamar (567). According to Johnson, the majority of students in South Africa encountered the first version of Shakespeare, which venerates the figure institutionalized in English teaching during the second half of the nineteenth century (3). We can thus hypothesize that Carlin encountered this first laudatory version of Shakespeare.

The political climate of South Africa during the late 1940s affected Carlin’s view of Shakespeare and the British Empire, thereby influencing *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*. In May of 1948, white South Africa went to the polls, resulting in a victory for the National Party¹⁰ under Dr. D.F. Malan, in alliance with the Afrikaner party¹¹ of N.C. Havenga, a party which essentially remained faithful to J.B.M. Hertzog’s legacy¹² (Ross 114). As Robert Ross notes in *A Concise History of South Africa*, the party won the election under the slogan “apartheid”—literally meaning “separateness” (115). Ross observes that in its origins apartheid entailed the recognition and separation of specific groups of people, but that the criteria by which the National Party demarcated these categories was not “racist” in the formal sense of the word (116). Ross situates the National Party’s ideologies within a broader context that emphasized the importance of ethnicity¹³ and viewed the various nations of South Africa as God-created entities, on the model of their own self-image of Afrikanderdom (116). The National Party sought to preserve these entities in their “purity” (116), a task the state accomplished by assigning everyone to one of the national categories in South Africa¹⁴ and, in theory, “freezing” these categories through the Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act of 1950 (116). However, the Immorality

Act regulated sexual relationships across colored, not ethnic, lines; the undertones of the criteria that the National Party used to separate groups of people in South Africa thus contained racist ideologies. Moreover, one of the programmatic documents that the National Party endorsed in the elections of 1948 entailed a vision of full “disassociation between whites and Africans” (Ross 116), aiming to reverse the process by which South Africa had become an economically integrated country (117).

Carlin did not participate in the disassociation between white South Africans and Africans; rather, he identified the plight of Africans forbidden from attending Rhodes University College as an unjust practice. Brokensha asserts that both he and Carlin challenged policies at Rhodes that proved deleterious to black Africans, specifically, that he and Carlin disputed Ian Smith,¹⁵ then President of the Students Representative Council (SRC) at Rhodes, on the proposed admission of two black African postgraduate chemistry students from Fort Hare College. Smith had argued that the white Rhodes students would not accept black African students, and the Senate had sided with Smith (Brokensha). According to Brokensha, he and Carlin organized a meeting of students and gained approval for the admission of the black African students to Rhodes (Brokensha). Additionally, Brokensha asserts that he and Carlin maintained a critical stance toward General Smuts, the South African Prime Minister, because of Smuts’s brutal repression of the (white) miner’s strike in 1922 and his government’s treatment of black Africans (Brokensha).

Scholars have discovered only a few details about the circumstances of Carlin’s departure (or expulsion) from South Africa. For example, Carlin appears in the diary of Patricia Ann Naipaul, the first wife of V.S. Naipaul. In *The World is What It Is: A Biography of V.S. Naipaul*, Patrick French refers to the diary entry that indicates, “He [Sir Vidiadhar Suraiprasad Naipaul,

sometimes known as V.S. or Sir Vidia Naipaul] recalls Murray Carlin and his poor wife >she killed herself< [sic] sitting on the step of their dreadful bungalow and [with] their rather common daughters, expelled from South Africa for his liberal stance, discovering where Vidia stood and [secretively] showing him his [Carlin's] (anti-African, anti-Negro) cartoons" (qtd. in French 255).¹⁶ Naipaul met Carlin during the nine months Naipaul spent in Africa in 1973, and although French does not indicate the specific African country in which their rendezvous occurred, prior to discussing the meeting, French refers to the attempt of Patricia Ann Naipaul to work in Uganda as a journalist. Since Patricia Ann's diary describes Carlin and his family as "expelled from South Africa" (225), the encounter between Naipaul and Carlin most likely took place in Uganda.

Carlin held a teaching post at Makerere University in Uganda, as documented by Carol Sicherman in *Becoming an African University: Makerere 1922-2000*. His students included Peter Nazareth, author of *In a Brown Mantle* (1972), *The Social Responsibility of the Third World Writer* (1978), and *The General is Up* (1991), among other works. Nazareth avers that Murray Carlin was his favorite professor at Makerere University, particularly since Carlin encouraged Nazareth to write about his own interpretation of literature, even if those views differed from Carlin's perspectives ("Query: Professor Murray Carlin"). According to an interview with Nazareth, Carlin also served as faculty advisor to *Penpoint*, Makerere's literary magazine (Lindfors 193). Sicherman recalls that only few of the staff members at Makerere independently sought to teach there (most teachers were recruited), the most noteworthy of whom were white South African academics who, after the apartheid government took office in 1948, were attracted to a nonracist institution in Africa (269), and she estimates that twenty five of the staff members at Makerere University in the 1950s derived from South Africa, including those such as Hannah

Stanton and Peter Rigby, who had suffered persecution (288).¹⁷ One may, therefore, plausibly deduce that the politically tumultuous circumstances that entailed disassociation from South Africa's apartheid government preceded Carlin's arrival at Makerere, and that these events also undoubtedly influenced Carlin's criticism of apartheid in his appropriation of Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Understanding the significance of Carlin's position at Makerere University during the late 1960s requires some knowledge of the political climate of Uganda during both the late 1960s and early 1970s. Uganda achieved independence from Britain on 9 October 1962 (Ofcansky 38), but the immediate period of decolonization involved considerable political turmoil. After defeating an attempted coup, Prime Minister Milton Obote suspended the 1962 Constitution, declared a state of emergency, and ordered army units to attack the Kabaka's (King's) palace on Mengo Hill (41). Earlier, Obote had ceremoniously designated the Kubaka from Buganda as President after Uganda became a Republic, since no government could reasonably hope to achieve stability without Buganda's support (37).¹⁸ The attack on and removal of the Kabaka from the presidency thus proved punitive towards Buganda. In *Sir Vidia's Shadow: A Friendship Across Four Continents*, Makerere lecturer Paul Theroux recalls the attack, noting that he could see smoke from the confrontation at Lubiri from his office desk at Makerere University (Theroux 68). After the attack, a curfew was imposed (69), Theroux temporarily stopped teaching, and he considered writing a novel like Albert Camus's *The Plague* in order to describe the deterioration of a city under a siege and a curfew (70). Although Mutesa II (the Kabaka) escaped to London, Obote's military crackdown, led by Deputy Army Commander Idi Amin, resulted in approximately 100 deaths (Ofcansky 41). Following the attack in 1967, Prime Minister Obote introduced a new constitution (41), abolished Uganda's four kingdoms (41), and drifted apart

from Amin (42).¹⁹ Aside from this political turmoil, the staging of Carlin's play at Makerere University in 1968 is also significant because Makerere had hosted the first African literature conference—the Conference of African writers of English Expression—in 1962 (Sicherman 335). Additionally, *Transition Magazine* was based in Kampala from 1961-1968, when Obote closed it. In 1963, Makerere became part of UEA, the University of East Africa; and, significantly, in 1968, Makerere students protested the hanging of three dissident Africans in Rhodesia (336).

Yet, understanding the relationship between Carlin and Shakespeare requires more than recounting facts from either the history of South Africa or Uganda. Prior to offering an interpretation of *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*, one must speculate on how Carlin's experiences with segregation and apartheid in South Africa influenced his view of Shakespeare. Johnson asserts that the arguments concerning the relationship between Shakespeare and apartheid can be divided in two loose groups: one that insists on a Shakespeare opposed to racism and one that sees a Shakespeare implicated in the links between Afrikaner racism and English humanism (173). Although Carlin appropriates Shakespeare's *Othello* to explore the connection between Shakespeare's plays and apartheid, Carlin's play does not neatly align with either of the two camps that Johnson describes. From one perspective, Carlin viewed Shakespeare sympathetically, as a man who "foresaw all the problems of the Age of Imperialism" (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 671-3). Additionally, by suggesting that Shakespeare's *Othello* focuses on Othello's blackness, Carlin invites critics to read Shakespeare as attentive to the issue of race. Yet, Carlin also depicts Desdemona as a "White Liberal" who makes Othello her black slave, intimating a potential relationship between her association with English humanism and the Afrikaner racism that supported the enslavement and exploitation of black Africans even after

the 1833 emancipation of slaves in the British Empire, an act that Ross sees as inciting the Dutch to adopt the name Boer, and later Afrikaner, to distinguish themselves from the English (171). I insist on a reading that puts the contradictions in Carlin's play in dialogue with both Carlin's identification with and disassociation from particular aspects of Shakespeare's play.

Carlin chose canonical literature such as Shakespeare's *Othello*²⁰ to highlight, challenge, and rewrite dominant narratives about race that, in his view, were precursors to deleterious race relations in the twentieth century. In the introduction to his play, Carlin queries, "Why, indeed, is Othello black?" (2). According to Carlin, his Actor-Othello, a black West Indian character, asks that question, "a question that has not been answered by any of the Shakespeare critics I have read" (2), while "rehearsing that [Othello's] part" (2). In Carlin's view, "the question of negro male sexuality is something that has been skirted and avoided by critics of *Othello*—and, until recently, by producers and actors too" (3). Moreover, Carlin asserts that the reactions of many of the characters in Shakespeare's play are unconsciously controlled by the fact that Othello is black (3), thus adding to the perplexity regarding the dearth of race-based criticism of the play. Carlin views the conditions of racism in the early modern and his own contemporary era similarly, stating that "in those conditions of the modern world which had already begun to prevail in Shakespeare's time, the presence of such a [black] man is felt as a threat" (3). A number of commentators, including Michael Neill and Emily Bartels, have since persuasively argued that the emerging imperialistic enterprises in which the English engaged in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries led to cross-cultural encounters with societies displaying very different customs and mores from the English, and these events led to the emergence of a conception of racial identity that is surprisingly akin to our contemporary concept.²¹ Moreover, scholars now also recognize that early modern forms of xenophobia evoked

aversion to many types of “aliens,” including Blackamoors, Spaniards, Turks, and Jews, as well as Africans, suggesting the presence of color prejudice during this historical period.²² Sensitive to this xenophobic thinking, Ania Loomba argues that even early modern racial thinking could be pernicious, without being based on a biological understanding of race (*Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* 38). Significantly, Carlin asserts that if his play is a play about Othello’s blackness, then it is “a play about race conflict in the twentieth century” (5); and he hopes that his play will make some contribution to the solution of that [racial] conflict (5). Carlin’s authorial motive is thus three-fold: to appropriate Shakespeare’s play to critically comment on it, to appropriate *Othello* to alter its dominant narratives, and to appropriate the tragedy to intervene in the broader social issue of racism. By identifying with and retaining some aspects of the play while altering others, Carlin’s play “writes back” to Shakespeare, to Shakespearean critics, and to Eurocentric dramatic representations of the “other.”

For instance, Carlin opted to appropriate Shakespeare’s generic dramatic form but to alter its structure and elements in order to emphasize the theme of race. As David Bevington comments, Shakespeare did not structure his plays in five acts with multiple scenes; editors later imposed this structure onto his plays (Bevington xciv). Critics can thus plausibly speculate that Carlin encountered an edition of *Othello* structured in five acts, such as those edited in the Arden Shakespeare series beginning in 1899, even though Carlin’s play consists of one act, comprising over 1,613 lines. Carlin also altered the play’s dialogue from verse to prose. The changes Carlin makes in appropriating and adapting *Othello* for a post-colonial stage amount to other striking additions and subtractions from Shakespeare’s original play. The subtractions include the Duke, the Senate, Cassio, Emilia, Bianca, Roderigo, Gratiano, Montano, and the subplot concerning Iago’s manipulation of Roderigo. Significantly, Carlin also omits Iago from the play, enabling

Carlin to focus on his interpretation of Desdemona's role in constructing Othello's race. In his "play on the theme of race" (592), Carlin strips Shakespeare's play to its principal elements and two of its principal characters. Carlin also adds one minor character, Harry, who serves as a lighting technician during the couple's rehearsal of Shakespeare's play. According to Nazareth, the focus on two characters and the inclusion of one additional character is characteristic of a dramatic "Carlinist," or "Carlinian" style: Carlin is interested in presenting a dialectic between two opposite ways of looking at issues but since it is difficult to write a play with only two characters, and since a third character would interfere with the dialectic, Carlin creates an "invisible third participant" (*An African View of Literature* 28-9). Carlin's play thus focuses on Othello's relationship to his adopted European culture and European wife by presenting two ways of interpreting the theme—jealousy versus racism—of Shakespeare's play.

Carlin's play also contains an overtly metadramatic dimension that affects his re-reading, re-structuring, and re-situating of Shakespeare's canonical play,²³ and this metadramatic facet allows Carlin to carefully critique the relationship between Othello and Desdemona while also re-situating their relationship in a post-colonial context. Analyzing Carlin's play, Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins aver that "the staging of the 'intact' [Shakespeare's] play offers one kind of counter-discourse which might, through a revisionist performance, articulate tensions between the Anglo script and its localized enunciation" (16). Carlin's play proves even more distinct, however. His play revolves around a rehearsal of Shakespeare's play, but during the breaks between their rehearsal segments in the framing narrative, Carlin's Actor-Othello and Actress-Desdemona debate whether jealousy or race is the main theme of Shakespeare's play. Through staging this debate, Carlin's play appropriates Shakespeare's drama to offer "literary" criticism, or commentary. Although critics may plausibly argue that other literary forms, such as satire,

also possess a multi-faceted function, the fact that these post-colonial plays “write back” to Shakespearean plays differentiates their purpose even further, since these plays foreground and thus resonate with post-colonial criticism of Shakespeare’s plays.

As such, in his re-reading of Shakespeare’s play, Carlin launches a critique of the still oft-debated issue of race by identifying Othello’s blackness, rather than his jealousy, as the explicit focus of Shakespeare’s play. Carlin’s Actor-Othello first emphasizes this argument by refuting the actress’s assertion that “Othello is a jealous man. That’s the theme—it’s what Shakespeare wrote. *She* is faithful, and loving and innocent. And he’s jealous. And there’s your play” (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 28). Carlin’s Actor-Othello insists that there is something she has forgotten in the play: “Othello is a black man. He’s like me” (28). According to the actor, if Desdemona’s argument is valid and jealousy is the theme of Shakespeare’s play, then “Shakespeare didn’t *need* a black man for the play” (28). The actress counters his point by suggesting that Shakespeare’s play is about “Love” (29), yet this perspective prompts the actor to insist that Shakespeare’s play concerns “War” (29), is “a play about the Colour Conflict” (29), and is the first play ever written about Colour (29). The actor also conjectures that Shakespeare’s Othello would have been the only black man on stage, that all the white people in the play are concerned with Othello in one way or another, and that they either love or hate him, or at least think that they do (32): “Here stands Othello, the negro, the black man—the only black man among hundreds of white people. If the play *Othello* isn’t about race and color—then tell me—can you tell me, what the hell is it about?” (33). To bolster his argument for race as the theme of the play, the actor points out that Othello is called “the thick lips” in Shakespeare’s play. Originally, the actor asserts that Desdemona calls Othello “the thick lips” (34), but the actress corrects him and confirms that Roderigo uses the slur “the thick lips” in act one, scene one

(34).²⁴ Carlin's West Indian actor thus relies on dialogue (albeit misquoted) from the play as well as his assertion that Othello is cast as black to argue for race as the central theme of Shakespeare's play.

Other readers and commentators of *Othello* had also noted the significance of race within the play prior to Carlin, and also to Hunter.²⁵ To complicate this critical history, many critics customarily view G.K. Hunter's lecture as among the precursors to post-colonial critics' emphasis on race. Hunter's landmark lecture "*Othello* and the Colour Prejudice" (1967) utilized G.B. Giraldi Cinthio's narrative, which was Shakespeare's source,²⁶ as a point of departure, noting that Cinthio's Moor was also black, a point that Carlin's Actor-Othello does not mention. Hunter stresses the need to focus on what the idea of a black man suggested to Shakespeare, while also considering what reaction the appearance of a black man on the stage was calculated to produce (249). According to Hunter, Shakespeare reversed Jacobean audiences' expectations of encountering a "Moor" on stage by depicting him as a "great Christian gentleman" (254); and yet when viewing blackness and whiteness as states of morality, as Shakespeare's audiences would undoubtedly have done, Iago transfers his blackness to Othello (259). Hunter thus focuses on race as a central issue, emphasizing the connection of appearance and morality within both the play and the mindset of Shakespeare's audience.

Shakespeare's development of Othello offered a discernable departure from stage tradition by integrating the dual stereotype of the Moor that existed when Shakespeare wrote *Othello*. By the time that *Othello* first appeared on the London stage, most likely in either 1604 or 1605, Moors had become a familiar figure of the London theater. A dual stereotype of the Moor existed in the stage tradition preceding *Othello*—one villainous and bestial; the other aristocratic and exotically "other." Othello stems from the latter, with Iago taking on the

characteristics of the former. Shakespeare creates a round tragic hero, who, throughout most of the play, represents the polar opposite of the traditional stereotyped Moor;²⁷ yet the ubiquitous use of the term “Moor” by many characters in the play, especially Iago, who almost always refers to Othello as “the Moor,” functions to remind the audience of Othello’s status as an alien in Venetian society. Iago only employs Othello’s Christian name once, during his ironic toast to “black Othello” as the Ensign stands on the parapet in Cyprus with Cassio (2.3.27-29).²⁸ Additionally, throughout the play, a host of characters employ racial epithets to refer to Othello as “the Moor,” an “old black ram” (1.1.90), a “Barbary horse” (1.1.114), a “lascivious Moor” (1.1.129), “the thick lips” (1.1.68), “black” (1.3.292-93), “the blacker devil” (5.2.135), and a “Malignant and Turbaned Turk” (5.2.363); although once, the Duke describes Othello as “far more fair than black” (1.3.293). Moreover, in act one, scene one, Iago tells Brabantio that “an old black ram / Is tuppung your white ewe” (1.1.90-91), that Brabantio will have his daughter covered with a Barbary horse (1.1.114), and that Desdemona has been transported to “the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor” (1.1.129). Iago thus depicts Othello’s racial identity and Othello and Desdemona’s sexual relationship as repugnant. Roderigo also indulges in racial slurs when referring to Othello, describing Othello as “an extravagant and wheeling stranger / of here and everywhere” (1.1.134-5),²⁹ as the “lascivious Moor” (1.1.129), and as the “thick lips” (1.1.68). Even Brabantio makes reference to Othello’s “sooty bosom” (1.2.71). However, Neill (*Putting History to the Question*) insists that Shakespeare’s audience(s) would have viewed Othello as a representation of a Moor, and thus as a conflation of the ideological and theatrical, asserting that Othello’s blackness was underpinned by the audience’s pleasurable consciousness that it was only a cosmetic illusion (282). Loomba also observes that Shakespeare depicts Othello as more than a representation of stereotypes (*Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* 92). Iago himself

admits that Othello is not the jealous type; instead, he “is of a constant, loving, noble nature” (qtd. in *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* 98).

Despite developing Othello as a tragic hero, the Anglo-American theatrical tradition demarcated race as a category that could be reduced to performable traits and attributes; yet, over time, ideologies regarding the representation of race on stage evolved, signaling a cultural movement towards realist modes of representation—modes that included the audience’s identification of a black body on stage, rather than a white actor’s attempts to imitate, or perform, “blackness.” This cultural evolution is illustrated by the significant American theatrical event of the 1940s, Margaret Webster’s production of *Othello* with Paul Robeson in the title role, though Robeson had already played Othello in London in 1930 (Vaughn 181-82). Certainly, race-based casting comments on race itself through casting decisions made by the director. This shift from “playing” a Moor to “casting” a Moor,” a change that informed even the decision of the director in *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* to cast Othello as black, was accompanied in the Anglo-American tradition by fresh critical approaches to literature.

Carlin also emphasizes the significance of how an audience would perceive a black Othello in the late 1960s, and Carlin’s decision to cast Othello as black also highlights his view of the centrality of race to the play. Carlin refers to the faults of traditional approaches that rely on white actors performing in blackface³⁰ by assigning lines to his Actor-Othello that criticize this style of representation, such as when his Actor-Othello imitates Sir Laurence Olivier’s famous rendering of Othello in 5.2.7: “Put out de light, and den put out de light” (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 13).³¹ Carlin implicitly suggests that, though not intended to be comic, Olivier’s performance evokes blackface minstrelsy, a comic form of drama in which white actors in blackface perform “blackness” based on racial stereotypes, as made famous by entertainers

like Thomas Dartmouth (“T.D.”) Rice. Carlin’s casting decision thus “writes back” to the reductive view of race as a performable set of attributes.

Carlin’s critique also connects Othello’s race to imperialistic ideology: Carlin writes back” to what he views as the implicit nature of the theme of imperialism in Shakespeare’s play, relating racism and imperialism to a post-colonial framework. For example, Carlin’s actor follows his argument about the centrality of race in the original play with his assertion that Shakespeare’s play comments on Imperialism. Carlin’s actor highlights historical aspects of early modern geography to elucidate the colonial discourse in Shakespeare’s play and to form a connection with the post-colonial geography and discourse of his own milieu. According to Carlin’s Actor-Othello, the Age of Imperialism had already begun when Shakespeare wrote *Othello* (32); in fact, Carlin’s Actor-Othello designates *Othello* as the “first play of the Age of Imperialism” (32). As evidence, the actor points out that Fort Jesus in Mombasa, “the bastion of the Portuguese Empire in the Indian Ocean for hundreds of years” (31), was built just ten years before Shakespeare wrote *Othello* (31-32). Thus Shakespeare obviously “understood and foresaw all the problems of the Age of Imperialism” (32), since the Age of Imperialism had already commenced.

Unlike post-colonial scholars, Carlin does not make a clear distinction between “colonialism” and “imperialism”; he prefers the term “imperial,” however, for his Actor-Othello’s discussion of the theme of Shakespeare’s play. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said uses the term “imperialism” to mean “the practice, theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory” (8), a practice he describes as distinct from colonialism, which entails the implantation of settlements on a distant territory. By identifying race as the central theme of Shakespeare’s play and by re-situating the original text within the

context of the apartheid politics of South Africa, Carlin evokes the attitudes and practices used by Great Britain in dominating South Africa from the metropolitan center.

Carlin also connects the historical geography of Shakespeare's drama to his own text by setting his play in London, suggesting a return of the repressed—or the colonized in the case of his black actor from Trinidad—to the "Motherland." Significantly, as numerous scholars such as John Springhall document, Trinidad had gained its independence from Great Britain in 1962 (141), the same year as Uganda. Carlin does not set his play in Uganda, Trinidad, or South Africa, however; the play suggests that the actor's and actress's rehearsal takes place in England, the "motherland" of South Africa, Uganda, and Trinidad. Evidence for the geographical setting includes Actress-Desdemona's reference to herself and Actor-Othello as refugees (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 43), her insistence on being "sick of this bloody island" (43), the actor's reference to a boycott of wine from South Africa (48), his description of Actress-Desdemona as having been away from home for a long time (55), and Actor-Othello's reference to himself as having been "new" there when he first met her (60). Carlin's alteration of the setting of Shakespeare's play thus underscores Carlin's motivations for positioning the dominated culture as confronting the dominating culture. Carlin reverses the trope of "invasion" even while the colonized appears to be integrated into the dominating culture.

Carlin's primary argument for the connection of Shakespeare's play to the age of Imperialism, however, rests on his assertions that Venice was an Empire (35), that Desdemona was the first of the "White Liberals" (37), that she longed for power over Othello (35), and that she obtained power by making Othello "her personal black man" (37). Carlin does not specify in either his introduction to the play or the play itself what precisely he means by "White Liberals," but since he capitalizes "Liberals" four out of the six times he utilizes the term in lines 852 to

884, one can deduce that Carlin is partly referring to the South African Liberal Party (SALA). The SALA was officially formed on May 9, 1953 (Vigne 19) and dissolved, unrecorded, in 1968 (223). Although the SALA did not officially develop politically until 1953, it existed prior to 1953 in nascent forms beginning as early as 1853 in Cape Town. The liberal tradition originated with the introduction of the non-racial Cape franchise, which extended franchise to all adult males of the Cape Colony, regardless of race and qualification (e.g., literacy) (Vigne 1). The tradition progressed into one whose principles gained the attention of both whites and blacks in Pietermaritzburg, Durban, Natal, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, and East London (13). Units from Cape Town, Natal, and Johannesburg united in 1953 to form the SALA, which made apartheid its prime target (17).

As Vigne explains, the SALA encountered contention both before and after its official formation. The liberals and the SALA “aimed to plead for fuller knowledge, or more consideration, of Non-European needs and interest” (ix) and to take aim at apartheid; but opponents, including the South African Congress of Democrats, argued against the plausibility of the SALA’s efforts to speak *for* non-European peoples: “Unlike the Liberal Party, it [the South African Congress of Democrats] claims to speak not *for* but *with* the non-European people as represented by African and Indian Congress (qtd. in Vigne 23).³² Yet, the Party maintained its focus on enfranchisement and non-racialism from the early 1950s until 1965, at which time a bill was introduced to prevent the interference by whites in non-white politics (Vigne 20). Nelson Mandela and others campaigned to turn the African National Congress (ANC) against the liberals, both black and white, and the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) contended that “the concept of liberalism was anathema” (9). In September of 1966, the SALA agreed to dissolve upon the signing of the Bill, titled the Prohibition of Political Interference (207). On 19

May 1968, the Prohibition came onto the statute book (222) and the SALA subsequently dissolved, after which no formal body of members remained in an organized form (225).³³ However, “White Liberal” was (and still is) a term generally used to describe a white individual who supports racial equality in a patronizing way. As Hunt Hawkins avers, Carlin almost certainly was using the term in this general way and only secondarily thinking of the South African Liberal Party” (“Chapter 1: Revised”).

According to Carlin’s Actor-Othello, “White Liberals” tell themselves that they are on the side of the black man but unconsciously want to dominate him: “That’s how they feel—how they really feel. They tell themselves they’re on the side of the black man—*they* are fighting for him against his oppressors (37)—but what they really want is to tell him what to do” (37), so they obtain power through love instead of force (37). Carlin’s Actor-Othello associates Shakespeare’s Desdemona with South African White Liberals and emphasizes Othello’s race to propose that Desdemona’s true desires did not differ from those who obtain power over black men through violence, suggesting that false or patronizing sympathy undergirds Desdemona’s attraction to Othello. In the actor’s interpretive paradigm, Desdemona may have told herself that her love for Othello proved that she saw him as a viable marriage partner, but this self-assurance did not negate her true desire to dominate him. According to the actor, the “power” Desdemona wishes to wield over Othello manifests itself through her control of him. The actor thus insists that Desdemona attempts to lead Othello away from himself: “All he [Othello] wanted was to fight, and go to war, and enjoy a little politics—and take his Venetian into bed, in between—and be left alone, to be himself—to act, to be a *man*, to *be*! All he wanted was to be left alone—and she *wouldn’t* leave him alone” (36). Ironically, the actor defends Iago, insisting that Iago was a

man (36), that he loved Othello (36), that he wanted to save Othello from Desdemona and “all her crew” (36), and that he sought to “bring Othello back to himself—to the Army” (36-7).

The actor’s defense of Iago and defamation of Desdemona proves perplexing: either Carlin and his Actor-Othello maintain a sexist approach to Shakespeare’s play, or Carlin has political reasons for associating Desdemona with White Liberals. In my view, the truth of this puzzle involves embracing both possibilities. The primary problem with the Actor-Othello’s defense of Iago is its reliance on inaccurate information. In Shakespeare’s play, Iago does not love Othello or want to save him; Iago himself explicitly informs other characters in the play as well as the audience that he hates Othello (Shakespeare 2.1.368, 2.1.387) and that he intends to use Desdemona to ensnare and destroy Othello (2.3.353-56). Additionally, Iago masterfully displays false sympathy for Othello, consistently informing the audience of his deleterious view of Othello while simultaneously pretending to be on Othello’s side. These facts prove particularly significant in act three, scene three, when after Desdemona pleads on Cassio’s behalf for his reinstatement, Iago duplicitously warns Othello to “beware . . . of jealousy” (3.3.178) and to accept proof of Desdemona’s infidelity from him, since the words he speaks derive from his love for Othello (3.3.210, 3.3.233-4). The displacement of this false sympathy by Shakespeare’s Othello and Carlin’s Actor-Othello onto Desdemona may be unconsciously sexist. And yet Carlin may have associated his Desdemona with White Liberalism since she is the only other character in the play. The Actor-Othello’s defense of Iago nonetheless depicts women in a negative light, offering credence to Nazareth’s view of the conflict between Carlin’s Actor and Actress as one not only one of race but of the conflict of man and emancipated woman (*An African View of Literature* 28).

Analyzing *Othello* through the lens of post-colonial theory, other post-colonial critics also later identified Othello's race as central to the play and, like Carlin, they connected race to colonial ideology. As Charles Bressler observes, the terms "postcolonial" and "postcolonialism" first appeared in scholarly journals in the mid-1980s, as subtitles in texts such as *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Ashcroft et al. 1989) and in Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin's *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism* (1990) indicate. For example, Loomba maintains that the black presence in early modern England was perceived and constructed as a threat to the state (*Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* 43). Analyzing the roles of racism and patriarchalism in the play, Loomba describes Othello as a colonized subject who internalizes the ideologies of the society that affects his exclusion: "Othello moves from being a colonised subject existing on the terms of the White Venetian society and trying to internalise its ideology, towards being marginalised, outcast and alienated from it in every way, until he occupies its 'true' position as its other" (49). Later, Loomba emphasizes the connection between Othello's race and his exclusion from Venetian society upholding the view that *Othello* is about "a black man trying to live in a white society, assimilating yet maintaining his identity while he is isolated from other black people, his history, and culture" (*Colonialism/Postcolonialism* 15). Jyotsna Singh further reasons that African and Turkish audiences would have perceived of Shakespeare's Othello as a figure in an "Orientalist landscape, both erotic and violent, a composite [European] fantasy" ("Othello's Identity, Post-Colonial Theory, and Contemporary African Rewritings" 298-9).³⁴ Certainly, the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) influenced Singh's interpretation of Shakespeare's famous protagonist. Additionally, Singh also applies theories from both Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha—two notable post-colonial theorists—to consider the role of Othello's race in the play.

In 2000 Arthur Little remarks that “a black body was not an anomaly in early modern England” (22), asking, “What would happen to *Othello* were we to consider it a drama taking place not at a critical juncture of London’s inclusion of black bodies but its exclusion, its deportation of them?” (22). Kim Hall also amplifies the relationship of Othello’s race to the construction of blacks in early modern England as a threat to the state, relating *Othello* to Queen Elizabeth I’s expulsion of “Blackamoors” from England to promote the welfare of her own “natural subjects” (194). As Hall observes, in 1596 Elizabeth issued a proclamation licensing Dutch Captain Casper Van Senden to transport “Negars and blackamoors” from England in exchange for English prisoners he delivered from Spain (*Othello: Texts and Contexts* 194) although Van Sanden complained that English citizens refused to give up their slaves, thus prompting Elizabeth to write a warrant in 1601 requiring the transportation of “Negars and blackamoors” out of the realm (194). Sara Munson Deats applies an Althusserian approach to posit that Iago uses techniques similar to those of a colonizer to hail, or interpellate, Othello and Desdemona into the subject positions endorsed by their racist and sexist society (196-7). Each of these critics thus thoroughly analyzes *Othello* to emphasize the centrality of race in the play and to interpret race as an aspect of colonial ideology. Singh’s analysis explains how select audiences would have viewed Othello as a racialized, exotic figure with whom they partially (yet not fully) identify; Hall’s study illuminates the relationship between Othello’s blackness and his exclusion from elite Venetian society; and both Loomba’s and Deats’s treatments consider the roles of sexism and racism in the construction of Othello as a colonized subject.

Carlin’s play can thus be viewed as a precursor to post-colonial criticism that connects race and colonial ideology, including gender-focused criticism that addresses the implicit and less-debated issue of Desdemona’s culpability. As previously discussed, Carlin’s play

antagonistically targets Shakespeare's Desdemona, insisting that "she demands on [sic] her black husband to reinstate her white protégé, Cassio" (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 3-4), that she is so "terribly persistent" in her efforts, and that a power "outside of her control" urges her to *force* her husband to accede (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 4). The fact that the framing narrative revolves around the actor's and actress's rehearsal of act three, scene three³⁵ of *Othello*, the scene in which Desdemona pleads for Cassio's reinstatement on his behalf, emphasizes Carlin's point. The actor's and actress's debate commences after Carlin's Actor-Othello, frustrated by the English producer's vision of the play, stops their rehearsal and almost quits the production. The actor's aversion to performing the role and script according to the English director's vision prompts the actress to ask the actor how *he* sees the plays and its characters. The actor agrees to share his marvelous ideas about the "real way" to perform the play, but the actress demands to know what he plans to do with *her* part (23). He insists that she appear full of sweetness, yet act confidently and commandingly, determined to be on top, and unrelentingly persistent about getting back *her* Cassio (25-26). Carlin's actor interprets this scene in Shakespeare's play as Desdemona's attempt to dominate Othello, and he suggests that her desire to maintain Othello as her "personal black man" (37) prevents her from respecting Othello's request to postpone white Cassio's reinstatement. Certainly, Carlin's interpretation relies on a view of a "white" Cassio and Desdemona that Shakespeare's audience would have not shared,³⁶ yet Carlin's audiences would have viewed whiteness as a signifier of race.

While critics divide in their perspectives regarding Desdemona's degree of complicity, some post-colonial critics see Shakespeare's Desdemona as complicit in Othello's demise. Philip C. Kolin aptly summarizes these divergent critical views: Desdemona has been polarized, "valorized as a saint or vilified as a strumpet" (16). Her "fractitious naysayers" have assailed her

for a host of wrongdoings, including disobeying her father, backchatting with Iago, lying to Othello about the handkerchief, pleading Cassio's case, admiring Lodovico, and absolving Othello of her death in act five, scene two (18). She has been "maligned by critics who search for her culpability to the end" (20).

Emily Bartels offers an interpretation of Desdemona's role that proves similar to Carlin's view: Bartels contends that Desdemona's insistence on her will and way are unorthodox from an early modern perspective ("Improvisation and Othello: The Play of Race and Gender" 74), and that Desdemona's intervention on Cassio's behalf in act three, scene three "seems to catalyze the forthcoming change of mind [in Othello] that Iago has plotted" (73). Bartels further asserts that after Othello initially resists Desdemona's attempts to "name the time" (3.3.68) for Cassio's reinstatement, but then finally surrenders to her entreaties (72), Desdemona, in "a seemingly extraneous moment," defers accepting her "victory" (73) while chastising Othello for misinterpreting her request, retorting that it is not a "boon" (73).³⁷ Addressing this scene within an important wider context, Bartels posits that the dialogue between Desdemona and Othello in act three, scene three proves pivotal in its inclusion of the improvisational underpinnings of the play (74), asserting that "characters and actions are defined first and foremost by particular interactions inside the play, even as those characters and actions take shape against codes and values that circulate outside" it (74). Thus the dialogue in this scene amplifies the domestic complications of the play, implies that Desdemona exerts force as a participatory subject, and demonstrates that a crisis in gender roles significantly contributes to the conflict of race in the play (75).

I concur with Bartels regarding the assertion that Desdemona's intervention on Cassio's behalf leads to the success of Iago's plot to change Othello's mind, but I view Iago, rather than

Desdemona, as responsible for the deleterious narrative about Desdemona that Iago co-opts Othello into constructing. Moreover, Iago and Othello begin to shape this narrative *after* the domestic dispute in act three, scene three. Othello reinstates Cassio, but Desdemona asserts that her case for his restoration is not a “boon,” or a request, but an effort to sway Othello into making an appropriate decision: “Tis as I should entreat you to wear your glove, / or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm” (Shakespeare 3.3.84-5). Bartels refers to this part of Desdemona’s request as a “coda”—a “superfluous chiding that Desdemona voices after Cassio’s suit is resolved” (“Improvisation and Othello: The Play of Race and Gender” 73). This “coda” presents Desdemona as concerned for her husband’s welfare, however, and might be paraphrased as, “This is not a *personal* request; I am encouraging Cassio’s reinstatement for *your* benefit.” However, although by the end of the scene Othello seems mollified, Iago soon sways Othello’s attention back to Cassio, the subject Iago had been focusing on prior to Othello’s domestic disagreement with Desdemona. The domestic dispute, therefore, not only interrupts but apparently contributes to Iago’s efforts to persuade Othello to construct a narrative in which Cassio and Desdemona are guilty of betrayal and infidelity.

Singh (1994) also feels ambivalent toward Shakespeare’s Desdemona: in Singh’s view, Desdemona “remains an idealized, virtuous woman—keeping alive the image of a besieged white femininity that is so crucial to the production of the black man as a ‘savage’ to the end” (290). Singh’s argument, which focuses on Othello and Desdemona in both Shakespeare’s and Carlin’s plays, hinges on how Desdemona is *cast*—as a pure and devoted heroine (294). Thus, according to Singh, by her very innocence and purity, Desdemona unwittingly helps to construct Othello as a barbarian and sexual predator. Although Singh does not discuss Desdemona’s internal psychology, she implies that casting Desdemona as innocent contributes to how Othello

is judged according to a civilization/barbarism dichotomy (299).³⁸ Moreover, Singh approaches Actor-Othello from a Fanonian perspective, analyzing both Othello and Carlin's Actor-Othello as black men whose desires for white women symbolize their wishes to be white (Singh 295). However, an analysis of Othello's psychosexuality does not explain Carlin's construction of both Shakespeare's and Carlin's Desdemonas as women unconsciously wishing to dominate black men.

Significantly, Carlin's Actress-Desdemona disagrees with the actor's interpretation of Desdemona, yet the actor convinces her to play the role according to his interpretation, revealing the irony of his insistence on acting out the very accusation he launches against Shakespeare's Desdemona—her persistent efforts to get her way. Actress-Desdemona's view of the drama starkly contrasts with that of her lover's / fellow actor's. The arguments that Carlin's Actor-Othello advance stem from his belief that there is only *one* play for every play by Shakespeare (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 16). According to the actress, however, there is no "real play" to interpret: "*Real play*—that's a contradiction. Every production—every performance—is what the producer and the actors make of it. They're all different" (26). Carlin's Actress-Desdemona views the role of Shakespeare's Desdemona as innocent, proudly identifying with Shakespeare's Desdemona: "Desdemona? . . . Everyone sees her in their own way. She's very loving . . . She's very generous . . . She's completely selfless . . . She's beautiful. As a matter of fact, she's a lot like me" (27). Nonetheless, because the actress recognizes the play as unstable, impermanent, and open to interpretation, she agrees to play Shakespeare's Desdemona the way Carlin's Actor-Othello views her: "*They act the scene. She is now entirely 'his' Desdemona—pressing, insistent, almost suffocating*" (39). Carlin thus uses the framing narrative—the relationship between his "unnamed West Indian character" (2) and "his 'Desdemona'" (5)—to dramatize a critical re-

reading of the roles of race, gender, and colonialism in Shakespeare's play, appropriating and re-reading Shakespeare's Desdemona as a white woman who desires and obtains control of Othello.

The debate between the Othello-Actor and the Actress-Desdemona crescendos into a climax when Carlin's Othello slaps Desdemona while they are still rehearsing act three, scene three, rather than act four, scene one (in which Shakespeare's Othello strikes his Desdemona), thereby affecting both the re-structuring and re-situating of Shakespeare's play.³⁹ The blow is so severe that Carlin's Actress-Desdemona staggers backwards and collapses (41). The stage directions ask, "*Was this a mime, or a real blow? Or a little of both? And what is 'real'?*" (41). In Shakespeare's play, Othello strikes Desdemona after Iago convinces Othello that Desdemona has committed adultery. In the next scene, Othello subsequently avows to "let her rot and perish" (Shakespeare 4.2.181), be "damned / tonight" (4.2.181-82), hang her (4.2.187), "chop her into messes" (4.2.199)," and poison her (4.2.203); and yet Iago persuades Othello to strangle Desdemona in the bed she has allegedly contaminated (4.2.206-7). In Carlin's play, however, his Actor-Othello strikes Desdemona during their rehearsal of act three, scene three, when Shakespeare's Desdemona entreats Othello to restore Cassio to his former position. Moreover, Carlin's Actor-Othello calls his fellow actress "Devil!" (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 41), suggesting that, as she states, he is "in the wrong part of the play" (41). "Yes" (41), he matter-of-factly agrees, signaling the convergence of his identification with Shakespeare's Othello (as he sees him) and the complexes he has inherited from imperialism.

This climax also functions as the juncture where the tendency of Carlin's Actor-Othello to displace his anxiety onto Shakespeare's Desdemona becomes most apparent: his violent explosion illogically follows her performance of the role of Shakespeare's Desdemona precisely as he had prescribed it. Applying Fanon's documented experiences with French colonialism,

Singh contends that the hostility and attraction that the actor directs towards the Actress-Desdemona is typical of the psychic divisions experienced by black men during colonial rule in places such as Fanon's native Martinique (295). Singh argues that Carlin's Actor-Othello recognizes the colonized persona of both his and Shakespeare's Othello, but that the actor does not wholly identify with the European "liberal" version of the black Othello. Singh further describes Carlin's Actor-Othello as a self-pitying neurotic who is full of contradictions, who sees race as the central issue of Shakespeare's play, and whose sexism can be explained by Fanon's analysis of a black man's desire for a white woman as symbolic for his wish to be white (295). Peter Dickinson advances a similar view: that *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* "really only serves as a pre-text—both literally and metaphorically—to the more pressing cultural matter of dramatizing a theory of Black subjectivity as it relates to the history of imperialism" (194). Elaborating, Dickinson states that Carlin is "responding as much to the psychological roles of the colonizer and the colonized as discussed by Octave Mannoni and Frantz Fanon as he is to the theatrical incarnation of those roles" (194). Considering Carlin's intentions to re-read, re-structure, and re-situate *Othello*, Loomba perceptively offers an interpretation of Shakespeare's *Othello* that shares characteristics of Singh's and Dickinson's views. Loomba compares Desdemona with a gateway to white humanity by using Chapter Three of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* to analyze Othello's desire for Desdemona (*Gender Race, and Renaissance Drama* 63). Fanon opens this chapter with the metaphor of a white woman's breasts as symbols for white civilization—a civilization that can be grasped, conquered, and possessed. Fanon intends to psychoanalyze a black man's desire for a white woman within a colonial context, but violence undergirds the metaphor he chooses to introduce his relevant psychoanalytical theories. This violent metaphor resonates with the "hostility" Singh ascribes to Carlin's Actor-Othello (295),

and the metaphor also relies on the reversal of the deep-seated cultural fear of a black man possessing a white woman in a European culture.

Carlin engages the dialectical interplay between hostility and attraction to which Singh refers by “writing back” to and reversing aspects of the myth of the black rapist—a myth predicated on a premise of miscegenation as a violation of natural law reified through the metaphor of sexualized racial violence. According to Little, the black rapist myth is deeply rooted in gendered anxieties: European men strived to make sense of the desires of European women for black men and thus inverted the desire by depicting black men in subversively dominant positions over white women (75). This prejudice complicated perceptions of black male sexuality in culture and literature. For example, Shakespeare’s Iago antagonistically reveals racial anxieties in scenes of horrifying sexuality (75), leading Othello to identify with Iago’s repugnant view of Othello’s sexual relationship with Desdemona. Iago frequently couches his salacious depictions of both Othello and Desdemona in animal imagery, describing Othello as “an old black ram” (1.1.90) and a Barbary horse” (1.1.114) to reduce Othello to the level of a beast. Iago later degrades Desdemona and Cassio to the level of animals, referring to their lust with the offended slur, “It is impossible you should see this, / Were they as prime goats, as hot as monkeys . . .” (3.3.418-19), a phrase that Othello will echo in 4.1.270-71. Iago’s narration to Othello of Cassio’s dream (3.3.410-23) perverts the coupling of Desdemona and Othello into sexual copulation between Cassio and himself (Iago), insinuating that Othello and Desdemona’s sexual relationship conjures up the homosexuality associated with Venice’s loose sexual mores (Little 85). This subversive association propels Othello to identify his relationship to Desdemona with Iago’s (mis)representation of it as a perverted liaison. As Kenneth Burke contends in his treatment of ingenuous and cunning identifications, Iago’s words and actions were “designed to

build up false identifications [in Othello]" (36).⁴⁰ By re-reading and re-situating Shakespeare's play, however, Carlin reverses the psychosexual dynamics of Othello's and Desdemona's relationship.

In the framing narrative, Carlin also focuses on the racial coding of Desdemona's desire, as hinging on her love for Othello. And yet in other parts of the play, particularly when the actor attempts to persuade the actress to accept his interpretation of Shakespeare's Desdemona, he inverts the gendered coding of hierarchical difference to associate white female sexuality with domination and monstrosity, reiterating his interpretation of Desdemona as emasculating Othello, and further illustrating the actor's displacement of the complexes he inherited from colonialism onto Desdemona. The conclusion of the play upholds this inversion, as Carlin's Actress Desdemona states: "I felt like a wanton—an abandoned woman. I wanted to flaunt myself in front of you . . . I wanted to arouse you . . . to make you want me—in a savage sort of way" (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 60). Carlin does not leave his confrontation with the black rapist myth at the level of a hierarchical reversal:⁴¹ he re-structures Shakespeare's play so that his Actor-Othello and Actress-Desdemona deconstruct the racialized order on which their sexual desire is based. The self-perceptions of the actor and actress thereby change from "savage" and "devil" to "ordinary" (60, 61): "[Carlin's Actor-Othello] Our bodies stopped being strange and became real; and real, they were more wonderful than before . . . There were no more savages, angels, and devils. And we became man and woman" (61).

Carlin also engages the dialectical interplay between hostility and attraction through the rehearsal of a play the actress proposes that the actor write, a play called *Desdemona*. After vehemently quarreling and accusing the Actor-Othello of indulging in self-pity, agonizing, posturing, and melodrama (43), Carlin's Desdemona proposes that the Actor-Othello write a play

titled *Desdemona*, set it in a black court in Central Africa, and cast Desdemona as the only white character (44). She also suggests that he cast Othello as a “black liberal” whose white wife Desdemona becomes jealous, is poisoned by a villainous friend, goes mad, kills her black husband, and then kills herself (45). She and the actor initially laugh about the absurdity of reversing the racial and gender hierarchies of Shakespeare’s *Othello*, but she nonetheless convinces the actor to act out part of “her” play. The actress commences the rehearsal in act five, scene two of Shakespeare’s play with Othello’s lines: “That handkerchief which I so loved and gave thee Thou gavest to Cassio” (45). Omitting lines 53-73 of the original scene, the actress resumes performing her version of Othello’s lines in 5.2.74: “He hath confessed” (45). After the actor responds by citing 5.2.80 of Shakespeare’s play with Desdemona’s lines: “Alas, he is betrayed and I undone!” (45), they continue with their reversals of roles, and the Actress-Desdemona tells Harry to “Put out the lights” (45). Although the actress is on top of the actor, he struggles out from under her, tells Harry to put the lights on, and uses a prop knife to simulate the act of slitting her throat, thereby symbolically shedding her blood and scarring that “whiter skin of hers than snow” (Shakespeare 5.2.4) that Shakespeare’s Othello had vowed to leave untouched (5.2.3-5). Although Carlin’s actress does not express offense in response to this horseplay, the actor’s behavior provides further evidence of the displacement of his anxiety onto his relationship with the actress. Carlin’s actor aptly views race as the theme of Shakespeare’s play, but he persistently focuses on Desdemona—a white woman—as the source of racism. The play *Desdemona* consequently functions as another means by which the actor and actress debate their views of the play. The actor’s perspective persistently emphasizes race as the central theme of the play while re-reading and re-situating the myth of the black rapist, whereas the perspective of the actress focuses on jealousy as the primary theme of Shakespeare’s play.

The parable of the Prime Minister, a story that Carlin's Actor-Othello tells the actress about a White Prime Minister of South Africa who turns black during an act of sexual intercourse with his white wife in a whites-only area of South Africa, also confronts and re-situates the black rapist myth. Lemuel Johnson points out that Carlin's Actor-Othello and Actress-Desdemona negotiate meaning out of the absurd parable about the trial of the Prime Minister of the Republic of South Africa. As Johnson describes, the Prime Minister stood trial for "changing, with no warning, from apartheid white to kaffir black" during an act of sexual intercourse with his white wife in a whites-only residential area (160). As previously discussed, Apartheid's Law of sexual circulation as codified in the Immorality Act made sexual intercourse between the black and white races illegal. The Law, therefore, renders the Prime Minister's marital thrust a crime. The case concludes with the ex-Prime Minister sentenced, hoisted, as it were, on the petard of the law's absurd logic: the judge determines that the ex-Prime Minister *must* have been psychologically aware that he had turned black during the act of sexual intercourse, after which he should have subsequently withdrawn from his wife and apologized (162). Key to the legal logic in the case against the White Prime Minister is that his "turning black" immediately strips him of privileges otherwise afforded to him as a white male. After he turns black, his wife suddenly fears violence, screaming, "Help! Murder! Police! Help! My husband has turned into a Kaffir, he's going to murder me!" (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 50). The Parable of the Prime Minister of South Africa thus also "writes back" to the concept of "turning Turk," or turning "black" in the Prime Minister's case. Although the Prime Minister rules a country that discriminates against blacks, the Prime Minister turns black and becomes the enemy within, thereby turning into that which he fears, the stereotypical black South African male.

Additionally, the parable implicitly comments on one of Othello's most memorable lines from Shakespeare's play, "Put out the light and then put out the light" (Shakespeare 5.2.7). In Shakespeare's play, both blackness (skin color) and darkness signify immorality and danger, particularly since Othello murders Desdemona in the darkness of the night. The relationship between blackness and darkness are, therefore, ideologically related in Shakespeare's play. The parable in Carlin's play, however, emphasizes blackness as a legal category; thus the darkness works in favor of the Prime Minister's Wife (she could not have known that her husband turned black), but darkness does not help the case of the Prime Minister (he must have known that he had turned black). The parable functions to deconstruct the parallel between blackness and darkness in the original play, and Carlin enhances this deconstructive technique when prior to spontaneously performing a mock version of the murder scene from Shakespeare's play, the Actor-Othello tells Harry to put the stage lights back on: "Wait a minute! Put them [the lights] on again, Harry— not yet . . . when I tell you . . . now!" (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 46). This scene functions to deconstruct the parallel of blackness and darkness in *Othello* by illustrating how playwrights (Shakespeare and Carlin) and directors (Carlin's Actor-Othello) can turn lights (and darkness) off and on, thereby exposing the illogical presupposition of the association between darkness/light and immorality/innocence.

While interracial union as a violation of natural law registers as a legal infraction in both *Othello* and *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*, Carlin's play emphasizes the punishment administered for such a violation in a legally segregated society. As recorded in the Fifth Volume of *The British Commonwealth; The Development of Its Laws and Constitution*, the Immorality Act was passed in 1927 to minimize miscegenation (317). Originally applicable to "illicit carnal intercourse" between "Europeans and Natives," the scope of the Act was extended in 1950 to

cover intercourse between “Europeans” and “non-Europeans,” wherein “appearance” and “repute” determined one’s designation as belonging to the former or latter category. The South African police initially debate about whether to beat the Prime Minister since, “If you are a member of the South African Police, and you *find* a Kaffir, you must beat that Kaffir. That is part of your duties. It’s *normal*” (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 50). The police subsequently attempt to determine which jail to put the Prime Minister in, since the jails are also segregated (50). After a close physical examination, the Prime Minister is assigned to a tribal area and, although his wife is not initially charged with a crime, the confession of his wife to a violation of the Act prompts both of their arraignments. A judge acquits the Prime Minister’s white wife; the judge holds her blameless because she had *not* turned on the light and recognized her husband as black before he penetrated her. The judge therefore declares her as not guilty since after turning on the light, she “behaved in a manner which any white woman might have been proud of” (55). In contrast, the Judge decided that the act of culpability would *not* have been a matter of appearances for the Prime Minister—that the instant he turned black, “his whole psychology must have changed . . . he must have felt like a Shangaan” (55). The judge thus sentences the ex-Prime Minister to one year in jail (56). Although it contains comic features, the parable of the Prime Minister reveals solemn dimensions of societal laws that were institutionalized in apartheid and the Immorality Act. By having the judge consult the Immorality Act and attempt to determine if the Prime Minister knew that he had turned black while having sex with his white wife, Carlin emphasizes the legal aspects of an operative law with roots in deep-seated cultural fears that manifested themselves even in Shakespeare’s English Renaissance plays.

Additionally, since Carlin’s Actor-Othello tells the actress about the parable in the form of a “story,” the parable also functions to “write back” to Othello’s notoriety for “storytelling” by

re-reading and re-situating this element of Shakespeare's play. Despite the actor's persistence in telling the story to the actress, Carlin's Actress-Desdemona, unlike Shakespeare's heroine, initially evinces little to no interest in hearing Othello's narrative, even though, in this case, it is described as "dirty" and "political" (17). The parable proves important in Carlin's play because in *Othello*, the only explicit reference Othello makes to why Desdemona loves him occurs when he declares that "She [Desdemona] loved me for the dangers I had passed, / And I loved her that she did pity them" (Shakespeare 1.3.169-70). According to Othello, the tales of "Cannibals that each other eat, / The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders" (1.3.145-47) attracted her to him. The Duke summarily refers to everything that Othello reportedly told Desdemona as a "tale" (1.3.173), but Othello calls it "the story of my life" (1.3.131). Significantly, in his narration of these tales, Othello identifies with the European traveler by differentiating himself from the savage monsters he reports to have observed. The actor's recounting of the plight of the Prime Minister of South Africa evokes a re-reading and re-situating of an "Othello" who cannot easily be categorized by himself or others as either a European or an "other."

The critical views presented in Carlin's play consequently also align with those offered in Vivian Comensoli's Fanonian-based critique of Shakespeare's *Othello*. Drawing on the post-colonial, psychoanalytic theory of Fanon as well as the contemporary psychoanalytic theory of Diana Fuss (who also refers to Fanon), Comensoli concludes that "Othello is constructed as neither subject nor other" (93), but, in Fanon's words, as "an 'object' cut off from his 'own presence'" (Fanon qtd. in Comensoli 93). Relying on Fuss in *Identification Papers*, Comensoli insists that Othello experiences "objecthood" (qtd. in Comensoli 95) versus "real alterity" (Comensoli 95), which "blocks the migration through the other necessary for subjectivity to take

place” (95). Significantly, Comensoli argues that Othello lacks a “self” or consciousness capable of action (92). By suggesting that Shakespeare’s Desdemona leads Othello away from himself (823-30), Carlin’s Actor-Othello also proposes that Othello subsequently lacks subjectivity. If, as the actor asserts, Desdemona makes Othello her “personal black man” (869), then Othello’s experience of himself is constructed accordingly, as neither a subject nor as an “other,” but as an object whose path to subjectivity is thwarted. And yet through his play, Carlin alters Othello’s “objecthood” to alterity.

Thus in the conclusion of Carlin’s play, the actress and actor share a more authentic relationship with one another, offering a significant alteration of Shakespeare’s conclusion of *Othello* while also illustrating Carlin’s interest in dismantling the effects of the nefarious institution of apartheid. As previously discussed, in the play’s conclusion, the actor and actress begin to see themselves as man and woman rather than “savages, angels, and devils” (*Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* 61). Yet, Carlin’s Actor-Othello decides to drink the South African wine despite the boycott (62), to accept dividends from South Africa (61), and to buy a ring made from gold from South Africa (61-2). Additionally, neither the actor nor the actress indicates that they intend to resign from the production of *Othello* that relies on stereotyped casting. The conclusion, therefore, leads one to question Carlin’s commitment to altering colonial structures. However, in my view, Carlin successfully protests against apartheid through *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*. Eight years after the staging of *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*, Nazareth observed that many South African writers were concerned with “fighting” apartheid to illustrate its monstrosity because in South Africa apartheid was the force that made the social system unjust, and which affected a person’s life “like a virulent form of cancer” (*An African View of Literature* 2). According to Nazareth, unless the African writer is fully satisfied with the status quo, he will be

“committed,” whether explicitly or implicitly (2). Moreover, the committed African writer may not necessarily provide solutions; “we are to draw our own conclusions about what must be done” (5). Carlin should thus be recognized for his commitment to challenging what was then the status quo in South Africa, through his political protest at Rhodes University College in South Africa as well as his dramatic resistance through *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* in London and Uganda.

In the introduction to his play, Carlin attempts to distance himself from his Actor-Othello, perceiving his character (as many authors would) as a creation that stands apart in its own distinct alterity. For example, Carlin states that when people ask him if his view of Shakespeare’s play corresponds with the perspective of his Actor-Othello, he replies, “It isn’t what I think—it’s what my character thinks!” (2). Carlin further asserts that his “character’s opinions are part of his personality” (2), and he maintains that West Indians are “volatile”—“they are quick, like quick silver” (4)—and that South Africans are “slow moving” (4-5). Significantly, Carlin does not identify himself with South Africans. Moreover, he does not identify with either “blacks” or “whites” when he asserts that “the poisons of race are, still: pity and self-pity. The blacks must stop being sorry for themselves. The whites must stop feeling false sympathy” (5). If Carlin identifies with whiteness in the way that he describes in his introduction, then his play simply serves as an example of his own “false sympathy.” If his play is about race and features characters who embody pity and self-pity, then they do not need to discuss Shakespeare’s *Othello*; nor does Carlin’s West Indian actor need to argue that Othello was a victim of Desdemona or, more broadly, racism. Although he only intimates it, Carlin partially identifies with his black West Indian actor. As such, Carlin asks the reader in his introduction whether or not they agree “that there is something in what he says” (2).

Not Now, Sweet Desdemona, therefore, “writes back” to the assumption that only Anglo-American criticism of *Othello* provides valid commentary on Shakespeare’s play. As discussed in the introduction, Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, Patrick Murphy, and Christy Desmet all advocate plays as both creative and critical works. Hall aligns with this theory as well: In her chapter titled “Encounters as Criticism” in *Othello: Texts and Contexts* (2008), she includes both critical and dramatic texts, contending that readers should think of all encounters—including their own—as interpretations of both Shakespeare’s play and the artist’s vision (344). My reading interprets Carlin’s play as dramatic commentary that “writes back” to Shakespeare and Shakespearean critics through the use of post-colonial counter-discursive metatheatre that re-reads, re-structures, and re-situates Shakespeare’s play. Singh aptly argues that *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* should be read in tandem with *Othello*, since this and other related post-colonial texts “question whether Shakespeare’s *Othello* can be read and appreciated (as conservatives would insist) without the interventions of its non-European revisions” (209). I concur, and I propose that this new interpretation of *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* enables critics to consider how the dramatic post-colonial tradition of Shakespeare’s *Othello* provides specific post-colonial interpretations of Shakespeare’s play that have heretofore remained unknown.

Notes

1. Carlin’s Actor-Othello explicitly refers to Shakespeare’s play as a “play on the theme of race” (29).
2. According to Carlin in his introduction to *The Thousand*, the first reading of *Not Now Sweet Desdemona* was staged in London in 1968; the Ngoma Players later performed *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* at Makerere University in the same year.
3. There have been numerous other post-colonial appropriations of Shakespeare’s great play from the early-Jacobean period—Blake Modisane’s *Blame Me on History* (1963), Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (1969), Caryl Phillips’ *The European Tribe* (1987) and *The*

Nature of Blood (1997), Simi Bedford's *Yoruba Dancing Girls* (1994), Paula Vogel's *Desdemona: A Play about a Handkerchief* (1994), Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), and Djanet Sears' *Harlem Duet* (1997). These appropriations share similarities with Carlin's play: they re-read *Othello* and appropriate it in order to discuss the relevance of race, gender, and colonialism to contemporary, post-colonial concerns. However, *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* has not received much critical attention. Additionally, since it overtly targets a play by William Shakespeare, a discussion of it proves effective alongside the other adaptations chosen for treatment in this dissertation.

4. Very little has been written about *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*, and in "Duets, Dialogues, and Black Diasporic Theatre: Djanet Sears, William Shakespeare, and Others," Peter Dickinson attributes the neglect of Carlin's play to the "massive critical attention" given to Aimé Césaire's 1969 adaptation of *The Tempest* (195).

5. Significantly, in "Lenin, Hitler, and the House of Commons in Three Plays by Terence Rattigan: A Case for the Author of French without Tears," Murray Carlin states that "one of the most difficult tasks of any dramatist is to represent cliché, or hyperbole . . . without perpetuating either" (7).

6. See Meredith Skura: "Reading Othello's Skin: Contexts and PreTexts" 299-334.

7. As discussed in the introduction, in Joanne Tompkins's words, counter-discursive post-colonial metatheatre re-reads, re-structures, and re-situates a larger "base" play (44-5).

8. At present, literary critics have not devoted a full-length article or book to Carlin or his literary works. This chapter references all known sources that address Carlin's life and work.

9. At that time, the University of Fort Hare was the only institution of higher learning open to African students (Ross 112).

10. Robert Ross notes that The National Party formed in 1914 (84-5).

11. As Robert Collins confirms in *Africa: A Short History*, the Dutch adopted the name Boer, and later Afrikaner, to distinguish themselves from the British (171).

12. Ross explains that J.B.M. Hertzog formed the National Party of South Africa, which claimed to propagate a white South African Nation. The corollaries of the National Party included a movement to set the Dutch and English on equal footing in terms of access to power and resources, to improve the status of the Dutch within government business, to exclude blacks from the body politics, and to permanently oppress blacks (84-5).

13. Scholar Werne Sollors avers that ethnicity is typically based on contrast, negativity, or antithesis, which the ethnopschoanalyst Georges Devereux has termed "disassociative" character; thus, ethnic identity rests on the proposition that "A is an X because he is not a Y" (qtd. in Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin 288).

14. The Population Registration Act of 1950 played a large role in this regard.

15. Ian Smith later became the Prime Minister of Rhodesia (1964-1979) when the whites there declared unilateral independence from Britain and took over the country. *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* would have been written during this period.

16. A few points in this diary entry raise questions that cannot be easily answered. Since the passage recalls Murray Carlin, his wife, and their daughters, it can be inferred that some or all of them were expelled from South Africa because of Carlin's radical stance. Additionally, considering the racial theme of *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona*, the suggestion that Carlin showed V.S. Naipaul anti-African cartoons proves curious. A few things must be considered: first, this diary entry is the only known source that associates Carlin with anti-black-African sentiments.

Second, the recollections in the diary entry should be considered alongside the account of Carlin that Brokensha offers, specifically, that he and Carlin organized a meeting of students and gained approval for the admission of the black African students to Rhodes (Brokensha).

17. It is unfortunate that critics do not know more about the potential persecution or expulsion of Carlin from South Africa.

18. Thomas Ofcansky explains that British colonial rule in Uganda started in Buganda, one of the four kingdoms of Uganda, and gradually spread throughout the rest of the country (21). The British preserved Buganda's traditional ruling hierarchy, which included the Kabaka, or King (22), though the British also retained authority over the activities of such offices with the help of Bugandan allies and the use of a subimperial governmental system (23). As British power consolidated in Buganda, a sense of Bugandan separatism emerged. This separatism precluded the emergence of a spirit of mass nationalism prior to independence (34). Additionally, Buganda separatism positioned the kingdom as the most politically influential entity, to the degree that the first post-Independence Government consisted of a coalition between Prime Minister Obote's Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and Buganda's traditionally oriented Kabaka Yekka ("The King Alone") movement (39).

19. Ofcansky documents the ensuing conflict that significantly affected Uganda: Amin overthrew Obote on 25 January 1971 while Obote was in Singapore for a Commonwealth Summit Conference (42). Aspects of Amin's regime were ruthless and were designed to terrorize the Ugandan population (43). By 1971, Amin pronounced a degree that allowed the military to detain anyone on suspicion of sedition (44), resulting in the death of approximately 10,000 Ugandans during Amin's first year of rule (44). Ofcansky asserts that Amin's expulsion of Uganda's more than 70,000 Asians destroyed Uganda's economy and administrative structure (45); this measure also led to a deterioration of the relationship between Great Britain and Uganda.

20. Carlin wrote three plays: *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona; Man, Wife, and Friend*; and *The Thousand*; and in the Introduction to *The Thousand*, Carlin states that "the three [plays] taken together might be called a trilogy" (2). To date, I have not located any information about *Man, Wife, and Friend*, in either the form of the primary text or criticism of it. In my view, *The Thousand* alludes to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to allegorically dramatize a "contest" between representatives of both the Western and Third Worlds.

21. For strong points of view on this issue, see Michael Neill ("Unproper Beds") 394 and Emily Bartels ("Making More of the Moor") 433-54.

22. See Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen*; Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black*; Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama*; Antony Gerard Barthelemy, *Black Face, Maligned Race*; Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness*.

23. As noted in the introduction, in Tompkins's words, post-colonial metatheatre assists in the re-reading and re-structuring and re-situating of the larger "base" play (44-5).

24. This reference occurs in 1.1.68 of *Othello*.

25. For example, Gary Taylor quotes Frederick Douglass in "Colorphobia in New York!" (1849), in which Douglass claims that New Yorkers affected by the "disease" of "colorphobia" suffered the same delusion as Brabantio in *Othello* (qtd. in Taylor 4). Additional critical forerunners of Hunter include A.C. Bradley (1904) in *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures in "Hamlet," "Othello," and "King Lear"* (1904); Ranjee Shahani in *Shakespeare through Eastern Eyes* (1932); Louis Mandin in "Etude Shakespeareienne: Le mystere de la perle et du judeen"

(1939); H.B. Charlton in *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1941); Philip Butler in “Othello’s Racial Identity” (1952); John Draper in *The ‘Othello’ of Shakespeare’s Audience* (1952); Bernard Harris in “A Portrait of a Moor” (1958); Philip Mason in “The Collective Unconscious and Othello” (1962); G.M. Matthews in “Othello and the Dignity of Man” (1964); Harry Levin in “Othello and the Motive Hunters” (1964); Louis Awad in “Shakespeare and Racial Discrimination” (1965); Enamul Karim in “The East in Shakespeare’s Tragedies” (1965); Miriam Halevy in “The Racial Problem in Shakespeare” (1966); and Sibnarayan Ray in “Shylock, Othello, and Caliban: Shakespearean Variations on the Theme of Apartheid” (1966). For example, Bradley (1904) contends that historical evidence and parallels between Othello and Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* substantiate Othello’s blackness, that color is related to critical conceptions of Desdemona and Othello’s union as distasteful, and that Desdemona made “nothing of the shrinking of her senses, but followed her soul until her senses took part with it” (Bradley 201-2). Mandin (1939) proposes that although Desdemona loves her husband for his soul, not his blackness, Iago moves Othello to jealousy by stressing his blackness, thus making his blackness the cause of his murdering Desdemona (290). H.B. Charlton (1941) asserts that Othello’s cultural and racial differences significantly affect his character, that passion and drive for self-mastery work in tandem to arouse a fury that Iago identifies and “with consummate audacious artistry, dares to rely on a plot so simple that Othello alone of all mankind is the one man certain to be caught by it” (123). In contrast, Robert Withington (1945) refutes the notion of *Othello* as a play about racial prejudice.

26. As numerous commentators such as Bevington confirm, Shakespeare’s main source for *Othello* was the seventh story from the third decade of G.B. Giraldi Cinthio’s *Hecatommithi* (1565).

27. For some insightful discussions of the early modern construction of the Moor, see Jones, *Othello’s Countrymen*; Jordan, *White Over Black*; D’Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama*; Barthelemy, *Black Face, Maligned Race*; and James R. Aubrey, “Race and the Spectacle of the Monstrous in *Othello*.” For the degree to which Othello smashes traditional expectations of the stereotypical Moor, see Sara Munson Deats, “The ‘Erring Barbarian’ and the ‘Maiden Never Bold’: Racist and Sexist Representations in *Othello*” 190-215.

28. All references to *Othello* derive from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (6th ed.), edited by David Bevington.

29. This reference is not included in Q1.

30. As Carlin’s Actor-Othello avers, “white actors have [had] always played / Othello in a black face” (165-66).

31. Sir Laurence Olivier played Othello in blackface in a film of 1965, based on a National Theater Stage Production of 1964 with Frank Finlay as Iago and Maggie Smith as Desdemona (Bevington 1155).

32. See *Fighting Talk*, July 1953, “Speaking for the Natives” 5.

33. According to Merle Lipton, the White Liberals are now represented in South Africa in organizations such as the Liberal Party, the Progressive Party, the Democratic Party, and the SA Institute of Race Relations, and they are ideologically opposed to the communists and socialists organized in the SA Community Party and the Congress of Democrats (333).

34. Significantly, Jyotsna Singh also points out that such audiences make “both an identification with and disavowal of ‘The Moor,’ recognizing that Othello’s claims to identity— either as a ‘savage’ or as a Christian and a tragic hero—are tenuous and derivative” (298-9).

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35. Specifically, the rehearsal in Carlin's play focuses on the domestic dispute in *Othello* (3.3.42-100).
36. In *Buying Whiteness* (2005), Taylor re-reads *Othello* to incorporate the view that "he [Shakespeare] did not use 'white' in a generic sense" (39), since "white" did not signify in the early modern period what we now call "race" (32-38).
37. *Shakespeare's Words* clarifies the meaning of "boon" as a petition, entreaty, or request; one meaning of "suit" denotes the same cluster of associations, though "suit" also refers to wooing and courtship. Although "entreaty" also meant "supplication" or "plea," Desdemona uses the word as a verb to form an analogy between her entreating Othello to "wear your gloves, / or feed on nourishing dishes" (84-85) as she would "sue" to him to do anything that would profit his "own person" (3.3.85-86).
38. Other post-colonial critics, such as Loomba (1989) and Deats (2003), adopt a sympathetic approach to Desdemona, contextualizing Desdemona's character within the socio-historic circumstances that, from a contemporary view, exacted sexist ideologies that restricted women. For example, Loomba (1989) contends that Desdemona's fascination with Othello "indicates her desire to break the claustrophobic patriarchal confine" of her daily life (55), that her desire is politically subversive—especially because its object is black (56)—and that her transformation from a bold woman who confronts both her father and the Senate into a submissive wife is a "manifestation of the contradictions imposed on her by a racist, patriarchal, and bourgeois society" (58). Deats (2003) presents Desdemona as subject to sexist stereotypes, even as Othello is subject to racist ones, thereby demonstrating both Othello's and Desdemona's victimization by a racist and sexist society.
39. In act four, scene one, Othello publicly slanders and slaps Desdemona.
40. Although Burke clearly identified Iago as the villain of *Othello* in his 1951 essay titled "*Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method*," he did not discuss Iago's efforts to build up "false identifications" in Othello until he briefly treated *Othello* in *A Rhetoric of Motives*.
41. As Bill Ashcroft *et al.* note, these instances of post-colonial writing do not simply reverse the hierarchical order of the canonical tradition; they also interrogate the philosophical assumptions on which that order is based (32).

CHAPTER TWO:

“UHURU!”: CALIBAN’S SELF-CONSCIOUS COUP IN AIMÉ CÉSAIRE’S *UNE TEMPÊTE*

One of the most debated post-colonial appropriations of Shakespeare, *Une Tempête* [*A Tempest*], penned in 1969 (translated in 1985) by Aimé Césaire, a black Francophone writer from the Caribbean, uses the French language, for the first time in the performance history of the play, to recast Ariel as a mulatto slave, Caliban as a black slave, and Prospero as a capitalist colonialist on an island in the Caribbean. Césaire’s adaptation exposes and subverts the colonial practices Shakespeare’s Prospero uses in *The Tempest*. The Caliban of *A Tempest* confronts Prospero for exploiting language to project a savage image of Caliban, enforcing slavery to exploit Caliban for labor, and using “civilization” to justify his colonial practices. In 1985, Paul Brown made colonial practices in *The Tempest* and in early modern England the subject of his analysis of Shakespeare’s play,¹ and Peter Hulme and Francis Barker called for a historical contextual analysis of *The Tempest*.² However, although Césaire’s play first analyzed colonial practices in *The Tempest*, critics have not recognized him for making this important critical intervention. This chapter explores *A Tempest* to consider its creative, political, and critical dimensions.³

Drawing on the literary source *The Tempest*, Césaire wrote *A Tempest* as the third installment of a dramatic trilogy. The first play in the trilogy, *La tragédie du roi Christophe* (1963, 1970; trans. 1969) [*The Tragedy of King Christophe*], presents a study of the forces that

led to the failure of Haiti, the first black independent state. Césaire based *The Tragedy of King Christophe* on the career of Henri Christophe, a Haitian military leader in the wars against the French, who established monarchical rule in the northern region of the island of Saint Domingue (as it was then called) between the years 1807-1820 (Davis 137). *The Tragedy of King Christophe* dramatizes the King's grandiose building projects, increasingly despotic rule, and eventual suicide in the wake of popular uprising (137). In "Aimé Césaire's Lesson about Decolonization in *La tragédie du roi Christophe*," Hunt Hawkins asserts that Césaire's purpose in writing the play was "at once didactic and hortatory": the play takes several liberties with historic fact to demonstrate the similarity of problems involved in the independence of Haiti and the ongoing decolonization of Africa at the time that the play was published in 1963 (144).

Gregson Davis describes the action of *Une saison au Congo* (1966; trans. 2010) [*A Season in the Congo*], the second play in the trilogy, as based on the historical imbroglio that accompanied and defined the transition of the Belgian Congo from a colony into an independent nation (152); this play analyzes the circumstances that led to the demise of Patrice Lumumba, whom Gayatri Spivak describes in the introduction to her translation of the play as committed to the idea of freedom evoked by the Kiswahili word "Uhuru" (freedom) rather than "dipenda," a type of independence that maintains colonial structures even after independence (xii).⁴ Unlike King Christophe, Lumumba is not satisfied simply to leave colonial structures in place after independence.

When viewing these two plays by Césaire as dramatic texts that address historical events, one is perplexed by Césaire's decision to turn to literature—Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*—as a source for the third play in his trilogy. *The Tragedy of King Christophe* and *A Season in the Congo* dramatically explore historical problems of decolonization and black liberation within the

French and Belgian Empires, but *A Tempest* re-assesses *The Tempest*, re-reading a literary account of a colonized figure's fight for liberation from a despotic Italian would-be-colonialist in order to address problems of decolonization and black liberation within both the British and French Empires.

Césaire's purpose in writing *A Tempest*, therefore, was at once critical, creative, and political. This chapter, therefore, treats *A Tempest*, proposing that Césaire "writes back" to Shakespeare because he identifies with Shakespeare's Caliban as a colonized figure yet he is also disassociated from, and therefore alters, Caliban's use of the colonizer's language exclusively to curse the colonizer and to plot a violent overthrow of Prospero. Césaire deploys counter-discursive metatheatres to re-read, re-structure, and resituate Shakespeare's play. As noted in the Introduction, counter-discursive post-colonial metatheatres assist in the re-reading, re-structuring, and re-situating of the larger "base" play (Tompkins 44-5). Re-reading *The Tempest* through a post-colonial lens, Césaire identifies and analyzes the colonialist undertones in Shakespeare's play and writes back to the concept of Caliban as dependent on Prospero, a presupposition that Octave Mannoni had also identified and adapted to create his theory of the "dependency complex."⁵ Césaire also re-structures *The Tempest*, particularly its dénouement, to depict a vision of decolonization that had not come to fruition in Martinique—a vision in which the improvement of socio-economic conditions for Martinicans would exist without their dependency on France. Like Lumumba, Caliban is not satisfied to retain colonial structures after independence. Yet, the Caliban that Césaire creates does not use martyrdom as a form of resistance,⁶ nor is he willing to kill Prospero. Although Césaire leaves the audience with some uncertainty about the outcome of the type of freedom his Caliban pursues, the audience witnesses Prospero's power decline, evoking a nascent sense of optimism for the future.

Additionally, in re-situating Caliban as a dramatic hero of *négritude*, Césaire exploits aspects of classical theater to incite audiences to identify with Caliban and, by association, to question the white supremacist presuppositions that undergirded the goal of assimilating alien cultures into the French Empire. Césaire's text thus takes its place in an ongoing controversy concerning critical re-readings of *The Tempest*. From the point of view of the colonized, this deliberation has evoked questions regarding the extent to which *The Tempest* and its implicit narratives can be appropriated to reconceive the idea of freedom in an era of decolonization.

Although Césaire turned to drama as a source for *A Tempest*, he employs metatheatricality in the play to blur the otherwise overt distinctions between the stage and history. In the Prologue, the Meneur de Jeu [Master of Ceremonies] instructs the actors to don the masks of their characters, emphasizing the stage as a world that is constructed by a play and its actors: "Allons, Messieurs, servez-vous . . . A chacun son personnage et à chaque personnage son masque . . . Il faut de tout pour faire un monde" (*Une Tempête* 9) ["Come gentleman, help yourselves. To each his character, to each character his Mask . . . It takes all kinds to make a world"] (*A Tempest* 7).⁷ Césaire's concern for conflating the stage with the world also arises in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* [*Journal of a Homecoming*]: after designating himself as a "mouth of those calamities that have no mouth" (13), the speaker states that his body and soul "beware of assuming the sterile attitude of a spectator, for life is not a spectacle" (13).⁸ Davis speculates on these lines, asking whether the poet is repudiating the dramaturgical trope "as such ('life is not a show on stage' versus Shakespeare's 'All the world's a stage')?" (30). Davis conjectures that, through Césaire's subtle rhetoric, the speaker "warns himself against confounding the figurative stage with the real stage" (30). As Gerhard Fischer and Bernard Greiner observe, metatheatricality affirms a self-conscious subject ("the actor") that transcends the masks of social roles, operating as a

strategy of self-reflection (xiii). Césaire’s use of this self-reflexive strategy thus highlights the critical and political impetuses that inform *A Tempest*, insisting on composing—to borrow from Kenneth Burke—“literature for use,”⁹ or, more properly, theater for use.

Yet, I wish to proceed with caution before building my argument which asserts that Césaire re-reads *The Tempest* through a “post-colonial lens.” I recognize the problematic nature of the use of “post-colonial” as a modifier within this context because Césaire played a role in the implementation of France’s law of departmentalization, which led to the incorporation of Martinique into the country of France. However, in Césaire’s speech¹⁰ at the Second International Congress of Black Writers in Rome, he delineated the responsibilities of black intellectuals and advocated revolutionary decolonization and the obliteration of harmful institutions (Pallister 105). Jane Pallister observes that Césaire’s comments can be viewed as somewhat paradoxical, since at the time he delivered the speech, he occupied a seat in the National Assembly of France, an organization that Pallister asserts was “surely a hallmark of French imperialist establishment and very likely a ‘harmful institution’” (105). Yet, Davis associates Césaire’s motives for incorporating Martinique into France with his desire to alleviate the poverty, disease, and inadequate social and educational services that characterized the Martinican island society in the 1940s (94), revealing the complexity of Césaire’s motivations as a politician.

In pondering the significance of Césaire’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s play, critics tend to overlook the circumstances involved in Césaire’s encounter with Shakespeare; yet, I view these conditions as not only relevant to the task of interpreting Césaire’s play but also as necessary to explaining why Césaire identified with Caliban. Césaire encountered “Shakespeare” in a manner similar to that of post-colonial critics: as a name that designates a cultural institution

that, along with the English language, the British represented as superior to non-European languages and literature and thus transported throughout the world. Born in 1913 on the French Caribbean island Martinique (Blackman qtd. in Fischer and Greiner 297), Césaire focused the intellectual attention of his early years on the French language and canonical French authors such as Victor Hugo and Voltaire. Davis recounts that Ferdinand Césaire, Césaire's father, conducted supplementary classes at home by waking his children every day at 6 a.m., tutoring them until 7:45 a.m., encouraging them to perfect their French, and instilling in them an admiration for literary models of the traditional canon (5). James Arnold further explains that acquiring the French language and culture (and repressing the Creole language and culture) was “the paramount social goal” for black children born in circumstances such as Césaire's (*Modernism and Negritude* 10). Césaire also won a scholarship to attend the Lycée Schoelcher in the capital of Martinique, Fort-de-France and was later awarded a scholarship to continue the next phase of his education in Paris at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand in 1939 (6). At the Lycée Schoelcher, Césaire studied under Mannoni (Pallister xi), though Mannoni did not write *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* until 1950 (trans. 1956). Césaire studied European philosophy there, and his experience at the Lycée Schoelcher also entailed his absorption of the masterpieces of French and European culture (*Modernism and Negritude* 10). He then gained entrance into the prestigious École Normale Supérieure in the Rue d'Ulm, where he remained enrolled until he returned to his native island on the eve of the Second World War (6).

Two significant facts plausibly suggest that Césaire encountered Shakespeare at École Normale Supérieure, if he has not already discovered the playwright. First, at the École Normale Supérieure, Césaire studied artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance, an artistic and political movement that proved instrumental in transforming Césaire since Césaire viewed writers of the

Harlem Renaissance as speaking of blacks in a way that gave them dignity (Davis 9). Poets of the Harlem Renaissance, including Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, James Weldon Johnson, and Sterling Brown, strived to record the Black experience in America. One group of writers, inclusive of Claude McKay, fused formal, European verse with the content of the Black American experience. For example, McKay's poem "Harlem Dancer," a Shakespearean sonnet with perfect rhyme, depicts an African American dancer in Harlem. In addition, during the second year at the École Normale, Césaire wrote a research paper for his diploma of English¹¹ bearing the title "The Theme of the South in the Negro-American Poetry of the United States" (Davis 9). The curriculum that existed at École Normale Supérieure during the time that Césaire studied there as well as the paper Césaire wrote during his second year thus suggest that Césaire encountered Shakespeare at École Normale Supérieure. Additionally, Arnold confirms that Césaire read and spoke English from his days at the Lycée Schoelcher ("Inquiry regarding Aimé Césaire"), so Césaire almost certainly read *The Tempest* in English. Moreover, when Arnold edited Césaire's paper "Culture et colonization," ["Culture and Colonization"] for the Paris genetic edition of his literary works in 2012, he confirmed that Césaire sometimes did his own translations from English ("Inquiry regarding Aimé Césaire").

Although Césaire translated and adapted *The Tempest* into the French language, he adapted it not only to entertain audiences—initially an audience at an international cultural festival in Hammameth, Tunisia, in July 1969 (*Aimé Césaire: Poetry, Theatre, Essays and Discourse: Critical Edition* 1200)—but also for black actors to explore themes of colonialism, imperialism, racism, capitalism, master-slave relationships, and decolonization. Césaire, therefore, wrote for both the colonizer and the colonized, creating "theater for use" in which he and the actors confront the colonizer. Significantly, Jean-Marie Surreau, a leading French

director at the time, directed the company of black actors for whom Césaire wrote *A Tempest*; as Arnold points out, “It was Césaire's theater director, Jean-Marie Serreau, who proposed that Césaire write an anti-colonial adaptation of Shakespeare's *Tempest*” (“Inquiry regarding Aimé Césaire”). Yet, consciously or unconsciously, Césaire himself also desired to create an anti-colonial adaptation of Shakespeare’s play. Scholars including Pier Frassinelli aver that, by his own admission, Césaire originally intended to translate Shakespeare’s play into French (Frassinelli qtd. in Dionne and Kapadia 174), but, he [Césaire] notes, “When the work was done, I realized there was not much Shakespeare left” (Césaire qtd. in Dionne and Kapadia 174).¹²

A consideration of Césaire’s political career may also help to sharpen our perception of Césaire’s purpose in writing *A Tempest*: Césaire identified with Caliban as a colonized figure who had become disenchanted with the idea of collaborating with Prospero to cooperatively shape the structure of their society. Proposing that Césaire identifies with “Caliban” requires a brief discussion of both Shakespeare’s and Césaire’s Calibans since to apply Burke’s theory of identification one must first note that Césaire’s identification with Shakespeare’s Caliban is contingent not only on shared, common characteristics but also on a disassociation with certain characteristics and values of Caliban. In *The Tempest*, the relationship between Prospero and Caliban indisputably hinges on a master-slave dialect, as Prospero stresses in addressing Caliban: “Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam, come forth!” (Shakespeare 1.2.322-3).¹³ Prospero enforces his relationship with Caliban by using several strategies: controlling the land, manipulating its material conditions, directing its property relations, and enforcing its class structure. However, Caliban upholds his ownership of the island, insisting: “This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak’st from me” (334-5), thereby suggesting that Caliban has a legitimate claim to the island through matrilineal

descent. Taking Césaire's biography into account, I suggest that Césaire identifies with these facts: Caliban's land was usurped (the French nation usurped Martinique), Caliban was forced into a master-slave relationship by the country that acquired control over his land (Césaire's ancestors were slaves in Martinique), and Caliban did not control the material conditions or class structure of the island (France controlled these aspects in the "colonial" and even the "departmental" Martinique). Additionally, at one period of time, Caliban had attempted to collaborate with Prospero:

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 day and night. And then I loved thee
And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and
fertile. (1.2.334-42)

Prospero's response to Caliban, "I have used thee, / Filth as thou art, with humane care, and lodged thee / In mine own cell, / till thou didst seek to violate / the honor of my child" (1.2.347-51), confirms Caliban's account of their original relationship, but Prospero's reply also illustrates the prejudicial power structure that undermines their relationship. Césaire may have identified with these aspects of Caliban's relationship with Prospero since early in his political career Césaire adopted an assimilationist perspective, joined the French Communist Party (PCF), and co-sponsored the law that created departmental status for the former colonies of Martinique and

Guadeloupe in 1946 (Davis 2). Additionally, Caliban was forced to learn Prospero's language, and Césaire had to learn the French language. Certainly, Césaire attempted to collaborate with France while also strategically placing himself in a position to affect the material conditions in Martinique. Just as the cooperative relationship between Prospero and Caliban broke down, Césaire resigned from the PCF in 1956 because of the party's indifference to the colonial question (96). As Burke theorizes, "identification inherently involves division" (45). As I will discuss later in this chapter, it is unlikely that Césaire identified with Caliban's attempt to have Prospero killed and to replace Prospero's power with the authority of Stephano and Trinculo because Césaire did not advocate violence like his Martinican compatriot Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961; trans. 2004), and Césaire started the Parti Progressiste Martiniquais (PPM) to alter, rather than reinforce, the material conditions and class structure of Martinique.

Based on this type of identification that involves relating to and disassociating from certain characteristics of an individual, Césaire creates a Caliban with whom he identifies and who resists Prospero and his colonial strategies, and I insist on a reading that puts Césaire's identification with Shakespeare's Caliban in dialogue with his alterations of the original play's structure. Césaire's dramatic re-structuring of Shakespeare's play enables him to comment on the colonialist overtones of the relationship between Prospero and Caliban. The altered list of characters, the first and most instantly recognizable change that Césaire makes, immediately signals Césaire's desire to highlight the colonial theme. Césaire identifies his characters as follows:

Ceux de Shakespeare.

Deux précisions supplémentaires

ARIEL esclave, ethniquement un mulâtre

CALIBAN esclave nègre

Une addition

ESHU dieu-diable nègre (*Une Tempête* 7)

As in Shakespeare, with:

Two alterations:

ARIEL, a mulatto slave

CALIBAN, a black slave

An addition:

ESHU, a black devil-god (*A Tempest* 3)

By omitting the names of the European characters and classical goddesses from Shakespeare's dramatis personae, Césaire successfully emphasizes the importance of the three non-European characters by explaining that they have been altered or, in Eshu's case, added.

Césaire also re-structures the earliest portions of Shakespeare's play by adding a Prologue, re-assigning the first words of the play from the "Master" of the ship in Shakespeare's version to the "Master" of Ceremonies in Césaire's play. *A Tempest* commences with the Master of Ceremonies instructing the actors to take up their masks and roles, overtly drawing attention to theater as a mode of representation while also calling for a "storm to end all storms" (*A Tempest* 7): "Il me faut une tempête à tout casser" (*Une Tempête* 9). Significantly, Césaire's "Master" demonstrates command over the creation of the storm that Shakespeare's Prospero conjures, which subsequently ensnares Shakespeare's "Master" of the Boat and its crew. The Prologue, therefore, functions not only as an addition that stresses the metatheatrical features of

A Tempest but also as an alteration that gives the first lines of Shakespeare's play to a "Master" of Ceremonies who usurps Prospero's—and Shakespeare's—mastery.

Additionally, Césaire alters the setting of *The Tempest*, using metatheatres to set the play in the present, omitting the reference to a specific "uninhabited island,"¹⁴ and evoking a geographical setting that figuratively interweaves Martinique and the Greater Caribbean, Africa, and the United States into the dramatic demythification¹⁵ of the master-slave relationship. Davis argues that the action of *A Tempest* takes place on a distinctly Caribbean island (157), Arnold avers that Césaire's island is a model of Caribbean society ("Césaire and Shakespeare: Two Tempests" 242), and Lucy Rix asserts that the play was "clearly written with the politics of Martinique in mind" (237). References to "the islands" (*A Tempest* 45) and "the coconut palm" (*Une Tempête* 46; *A Tempest* 33) support these assertions. The play also evokes the flora and fauna of Africa, including the baobab tree and calao bird (*A Tempest* 16), and alludes to the Black Power movement in the United States. In his Introduction to *Une Tempête*, Arnold explains the significance of Césaire's relationship of the United States to the setting of the play: Césaire fixed the ethnic classes of the characters of Ariel and Caliban to refer to segregation in the United States ("Césaire dans *Une Tempête* fixa a, dans les personnages d' Ariel (<<esclave, ethniquement un mulâtre>>) et Caliban (<<esclave nègre>> des ethnoclasses qui renvoient a une segregation de type états-union" 1203). Arnold also addresses the cultural implications of the Caribbean setting, asserting that Césaire also shaped the two slaves of Prospero in the same relationship as forces in *Toussaint Louverture*, where the mulattos are the worst enemies of the Negroes of Saint Dominique: "Césaire campa le deux esclaves de Prospéro dans le même rapport des forces qu'il envisagea dans son *Toussaint Louverture*, où les mulâtres sont les pires ennemis des nègres de Saint Dominique" (1203). The setting of Césaire's play thus undoubtedly includes

the Caribbean, Africa, and the United States.¹⁶ His alteration of the setting enables him to address racism and colonialism in the present, as countries including Martinique and the United States struggled to change colonial structures that remained in place even after slaves in both countries had been freed and after both countries had purportedly achieved a form of independence from the French and British Empires.¹⁷

Césaire also re-structures the original play by revising its classical five-act structure, facilitating his purpose of chronologically dramatizing Caliban's confrontation with Prospero and Prospero's colonial strategies. The compression of the original play's events and the scenes that Césaire adds also highlight the colonial, master-slave conflict. Césaire uses act one to introduce the principal characters of the play and to illustrate their relationships, while simultaneously emphasizing Shakespeare's colonial theme. For example, in act one, scene two, Prospero recounts to Miranda that he had succeeded in discovering the exact location of the lands that he would later colonize and that he had made preparations to take possession of them, but that Antonio and the King of Naples hatched a scheme to steal his "as-yet-unborn empire" from him" (*A Tempest* 13): "Quoi qu'il en soit, quand ils surent que par mes calculs, j'avais situé avec précision ces terres qui depuis des siècles sont promises à la quête de l'homme, et que je commençais mes préparatifs pour en prendre possession, ils ourdirent un complot pour me voler cet empire à naître" (*Une Tempête* 20).

In any event, when they learned that through my studies and experiments I had managed to discover the exact location of these lands for which many had sought for centuries and that I was making *preparations* to set forth to take possession of them, they hatched a scheme to steal my as-yet-unborn empire from me. (*A Tempest* 13)

This dramatic exposition provides important information about what led to the conflict between Prospero and Caliban, and Césaire makes that contention central to his play.

Act two of *A Tempest* re-structures the original play by exclusively emphasizing colonial and political themes, re-structuring the relationship between Ariel and Prospero and Ariel and Caliban so that Césaire's Ariel still carries out Prospero's orders while also subverting Prospero's authority. Act two of *The Tempest* presents four instances of collaboration among the dramatis personae of the play: the bantering among Gonzalo, Sebastian, Antonio, Alonso, and Adrian about the possibility of creating a Commonwealth on the island (Shakespeare 2.1.150); the united efforts of Sebastian and Antonio to usurp the throne of Naples; the cooperation of Prospero and Ariel to prevent the coup against the King of Naples; and Caliban's attempt to convince Stephano and Trinculo to overthrow Prospero. Each instance of conspiracy and collaboration significantly engages political questions of power: Gonzalo aims to become king of the Commonwealth (2.1.148); Sebastian and Antonio want to remove Alonso to prevent Claribel from becoming the next heir of Naples (they assume that Ferdinand had drowned); Prospero plans to keep the King of Naples alive to unite Miranda and Ferdinand and, arguably, to re-establish his dukedom; and Caliban desires to overthrow Prospero.

However, Césaire re-structures two of these cooperative projects. First, he depicts Sebastian and Antonio's motivations for planning to murder the King as contempt for the King as well as a desire for personal power; as Antonio scoffs: "C'est n'avoir pas de sang dans les veines que de voir dormir un roi sans que ca vous donne certaines idées..." (*Une Tempête* 45) ["You're a really bloodless lily-liver if you can see a king asleep without getting ideas. . ."] (*A Tempest* 33). Insisting that "le moment est venu de secouer le cocotier" (*Une Tempête* 46) ["it is

time to shake the coconut palm”] (*A Tempest* 33), Antonio proposes that it is time to “grab” an opportunity offered to them (*Une Tempête* 46; *A Tempest* 33).

Secondly, as in Shakespeare’s play, Césaire’s Ariel warns the King and thwarts the conspirators’ plans (*Une Tempête* 47; *A Tempest* 34), but, in Césaire’s play, Ariel also informs Caliban of Prospero’s plans for revenge and attempts to collaborate with Caliban to gain their freedom, thereby re-structuring the relationship between Ariel and Caliban as one that is potentially cooperative. I quote the relevant dialogue at length here in order to fully illustrate the degree to which Césaire alters the relationship between Ariel and Caliban:

ARIEL. Salut, Caliban! Je sais que tu ne m’estimes guère, mais
après tout nous sommes frères, frères dans la souffrance et
l’esclavage, frères aussi dans l’espérance. Tous deux nous
voulons la liberté, seules nos methodes diffèrent.

CALIBAN. Salut à toi. Ce n’est quand même pas pour me faire cette
profession de foi que tu es venu me voir! Allons, Alastor!
C’est le vieux qui t’envoie, pas vrai? Beau métier : exécuteurs
des haute pensées due Maître!

ARIEL. Non, je viens de moi- même. Je suis venu t’avertir. Prospero
Médite sur toi d’épouvantables vengeance. J’ai cru de mon
devoir de te mettre en garde. (*Une Tempête* 36)

ARIEL. Greetings, Caliban. I know you don’t think much of

me, but after all we *are* brothers, brothers in suffering and slavery, but brothers in hope as well. We both want our freedom. We just have different methods.

CALIBAN. Greetings to you. But you didn't come to see me just to make that profession of faith! Come on, Alastor! The old man sent you, didn't he? A great job: carrying out the Master's fine ideas, his great plans.

ARIEL. No, I've come on my own. I came to warn you. Prospero is planning horrible acts of revenge against you. I thought it was my duty to alert you. (*A Tempest* 26)

This dialogue between Ariel and Caliban illustrates Césaire's success in realigning the relationship between Prospero's two servants from *The Tempest*, in which Ariel only attempts to secure his own freedom and does not seem to care about Caliban's plight, to *A Tempest*, in which Ariel endeavors to cooperate with Caliban to subvert Prospero's authority and obtain freedom for both of them.

Césaire's allusions to the Black Power Movement in the United States enhance this aspect of Césaire's play. As Césaire's play reveals, and as commentators point out, Césaire aligns Caliban's and Ariel's identities with Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; moreover, Césaire's references to the Black Power Movement are not unconscious allusions. In his Introduction to *Une Tempête*, Arnold explains that in 1967, "Césaire projecta, des 1967, d'écrire une pièce sur les noirs des États-Unis, afin de boucler la trilogie commence with *La*

Tragédie du roi Christophe (1200) [Césaire planned to write a play about the blacks in the United States in order to finish the trilogy that commenced with the *Tragedy of King Christophe*]. According to Arnold, this play would be titled “A Hot Summer” (1200). The historical circumstances of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—and the parallels drawn between King and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi—influenced Césaire in writing *A Tempest*, which dramatizes Caliban’s confrontation with Prospero by alluding to the different strategies of Dr. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X for confronting colonialist structures such as racism, thereby re-presenting the alternative methods for challenging the colonizer that Césaire had also dramatized in *A Season of the Congo*. Later in this chapter, I will discuss how Césaire’s restructuring of the original play enables him to re-situate the confrontation between Caliban and Prospero within the context of decolonization.

These alterations and additions prove significant to Césaire’s transformation of the structural framework of Shakespeare’s play into a contemporary frame through which Césaire re-reads and re-situates the colonial theme of *The Tempest* to dramatize Caliban’s confrontation of Prospero. Although Caliban curses Prospero in *The Tempest*, Caliban never challenges him; nor does Caliban ever demand his freedom. Césaire thus grants Caliban subjectivity and agency. Césaire re-reads Caliban as a character explicitly colonized by Prospero, even though the reification of colonialist projects through master-slave relationships was only burgeoning during Shakespeare’s era, and despite the fact that Anglo-American critics later disputed the existence of a colonial theme in the original play.¹⁸

The primary means by which Césaire represents Caliban as colonized is as follows: act one, scene two includes Prospero’s insistence that Caliban, a savage, should be grateful that Prospero taught him language, educated and trained him, and pulled him up from the “bestiality”

that still clings to him: “Un barbare! Un bête brute que j’ai éduquée, formée, que j’ai tirée de l’animalité qui l’engangue encore de toute part!” (*Une Tempête* 25) [“You savage . . . a dumb animal, a beast I educated, trained, dragged up from the bestiality that still clings to you”] (*A Tempest* 17). Prospero is so full of pride in his perceived benevolence that he haughtily poses a rhetorical question to Caliban, “Sans moi, que serais-tu?” (*Une Tempête* 25) [“What would you be without me?”] (*A Tempest* 17). Through this dialogue, Césaire comments on Shakespeare’s play, in which Miranda insists that she “took pains” to make Caliban speak: that she “taught thee each / hour / One thing or other” (Shakespeare 1.2.356-7), and when “thou [he] didst not, savage, / Know thine own meaning” (358-9), “endowed” his “purposes” with “words that made them known” (360-1). Editors sometimes assign these lines to Prospero; Stephen Orgel points out that the speech is often, still, not Miranda’s but Prospero’s (“Introduction” 17).¹⁹ Césaire’s purpose, to highlight the colonial theme of the play and Caliban’s position as a figure colonized by Prospero, thus proves similar to the interpretations of editors who have made these emendations. However, Césaire’s interpretation proves even bolder than the editors’: rather than straightforwardly assign Miranda’s lines to Prospero, Césaire includes dialogue in which Prospero depicts an image of his raising Caliban through education, as well as insisting that Caliban should show gratitude to him.

Other post-colonial commentators have interpreted act one, scene two of *The Tempest* and the significance of language and education in the play similarly, emphasizing Shakespeare’s inclusion of education in the master-slave dialect as evidence for the play’s colonial theme and for Caliban as a colonized figure. Lamming refers to Miranda’s speech concerning her education of Caliban as a “cantankerous” assertion, spoken by her, but obviously reflecting “the thought and vocabulary of her father” (109). Paul Brown also analyzes Shakespeare’s stressing of

language, education, and colonialism, observing, “colonialist discourse voices a demand both for order and disorder, producing a disruptive other in order to assert the superiority of the colonizer” (58). Significantly, Caliban is produced through language as an “other” (61); similarly, the political conversion of Gaelic customs into their “civil” counterparts and the introduction of English as the sole official language were policies exercised by the British in the vast discursive production of the Irish (55). Eric Cheyfetz also underscores the relationship between language and colonialism by identifying parallels between Prospero as a dictator of an official language and the ways in which official languages are used in the conquest of native people. Kim Hall echoes Cheyfetz by observing the correlation between many colonial travelers who denigrate the language of other cultures with the “lessons” Miranda gives Caliban in an attempt to reform or civilize him (144). Similarly, Ania Loomba concentrates on the role of language in the colonial theme of *The Tempest*, noting how the linguistic and cultural aspects of colonialism highlighted by Lamming, Mannoni, Roberto Fernandez Retamar, Césaire, and Frantz Fanon later became central to postcolonial debates about early modern colonial encounters in *The Tempest* (163-4). Loomba contends that, to some extent, critics during and after the 1980s “were simply catching up with and complicating the debate that had been inaugurated outside the academy” (163) by Lamming, Césaire, and others. Césaire thus foregrounds the critical purposes of post-colonial critics who, in the last two decades of the twentieth century, recovered and analyzed the colonial theme in *The Tempest*.

In addition to explicitly re-reading Caliban’s role as a colonized figure, by casting Ariel as a mulatto slave and Caliban as a black slave, Césaire explicitly evokes the black diaspora in the Caribbean and the United States; this strategy of appropriation enables him to extend Caliban’s character into an era of decolonization. Césaire resituates Caliban by retaining his role

as a slave, casting him as black, dramatizing him as distinctly choosing to speak either his native language or the language of the colonized, and depicting him as aware of the fact that his identity has been constructed. Lucy Rix confirms Césaire’s motivation to connect *A Tempest* to post-colonial (or post-departmental) politics in Martinique: “Césaire believed that it was crucial for the colonized Martinican people to relocate themselves at the centre of the stage” (qtd. in Hulme and Sherman 236). As evidence, Rix translates and quotes Césaire: “The Martinican malaise is the malaise of a people that no longer feels responsible for its destiny and has no more than a minor part in a drama in which it should be a protagonist” (Césaire qtd. in Burton 1). Recognizing Césaire’s desire to make Martinique a “protagonist” supports the view that Césaire targeted the black diaspora in the Caribbean when he wrote *A Tempest*.

Césaire undoubtedly wrote *A Tempest* to foreground the black diaspora in the United States, particularly by associating Caliban with Malcolm Little, who later replaced what he regarded as his slave name with the letter X to represent his lost African name. The most explicit allusion to Malcolm X occurs in act one, scene two, when Caliban insists that he will no longer answer to the name of Caliban: “Appelle-moi X. Ca vaudra mieux. Comme qui dirait l’homme sans nom. Plus exactement, l’homme dont on a volé le nom” (*Une Tempête* 28) [“Call me X. That would be best. Like a man without a name. Or, to be more precise, a man whose name has been stolen”] (*A Tempest* 20). Chantal Zabus confirms that Caliban’s strategy of calling himself X aligns him with the Black Panthers, Malcolm X, and the 1960s U.S. Black Muslim movement led by Elijah Muhammad (47). According to Louis E. Lomax, when seeking to be admitted to membership in the Nation of Islam, the applicant supplicates Allah to give him his “Original name”: “the convert [is] allowed to drop his ‘slave’ name . . . the ‘x’ is the Black Muslim’s way of saying that his own origins—before the white man—and name are a mystery; it is also the

Muslim's shout that he is an 'ex,' and 'no longer what I was when the white man had me deaf, blind, and dumb'" (30-31).

And yet I assert that the association between Césaire's Caliban and Malcolm X is much more complex than has previously been acknowledged: in pondering why Césaire aligns his Caliban with Malcolm X, critics tend to overlook the two figures' use of the colonizer's language to reject the colonizer's image of the colonized. In his Autobiography, Malcolm X explains that learning to read in the Norfolk Prison Colony (a prison near Boston, Massachusetts) gave him more "sensitivity to the deafness, dumbness, and blindness that was afflicting the black race of America" (179). Malcolm X also describes how his reading helped him to understand the genesis of the white man's view of non-whites: "I perceived, as I read, how the collective white man had been actually nothing but a piratical opportunist . . . First, always 'religiously,' he branded 'heathen' and 'pagan' labels upon ancient non-white cultures and civilizations. The stage thus set, he then turned upon his non-white victims his weapons of war" (177). Malcolm X asserts that after learning to read, he would never again be caught with a free fifteen minutes in which he was not studying something he felt might be able to help the black man (179). Similarly, Césaire's Caliban uses the language of the colonized to challenge Prospero and the deleterious image of himself that Prospero impresses upon him. Caliban's confrontation with Prospero in act three, scene five, illustrates Caliban's mastery of the master's logo-linguistic narrative in which he had been imprisoned:

Et tu m'as tellement menti
mentis ur le monde, mentis ur moi-même,
que tu as fini par m'imposer
une image de moi-même :

Un sous-développé, comme tu dis,
un sous-capable,
voilà comment tu m'as obligé à me voir. (*Une Tempête* 88)

And you lied to me so much,
about the world, about myself, that you ended up imposing on me
an image of myself: underdeveloped, in your words, undercompetent
that's how you made me see myself! (*A Tempest* 62)

Critics have also overlooked the fact that although Césaire's Caliban and Ariel discuss the philosophies of violence and nonviolence,²⁰ Césaire's Caliban neither advocates violence nor chooses to kill Prospero when he has the opportunity, as might be expected by the alignment of Caliban with Malcolm X.²¹ Caliban's relationship to language and his rejection of violence prove particularly important when considering his use of the word "Uhuru," a term that most certainly would have evoked the Mau Mau Revolution in Kenya as well as the violent strategies on which the revolution relied. The fact that Césaire's Martinican compatriot, Fanon, had used the French language to advocate the use of violence against the colonizer in *The Wretched of the Earth*²² adds to the importance of analyzing the attitude of Césaire's Caliban towards violence. Césaire's Caliban uses a Kiswahili word for freedom, "Uhuru," a word Caliban must have "known" before Prospero enforced his language on Caliban, even as it is unlikely that Shakespeare's Prospero taught Caliban the word "Setebos," which Caliban uses to refer to one of his gods (Shakespeare 1.2.376). Significantly, the word "Uhuru" is Caliban's first word in the play (*Une Tempête* 24; *A Tempest* 17); it is also the word that Caliban repeats at the end of his initial dialogue with Prospero (*Une Tempête* 28; *A Tempest* 20), and the word that Prospero acknowledges as

Caliban's "langage barbare" (*Une Tempête* 24) ["native language"] (*A Tempest* 9). Caliban's use of the word proves significant: Césaire refuses to gloss it, forcing the audience to consider the peculiar significance of the word. Ashcroft *et al.* discuss the integration of untranslated words as a strategy used in post-colonial literature for conveying a sense of cultural distinctiveness (63): the technique registers cultural peculiarity but also elicits the reader to actively engage with the culture in which the terms have meaning (64). Césaire's use of the word "Uhuru," therefore, compels the reader to consider the various meanings—violent and non-violent—of the African term. Steve Almquist points out that each native African possesses his own conception of "Uhuru": the word may signify a round-the-corner Utopia, the expulsion of the white man from Africa, or, to the willfully lawless, a license to rob, steal, and kill without punishment (599). Additionally, to the white man in Africa, "Uhuru" is regarded as a threat (599). In Caliban's case, "Uhuru" connects Caliban to Africa, gives Caliban an African voice, and thereby recuperates his African lineage. The fact that Caliban also insists on being called "X" illustrates Césaire's depiction of Caliban as a hero of *négritude*: Caliban's articulation of the word "Uhuru" connects him with a claim to Africa's cultural distinctiveness and, by association, to a personal assertion of distinct racial identity. However, as I will discuss later in this chapter, Caliban disassociates himself from any aspects of the concept of "Uhuru" that would connect him with violence, particularly murder; rather, Caliban insists on being recognized for his racial distinction. Césaire's reference to Malcolm X in *A Tempest*, therefore, connects the histories and struggles for self-identification from Shakespeare's Caliban to Césaire to Malcolm X to Césaire's Caliban. Although Césaire's re-situating of Caliban in this respect illustrates Césaire's identification of Caliban with himself (Césaire repressed Creole to learn the French language and

used the French language to resist the colonizer), it also demonstrates the complexity of his identification with Malcolm X.

Césaire also explicitly re-reads Ariel as a slave of Prospero, who desires to obtain his freedom but who, unlike Caliban, believes he can obtain it by reasoning with the colonizer. In act one, scene two of *A Tempest*, Ariel declares that he is disgusted with obeying Prospero's orders because Prospero has never fulfilled his promise of freeing him (*Une Tempête* 23; *A Tempest* 16). As in Shakespeare's play, Prospero deflects Ariel's observation by reminding him that he has freed Ariel from the tree in which Sycorax had imprisoned him (*Une Tempête* 23; *A Tempest* 16). Ariel thus carries out Prospero's orders, but he only capitulates to Prospero's commands in order to obtain his freedom. Additionally, although Césaire explicitly interprets Ariel as Prospero's slave, Césaire does not alter Shakespeare's depiction of Ariel as non-human. In act two, scene three of *A Tempest*, after preventing the murder of Alonso, Ariel identifies himself as a god who can fly to Alonso's aid, and in the same scene he identifies with "les esprits qui peuplent l'air que vous respirez" (*Une Tempête* 48) ["the spirits of the air you breathe"] (*A Tempest* 34). In re-reading the character of Ariel, therefore, Césaire not only interprets Ariel as a slave who desires to obtain the freedom that Prospero promises him, but also as an androgynous, non-human figure, who underscores the extensive scope of Prospero's power but who also deconstructs this power by maintaining a self-conscious theatricality in depictions of supernatural effects.

Other post-colonial critics view the relationship of Shakespeare's Ariel to the power of his Prospero similarly: for example, Lamming describes Ariel as one of "the two agents of labour and public relations" without whom Prospero would be helpless" (114). Yet, Lamming does not identify with Ariel. Lamming considers Ariel a "servant" (97) of Prospero, a "lackey" who "has

been emancipated to the status of a privileged servant” (99). More sympathetic to Shakespeare’s Ariel than Lamming, Brown underscores Prospero’s reliance on repetition to keep Ariel in bondage: “Ariel is, paradoxically, bound in service by this constant reminder of Prospero’s gift of *freedom* to him . . . That bondage is reinforced by both a promise to repeat the act of release when a period of servitude has expired and a promise to repeat the act of incarceration should service not be forthcoming” (60).

These critical re-readings reveal two key features of post-colonial interpretations of Shakespeare’s Ariel: some, though not all, notable post-colonial critics view Ariel as a servant, rather than a slave, of Prospero; yet, few besides Césaire address Ariel’s ironic reliance on repetition and rationality in his attempt to secure the freedom that Prospero withholds from him. Timothy Scheie argues that Césaire reveals the addiction of colonial ideology to the repetition of racist discourse, relating colonial ideology to “power” understood in a Foucauldian sense: not a privilege wielded by someone who has power, “but a diffuse network of institutionalized constraints that coerce the performance of identity into nationalized configurations and that include mechanisms for censoring performances that do not comply” (19). Scheie’s analysis elucidates Césaire’s potential rationale for depicting Ariel as a mulatto slave. Since Ariel’s and Caliban’s roles differ, what keeps them in “their place”—at least in Shakespeare’s play—is Prospero’s repetition of racist discourse. As Brown insists, “Prospero utilises the previous regime of Sycorax as an evil other. Her black, female magic ostensibly contrasts with that of Prospero in that it is remembered as viciously coercive, yet beneath the apparent voluntarism of the white, male regime lies the threat of precisely this coercion” (61). Césaire’s interpretation of the character Ariel, therefore, does not easily align with any of these other post-colonial views;

although, like Brown, Césaire recognizes, retains (and resists) Prospero's reliance on repetition to keep Ariel in bondage.

Césaire also alters Ariel's role to relate to his audience, employing allusion to evoke Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in dialogue with Malcolm X, thereby re-drawing the spatio-temporal coordinates of Shakespeare's play and dramatizing two philosophies of engaging racial conflict. Zabus observes that if Caliban is "like a Malcolm X figure or the Stokely Carmichael of the Black Panthers . . . Ariel is more like a Martin Luther King, who preached non-violence . . . yet met a violent end with his assassination in 1968" (47). Although Césaire intentionally alludes to King's resistance to racism in the United States, King's political and social actions also extended to Africa. For example, Chinua Achebe comments that in preparation for his work in the United States, King made a substantial commitment to the future of Africa, traveling with his wife to Africa in 1957 to be present at the independence celebrations of Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana and, in 1957, along with Eleanor Roosevelt and Bishop James Pike, sponsoring a document signed by 130 world leaders urging the international community to protest against apartheid (132). Césaire's Ariel, therefore, alludes to the peaceful yet unswerving commitment of King to social justice.

In addition to re-presenting both Ariel and Caliban as slaves within a colonial system, Césaire re-reads Prospero as a colonizer in the Prologue to *A Tempest*, associating Prospero with the Nietzschean concept of the will to power: "Toi, Prospero? Pour-quoi pas? Il y a des volontés de puissance qui s'ignorent!" (*Une Tempête* 9). Richard Miller translates the second sentence as, "He [Prospero] has reserves of willpower he's not even aware of" (*A Tempest* 7); Frassinelli translates the same sentence as, "Sometimes the will to power is unconscious" (qtd. in Dionne and Kapadia 180). Other explicit evidence for Shakespeare's Prospero as a colonizer that Césaire

retains includes Caliban's claim that Prospero stole the island from him (Shakespeare 1.2.35), Ariel's insistence on calling Prospero "Master" (1.2.190, 219), Prospero's references to both Ariel and Caliban as his slaves (1.2.172; 322), Prospero's admission of using violence to dominate Caliban (1.2.347), Prospero's exploitation of Caliban for labor (1.2.369), and Prospero's ultimate appropriation of Caliban, "This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1.278-79). Significantly, Shakespeare's Prospero also links Caliban's labor to the production and maintenance of power that Prospero does not possess: it is Caliban who fetches their wood, makes their fires, and performs duties that "profit" both Prospero and Miranda, even when "[Caliban] There's wood enough within" (1.2.317), and Césaire retains these aspects of Prospero's character from the original text. In act one, scene two of *A Tempest*, Caliban claims that without Prospero he would be "King of the Island" given to him by his mother, Sycorax: "Sans toi? Mais tout simplement le roi! Le roi de île! Le roi de mon île, que je tiens de Sycorax, ma mere" (*Une Tempête* 25) ["Without you? I'd be the king, that's what I'd be, the King of the Island. The King of the Island given to me by my mother, Sycorax"] (*A Tempest* 17). Additionally, in act one, scene two, Césaire's Ariel still refers to Prospero as "Maître," [Master], Ariel and Caliban are explicitly cast as "slaves" in the dramatic personae of the play, Prospero uses violence to dominate Caliban (*Une Tempête* 27; *A Tempest* 19), and Prospero exploits Caliban for labor (*Une Tempête* 27; *A Tempest* 19). Prospero also designates Caliban as his creation: "Mieux! De la brute, due monstre, j'ai fait l'homme" (*Une Tempête* 63) ["Better yet— from a brutish monster I have made man!"] (*A Tempest* 63).

Césaire's explicit re-reading of Prospero as a colonizer also contributes to his depiction of Prospero as a capitalist; Césaire may have had Martinique and the greater Caribbean in mind when he re-situated Prospero in this role. Antonio Benitez-Rojo observes that "the history of the

Caribbean is one of the main strands in the history of capitalism” (5) and that without material resources from the Caribbean, Western capitalism would not have developed from the Mercantilist Revolution to the Industrial Revolution (5). In Shakespeare’s play, Caliban performs labor as Prospero’s slave, and Prospero consequently owns the means of production of the island. Prospero himself admits that Caliban “serves in offices” (Shakespeare 1.2.316). Bevington glosses “offices” as “functions and duties” (Bevington 1580), and these obligations “profit” both Prospero and Miranda (1.2.316). *Shakespeare’s Words* clarifies the meaning of the word “profit” when used as a verb in Shakespeare’s play: “benefit, be of use to, do good to” (349), a definition that complicates an economic reading of Prospero’s statement in 1.2.316. Yet, according to Shakespeare’s play, Caliban gathers wood and builds fires even when there is “wood enough within” (Shakespeare 1.2.317). Caliban’s comment, therefore, points to Prospero’s attempt to maintain a means of production that operates on a system that promotes surplus and growth.

However, in analyzing the critique of capitalism that Césaire’s play poses, critics have failed to note that although Césaire emphasizes Prospero’s commitment to capitalism, he simultaneously undercuts it. Rather than simply claim ownership of the island and, by association, its commodities, such as wood, Césaire’s Caliban critiques the idea of nature as a commodity and a means to production. Additionally, Césaire disrupts Prospero’s control over the mechanisms of the theater through the Prologue and employment of the Brechtian technique of alienation.²³ In the Prologue, Césaire’s use of metatheatre calls attention to the actors’ and audience’s awareness that the players are about to act out events that have already taken place—in this case the performance of *The Tempest* as well as colonization. This particular use of metatheatre also makes the theater’s representational qualities explicit, thereby negating the power over illusion that Prospero maintains in Shakespeare’s play. Césaire further deconstructs

Prospero's power over illusion in act three, scene three, when Eshu forcefully disrupts the engagement masque Prospero coordinated for Miranda and Ferdinand. Thus there is something very right and very wrong with such arguments as the one advanced by Roxanna Curto, which assert that in Césaire's version of the story, Prospero is "at once a capitalist entrepreneur, an inventor, and an illusion-maker," and that his "ownership of the means of production, which he refuses to share, constitutes the basis of his power on the island" (161). Césaire's Prospero is a capitalist entrepreneur, but Césaire's use of counter-discursive metatheatricality undercuts Prospero's illusion-making abilities, alienating the audience from the otherwise natural events of the original play, and encouraging the audience to question and critique Prospero, the magician, colonialist, and capitalist. Curto herself identifies a Brechtian paradigm operating in the play and observes that Surreau directed Brecht's 1936 *The Exception and the Rule* immediately before beginning work with Césaire on production of *Une Tempête* (161). Yet, Curto neglects the role that the Brechtian paradigm plays in deflating Prospero's illusion-making abilities.

In addition to his success in decentralizing Prospero's power over illusion-making, Césaire also critiques the idea of nature as a means of production, thereby exposing as an illusion the capitalist ideology that the exploitation of nature is "natural." In act one, scene two, Caliban insists that Prospero considers Sycorax as dead because Prospero views the earth as dead, suggesting that he [Caliban] respects both Sycorax and the earth because they are both alive: "C'est tellement plus commode! Morte, alors on la piétine, on la souille, on la foule d'un pied vainqueur! Moi, je la respecte, car je sais qu'elle vit, et que vit Sycorax" (*Une Tempête* 25-6) ["It's so much simpler that way! Dead, you can walk on it, pollute it, you can tread upon it with the steps of a conqueror. I respect the earth, because I know that Sycorax is alive"] (*A Tempest* 18). Here, Césaire's Caliban explicitly connects Prospero's enterprises with the pollution and

exploitation of nature which, like his mother, he deems as alive, thereby setting himself in opposition to Prospero's capitalist initiatives.

Christopher L. Miller has focused on Césaire's resistance to capitalist initiatives in his analysis of the recent discovery of physical evidence for the thesis of *négritude*, employing the French term "marxisant" to describe Césaire's initial concept of *négritude* as "conversant with Marxism but not adhering to all aspects of the philosophy" (748). Miller explains that it was not until 2008 that Christian Filostrat published a book explaining *négritude*'s missing link: an article by Césaire in *L'étudiant noir*.²⁴ This article, "Conscience raciale et révolution sociale" ("Racial Consciousness and Social Revolution"), published in Filostrat's *Négritude Agonistes: Assimilation against Nationalism in the French-Speaking Caribbean and Guyane* (2008), is heavily indebted to a Marxist, revolutionary discourse (Miller 744). As Miller explains, in 1935 when "Conscience raciale" was published, fascism was on the rise in France, and the Popular Front (the alliance of the left that would govern France from 1936 to 1937) was being formed, but the left did not view the Antilles colonies as a priority. In this essay, Césaire argues that race and class conspire as "exploiteurs blancs" (qtd. in Miller 745) ["white exploiters"] that impose white culture, white civilization, and white morality, "nous paralysant ainsi par mailles invisibles" (qtd. in Miller 745) ["paralyzing us with invisible chain mail"].²⁵ Yet, Césaire also criticizes communism, identifying it as an anti-capitalist enterprise that exploits tension between communism and the collective "negre," [Negro]: "What revolution was ever made by a people innocent of curiosities? Whoever incited a toy against its owner? However, that is the trick that our black revolutionaries want to perform when they ask the Negro to revolt against the capitalism that oppresses him" (qtd. and trans. in Miller 745). As previously discussed, when Césaire wrote *Une Tempête*, he had already resigned from the PCF. Thus Césaire's Caliban does

not propose a vision of decolonization based on ideas of communism, but he presents counterpoints to Prospero's capitalistic ideology.

In addition to analyzing the principal characters of Shakespeare's play within the contexts of colonizer/colonized and master/slave relationships, Césaire critiques ethnic, social, and religious conventions. For example, Césaire writes back to what most critics have interpreted as Prospero's accusation against Caliban of rape, casting doubt on the original charge itself as well as making the perceived threat of miscegenation in the original play explicit. In Shakespeare's play, Prospero claims that Caliban "didst seek to violate / The honor of my [his] child" (Shakespeare 1.2.350-1). Most critics have interpreted this accusation, as well as Caliban's response—that "would't had been done! / Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (1.2.352-4)—as Caliban's admission to attempted rape against Miranda. Conversely, in *A Tempest*, Caliban denies the accusation of rape. In act one, scene two, when Caliban confronts Prospero for throwing him out of Prospero's house and making him live in a filthy cave, "Le ghetto" (*Une Tempête* 26) [the ghetto] (*A Tempest* 19), Prospero insists that Caliban's lust forced him to get rid of Caliban: "Dame! Tu as essayé de violer ma fille!" (*Une Tempête* 27) ["Good God, you tried to rape my daughter!"] (*A Tempest* 19). However, Caliban repudiates the accusation of rape and blames Prospero for his lust: "Violer! violer! Dis-donc, vieux bouc, tu me prêtes tes idées libidineuses. Sache-le : Je n'ai que faire de ta fille, ni de ta grotte, d'ailleurs" (*Une Tempête* 27) ["Rape! Rape! Listen, you old goat, you're the one that put those dirty thoughts in my head. Let me tell you something: I couldn't care less about your daughter, or about your cave, for that matter"] (*A Tempest* 19). Additionally, while Shakespeare's play does not include additional scenes in which both Caliban and Miranda appear, which would have given Caliban the opportunity to act on his alleged desire to rape

Miranda, Césaire's play integrates a relevant scene. In act three, scene one, after Miranda refuses to tell Ferdinand her name because Prospero has expressly forbidden it, Caliban whispers her name to Ferdinand: "Mi-ran-da" (*Une Tempête* 54; *A Tempest* 38). Rather than depict Caliban as a threat to Miranda or her sexuality, however, this action illustrates Caliban's rebellion against Prospero's attempts to control Ferdinand's and Miranda's sexuality, demonstrating how Césaire's Caliban intercedes in what would otherwise be a triangular relationship between Prospero, Miranda, and Ferdinand.

Other post-colonial critics have also analyzed the perceivable threat of Caliban's and Miranda's sexuality. Explicitly addressing *The Tempest*, Fanon asserts that "Prospero adopts an attitude toward Caliban that the Americans in the south know only too well. Don't they say that the niggers are just waiting for a chance to jump on a white woman?" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 87). Critics have actively debated Prospero's accusations of rape against Caliban in Shakespeare's play. In Loomba's view, the "political effect of Prospero's accusation and Caliban's acceptance is to make a political revolutionary a rapist" (*Gender, Race, and Renaissance Drama* 156). Moreover, Loomba argues that Caliban's linguistic and sexual rebellion are related in the attempts of Caliban to break free from the boundaries of colonial discourse, a connection she purports Lamming hints at but, as "typical of the gender-blindness of many anti-colonial appropriations and criticism," does not fully develop (156). Brown also highlights the effects of Prospero's charge against Caliban: "The first effect is to circumvent Caliban's version of events by reencoding his boundlessness as rapacity: his inability to discern a concept of private, bounded property concerning his own dominions is reinterpreted as a desire to violate the chaste virgin, who epitomises courtly property" (62). Brown elaborates by asserting that the sexual division of the other into rapist and virgin is common in colonial

discourse, citing as examples *The Faerie Queen*, in which Ireland is represented as both Irene, a courtly virgin, and Grantorto, a rapacious woodkerne from whom the virgin requires protection, as well as Purchas's *Virginia's Verger* of 1625, which depicts the uprising of 1622 as an act of incestuous rape by native sons of a virgin land (62). Like Brown, Hall relates the threat of Caliban's sexuality to colonial discourse, remarking that interracial sex became an issue in the Virginia colonies approximately twenty years after the performance of *The Tempest* (Hall 143). The First Virginia case law involving race resulted in a white man, Hugh Davis, being publicly whipped for fornication with a black woman (143).²⁶ Most importantly, like Césaire, Hall connects Prospero's hostility toward Caliban to his compulsive attempts to control his environment and his daughter's sexuality (143). Like Fanon, Loomba and Hall, Césaire contextualizes the sexual charges against Caliban within the context of colonial discourse, casting doubt on the veracity of the very accusation upon which Prospero's rationale for enslaving Caliban rests, and re-situating Caliban as capable of subverting Prospero's authority over sexuality without also attempting to sexually violate Miranda.

Despite Césaire's rigorous redress of this contentious aspect of Shakespeare's play, it should not be overlooked that Césaire's critique of Caliban as a threat to hegemonic order also incorporates parody by mocking the European love conventions that Shakespeare's play celebrates. Shakespeare contrasts the play's "legitimate" couple, Ferdinand and Miranda, with the three other "illegitimate" pairs—Caliban and Miranda, Claribel and the King of Tunis, and Sycorax and Caliban's father. Caliban's cantankerous nature underscores Ferdinand's courtly manners, presenting Caliban as an unmannered savage and Ferdinand as an honorable suitor. Shakespeare also portrays Ferdinand as a Petrarchan lover who is willing to make himself a "slave," a "patient logman" to Miranda's service (Shakespeare 3.1. 65-7), in order to marry her.

Miranda enthusiastically receives and returns Ferdinand's flattery, weeping (3.1.75) and offering herself to Ferdinand: "I am your wife, if you will marry me; / If not, I'll die your maid" (83-4). Shakespeare's diction further highlights his adulatory depiction of the couple as well as his value-laden description of Miranda: Ferdinand refers to Miranda as a maid (1.2.431) and mistress (3.1.6; 3.1.11; 3.1.21; 3.1.33; 3.1.86) several times; and Prospero calls Miranda his daughter (1.1.17; 1.1.57; 4.1.13), "my girl" (1.1.62), and a wench (1.1.139; 1.2.416); yet, he also describes her as his rich gift (4.1.8; 4.1.13). Examining the relationship of gender and marriage, Jennifer Higginbotham rethinks accepted concepts of early modern social hierarchies, particularly the division of the female into the categories of the "maid," "wife," and "widow," arguing that becoming a woman in early modern England did not necessarily only entail getting married (9); rather, "boying" and "girling" in the drama of the period hinged on highlighting reproductive ability. Applying Higginbotham's insights helps us to see that Shakespeare emphasizes Miranda's suitability as material for the marriage market, and Ferdinand serves as an appropriate recipient of Prospero's gift (Miranda) while Caliban does not.

However, Césaire comically deflates these European love conventions that had serious economic and gendered sociocultural implications in the early modern era. Césaire's Miranda immediately sees Ferdinand as "à un complimenteur" (*Une Tempête* 30) [a flatterer]—a young man whose ability to pay compliments in the situation in which he finds himself proves his courage (*Une Tempête* 30; *A Tempest* 22). As previously discussed, Césaire's Caliban disrupts the triangular Shakespearean relationship between Prospero, Ferdinand, and Miranda by whispering Miranda's name to Ferdinand, thereby enabling Ferdinand to pretend to "christen" Miranda with a name of his own (*Une Tempête* 54; *A Tempest* 38), although Miranda describes Ferdinand's "christening" as a "low trick" (*Une Tempête* 54; *A Tempest* 38). Césaire also uses

Eshu to rework Shakespearean love conventions. Arnold describes Eshu as “one of the two names given to the Ioa who, in voodoo and in Brazilian macumba, opens the path or lifts the barriers between the world of men and the world of spirits” (*Modernism and Negritude* 221). Eshu describes himself as a God to his friends, yet the Devil to his enemies (*Une Tempête* 68; *A Tempest* 47), and he expresses his disdain for not receiving an invitation to the engagement masque that Prospero’s orchestrates for Ferdinand and Miranda:

PROSPERO. Qui t’a invite? Je n’aime
pas le sans genê! Même chez les dieux!

ESHU. Mais c’est que précisément, personne ne m’a invite. . . C’est
pas gentil, ca! Personne n’a songé au pauvre Shu! Alors,
le pauvre Eshu, il est venu quand même! Hihih! (*Une Tempête* 69)

PROSPERO. Who invited you? I don’t like such loose behavior, even
From a god!

ESHU. But that’s just the point . . . no one invited me . . .
And that wasn’t very nice! Nobody remembered poor
Eshu! So poor Eshu came anyway. Hihih! (*A Tempest* 48)

Prospero, whose power is disrupted by Eshu’s sudden arrival comically remarks that Eshu’s behavior is “loose,” and Prospero’s reaction probably only encourages Eshu to sing a lewd song for Ferdinand and Miranda, the final stanza of which solemnly suggests that black sexuality can be used as a weapon to counter the “whipping” that colonial slave masters dole out:

Eshu est un joyeux luron,
De son pénis il frappe,
Il frappe
Il frappe... (*Une Tempête* 70)

Eshu is a merry elf,
and he can whip you with his dick,
he can whip you,
he can whip you . . . (*A Tempest* 49)

James E. Robinson avers that Eshu, who “speaks and sings in a language of merry crudities (including a phallic obscenity)” (439), mocks and overpowers the Graeco-Roman mythology of Prospero’s European culture (439). Indeed, Eshu’s song also irritates Juno, Ceres, and Iris, all of whom Eshu wittily refers to as his “comerés” (*Une Tempête* 71) [“colleagues”] (*A Tempest* 49), leaving Prospero confused and deflated (*Une Tempête* 71; *A Tempest* 50). Like Caliban, Eshu undercuts Prospero’s authority, as well as the celebration of European love conventions.

Other post-colonial critics have also commented on the sociocultural significance of European love conventions in both Shakespeare’s and Césaire’s plays. Discussing Shakespeare’s play, Stephen Orgel conceives of Prospero and Caliban as embodying models of royal authority in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods (8) and contends that Miranda’s marriage preserves Prospero’s political authority. Jyotsna Singh observes that marriages are the most basic form of gift exchange and that Caliban’s desire for Miranda in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, symbolizes his desire for kinship with Prospero (199-200). By preventing Caliban from violating Miranda’s honor, Prospero retains control over her as a sexual gift that he will give to Ferdinand (200).

Yet, Césaire's Caliban does not desire kinship with Prospero or Miranda; Césaire's Caliban seeks recognition and freedom. Identifying with Caliban as a colonized figure, Césaire thus writes back to representations of Caliban—and the colonized—as dependent on Prospero, emphasizing the role of language in the creation and maintenance of Prospero's social order. Césaire re-situates *The Tempest* to target Mannoni's theory of the dependency complex, which he had also redressed in *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950; trans. 1972).²⁷ In *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (1950; trans. 1956)²⁸ Mannoni appropriates the principal characters of *The Tempest* to develop this theory of the dependency complex. He borrows from *The Tempest* for prototypes of the colonizer (Prospero) and the colonized (Caliban), as well as the theories of Jacques Lacan, Lucien Lévy-Brühl, Alfred Adler, Joel Kovel, and Melanie Klein, to speculate that the colonial situation's bringing two "types" of personalities face to face becomes a catalyst for activating the colonized "dependency complex" (23).

The dependency complex leads to the belief of the dependency of the colonized on the colonizer, resulting in dependent behavior as well as the fear of abandonment. Yet, Mannoni sees *The Tempest* as a backdrop for the discussion of his central theory since his analysis of the dependency complex revolves around a study of the Malagasy people. In the foreword to Mannoni's book, Maurice Bloch thus remarks that Mannoni's book is best read as an opening speech to a debate, and that the colonial situation, or settler mentality, is not created by the colonial situation: "Shakespeare knew it was there in human nature and drew the colonial type in Prospero" (12).

By re-situating *The Tempest* to refute Mannoni's theory of the dependency complex, Césaire explicitly illuminates a colonial situation in which Caliban recognizes and rejects the

false image that Prospero has projected onto him. In his Introduction to *Une Tempête*, Arnold avers that Césaire viewed Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* as a target (*Aimé Césaire: Poetry, Theatre, Essays and Discourse: Critical Edition* 1200) when he wrote *Une Tempête*. Arnold also speculates that the role Mannoni had played in Césaire's life, as Césaire's professor, made Césaire's ideological disagreement with Mannoni more personal: "Le fait que Mannoni fut professeur au lycée Schoelcher de Fort-de France pendant la scolarité du futur dramaturge ne put que rendre le conflit idéologique plus explosive et plus personnel" (1200-1) [The fact that Mannoni was a professor at the Lycée Schoelcher of Fort-de-France during the schooling of the future dramatist could only make the ideological conflict more explosive and more personal]. Moreover, Césaire's use of the genre of drama to refute Mannoni a second time is significant because in *Discourse on Colonialism* Césaire criticizes Mannoni for reducing human problems to ideas (62). Thus in act three, scene five, Césaire dramatizes Caliban's predicament, its effect on Caliban, and Caliban's confrontation of Prospero:

Prospero, tu es un grand illusionniste:

Le mensonge, ça te connaît.

Et tu m'as tellement menti,

Menti sur le monde, menti sur moi-même... (*Une Tempête* 88)

Prospero, you're a great magician:

You're an old hand at deception.

And you lied to me so much,

about the world, about myself... (*A Tempest* 61-2)

Caliban, therefore, refutes the theory of the dependency complex by opposing the essentialist notion of an inferiority complex existing *a priori* and by rejecting the view of Prospero's language as a "gift."

Other post-colonial critics have also analyzed the role that language plays in the development of Prospero's and Caliban's dependent relationship in *The Tempest*. Lamming describes the gift of language as "the deepest and most delicate bond of involvement"—a gift that has a "certain finality" (109). Additionally, "the gift of language meant not English, in particular, but speech and concept as a way, a method, a necessary avenue towards areas of the self which could not be reached in any other way" (109). Brown remarks that in *The Tempest* the "gift" of language also inscribes power relations as the other is "hailed and recognises himself as a linguistic subject of a master language" (61), and Hall points out that the triangulated linguistic community (144) in Shakespeare's play, with Prospero at its apex, serves to enforce both a racial hierarchy and patriarchal authority (145). Lamming's, Brown's, and Hall's interpretations all underscore the bond that the "gift" of language can create between the colonized and the colonizer.

Césaire thus resituates Caliban not only to refute the theory of the dependency complex, but to demonstrate that Prospero depends on Caliban rather than the other way around. As previously noted, Prospero reiterates racist discourse, demonstrating the contingency of his colonial vocation on Caliban. According to Mannoni, European colonizers may view circumstances that objectively rely on dependence as entailing the inferiority of the colonized (40), thus illustrating the projection of the colonizer's inferiority complex. Shakespeare's Prospero embodies this aspect of Mannoni's theory, but Césaire's Caliban reflects Prospero's mirror image back to him: "Qu'aurais-tu fait sans moi, dans cette contrée inconnue? Ingrat! Je

t'ai appris les arbres, les fruits, les oiseaux, les saisons, et maintenant je t'en fous . . . Recette connue! l'orange presée, on en rejette l'écorce! . . . Un viel intoxiqué, voila ce que tu es!" (*Une Tempête* 26, 89).

And what do you think you'd have done without me in this strange land? Ingrate! I taught you the trees, fruits, birds, the seasons, and now you don't give a damn . . . once you've squeezed the juice from the orange, you toss the rind away! . . . You're an old addict, that's what you are! (*A Tempest* 19, 62)

Lamming, too, maintains that Prospero would be "helpless" without Caliban and Ariel (114). However, Robinson reminds us that, as discussed earlier, the terms of *A Tempest* reflect Césaire's concept of *négritude*, an awareness of being black and taking charge of one's destiny as a black man" (437). One of the most significant ways in which Caliban asserts agency is by exposing Prospero's dependency complex. In the concluding scene of *A Tempest*, Caliban predicts that Prospero will not go back to Europe, since Prospero depends on Caliban for his "vocation"²⁹ (*Une Tempête* 89; *A Tempest* 62). Significantly, Caliban's prediction comes true, illustrating what Robinson describes as the colonizer becoming bonded to the colonized (441).

Thus Césaire also writes back to the depiction of Caliban as a wild savage, re-structuring and re-situating both the climax—at least the climax of the Caliban subplot³⁰—and the dénouement of *The Tempest* to challenge the supposition that, if given the opportunity, Caliban would kill Prospero. In *The Tempest*, Caliban encounters Trinculo and Stephano, (Shakespeare 2.2.57-8), and Caliban swears that he will kiss their feet if they will be his God (2.2.147), offering to give them his island if they will carry out revenge on Prospero by seizing his books and beating him: "Having first seized his books; or with a log / Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake, / or cut his weasand with thy knife. / Remember first to possess his books" (3.2.89-

92). Stephano vows to kill Prospero (3.3.107), and Caliban encourages him (3.2.148). In the climax of the Caliban plot in *The Tempest*, however, in which Caliban plays the antagonist to Prospero, the protagonist, Ariel warns Prospero, who refers to the plan as a “foul conspiracy / of the beast Caliban and his confederates” (4.1.139-140). Although Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo all participate in the plot against Prospero’s life, Prospero primarily blames Caliban, whom Prospero describes as a “born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick” (4.1.188-9). Later, Prospero tells Sebastian and Alonso that Caliban, Stephano, and Caliban all conspired to take his life, and that they must “know and own” Stephano and Trinculo (5.1.277-8) while Prospero identifies Caliban as “this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine” (5.1.278-9).

Césaire re-structures and re-situates *The Tempest* so that Caliban regrets his attempts to “create the Revolution with swollen guts and fat faces” and approaches Prospero alone with a weapon in his hand (*Une Tempête* 79; *A Tempest* 55). Césaire’s Prospero dares Caliban to alter the material conditions of the island and to kill him: “[Prospero] (Bares his chest to him [Caliban]): Strike! Go on, strike! Strike your master, your benefactor! Don’t tell me you’re going to spare him!” (55). Caliban’s response, “Alois, defends-toi! Je ne suis pas un assassin” (*Une Tempête* 79) [“Defend yourself! I’m not a murderer”] (*A Tempest* 55) proves significant in suggesting that, given the opportunity, Caliban would not kill Prospero (55). Joseph Khoury analyzes the confrontation between Caliban and Prospero as one between a slave and a master, quoting Hegel that “it is solely through risking life that freedom is obtained” (Hegel qtd. in Khoury 33).³¹ According to Khoury, by giving himself up to death, Caliban gambles that Prospero will be forced to recognize him by not killing him” (33). Although, as I will discuss in the conclusion of this chapter, describing Césaire as “unabashedly Hegelian in his thinking” (33) proves problematic given the negative depiction of Africa’s role in history that Hegel espouses in

The Philosophy of History, I agree that Césaire's Caliban seeks to achieve recognition of his African lineage, as well as his freedom. Khoury contends that Césaire cannot have a slave die, as doing so would symbolize the death of all colonized peoples (33); yet, having a master die would also signify the death of all the colonizers, and Césaire's Caliban chooses to confront rather than kill Prospero. In my view, Césaire understands that violence would not necessarily change the conditions for Caliban, for Martinicans, for African Americans, or for other colonized peoples.

In Césaire's dénouement, even though Prospero originally intends to leave the island, Caliban still insists on confronting Prospero and exposing his vocation: "Le vieux monde foire! . . . Ta vocation est de m'emmerder! Et voilà pourquoi tu resteras, comme ces mecs qui ont fait les colonies et qui ne peuvent plus vivre ailleurs" (*Une Tempête* 88-9) ["The old world is crumbling down! . . . Your vocation is to hassle me and that's just why you'll stay, just like those guys who founded the colonies and now who can't live anywhere else"] (*A Tempest* 62). Caliban's linguistic revolt is successful, leading Prospero to doubt himself for the first time (*Une Tempête* 90; *A Tempest* 63) and decide to remain on the island to meet his fate (*Une Tempête* 90; *A Tempest* 64), symbolizing the change Caliban sought through his self-conscious coup. To quote Judith Holland Sarnecki, Caliban beats Prospero at his own game by "mastering his language so well that he can bend it for revolutionary purposes" (281). Rather than bidding farewell to French, as Ngũgĩ Thiong'o says farewell to English in *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Césaire and his Caliban use the French language to alter former colonial attitudes and structures. Césaire re-structures and re-situates Shakespeare's dénouement to elucidate decolonization as a process of shattering old structures. The conclusion Césaire offers is indeterminate; yet, this characteristic should not be conflated with ambivalence on Caliban's part. Césaire undoubtedly depicts Caliban's rejection of Prospero; this achievement,

along with Césaire's use of metatheatres, effectively explodes Prospero's power over the creation of illusions, including the false image of Caliban as an unintelligent, brute savage.

This chapter, therefore, demonstrates that Césaire identifies and appropriates the colonial theme in Shakespeare's play in order to depict a vision of decolonization that had not come to fruition in Martinique, the greater Caribbean, the United States, or Africa. Césaire's historical and socio-cultural conditions originally led him to the task of translating Shakespeare's play; and although translation itself is arguably an interpretive act, Césaire's interpretation explicitly identifies a colonial theme in Shakespeare's play, re-reading Caliban and Prospero as the colonized and colonizer, and re-situating their relationship to expose the desire for power behind Prospero's rhetorical presentation of himself as a humanist, a benevolent magician, and Caliban as a savage monster. Moreover, the conditions from which *A Tempest* emerged underscore what is at stake for Césaire in critiquing *The Tempest*. As previously documented, when Césaire wrote *A Tempest*, he had already resigned from the PCF, recognizing that expansionist economic systems that bolster Imperialism exist in both capitalist and communist systems, and that the PCF's agenda did not include a type of decolonization that would alter, rather than maintain, racial and socioeconomic structures.

The colonial question, and the African question—the question of how racial evolution and historical destiny could once again become the temporal territory of people of African ancestry rather than the exclusive domain of white Europeans—were the most significant questions in Césaire's mind when he wrote *A Tempest*. Yet, understandably, critics such as Singh and Irene Lara have carefully considered the role Césaire gives the subaltern woman, Sycorax, in this re-configured post-colonial domain. Singh argues that “Sycorax figures in the play as a *symbolic* Earth mother embodied in the natural elements of the island,” thereby displac[ing] the

sexual, maternal identity of the ‘native’ woman, Sycorax, onto the idealized abstraction of the Earth as Mother” (196, 207). Lara espouses a similar perspective, contending that Césaire participates in the “nationalist discourse” that idealizes women as spiritual mothers and the source of their sons’ strength and legitimacy, ignoring their complex materiality, sexuality, and subjectivity (88). Lara boldly asks: “If Césaire’s Caliban calls for “Uhuru,” freedom in Swahili, we must ask: Uhuru by whom and for whom (“uhuru”)?” (87). Moreover, according to Lara, Césaire’s play “perpetuates a masculinist tongue” (87) that, in addition to idealizing Sycorax, androcentrically dramatizes the antagonistic relationship between the male colonizer and the male colonized, thereby also preventing Miranda from collaborating with Caliban to set each other free (87).

Although Singh and Lara ask important questions, their criticism of Césaire perpetuates the cycle of depicting the male political revolutionary as sexist. In *The Tempest*, Prospero amplifies Caliban’s threatening representation by depicting him as a rapist. Césaire frees Caliban of this dubious charge, only to be challenged as a sexist author. Caliban’s and Miranda’s complex history should not be oversimplified: Shakespeare presents Miranda as a complicit participant in Prospero’s colonial project; the accusation that Caliban attempted to rape Miranda further fractures the relationship between Miranda and Caliban. As critics, we should recognize that, given the role of white women in the history of colonialism, and even in *The Tempest*, it is understandable that Césaire was not ready to position Caliban and Miranda in a post-colonial utopia in which white women and black men collaborate to set each other free. Additionally, Caliban’s association of Sycorax with the Earth should also be viewed in light of Césaire’s and Surreau’s use of the Brechtian alienation effect to denaturalize both the exploitation of nature as well as the denigration of Sycorax. Caliban’s view of Sycorax as alive in the rain, lightning, and

rushes (*Une Tempête* 26; *A Tempest* 18) illustrates Césaire's animist, non-Christian philosophy, rather than his trivialization of the subaltern woman. As Arnold explains, Césaire aggressively rejected Christianity, which he viewed as the religion of colonialism ("Césaire at Seventy" 114). In offering an animist religious dimension to blacks who can no longer believe in a white Christ (116), Césaire subverts the Christian rhetoric that undergirds the depiction of Sycorax as a witch, recuperates her dignity within the context of a non-Christian framework, and includes her in the temporal territory of the present that Césaire aims to protest as the exclusive domain of white Europeans.

Thus Césaire wrote back not only to Shakespeare but to colonialists and imperialists who had appropriated Hegel and his views of the "African character"³² as "undeveloped" and entirely ignorant of an individual self (93), and of Africa as "no historical part of the world" (99), and therefore as a part of the historical past that white Europeans of the present and future could exploit in writing a [European] historical destiny. While Fanon had begun the work of wresting essentialist Hegelian philosophy from Europeans to appropriate it for the colonized,³³ Césaire dramatized the African's struggle for self-consciousness in an era of decolonization that had not signaled liberation for blacks. Drawing on Nietzsche's concepts of will to power and "truth" and "reality" as rhetorically constructed, Césaire's Caliban deconstructs Prospero's colonial rhetoric, exposing its investment in conflating racial evolution and historical destiny to maintain power over writing history in the present and for the future. Through identifying with Caliban, and in re-reading, re-structuring, and re-situating *The Tempest*, *A Tempest* shares a relationship with post-colonial criticism of *The Tempest* that emerged after Césaire critiqued the play.

Notes

1. See “‘This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine’: *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism.”
2. See “Nymphs and reapers heavily vanish: the discursive con-texts of *The Tempest*” in *Alternative Shakespeares* (Ed. John Drakakis) 191-205. Paul Brown notes that he did not learn of Hulme’s and Barker’s collaboration, which existed in the form of an unpublished draft at that time, until he reached a late stage in the production of his own essay.
3. A myriad of adaptations of *The Tempest* have been written, starting with Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *The Minister’s Wooing* (1859) and *Pearl of Orr’s Island* (1862), continuing with G.D. Roberts’s *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* (1900), Robertson Davies’s *Tempest-Tost* (1951), W.J. Stuart’s *Forbidden Planet* (1956), John Fowles’s *The Collector* (1963) and *The Magus* (1966; 1977), George Lamming’s *Water with Berries* (1971), Audrey Thomas’s *Munchmeyer: And Prospero on the Island* (1971), Margaret Laurence’s *The Diviners* (1974), Phyllis Gotlieb’s *O Master Caliban!* (1976), Iris Murdoch’s *The Sea, The Sea* (1978), Rachel Ingalls’s *Mrs. Caliban* (1982), Harry Mulisch’s *The Last Call* (1985), Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), Jamaica Kincaid’s *Annie John* (1987), Sarah Murphey’s *The Measure of Miranda* (1987), Philip Osment’s *This Island’s Mine* (1988), Gloria Naylor’s *Mama Day* (1988), Marina Warner’s *Indigo* (1992), Paul Voermans’s *And Disregards the Rest* (1992), Tad Williams’s *Caliban’s Hour* (1994), Dev Virahsawmy’s *Toufann* (1995), and concluding with J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999). Although *A Tempest* has received considerable critical attention, critics have not yet analyzed how it offers post-colonial criticism of William Shakespeare’s play.
4. The sarcasm of Gayatri Spivak’s rhetorical question, “Why wouldn’t everybody be happy to settle for *dipenda*?” can be easily detected and also contributes to her explanation: “The Belgian bankers are happy when they understand that *dipenda* means that what truly matters, namely economic domination, will remain the same so they join in the choir changing: ‘Hurrah! Hurrah! Love live independence!’” (xiii).
5. See *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (1950; trans. 1956). Octave Mannoni speculates that the colonial situation bringing two “types” of personalities face to face becomes a catalyst for activating the “dependency complex” of the colonized (23). The dependency complex leads to the belief in the dependency of the colonized on the colonizer, resulting in dependent behavior as well as the fear of abandonment.
6. Ironically, in act three, scene one of *A Season in the Congo*, Lumumba rejects violence as a solution, an assertion that is met with resistance by M’Polo, who declares that non-violence “amounts to suicide” (129), yet then avows to make a spectacle of his death: “If I must die, let it be like Gandhi. Come on! Let the crowd enter! I will give them an audience!” (129).
7. All translations of *A Tempest* derive from Richard Miller’s 1985 translation.
8. See *Notebook of a Return to The Native Land*, Trans. and Ed. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith.
9. See the introduction for a thorough discussion of Kenneth Burke and *A Rhetoric of Motives*.
10. Jane Pallister documents that this speech was published as the paper “L’Homme de culture et ses responsabilités.”
11. A. James Arnold observes that on his graduation from the Lycée Schoelcher in 1931, Césaire took prizes in French, Latin, and English (*Modernism and Negritude* 8).
12. Pier Frassinelli directs the reader to *Un poete politique*, p. 31, for the original text of his translation.

13. All references to *The Tempest* derive from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (6th ed.), edited by David Bevington.

14. The stage directions for *The Tempest* (F1) note its setting as “an uninhabited island.”

15. In an interview released before the opening night of *A Tempest*, Aimé Césaire remarks: “I continually broke away from the original. I was trying to ‘de-mythify’ the tale” (qtd. in Bellhassen 176).

16. Additionally, the play’s referents evoke Shakespeare’s Old World through Césaire’s allusion to Book VI of *The Odyssey* in act one, scene two: “En voyant mademoiselle plus belle qu’une nymphe, je me suis cru Ulysse dans l’île de Nausicaa” (*Une Tempête* 31) [“Seeing the young lady, more beautiful than any wood-nymph, I might have been Ulysses on Nausicaa’s isle”] (*A Tempest* 23), making a reference to the shipwrecked Odysseus’s encounter with princess Nausicaä.

17. Significantly, according to Frassinelli, the first performance of *A Tempest* was set in the United States, using the visual climate of the Western (qtd. in Dionne and Kapadia 176).

18. For example, in 1989, Meredith Skura proposes that Shakespeare could not have had access to the records of England’s colonial ventures or forays into the Mediterranean (42-69). In 1989 Deborah Willis contends that “the play’s true threatening ‘other’ is not Caliban but Antonio (280). According to Brian Vickers, the “normal features” of the colonialist motif—murdering the natives, stealing their land, exporting their goods, produce, and wealth for profit back to one’s own country”—are “conspicuously lacking” in *The Tempest* (246). Ben Ross Schneider’s 1995 article “‘Are We Being Historical Yet?’ Colonialist Interpretations of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*” maintains that “by choosing colonialism as a frame, and then ‘reifying’ it as if it were coterminous with the limits of discourse in general,” new historicists have marginalized not only a large field of pertinent contemporary discourse, but also *The Tempest* itself (121). In 1998, Jerry Brotton redresses what had been, to date, the marginalization of *The Tempest*’s Mediterranean contexts, contending that colonial readings of *The Tempest* had persistently overlooked Prospero’s Italian identity (qtd. in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* 30). Brotton also posits that the colonial American emphasis postulated by other critics conceals the play’s direct inversion of Aeneas’s voyage to Carthage as well as Caliban’s African lineage (40). Additionally, Todd Andrew Borlik argues that modern critics have duplicated the mistakes of early modern colonialists by neglecting the discourse about cultural Others within the civilized borders of England; specifically, Borlik avers that Caliban is in part inspired by legends of Lincolnshire fen spirits, and that Caliban’s plight “comments on the displacement of local cottagers by land reclamation projects” (22).

19. Stephen Orgel also points out that commentators from John Dryden to Lewis Theobald to the Cambridge editors felt that this passage by the otherwise “passive Miranda” required emendation (17).

20. As previously discussed, Césaire also addresses this debate in *A Season in the Congo*.

21. In his autobiography, Malcolm X discusses the media’s persistent attempts to associate his philosophies with the word “violence”: “But the white reporters kept wanting me linked with that word ‘violence.’ I doubt if I had one interview without having to deal with the accusation” (367). In his autobiography, he states that “Negroes have the right to fight against these racists, by any means necessary . . . I am for violence if non-violence means we continue postponing a solution to the American black man’s problem—just to avoid violence” (367).

22. See “On Violence” 1-62.

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23. See especially “The Street Scene: A Basic Model for an Epic Theatre,” a critical essay in which Bertolt Brecht outlines his theory of the A-affect (or alienation effect).
24. See *L’etudiant noir*, number 3, May June 1935. Prior to 1938, Léopold Sedar Senghor and Léon Damas maintained that Césaire coined the word Négritude in *L’Edudiant Noir*; yet, lacking physical evidence of the thesis of négritude’s birth, Edward Ako denounced the “myth of the genesis of the négritude movement” in his 1984 essay, “*L’etudiant* and the Myth of the Genesis of the Negritude Movement.” As Christopher Miller points out, Ako and others in recent decades only had access to the initial issue of *L’etudiant noir* (Mar. 1935).
25. I quote Miller’s translation here (Miller received a copy of Césaire’s original article from Filostrat).
26. See Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* 35-6.
27. See 59-62.
28. Mannoni wrote this text in 1948 in Madagascar after a bloody, anti-colonial revolt that led to the French army murdering nearly 100,000 Malagasy people.
29. I propose that by using the word “vocation,” Césaire refers to a French attitude toward settlement and colonialism as a type of employment connected to the purported humanist endeavor of elevating the status of “native” peoples. For example, in approximately 1900, a practical course of instruction was instituted for young men seeking employment overseas; the curriculum included sixteen lessons on “applied colonisation” (Robinson 126). Careers in colonial service offered an outlet for those who were bored in their administrative grades and desired a new professional outlet (160-1). Although the policies of French colonialism were justified in the spirit of French nationalism, in contrast to the humanitarian grounds of British colonialism, French nationalist policies still referred to “civilised man’s duties towards less advanced peoples” (168). See *French Colonialism 1871-1914: Myths and Realities*. Additionally, Arnold points out that Césaire aggressively rejected Christianity, which he viewed as the religion of colonialism (114). See “Césaire at Seventy” for an intriguing discussion of Césaire’s views on religion and spirituality.
30. Most critics who focus on the reconciliation theme of *The Tempest*, thereby emphasizing the main plot, locate the climax of the play as occurring in act five, scene one, when Ariel persuades Prospero to forgive his enemies and not to take vengeance on his adversaries and Prospero, realizing that his power is dangerous, pledges to break his staff and drown his books. See 5.1.8-32.
31. See G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Trans. J.B. Baille.
32. Hegel addresses these views in the Introduction to *Philosophy of History* 1-102.
33. In “The Black Man and Hegel” (*Black Skin, White Masks*), Fanon argues that the master-slave analogy/metaphor Hegel used to discuss the struggle for self-consciousness is different from the master-slave relationships of colonialism: “We hope we have shown that the master here is basically different than the one described by Hegel. For Hegel there is reciprocity; here the master scorns the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work. Likewise, the slave here can in no way be equated with the slave who loses himself in the object and finds the source of his liberation in his work. The black slave wants to be like his master. Therefore he is less independent than the Hegelian slave” (195).

CHAPTER THREE:

ALIENATION ON IMPERIAL AXES IN *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA* AND *A BRANCH OF THE BLUE NILE*

Post-colonial critics of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* have largely ignored the few adaptations of Shakespeare's monumental study of gender, ethnicity, and colonization in the Roman world.¹ Criticism of *A Branch of the Blue Nile* has typically emphasized the attitudes that the play's Trinidadian acting troupe and Walcott express towards William Shakespeare and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Tobias Döring also explores Walcott's motivations for adapting *Antony and Cleopatra*, suggesting that the discrepancy between actor and role and person and persona in *Antony and Cleopatra* may have been one source of interest for Walcott since such issues evoke the core of post-colonial predicaments (Döring 19). I agree with Döring but also insist that *A Branch of the Blue Nile* treats the issues of race, gender, and colonialism in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Although Janet Adelman's groundbreaking analysis of the significance of race in Shakespeare's play emerged in 1973, criticism that addresses the connection of race, gender, and colonialism in the play did not appear until the late 1980s, in scholarship such as Ania Loomba's *Gender, Race, and Renaissance Drama*. To date, however, critics have not recognized the intervention Walcott's play makes through its post-colonial adaptation and criticism of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

In this chapter, I will extend Döring's analysis, integrating and analyzing significant aspects of Walcott's biography that bolster the plausibility of his interest in the schisms to which Döring refers. Additionally, I will relate Kenneth Burke's theory of identification to *A Branch of the Blue Nile*. As a result, I will speculate that the discrepancies Döring analyzes as a "source of interest" for Walcott are aspects of the play with which he, members of the troupe, and audiences identify. In "Writing Away from the Centre" (*Post-Colonial Shakespeares*), Michael Neill briefly treats Walcott's *A Branch of the Blue Nile*, contending that Walcott's play does not evoke the "glad hybridity" (qtd. in Loomba and Orkin 180) that Salman Rushdie arouses in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, since a "disillusioned actor" [Sheila Harris] voices a "profound ambivalence about what it means for Shakespeare to 'end up' in her West Indian mouth" (181). I will counter Neill's assertion regarding a lack of "glad hybridity" in Walcott's play, contending that *A Branch of the Blue Nile* espouses a pluralistic and multicultural aesthetic that fulfills Walcott's purposes for writing and staging Caribbean theater and that foregrounds critical post-colonial interpretations of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Walcott "writes back" to Shakespeare because he identifies with Antony and Cleopatra's alterity but he also disassociates from, and therefore alters, the depiction of Cleopatra as an orientalist construct and the portrayal of Antony's surrender to hegemonic ideals. Re-reading *Antony and Cleopatra* through a post-colonial lens, Walcott explodes the colonizer/colonized binary, re-situating *Antony and Cleopatra* to reflect the dual social histories of the actors and actresses in the Caribbean troupe. Walcott also re-structures *Antony and Cleopatra* to articulate a vision of decolonization that rejects mimicry while advocating a Caribbean theater that authentically creates itself and a type of original drama for its actors, actresses, and audiences. When synthesizing its ideas with Burke's theory of identification in *The Rhetoric of Motives*, the

theory of Ashcroft *et al.* in *The Empire Writes Back* provides a paradigm for understanding how *A Branch of the Blue Nile* enacts critical reading practices that dramatically comment on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and stress the psychological effects of colonialism.² Walcott's play especially resonates with Jyotsna Singh's critical view of *Antony and Cleopatra* which re-reads Shakespeare's play as a defense of the theatrical and the feminine.

A Branch of the Blue Nile was first performed in Barbados in 1983; its production tested the relevance of Shakespeare to the Caribbean. The love affair of Antony and Cleopatra finds its correlation in Walcott's play, and Walcott insisted that his wife Norline play the role of Marilyn Lewis—Sheila's understudy—in the 1983 Barbados and 1985 Trinidad productions³ (*Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* 425). Certainly, Walcott had St. Lucia, Barbados, Trinidad, and the greater British West Indies in mind when he wrote *A Branch of the Blue Nile*, a play that comically yet poignantly dramatizes the struggles of a Caribbean acting troupe to “play” Shakespeare on a Caribbean stage. Walcott's drama is at once creative, critical, and political: it creatively adapts what might otherwise be an irrelevant play for an audience in the Caribbean, critically comments on the dual affinities of both Antony and Cleopatra, and decenters the authority of the Shakespearean play to demonstrate the viability of Shakespeare in the Caribbean.

A Branch of the Blue Nile employs counter-discursive metatheatre to critique its source, a strategy that proves particularly significant when viewed in light of Shakespeare's appropriation of the historical narrative⁴ during a period when England had imperialistic ambitions and had begun to encroach upon Asia and Africa. Walcott's use of metatheatre, therefore, demonstrates his conscious relationship of the theater to imperialism and to decolonization, decentering the authority of Shakespeare's play. For example, Walcott's Sheila struggles to identify with Cleopatra, primarily because Sheila thinks her black skin and class, as opposed to the lighter,

“Mediterranean” (*A Branch of the Blue Nile* 284) skin and royal status associated with Cleopatra’s persona, create a psychological chasm that she cannot bridge. Walcott’s use of metatheatricality thus disrupts the notion of even a universal “Cleopatra,” even one of an “infinite variety” (Shakespeare 2.4.246), suggesting Cleopatra’s persona does not easily translate to all cultures.

In pondering why Walcott adapts Shakespeare’s play, critics tend to overlook how the Caribbean playwright encountered Shakespeare. Significantly, Walcott’s father started the Star Literary Club in Barbados and staged concerts at his Methodist primary school. Sources of the staged scenes included *The Merchant of Venice*, in which Walcott’s mother Alix played the role of Portia (*Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* 9). Walcott studied Latin, Shakespeare, English poetry, and Dickens at St. Mary’s College for boys which followed the model of a British public school (25). There, Walcott also acted as a Junior Master on Speech Day, directing scenes from *Macbeth* (25). As a result of his education, Walcott needed to reflect on his relationship to the English language and to English literature, and an awareness of the differences between good local speech and mimicry of British diction and tones became a springboard for a multitude of Walcott’s artistic ideas (29). Walcott read Shakespeare and other Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists as subjects that the British integrated into colonial education in order to Anglicize their colonial subjects; and yet, like Carlin and Césaire, Walcott did not develop an altogether antagonistic attitude towards Shakespeare.

It is, therefore, important to observe that both *A Branch of the Blue Nile* and Walcott’s background are replete with social “paradoxes” that Walcott weaves into a celebratory—if not exactly an optimistic—tapestry of Caribbean hybridization. Walcott possessed a British passport for most of his life. He is considered a native English speaker from St. Lucia, one of a belt of

French-speaking islands, as well as bilingual since he also speaks Creole (5). Walcott's light-brown father was born in St. Lucia; his light-brown mother is from Dutch St. Maarten (5); and Walcott's white grandfather, Charles Walcott, came to St. Lucia from Barbados, a highly Anglicized country in the Caribbean. King asserts that Walcott imagined his grandfather's origins were in "Shakespeare's country," which would have made him an heir to the tradition of English literature (8). King also points out that Derek's poetry—specifically *Omeros*—refers to his grandfather as a bastard (7), a claim that can be verified in Book XII of the poem when Walcott depicts his father as foregrounding his [Derek Walcott's] identification with English Literature:

I was raised in this obscure Caribbean port,
where my bastard father Christened me for his shire:
Warwick. The Bard's Country. But never felt part

of the foreign machinery known as Literature.

I preferred verse to fame, but I wrote with the heart
of an amateur. It's that Will you inherit.

I died on his [Shakespeare's] birthday, one April, your mother
sewed her own costume as Portia, then that disease
like Hamlet's old man's spread from an infected ear,
I believe that parallel has brought you some peace.

Death imitating Art, eh? (68-9)

Thus Walcott's social background is rife with a diversity that undoubtedly informs his advocacy for reconciliation versus revenge, multiculturalism instead of mimicry, and pluralism rather than pessimism.

Walcott's experiences with the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) and the Stratford Ontario Shakespeare Festival further validate the conjecture that Walcott viewed the Bard as a beneficial benefactor of literature rather than a bellicose influence of colonialism. These experiences, in addition to the role that Shakespeare played in the lives of Walcott's parents, demonstrate the uniqueness of Walcott's relationship to Shakespeare in comparison to either Carlin's or Césaire's connections to the English playwright. The Rockefeller Foundation (RF) originally targeted American minorities for its support in the 1960s, and it assisted Walcott as a "black" dramatist and poet for many years. According to King, the RF first became involved with the West Indies Theatre through Tom Patterson of the Stratford Ontario Shakespeare Festival ("West Indian Drama and the Rockefeller Foundation, 1957-70: Derek Walcott, the Little Carib and the University of the West Indies" 496). In September 1957, the RF provided funding to Walcott to go to Stratford, Ontario, where Walcott received advice from Tyrone Guthrie about a proposed festival for West Indian drama (496-7).

The relationship between Walcott and the RF proved successful: in the late 1950s, Walcott traveled to New York by way of a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship to study theater (498), leading to his advanced studies of design, acting, and theatre, and to the RF supporting the establishment of a theater in Trinidad (497-8). The relationship also led Walcott to embrace the Americanized Stanislavski Method of acting (498-91), and to develop the Little Carib Theatre Workshop (499), which later became the Trinidad Theatre Workshop (TTW). The Workshop offered its first performance in 1962, a time of substantial conflict in Trinidad since the

Trinidadian government of the 1960s supported folk culture, leading Walcott to believe that theater was the only true revolutionary forum of the region (503). In 1969, Walcott and his company achieved international acclaim by performing in the United States; however, new RF policies of the 1970s that limited funding to the United States ended the relationship between Walcott's theater Workshop and the RF.

Decolonization of the Caribbean during the twentieth century also immeasurably informed *A Branch of the Blue Nile*; thus, as in my treatments of Carlin's and Césaire's plays, decolonization is another relevant point of departure for analyzing Walcott's play. At the time of the play's first two productions in Barbados and Trinidad, both countries had achieved their independence from Great Britain. The emancipation from Great Britain of Trinidad in 1962, Barbados in 1966, and St. Lucia in 1979 consequently made the play's engagement with themes of national and personal identity immediately relevant to multiple audiences in the Caribbean. During the time *A Branch of the Blue Nile* was written and performed, Trinidadian society did not view the stage as an appropriate place for black women. Joyce Green MacDonald addresses this prejudice against black women in the Caribbean, asserting that Walcott's Sheila—the character the play's director casts as Cleopatra—reflects aspects of Caribbean history that sharply delimited black women's performances (“Bodies, Race, and Performance in Walcott's *A Branch of the Blue Nile*” 199). MacDonald refers to a quote by Belinda Edmonson from *The Port of Spain Gazette* (1884) that declares that “The obscenities, the bawdy language, and the gestures of women in the street have been pushed to a degree of wantonness which cannot be surpassed and must not be tolerated” (qtd. in Edmonson 1). And yet the fact that the TTW, which Walcott founded in 1956 and led until 1976, began as a multiracial company and remained as a predominantly black company

including both men and women (*Derek Walcott and West Indian Drama* 159) complicates the status of black women in Trinidad during the time that Walcott wrote *A Branch of the Blue Nile*.

Edmonson's research does not comment on the theater in Trinidad or the Caribbean; however, she points out that two contradictory ideologies surrounded contemporary women's performance in the Caribbean public sphere, and I insist that these conflicting philosophies relate to *A Branch of the Blue Nile*. According to Edmonson, on the one hand, black women were viewed as icons of respectability who supported black, nationalist ideals. In contrast, Caribbean society also represented black women as "antiwoman, pathological and lascivious viragos who undermine the national project" (1-2). As modernity became associated with whiteness, black nationalists felt the need to police images of black women and to scrutinize the public behavior of black females (4-5). The ability of black men to "rule" black women developed into the litmus test for black leadership, further complicating these sociocultural matters. For example, in nineteenth-century Trinidad, "jamettes," black women associated with barracks yards, gangs, and the streets, were viewed as a danger to the project of a white modernity (5). As brown women entered the public sphere through carnivals and beauty pageants, an image of a "brown nation" (6) merged with sentiments of Caribbean nationalism, even alongside the increasing acceptance of post-independence philosophies that touted indigenous Caribbean culture as equal to cultures of Europe and the United States (9).

Although Walcott desired to revolutionize the West Indies through drama, the theater intersected with the social movements noted above and thus affected how society viewed both black and mulatto women as well as how these women perceived themselves. Additionally, Walcott held his own views of the relationship of women to West Indian theater. In "Meanings" (1970), Walcott eschews the inclusion of women in Caribbean theater, maintaining that the

exclusion of women will allow “a kind of style” to happen; “there will be violence, there will be direct conflict, there will be more physical theater, and there will be less interest in sexual psychology” (48-9). Although Chihoko Matsuda describes this view as chauvinistic, she also maintains that Walcott used binary logic to eradicate Western theatrical conventions and to develop Caribbean theater and drama: Walcott saw Western theater as psychological and “feminine,” whereas he viewed Caribbean theater as physical and “masculine” and, therefore, more able to present direct conflicts between the Western world and the Caribbean and the colonizer and the colonized (30). I agree with Matsuda that *A Branch of the Blue Nile* illustrates a positive development in Walcott’s view of women in the Caribbean theater (21). Additionally, Sheila’s role as Cleopatra demonstrates Walcott’s efforts to test his philosophies of modernism, nationalism, and the theater by casting a black Trinidadian woman in a play that overtly touts the Caribbean and the European culture as equal endeavors. The fact that Sheila resists identifying with “Cleopatra” aligns with Edmonson’s argument by demonstrating that blackness had not yet been established as a legitimate cultural signifier in the Caribbean.

The signification of blackness during the process of decolonization in the Caribbean would have also proved important in Barbados, where *A Branch of the Blue Nile* first premiered in 1983, since, as Antonio Benitez-Rojo affirms, Barbados is not as Africanized as other islands in the Caribbean (69).⁵ In 1982, Walcott lost \$30,000 on a production of *The Last Carnival* in Port of Spain (*Derek Walcott and West Indian Drama* 320), which influenced his decision to premier *A Branch of the Blue Nile* in Barbados. According to King, the fact that it was less expensive to produce a play in Barbados (a factor that became important in light of Walcott’s recent financial loss) as well as Walcott’s recent fight with the TTW⁶ also affected Walcott’s decision. Stage One⁷ bought the rights to the play for a year, planned a black-tie gala champagne

opening with special guests and \$40 tickets, conceded to Walcott's ultimatum to either replace the actress Sonya Maze with his second wife Norline—a dancer he had met in the TTW—or have the production canceled, and finally premiered the play to an audience of invited guests that included several government ministers, bank governors, and original members of the St. Lucia Arts Guild. The play received excellent reviews in Barbados, with critics writing that “they were seeing a classic play by a great author at the height of his powers” (319). *The Weekend Nation* averred that the play “unearths the roots of Caribbean man and holds them up before the eyes of a pleased and participating audience” (qtd. in King 321), acknowledging the African, English, and American influences on the region (321).

As St. Lucia is Walcott's birthplace, a brief discussion of its relationship to Walcott is also necessary to analyzing *A Branch of the Blue Nile*. St Lucia gained its independence in 1979 (*Decolonization since 1945* 141), only four years before *A Branch of the Blue Nile* premiered in Barbados. Walcott was living in the United States at the time, and when he left the United States in 1980, he returned with his second wife Norline to Trinidad. As far as I have ascertained, Walcott did not return to St Lucia until 1983, when he visited with his daughters in the summer (their first time in St Lucia) (*Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* 420). When Walcott revisited St. Lucia in 1983, he was working again as a freelance journalist for the American publication *House & Garden*, writing an article that compared the past and the present in St. Lucia (420) from his point of view. According to King, Walcott felt like an outsider, although the island had not changed despite some superficial modernization (420). Although there is little evidence in this article to suggest that Walcott identified with St Lucia, the impact of both colonization and decolonization, which led him to feel like both a native and a tourist in St. Lucia, affected his sociological makeup and these contradictions are revealed in the psychological and professional

conflicts experienced by the actors and actresses in *A Branch of the Blue Nile*. One of Walcott's purposes in *A Branch of the Blue Nile*, therefore, is to dramatize a means by which Caribbean artists, actors, and audiences can celebrate their dual social and linguistic histories. Walcott accomplishes his purpose by re-reading, re-situating and re-structuring *Antony and Cleopatra*.⁸

Shakespeare's well-known play does not require a summary; however, a brief summary of *A Branch of the Blue Nile* is necessary. Walcott's play dramatizes the conflict that arises when an acting troupe in Trinidad attempts to stage a production of *Antony and Cleopatra* based on the vision of their director, Harvey St. Just, a professional from England who uses Method Acting to help his actors play roles with which they may not otherwise easily identify. Method Acting encourages actors to rely on "emotion-memory" (Constantin Stanislavski coined the term "emotion-memory" in order to refer to the actor's past emotions as creative material that can be used to sympathize, or identify with, a dramatic character)⁹ to relate to a particular role; it is a naturalistic technique of acting developed by Stanislavski and adapted by American directors and actors.¹⁰ Disputes that arise during rehearsals primarily concern an antagonistic relationship between Chris and Gavin and the love affair of Sheila Harris—a black Trinidadian typist cast as Cleopatra—and Chris, a black Trinidadian writer who is married to a woman from England. The climax occurs when Sheila deserts the theater. Aside from a stunning performance of Cleopatra by Marilyn, Cleopatra's understudy, the opening night ends in a comical disaster that leads a reviewer to write a scathing review titled "BARD GOES BANANAS." The play's conflict is resolved when Chris seeks out Sheila and persuades her to return to the theater which has been abandoned by the other actors in the troupe.

Walcott's dramatic re-structuring eliminates several roles and scenes and subordinates the love affair between Antony and Cleopatra to the conflict that arises from their efforts to maintain

dual cultural affinities while performing *Antony and Cleopatra*. The play that Walcott's troupe stages retains Shakespeare's fidelity to Cleopatra's status as a queen and to Antony's historical identity as the ruler of one third of the Roman world.¹¹ Walcott uses the framing narrative to resituate the lovers within a Caribbean, post-colonial framework. Sheila is cast as a black Trinidadian woman who attempts to "play" the role of Cleopatra as a parallel to her real-life love affair with a black, married Trinidadian male whose wife is English. The climax of Shakespeare's vast play, which includes five acts and forty two scenes, occurs in act three when Cleopatra fearfully flees from the battle and Antony ignominiously follows her; Walcott's play features two acts and twelve scenes, and the climax ensues when Sheila—cast as Cleopatra—fearfully abandons the theater at the end of act one. Whereas Shakespeare's play features a cast of thirty two named characters plus a soothsayer, servants, soldiers, sentries, and guardsmen, Walcott's play presents a cast of nine named characters, and the portion of the framing narrative that adapts the romantic interlude between Antony and Cleopatra is limited to encounters between Chris and Sheila and rehearsals of Cleopatra's suicide speech from act five, scene two of Shakespeare's play. A difficult play to stage, the action of *Antony and Cleopatra* moves back and forth across the Mediterranean and flouts the unities of time and place to an extreme degree. Generically, the trajectory of the play's action follows the rubric of Aristotelian tragedy, yet it also integrates a comic texture that accounts for the play's generic hybridity. In contrast, the setting of Walcott's play is a bare stage in Trinidad (*A Branch of the Blue Nile* 212). Generically, however, Walcott's play is also a hybrid product, featuring both comic and serious dimensions.

In addition to re-structuring Shakespeare's play, Walcott explicitly re-reads Cleopatra as a woman from a dominated culture, making the implicit, yet more recently debated colonial and imperial themes in Shakespeare's play explicit. In Shakespeare's play, Cleopatra is the ruler of

Egypt, although in act three, scene six, Antony also makes her Absolute Queen of Egypt, Syria, Cyprus, and Libya (Shakespeare 3.6.8-11), essentially establishing her as the ruler over much of the Middle East as well as giving her authority to exercise power in his place. The dramatis personae of *A Branch of the Blue Nile* indicates that Sheila is a black actress from Trinidad in her early thirties (212). However, the play includes only three references to her race. The first occurs in act one, scene one, after Sheila offers a stunning performance as Cleopatra during a rehearsal, when Harvey, the play's white director, sardonically tells Sheila, "Don't come near me, you stupid black bitch" (*A Branch of the Blue Nile* 220).¹² Sheila herself refers to her skin color in act one, scene three, when she tells Chris that she is a "broke, black, West Indian actress over thirty" (238), and in act two, scene three, when she states that she stepped down from the stage to the congregation because "that's where an ambitious black woman belongs, either grinning and dancing and screaming how she has soul, or clapping and preaching and going gaga for Jesus" (284-5). Significantly, Walcott emphasizes that Sheila not only signifies a black Trinidadian actress but that she also represents Cleopatra in the rehearsals of Shakespeare's play as well as in the framing narrative. In act one, scene three, after Chris and Sheila argue about Chris's English wife, Sheila calls him "Antony" (238), and she begins to identify with Cleopatra so closely that in act two, scene three, Harvey declares, "Sheila, you are her [Cleopatra] now. She's talking through you" (285). Tompkins and Gilbert also affirm that the relationship between Sheila and Chris develops in ways which rework the story of Shakespeare's famous lovers (22).

Walcott also casts Marilyn, a mulatto woman with light brown skin who serves as Sheila's understudy and assumes the role of Cleopatra when Sheila deserts the theater, as a female from a dominated culture, further illustrating the contentious debate regarding Cleopatra's ethnicity. Certainly, the rhetoric of comparison commonly used in colonial discourse

has influenced this historical and literary debate, and Walcott's casting of Sheila as Cleopatra in rehearsals and the framing narrative and Marilyn as Cleopatra in the staging of *Antony and Cleopatra* further underscore this rhetoric. This rhetoric of comparison also informs the actresses' personal and professional perceptions of themselves. For example, the references to Sheila's skin color discussed above do not suggest that she or others view her blackness as an asset. Additionally, Sheila does not believe that Cleopatra was black: "Let Marilyn play it [the role of Cleopatra]. She's passable, but she'll pass . . . Besides, there's something else you never told me. She [Cleopatra] wasn't black, she was like Marilyn, Mediterranean" (284). Sheila's discomfort derives from her resistance to allowing her body to signify a black, Caribbean Cleopatra because she thinks that the audience will perceive an English script and diction as inappropriate for her black body. At the same time, the comparison of her skin color with Marilyn's lighter skin emphasizes the critical debate regarding Cleopatra's ethnicity, an issue to be discussed later in this chapter. Sheila also envies Marilyn's lighter skin, using a rhetoric of comparison to point out that Marilyn's skin can help her acquire acting work abroad (256). Conversely, Marilyn claims that she is so jealous of Sheila's talent that she suffers from insomnia until two or three in the morning (254). Moreover, Marilyn maintains that "God has favorites," and that he wouldn't "pick" her—that he "picked" Sheila instead (255). Yet, Marilyn's performance as Cleopatra accounts for the only positive aspect of the play's review:

For here is an actress who has suddenly found herself, and who, in the role of Egypt's dimming, dying, and yet radiant queen, has said to herself, I shine, I shine for the future of our theatre, I shine for all women, black, white, and shine she does, she illuminates our tawdry stage like the moon herself, despite that bunch of Best Village bananas at her back." (271)

Notably, even the reviewer's description of Marilyn relies on a rhetoric of comparison. Sheila's and Marilyn's roles, therefore, not only relate to the debate about Cleopatra's ethnicity, but also amplify the function that the theater plays in constructing these roles and personas. Thus the play's metatheatrical dimensions destabilize essentialist ideology, emphasizing the socially constructed nature of human identity.

Six years after *A Branch of the Blue Nile* premiered in Barbados, Jyotsna Singh also remarked on the role of metatheatre in *Antony and Cleopatra*. According to Singh, while Roman actions and speech promote a hierarchical view of political order and an essentialist concept of human identity, Cleopatra's "histrionic mode of being" disrupts these notions of fixity (108), revealing the Roman discourse and rhetoric of the play as well as Plutarch's moralizing history as male-centered and logocentric (111). This focus also correlates Cleopatra's playfulness and subversion of Roman claims with a strategy of improvising on Roman fictions and revealing them as constructed and arbitrary (113). I agree with Singh's analysis and I think that Walcott kept these concepts of literary and social construction in mind when he wrote *A Branch of the Blue Nile*. Shakespeare's characterization of Cleopatra differs from Walcott's depiction, however, because Walcott approaches the play from the perspective of the dominated culture and, therefore, offers Cleopatra's perspective. Shakespeare's Cleopatra may unsettle notions of fixed identity; however, we never see her struggle to be Cleopatra—to play the role of an astute Queen who learned the language of her people and who sought to prevent Egypt from facing complete assimilation into the Roman Empire.

The characters Sheila and Marilyn also foreground post-colonial interpretations of Cleopatra's persona. Matsuda contends that one cannot determine Cleopatra's skin color or ethnic features (26), but post-colonial critics have underscored Shakespeare's interpretation of

Cleopatra as a black woman, or at least as possessing darker skin than members of his audience. Despite the play's explicit identification of Cleopatra with Egypt, previous critics did not question Cleopatra's race because of her Greek heritage (she descended from Alexander the Great, and since the royal family did not intermarry, it is doubtful that Cleopatra would have possessed Egyptian blood). The centrality of race and colonialism to the play finds support in two textual references: Philo's allusion to Cleopatra's "tawny front" (Shakespeare 1.1.6)¹³—mulattos were often referred to as "tawny moors"—(Clark 126)—and Cleopatra's own admission, "Think on me, / That am with Phoebus' amorous pinches black / And wrinkled days in time" (1.5.29-30). Additionally, Antony's allusion to Dido, Queen of Carthage,¹⁴ another famous African queen, evokes a black Cleopatra. In the first critical foray into the significance of race in the play, Janet Adelman remarks that when Cleopatra tells us she is black with Phoebus's amorous pinches, she transforms sunburn into an amorous cosmic adventure: "She [Cleopatra] is black (and blue) because Phoebus pinches her (186), and it is suggestive that Cleopatra attributes her color to sunburn because she uses current theory to explain her color" (186-7). Thus, according to Adelman, Cleopatra's explanation associates her with Africa. Despite the significance of these findings, I agree with Adelman's assertion that Shakespeare's audiences were probably not concerned with whether Cleopatra's origins were African; rather, they would have viewed her as darker than them (188), thereby constructing her as an "Other." Cleopatra's darkness would have also added to the threat attached to her persona throughout history, literature, and drama: as MacDonald maintains, as an African, a woman, and a queen, Cleopatra embodies three potent sources of threat to the white masculine Roman Empire ("*Sex, Race, and Empire in Antony and Cleopatra*" 62). Notably, all three ways in which Cleopatra presents a menace to Empire rely on a rhetoric of comparison.

Additional criticism concerning the ethnicity of Cleopatra abounds;¹⁵ and this dissertation interprets Cleopatra as a woman of color, though, notably, scholars have rigorously debated the issue of Cleopatra's race. This emphasis on ethnicity evokes an important wider context: the repeated construction of Cleopatra as an "other"—whether as a "black" woman (Shakespeare 1.5.29), a "serpent of old Nile" (1.5.251), "tawny" (1.1.16), a "serpent of Egypt" (2.7.26), an "Egyptian dish" (2.6.126), Antony's "crocodile" (2.7.27), a "triple-turned whore" (4.13.13), a "right gypsy" (4.13.18), a "witch" (4.12.48), or a "vile lady" (4.15.22)—speaks volumes about how dominating cultures have constructed a persona for Cleopatra while suppressing other aspects of her biography. Prior to Walcott's play, the West had almost always encountered Cleopatra through the perspectives of writers and artists of dominant cultures. Moreover, these roles cannot be acted in performance at will, particularly in cultures such as the Caribbean in which split—or dual—social histories form the core of some of the most salient post-colonial predicaments.

Walcott offers additional illustrations of this dilemma by re-reading the dueling cultural affinities of Antony by representing Chris—who plays Antony in the framing narrative and in rehearsals of *Antony and Cleopatra*—as straddling cultures that are influenced but also wary of hegemonic ideals. Considering Antony's historical position as a military commander in the Roman Empire, Walcott's re-reading of Antony's character is sympathetic. Walcott re-reads this split in Antony's/Chris's psyche by re-presenting his affection for Cleopatra/Sheila and his refusal to choose one culture over another.¹⁶ In act one, scene three, Chris and Sheila argue about his English wife (234). The couple splits up after Sheila scornfully tells him to go pick up his wife, expressively insisting that no one needs a broke, black, West Indian actress over thirty (238). Yet, despite the fact that Chris does not leave his wife, Chris clearly possesses deep

affinities for Sheila and the Caribbean culture. For example, Chris persuades Harvey to stage his “dialect piece”¹⁷ in addition to *Antony and Cleopatra* (223). It can also be inferred that Chris’s attitudes toward Caribbean theater influence Harvey to stage the dialect version of act five, scene two of *Antony and Cleopatra* that Marilyn and the troupe perform in act two, scene one of Walcott’s play. The Clown speaks the dialect portions of this scene, since, as Harvey later argues, in Shakespeare’s day the clowns spoke dialect, and since their dialect is so Jacobean, he felt quite justified (268). For example, when Marilyn/Cleopatra asks the clown if the worm will eat her, he responds, “‘Don’t feel I so dotish that I ain’t know the devil self don’t eat no woman; I know that a woman is a dish for the gods, if the devil don’t make the dressing. But them whore-mongering devils does screw the gods up with their women, ‘cause for every ten women God make, the devil does mash up five’” (264). Additionally, Chris bases his *A Branch of the Blue Nile* on his tape recordings of the troupe during and between their rehearsals of *Antony and Cleopatra*, thereby documenting the personal, social, and professional struggles that inform his own conflict as well.

Yet, as in Shakespeare’s play, Chris’s/Antony’s dual affinities are not without their consequences: in act one, scene one, after Harvey agrees to stage Chris’s dialect play, Chris declares that they “have found some truth,” and that the truth “go split us up” (223). The truth *does* split the troupe up, revealing the challenges inherent in performing Caribbean theater. In act one, scene four, after the troupe does not take the rehearsal of Chris’s play seriously, Chris becomes angry and proclaims that he stopped reading because the books he encountered were not relevant to his life: “That goes for plays, too; I ain’t care who the arse it is, Shakespeare, Racine, Chekhov, nutten in there had to do with my life all of them black people out in the hot sun on Frederick street at twelve o’clock trying to hustle a living” (246). Chris’s anger escalates,

and he contends that Harvey should not stage *Antony and Cleopatra* so people will feel white (247), as if they are in a theater designed to cater to white, European audiences, because Trinidad is not England or New York (the type of places that would typically stage a play like *Antony and Cleopatra*).¹⁸ Chris also insists that there is no point in presenting a “major writer for a minority” (247). An explosive argument ensues, leading to the climax of the play: Gavin angrily recounts that he did not return from a failed acting career in the States to act “provincial shit” (249), Chris calls Gavin a “schizophrenic nigger” (250), Harvey falls ill (250-1), and Sheila declares that they have become “monsters” (253) and suddenly falls into a religious frenzy and passes “Cleopatra” to Marilyn through her palm (260-1) prior to leaving the theater:

SHEILA. [*They stare at each other.*] It’s yours now, Marilyn. Press

My right palm. [*She takes MARILYN’S palm, presses her own against it.*]

MARILYN. What?

SHEILA. The gift. The river in my palm. (261)

Previously, Sheila had recounted the palm reading she received from an African woman who relayed that she saw a river with seven branches that was connected to Sheila, who could not avoid the river any more than she could remove the “open tributaries” in her open palm (240). This reading of Sheila’s palm connects Sheila with both Cleopatra and the Nile River. Thus Chris’s prediction comes true: the “truth” splits up the troupe, which creates an overtly antagonistic relationship between Chris and Gavin and leads to a crisis in Sheila’s ability to “play” Cleopatra on stage.

Antony’s dual affinities have also been examined in post-colonial criticism of the early twenty-first century. For example, Coppélia Kahn argues that through his relationship with

Cleopatra, Antony is establishing a counter-empire (116). According to Kahn, Roman virtue and “Romanness” are associated—if not almost synonymous—with masculinity (2, 14). She contends that Shakespeare’s play is not “only about a struggle between two superheroes for sole dominance over the Roman Empire . . . The play is doubly determined by homosocial rivalry; it dramatizes the homosocial bonding that is Rome’s hallmark” (112). This homosocial bonding relies on emulation, an urge to match the rival and competitor (113). Such a perspective also correlates to Chris’s homosocial rivalry with Gavin, who more readily embraces Harvey’s approach to matching the competition of international theater by performing Shakespearean plays. In contrast, Chris resists presenting a major writer such as Shakespeare for what he calls “a minority” (247).

Arthur Little also attempts to recuperate Antony’s psychic conflict by linking it with Caesar’s view of Antony as falling short of Roman, masculinized ideals. Little describes Antony as a “kind of White African” (104),¹⁹ positing that Antony’s English, ostensibly white body betrays his “having gone primitive, Egyptian, and, in effect, African” (104). Little’s use of the word “framing” proves key to his re-reading of Antony: Little employs the word to connote both the imaging of Antony (his relationship to Roman masculinity) and his framing by Caesar to portray Antony as falling short of Rome’s idealized image of its corporeal self” (23).

Similarly, in *A Branch of the Blue Nile*, Gavin depicts Chris as not fulfilling the role of an idealized modern Caribbean artist. While Chris’s character, who more than likely represents Walcott, embodies the “writing” aspect of theatrical production, Gavin underscores the performative function, writing back to the idea of Shakespearean performance as quintessential. Two key scenes prove pivotal in revealing Gavin’s philosophy: In act two, scene two, after Sheila experiences an epiphany through which she identifies with Cleopatra, Gavin warns her,

“from now on, girl, you’ll start having fantasies. Deal with the fantasy. Don’t dream like me about the universality of the theater. It’s economics, and economics means race” (224). Sheila responds by commenting on how bitter Gavin was when he returned from America, persistently inquiring about what he “saw” while there. The perspective Gavin relays correlates to Fanon’s revision of the Lacanian mirror stage in *Black Skin, White Masks* concerning how a black male can see himself as unacceptable and undesirable in the eyes of the “other”:

GAVIN. At first off, I didn’t see myself in the mirror.

I just plain refused what they wanted me to see,
Which was a black man looking back in my face
and muttering: “How you going han’le this, nigger?

How you going leap out of the invisible crowd
and be your charming, dazzling self? I saw me;
then the mirror changed on me, the way you hate
your passport picture. I saw a number under it
like a prison picture, a mug shot in a post office,
and I began to believe what I saw in the mirror
because that’s how they wanted me to look.

I reduced that reflection to acceptance, babe,
Against my mother-fucking will. (226)

Gavin also insists that he traveled to the states to be an actor only to discover that he was viewed through a stereotypic gaze (249); he thus advises Sheila to turn into Marilyn, who is both black and white, to satisfy audiences of modern theater.

In addition to re-reading these aspects of the play—attributes regarding race, gender, and colonialism with which Walcott closely identifies—Walcott also re-situates *Antony and Cleopatra*. I view “re-situating” as a strategy of adapting Shakespeare, and I am therefore distinguishing between appropriation and adaptation as much as I am departing from the scant criticism of *A Branch of the Blue Nile* that primarily focuses on Walcott’s play as an appropriation. To begin, Walcott subordinates the love affair that is central to *Antony and Cleopatra* to the conflict between the dominated and dominating cultures, thus highlighting a colonial reading of the play that was not emphasized by critics until the last few decades of the twentieth century. Certainly, even the title of Shakespeare’s play underscores the romantic relationship between the two infamous lovers. Additionally, twenty-six of the forty-two scenes in *Antony and Cleopatra* dramatize or refer to the torrid affair between them; the other sixteen scenes primarily focus on homosocial relationships and the personal and political dissension of Antony and Caesar. Moreover, the play commences and concludes by amplifying the importance of Antony and Cleopatra’s relationship. For example, in the opening act, Philo avers that Cleopatra has transformed Antony into a fool and effeminized him: “Take but good note, / and you shall see him / The triple pillar of the world transformed / Into a strumpet’s fool. Behold and see” (Shakespeare 1.1.10-13). Conversely, the last act elevates the two lovers throughout, including the final scene in which Caesar exalts both Antony and Cleopatra, insisting that Cleopatra be buried by Antony and that “No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous” (5.2.359-60).²⁰ These aspects of Shakespeare’s play do not merely recapitulate a romantic tale: they also provide a parallel to the conflict between Caesar and Antony and illustrate that more than Empires—Egyptian or Roman—are at stake. Shakespeare’s dramatization of Antony and Cleopatra’s relationship also destabilizes the otherwise fixed

categories of race and gender, and this disruption proves particularly evident during the occasions when Shakespeare's Cleopatra apparently dresses Antony in her clothes: "I laughed him out of patience; and that night / I laughed him into patience. And next morn, / Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to bed, / Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst / I wore his sword Philippan (2.5.18-22).²¹

In *A Branch of the Blue Nile*, only three of the twelve scenes dramatize the relationship between Chris and Sheila. In act one, scene one, Harvey uses Method Acting to encourage Sheila to feel more at ease in the role of Cleopatra. Harvey asks Sheila, "What's all this sexual hesitation, Sheila? You know how sensual his [Antony's] corpse is to her? (*A Branch of the Blue Nile* 213). Sheila's response, that "She's not her [Cleopatra]" (213), leads Harvey to encourage her to play what she feels about Chris, not "Antony" (313). Chris's and Sheila's private affair thus becomes a topic of discussion in this scene to introduce Sheila as Cleopatra and Chris as Antony and, more importantly, to illustrate how reflecting on their real-life relationship might assist Sheila in playing Cleopatra on stage.

The couple also appears in act one, scene three, discussing their difficulties with staging Harvey's version of *Antony and Cleopatra* (228-9):

CHRIS. You still here?

SHEILA. Yeah. We got rhythm.

CHRIS. Can't talk Shakespeare, though.

SHEILA. Lips too big.

CHRIS. No. No brains.

SHEILA. Got rhythm, though. (229)

In this scene, Chris also admits that his wife knows about his affair with Sheila (234), and Sheila expresses frustration over Chris's refusal to leave his wife (234). However, the scene concludes with Sheila relaying her fear of a prophecy given to her by an African *gardeuse* (240), thereby de-emphasizing her personal conflict with Chris/Antony. Although this scene masterfully resituates the historical and Shakespearean couple, it also foreshadows Sheila's flight from the theater:

SHEILA. I don't want to have it! I'm afraid.

CHRIS. Have what?

SHEILA. Her prophecy. I want to give it back. (240)

Sheila's recollection of the prophecy adds immeasurably to this scene, subordinating her relationship with Chris to her connection with Cleopatra. As I previously discussed, according to Sheila, the African *gardeuse* told Sheila that she saw in Sheila's palm a river with seven branches, which Sheila could not avoid (240). In my view, the river the African *gardeuse* refers to is the Nile River, which connects Sheila to Egypt and Cleopatra. As I will discuss later in this chapter, the reading of the veins in Sheila's palm and the title of Chris's and Walcott's play, *A Branch of the Blue Nile*, also associate Sheila with Cleopatra by signifying the blue Nile River and alluding to Cleopatra's reference to her "bluest veins" (Shakespeare 2.5.29). Renu Juneja maintains that the river in Walcott's play is neither black nor white; it is between; it is blue (245). Thus this scene represents the couple's romantic relationship, but it also foregrounds the significance of Sheila's "role" as Cleopatra.

Act two, scene four, the final scene that features Sheila and Chris together, also subordinates their relationship to the cultural conflict resulting from Sheila's attempts to "play" Harvey's Cleopatra. In this scene, Sheila and Chris only briefly discuss Chris's wife (*A Branch*

of the Blue Nile 290); the rest of their conversation concerns Sheila's departure from the theater and Chris's efforts to persuade her to return. The most compelling evidence Chris presents for Sheila's potential to perform European plays in the Caribbean regards a conversation he had with a tourist on the Caroni bird sanctuary. According to Chris, the tourist averred that Trinidad has a bird called the ibis that also lived by the Nile in Egypt, and that the Egyptians considered the bird sacred (291). Significantly, Chris insinuates that the bird "loses her colour in captivity" (292), rhetorically asking Sheila if "she don't feel black, hiding in church" (292). Chris thus persuades Sheila to see an implicit connection between Trinidad and Egypt as well as the Caribbean and Cleopatra. Additionally, similar to the other two scenes that feature the twentieth century Antony-Cleopatra duo, Sheila takes center stage, subordinating the historically tumultuous affair that has dominated and, in many eyes, tarnished Cleopatra's reputation for centuries to the theatrical endeavor of establishing a counter empire.

A Branch of the Blue Nile also re-situates the climax of Shakespeare's play to underscore that fear, rather than betrayal, led to Sheila's flight from the conflict-ridden stage in Trinidad to a church in Baratavia. This modification also enables Walcott to set the stage for Chris to sacrifice his script to save Cleopatra from a life that, in his view, she has "emptied" (290). In Shakespeare's play, the climax occurs in act three, scene ten, when on a field near Actium, Scarus reports that Cleopatra and her ships have abandoned the war at sea between Antony and Caesar: "You ribaudred nag of Egypt — / whom leprosy o'ertake! – i' the midst o' the fight, / when vantage like a pair of twins appeared / Both as the same, or rather ours the elder, / The breeze upon her, like a cow in June / Hoists her sails and flies" (Shakespeare 3.10.10-15). Canidius, Enobarbus, and another soldier had all emphatically urged Antony not to accept Caesar's challenge to fight at sea (3.7.32-5, 36-41, 42-9, 62-7), but Antony had determined to

accept Caesar's challenge even before Cleopatra offered him sixty ships. Although Shakespeare depicts a weeping, contrite Cleopatra who begs three times for Antony's forgiveness (3.11.54-55, 59, 67), Shakespeare affords the Queen only one line to explain her reason for fleeing the war: "Forgive my fearful sails!" (3.11.54). Additionally, Shakespeare's scene concentrates almost exclusively on the blame Antony shifts from himself ("I have fled myself," 3.11.9) to Cleopatra ("Egypt thou knew'st too well / My heart was to thy rudder tired by th' strings, / And thou shouldst tow me after," 3.11.55-6), eclipsing Cleopatra's perspective.

In Walcott's play, the climax occurs when Sheila flees a conflict-ridden stage, and Walcott uses dialogue to explain why she left the theater. In act two, scene two, at the church in Baratavia, Sheila shares her testimony, declaring that she saw William Blake in the light-illuminated fields, and now that the light is inside of her, she feels like a bright field (265).²² She then asks the audience, "Who calls us? Why are we given our gifts?" referring to herself in the prayer that follows as a servant of the Lord (266). Although the speech that Brother John gives after Sheila's benediction undercuts her testimony—he encourages the congregation to pinch their pennies, band their jaw, and give to the Church and Caesar with "love" rather than as Cleopatra that "lecherous serpent" of "Egypt" rendered (266)—Walcott depicts Sheila as more comfortable using her gifts in the Church than in the theater. Walcott's reworking of the climax of Shakespeare's play thus re-situates Cleopatra's "fearful sails" (Shakespeare 3.11.54),²³ emphasizing the motivation for Sheila's departure rather than the abandonment of Chris or the troupe.²⁴ As Reed Way Dasenbrock observes: Sheila quits the theater to flee its dangerous mimetic space (109), and Sheila represents her conversion in terms of a shift of rivers:

then from somewhere, next door,

I heard this evangelical meeting—the voice

wasn't shouting, but lulling, like a river,
as if the Nile herself had changed her voice.

It wasn't the Nile anymore but the river Jordan. (*A Branch of the Blue Nile* 281-82)

Sheila's conversion also demonstrates Walcott's integration of powerful Christian typology, the opposition between Egypt and Israel, which has been important in Protestant thinking, particularly the Protestantism of the African Diaspora (109). Significantly, Juneja asserts that Chris's art may not be mainstream but it is still a "tributary" of the Western tradition which "begins" in Greece but draws on Egypt and Africa (245).

Yet, it occurs to me that we ought not to isolate sections of Walcott's play as representative of the whole; I thus submit that Walcott's reconfiguration of Cleopatra's departure from the sea to Sheila's desertion of the theater foregrounds the playwright's reworking of the dénouement of Shakespeare's play. In my view, whereas Shakespeare depicts Cleopatra's suicide as a self-conscious choice that rejects life on the colonizer's terms, Walcott omits certain lines and stage directions from Shakespeare's script to represent Cleopatra's suicide as performed by Sheila's understudy Marilyn as comic, while also dramatizing Sheila's figurative death from the theater and rebirth within the Church. First, Plutarch's account of Cleopatra's death differs significantly from the Shakespearean version that Walcott revises. In "The Life of Marcus Antonius," Plutarch recounts an eloquent and passionate monologue that Cleopatra allegedly gave prior to her death—a speech which Shakespeare curiously omits. Specifically, he suggests that Cleopatra longed to be buried with Antony, whom, according to Plutarch, Caesar had allowed Cleopatra to bury in Egypt:

O my deare Lord Antonius, not long sithence [since] I buried thee here, a free woman:
and now I offer unto thee the funerall springklinges and oblations, being a captive and

prisoner . . . For as thou being a Romane, hast bene buried in Egypt: even so wretched creature I, an Egyptian, shall be buried in Italie, which shall be all the good that I have received by thy countrie. If therefore the gods where thou art now have any power and authoritie, sith [since] our gods here have forsaken us: suffer not thy true friend and lover to be carried away alive, that in me, they triumphe of thee: but receive me with thee, and let me be buried in one selfe tomb with thee. (86)

Shakespeare excises the speech of Cleopatra that Plutarch recounts, however, reworking Plutarch's account to dramatize her death by suicide, retaining the role that Plutarch avers Cleopatra played in finding the serpent of the Nile that kills with the least pain,²⁵ and presenting a glorified version of her death in which her last words, "Come, / thou mortal wretch, / With my sharp teeth this knot intricate / Of life once untie / Poor venomous fool, / Be angry and dispatch. O couldst thou speak, / that I might hear thee call great Caesar ass / Unpolicied" (Shakespeare 5.2.302-6), deride Caesar, her conqueror.

During Marilyn's staging of Cleopatra's suicide, these lines from Shakespeare's play are cut, and Walcott makes "husband, I come: Now to that name my courage prove my title!" her last lines (264), de-emphasizing Cleopatra's contempt for the colonizer. Walcott also weaves a comic dimension into his presentation of this scene: only seconds after Marilyn/Cleopatra refers to her "immortal longings" and prepares to kill herself, Wilfred, a stagehand dressed in a black sweatshirt and jeans, enters, and by mistake rolls on a cutout of bananas or fig trees and places it behind Marilyn/Cleopatra during her speech (*A Branch of the Blue Nile* 264). Walcott's stage directions indicate that Marilyn becomes enraged, and the dialogue reveals that Harvey develops irritation as well: "[Harvey's Voice] "Wilfred! Wilfred! Move the figs!" (264-265). Yet, in a comic conclusion, Wilfred decides not to move the figs, opting instead to bow, "as if he were

part of the action,” and exit (265). Additionally, although Iras enters with Marilyn/Cleopatra’s robe and crown, Walcott excises Shakespeare’s stage direction, [“*The women dress her*”] (Bevington 1381); thus Walcott’s Marilyn/Cleopatra is poised to die with a cutout of bananas, rather than gold, behind her, resulting in a type of hybridized performance that, significantly, leads the audience to laugh and applaud (*A Branch of the Blue Nile* 265). Walcott’s subtraction of the stage directions that indicate Cleopatra is dressed in royal garments and the monologue in which Cleopatra curses Caesar are intentional, highlighting significant counter-discursive aspects of his masterful adaptation of Shakespeare’s play.

While Walcott’s play disrupts the Westernized iconic representation of Cleopatra, Walcott also supplements this figurative death with the metaphorical death of Sheila/Cleopatra, who is reborn through the arduous task of accepting her God-given talents in a culture where the role of a black woman on stage is still precarious. Act two, scene two, in which Marilyn and the Clown re-stage act five, scene two of Shakespeare’s play, is followed by Sheila offering her testimony in a Church, asserting that her eyes have seen the salvation which God has prepared for everyone (266). Walcott makes it evident that Sheila left the theater because of the conflict she had experienced when she attempted to play the role of Cleopatra: “I killed her [Cleopatra]. She was killing me. My body was invaded by that queen . . . I heard my blood whispering like the Nile, its branches, instead of traffic . . . Egypt was my death. Now I’ve found a faith where I’m not important . . . I’ve simply changed religions” (296). Moreover, *A Branch of the Blue Nile* suggests that Sheila’s flight does not resolve her conflict, emphasizing that one cannot simply change clothes—or religions—to intrinsically change identities. Thus in act two, scene four, Brother John chides Sheila, maintaining that her humility cannot “perform” for God, and that the congregation is not an audience any more than the devout are actors (287). This dialogue

undercuts Sheila's assertion of having changed religions (296). Unlike Shakespeare's Cleopatra, Sheila's longings are not solely "immortal" (Shakespeare 5.2.281); she desires the visceral experience of performing for live audiences. Yet, Sheila's experience as a black woman in Trinidad thwarts her ease with performance, particularly her comfort with playing the role of Shakespeare's Cleopatra.

Sheila represents aspects of Walcott's biography as well as his perception of the moral climate of Trinidad; thus it can be deduced that Walcott does not identify with what some critics, primarily 19th and early 20th century commentators, see as the decadent representations of either Egypt or Cleopatra and, therefore, present counterpoints to these putative theatrical representations. King insists that "Trinidad was different from Walcott" because "it believed in the hedonist fête" (*Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* 345), whereas Walcott did not like to join in the crowds, the wild dancing, the surrender, and the abandonment in a country where one-third of the national income resulted from Carnival (345). According to Tejumola Olaniyan, Walcott opposed the performance traditions of the black majority in the Caribbean, such as Carnival, to advocate an "omnibus encompassing heirs to Prospero and Caliban, Crusoe and Friday, free to borrow in any direction" (488). Juneja also affirms that Walcott's play conforms to counter-cultural principals: whereas the black, colonial actors found himself "needing to 'out-perform' in any sphere of his white counterpart, the counter-culture performer reinterprets colonial culture" (57).

Walcott also identifies with an Antony whose Cleopatra was like a muse, but who presented a significant challenge to the task of maintaining his cultural and political affiliations. The character Chris/Antony thus shares affinities with Walcott that prove particularly significant when viewed in light of the sacrifice Plutarch's and Shakespeare's Antony makes for Cleopatra,

similar to the one that Chris offers to Sheila and the troupe. As previously discussed, Plutarch's Antony does not confront Cleopatra after she abandons the war with Caesar. Instead, he follows her, boards her ship, and grievously laments his circumstances for three days (69-70).

Shakespeare excises this account of Antony's reaction, however, dramatizing a fictitious argument between the couple in which Antony blames Cleopatra for abandoning his fleet (Shakespeare 3.10) and threatens to kill her (4.12). Walcott omits these scenes, replacing them with a scene in which Chris follows Sheila, finds her, and offers *A Branch of the Blue Nile* to her as his act of "contrition" (*A Branch of the Blue Nile* 291). Chris urges Sheila to read, or at least type, the script and return to the theater, since fooling the congregation would be worse than deceiving herself (294). In act two, scene eight, Sheila subsequently returns to the theater and discovers the script that Chris had left there before his return to Barbados.

Significantly, Walcott thought of his talents as God-given (*Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* 40) and possessed a Messianic image of himself, and I insist on a reading of his play that proposes he integrated these aspects of his experiences into the character Chris/Antony, who presents Sheila with a vision of the present in which both her mortal (theatrical) and immortal (religious) longings can co-exist. Such a perspective correlates to my assertion that Chris—the play's "Antony"—functions as a type of Christ figure in Walcott's play. Walcott reworks the account of Antony's sacrifice of himself for Cleopatra, depicting Chris's script, which he leaves for Sheila and the troupe, as a type of sacrificial offering. The narrative that undergirds the Christian religion proposes that Christ sacrificed his life for all of humanity without knowing whether humanity would accept this gift or not. Similarly, Chris leaves his script at the theater in Trinidad with a letter that urges the troupe to help him with the end of the play (311), even though he does not know what the outcome of his gesture will be (311). Additionally, the

rhetoric surrounding Christ's death is encoded with the tropes of reconciliation, redemption, and renewal, and Chris's script symbolizes his reconciliation with the troupe and the renewal of Sheila's life; Sheila finds the script Chris had attempted to give her at the church in Baratari when she returns to the theater and agrees to begin rehearsing and perform the play.

From a feminist perspective, Chris's visit with Sheila at the church in Baratari undermines her agency by suggesting that she would not have gone back to the theater without the intervention of Chris. However, by calling his script an act of "contrition" and leaving it at the theater, Chris also shows his humility and willingness to part with a work of art while maintaining only a nascent form of hope that the troupe and Sheila will accept it, finish it, and perform it. He is not certain about what the outcome of his attempt to alter the gendered structures that undergird the theater in the Caribbean will be, but he nonetheless attempts to change those structures.

Arthur Little and Lisa Starks have also approached Shakespeare's Antony as a sacrificial figure, though Little emphasizes Antony's inversion of gendered and racialized myths. Little postulates that Antony's death reverses gender roles and inverts a foundational myth of the Western World in which "the white man sacrifices himself at the feet of a black woman" rather than vice versa (116). Thus Little views Antony's role in *Antony and Cleopatra* as feminine. Starks appreciates Little's emphasis on the erotic dimensions of the play and Antony's body, but argues that Antony "plays a male (albeit alternative) rather than female" role (255). Starks argues that Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* culminates in a poetic fusion of death and sexuality characteristic of the *Liebstd*, or a sensual story of love and death, as developed through the narrative of male masochism (243). Significantly, Starks asserts that Antony inhabits a Christian masochist's universe of martyrdom and identification with the crucified Christ—but with a

difference, since his role as a masochist refigures an erotic economy that destabilizes binaries that undergird Western constructions of sexuality, heroism, and masculinity (254). I concur with Starks's view of Shakespeare's Antony as an eroticized sacrificial figure. Additionally, I appreciate Little's perspective of Antony's feminized body, since the history of the representation of Christ's body includes art and medieval devotional texts that depicted Christ as feminine (Bynum 205). However, it is perhaps most significant that Walcott reconfigures Christ as a black sacrificial Christ figure, further destabilizing racial binaries that undergird Western constructions of Christ's identity. Rejoinders to these constructions are not infrequently a subject in other post-colonial plays and texts.²⁶

Significantly, in Plutarch's source, Cleopatra is portrayed as the savior of Antony: if she had not sent her secretary Diomedes to bring him to her, he would have died in his home, writhing in agony from the pain of a self-inflicted wound that not even his own servants would assuage or end (79). In my view, Antony's sacrifice is depicted most poignantly by his astonishing yet unabashed decision to follow Cleopatra after her departure from the war-ridden sea, and Walcott also re-situates this act to ruminate on the role of Caribbean theater in decolonization. In "Egypt, Tobago," Walcott contends that Antony exchanged an empire for her beads of sweat" (28), and the critic Matsuda has focused on this line to depict Walcott's view of Cleopatra in this poem as that of a male chauvinist (24-5) in comparison to the more positive portrayal of women she observes in *A Branch of the Blue Nile*. And yet Walcott concludes "Egypt, Tobago" by maintaining that "everything else is vanity, / but this tenderness / for a woman not his mistress / but his sleeping child" (lines 82-5), suggesting that Walcott may have recognized Antony's deep affection for Cleopatra—an affinity that makes his sacrifice endearing—prior to the composition and production of *A Branch of the Blue Nile*.

In *A Branch of the Blue Nile*, Walcott masterfully reworks Shakespeare's play, excising the tragic dimensions of the history and literary accounts so that sacrifice takes the place of and prevents, rather than precedes, self-destruction. Walcott's split social history was both a blessing and a curse: while his aspirations to prolong the line of great authors such as Marlowe and other English writers fueled his literary visions, his efforts to relate the "English" language and literature to Caribbean people and contexts inform the conflict of *A Branch of the Blue Nile*. Since Walcott aspired to create theater that rivaled the drama of other countries yet targeted local, Caribbean themes, actors, and audiences, Walcott's use of Shakespeare in *A Branch of the Blue Nile* should be viewed as a venture whose success must be measured on both the stage and the page. That is, although *A Branch of the Blue Nile* was only produced three times, it may be judged an unsuccessful theatrical endeavor; but its impact must also be analyzed in light of the play's noteworthy effects on post-colonial criticism of both Walcott's and Shakespeare's plays.

Notes

1. As far as I am aware, apart from M. K. Joseph's campus novel, *A Pound of Saffron*, Derek Walcott's *A Branch of the Blue Nile* offers the only post-colonial adaptation/appropriation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* written in either the genre of fiction or drama. Walcott had also treated Shakespeare's play in his poem "Egypt, Tobago." Since *A Branch of the Blue Nile* also employs counter-discursive post-colonial metatheatre, as both *Not Now, Sweet Desdemona* and *A Tempest* do, *A Branch of the Blue Nile* is the most appropriate subject for this chapter.
2. See the Introduction for my extended discussion on Kenneth Burke and the significant relevance of his concept of the rhetoric of identification to both the "identification" Rob Nixon discusses in "Caribbean and African Appropriations of *The Tempest*" and my extension of Burke and Nixon to post-colonial appropriations of *Othello*.
3. A third production, An Amsterdam production in 1991, in Dutch translation, toured the Netherlands (Döring qtd. in Massai 17).
4. William Shakespeare relied on his chief source, "The Life of Marcus Antonius," in the first-century biographer Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* to characterize both Antony and Cleopatra and to dramatize events of their lives (Shakespeare used an English version by Sir Thomas North, 1579, which I have quoted from in this chapter).
5. Antonio Benitez-Rojo conjectures that the key to Africanization in the Caribbean colonies lays in the degree of mobility that the African possessed when he or she came to the Caribbean (70). Regardless of the African population of an island, Plantation conditions forced Africans to live in circumstances of incarcerating forced labor, thereby limiting their ability to exert a cultural

influence in the area (70). The sugar plantation arrived in Barbados by 1667 (69), whereas, in contrast, Jamaica did not complete the transition to the Plantation until during the eighteenth century (70).

6. In *Derek Walcott and West Indian Drama*, Bruce King asserts that due to various professional reasons, Walcott resigned from the TTW on 15 November 1976 (259-60). In *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life*, King dates the resignation on 3 May 1970, citing a quarrel between Slade and a drunken Walcott over professional matters as precipitating Walcott's resignation (256).

7. Stage One Theatre Productions was a non-profit company established in Barbados to primarily perform Caribbean plays. See *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* 378.

8. Here, I invoke Joanne Tompkins in "Spectacular Resistance": Metatheatric in Post-Colonial Drama." As I discuss in the introduction and other chapters of this dissertation, Tompkins identifies re-reading, re-structuring, and re-situating as the key functions of post-colonial counter-discursive metatheatre.

9. See *An Actor Prepares* 168.

10. As Daniel Dinkgräfe observes, Lee Strasberg made Stanislavsky's system popular in American as the "Method" (47). Strasberg developed the theories of motivation and substitution: the actor should consider what would motivate him or her to act in the way that is similar to a dramatic character, but the actor should use techniques such as emotion-memory to substitute for an idea of the character that is potentially developed in the actor's imagination (48). In Strasberg's words, "The actor is not limited to the way in which he would behave within particular circumstances set for the characters; rather, he seeks to substitute reality different from that set forth in the play that will help him behave according to the demands of the role." See *Approaches to Acting: Past and Present* 47 and *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method* 60.

11. After the assassination of Julius Caesar, Antony—a Roman General and Politician—joined with Caesar's nephew, Octavius Caesar, and Lepidus to divide up and rule the Roman Empire.

12. This comment is, in my view, extremely sexist, but Sheila hugs Harvey after he makes this statement to her, indicating that she possesses a degree of tolerance for this tone and language.

13. All references to *Antony and Cleopatra* derive from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (6th ed.), edited by David Bevington.

14. See 4.4.53.

15. See especially "The Imperial Romance of Antony and Cleopatra" in Ania Loomba (2002) 112-144. In the 1980s, 1990s, and early decades of the twenty-first century, post-colonial critics departed from tradition by interpreting Cleopatra as a black African Queen and by reading the play as a study of racial, sexual, and ethnic alterity. Henrik Clarke (1984), Ania Loomba ("Theatre and the Space of the Other," 1989; *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* 2002), Mary Nyquist (1994), Joyce Green MacDonald (1996), and Mary Floyd-Wilson (2001) all insist that despite Cleopatra's historical Greek heritage, Shakespeare's play portrays her as black. Both Kim Hall (1995) and Loomba (2002) discuss the significance of skin color and "foreignness" in the play by relating it to the stories of Sheba and Solomon, and of the Shulamite in *Song of Songs*, both of which are vigorously renewed during the Renaissance (124).

16. Walcott also represents these split affinities in his poem "Egypt, Tobago," describing a dismembered Antony as having his head / in Egypt, his feet / in Rome (lines 37-9).

17. Walcott's play does not refer to the specific title of this play.

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18. Significantly, in his criticism of *Antony and Cleopatra* (1964), Burke addresses the challenges Shakespeare must have faced in persuading *his* audience to identify with characters (Antony and Cleopatra) of such grandeur. According to Burke, Shakespeare amplifies the theme of love so that his audience will identify with Antony and Cleopatra; one of the ways he accomplishes this is by adding imperial tinctures to the love affair between Antony and Cleopatra (in Burke's view, the Elizabeth empire "on the make" would have been in the unconscious recesses of Shakespeare's and the audience's minds). See "Shakespearean Persuasion: *Antony and Cleopatra*."
19. Prior to Little, Kim Hall had described Antony as "going native" by falling into plentitude and excess in Egypt. See *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* 158.
20. In Plutarch's "Life of Marcus Antonius," Plutarch reports that Caesar allowed Cleopatra to bury Antony with her own hands and that Cleopatra's death, which occurred several days later, may have resulted from suicide.
21. Plutarch does not reference accounts of Cleopatra dressing Antony in her clothes; Shakespeare's addition of this aspect of the plot may function to comment on the topical issues of social and theatrical cross-dressing during the Renaissance in England.
22. Walcott may be referring to William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, particularly "The Chimney Sweeper," in which Blake refers to an Angel with a bright key who sets chimney sweepers free from their coffins so that they run down a green plain leaping and laughing, washing in a river, and shining in the sun (lines 13-16).
23. Plutarch does not relay a rationale for Cleopatra's flight.
24. Significantly, Plutarch does not recount Antony confronting Cleopatra after her flight from the sea. Walcott refers to Plutarch in *A Branch of the Blue Nile*; in fact, the reviewer accuses Harvey of hiding behind Plutarch (268); thus, like Shakespeare, Walcott may have also read a translation of Plutarch's account of Mark Antony's life.
25. According to Plutarch, Cleopatra ordered the venomous bites of snakes of Egypt to be tested on prisoners to ascertain which serpent produced death most swiftly and with the least amount of pain, and Plutarch maintains that she watched the application of the creature's bites to prisoners on a daily basis (75). Shakespeare integrates this aspect of Cleopatra's history into *Antony and Cleopatra* through Octavius Caesar's speech about Cleopatra in which he notes that "She [Cleopatra] hath pursued conclusions infinite / Of easy ways to die" (Shakespeare 5.2.355-356). This speech implies that Shakespeare's Cleopatra had sought the serpent that kills with the least pain.
26. Here, I have Njorge in Ngũgĩ, Thiong'o *Weep Not Child*, Olunde in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, Caliban in Aimé Césaire's *Une tempête*, and Nnu Ego in Buchi Emicheta *The Joys of Motherhood* in mind.

CONCLUSION:

THE FUTURE OF POST-COLONIAL STUDIES OF SHAKESPEARE

In the Epilogue of *The Tempest*, Prospero remains alone on the stage to renounce his magic and to implore the audience to pardon him for his crimes and release him from confinement on the island.¹ This Epilogue underscores the contingency of Prospero's power on audience approval as well as the responsibility of the audience to produce the conclusion. Literary criticism functions similar to a dramatic epilogue: it analyzes fictional events to lead the audience to make conclusions about a text. The afterword or conclusion to any scholarly work of notable length further highlights the similarities between critical and theatrical conventions: in a conclusion, it is as if someone walks on stage to comment on the previous collection of chapters. As such, I use this conclusion to assert that this dissertation significantly emphasizes the intersections of theatrical and critical traditions, striving to persuade the audience to release these post-colonial plays from their confinement in the realm of "third-world drama" or "appropriations of Shakespeare."

In addressing select post-colonial dramas as criticism as well as adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, these chapters engage with some slippery labels while simultaneously privileging explanatory versus descriptive modes of analysis. Scholars continue to debate about whether to designate plays such as those examined in this dissertation as "appropriations" or "adaptations." Approaches to this question range from the skeptical perspective of Daniel

Fischlin and Mark Fortier who, in the Introduction to their critical anthology *Adaptations of Shakespeare*, maintain that there is no “right” name for the work represented in their anthology—there are only labels with more or less currency and connection to history (2)—to the more assertive conjectures regarding differences between “intercultural appropriation” and “local adaptation” (qtd. in Massai 18, 21) posited by Tobias Döring. To complicate this issue, this dissertation analyzes “writing back,” a strategy that scholars such as Jane Kidnie deem is impossible when writers respond to Shakespeare, since, in her view, Shakespeare’s texts lack a point of origin (1) because they are not “sealed off” in a specific past moment in time (69). I have opted to use the terms appropriation and adaptation interchangeably in order to focus on the rhetorical situation—or process—of these post-colonial plays. This terminology allows me to argue that the process of “writing back” to Shakespeare begins with “identification,” as analyzed by Kenneth Burke in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, and that this identification makes the post-colonial writer and his or her constraints a part of the rhetorical situation. I have also illustrated how the use of post-colonial counter-discursive metatheatres, as described by Joanne Tompkins, enables these post-colonial writers to critique the intact Shakespearean play while simultaneously adapting it.

Not Now, Sweet Desdemona; Une Tempête; and a Branch of the Blue Nile begin to decolonize Shakespeare’s plays by making the discursive processes of race, gender, and colonialism visible and by illustrating the connections between these processes, even when geographical, cultural, and historical differences would appear to threaten such endeavors as anachronistic. Here I refer to decolonization as a process that dismantles colonial and imperial structures. These three post-colonial plays re-read the raced and gendered discourses of colonialism within Shakespeare’s plays, illustrate the threat of interracial unions to sentiments of

British nationalism, and re-structure the original texts to alter, or at least challenge, colonial structures. This view of decolonization differs from others, such as nativism, the recovery of pristine pre-colonial cultures, or a rejection of the colonizer's language, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o advocates in his "farewell" to the English language.² Rather, these plays begin to decolonize Shakespeare by dismantling the deep-seated, prejudicial ideologies of race, gender, and colonialism that are evident in British drama such as Shakespeare's, and which have shaped the lives of millions of people who encountered Shakespeare through colonial education. On a personal level, these post-colonial writers recognize and expose the role that English Literature played in disseminating dichotomies such as center/margin, center/periphery, canonical/uncanonical, and civilized/uncivilized. Politically, these post-colonial plays write back to the institutionalized English Language and Literature that finds its roots in the dual developments of the study of English and the growth of the British Empire.

While numerous descriptive articles compare and contrast these post-colonial plays, this dissertation offers a theoretical framework for analyzing the rhetorical situation of "writing back" to Shakespeare and the hegemonic ideals undergirding race, gender, and colonialism in his plays. I maintain that identification is the starting point in the process of writing back, a process that can be theorized in addition to described as "sympathetic" (Nixon 567). Murray Carlin identifies with Othello, Aimé Césaire with Caliban, and Derek Walcott with both Antony and Cleopatra, indicating the relevance of irony to these rhetorical situations. These authors deconstruct their ironic identifications with literary figures in Shakespeare by using counter-discursive metatheatres to re-read, or critique, the original play. Additionally, strategies of adaptation enable these post-colonial writers to alter those aspects of the characters and plays

from which they disassociate, encoding the day-to-day realities experienced by colonized people within the post-colonial plays.

The implications of this research underscore a previously overlooked aspect of Shakespearean appropriation: these post-colonial readings of Shakespeare's plays constitute a form of literary criticism, which shares a kinship with post-colonial criticism. This discovery re-situates the origins of post-colonial criticism of Shakespeare's plays. Scholars currently locate these origins in the last two decades of the twentieth century, pinpointing decolonization, Edward Said's groundbreaking *Orientalism*, and the rise in popularity of cultural materialism as the conditions that led to the emergence of post-colonial criticism. From this perspective, however, decolonization and post-colonial predicaments are subjugated to literary criticism, since this narrative frequently relies on the appropriation of post-colonial literatures for the critical purposes of developing an understanding of Shakespeare, his plays, and their role in colonialism. Conversely, Carlin, Césaire, and Walcott adapted Shakespeare's plays to illustrate how post-colonial societies adjust to the constraints that the influence of Shakespeare places on language and culture. This perspective views the post-colonial writer as central to the rhetorical situation, and pinpoints post-colonial criticism as emerging *during* the process of decolonization.

And yet this conjecture does not negate the kinship shared by these dramatic interpretations and post-colonial criticism of Shakespeare's plays. Although this dissertation focuses on three branches of post-colonial responses to Shakespeare—interpretations from South Africa, the French Caribbean, and the British West Indies—the development of these perspectives shares parallels with the emergence of Anglo-American post-colonial criticism of Shakespeare; all of these branches find their source in the cultural and historic memory of seventeenth century British literature and in the development of English Language and Literature

as an object of study. Consequently, this dissertation seeks to encourage a new way to approach Shakespearean studies. In addition to asking what new light these post-colonial plays can shed on Shakespeare's plays, we can explore how these adaptations illuminate ongoing post-colonial predicaments that led to select occasions for "writing back." The result, therefore, is an epistemological shift that perceives the convergence of the theatrical and critical traditions. Some scholars may argue that the project of reframing the origins of post-colonial criticism is trivial due to its goal of identifying a particular timeframe for such origins. However, the issue of origins is at the heart of many post-colonial predicaments, relating to the significant philosophical difference between insisting that Europeans first settled the Americas and regions of Africa and the Caribbean versus the claim that they conquered indigenous peoples, as Caliban emphasizes in *The Tempest*: "This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me" (1.2.334-5).

Consequently, much more is at stake in these particular predicaments than in a general relationship of any writer to a tradition, which may explain why Harold Bloom intentionally omitted Shakespeare from the manuscript for *The Anxiety of Influence* that he wrote in the summer of 1967. In his preface to the second edition, Bloom reflects that he was not yet ready to meditate on Shakespeare (xiii); he also contends that "Shakespeare invented us, and continues to contain us" (xvi). In contrast, Carlin, Césaire and Walcott *needed* to meditate on Shakespeare because they were aware that they had been constructed as an "other"—as the "other" we see variations of in Shakespeare's plays—and that this projected self-perception pervaded their day-to-day lives.

Thus this dissertation asks scholars to treat these post-colonial dramatists with the same gravitas awarded post-colonial critics. The likelihood that such an ideological change will occur

remains uncertain. At present, scholars still identify more with Shakespeare and his critics than with Murray Carlin, Aimé Césaire, or Derek Walcott: a search of the *MLA International Bibliography* reveals that 3,387 scholarly works with the word “Shakespeare” in the title were published during the last ten years in contrast to 145 scholarly texts with the word “Walcott” or 148 with the name “Césaire” in their titles.

We should, therefore, continue to further develop this area of study by applying the theoretical approach outlined in this dissertation to more post-colonial texts. This dissertation provides a representative sample of works to which a theory of “writing back” applies, demonstrating knowledge of the most seminal Shakespearean plays and criticism approached from post-colonial perspectives, as well providing a thorough analysis of Césaire and Walcott, two of the most noteworthy and prolific post-colonial authors of this era as well as one additional post-colonial author, Carlin, who should not be overlooked. I hope that what emerges will result in a new way of reading additional post-colonial plays that comment on Shakespeare’s plays.

Notes

1. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* in David Bevington ed. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 6th. (London: Macmillan, 2008), Epilogue 1603.
2. See *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*.

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