

A STUDY OF THE BLACK POLITICAL THEATRE OF AIME CÉSAIRE

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OF AIME CÉSAIRE

by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The purpose of this dissertation will be to study Césaire's theatre in terms of the interaction of race and politics and in the context of the colonial and independence struggles of black peoples.

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## INTRODUCTION

From the racial viewpoint, it is hoped that this study will reveal why, in the opinion of Aimé Césaire, the awareness of being black and of all that such a condition implies, is a prerequisite for the political reconstruction of the peoples of the black diaspora. From the political viewpoint, it is hoped that our study will illustrate Césaire's view of colonial racism as a basically economic phenomenon, as an integral part of the colonizer's policy of efficient economic exploitation. For Césaire writes, in his theatre, of the black peoples of Africa and of African origin, who have all, at one time or another, been subjected to a system which denies them their cultural and intellectual achievements, and which, in short, deprives them of the right to historical initiative. Speaking at the first Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris in 1956, Aimé Césaire points to the common colonial experience of all segments of the black race:

On s'est demandé . . . quel est le commun dénominateur d'une assemblée qui unit des hommes aussi divers que des Africains de l'Afrique noire, et des Américains du Nord, des Antillais et des Malgaches. La réponse me paraît évidente: ce commun dénominateur, c'est la situation coloniale (...). Toutes les cultures noires se développent à l'heure actuelle dans ce conditionnement particulier

qu'est la situation coloniale ou semi-coloniale  
ou para-coloniale.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, apart from racial affinity, these people are drawn together by a similar political conditioning. For, whether or not we agree with the observations of people such as Dominique O. Mannoni who argue that colonial conflict is a result of misunderstanding between the European and the colonized people,<sup>2</sup> it is hard to deny that the subordination of one people to another, even if they stem from the same racial group, is a political fact. In the case of the black man, it is also hard to deny that the colonization of Africa, the transportation of one hundred million Africans to the New World, and their subsequent enslavement, are political facts. We do not argue that racism preceded slavery, but rather that it was in order to justify slavery, in order to justify its economic control of these peoples, that imperialism undertook a systematic policy of describing the black man as inferior, of denying his ability to run his own affairs, of despising his customs and traditions, and of refuting the fact that he too has a history. It is with this singular conditioning

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<sup>1</sup>A. Césaire, 'Culture et Colonisation', 1<sup>er</sup> Congrès des Ecrivains et Artistes Noirs (Paris, 1956), Présence Africaine, Paris, no. 8-9-10, June - November 1956, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup>Vide D.O. Mannoni, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization (New York: Praeger, 1956).

of the black man by colonialism that Aimé Césaire is primarily preoccupied, and his entire life work, literary as well as political, represents his reaction to that condition, and his will to see his brothers regain their historical initiative snatched from them by the colonizers. We feel it necessary to remark, nevertheless, that however much one may stress the evident links between Césaire's writings and his political activity, Césaire the writer and Césaire the politician are not inseparable. On numerous occasions, when circumstances called for a firm commitment on his part, Césaire's actions have certainly not lived up to the promise of his writings.<sup>3</sup>

It is, therefore, with blackness and politics in mind, and the realization that Césaire's writings are a weapon of political combat, that we approach this study of his dramatic works. The focus of our work is upon political and sociological aspects of the Martiniquan author's theatre, but our choice does not signify any wish to deny the validity of a purely literary approach. An examination of Césaire's literary career will enable us to place his theatre in proper perspective.

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<sup>3</sup>As leader of the Parti Progressiste Martiniquais, which he founded in 1956 after resigning from the French Communist Party, Césaire is Mayor of Martinique's capital, Fort-de-France, and is a Deputy for that island in the French National Assembly. Technically part of France since 1946, Martinique (along with Réunion, French Guiana and Guadeloupe) bears the official title of 'Département d'Outre-Mer'.

As in the case with a large number of leaders in the Third World, Aimé Césaire acquired his politico-racial consciousness while studying in the metropolitan capital. It was in Paris that he understood, not only the reasons for his unhappy condition as a black man, but also his condition as a 'déraciné', exiled from his Mother Continent, Africa, and rejected by Europe, the continent that had enslaved his ancestors and alienated them from African culture and tradition. It is the West Indian's limbo between Africa and Europe, his sense of belonging to neither, which demoralizes him so much, and empties him of a will to create a viable society, corresponding to his needs, right there in the West Indies. The West Indian, "le 'bâtard' de l'Europe et de l'Afrique, partagé entre ce père qui le renie et cette mère qu'il a reniée",<sup>4</sup> was the centre of interest of a group of Marxist-oriented young black students -- all French West Indians -- that produced in 1932 in Paris a manifesto known as Légitime Défense.<sup>5</sup> This manifesto, launched by Etienne Léro, René Mênil and Jules Monnerot, was of great interest to Césaire who, at the time, was a 'Khâgne' student at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand

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<sup>4</sup>A. Césaire in Preface to B. Juminer's Les Bâtards, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1961, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>This manifesto had only one issue. Unless otherwise stated, quotations from Légitime Défense are drawn from Lilyan Kesteloot's Anthologie Nègro-Africaine, Verviers (Belgium), Marabout, 1967, pp. 75-78.

in Paris, and was of considerable influence in his political education. What Légitime Défense attacked primarily, in dealing with the cultural deprivation and mimetic tendencies of West Indian society, was the failure of French Caribbean writers to commit themselves to the problems of their own society, to produce literature that dealt in some way with these problems, and to expose the harmful effects of French colonialism which created the unhappy situation of the 'bastard' West Indian. Taking these writers to task for the psittacistic literature that then prevailed in the West Indies, rejecting the romantic "tourisme littéraire"<sup>6</sup> which had little or no bearing on the problems of the black man in the Caribbean, Etienne Léro has this to say of the contemporary writer in Martinique and Guadeloupe:

L'Antillais, bourré à craquer de morale blanche, de culture blanche, d'éducation blanche, de préjugés blancs, étale dans ses plaquettes l'image boursouflée de lui-même(...). Il se fait un point d'honneur qu'un blanc puisse lire tout son livre sans deviner sa pigmentation.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast with these writers, those grouped around Légitime Défense saw their role as political, vowed to overthrow the "assimilated" ruling classes in their islands and to produce a genuine West Indian genre:

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<sup>6</sup> Suzanne Césaire, as quoted by L. Kesteloot in Les écrivains noirs de langue française: naissance d'une littérature, Bruxelles, l'Université Libre, 1963, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> E. Léro, 'Misère d'une poésie', Légitime Défense, Paris, 1932.

Du jour où le prolétariat noir, que suce aux Antilles une mulâtraille parasite vendue à des blancs dégénérés, accédera, en brisant ce double joug, au droit de manger et à le vie de l'esprit, de ce jour-là seulement il existera une poésie antillaise.<sup>8</sup>

Even though Léro and company were mostly of bourgeois origin, they considered themselves and their downtrodden countrymen as part of the international proletariat oppressed by the capitalist-imperialist system. Three points of interest to us in our attempt to acquire a perspective of Césaire's writings should be noted. First of all, the writers grouped around the Légitime Défense manifesto are all West Indians, whose preoccupations focus on the West Indies specifically. Secondly, these writers openly declared their allegiance to the international communist movement, and, thirdly, it appears as though they considered surrealism as a means of recovering their original personality, deformed by French colonial policies of depersonalization. They may equally have envisaged surrealism as Europeans apparently did, as a means of revolt against the existing order. Léopold Senghor sums up the group as follows:

Plus qu'une revue, plus qu'un groupement culturel, 'Légitime Défense' fut un mouvement culturel. Partant de l'analyse marxiste de la société des Iles, il découvrait en l'Antillais le descendant d'esclaves négro-africains maintenus, trois siècles durant, dans l'abêtissante condition de prolétaire. Il affirmait

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

que seul le surréalisme pourrait le libérer de ses tabous et l'exprimer dans son intégralité.<sup>9</sup>

Two years later, in 1934, the paper L'Etudiant Noir was founded, and it lasted until 1940. Spearheaded by Aimé Césaire, from Martinique, Léon Damas, from French Guiana, and Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal, the paper was intended to group, as its title suggests, black students in Paris, irrespective of their country of origin. As opposed to Légitime Défense, not only was it supra-national in outlook, it was also supra-continental in scope. Unlike its predecessor, L'Etudiant Noir marked a concrete effort on the part of the budding black élite to see the singularity of their problems as blacks, an attitude which is the foundation of Aimé Césaire's political viewpoint. The central characteristic of this movement was a re-examination of the role of Africa, Mother Continent of all these students whose contact with European civilization had, to vastly varying degrees, alienated them from an original African personality. But, whereas Senghor and the other Africans in the group had only to reassume and to reassert the culture they already had in their home-lands, Césaire, Damas and other West Indians waged the fight primarily against "assimilation",

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<sup>9</sup>L. S. Senghor, as quoted by K. Kesteloot. Les écrivains noirs de langue française: naissance d'une littérature, p. 27.

and had to restructure Africa through the enlightening publications of ethnologists such as Frobenius, Delafosse, G. Hardy, Th. Monod and Delavignette. The West Indians, exiled as they were both geographically and chronologically from Africa, eagerly sought a new identity which, in Césaire's opinion, only Africa could give them. But it is generally true to say that the writings of the aforementioned ethnologists lead to a heightening of the racial consciousness of both the West Indians and the Africans, whom colonialist propaganda had often led to believe that Africa needed Europe to lift it from barbarity. It was Frobenius who countered such propaganda, by not only saying that the Europeans had invented the idea of the barbarous Negro, but by declaring that Africans were "civilisés jusqu'à la moelle des os"!<sup>10</sup> This focus on Africa as the revitalising force of the black man, particularly of the 'extra-African' black was to lead to the foundation of the supra-continental movement of Négritude which we will discuss later on in our study, and of which Césaire is still a leading figure.

A second feature of L'Etudiant Noir which is crucial to the understanding of the work of Aimé Césaire was the continued allegiance of its adherents to a

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<sup>10</sup>L. Frobenius, 'Histoire de la civilisation africaine' (Paris, 1906), as quoted by L. Kesteloot, Anthologie Négro-Africaine, p. 81.

socialistic outlook, but this outlook presents one important modification of that held by the Légitime Défense group. The Marxist analysis of economic relationships within society was still recognized, and applied to suit a study of the dynamics of the relationship between colonizer and colonized. But, neither Senghor or Damas belonged to the French Communist Party, and Césaire was not to do so for another ten years. Senghor has remained ever since committed to some form of socialism, as he points out:

S'inspirer du socialisme ne consistera pas à adopter je ne sais quel 'dogme marxiste', à emprunter des solutions européennes toutes faites,<sup>11</sup>

but will consist of an effort to

analyser dialectiquement notre situation concrète . . . de négro-africains, de malgaches, d'océaniens, d'antillais colonisés.<sup>12</sup>

This recognition of the singularity of the political problems of the black peoples, and of the need to formulate a singular approach to these problems, was eventually shared by Aimé Césaire in 1956, when he resigned from the French Communist Party.\* In an open letter to the Secretary of that Party, Maurice Thorez, Césaire argued

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<sup>11</sup>L. Senghor, quoted L. Kesteloot, Ecrivains noirs de langue française: Naissance d'une littérature, p. 93.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

\*It is interesting to note that Césaire was never a militant member of the French Communist Party. Never did he endure the political apprenticeship of being pursued by the police while distributing tracts or sticking party posters. Nor was his political education improved by his failure to undertake day-to-day home-visiting and electioneering.

that the path followed by the contemporary Communist movement could not be that which the black man should follow. Having said: "J'ai acquis la conviction que nos voies et celles du communisme tel qu'il est mis en pratique ne se confondent pas purement et simplement",<sup>13</sup> Césaire goes on to explain what he expects of Communism:

. . .Ce que je veux, c'est que marxisme et communisme soient mis au service des peuples noirs, et non les peuples noirs au service du marxisme et du communisme.<sup>14</sup>

He states clearly in the same letter that the solidarity his people expects is, for reasons of a common experience, more forthcoming from the black peoples of the world than from the European working-class, which, in most cases, shares the prejudices of those in power over them.

A third point of contrast between Légitime Défense and L'Etudiant Noir, and which is of interest to us in our study of Aimé Césaire, is surrealism. In their rejection of the psittacistic tendencies of their predecessors, and in attacking colonialism as representative of a decadent civilization, Etienne Léro and company aligned themselves with the surrealists:

Nous acceptons sans réserve le surréalisme  
auquel -- en 1932 -- nous lions notre

<sup>13</sup>A. Césaire, Lettre à Maurice Thorez, Paris: Présence Africaine, 1956, pp. 7-8.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

devenir. Et nous renvoyons nos lecteurs aux deux 'Manifestes' d'André Breton, à l'oeuvre tout entière d'Aragon, d'A. Breton, de René Crevel, de Salvator Dali, de Paul Eluard, de Benjamin Péret, de Tristan Tzara.<sup>15</sup>

Surrealism, as a rejection of conformism and with its profound effect on the inter-war climate of ideas, feelings and artistic expression, provided the young blacks of both groups with an opportunity to attack the traditional literary and philosophical forms of Europe, which were so pathetically aped by many of their compatriots. As an attack upon European forms, it was also an attack upon the foundations of a civilization which had imposed itself upon colonial peoples in the name of supposedly superior moral values. Counter to this, it will no doubt be argued that the advocacy of surrealism is in itself conformity to a European trend. Certainly, the aforementioned statement by the Légitime Défense movement is, to a certain extent, indicative of such conformity. But what both groups, Légitime Défense and L'Etudiant Noir, found most attractive in surrealism was the opportunity to explore the unconscious, to surrender themselves to "ce plus fort que moi" by means of automatic writing. For the westernized Negro-African, this takes on a special significance. For him, it is an instrument for the

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<sup>15</sup>'Légitime Défense': 'Avertissement', p. 1, as quoted by L. Kesteloot, Ecrivains noirs de langue française: Naissance d'une littérature, p. 44.

recovery of their original personality, dulled by colonial policy of assimilation and depersonalization. It is, as Lilyan Kesteloot points out, "une véritable cure de désintoxication".<sup>16</sup> But for those involved in the movement centred on L'Etudiant Noir, however, surrealism was more than that, it was not so much a European form as what Léopold Senghor calls a Negro-African reality:

Nous acceptions le Surréalisme comme un moyen, mais non comme une fin, comme un allié et non comme un maître. Nous voulions bien nous inspirer du Surréalisme, mais uniquement parce que l'écriture surréaliste retrouvait la parole négro-africaine.<sup>17</sup>

Senghor goes on to say elsewhere that the use in traditional African literature of "l'image-analogie",<sup>18</sup> in which the meaning of an object derives not from what it represents or describes, but from what it suggests, gives rise to a surrealism which "présuppose et manifeste l'univers hiérarchisé de forces vitales".<sup>19</sup>

It was the "chef de file" of surrealism, André Breton, in exile in Martinique after the German occupation of France in 1941, who 'discovered' some of Césaire's

<sup>16</sup>L. Kesteloot, Aimé Césaire, p. 33.

<sup>17</sup>L. Senghor, as quoted by L. Kesteloot, Ecrivains noirs de langue française: Naissance d'une littérature, p. 94.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

poetry in the first issue of the review Tropiques, edited by René M énil, Aim é C ésaire and his wife, Suzanne. Breton later met C ésaire, who presented the French surrealist poet with a copy of his first work, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, fragments of which had appeared in 1939 in the Parisian periodical Volontés. As a powerful indictment of the colonial experience, this work, written in Paris, is the expression of C ésaire's bitter nostalgia for his island-ghetto, Martinique, beautiful yet overshadowed by the squalor and the resignation of its people, whose wounds of slavery have not yet healed. Cahier d'un retour au pays natal represents the 'prise de conscience' of the exiled black man, exiled not only within his own society over which he has no control, but also from the land of his forefathers, Africa. The theme of exile from Africa recurs throughout the rest of his works, for Africa is seen as the cultural centre of the supra-continental movement of Negritude of which we shall speak later.

Allied with the theme of exile and to the theme of Africa, there is in C ésaire's writings the rejection of colonial Europe, of imperialist Europe, but, even though C ésaire rejects the colonial experience of European colonization and regrets the way in which the colonial peoples have related with Europe, even though he declares

that "il-est-beau-et-bon-et-légitime-d'être-nègre",<sup>20</sup>  
 his ultimate and fundamental outlook can be interpreted  
 as being humanistic:

Vous savez que ce n'est point par haine des  
 autres races  
 que je m'exige bêcheur de cette unique race  
 que ce que je veux  
 c'est pour la faim universelle  
 pour la soif universelle.<sup>21</sup>

After Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, Césaire continued to write several works of poetry, which, like the aforementioned work, express the sufferings of the black race throughout the world, yet which celebrate the qualities of that race, affirm an unwillingness to consider the present as definitive, and proclaim the irresistible wish and need of the black man to take his future once again into his own hands. Bearing in mind that Césaire's writings are a weapon of political combat, it is understandable that he should continue to seek new means of communicating his message to his people. His use of the theatre, does not represent, however, a departure from poetry, for, in his view, theatre is, first and foremost, a department of poetry. It is the means whereby he can contact a wider public, while maintaining, if not

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<sup>20</sup> A. Césaire, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (bilingual edition), Paris, Présence Africaine, 1971, p. 153.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

strengthening, the bonds between his poetical imagination and his political message:

En effet, qu'est-ce qu'un poète? Selon la définition de Rimbaud, c'est un voyant; par conséquent, le poète qui a pour qualité première de faire voir, de voir pour son compte, devient homme de théâtre dès le moment où il essaie de faire voir, de transmettre sa vision aux autres.<sup>22</sup>

The theatre of Aimé Césaire is, therefore, inseparable, not only from his political activity, but also from his poetry. It is the measure of the ability of the poet, in search of new ways of putting his poetical imagination to work.

So far, Aimé Césaire has written four plays: Et les chiens se taisaient (1956), La tragédie du roi Christophe (1963 with a second edition in 1970), Une Saison au Congo (1967) and Une Tempête (1969), which all deal with the political problems of the black man within a colonial or post-colonial context. The general trend of the critics has been to place the most emphasis and attention on La tragédie du roi Christophe and Une Saison au Congo, which are essentially chronicles of the post-independence era in Haiti and in the Congo (now known as Zaïre) respectively. Due attention will be paid to these plays in our study, especially in view of the burning topical interest of

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<sup>22</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by P. Laville, 'Aimé Césaire et Jean-Marie Serreau: un acte politique et poétique', Les voies de la création théâtrale II (D. Bablet, ed.), Paris, C.N.R.S., 1970, p. 239.

their subject-matter. On the other hand, Et les chiens se taisaient and Une Tempête have so far received scant attention from critics and students of Césaire's theatre. As regards the former play, the reason is understandable, bearing in mind that it is a mere "arrangement théâtral", which "reste à mi-chemin entre la confidence lyrique et la création d'un univers théâtral".<sup>23</sup> Césaire himself explains his motives for writing this play:

Les auteurs grecs de l'Antiquité, que j'admire, ont eu sur moi une influence considérable; j'ai été aussi vivement impressionné par le livre de Nietzsche sur la tragédie grecque, et j'ai voulu écrire avec 'Et les chiens se taisaient' une tragédie grecque, mais non dans le but de la présenter au public.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the fact that Et les chiens se taisaient was not written for the stage, it deserves much attention for our consideration of the thematic unity of all four plays, for our study of the salient characteristics of the Césairian hero, and because of the logical place it holds in the sequence of attitudes of political revolt. In fact, it represents the starting point in the racial and political consciousness of Césaire's leaders.

However, the reasons for the scant attention paid

<sup>23</sup>M. Odon, as quoted by P. Laville, 'Aimé Césaire et Jean-Marie Serreau: un acte politique et poétique', p. 248.

<sup>24</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by P. Laville, 'Aimé Césaire et Jean-Marie Serreau: un acte politique et poétique', p. 248.

to Une Tempête are rather less obvious. Too often has it been dismissed lightly by the critics as a mere adaptation of Shakespeare's play, The Tempest. Indeed, the basic structure of Césaire's play does closely resemble the Shakespearean model, but the injection of the racial element into the master/slave relationship between Prospero and Caliban, and the refusal of Prospero to leave the island at the end of the play (contrary to the decision of Shakespeare's Prospero), do add a new dimension to the basic story, and enable us not only to gain a valuable insight into the colonial situation in any black country, but also to acquire a fuller comprehension of the three other plays. In our view, in so far as Une Tempête is as representative of Césaire's political outlook as his other works, and introduces us to a useful view of the specific problems of the black man within the colonial situation, it is indispensable to our study.

All four of Césaire's plays make us aware of the forbidding complexity and of the singularity of the relationship between the black man and the modern world. Forbidding, in the sense that the extent of the problems involved in the social and economic emancipation of the black man often lead him, -- and recent history proves this, -- to opt for selfishness and complacency, rather than help shoulder the collective responsibility so necessary for

the creation of a social reality corresponding to his own needs and aspirations. Singularity, in the sense that the colonizer's desire for a more efficient and more "justifiable" exploitation forced him to create a unique colonial situation where the black man is concerned, and which makes the path to the recovery of the black man's historical initiative singularly complex and difficult. It will be seen, however, that the complexity and singularity of the problems can both be boiled down to one key term: black consciousness.

We shall first examine the phenomenon of black consciousness in the non-French-speaking New World; this will enable us to gain a limited, but sufficiently general view of black consciousness, particularly as it has been expressed in Cuba, Brazil and the United States. The second part of the chapter will examine the Negritude movement, contrasting the formulation of racial consciousness as expressed by French-speaking Africans with the formulation expressed by French-speaking West Indians. We shall then attempt to place Negritude in historico-political perspective, and, in presenting the views of English-speaking Africans critical of that movement, it is hoped that our view of the peculiar Frenchness of Negritude will be sharpened. It will be seen, however, that despite the different geographical and colonial conditionings of black people throughout the

world, common to all manifestations of black consciousness is the search for identity in a world where not only is colour associated with slavery and oppression, but where 'white' or European values predominate.

The second chapter of our study, 'Tragedies of decolonization', is a view of the tragic efforts of colonized and formerly colonized peoples to shake off the chains of colonialism, both physically and psychologically, and to come to terms with the problems of independence. We are introduced to the difficulties of creating a national consciousness, of stimulating the re-creation of a people, necessitated by independence. The role of violence, and the use and misuse of a policy of sacrifice and hard work are given particular attention in the plays. Césaire addresses himself to the problems of decolonization through the efforts of his three main heroes, Le Rebelle in Et les chiens se taisaient, Henry Christophe in La tragédie du roi Christophe and Patrice Lumumba in Une Saison au Congo. Only brief and passing reference will be made to Césaire's fourth play, Une Tempête, for since this part of our study focusses on the qualities Césaire feels that the national leader should have, and on the dynamics of the relationship between the leader and his people, we contend that neither Ariel nor Caliban meet these requirements. We take care to point out, however, that even though our study centres on the individual leader,

such a leader's fate merely symbolizes the fate of those whom he leads; that the problems faced by the individual leader represent those faced by almost every leader of a black nation; finally, that the destiny of the individual black nation symbolizes the collective destiny of black peoples everywhere.

It will be seen in this chapter that Césaire considers colonialism as the negation of creation for the colonized, and that it is in recognition of the singular effects of colonialism on the black man, that the Césairian leader acts. Special emphasis is laid on the specific problems of the 'déraciné', who has to re-root himself in his surroundings of exile. The role of his cultural matrix, Africa, enters our study at the stage when the national leader attempts to re-root his people, badly in need of revitalization. It will also be seen that in view of the peculiar colonial conditioning of the black man, the Césairian heroes are all intransigent, they all act with urgency, and they act always with the future in mind. But the future which they envisage is not only that of their own nations, but of the whole Negro race. As such, they all correspond to Aimé Césaire's definition of the popular leader as being at one and the same time a revolutionary, a 'Voyant' and a 'prophète'. But ~~it~~ is because they are so far ahead of their time, so far ahead

of their people, that they fail, and fall prey not only to external aggression, but to the schemes of their own people, who have internalized and accepted the values of their masters or former masters. However, the Césairian leader does not die with his physical disappearance, for the ideas and visions he pursued, and, to a great extent, embodied, transcend his death, and out of his blood will spring others ready to follow the trail that he blazed.

The third chapter, 'Colonizer and Colonized', is a view, primarily through Une Tempête, of the colonial situation as it relates to black people. It will be seen that many of the points to which we shall refer therein apply equally well to blacks in a minority situation as in a majority situation. The purpose of this part of our study will be to probe, primarily through the aforementioned play, and in comparison with William Shakespeare's The Tempest, the nature of the relationship between the white colonizer and the black colonized, with the intention of determining just how Césaire considers colonialism to be the contrary of civilisation. With the support of Césaire's Discours sur le colonialisme, we hope to show how, in the Martiniquan author's view, the actions of the colonizer belie his claims, and how the series of opposites inherent in the colonial situation is emphasized by the colonizer to justify his presence and to facilitate the economic exploitation of those whose land he usurped. In this

connection, Albert Memmi's concept of the 'Nero complex' of the colonizer, on which he elaborates in his book The Colonizer and the Colonized, will be discussed and applied to our study. Another well-known work which will be consulted in relation to our study of the relationship between colonizer and colonized -- and to which Césaire refers in biting terms in Discours sur le colonialisme -- is Dominique Mannoni's controversial book, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization. Mannoni's interpretation of colonial conflict as being the result of misunderstanding between two groups of people, each of whose personality structure differs from the other because the European colonizer comes from a competitive society and the colonized from a so-called static society, leads to what he terms the dependency complex of colonized peoples. We will outline Mannoni's argument, so as to put into perspective Césaire's interpretation of Caliban's revolt against Prospero, as opposed to Mannoni's views of the links between his dependency complex concept and Shakespeare's The Tempest. Also discussed in this section is the role of Ariel, who advocates the non-violent path to freedom, but underlying the entire play is Césaire's incisive criticism of colonialism and his belief in the invincibility of the black man's desire for freedom.

Even though we treat the four plays separately, it will be seen that they all present a certain thematic unity.

And it is in virtue of this thematic unity that we shall, in concluding, strive to see how far the plays correspond to Césaire's concept of political Négritude.

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\* It will be noted that in our study of La tragédie du roi Christophe heavy emphasis is placed on the second edition (1970), while the first edition (1962) was used only once. The second edition, which is a bit shorter than the first, comprises modifications made as a result of collaboration between Aimé Césaire and the foremost producer of his plays, Jean-Marie Serreau. Perhaps the outstanding difference between the two versions is that the second edition stresses the powerlessness of the people to have much bearing on the struggle between Christophe and Pétion.

CHAPTER ONE  
BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

A. A view of the phenomenon in the non-French-speaking New World.

As it is expressed in the various parts of the black diaspora, black consciousness is essentially the search of the black man for an identity of his own, it is a reflection of the inner tensions, frustrations and contradictions of the black man, who lives in a world where, willy-nilly, white culture predominates. Aimé Césaire, as "la voix de la conscience nègre, de ses souffrances et de ses exigences",<sup>1</sup> gives full expression to the need for such a movement, and it will be seen that the following statement of his is the cornerstone of the struggle of the black leaders in his theatre:

Nous, hommes de couleur, en ce moment précis de l'évolution historique, avons, dans notre conscience, pris possession de tout le champ de notre singularité, et . . . sommes prêts à assumer sur tous les plans et dans tous les domaines les responsabilités qui découlent de cette prise de conscience.<sup>2</sup>

But, at this point, before dealing with the fundamental

<sup>1</sup>L. Kesteloot, Anthologie Nègro-Africaine, Verviers (Belgium), Marabout, 1967, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>A. Césaire, Lettre à Maurice Thorez, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1956, p. 8.

theme of black consciousness in Césaire's dramatic works, we feel it necessary to provide an 'Überblick' of the movement of black consciousness in the New World, so as to be able to place into historical and political perspective the movement of Negritude, and Césaire's formulation of it.

It is a fact that most black peoples, whether in Africa or in the New World, have, at one time or another in their history, undergone what Césaire calls "ce conditionnement particulier qu'est la situation coloniale ou semi-coloniale ou para-coloniale",<sup>3</sup> an essential part of which is the deliberate depersonalization and "assimilation" of the colonized peoples by their oppressors. Such policies result not only in the denial by the colonial nations of the cultural and intellectual achievements of the colonized peoples, but also in the same denial being expressed by the colonized peoples themselves. The colonial system is then rewarded with a justification for its existence, for, to use a simple example, it is not sufficient to be a slave; one must accept being a slave. Colonial ideology has sought to perpetuate the economic and political subjugation of the colonized by inculcating in them a sense of congenital inferiority. The whole idea behind any movement of black

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<sup>3</sup>A. Césaire, *Culture et Colonisation*, 1<sup>er</sup> Congrès International des Ecrivains et Artistes Noirs (Paris), *Présence Africaine*, Paris, no. 8-9-10, Juin - Nov. 1956, p. 190.

consciousness anywhere is, therefore, to pick up a much maligned word, BLACK, which traditional aesthetics and a colonial mentality tend to associate with evil, misfortune and inferiority, and to give it new value and meaning. Thus, the movement has not outgrown its usefulness, for, as long as the black man's humanity is challenged, he will continue to assert his humanity as a black man. The task of such a movement has been relatively easy in Africa, where there is a coherent cultural base upon which the population may draw. In fact, according to Léopold Senghor and Janheinz Jahn, Africans conceive of culture as being inseparable from daily life, and, in this sense, it is not something to be attained, it is that which is lived and experienced.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, moving back to the New World, the state of cultural alienation which uprootment from Africa and subsequent slavery have inflicted on the West Indian has led to his de-personalization, to his non-identity. There has not been, and there still is not in West Indian society, or at least not in the French Overseas Departments of Martinique and Guadeloupe, the coherent indigenous culture which had been such a forceful element in the struggles of the Asian and African peoples against colonialism. As Césaire points

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<sup>4</sup>However, the African élite, as it becomes more westernized, runs the risk of being drawn away from the masses, and hence, from the popular tradition that is culture.

out:

I do not think that you can separate culture and politics. And I think that politics should enrich culture and culture should enrich politics (...). If I were to make a criticism of French colonialism, I would not harp so much upon the injustices that have been done -- they have happened in all the other countries. But one thing that I cannot forgive colonialism, is the state of alienation into which it has put our people.<sup>5</sup>

The striving for cultural originality has long been an important part of the struggle against colonial oppression. In Latin America, for instance, the literature of "indianismo",<sup>6</sup> promoting the theme of the primitiveness of the Amerindian, and glorifying his pre-colonial past, played a major role in the fight for independence from Spain. In other parts of the Spanish-speaking New World, but not in the Dominican Republic,<sup>7</sup> the theme of the

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<sup>5</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted in interview with Trinidad Guardian, Port-of Spain, Oct. 12th 1971, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup>The use of "indianismo" can be seen in the works of several Latin American authors, of whom García Marquez of Columbia and Miguel Angel Asturias of Guatemala are perhaps the best known.

<sup>7</sup>The Dominican Republic shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, and fears of Haitian infiltration and influence have been used by the Dominican ruling classes to reinforce support for the most Spanish elements in the cultural life of that country.

primitiveness of the Negro anticipates Négritude. The Afro-Cubanists<sup>8</sup> (the majority of whom were white) proposed the primitiveness of the black man as a remedy for "the overcivilization of the white world with its unhappiness, frustrations and inhibitions".<sup>9</sup> However, at the beginning at least, Afro-Cubanism was part of the anti-intellectual wave in the Western world, characterized by movements such as Indigenism, Dadaism and Surrealism, and influenced by the writings of men such as Freud, Spengler and Bergson. This movement is of particular interest to us for two reasons. First of all, even though it anticipated Négritude, as we mentioned earlier, "the overwhelming impression left by the writers of the Afro-Cuban movement is that the black man was little more than a doll or a puppet which they made to jump and writhe about to the accompaniment of Cuban popular instruments".<sup>10</sup> The second point of interest is that, as opposed to similar movements in the New World and in Africa, Afro-Cubanism deals with a

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<sup>8</sup>Afro-Cubanism reached its height in the years 1920-1940. Among the leading figures of this movement were Alejo Carpentier, Palés Matos, José Z. Tallet, Nicolas Guillén, Emilio Ballagas and Ramón Guirao.

<sup>9</sup>G. R. Coulthard, Race and Colour in Caribbean Literature, London: O.U.P., 1962, p. 30.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

minority group. The same can be said about "indianismo" in some but in by no means all of the Latin American countries, and the two movements present a striking similarity. They were both promoted primarily by people who belonged to neither ethnic group in question, and as such, even though they did represent a striving for national cultural identity, they did not represent a striving for ethnic cultural identity. Afro-Cubanism itself, except in the latter decade of its existence, did not grow primarily out of a protest against the social and economic situation of the blacks in Cuba; it was more a literary fashion. But its interest for us in a study of the phenomenon of black consciousness is that it was one of the very first movements to recognize the African presence as a positive force in the New World.

The African presence has been revalued in Brazil also, where the black man is again in the minority. In fact the blacks in the North-East of that country have managed to retain several aspects of African religious ritual, and, indeed, in certain instances, still speak Yoruba (though we do not know how understandable it is to Nigerian speakers of the language). However, the situation is different in the South, in the industrialized urban areas, where the black man has been assimilated, but where there has been, since 1914, a movement of black racial consciousness. Of

particular note for us is the fact that this has been especially manifest in the theatrical sphere, and will enter into our conclusions about the social function of Césaire's theatre. The Negro Experimental Theatre,<sup>11</sup> founded in 1944, sought not to combat racism, but to renounce a system of aesthetic criteria whereby the colour black is traditionally associated with evil and ugliness, since the black man occupies, in most cases, a place among the poorest classes in Brazil.<sup>12</sup> The first function of this Theatre was to enable the Negro to break out of the straightjacket of stereotypes imposed by folklore and exoticism, and to raise himself "au plan de l'art et de l'humanité".<sup>13</sup> The other function of the Theatre was the creation and promotion of a system of black aesthetics "où le génie de la race puisse se manifester et où non seulement les acteurs seraient des Noirs, mais où les thèmes traités seraient aussi nègres, soit tirés du folklore nègre, soit de la situation sociale du Noir".<sup>13</sup> It is to be noted that black consciousness as it relates

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<sup>11</sup>The Negro Experimental Theatre was founded in 1944 by Abdias de Nascimento, and lasted until 1951.

<sup>12</sup>According to Abdias de Nascimento, there is no racism in Brazil. It is our feeling that it is difficult for a person unfamiliar with Brazilian racial attitudes to understand just how such aesthetic criteria cannot be defined as racist.

<sup>13</sup>Bakary Traoré, Le théâtre négro-africain et ses fonctions sociales, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1958, p. 129.

to the Brazilian situation focuses more on the black man than on the African, and this split is of great importance when we come to discuss Négritude.

Africa was, and still is, of great importance for many English-speaking West Indians and black Americans in their struggle to find their "roots". Recently, several West Indians have been involved prominently in the Pan-African movement, but as far back as 1918, a Jamaican called Marcus Garvey promoted a "Back to Africa" movement under the aegis of his Universal Negro Improvement Association, which saw most of its success in the United States. But seeking an identity in America itself, and not in Africa, was the Harlem Renaissance which sooner or later fell prey to "the guilty, idealistic, or egotistic interventions of cultural paternalism",<sup>14</sup> that is, of white cultural paternalism, which led to the acculturation of the black thematic material whereby those involved in the movement had hoped that the black man would regain an identity. At the present time, black cultural nationalists in the United States, such as Imamu Amiri Baraka (the former Le Roi Jones), Maulana Ron Karenga and Ed Bullins are attempting to avoid the pitfalls of the past by engaging in a policy whereby black artistic material is in the hands of black people,

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<sup>14</sup>Harold Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, New York, Wm. Morrow & Co. Inc., 1967, p. 38.

written by black people, and used by black people for the benefit of black people. This movement is involved in an effort to not only break the prestige of white culture, but also to completely boycott white culture and to have as little contact with white society as possible. Black theatre groups will become the workshops and generators of a system of black values and black aesthetic criteria, which will, according to those just named, provide the stimulus for the creation of a black nation, separate from white America. To pass judgement here on such an idea would be to desert fact for speculation. That fact, which the Harlem Renaissance recognized also, is that "as long as the Negro's cultural identity is in question, or open to self-doubts, then there can be no positive identification with the real demands of his political existence".<sup>15</sup> Whether the creation of such an identity can be reconciled with an identification with the problems of Africa, and with the culture of Africa, is a central question, and marks the point where we must rejoin Césaire, who once said in an interview:

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<sup>15</sup>Harold Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, p. 12.

. . .J'ai toujours considéré les Antillais, tout francisés qu'ils soient - et je ne nie pas qu'ils sont francisés comme les Gaulois ont été romanisés - comme des Africains. Une des composantes des Antilles, c'est certainement la culture française, mais l'autre, la plus importante, c'est tout de même la composante africaine.<sup>16</sup>

Such may be the case, but the problems of the New World have to be solved by the people of the New World within the New World. In our view, the problem of identity for the West Indian or the Black American is not how to be European or African, but how to be West Indian or American. This does not in any way entail a rejection of the past, as the black man tries to place himself in history, for

We of the Caribbean are a people more than any other people constructed by history, and therefore any attempt not only to analyse but to carry out political or social activity, in connection with ourselves and in relation to other peoples, any such attempt has got to begin and constantly bear in mind how we came into being, where we have reached, who we are, and what we are.<sup>17</sup>

Négritude is the expression of the analysis of the French-speaking black man of such a situation.

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<sup>16</sup> Aimé Césaire, as recorded by Nicole Zand, Le Monde Paris, no.7071, 7 Oct. 1967, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> C. L. R. James in the Introduction to J. J. Thomas' Froudacity, London, New Beacon Books Ltd., 1969, p. 46.

B. Négritude - the racial consciousness of black Francophonia.

Négritude (the word was formulated by Aimé Césaire in his Cahier d'un retour au pays natal)<sup>18</sup> was defined by the Martiniquan writer as:

la conscience d'être noir, simple reconnaissance d'un fait, qui implique acceptation, prise en charge de son destin, de son histoire et de sa culture.<sup>19</sup>

This recognition of the singularity of the black man is echoed by Léopold Senghor, who defines Négritude as

. . .l'ensemble des valeurs culturelles du monde noir, telles qu'elles s'expriment dans la vie, les institutions et les oeuvres des Noirs (...). Pour nous, notre souci, notre unique souci, a été de l'assumer, cette Négritude, en la vivant, et l'ayant vécue, en approfondir le sens.<sup>20</sup>

It will be noticed that both of these definitions demand an "assumption" and a "prise en charge" of one's blackness, for, as Albert Memmi points out: "On ne se quitte pas si aisément. On n'ôte pas sa négritude lorsqu'on est noir, en la déclarant un mirage. On n'échange pas sa singularité

<sup>18</sup>A. Césaire, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (bilingual edition), Paris, Présence Africaine, 1971.

<sup>19</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by L. Kesteloot in Les écrivains noirs de langue française: Naissance d'une littérature, Bruxelles, L'Université Libre, 1965, p. 113.

<sup>20</sup>L. S. Senghor, Liberté I: Négritude et Humanisme, Paris, Seuil, 1964, p. 9.

contre une autre, par simple volonté, ni même au nom d'une éthique révolutionnaire".<sup>21</sup> But, whereas the sole concern of the westernized African is to assume and to live his culture, which already exists in his society, the concern of the West Indian is to recover and, to a certain extent, to revive that which had been lost to him through exile from Africa, before he can assume it. Thus, the movement of Négritude cannot be seen as a unified whole, despite the "solidarité horizontale"<sup>22</sup> of French-speaking black peoples with the common experience of colonialism. It would seem as if Senghor and Césaire are speaking of black culture as if it were an integral entity, despite the differing geographical and colonial conditioning of the various parts of the black diaspora. Négritude is, despite its diverse facets, a phenomenon peculiar to the francophone black conditioned by the peculiarities of the French colonial situation, and is the expression of black consciousness in the face of these peculiarities, but one of the basic features of Négritude is the recognition, over and beyond national and colonial barriers, of another form of black solidarity, "la solidarité verticale . . . une solidarité dans le temps, celle qui provient de ce fait

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<sup>21</sup>A. Memmi, 'La Vie Impossible de Frantz Fanon', Esprit, 39<sup>e</sup> année, no.406, Sept. 1971, p. 264.

<sup>22</sup>A. Césaire, Culture et Colonisation, p. 192.

qu'à partir d'une unité première, l'unité de la civilisation africaine, il s'est différencié toute une série de cultures qui, toutes, doivent à des degrés divers à cette civilisation".<sup>23</sup> Négritude does recognize culture as being national, and it is in the light of the following statement that we must understand both Senghor's and Césaire's formulation of Negro-African culture:

Je pense qu'il est très vrai de dire qu'il n'y a de culture que nationale. Mais il saute aux yeux que les cultures nationales, toutes particulières qu'elles sont, se groupent par affinités. Et ces grandes parentés de culture, ces grandes familles de cultures, portent un nom: ce sont des civilisations.<sup>24</sup>

We shall take as our point of departure in this survey of Négritude the instance of Haiti, where, according to Césaire, "la négritude se mit debout pour la première fois et dit qu'elle croyait à son humanité".<sup>25</sup> For, even though Haiti had been independent from France legally since 1804, considerable French influence has remained in the sphere of culture. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Michelet referred to Haiti as "La France noire", and, as Jacques Stéphen Alexis pointed out at the First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists held

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>25</sup> A. Césaire, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, p. 67.

in Paris in 1956, Haiti has been constantly referred to as a cultural province of France. For at least over a century after independence, European civilization was almost obsequiously followed by the Haitian ruling classes, and was used as a model for a so-called Haitian civilization. It was not until national sovereignty was threatened, and, in fact, violated by the American occupation of the island from 1915 to 1934 that a national rallying point was found in Négritude (though it was not referred to by that name) and in a review of the African element in the culture of Haiti. This point is stressed by two eminent Haitian scholars:

Since, on the one hand, all our efforts since Independence to this day have consisted in the systematic repression of our African heritage, in the literary and the political and social fields, our actions should lead us to demand the revaluation of this racial factor.<sup>26</sup>

Here again we see the important interaction between culture and politics. Négritude in the Haitian context at that time involved the assumption of the large residue of African culture retained by the Haitian peasant after Independence, and handed down largely intact over the

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<sup>26</sup> Denis Lorimer and François Duvalier, *L'essentiel de la doctrine des Griots*, vol.2, no.2, p. 153. Port-au-Prince, 1939, quoted by G.R. Coulthard, Race and Colour in Caribbean Literature, p. 48. The reader may well be startled by my description of François Duvalier, the late President of the Republic of Haiti, and otherwise known as 'Papa Doc', as an eminent scholar. The quantity and quality of his writings on Haitian culture make such a description an indisputable fact.

generations, particularly in the religious sphere.<sup>27</sup>

In 1928, Dr. Jean Price-Mars, the distinguished Haitian doctor, writer and statesman, described with great admiration in his book, Ainsi Parla l'Oncle (Port-au-Prince, 1928), the neo-African culture of the Haitian peasantry, which struck a medium between "une attirance mystérieuse vers l'Afrique légendaire et un attachement imperturbable à la France dont la puissance de rayonnement est universelle",<sup>28</sup> for, according to Price-Mars it was an original culture "qui ne fut ni africaine ni française, mais une harmonieuse synthèse de l'une et de l'autre".<sup>29</sup> This wave of "haïtianisme" or "indigénisme" weakened but did not eradicate in any way the curious cultural attachment to France which characterizes Négritude.

But, on the whole, the French West Indians never had a chance to properly revive the African elements in their culture, so successfully had the French colonial policy of "assimilation" worked. In a book exposing the essentials of that doctrine, Victor Sablé defines "assimilation" as "une méthode d'éducation et d'évolution,

<sup>27</sup>Voodoo is the national religion of Haiti.

<sup>28</sup>J. Price Mars, De Saint-Domingue à Haiti, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1959, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

une culture, une conception générale de la vie que l'on veut acclimater en vue de donner à un peuple lointain une certaine identité de conscience morale et par conséquent un développement social équivalent".<sup>30</sup> Such a policy is evidently part of colonial ideology, whereby, in denying an authentic and original West Indian culture and encouraging total identification with European culture, the black man loses any true identity, is depersonalized, and comes to accept the colonial system as natural and almost divinely ordained. He accepts colonial oppression as his nightful fate. Césaire sums up this attitude in his Cahier:

C'était un très bon nègre  
la misère lui avait blessé poitrine et dos et on  
avait fourré dans sa pauvre cervelle qu'une  
fatalité pesait sur lui qu'on ne prend pas au  
collet; qu'il n'avait pas puissance sur son  
propre destin; qu'un seigneur méchant avait  
de toute éternité écrit des lois d'interdiction  
en sa nature pelvienne; et d'être le bon  
nègre; de croire honnêtement à son indignité,  
sans curiosité perverse de vérifier jamais les  
hiéroglyphes fatidiques.<sup>31</sup>

Frantz Fanon has brilliantly portrayed in Peau Noire, Masques Blancs<sup>32</sup> the racial neuroses of the West

<sup>30</sup>Victor Sablé, *La transformation des Isles d'Amérique en départements français*, Paris, 1955, as quoted by André Lucrèce in *Le mouvement martiniquais de la négritude*, ACOMA, Paris, no.2, avril-juin 1971, p. 96.

<sup>31</sup>A. Césaire, Cahier, p. 145.

<sup>32</sup>F. Fanon, Peau Noire, Masques Blancs, Paris, éd. du Seuil, 1952.

Indian, whose chances of social elevation are proportional to the success with which he approaches assimilation. This process of "lactification",<sup>33</sup> judged by the degree of French civilization one has acquired, is also undertaken by climbing up the rungs of the colour-ladder, and marrying into a lighter shade-group. "Mieux qu'une hiérarchie, une ontologie",<sup>34</sup> as Césaire remarks. This brings us on to the point of language, in our discussion of identity, for, according to Fanon once again,

tout peuple colonisé -- c'est-à-dire tout peuple au sein duquel a pris naissance un complexe d'infériorité, du fait de la mise au tombeau de l'originalité culturelle locale -- se situe vis-à-vis du langage de la nation civilisatrice, c'est-à-dire de la culture métropolitaine. Le colonisé se sera d'autant plus échappé de sa brousse qu'il aura fait siennes les valeurs culturelles de la métropole.<sup>35</sup>

We have spoken of the interaction of culture and politics, of the need for an identity as the launching-pad of a political revolution. Such a revolution could not take place in the French West Indies so long as assimilation continues to be accepted, for the underlying reality of assimilation is negrophobia:

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> A. Césaire, Toussaint Louverture, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1961, p. 31.

<sup>35</sup> F. Fanon, Peau Noire, Masques Blancs, p. 32.

Et l'ensemble faisait parfaitement un nègre hideux, un nègre grognon, un nègre mélancolique, un nègre affalé, ses mains réunies en prière sur un bâton noueux. Un nègre enseveli dans une vieille veste élimée. Un nègre comique et laid et des femmes derrière moi ricanait en le regardant.

Il était COMIQUE ET LAID.  
COMIQUE ET LAID pour sûr.  
J'arborai un grand sourire complice . . .  
Ma lâcheté retrouvée!<sup>36</sup>

Realizing that they were never "des Français à part entière" but were in fact "des Français entièrement à part", French West Indians followed a pattern described by Albert Memmi:

Lorsqu'un homme dominé a compris l'impossibilité de l'assimilation au dominant, en général il revient à lui-même, à son peuple, à son passé, quelquefois . . . avec une vigueur excessive, tranfigurant ce peuple et ce passé jusqu'aux contre-mythes.<sup>37</sup>

This counter-myth for many West Indian writers, was that of a romantic Africa, which, as opposed to Europe, symbolized for them primitiveness, purity and innocence. Jean-Paul Sartre writes of the compelling vision of Africa of several of the Caribbean poets featuring in Leopold Senghor's Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache.<sup>38</sup> The vision was of:

<sup>36</sup>A. Césaire, Cahier, p. 105.

<sup>37</sup>A. Memmi, La vie impossible de Frantz Fanon, Esprit, no.406, p. 253.

<sup>38</sup>L. S. Senghor, (ed.) Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache, Paris, P.U.F., 1948.

l'Afrique dernier cercle, nombril du monde,  
 pôle de toute la poésie noire, l'Afrique  
 éblouissante, incendiée, huileuse comme  
 une peau de serpent, l'Afrique de feu et de  
 pluie, torride et touffue, l'Afrique fantôme  
 vacillant comme une flamme, entre l'être et  
 le néant, plus vraie que les 'éternels  
 boulevards à flics' mais absente, désintégrant  
 l'Europe par ses rayons noirs, et pourtant in-  
 visible, hors d'atteinte, l'Afrique, continent  
 imaginaire.<sup>39</sup>

Along with this theme of nostalgia for the imaginary lost Mother Africa, goes the theme of the horrors of the uprootment from that continent and all the horrors of the Middle Passage, "l'intourist du circuit triangulaire".<sup>40</sup> There is too a vaunting about the African civilizations that, according to these writers, flourished while Europe was still in a state of savagery and barbarism.

The past greatness of Africa, and affirmations of the cultural superiority of Africa was, of course, tied in with a rejection of European culture, which is portrayed as unsuited to the temperament, way of life and thought of the black man. Léon Damas expresses this distaste for European modes of dress, manners and thought in the poem 'Solde':

J'ai l'impression d'être ridicule  
 dans leurs souliers  
 dans leur smoking

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<sup>39</sup>J. P. Sartre, *Orphée Noir* in Situations III, Paris, Gallimard, 1949, p. 241.

<sup>40</sup>A. Césaire, Cahier, p. 153.

dans leur plastron  
 dans leur faux-col  
 dans leur monocle  
 dans leur melon

.....

J'ai l'impression d'être ridicule  
 dans leurs salons  
 dans leurs manières  
 dans leurs courbettes  
 dans leur multiple besoin de singeries

J'ai l'impression d'être ridicule  
 avec les théories qu'ils assaisonnent  
 au goût de leurs besoins  
 de leurs passions

.....

J'ai l'impression d'être rivicule  
 parmi eux complice  
 parmi eux souteneur  
 parmi eux égorgueur  
 les mains effroyablement rouges  
 du sang de leur ci-vi-li-sa-tion.<sup>41</sup>

The African form of Négritude is expressed most fully by Senghor. What is interesting about his view is that he does not reject European civilization as do many of his West Indian comrades, but seeks to unite his African colleagues around an economic and cultural programme, while defining and consolidating Négritude as the specific cultural expression of the Negro-African. The specific qualities of Europe and Africa are seen in terms of their "complémentarité", in terms of a symbiotic relationship,

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<sup>41</sup>L-G. Damas, 'Solde', in Pigments, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1937, pp. 39-40.

and no longer in terms of dynamic opposites. Senghor's concept of African socialism bears striking proof of this. Having advocated a socialism based on the traditional African system of social organization, which he stresses has always been collectivist, Senghor goes on to say:

Du socialisme européen, c'est surtout la méthode qu'il faut retenir. Et celle-ci exige qu'on commence par analyser les réalités négro-africaines -- géographiques, historiques, ethniques, politiques, économiques, sociales, culturelles. Cette analyse faite, le problème est de savoir quelle est la valeur actuelle des institutions et du style de vie nés de ces réalités, comment adapter ceux-ci au monde contemporain.<sup>42</sup>

This very idea of the symbiosis of civilizations stems from one of the socio-cultural "Negro-African realities" of which Senghor was speaking, for, according to Senghor, Negro-African ontology is unitary and existential and also explains what he terms the opposition between the "raison discursive" of Western man and the "raison intuitive" of Negro-African man:

Pour le Nègre, tout objet est symbole d'une réalité profonde qui constitue la véritable signification du signe qui nous est, d'abord libre (...). La raison intuitive est donc à la base de l'ontologie, de la conception nègre du monde. Les différentes apparences sensibles, constituées par les nègres animal, végétal, minéral, ne sont que les manifestations matérielles d'une seule réalité fondamentale: l'univers, réseau de forces diverses mais

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<sup>42</sup>L. S. Senghor, Liberté I: Négritude et Humanisme, p. 284.

complémentaires, qui sont l'expression des virtualités renfermées en DIEU, seul être véritable, seule force réelle. Car Dieu est la force des choses. L'ontologie négro-africaine est unitaire: l'unité de l'univers se réalise en Dieu, par la convergence des forces complémentaires issues de Dieu et ordonnées vers Dieu. C'est ce qui explique que le Nègre ait un sens si développé de la solidarité des hommes et de leur coopération.<sup>43</sup>

Other aspects that Senghor states as specific Negro-African attributes are: firstly, rhythm, which he refers to as "le sceau de la Négritude",<sup>44</sup> secondly, emotion, which according to him is "nègre comme la raison hellène",<sup>45</sup> for the Black is "l'homme de la nature . . . (d')une très grande sensibilité",<sup>46</sup> and characterized by his "puissance d'émotion";<sup>47</sup> thirdly, another Negro-African originality, according to Senghor, is to be found in the fields of art and language, particularly African, which is explicative and not descriptive: "L'image ici n'est pas une image-équation, mais une image-analogie, où le mot suggère beaucoup plus qu'il ne dit. Le tour de force est

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<sup>43</sup>L. S. Senghor, Qu'est-ce que la Négritude?, Etudes Françaises, Montréal, Vol.III, no.1, fév. 1967, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>45</sup>L. S. Senghor, Liberté I: Négritude et Humanisme, p. 24.

<sup>46</sup>L. S. Senghor, Qu'est-ce que la Négritude?, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

le langage africain...

d'autant plus aisé que les langues négro-africaines sont des langues concrètes, dont tous les mots, par leurs racines, sont chargés d'un sens concret émotif. Au-delà du signifiant, il faut, toujours, voir le signifié. La surréalité gît sous la réalité".<sup>48</sup>

These are, essentially, the specific cultural "Negro-African realities" which Senghor wishes to present to the world as "une pierre d'angle dans l'édification de la 'Civilisation de l'Universel', qui sera l'oeuvre commune de toutes les races, de toutes les civilisations différentes - ou ne sera pas".<sup>49</sup> He reaffirms the same idea elsewhere: "Je pourrais dire: c'est notre revanche. Mais le temps de la revanche est passé, celui de la négritude militante où il fallait s'opposer pour se poser. Nous sommes au temps de la convergence panhumaine".<sup>50</sup>

Négritude is therefore at one and the same time, a thing in itself (blackness), an idea or conglomeration of ideas, and a comportment. According to Senghor, as quoted above, this comportment naturally changes with historico-political development, as in the event of

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> L. S. Senghor, Liberté I: Négritude et Humanisme, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> L. S. Senghor, Qu'est-ce que la Négritude? p. 20.

decolonization. Négritude was, for Senghor, refusal of the Other, a position which Sartre incorporates into a Hegelian dialectical relationship between the affirmation of white supremacy, the thesis posited by the white man, in opposition to which and in refusal of which the black man posits Négritude. At this stage, Négritude is negation, but is seen as "le temps faible d'une progression dialectique"<sup>51</sup> by Sartre, who then expands and qualifies his statement by saying:

Mais ce moment négatif n'a pas de suffisance par lui-même et les Noirs le savent fort bien; ils savent qu'il vise à préparer la synthèse ou réalisation de l'humain dans une société sans races. Ainsi la négritude est pour se détruire, elle est passage et non aboutissement, moyen et non fin dernière.<sup>51</sup> (...) Un pas de plus et la Négritude va disparaître tout à fait: ce qui était le bouillonnement ancestral et mystérieux du sang noir; le nègre lui-même en fait un accident géographique; le produit inconsistant du déterminisme universel.<sup>52</sup>

Sartre had already described Négritude as "l'être-dans-le-monde-du-Nègre",<sup>53</sup> as a "racisme anti-raciste"<sup>54</sup> through which the black man was historically destined to pass. But even though Sartre assimilates the black race with his concept of a world-wide proletariat, it would be erroneous

<sup>51</sup>J. P. Sartre, Orphée Noir, p. 280.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

to see his vision of a "société sans races" as one in which the black man's specificity will be challenged or even lost. For, he sums up the anger, the suffering ("Passion")<sup>55</sup> and the racial consciousness of the black man as the expression of a desire to abolish "les privilèges de notre race, de notre couleur, de nos techniques",<sup>56</sup> indeed "des privilèges ethniques d'où qu'ils viennent".<sup>57</sup> For even though one can speak of a universal man or of a world civilization, one must face the fact that the world is made up of 'particular' men and of 'particular' civilizations.

### C. Négritude and its Opponents

Négritude has had numerous detractors, both black and white. Most of the criticism from whites originates in Southern Africa, and we do not feel it necessary to explain the reasons for that. But, in fact, the bulk of the critics of Négritude are black, particularly English-speaking blacks, who accuse the movement of being too preoccupied with the past and with myth, to the detriment of the future and of truth. Frantz Fanon, the Martiniquan,

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

accused the exponents of Négritude of exchanging "l'erreur blanche" -- the obsequious mimicry of western culture -- for "le mirage noir" -- the looking back to the African past, which, in Fanon's opinion, will not solve the problems of the future. Others have called for a replacement of Négritude by a concrete socio-economic policy such as Pan-Africanism should ideally be, for, they argue, Négritude has outgrown its usefulness. It is our intention, therefore, before finally returning to Césaire, to give a review of the opposition to Négritude, in the hope that such this introduction will help the reader to gain a better understanding of Césaire's writings.

As a socio-political concept, Négritude, as we have seen, is the expression of the assimilated Negro in French or former French territories, torn between an attachment to European culture and an appurtenance to African culture. We stress the Frenchness of the movement, for whereas the French set out to replace the indigenous identity of their colonized subjects with a French identity, the British never set out to do the same in their African colonies. Indeed, more often than not, they considered the mimicry of their culture and way of life as outrageous. This fact undoubtedly explains why the English-speaking African, on the whole, has not lost his African-ness or Negro-ness, and also explains why he is so critical of French-speaking

black intellectuals who feel the need to stress their Negro-ness. In a criticism of Négritude, the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka jested that "the tiger does not speak of his tigritude",<sup>58</sup> thereby arousing the wrath of Léopold Senghor:

. . .le tigre ne parle pas de sa tigritude parce qu'il est une bête. Mais l'homme, lui, parle de son humanité parce qu'il est homme et il pense. Les Anglais parlent de la 'civilisation anglo-saxonne', et en plein Nigéria, et ils ont raison. Les Français parlent de la 'civilisation française' quand ce n'est pas de la 'latine' ou de la 'gréco-romaine', et nous y applaudissons. Mais nous, militants de la négritude, nous parlons d'abord, de la négritude, parce que nous sommes nègres et, partant, des hommes qui pensent.<sup>59</sup>

The barb about Anglo-Saxon civilization in Nigeria proves Senghor's anger, and little else. But the rest of the statement gives rise to a number of interesting points. Firstly, it is claimed by some that the mere fact of talking about one's négritude is in itself a concession to the white race, which has had no need to form a 'whiteness' movement. However, we must not forget that the fact of belonging to a particular racial or ethnic group is significant only in so far as one is conscious of it, or

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<sup>58</sup>W. Soyinka, as quoted by Senghor in Qu'est-ce que la négritude?, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup>L. Senghor, Qu'est-ce que la négritude?, p. 19.

made conscious of it. A second, and rather more convincing point is the criticism made by Soyinka and the South African, Ezekhiel Mphahlele, that Négritude is preoccupied with a romantic and often misleading view of Africa, "symbol of innocence, purity and artless primitiveness".<sup>60</sup> Making the point that "if African culture is worth anything at all, it should not require myths to prop it up",<sup>61</sup> Mphahlele contends that the "apostles" of Négritude "have set it up as a principle of art" to the point of "self-enslavement":

We should not allow ourselves to be bullied at gunpoint into producing literature that is supposed to contain a négritude theme and style....We must strive to visualise the whole man, not merely the things that are meant to flatter the Negro's ego.<sup>62</sup>

Neither Soyinka nor Mphahlele deny the historical validity of Négritude as a protest against European encroachment and as an assertion of African humanity and culture. The past is of importance to both of them, for "it clarifies the present and explains the future, but it is not a fleshpot for escapist indulgence, and it is totally dependent on the sensibility that recalls it".<sup>63</sup> Too often does a

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<sup>60</sup>E. Mphahlele, in African Literature and The Universities (ed. G. Moore), Ibadan, University Press, 1965, p. 23.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>63</sup>W. Soyinka, 'The Writer in a Modern African State', in The Writer in Modern Africa (ed. Per Wästberg), Africana Publishing Corp, New York, 1969, p. 19.

fascination with the past distract us from the present, and may indeed be the admission of a failure to deal with the problems of the present.

Another point which arises from Senghor's outburst against Soyinka is his obvious attachment to the French language. We see absolutely nothing wrong in that, but his barb about Anglo-Saxon civilisation in Nigeria is more likely to rebound on him when we read as strong a "Défense et Illustration de la langue française" as the following statement:

En réalité, ce à quoi répugnent certains écrivains et intellectuels négro-africains de langue anglaise, c'est, avec le mot, la thématisation de la négritude. En somme, ils nous reprochent notre culture française, avec ce que cela comporte: goût de l'analyse, conceptualisation, invention verbale etc.<sup>64</sup>

After reading that, we should have little wonder as regards to why Emmanuel Mourier refers in his book L'Eveil de l'Afrique Noire to certain members of the African élite as "des Latins renforcés". But no one doubts, least of all Soyinka and Mphahlele, Senghor's reasons for using French to express his ideas. Naturally, the use of French means that these ideas are far more likely to reach a wide audience than if a tribal language is used; the use of French would mean the breaking down of tribal, national and international

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<sup>64</sup>L. Senghor, Qu'est-ce que la négritude? p. 18.

language barriers. Indeed, as Senghor points out:

C'est notre situation de colonisés qui nous imposait la langue du Colonisateur, plus précisément la politique de l'assimilation (...). Comme le dit Jean-Paul Sartre, nous avons choisi les armes du Colonisateur pour les retourner contre lui. 'Les armes miraculeuses', précise Aimé Césaire.<sup>65</sup>

However, Senghor's use and defence of French reveals yet another point to us. Firstly, not only is the bulk of the literature of Négritude aimed at a foreign, i.e. European, audience, for reasons of adequate royalties and of a wider reading-public, but also this literature is not read by the broad masses of the African people, at whom such literature should normally be aimed. But since Négritude is the expression of an élite which has had much contact with European civilization, both in Africa and in Europe, and since the rural masses have had relatively little contact with Europeans (despite the fact that their lives have undergone changes because of their influence), the fact remains that these masses have not experienced the need to read such literature, which is, by and large, inaccessible to them in more ways than one. It is to the culture and civilization of the common people that the élite turns for inspiration. Therefore, contrary to the tradition in European societies, where the rank-and-file accepts the values

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<sup>65</sup>L. Senghor, Liberté I: Négritude et Humanisme, p. 399.

of the economically dominant bourgeois classes, the custom in African societies is for the élite to take part in the folklore, rites and popular ceremonies of the masses, without any apparent distinction between the two sections. However, this apparent cultural unity hides a very real economic and mental split. So when the African élite glorifies the traditional customs of the people, while at the same time promoting itself through its adherence to a Western economic base, that very glorification can be seen as a cover-up for a serious divorce between the élite and the people it governs.

That is, undoubtedly, one of the reasons prompting critics of Négritude to state that the movement has outlined its usefulness, especially in the post-colonial context. Such critics would undoubtedly like to see Négritude evolve into a movement such as Pan-Africanism, and to move away from groupings such as 'francophonie', the 'Communauté' and the Commonwealth, for, as an admirer of Négritude remarks: "La négritude est le terme d'où a jailli la source Nègre quand le panafricanisme est le terme vers lequel la construction humaine, l'élaboration dialectique s'efforcent de canaliser ce jaillissement".<sup>66</sup> In truth, Négritude does provide the African consciousness and the African loyalty demanded by

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<sup>66</sup>T. Melone, De La négritude dans la littérature négro-africaine, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1962, p. 24.

Pan-Africanism, but platitudes are not enough, for they must be accompanied by a psychological acceptance of the sacrifices involved in a movement of unity.

Extending, at this stage, the notion of Négritude to the black dispersion in the New World, we fail to see what there is to unify all these diverse elements, other than political sympathy. Cultural affinity is not enough, as the example of Africa itself shows, and as the movement towards Caribbean unity shows, though it could be a positive factor in any Pan-African or Pan-Caribbean federation. But a world-wide movement incorporating all blacks is an obvious illusion, for, despite the fact that all these peoples have at one time or another undergone the conditioning of the colonial situation, their geographical and colonial conditioning have, in most instances, offered vastly different experiences. Indeed, one may say, along with James Baldwin and Frantz Fanon, that the African, the Latin American black, the West Indian and the Afro-American resemble each other only in so far as they are defined in relation to the white man. But Césaire sees the situation differently:

Partant de la conscience d'être noir, ce qui implique la prise en charge de son histoire et de sa culture, la négritude est la simple reconnaissance de ce fait, et ne comporte ni racisme, ni reniement, ni exclusivité, mais, au contraire, une fraternité avec tous les hommes. Il existe, cependant, une solidarité plus grande entre les hommes de race noire; ce n'est pas en fonction de leur peau, mais bien d'une communauté

de culture, d'histoire et de tempérament.  
Ainsi définie, la négritude est, pour l'homme  
noir, une condition 'sine qua non'  
d'authenticité de la création dans quelque  
domaine que ce soit.<sup>67</sup>

However much we may disagree with Césaire on that point, it is in the light of that statement that we must undertake a study of his theatre, which is the portrayal of the efforts of the colonized and decolonized black man to create a new nation, based on the recognition of the singularity of his past. His play depicts the relationship of the black man of the developing nations, with the world.

"Mon théâtre, c'est le drame des Nègres dans le monde moderne,"<sup>68</sup> says Césaire. The first of his plays, Et les chiens se taisaient deals with the arrival of the hour of decolonization, the time when the black man realized the necessity to build his nation according to his own initiative and his own wishes. "L'heure de nous-mêmes a sonné."<sup>69</sup> For the West Indian, exiled and culturally alienated from Africa, the reawakening will take place simultaneously with a drawing of inspiration from Africa:

Cette Afrique Noire, la mère de notre culture  
et de notre civilisation antillaise, c'est d'elle

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<sup>67</sup> A. Césaire, as quoted by E. Eliet in Panorama de la littérature négro-africaine 1921-1962, Paris: Présence Africaine, 1965, pp. 15-16.

<sup>68</sup> A. Césaire, as quoted in interview with Nicole Zand, Le Monde, Paris, no.7071, 7 Oct. 1967, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> A. Césaire, Lettre à Maurice Thorez, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1956, p. 14.

que j'attends la régénération des Antilles;  
pas de l'Europe qui ne peut que parfaire notre  
aliénation, mais de l'Afrique qui seule peut  
revitaliser, repersonnaliser les Antilles.<sup>70</sup>

It is Africa which will help the West Indian to  
"naître à lui-même et à se dépasser lui-même".<sup>71</sup> It is  
a preoccupation with Africa, and with the future of the  
Negro race that forces Patrice Lumumba not to compromise  
with the enemies of his country's independence: "L'Afrique  
a besoin de mon intransigeance!"<sup>72</sup> for, having acquired and  
consolidated African consciousness, the black leader  
attempts to hasten the construction of his nation, bearing  
in mind all the time the peculiar legacy that colonialism  
has bestowed on the black man. It is because of the  
depths to which African consciousness and pride had sunk  
that Christophe describes his plan for the rehabilitation  
of his people as ". . .une remontée jamais vue",<sup>73</sup> while  
Lumumba expresses much the same sentiment:

Savez-vous combien j'ai de temps pour remonter  
cinquante ans d'histoire? trois mois, messieurs!  
Et vous croyez que j'ai le temps de ne pas aller  
trop vite!<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> A. Césaire, Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>71</sup> A. Césaire, La tragédie du roi Christophe, Paris, Presence Africaine, 1971, p. 23.

<sup>72</sup> A. Césaire, Une Saison au Congo, Paris, Seuil, 1967, p. 100.

<sup>73</sup> A. Césaire, La tragédie du roi Christophe, p. 59.

<sup>74</sup> A. Césaire, Une Saison au Congo, p. 34.

Césaire, after dealing with the difficulties and obstacles to the rise of racial consciousness, a 'sine qua non' in the independence struggles of the black peoples, then goes on to portray the urgent and extremely difficult tasks faced in the reconstruction period after independence. For, having stated the "singularité de notre situation dans le monde", Césaire asks:

Qu'en résulte-t-il, sinon que nos voies vers l'avenir, je dis toutes nos voies, la voie politique comme la voie culturelle, ne sont pas toutes faites; qu'elles sont à découvrir, et que les soins de cette découverte ne regardent que nous?<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>A. Césaire, Lettre à Maurice Thorez, p. 8.

CHAPTER II  
TRAGEDIES OF DECOLONIZATION

Over the ages, tragedy has portrayed the clash between man and superior forces, but the nature of these forces has varied according to the preoccupations of the particular age. In seventeenth century France, for example, the tragedies of Racine and Corneille reflected the preoccupation of the ruling classes with the inner workings of human nature, and depicted, in numerous cases, the conflict between the hero's love and his duty to his country or family. In the twentieth century context of the decolonization of Third World countries, the Césairian hero experiences no such conflict of duty. He is hero, not only because he is a leader, but because of the political outlook which he holds, and, accordingly, because of the absolute passion with which he pursues his political goal - that of nation-building. He is a tragic hero because of the impossibility of satisfying his absolute wishes. It is of this impossibility that Christophe speaks:

. . . ce peuple doit se procurer, vouloir, réussir  
quelque chose d'impossible! Contre le Sort,  
contre l'Histoire, contre la Nature!<sup>1</sup>

However, as will be seen, the fate of the individual hero,

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<sup>1</sup>A. Césaire, La tragédie du roi Christophe, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1971, p. 62.

his individual sentiments and conflicts do not have the importance they had in classical tragedy, for, however great or superhuman efforts of the heroes may be, their fate merely symbolizes the collective destiny of their peoples. They are, in Césaire's view "des hommes-symboles",<sup>2</sup> and it is with this view in mind that we shall study Césaire's tragedies of decolonization.

Bearing in mind that, for Aimé Césaire, the matrix of political construction in black countries is racial consciousness and the realization of the singularity of the problems of the black man conditioned by his singular past, we are led to see in his theatre the efforts of national leaders to develop in their own people a consciousness and mental structures favoring the creation of a social reality which would correspond to the particular needs of the black man. For, as Aimé Césaire himself points out:

Il me semble que le salut des pays sous-développés ne sera assuré que lorsque les habitants auront dépassé leur stade actuel de manque de conscience.<sup>3</sup>

In Césaire's view, the creation of a viable system for the amelioration of the lot of the black man can come about only

<sup>2</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by Nicole Zand, Le Monde, Paris, no.7071, 7 Oct. 1967, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by P. Laville, 'Aimé Césaire et Jean-Marie Serreau: un acte politique et poétique', in Les Voies de la Création Théâtrale, Paris, C.N.R.S., 1970, p. 24.

through decolonization, and for two fundamental and interrelated reasons. The first arises from the contention that "le régime colonial est négation de l'acte: négation de la création",<sup>4</sup> and must be removed before the colonized man can regain his initiative. The second reason is founded on the necessity for self-confidence and dignity, for Césaire stresses elsewhere the fact that "il n'y a pas de dignité sans liberté. Nous préférons la pauvreté dans la liberté à la richesse dans l'esclavage".<sup>5</sup>

But independence is not, and cannot be, an end in itself; it is the means whereby the black man can attain social and economic emancipation. Independence is the means chosen to destroy the colonial system, as Sékou Touré emphasises:

Lorsque nous disons 'décolonisation', nous entendons détruire les habitudes, les conceptions, la façon d'agir du colonisateur (...). Nous considérons notre souveraineté non pas comme une fin en soi, non pas comme une étape terminale, mais comme un moyen au service du développement de notre société et, en définitive, c'est lui et lui seul qui règle nos choix et nos options politiques.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>A. Césaire, 'L'homme de culture et ses responsabilités', 2<sup>e</sup> Congrès des Ecrivains et Artistes Noirs (Rome), 1959, quoted in Présence Africaine, Paris, no.24-25, février-mars 1959, pp. 117-118.

<sup>5</sup>A. Césaire, 'La pensée politique de Sékou Touré', Présence Africaine, Paris, no.29, Déc. 1959 - Jan 1960, pp. 65-66.

<sup>6</sup>Sékou Touré, as quoted by A. Césaire 'La pensée politique de Sékou Touré', pp. 67-69.

It is independence which guides the actions and words of the Césairian heroes, Le Rebelle, Henry Christophe and Patrice Lumumba, but they are condemned beforehand because of their visions of the future, because of their refusal to accept the present as definitive. It is because of these visions that they are far ahead of their people. The gap between the visions of the leader, determined to hasten the decolonization process, and to make up in the shortest possible time the delay in the development of his nation, and the short vision and resignation of his people, is what, essentially, brings about the downfall of the Césairian leader. In view of the urgency of the problems of national reconstruction, it will be seen that the leader of a newly independent black nation has a tougher than average task as a national leader, for, in Christophe's words, the common feature of the ex-colonized black nations is the fact that their peoples have been dragged down into "la raque de l'histoire".<sup>7</sup> Independence, for these nations, can only mean taking advantage of their liberty to extricate themselves from that position. It entails additional duties towards the nation, over and beyond those normally expected of a decolonized people, and especially, it entails duties to the whole black race:

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<sup>7</sup>A. Césaire, La tragédie du roi Christophe, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1971, p. 98.

Je demande trop aux hommes! Mais pas assez aux nègres . . . Tous les hommes ont mêmes droits! J'y souscris. Mais du commun lot, il en est qui ont plus de devoirs que d'autres. Là est l'inégalité. Une inégalité de sommations, comprenez-vous? A qui fera-t-on croire que tous les hommes, je dis tous, sans privilège; sans particulière exhonoratation, ont connu la déportation, la traite, l'esclavage, le collectif ravalement à la bête, le total outrage, le vaste insulte que tous, ils ont reçu, plaqué sur le corps, au visage, l'omniant crachat! Nous seuls . . . , vous m'entendez, nous seuls, les nègres! Alors, au fond de la fosse! . . . C'est là que nous crions; de là que nous aspirons à l'air, à la lumière, au soleil. Et si nous voulons remonter, voyez comme s'imposent à nous, le pied qui s'arcboute, le muscle qui se tend, les dents qui se serrent, la tête, oh! la tête, large et froide! Et voilà pourquoi il faut en demander aux nègres plus qu'aux autres: plus de travail, plus de foi, plus d'enthousiasme, un pas, un autre pas, encore un autre pas et tenir gagné chaque pas! C'est d'une remontée jamais vue que je parle, Messieurs, et malheur à celui dont le pied flanche!<sup>8</sup>

The internal problems of independent nations - coups d'état, revolts, political intrigues, clashes of civilisations, and of modernity and tradition - are aggravated, and in many cases, provoked, by the aggressive manoeuvring of the former colonial powers, eager to lay hands on and retain the primary resources of the independent nations. Therefore, the national leader has, at one and the same time, to outplay external aggression, and to hasten the political maturity of his people who have not yet thrown off attitudes inculcated in them by years of colonial rule. Such a step

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

signifies the necessity to complete independence by a rejection of the spirit of colonialism, represented by resigned and obsequious attitudes towards the values, thought and traditions of the former oppressors. The efforts of the leader to make independence meaningful to his people, to make national liberation a completely new step, and not just another step are highlighted in Césaire's tragedies, but it is not the destiny of the individual hero that is of prime importance, it is the collective destiny of black nations as seen through the fate of their leaders.

It is in the light of this "coincidence" between the destiny of a leader and that of his people that we can understand how, for Césaire, the outstanding example of political Négritude is to be found in the Haitian War of Independence (1793-1804),<sup>9</sup> which was the only successful slave rebellion in history. The first leader of the slaves, Toussaint Louverture, to whom Césaire refers as "le premier grand leader anticolonialiste que le monde ait connu",<sup>10</sup> owes his greatness, in Césaire's view, to the fact that his

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<sup>9</sup>The Haitian War of Independence against the French was led, first of all, by Toussaint Louverture, until his exile and imprisonment by the French in 1802. His successor, Dessalines, led his people to independence in 1804.

<sup>10</sup>A. Césaire, Toussaint Louverture, Paris, *Présence Africaine*, 1961, p. 189.

efforts towards freeing Haiti were unsupported by any foreign political theory, and were very largely aided by his own people, from whom he drew his inspiration. The example of Haiti is important for us because the problems of Haitian independence are essentially those of any present-day black independent nation, and because the Haitian experience lays down certain guidelines for us to follow.

The rise of Toussaint Louverture was, indeed, not so much the rise of one man, as of a class, the black peasantry, determined to do away with the old order of caste and race. When Toussaint was captured by French in 1802, he realized that the struggle of his people would go on until final victory without him. Césaire even contends that Toussaint was aware that he had outlived his usefulness as a leader, for, in the author's view, a revolutionary leader lasts only so long as he can be useful to the revolution. It is difficult to explain in any other way Toussaint's willingness to go to negotiate with the French, despite constant warnings that he would be captured. The knowledge of their dispensability to the cause of national freedom is a characteristic of two of Césaire's heroes, Le Rebelle and Patrice Lumumba, and, to a lesser extent, of Henry Christophe, whose efforts set an example to his people, and whose burial, standing upright,

according to Shango custom, signifies his transcendance as a source of advice and inspiration to his successors. It is this dispensability yet this transcendance of the hero through his exemplary death that helps us to understand Césaire's conception of a hero as "voyant", "prophète" and "révolutionnaire".<sup>11</sup> Not only is there, in the death of the hero, "une semence du futur dans son échec",<sup>12</sup> but there is also in his actions the vision of the world he wishes to build:

Pour moi, le vrai révolutionnaire ne peut être qu'un voyant. Je suis de ceux qui intègrent l'utopie dans la révolution, et je ne veux pas tomber dans le schéma qui consiste à dire: il y a des révolutionnaires et il y a les utopistes. Evidemment, ma conception de révolutionnaire c'est toujours quelqu'un qui est en avant; il y a donc un prophétisme qui est la première démarche révolutionnaire.<sup>13</sup>

The second guideline laid down by the Haitian experience is that of the necessity of popular consciousness, both racial and political, in decolonization, but particularly in the second stage of that process, which is nation-building. For, in 1804, with the rise of Haiti to independence, there was the almost simultaneous fall

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<sup>11</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by Nicole Zand, Le Monde, Paris, no.7071, 7 Oct. 1967, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

in the consciousness of that dynamic class of the revolutionary war, the black peasantry, and the failure of the Haitian people, in the unprecedented position of being able to start afresh, to seize the initiative offered by Independence and to choose and develop the institutions fitting its image as the first black country to cast off the chains of European colonialism. The singular past of black nations in the New World, populated, in the majority of cases, by transplanted ex-slaves or their descendants, exiled from Africa and living in surroundings which constantly remind them of their humiliating past, necessitates the re-rooting of these people, a familiarization with surroundings which they must accept willy-nilly and where they must build their future. In Césaire's view, the obliteration of the colonial past, and the construction of the future, the passage from non-identity to identity, must, in the case of black peoples, be accompanied by a reassumption of African culture. Haiti was to have been an example for other black peoples to follow, but, generally speaking, failed to live up to its vocation as the forerunner of black socio-economic independence. Now, in the twentieth century context of decolonization, it is up to the newly-independent black nations to take up the challenge.

The failure to take up the challenge of independence is, in itself, linked with the third guideline laid down

by Haitian independence, the idea that liberty, without the initiative and the means of putting it into effect, is a sham. It will be seen, as we hope that our study of La tragédie du roi Christophe will show, that even though the question of land reform was the main divisive factor in the first ten years after Haiti's independence, such a reform was a red-herring, and that what decolonization necessitated then, and still necessitates, is a "tabula rasa" of all redundant colonial groups and privileges, so that the mass of people will benefit, not just a group of parasites.

The similarity of the Haitian experience and that of modern black nations is indeed striking, and shows Césaire's clear understanding of the indissoluble links of the past and the future which has yet to be built. For Césaire proposes a contemporary and future view of colonial and post-colonial situations, based, as in the post-colonial examples of La tragédie du roi Christophe and Une Saison au Congo, on real events and characters of the past. The problems faced in the first decade of the nineteenth century by Henry Christophe are, essentially, those faced by the leader of any recently decolonized black nation:

Le Roi Christophe incarne la négritude affrontée à trois problèmes: problème métaphysique de la race elle-même; problème politique qui est celui de la charge d'avoir un état à construire; problème humain, qui est celui de l'adaptation

deal with the awakened political consciousness of a black slave. Caliban, in Une Tempête, declares to his mulatto fellow-slave, Ariel, that he is no longer prepared to follow the path of patient non-violence and of receiving token concessions from his white master, Prospero. In fact, he tells Prospero himself that he is no longer willing to fit the image imposed on him by colonial ideology as being congenitally inferior and subservient, and that the hour of freedom is nigh:

Il faut que tu comprennes, Prospero:  
des années j'ai courbé la tête  
des années j'ai accepté  
tout accepté:  
tes insultes, ton ingratitude  
pis encore, plus dégradante que tout le reste,  
ta condescendance  
Mais maintenant c'est fini!  
Fini tu entends!<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to Caliban, the hero of Et les chiens se taisaient, Le Rebelle, has already undertaken his revolt, and is in a cell, relating the highlights of his actions. For him, the phase of consciousness contrasted with the resigned attitude of his fellow West Indian slaves, which he describes as:

La nuit et la misère, camarades, la misère  
et l'acceptation animale, la nuit bruissante  
de souffles d'esclaves dilatant sous les pas  
du christophore la grande mer de misère, la  
grande mer de sang noir, la grande houle de  
cannes à sucre et de dividendes, le grand

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<sup>16</sup>A. Césaire, Une Tempête, Paris, Seuil, 1969, p. 88.

océan d'horreur et de désolation. A la fin,  
il y a à la fin . . . .<sup>17</sup>

At the end, there is violent revolt, the break from the attitudes of the past, and the first step towards decolonization, the ripening of popular consciousness.

In the case of Caliban, this revolt is accompanied by an emphatic rejection of the slave identity imposed on him by the white colonizer, Prospero; the name Caliban is replaced by X, which signifies a separation from the oppressor's system, and a wish to start a new and independent life from scratch:

Eh bien, voilà: j'ai bien décidé que je ne serai plus Caliban . . . .Je te dis que désormais je ne répondrai plus au nom de Caliban . . . .Eh bien, y a que Caliban n'est pas mon nom. C'est simple! . . .C'est le sobriquet dont ta haine m'a affublé et dont chaque rappel m'insulte . . . . Appelle-moi X. Ça vaudra mieux. Comme qui dirait l'homme sans nom. Plus exactement, l'homme dont on a volé le nom. Tu parles d'histoire. Eh bien, ça, c'est de l'histoire, et fameuse! Chaque fois que tu m'appelleras, ça me rappellera le fait fondamental, que tu m'as tout volé et jusqu'à mon identité! Uhuru!<sup>18</sup>

This problem of identity is one that the West Indian slave, Le Rebelle, shares also, for exiled as he is from Africa, only the Mother Continent can tell him his name, but his return there is beyond the reach of possibility.

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<sup>17</sup>A. Césaire, Et les chiens se taisaient, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1956, p. 27.

<sup>18</sup>A. Césaire, Une Tempête, p. 28.

He asserts the identity of a freedom fighter, of a rebel, so as to efface his slave identity: "Mon identité: offensé; mon prénom: humilié; mon état: révolté; mon âge: l'âge de pierre . . . .Ma race: la race tombée".<sup>19</sup> He is conscious, above all, of the need to uplift his race after the violence of uprootment from Africa, of slavery and of colonialism. Unlike Caliban, who is prepared to wait for the right moment to kill Prospero, and who is even willing to make a compromise with his desire for freedom by temporarily allying himself with two white drunken sailors, Trinculo and Stephano, who had been shipwrecked on his island, Le Rebelle decides to put an immediate and violent end to the master/slave relationship by murdering his own paternalistic master. For him, the only good colonizer is a dead one. Such violence, as Sartre points out, is not "la résurrection d'instincts sauvages, ni même un effet de ressentiment",<sup>20</sup> but is a positive step towards forging a new identity for the colonized. The passage from non-identity to identity is in this case operated by a psychologically-cleansing murder, ridding the colonized man both of his oppression and of the colonized mentality within himself. In Fanonian and Sartrian terms, decolonization,

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<sup>19</sup>A. Césaire, Et les chiens se taisaient, p. 68.

<sup>20</sup>J-P. Sartre, in preface to Fanon's Les damnés de la terre, Paris, Maspéro, 1968.

as a reply to the intrinsically violent system of colonialism, involves a violence which creates a new kind of man out of the colonized man, and facilitates the birth of a nation. It is of this kind of birth that Le Rebelle speaks as he relates the murder of his master:

La chambre du maître était brillamment  
éclairée, et le maître était là, très  
calme . . . .C'était moi, c'était bien moi,  
lui disais-je, le bon esclave, le fidèle  
esclave, l'esclave esclave, et soudain ses  
yeux furent deux navets apeurés les jours de  
pluie . . .je frappai, le sang gicla: c'est  
le seul baptême dont je me souviens  
aujourd'hui.<sup>21</sup>

This is the moment when, in Césaire's words, "la vieille négritude...se cadavérise, (...) la négraille assise inattendûment debout".<sup>22</sup>

It was Fanon who argued that the second stage of decolonisation, nation-building, is facilitated by a violent first stage, "ce mortier travaillé dans le sang et la colère",<sup>23</sup> which binds the oppressed community together and commits the individual, both in his own eyes and in the eyes of his comrades. That hatred and revolutionary politics should go together is one of the

<sup>21</sup>A. Césaire, Et les chiens se taisaient, p. 71.

<sup>22</sup>A. Césaire, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, p. 147.

<sup>23</sup>F. Fanon, Les damnés de la terre, p. 51.

basic laws of any national liberation movement. But Le Rebelle fails to mobilise his people by his exemplary action, and is unable to extend the revolt beyond that of his own individual revolt. His failure is in fact directly linked with Césaire's own views on revolutionary violence:

. . . Il faut se garder de la mystique de la violence. Il n'y a pas dans l'hécatombe une vertu telle qu'elle puisse fonder la cité. On aura pris l'effet pour la cause. Et si la guerre, comme rien d'autre, cimenter l'indépendance, ce n'est pas par la vertu du sang répandu, mais par la vertu de la mobilisation passionnelle qui a rendu un peuple capable de répandre son sang.<sup>24</sup>

Le Rebelle's failure is linked with his failure to communicate effectively to his people the necessity of violence as a phase in the revolt against colonization, and he was rejected by his own people because they had been told by the oppressors that his violence was an end in itself. However, Le Rebelle, despite his failure to relate effectively with his people, did see violence only as a means to an end. His role of "voyant" and "prophète", as visionary, his necessity of seeing present action always as a function of the future, required that the violent anti-white attitude give way to the task of nation-building. Hatred, needed to kindle the flames of revolt, must be replaced by guarded construction:

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<sup>24</sup>A. Césaire, 'La pensée politique de Sékou Touré', p. 66.

Ressentiment? non; je ressens l'injustice, mais je ne voudrais pour rien au monde troquer ma place contre celle du bourreau et lui rendre en billon la monnaie de sa pièce sanglante.

Rancune? Non. Haïr c'est encore dépendre. Qu'est-ce la haine, sinon la bonne pièce de bois attachée au cou de l'esclave et qui l'empêtre....<sup>25</sup>

However, the creation of new men, of a new nation, from the material of transplanted slaves must be accompanied by a rooting of these people in their place of exile. Uprooted slaves must become, in a short time, re-rooted free men, aware of their responsibilities to themselves and to their compatriots. Such a process involves, as Edouard Glissant points out, knowledge of one's origins, of who one is, of where one is going, and, above all, of one's environment:

. . . Pour arriver à la pleine conscience de soi, l'homme commence ici par découvrir son pays; terre d'atrocités, de magnifique floraison, de bonhomie et de misère, dans ses petitessees comme dans l'éclat de son soleil!<sup>26</sup>

This is evidently what Le Rebelle has in mind when he declares that he had started his fellow-slaves on the road to political awareness by linking revolt with what Glissant calls "enracinement" and "connaissance":

<sup>25</sup>A. Césaire, Et les chiens se taisaient, p. 55.

<sup>26</sup>E. Glissant, 'Aimé Césaire et la découverte du monde', in Les Lettres Nouvelles, Paris, no.34, Jan. 1956, p. 45.

J'avais amené ce pays à la connaissance de lui-même  
 familiarisé cette terre avec ses démons secrets  
 allumé aux cratères d'hélodermes et de cymbales  
 les symphonies d'un enfer inconnu splendide  
 parasité de nostalgies hautaines.<sup>27</sup>

But violence and knowledge of one's country and one's people do not suffice to forge the new identity of the 'extra-African' black, for, in Césaire's view, race and identity are inseparable, and it is Africa which is at the centre of the black identity, it is Africa that, for Césaire, is the main source of the re-personalization of the black man in the New World. It is for this reason that Le Rebelle states: "J'ai remonté avec mon coeur l'antique silex, le vieil amadou déposé par l'Afrique au fond de moi-même".<sup>28</sup>

Tied in with the Césairian concept of the revolutionary hero as one who must act in the present as a function of the future, as one who is "voyant" and "prophète" as well as politician, is the concept of the hero with poetic intuition:

Il y a en lui du voyant et du poète....Homme  
 d'imagination, toujours au-delà de la  
 situation présente, et par là même homme de  
 foi, il est aussi l'homme d'Afrique, le muntu,

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<sup>27</sup>A. Césaire, Et les chiens se taisaient, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

à la fois l'homme qui participe à la force  
vitale (le ngolo) et l'homme du 'verbe'  
(le nommo).<sup>29</sup>

It is Africa which will give his people an identity and will inspire them, and it is on the basis of this new identity that Le Rebelle dreams of building a new society. It is with his power of the word, 'le nommo', that Le Rebelle constructs his vision. Having, first of all, used the power of the word to incite his fellow rebels to violence on the night of his master's murder, - with those words "de poix et d'embuscade"<sup>30</sup> which his mother feared so much because of their murderous inhumanity -- Le Rebelle evokes the beauty of the world that he is preparing through his revolt:

Je bâtirai de ciel, d'oiseaux, de perroquets, de  
cloches, de foulards, de tambours, de fumées  
légères, de tendresses furieuses, de tons de  
cuivre, de nacre, de dimanches, de bastringues,  
de mots d'enfants, de mots d'amour, d'amour, de  
mitaines d'enfants, un monde notre monde....<sup>31</sup>

Despite his efforts to awaken the consciousness of his people, Le Rebelle goes to his death without the satisfaction of seeing them take up arms against the oppressors. But his death, resulting from the gap between the

<sup>29</sup>A. Césaire, on back cover of Une Saison au Congo, Paris, Seuil, 1969.

<sup>30</sup>A. Césaire, Et les chiens se taisaient, p. 71.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

far-sightedness of his vision and the resigned short-sightedness of his fellow slaves brings to mind two essential features of the Césairian hero, and these are to be seen in the light of Sartre's definition of the first black leader and his revolt:

Il se veut phare et miroir à la fois; le premier révolutionnaire sera l'annonciateur de l'âme noire, le héraut qui arrachera de soi la négritude pour la tendre au monde, à demi prophète, à demi partisan, bref un poète au sens précis du mot 'vates'.<sup>32</sup>

First of all, the hero's solitude increases in proportion to the increase of the gap between his visions and the static outlook of his people. But *Le Rebelle* is aware, early on in the play, of the necessity of his solitude, and fully accepts it as a consequence of his actions:

Et laissez-moi crier à ma suffisance le bon cri saoul de la révolte, je veux être seul dans ma peau (...). La statue que nous sommes en train d'ériger, camarades, la plus belle des statues. C'est pour les coeurs absolus avec sur les bras notre très grand désespoir à force de frémir, dans l'air lourd et dégagé d'oiseaux, la plus belle des statues,<sup>33</sup> la seule où ne pousse pas l'ortie: la solitude.

Secondly, fully cognizant of the absolute impossibility of achieving his aims by himself in his own lifetime, *Le Rebelle's* vision of the nation he wishes to create is

<sup>32</sup>J-P. Sartre, Orphée Noir, p. 239.

<sup>33</sup>A. Césaire, Et les chiens se taisaient, p. 50.

subordinate to his knowledge of his dispensability to the cause, and of the transcendent value of his exemplary death. He is a "voyant" and a "prophète", and sees beyond the narrow dimensions of the present, for despite the tragedy of his death, he knows that out of his blood will spring other revolutionaries, willing to continue the struggle to achieve popular consciousness, the first stage of decolonization. So even though he dies insulting his people for their resignation, cowardice and hypocrisy, "condamnés à vivre en tête-à-tête avec la stupidité empuantie",<sup>34</sup> he is confident that his blood will fertilize the soil of revolt:

Je ne sais quel gré ce peuple me saura  
 mais je sais qu'il lui fallait autre chose qu'un  
 commencement  
 quelque chose comme une naissance.  
 Que de mon sang oui, de mon sang  
 je fonde ce peuple.<sup>35</sup>

With *Le Rebelle* going to his death on such a confident note, beaten as he is by the superior force of the legacy of attitudes inculcated in his people by colonialism, we can understand why Césaire refers to his plays as "des tragédies optimistes".<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 61-62.

<sup>36</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by Nicole Zand, Le Monde, Paris, no.7071, 7 Oct. 1967, p. 14.

B. La Tragédie du Roi Christophe

Césaire's second tragedy takes place in Haiti during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The action begins in 1807, upon the death of Dessalines, the Emperor. Dessaline's obvious successor was the black ex-slave Henry Christophe, whose suspicions that the assassination of the Emperor was the first move in a mulatto plot to take over the country, were confirmed by the offer to him by the predominantly mulatto Senate, of the post of President of the Republic of Haiti, with only vestigial powers. The substance of authority had been reserved for the leader of the Senate, Pétion. Thus, with Christophe's blunt refusal to accept "un pouvoir sans croûte ni mie, une rognure, une râclure de pouvoir",<sup>37</sup> civil war broke out, marring the third anniversary of the island's independence, and dividing Haiti roughly along the line of the Artibonite River, with Christophe to the south of it, and Pétion to the north.

But the split between the two groups was not only epidemic<sup>38</sup> in nature; it was also, and fundamentally,

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<sup>37</sup>A. Césaire, La tragédie du roi Christophe, p. 20.

<sup>38</sup>Power, both economic and political, generally lies in the hands of those in the lighter 'shade-groups! The social ladder corresponded, and still does to a certain extent, to the colour ladder, with white at the top and black at the bottom.

ideological. It centred around each group's approach to the problems of independence, and around the degree of emphasis each side placed on the particularity of the problems of an independent nation of transplanted black people. Pétion's régime was very easygoing, applying little or no coercion on his people, and in fact pursued policies the keynote of which was persuasion:

Je suis un démocrate et me veux non le chef  
mais le guide d'une nation libre. De moi  
donc la nation saura tout; c'est la nation  
que décidera et quand la nation aura décidé,  
rassurez-vous, Pétion agira.<sup>39</sup>

At a time when, more than ever before, the Haitian people was faced with immense and urgent tasks for the reconstruction of their land, one of its leaders, Pétion, was unwilling to drive them to success, and this was borne out by his land policy. Until Pétion's time, Haiti had not known small properties, since one of the destructive features of the colonial agricultural system had been large estates, which, were later nationalized and retained as State property by Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines. Giving the reason that he would stimulate the interest of his people in the land, and that he wished to reward those who had fought for the freedom of their country, Pétion undertook a policy of parcelling the land out to ex-soldiers

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<sup>39</sup>A. Césaire, La tragédie du roi Christophe, p. 47.

and to the peasantry, then left them very much to their own devices. On the other hand, the keynotes of Christophe's policies were hard work, iron discipline, and a sense of urgency. Whereas Pétion seemingly conceived of national goals as being subordinate to individual freedom, Christophe viewed liberty as being synonymous with freedom from French domination, and as the sole chance for the black race to regain its initiative and to give itself new stature after centuries of slavery and humiliation. For a nation of transplanted ex-slaves, with no new identity to match the independent status of their island, this liberty signified work of unparalleled ardour. Hence Christophe's emphatic message to the Senate in Port-au-Prince, rejecting Pétion's ideology:

Dites-leur que je regrette . . .qu'ils n'aient pas compris qu'à l'heure actuelle et au milieu de nos traverses le plus grand besoin de ce pays, de ce peuple qu'il faut protéger, qu'il faut corriger, qu'il faut éduquer, c'est . . .la liberté sans doute, mais pas la liberté facile! Et c'est donc d'avoir un État....Quelque chose grâce à quoi ce peuple de transplantés s'enracine, boutonne, s'épanouisse....Pourquoi ne pas le dire, quelque chose qui, au besoin par la force, l'oblige à naître à lui-même et à se dépasser lui-même.<sup>40</sup>

In order for independence to be meaningful, it is necessary for there to be an eradication of those institutions which served the purposes of colonialism and

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-23.

subjugation, and for them to be replaced by institutions suited to the specific needs of an independent people. Along with this shake-up, there must also be a new attitude towards national construction, on the part of both leaders and people. It will be seen that neither Pétion nor Christophe went nearly far enough in one or the other of these necessary changes. Pétion may well have been sincere in his desire to see the people take a more active interest in the land, and his move to parcel the land could possibly have given the average Haitian peasant the self-confidence so badly needed for nation-building. Certainly, it was a step away from the military-style discipline of plantation slavery and away from the chain-gang atmosphere prevailing on the State plantations under Dessalines and Christophe. But it is more likely that Pétion was pursuing personal objectives, and forestalling a revolt against himself by paying the long overdue wages of his large standing-army in the form of land-allotments. His easygoing policy may well have been influenced by fear of a return to the rigours and tyranny of Dessalines' régime, but it is more likely that the expression of such fears was the pretext for reserving power for the mulatto factions. So, even though Pétion did try to reform the land-system in a stated attempt to give the Haitian peasant more self-confidence and pride, the old system of power-groups and the economic

subjugation of the black peasantry to the mulattoes, continued as under colonialism.

The fact is that, to a large extent, Pétion's policy did respond to the wishes of a broad cross-section of the peasantry, for we hear Le Deuxième Paysan complain:

Je me dis . . . que si nous avons rejeté les Blancs à la mer, c'était pour l'avoir à nous, cette terre, pas pour peiner sur la terre des autres, mêmes noirs, l'avoir à nous comme on a une femme, quoi!<sup>41</sup>

Later on, Le Premier Paysan aims the complaint specifically at Christophe's system of State-supervised plantations:

"Je crois à la terre que je travaille de mes bras et que le gros roi ne veut pas donner à nos bras".<sup>42</sup> The Haitian peasantry, having worked on the land of overlords all their lives, equated independence with the right to work their own land, for which they fought so hard. But independence did not change their work attitudes, and the effect of land distribution in the North was the lowering of agricultural production and the recourse to subsistence farming, a characteristic feature of the present-day agricultural economy of Haiti. "Je vois d'ici l'anarchie du petit mil et de la douce patate dans le parcellage menu",<sup>43</sup> says

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

Christophe, for the psychological legacy of slavery had been such that the average black peasant farmer continued to see material need in terms of himself, his family and his estate, to the detriment of overall national goals. Even though the land policy had been reformed, there was not the necessary psychological transformation to accompany such a reform. Hence Christophe's lament for the lack of a national consciousness, and, concomitantly, of racial consciousness:

Qu'est-ce que ce peuple qui, pour conscience nationale, n'a qu'un conglomérat de ragots! Peuple haïtien, Haïti a moins à craindre des Français que d'elle-même! L'ennemi de ce peuple, c'est son indolence, son effronterie, sa haine de la discipline, l'esprit de jouissance et de torpeur.

Messieurs, pour l'honneur et la survie de ce pays, je ne veux pas qu'il puisse jamais être dit, jamais être soupçonné dans le monde que dix ans de liberté nègre, dix ans de laissez-aller et de démission nègre suffiront pour que soit dilapidé le trésor que le martyr de notre peuple a amassé en cent ans de labeur et de coups de fouet.<sup>44</sup>

For Christophe, the future of both Haiti and the black race is at stake, and he sees the need to drive his people to success. For him, independence does not mean a continuation but a change in the life-style of his people. Such a task cannot, in his view, be left to the people; it is up to the leader to push his people to do in the

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

shortest time possible what others have done in centuries:

Bougre! Les autres ont fait à petits coups de siècles. Où est pour nous le salut, si ce n'est que nous ferons nous - à grands coups d'années, à grands ahons d'années?<sup>45</sup>

Now that independence has been achieved, it is hard work that Christophe sees as moulding his collection of ex-slave subjects into a solid nation. It is work that will create something capable of giving his people a national pride, for even though independence had been won through violence, "élevé de nos mains et cimenté de notre sang",<sup>46</sup> as Christophe puts it, violence had not managed to give to his people a new identity. In fact, it was the violence of the war years that had ruined the physical environment that needed to be reconstructed: "Poussière! Poussière! Partout de la poussière! Pas de pierre! De la poussière! De la merde et de la poussière!"<sup>47</sup> But, above all, the human atmosphere also left much to be desired. For, it is a fact that even the most popular and successful revolution leaves in its wake bitterness, envy and hostility, and it is also a fact that even though violence may have successfully destroyed former institutions, it does not always create an atmosphere

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

conducive to the construction of viable substitute institutions. The contention here is not that violence is irrelevant to decolonization, nor that it is wrong, but that the new society does have to be built by those who lived in the old society, and who experienced its demise. At any rate, in the case of Haiti, violence did not eradicate the old power-groups, and did not efface the antagonisms between the black peasantry and the mulattoes, a fact about which Christophe remarks:

Pauvre Afrique! Je veux dire pauvre Haïti!  
C'est la même chose d'ailleurs. Là-bas, la  
tribu, les langues, les fleuves, les castes,  
la forêt, village contre village, hameau  
contre hameau.

Ici, nègres, mulâtres, griffes, marabouts,  
que sais-je, le clan, la caste, la couleur,  
méfiance et concurrence, combats de coqs, de  
chiens pour l'os combats de poux!<sup>48</sup>

Christophe's attempt to give his nation a coherent and original identity was twofold. The first part of it involved, as we have said, hard work. Like the leader of any underdeveloped country, he called upon his people to make the sacrifices and to provide the indefatigable labour needed to put a nation on its feet. Christophe wanted something which would signify "l'annulation du négrier",<sup>49</sup> which would make his people realize that they too could accomplish

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

magnificent feats, and it was towards that purpose that he had an enormous Citadel built on a sheer hill side:

Mais oui, ingénieur, à chaque peuple ses monuments! A ce peuple qu'on voulut à genoux, il fallait un monument qui le mît debout. Le voici! Surgie! Vigie!<sup>50</sup>

Whereas, for Le Deuxième Paysan, "le meilleur lève-corps" was nothing more than "un petit coup de clairin sec",<sup>51</sup> for Christophe the best "lève-corps" was hard work. Military discipline was imposed on all agricultural labourers, who were kept in strict surveillance by Christophe's hand-picked Royal-Dahomets. The keynote of Christophe's régime was, therefore, that "la liberté ne peut subsister sans le travail".<sup>52</sup>

Unfortunately, the tragedy of Christophe's policy as regards the equation, Work = Liberty, was that the peasantry was unable to see the difference between his demands and those of their former slave-masters. This was a problem of which even those at Christophe's court were aware:

Deuxième Dame: . . .Cela ressemble terriblement à quelque chose que nous avons bien connu jadis et que pour votre honneur, Monsieur Vastey, vous avez combattu. Jadis.

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

Vastey: Eh! L'Histoire pour passer n'a parfois qu'une voie. Et tous l'empruntent!

Première Dame: Si bien que celle de la liberté et de l'esclavage se confondraient.

Deuxième Dame: Le charmant paradoxe! En somme, le roi Christophe servirait la liberté par les moyens de la servitude!<sup>53</sup>

Unfortunately, even if Christophe's ideas were good, it was his method that caused his downfall. His problem was that of any leader of an underdeveloped country: how to maintain contact with the masses, while still driving them forward to success. Before independence, that problem was easy to solve, since the leader lived with the people and was close to his followers. After independence, leaders have to act deliberately so as to emphasize their identification with the people, so as to remain one of them. But Christophe, like many a great man, was an overweening egotist, and his energy and ambition neither understood nor brooked a lesser determination than his own. Above all, he was a soldier, whose watchword, "Mon épée et mon droit",<sup>54</sup> ruled his every plan. Christophe, who elsewhere had said: "Je ne suis roi ni par la grâce de Dieu ni par la volonté du peuple, mais par la volonté et la grâce de mes poings",<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

was unable to throw off his military background, and demanded that his people be as mechanical and as systematic as a well-disciplined army. Instead of trying to rationalize his relationship with the masses, he reduced them to a military state. Thus, where Pétion suggested and persuaded, Christophe decreed and backed up his decrees with military force. When Pétion distributed land, but left the power-structure virtually untouched, Christophe reinforced the State capitalism started by Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines, and then instituted a feudal monarchy, with the intention of strengthening his own power and establishing a strong government capable of pushing his people to success.

But the idea of accentuating the differences between his régime and that of Pétion was also at the back of his mind. The institution of monarchy was not only for personal prestige and vanity, but was a tool of his ideology, and of his concern for the whole black race. Vastey is emphatic on this point:

Que disent les Blancs de France? Que Pétion et Christophe sont deux fous. Les Français, voyez-vous, n'ont pas de respect pour les républiques. Napoléon l'a bien montré! Et qu'est-ce Haïti! Même pas une, mais deux! Deux républiques, Monsieur....Le monde entier nous regarde, citoyens, et les peuples pensent que les hommes noirs manquent de dignité! Un roi, une cour, un royaume, voilà, si nous voulons être

respectés, ce que nous devrions leur montrer.  
Un chef à la tête de notre nation. Une  
couronne sur la tête de notre chef!<sup>56</sup>

In actual fact, Christophe's particular brand of monarchy was an integral part of his policy of strong rule. His was a feudal monarchy, but with a difference. Whereas in European medieval feudalism the King was "primus inter pares", Christophe reserved for himself the sole right of dispensing royal favours to his nobles, whom he named, and whose very position and property were dependent on the King's whim. The comment by the Présentateur-Commentateur in the historical introduction preceding the first act could be misleading:

Roi comme Louis XIII, Louis XIV, Louis XV  
et quelques autres. Et comme tout roi, tout  
roi vrai, je veux dire tout roi blanc, il  
créa une cour et s'entoura d'une noblesse,<sup>57</sup>

for Christophe did set about, although rather hilariously at times, adapting the monarchic institution to Haitian conditions. Thus the burlesque ceremony in which his coronation takes place, and in which his nobility receives its nomenclature, has a very serious intention indeed, for, not only do the new titles signify a break from a slave identity, but they also correspond to genuine Haitian toponyms. As Vastey points out, titles such as Le Duc de

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

Marmelade or Le Duc de la Limonade may indeed be comical, but they are no more odd than French titles such as Le Duc de Foix or Le Duc de Bouillon. It is Christophe who explains that the motive behind the installation of the nomenclature was connected with the problem of identity:

Ces noms nouveaux, ces titres de noblesse,  
ce couronnement! Jadis on nous vola  
Nos noms!  
Notre fierté!  
Notre noblesse, on, je dis On nous les vola!  
Pierre, Paul, Jacques, Toussaint! Voilà les  
estampilles humiliantes dont on oblitéra  
nos noms de vérité.  
Moi-même votre Roi  
sentez-vous la douleur d'un homme de ne savoir  
pas de quel nom il s'appelle? A quoi son  
nom l'appelle? Hélas seule le sait notre  
mère l'Afrique!  
Eh bien, griffus ou non griffus, tout est là! Je  
réponds "griffus". Nous devons être les "griffus".  
Non seulement les déchirés, mais aussi les  
déchireurs. Nous, nos noms, puisque nous ne pouvons les  
arracher au passé, que ce soit à l'avenir!  
Allons.  
de noms de gloire je veux couvrir vos noms d'esclaves,  
de noms d'orgueil nos noms d'infamie,  
de noms de rachat nos noms d'orphelins!  
C'est d'une nouvelle naissance, Messieurs, qu'il  
s'agit!<sup>58</sup>

In contrast with Le Rebelle's "baptême", this "nouvelle naissance" takes place without violence or bloodshed, and, in contrast also with events in Et les chiens se taisaient, the forging of a new identity is undertaken with less emphasis on the universality of

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

oppression, and with more stress on the singular condition of the black man. In his role as constructor of the Haitian nation, where "le matériau lui même est à refondre",<sup>59</sup> and in his role as "voyant" and "prophète", Christophe invokes the help of Africa on the two most important occasions of his reign, for Africa is, in Aimé Césaire's view, the most important revitalizing force of the black man. The first occasion is just prior to his coronation, when he reviews the considerable tasks faced in the construction of the nation, and likens his actions to those of his Bambara ancestors, creating with the power of the word: "Secousse, puissance du dire du faire, de construire, de bâtir, d'être, du nommer, du lier, du refaire".<sup>60</sup> It is Africa, his "lieu de forces",<sup>61</sup> which will give him the strength to pursue his task. The second occasion is right at the end of his reign, when he invokes the voodoo gods, or loas, which are, according to Janheinz Jahn "forces, and in 'possession' man takes these forces into himself; intensifies his own nature, intensifies the force which he himself is. He experiences himself as universal force, strengthens

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

his being, his vital force, through communication with superhuman forces, and experiences his tie ('religio') with these forces".<sup>62</sup> Possessed with the loa, Christophe takes the life force (N'golo) of Africa, and begs for the strength to overcome his paralysis so as to be able to defend his kingdom and ideology against the invading republican forces led by Boyer, Pétion's successor. Possessed by the gods, Christophe regains his strength which throbs inside him like the beating of the "Assotor" (voodoo drum), and his actions are witnessed by the "Hounsis" (the initiated), who form a kind of voodoo choir, and then dance their response to the polymetric beat of the drum, each beat of which corresponds to a specific loa:

. . .l'impétueux colibri dans la tubulure du datura, je me suis toujours émerveillé qu'un corps si frêle puisse sans éclater supporter le pas de charge de ce coeur qui bat. Afrique de ta grande corne sonne mon sang! Et qu'il se déploie de toute l'envergure d'un vaste oiseau! N'éclate pas cage de mon pouls, battez, Le toucan de son bec brise le fruit du palmier-raphia Salut grand toucan grand tambourinaire! Coq, la nuit saigne au tranchant de la hache de ton cri Salut, coq, ahan tranchant! Le martin-pêcheur happant brin d'oriflamme par brin d'oriflamme s'invente un petit matin de soleil ivre Salut, martin-pêcheur grand tambourinaire! tambour-coq tambour-toucan tambour-martin-pêcheur tambour! mon sang audible!

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<sup>62</sup>J. Jahn, Muntu: the new African culture, New York, Grove Press Inc., 1961, p. 61.

Assotor, mon coeur, battez.  
 Mes hounsis! mes enfants! quand je mourrai,  
 le grand tambour n'aura plus de son.  
 Alors qu'il batte, qu'il batte, le grand tambour  
 qu'il me batte un fleuve de sang,  
 un ouragan de sang et de vie  
 Mon corps!<sup>63</sup>

The vocabulary used, particularly in reference to birds and to fruit, expresses hope for the future, whereas the drum-beating and the references to the toucan and the 'martin-pêcheur' reflect the revolutionary aggressiveness of the black man. The drum-beating, along with the "fleuve de sang", express the vital energy of Africa pulsating in Christophe's veins.

It is interesting to note that Césaire follows voodoo ritual in great detail. The ceremony, of which the above invocation was a part, starts with the customary invocation of Legba, symbol of life, and "the lord of roads and streets, the Hermes of the Voodoo Olympus, the protector of crossroads and doors, the protector of the herd",<sup>64</sup> and ends with Christophe's death and the appearance of Vastey dressed as Baron Samedi, guardian of cemeteries, and the most important 'loa' of death. Césaire's scrupulous attention to detail in this scene evidently owes much to his desire for realism, but

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<sup>63</sup>A. Césaire, La Tragédie du roi Christophe, pp. 143-144.

<sup>64</sup>J. Jahn, Muntu: the new African culture, p. 42.

owes as much to his wish to illustrate the validity and relevance of the African presence in the culture and life of the black man in the New World, and to his insistence on Africa as the prime hope for the re-personalization of the 'extra-African' black. After all, it was Christophe who says: "L'Afrique . . .infuse, nourrit mes os, alimente ma moelle",<sup>65</sup> and who relied on the voodoo religion even though he actively discouraged his subjects from practising it.

The reliance on Africa poses a problem for us, for at the same time as Christophe believed in the vital forces of the Mother Continent and in African tradition, he pursued a policy of mimicking European royalty: "Ce roi noir, un conte bleu, n'est-ce pas? Ce royaume noir, cette cour, parfaite réplique en noir de ce que la vieille Europe a fait de mieux en matière de cour".<sup>66</sup> The expatriate advisor from TESCO (Technical, Educational, Scientific Cooperation Organization) is a Master of Ceremonies, who has been employed by the King to raise the level of 'civilization' of his people, and to bring the standard of regal ceremony up to that of a European court. At the same time, Christophe courts the British abolitionists, Wilberforce and Clarkson, who send

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<sup>65</sup>A. Césaire, La tragédie du roi Christophe (1st edition), Paris, Présence Africaine, 1963, pp. 144-145.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

him advice and teachers from the Foreign Bible Society, and he seeks recognition of his Archbishop by the Vatican. All these actions detract from his intention to "laisser parler le génie national",<sup>67</sup> and it is Christophe's tragicomic failure to adapt his imported ideas to the Haitian situation that evokes the following statement from Aimé Césaire:

La faute essentielle de Christophe, c'est d'avoir tenté d'introduire tout artificiellement l'Europe dans son île, où elle ne peut coïncider, au lieu d'avoir imaginé une formule nouvelle qui n'emprunte à l'occident que ce qu'il peut avoir de justement assimilable.<sup>68</sup>

Christophe symbolized the West Indian, torn between Africa and Europe, the bastard of two continents, who the further he indulges in the mimicry of European civilization, the more he feels possessed by the traditions of his race. Jacques Lemarchand has this to say of Christophe's state of limbo:

En son cas personnel, il lui faut aussi prendre la mesure de tout ce qui, en lui-même, nie les 'blancs', de tout ce qui le pousse à se soumettre aux forces qui sont celles de sa race et de ses traditions. La conscience de cet échec, la lutte poussée jusqu'à l'absurde contre ce qui est sa profonde vérité font du roi

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>68</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by F. Mégret, 'Aimé Césaire a écrit le premier drame de la décolonisation', Le Figaro Littéraire, Paris, 20e année, no.1013, 16-22, Sept. 1965, p. 3.

Christophe beaucoup mieux qu'un symbole; un personnage déchiré et qui nous déchire.<sup>69</sup>

Christophe's actions reveal a contradictory movement. The first action involves a refusal of the master/slave relationship of the colonial situation, a refusal of Prospero. The second action involves identification with Prospero, as revealed in the mimicry of European regal tradition and in the way in which he militarized the plantation economy of Haiti. His visions of a Haiti which would be a paraclete for the black race made him lose all contact with an unforgiving reality, and his failure and death were the lot reserved for a visionary too far ahead of his age. In the end, all he had succeeded in doing was to reduce Haiti to a semi-colonial situation, wherein a small minority ruled with warlike ferocity over a large black peasantry. True decolonization had not taken place, as Césaire places the Haiti of Christophe in true perspective when he states:

Le combat contre le colonialisme n'est pas terminé si tôt qu'on le croit et parce que l'impérialisme aura été militairement vaincu.... Bref, il ne saurait s'agir pour nous de déplacer le colonialisme ou d'intérioriser la servitude. Ce qu'il faut, c'est le détruire, l'extirper au sens propre, c'est-à-dire en arracher les racines, voilà pourquoi la décolonisation vraie sera révolutionnaire ou ne sera pas.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>J. Lemarchand, 'La tragédie du roi Christophe d' Aimé Césaire', in Le Figaro Littéraire, Paris, 20<sup>e</sup> année, no.906, 20-26 mai 1965, p. 16.

<sup>70</sup>A. Césaire, 'L'homme de culture et ses responsabilités', p.

C. Une Saison au Congo

Like the preceding play, Une Saison au Congo is based on real historical events. It relates, with scrupulous attention to detail and to genuine political speeches of many of its protagonists, the tragic events surrounding the accession to independence on 30th June 1960, of the former Belgian Congo (now known as Zaïre). The events of the play start at the end of 1959, with the release from prison of Patrice Lumumba, leader of the Mouvement National Congolais (M.N.C.) which had won the recent elections, and with his departure for Brussels, where the constitutional Round Table Conference of the Belgian authorities and of the Congolese political parties, set the date for independence. The play then goes on to relate the subsequent highlights of the Congo tragedy, with the chronological limit being the beginning of 1961: there is the formation of the first Congolese government with Lumumba as Prime Minister and Kasavubu<sup>71</sup> (known in the play as Kala-Luba) as President, the proclamation of independence, the mutiny of the Congolese-manned but Belgian-led Force Publique, and its transformation

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<sup>71</sup>Kasavubu was the political and spiritual leader of the Bakongo tribe whose political wing was ABAKO (Association des Bakongo pour l'Unification, l'Expansion et la Défense de la Kilonga), formed in 1950 by Edmond Nzeza-Landu, and originally a purely cultural society which gained adherents partly because of the fear that the Bakongo would be swamped by the influx of other tribes coming into the industrially booming Leopoldville.

into the Armée Nationale Congolaise (A.N.C.), the Belgian military invasion under the pretext of protecting expatriates, the secession of the Congolese provinces of Katanga and South Kasai under Tshombe (known in the play as Tzumbi) and Kalonji respectively, the intervention of United Nations forces at Lumumba's request, the simultaneous attempts by Kasavubu and Lumumba to dismiss each other, Mobutu's (Mobutu is known as Mokutu in the play) subsequent dismissal of both parties, the re-imprisonment of Lumumba and his removal to Katanga, where he was assassinated. Behind all these events, there are many forces which drive the opposing factions to attempt to enforce their wishes by means of violence. The main forces are Belgian colonialism, the derisory neutrality of the United Nations under its Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, tribalism, manipulation of the Church.

Another characteristic feature of both La tragédie du roi Christophe and Une Saison au Congo is that the central characters, Christophe and Lumumba, are both heads of nations, and are filled with a desire for the re-creation of their peoples. But the characterisation of the two leaders is not balanced, and they are not of equal value. Christophe is undoubtedly the outstanding character of a play to which he gives the title, but the same cannot be said of Patrice Lumumba. He is not the complex, ambiguous or the

pathetically clownish figure that is Christophe. Indeed, Césaire himself says:

Je n'ai pas voulu écrire un 'Lumumba'. 'Une Saison au Congo', c'est une tranche de vie dans l'histoire d'un peuple. Je m'arrête avec la venue de Mobutu, point de départ d'une saison nouvelle. La première saison est terminée.<sup>72</sup>

Like Christophe, Lumumba is "un homme-symbole",<sup>73</sup> whose trials, errors and sufferings represent those of his people and whose destiny symbolizes the collective destiny of Africa and of the whole black race in the struggle for independence. The merging and indissolubility of the individual destiny of the leader and the collective destiny of the people is the topic of discussion between Mokutu and a companion in an African bar in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa):

Un Homme: . . . n'empêche pas que nous ne travaillions pas pour le sort d'un homme, mais pour le sort d'un pays!

Mokutu: . . . camarade, tu ne t'es jamais demandé ce qui arriverait si le sort d'un homme et le sort d'un pays se confondaient, non?<sup>74</sup>

It is precisely because the fate of the people is seen

<sup>72</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by Nicole Zand, Le Monde, Paris, no.7071, 7 Oct. 1967, p. 14.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>74</sup>A. Césaire, Une Saison au Congo, Paris, Seuil, 1967, p. 16.

through that of the individual, and because it is the fate of the collective that is at stake that Césaire's theatre can be termed as epic. Epic, too, in so far as the role of the individual Lumumba is undivorceable from that of any other African leader, and particularly in so far as Lumumba views the problems of the Congo as inseparable from those of Africa. Not only are the problems Lumumba faces in the Congo a microcosm of the problems of Africa but the "saison" which we witness is of utmost importance for the future of the whole continent.

For, let us not forget that at the time of the independence of the Congo in 1960, Africa as a whole had succeeded in throwing off the colonial yoke in many countries, among them Ghana and Guinée, and expressed the will and the wish to pursue a policy of non-alignment, free from the pressures of allegiance to the ex-colonial powers and from alignment to the Eastern Bloc. It was a trying time for Western imperialism, seeing the primary resources of the emergent nations beginning to slip out of their grasp. The Congo was the testing ground for a policy of neocolonialism which saw in Lumumba's desire for absolute independence a threat to its existence and expansion. Patrice Lumumba also saw the Congo as a testing-ground for independence, and as working-material to be used to prove that the African could run his own

affairs and could create a viable political structure:

Camarades, tout est à faire, ou tout est à  
refaire, mais nous le ferons, nous le referons.  
Pour Kongo . . . Je demande l'union de tous!  
Je demande le dévouement de tous! Pour Kongo!<sup>75</sup>

But, above all, he sees his task of reconstruction in the context of the attempts of Western imperialism to regain control of Africa and to stifle the efforts of its leaders to regain national self-determination. Lumumba is fully aware that already existing political and tribal divisions will be exploited by the enemies of Congolese independence bent on maintaining economic control of that nation: "Tout. Nous aurons tout, et en même temps! Et tout de suite. La révolte, le sabotage, la menace, la calomnie, le chantage, la trahison",<sup>76</sup> but sees the menace to the Congo as only part of a larger menace to Africa as a whole. Should the Congo fail to repulse these threats, then the rest of Africa could fall prey to imperialist greed:

J'ai à vous raconter l'Afrique! Aïe! Afrique!  
Les yeux, le dos, le flanc! Europe, tes  
serres! Amérique, ton bec! Asie! Asie! Ah! ce  
pourchas de fiente et de rostres! L'Afrique est  
comme un homme qui, dans le demi-jour se lève,  
et se découvre assailli des quatre points de  
l'horizon! Je vois l'Afrique assaillie de toutes  
parts d'oiseaux rapaces, elle ne s'est pas plus  
tôt garée de l'un, que l'autre est sur lui, de son  
bec ruisselant.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

Should the Congo hold its ground and stave off the onslaught on its sovereignty and self-determination, then the bastions of economic exploitation and accomplished racism in Southern Africa would have their foundations severely shaken. Therein lies the greatness of Patrice Lumumba: that he knew that his struggle was not only that of his people, but also that of all Africans and, that his victory would mean the establishment of the unity of African nations. Césaire is emphatic on this point:

Patrice Lumumba, lui, voit bien  
 au-delà, et c'est sa grandeur.  
 Au-delà de ce Congo, qui avec ses richesses et  
 ses diversités constitue déjà une sorte d'Amérique  
 au sein de l'Afrique, il aperçoit l'unité  
 africaine....C'est cette vision qui tuera  
 Lumumba aussi sûrement que la balle que lui  
 loge finalement dans la tête le mercenaire  
 belge. Oui, ses dimensions sont énormes: il  
 savait qu'il ne réussirait pas ce qu'il se devait  
 entreprendre. Il ne pouvait réussir. Il  
 était condamné. Le Congo est trop grand, trop  
 riche, trop convoité.<sup>78</sup>

Like the typical tragic hero of classical drama, Lumumba knows that his actions are condemned beforehand, and goes lucidly to his death. And like the typical tragic hero, like *Le Rebelle* and *Christophe*, his commitment to the cause of freedom, impossible at the time, was absolute and intransigent. In reply to Kala-Lubu's warning that his intransigence would lead to his downfall, Lumumba

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<sup>78</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by F. Megret, 'Pour Aimé Césaire, Lumumba fut un héros tragique', *Le Figaro Littéraire*, Paris, 21<sup>e</sup> année, no.1044, 21 April 1966, p. 7.

states defiantly: "L'Afrique a besoin de mon intransigeance! Surtout quand tant d'autres transigent sur son dos!"<sup>79</sup> Like Christophe, Lumumba had to struggle against the shortsightedness of many of his countrymen who refused to see the wider implications of the events surrounding the independence of their country. Mokutu refused to back down on his demands for military control of the country, because, as far as he was concerned, he was answerable to the Congo alone, and not to Africa. Nor was Lumumba able to prevail over the tribal divisions of his people which were encouraged by the Belgian colonialists in the infamous policy of 'Divide and Rule'. His failure in this field is illustrated by the recrudescence of tribal warfare between the Lulus and the Balubas, and pinpointed by the following outburst of Le Tribaliste Mukongo, who sees in independence the opportunity for tribal revenge:

Peu importe! Donnée ou arrachée, ce que je sais, c'est que maintenant que nous avons Dipenda, il faudra que tous les Bengalas rentrent dans leurs villages. Le pays est gâté avec tous ces Bengalas-là!<sup>80</sup>

In fact, one of the main causes of Lumumba's downfall was tribal recriminations. Lumumba originated from one of the

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<sup>79</sup>A. Césaire, Une Saison au Congo, p. 100.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

smaller tribes, the Mutetele, which posed no threat to any of the larger tribes, and was thus able to command supra-tribal and supra-ethnic support for his party, the Mouvement National Congolais. Unfortunately, for the young Prime Minister, however, the seat of the national government was Leopoldville, which was right in the centre of the predominantly Bakongo region. Lumumba's support came mainly from the rural areas and from Stanleyville, and he soon found himself in conflict with ABAKO, the Bakongo party led by the Head of State, Kala-Luba. It is essential to bear in mind that Bakongo society was characterized by a monarchic conception of leadership, which in turn was based on support by the Kimbangist religious denomination, founded by the Congolese prophet Simon Kimbangu (L'Église de Jésus-Christ sur terre par son prophète Simon Kimbangu). So, the leader of ABAKO party is considered not only as a kind of monarch, but also as holding his power from Kimbangu. It was the fanatical support of his Bakongo people that permitted Kala-Luba to hold the trump-card over Lumumba, separated from the base of his support, and which made the young Prime Minister doomed to failure. The prophet of national independence as opposed to tribal allegiance, Lumumba was far ahead of his time. As in the case of Christophe, he pursued the ideal of the urgent creation of national unity, but, in so doing, lost touch with an unforgiving reality.

The conflict between tribalism and nationalism, between tradition and modernity gives rise to the problem of the varying significance of independence. For Kala-Luba, independence means the reconciliation between old and new, but, for him, tradition must still be strictly adhered to. As events later proved, his motives were not exactly sincere, as he outlined his expectations to the Congolese people on Independence Day with the following reminder:

Quant à vous Congolais, mes frères, je veux que vous sachiez, que vous compreniez, que l'indépendance, amie des tribus; n'est pas venue pour abolir la loi, ni la coutume; elle est venue pour les compléter, les accomplir et les harmoniser. L'indépendance, amie de la Nation, n'est pas venue davantage pour faire régresser la civilisation. L'indépendance est venue, tenue par la main, d'un côté par la Coutume, de l'autre par la Civilisation. L'indépendance est venue pour réconcilier l'ancien et le nouveau, la nation et les tribus. Restons fidèles à la Civilisation, restons fidèles à la Coutume et Dieu protégera le Congo.<sup>81</sup>

If respect for tribal tradition meant restoring to their dignity customs which the colonial power had maligned and disrespected, much credit is to be given to Kala-Lubu's intentions. However, such a speech prepared the ground for secession. Again, if tribal tradition encouraged the maintenance and respect of Congolese culture and nationhood, there was no reason for it to be discouraged. Unfortunately

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

for Congolese nationalists such as Lumumba, tribal tradition had, more often than not, given a helping hand to the colonial power, making a mockery of Kala-Lubu's enchanting vision of "Civilisation" and Tradition walking hand in hand with independence. A case in point is the system of tribal chieftains, through whom the Belgians imposed subservience on the masses, and which drew the following angry remark from Lumumba:

Tous ces petits potentats qui ont aidé les colonialistes à écraser notre peuple! ces chiens de garde du Belge, il faut qu'ils disparaissent et fassent place aux vraies élites....<sup>82</sup>

Kala-Lubu's remark is also interesting in that it makes a fundamental concession to the Belgians: that of acknowledging Belgian colonialism as being the bearer of Civilisation, of recognizing the imperialism's contention that its mission is civilizing. When, at the Independence day ceremony, Kala-Luba greets King Basilio (King Baudouin of the Belgians) in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration, he wittingly or unwittingly acknowledges the Belgian King's remark that the Congo was the work<sup>83</sup> of

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>83</sup>Cf. the following excerpt from Basilio's Independence Day speech: "Gloire aux fondateurs! Gloire aux continuateurs! Il (mon propos) est enfin, Messieurs, pour vous remettre cet Etat, notre oeuvre" (Une Saison au Congo, p. 27).

colonialism, that it was the creation of European civilization and technology. Lumumba himself refuses to see in independence the wish of the Congolese people to continue what had been 'created' by the Belgians, he refuses to subscribe to the idea that the Congo is now free to mould its own destiny because it had undergone a period of satisfactory apprenticeship under Belgian guidance. For him colonialism was nothing less than an imposition, and independence came because the Congolese had struggled to regain it from the colonizers. In other words, Belgian colonialism had created the Congolese nation only in so far as the Congolese people were driven together by Belgian oppression:

Sire, toute souffrance qui se pouvait souffrir, nous l'avons soufferte. Toute humiliation qui se pouvait boire, nous l'avons bue! Mais, camarades, le goût de vivre, ils n'ont pu nous l'affadir dans la bouche, et nous avons lutté, avec nos propres moyens lutté pendant cinquante ans et voici: nous avons vaincu. Notre pays est désormais entre les mains de ses enfants.<sup>84</sup>

Two viewpoints dear to Césaire's political beliefs emerge from this. The first is that colonization does not have a civilizing motive. After declaring that colonisation is "ni évangélisation, ni entreprise philanthropique, ni volonté de reculer les frontières de l'ignorance, de la maladie, de la tyrannie, ni élargissement de Dieu, ni

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

extension du Droit", Césaire goes on to emphasize the economic nature of colonialism:

Le geste décisif est ici de l'aventurier et du pirate, de l'épicier en grand et de l'armateur, du chercheur d'or et du marchand, de l'appétit et de la force, avec, derrière, l'ombre portée, maléfique, d'une forme de civilisation qui, à un moment de son histoire, se constate obligée, de façon interne, d'étendre à l'échelle mondiale la concurrence de ses économies antagonistes.<sup>85</sup>

It is because the colonial situation is one of economic privilege for the colonizer, to the detriment of the colonized, whose very subservience, in both economic and human terms, that Césaire makes the comment that decolonization is never automatic:

. . .la décolonisation n'est jamais le résultat d'un 'fiat' de la conscience du colonisateur. C'est toujours le résultat d'une poussée. Même la plus pacifique d'entre elles est toujours le résultat d'une rupture.<sup>86</sup>

Echoing Césaire's view that "de la colonisation à la civilisation la distance est infinie",<sup>87</sup> Lumumba sees the result of colonial rule as being corruption and vice, and it is in Mama Makosi's bar in Leopoldville that he gets an insight into the psychological and moral problems that he will be called upon to solve while Prime Minister:

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<sup>85</sup>A. Césaire, Discours sur le colonialisme, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1955, pp. 6-7.

<sup>86</sup>A. Césaire, L'homme de culture et ses responsabilités, p. 116.

<sup>87</sup>A. Césaire, Discours sur le colonialisme, p. 8.

Et si les oppresseurs ne laissent à l'opprimé de liberté que celle du vice?...L'Europe vint, et le Congo ne s'est pas effondré, non! pire! Le Congo est entré en décomposition. Il s'est mis à se décomposer, membre après membre, et à puer! Tout y passe: l'Etat, la famille, l'homme. Si bien que ce bouge avec sa faune interlope et mêlée, est peut-être l'image même de notre Congo actuel. De la pourriture au soleil!<sup>88</sup>

It is from all this vice that Lumumba wishes to pull the Congolese people. Not only are some of the politicians, with their laziness, treachery and corruption representative of this vice, but one of the most outstanding negative results of colonialism, Le Fou, represents the psychological damage wrought by colonialism, on the average colonized subject. Le Fou wanders around the bar, lamenting the departure of the white colonizers, whom he regarded with divine respect and consideration. He represents, above all, the damage inflicted by that subversive fifth column of colonialism, the Church:

Ah! Dieu des chrétiens, pourquoi as-tu permis que les blancs s'en aillent(...). Dieu, pourquoi as-tu fait les noirs si mauvais(...)! J'ai descendu le fleuve pour retrouver les hommes blancs qui ont quitté mon village, et je ne les ai point retrouvés; les blancs ont quitté le village et les hommes noirs sont mauvais! Les hommes noirs sont maudits de Dieu....<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>A. Césaire, Une Saison au Congo, p. 52.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., pp. 53-54.

Thus, Lumumba's tasks are outlined. He has to create a nation out of a mentally damaged people, out of a people divided by tribal rivalry, which even the struggle for independence did not manage to weld firmly together.

However, Lumumba comes to the rapid realization that the means whereby he could undertake a struggle on all fronts against national disunity do not exist. He remains undaunted, for, as Césaire declares:

La grandeur de Lumumba c'est de balayer toutes ces réalités et de voir un Congo extraordinaire qui n'est encore que dans son esprit, mais qui sera la réalité de demain. Et Lumumba est grand par là parce qu'il y a toujours un au-delà chez lui.<sup>90</sup>

It is because he is acting for the future that Lumumba decides to carry on regardless. Like Christophe, his conception of power is strict and pessimistic. His ministers, like himself are "des forçats, c'est-à-dire des hommes condamnés à un travail sans fin",<sup>91</sup> entitled to no rest, and at the Congo's disposal twenty-four hours a day. Just as Christophe demanded indefatigable and devoted work, terming the creation of the Haitian nation as "une remontée jamais vue",<sup>92</sup> Lumumba demanded that

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<sup>90</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by Nicole Zand, Le Monde, Paris, no.7071, 7 Oct. 1967, p. 14.

<sup>91</sup>A. Césaire, Une Saison Congo, p. 34.

<sup>92</sup>A. Césaire, La tragédie du roi Christophe, p. 59.

national construction be considered a matter of immediate urgency:

Eh bien, bande de limaçons, oui, il faut aller vite, il faut aller trop vite. Savez-vous combien j'ai de temps pour remonter cinquante ans d'histoire? trois mois, messieurs! Et vous croyez que j'ai le temps de ne pas aller trop vite!<sup>93</sup>

Just as Christophe scoffed at the advice of the English abolitionist William Wilberforce that a nation grows like a tree, and that it must therefore be allowed to grow steadily bigger, and not forced to grow, Lumumba rejects Kala-Luba's advice to be patient, to let things take their course gently, and to step down so as to allow a more calm and "reassuring" politician to take his place:

Je hais le temps! Je déteste vos 'doucement'!  
Et puis rassurer! pourquoi rassurer! je  
préfèrerais plutôt un homme qui inquiétât,  
un inquieteur! un homme qui rendît le peuple  
inquiet, comme je le suis moi-même, de  
l'avenir que nous préparent les mauvais bergers!<sup>94</sup>

Like Christophe, Lumumba wishes to shake his people from their torpor, he wishes to force the future, and is intransigent. All this is part of his effort to snatch his nation from the greedy jaws of imperialism. But, unlike Christophe, he does not drive his people to success with tyrannical and militaristic methods, for these

<sup>93</sup>A. Césaire, Une Saison au Congo, p. 34.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

methods are beyond his reach. First of all, he is unable to gain satisfaction from the derisively neutral United Nations whom he had summoned to the Congo so as to prevent the Belgians from recovering Congolese territory. Secondly, he is unable, again because of United Nations reticence, to transport A.N.C. troops to recapture secessionist South Kasai and Katanga.

Above all, Lumumba is powerless because of the treacherous constitution, the Loi Fondamentale, imposed on him by the 'mauvais bergers' whom he mentioned above:

Le Congo de la loi fondamentale, le bicéphale Congo, l'albinos monstrueux né des fornications métisses de la Table Ronde, je <sup>95</sup> ne l'ai accepté que le temps d'un compromis.

For, the Belgian imperialists, with no intention of giving up the mineral resources of the Congo, in particular the diamonds of South Kasai and the copper, uranium, cobalt, coal, lead, tin zinc, silver and cadmium of Katanga, imposed on the Congolese government a constitution allowing for a continuation of their economic presence. Not only did Katanga produce all the above minerals, it also possessed a considerable potential for the generation of electricity, and was therefore, in every respect, economically essential to the Congo. It was a unilateral revision of the Loi Fondamentale which allowed Moïse Tshombe's CONAKAT party (Confédération des Associations du Katanga) to come to

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

power in Katanga despite being a minority party,<sup>96</sup> and to prepare the way for secession. But the Katangese example of secession had implications not only for the unity of the Congo, but for the unity of Africa as a whole. As the late Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah remarked:

Africa already has too many small states which are politically weak and not economically viable. Further fragmentation would serve only the interests of the neo-colonialists who seek to maintain their hold on Africa.<sup>97</sup>

The Loi Fondamentale also provided for a peace treaty between Belgium and the fledgling nation, whereby the former colonizers would maintain military air-bases in the Congo. As subsequent events proved, such a treaty inevitably undermined the territorial integrity of the Congo, and paved the way for Belgian reoccupation. Lastly, according to Kala-Luba, the Loi Fondamentale also provided the President of the Congolese Republic with the right to dismiss the Prime Minister, even though Lumumba's party,

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<sup>96</sup>Unable to form a government in Katanga, since he did not have the required two-third majority in the Provincial Assembly, and dissatisfied because, with only 8 out of 137 seats in the National Assembly, he could demand little Cabinet representation, Tshombe threatened secession. The Belgians then unilaterally altered the Loi Fondamentale after it had already been worked out with the political leaders of the Congo as a whole, and Katanga seceded from the Congo because of Lumumba's refusal to increase Conakat's cabinet representation.

<sup>97</sup>K. Nkrumah, The Challenge of the Congo, New York, International Publishers, 1967, p. 66.

the M.N.C., had recently won the elections.

What made Lumumba a tragic hero above all is that he decided to confront and fight the internal and external enemies of his countries independence singlehanded, and openly. His iron will and persistent character was, by choice, not combined with tactical flexibility, for here was a hero who lived his ideology passionately. With a perspective view of history, he saw his role as a mission, as a "function", so when Mokutu reproached him for the blunt tone of his Independence Day speech, reminding him that one must never attack one's enemy except from a position of strength and except one is sure of making a kill, Lumumba retorted: "Il y avait un tabou à lever. Je l'ai levé!"<sup>98</sup> It was his "function" to create a free Congolese state which would be the forerunner of the African independence movement: "Ma fonction était, sur le ciel noir et l'horizon bouché, de dessiner d'un seul trait incantatoire la courbe et la direction".<sup>99</sup>

If Lumumba's weakness lay in his intransigence, his strength lay in his word. Both his strength and his weakness, however, stem from his role as "prophète" and "voyant", as M'polo points out to him:

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<sup>98</sup>A. Césaire, Une Saison au Congo, p. 30.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

M'polo: Il est certain que tu es un prophète, Patrice. Celui qui marche devant et propère. C'est là ta force et ta faiblesse!

Lumumba: Mi-louange, mi-critique, j'accepte le verdict de M'polo. Surtout s'il doit nous communiquer, ma foi, ma foi inébranlable dans l'avenir!<sup>100</sup>

This unshakeable faith in the invincibility of the idea that he incarnates, a free and united Africa is at the basis of the strength of his work:

Je n'ai pour arme que ma parole, je parle, et j'éveille, je ne suis pas un redresseur de torts, pas un faiseur de miracles, je suis un redresseur de vie, je parle et je rends l'Afrique à elle-même! Je parle et je rends l'Afrique au monde! Je parle, et attaquant à leur base oppression et servitude, je rends possible, pour la première fois possible, la fraternité.<sup>101</sup>

The play ends with the assassination of Lumumba, and the installation of Mobutu. But the ideas of Lumumba, the martyr of Congolese independence, of African freedom and of Pan-Africanism, live on. Not only did Lumumba embody the struggles and failures of African independence, he also embodies the will to accept a free and united Africa as a genuine possibility. Like Le Rebelle and Henry Christophe, Lumumba does not die with his physical disappearance. Like Le Rebelle, he recognized his

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

dispensability, but knew that his role was a vital one in the process of decolonization. His individual destiny represents only one small but important stage in the destiny of black nations. Like Christophe, he will be the source of inspiration for many generations of black leaders to come, for, in Césaire's view,

on ne peut rebâtir le Congo qu'à partir de Lumumba. Voilà le vrai sens de la pièce, et par conséquent, cet échec, au fond, c'est 'Si le grain ne meurt'.<sup>102</sup>

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that the efforts of all three leaders just studied are channelled, first of all towards the upliftment of black nations, with a particular or singular colonial past. The break from this past requires attention to the particular problems arising from the particular conditioning of the black man by the colonial situation, but, in accordance with political Négritude, all three leaders, but especially Le Rebelle and Patrice Lumumba, see the re-creation of their black nations as preparation for inter-racial fraternity, in which the black man will make his own original contribution to a universal concept of humanism. There is, in Et les chiens se taisaient, a very striking affirmation of that concept, expressed by Le Rebelle:

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<sup>102</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by Nicole Zand, Le Monde, Paris, no.7071, 7 Oct. 1967, p. 14.

Je suppose que le monde soit une forêt. Bon!  
 Il y a des baobabs, du chêne vif, des sapins noirs,  
 du noyer blanc;  
 Je veux qu'ils poussent tous, bien fermes et drus,  
 différents de bois, de port, de couleur,  
 mais pareillement pleins de sève et sans que l'un  
 empiète sur l'autre,  
 différents à leur base  
 mais oh!  
 que leur tête se rejoigne oui très haut dans l'éther  
 égal à ne former pour tous  
 qu'un seul toit  
 je dis l'unique toit tutélaire!<sup>103</sup>

Césaire's plays must thus be seen within his formulation of Négritude, as being neither racism nor a rejection of Europe, but as a rejection of colonial Europe, and its derisory and incessant insistence on humanism:

. . .jamais l'Occident, dans le temps où il se gargarise le plus du mot, n'a été plus éloigné de pouvoir assumer les exigences d'un humanisme vrai, de pouvoir vivre l'humanisme vrai - l'humanisme à la mesure du monde.<sup>104</sup>

The struggles of black peoples to achieve new dignity after a lengthy period of colonial rule, is, for Césaire, inseparable from the struggle of men of all races to free themselves from tyranny, hatred and fanaticism.

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<sup>103</sup>A. Césaire, Et les chiens se taisaient, pp. 57-58.

<sup>104</sup>A. Césaire, Discours sur le colonialisme, p. 58.

CHAPTER THREE  
COLONIZER AND COLONIZED

As we have seen, the fundamental role of the leader in Aimé Césaire's dramatic works is to prophesy, to announce and to prepare the coming to maturity of his people, having finally thrown off the chains of colonialism and regained their historical initiative. Independence is seen, not as an end in itself, nor as a panacea for all ills, but simply as a means whereby the black man can at last work to create a social reality corresponding to his own needs and aspirations, and whereby, consequently, he can re-order his relationship with other men. It is our intention in this chapter to examine more closely, primarily through Césaire's fourth and latest play, Une Tempête, the colonial situation and its derivatives, so that we may gain an understanding of the ways in which Césaire considers colonialism and its psychological legacy to be a negation of the black man's right to initiative and to personality. For, in Césaire's view, even though we have not and cannot possibly have any idea of what the colonized would have been without colonization, we do see the results of colonization:

Le grand reproche que l'on est fondé à faire à l'Europe c'est d'avoir brisé dans leur élan des civilisations qui n'avaient pas encore tenu toutes leurs promesses, de ne leur avoir pas

permis de développer et d'accomplir toute la  
richesse des formes contenues dans leur tête.<sup>1</sup>

As is illustrated in all four of Césaire's plays, the fact is that colonization, in its bid to suppress and exploit the colonized, has alienated them to a great extent from the social, cultural and technical mainstream of the world.

As Georges Balandier points out in his Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique Noire, no study of colonial society can be divorced from an understanding of the overall conditions of the colonial situation, and he goes on to define the main conditions as follows:

La domination imposée par une minorité étrangère 'racialement' et culturellement différente, au nom d'une supériorité raciale (ou ethnique) et culturelle dogmatiquement affirmée, à une majorité autochtone matériellement inférieure; la mise en rapport de civilisations hétérogènes: une civilisation à machinisme, à économie puissante, à rythme rapide et d'origine chrétienne s'imposant à des civilisations sans techniques complexes, à économie retardée, à rythme lent et radicalement 'non chrétiennes'; le caractère antagoniste des relations intervenant entre les deux sociétés qui s'expliquent par le rôle d'instrument auquel est condamnée la société dominée; la nécessité, pour maintenir la domination, de recourir non seulement à la force, mais encore à un ensemble de pseudo-justifications et de comportements stéréotypés.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, observed as a historical phenomenon, the condition of

<sup>1</sup>A. Césaire, Culture et Colonisation, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup>G. Balandier, Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique Noire, Paris: P.U.F., 1955, pp. 34-35.

the black man within the colonial situation is one of conflict, in which stand face to face a series of dynamic opposites: master/slave; oppressor/oppressed; white/black; rich/poor; "Christianity/paganism"; "competitive society/static society".\* Bearing in mind Césaire's view of colonialism as being an exercise in economic exploitation, and as being a system whereby the colonizer acquires economic privilege, our study of his dramatic works will show that the colonizer exploits the above differences in an attempt to emphasize his separateness and his superiority, rather than strives to minimize the differences with a view to creating a society for the mutual benefit of both groups. A study of Une Tempête, will, it is hoped, provide an insight into the dynamics of the relationship between colonizer and colonized, and will elucidate the dramatist's viewpoint.

Une Tempête is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's play, The Tempest. But, in adapting this play, Césaire remains faithful to his description of his theatre as "le drame des Nègres dans le monde moderne",<sup>3</sup> for he brings to the Shakespearean model four significant modifications of characterization, and one of plot. As regards characterization, in Césaire's version, Prospero becomes a white master,

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<sup>3</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by Nicole Zand, Le Monde, Paris, no.7071, 7 Oct. 1967, p. 14.

\*It is with irony that we include the last two items of conflict, which figure primarily in colonialist vocabulary.

exploiting Caliban, who is now a black slave, while Ariel, a buffer between the black slave and the white master, becomes a mulatto slave. The fourth modification is the introduction of the rebellious African god, Eshu, who is an important deity of the religion of the land of the Yoruba, and an 'orisha' (similar to the Haitian 'loa') of the Cuban equivalent of voodoo, Santería. Thus the stage is set for a view of the colonial situation as it refers to the black man. The final significant modification, that of the plot, is the refusal of Prospero to return to Italy at the end of the play, whereas, in the Shakespearean original, he opted to return home. The significance of that will be discussed later. However, even though the play presents important modifications so as to suit the colonial situation in a black country, there is no coincidence in the choice of a Shakespearean play for a portrayal of that situation. Our reasons for so stating are twofold. First of all, there existed before Shakespeare's time, in Renaissance drama, imitations of Roman comedies in which the theme of slavery figured largely. The conditions of Elizabethan England, founded on hierarchical social categories, facilitated the adaptation of the ancient comic design to contemporary drama. Bernard Knox, in an article entitled "'The Tempest' and the Ancient Comic Tradition" expands on this point:

Shakespearean comedy abounds in brilliant adaptations of the basic formula: the cruel

reduction to his proper station suffered by Malvolio, who had 'greatnesse thrust' upon him; the exposure of Parolles 'the gallant militarist' as a 'past-saving slave'; above all the magnificent interpenetration of the two worlds of court and tavern in 'Henry IV'. Falstaff acts the role of the King in the Boar's Head, runs his sword through Hotspur's corpse at Shrewsbury, and sets out for London crying, 'The lawes of England are at my commandment', only to be brusquely restored to his proper station as a 'Foole and Jester'. Prince Hal, like some foundling, as his father suggests, begins as a 'sworn brother to a leash of Drawers', sounding 'the very base-string of humility', but in the end restores himself to his proper station', to mock the expectation of the world'.<sup>4</sup>

Our second reason for seeing no coincidence in Césaire's choice of a Shakespearean play is as follows. If, along with modern literary sociologists such as Lucien Goldmann, we agree that the pattern of order in the work of an individual writer is, willy-nilly, a reflection of the collective consciousness of the society in which he lives, we cannot fail to see in The Tempest a sixteenth century Englishman's view of slavery. To discuss whether or not Shakespeare endorsed the views of slave-traders and colonists would be to desert fact for speculation. But the fact of the matter is that Shakespeare wrote The Tempest around the end of the first decade of the sixteenth century, only a

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<sup>4</sup>B. Knox, 'The Tempest and the Ancient Comic Tradition' quoted in 'Commentaries' succeeding W. Shakespeare's The Tempest, New York, Signet (New American Library Inc.), 1963, p. 170.

few years after Sir John Hawkins had transported the first batch of black slaves to America. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that at that time the average European saw nothing wrong in enslaving the indigenous populations of the newly discovered lands all over the world, and it is possible to see in Caliban's refusal to be reduced to slavery a reflection of the refusal of the Indian in North America, the West Indies and in many parts of South and Central America, to be enslaved. Prospero's resentment of this refusal could, in turn, be a reflection of the resentment of European colonists towards their new subjects, and was no doubt an attitude which the typical Elizabethan audience could be expected to share. An attitude which such an audience would also share is the disapproval of attempts of those on the lower rungs of the social ladder to climb up to rungs hardly suited to their station, and this would be reflected in the colonizer's view of the immutability of the so-called savage condition of native peoples, whose desires to prove themselves equal to the colonizers were seen as 'hubris'.

Turning to the play Une Tempête itself, we can see the conditions of the colonial situation fulfilled. Prospero is a usurper of Caliban's land, he is the representative of white civilization, and possesses supernatural knowledge, which he derives from his study of books dealing with the

occult. This knowledge, represented by his books, is not only symbolic of the technically and materially superior civilization from which he comes, but also provides a contrast between his white, beneficent magic, and the black, maleficent magic of Caliban's mother, Sycorax. A distinction is made in Shakespeare's play between the evil of witchcraft, as practiced by Sycorax who is allied with the devil, and the good of magic at its best, as practiced by Prospero. In Césaire's play, this distinction is not so clear, but for a reason which we will explain later. The native population, represented by Caliban and Ariel is reduced to the role of instruments of his orders, to slaves, and, as a whole, the situation as portrayed in the play corresponds to Aimé Césaire's definition of the colonial situation:

Aucun contact humain, mais des rapports de domination et de soumission qui transforment l'homme colonisateur en pion, en adjudant, en garde-chiourme, en chicote, et l'homme indigène en instrument de production.<sup>5</sup>

Faithful also to Georges Balandier's definition of the colonial situation, Prospero resorts to pseudo-justifications in an effort to forestall Caliban's rebellion, and reminds the black slave that his presence is providential, that his usurpation of power on the island corresponds to a civilizing

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<sup>5</sup>A. Césaire, Discours sur le colonialisme, p. 18.

mission. In Shakespeare's play, Prospero considers Caliban as having a rudimentary and mindless nature, as being uneducable:

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature  
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,  
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost!  
And so with age his body uglier grows,  
So his mind cankers.<sup>6</sup>

When Prospero and Miranda remind him that it was they who taught him to speak, they also express the view once again that his nature is congenitally inferior. Miranda says to him:

Abhorrèd slave,  
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,  
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,  
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each  
hour  
One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage,  
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like  
A thing most brutish. I endowed thy purposes  
With words that made them known. But thy vile  
race,  
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which  
good natures  
Could not abide to be with.<sup>7</sup>

But whereas in The Tempest Caliban merely replies:

You taught me language, and my profit on't  
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you  
for learning me your language!<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup>W. Shakespeare, The Tempest (Act IV, sc.i), p. 105.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid (Act I, sc.ii), pp. 54-55. Many critics see these words as being uncharacteristic of Miranda, and attribute them to Prospero.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

and then obeys Prospero's orders with no complaint, Césaire's Caliban refuses to recognize the legitimacy of Prospero's position of privilege, and insults his master, who retorts:

Puisque tu manies si bien l'invective, tu pourrais au moins me bénir de t'avoir appris à parler. Un barbare! Une bête brute que j'ai éduquée, formée, que j'ai tirée de l'animalité qui l'engangue encore de toute part!<sup>9</sup>

This statement gives rise to two points of interest. First of all, in Césaire's version, Prospero does recognize that Caliban can be 'educated'. Secondly, Caliban realizes this, but also knows that the advantage held by Prospero over him - supernatural knowledge - will never be passed on. Therefore, Césaire's version emphasizes not only the fact that Caliban has learned to curse Prospero, which is evidently a sign of dissatisfaction with his position, but adapts the theme of language and education to that of the colonial situation, and emphasizes the selectivity of the education offered by the colonizer. Caliban has firm views on that:

D'abord, ce n'est pas vrai. Tu ne m'as rien appris du tout. Sauf, bien sûr à baragouiner ton langage pour comprendre tes ordres: couper du bois, laver la vaisselle, pêcher le poisson, planter les légumes, parce que tu es bien trop fainéant pour le faire. Quant à ta science,

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<sup>9</sup>A. Césaire, Une Tempête, p. 25.

est-ce que tu me l'as jamais apprise, toi?  
Tu t'en es bien gardé! Ta science, tu la  
gardes égoïstement pour toi seul, enfermée  
dans les gros livres que voilà.<sup>10</sup>

The first step towards decolonization, the realization of the mendacity of the colonizer, and the consciousness that the position of the colonizer is one of economic privilege, has been made, and the end of colonization is at last in sight. Césaire sums up this situation very precisely elsewhere:

On peut tuer en Indochine, torturer à Madagascar, emprisonner en Afrique Noire, sévir aux Antilles. Les colonisés savent désormais qu'ils ont sur les colonialistes un avantage. Ils savent que leurs maîtres provisoires mentent.<sup>11</sup>

At this stage, it is necessary for us to explain Césaire's position on the colonialist's contention that his presence represents a desire to civilize the natives, so as to gain a fuller comprehension of Caliban's retort. Césaire explained his viewpoint at length in a discourse, "Culture et Colonisation", delivered at the First Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris in 1956, and launched his attack on colonialism with the following categorical assertion: ". . .aucun pays ne peut prodiguer sa civilisation

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>11</sup>A. Césaire, Discours sur le colonialisme, p. 16.

à aucun pays colonisé",<sup>12</sup> for the colonizer's claim to a civilizing mission, replacing the native civilization with metropolitan civilization, could only express a willingness on the part of the colonizer to impart knowledge of his superior technology to his subjects, so as to allow them to gain mastery over western techniques. But experience has proven to be contrary to such a contention for the very obvious reason that a move towards equality between colonizer and colonized is totally incompatible with colonialism, which is a system requiring a relationship between exploiter and exploited. Rather, in Césaire's view, colonial policies require recognition of what Malinowski terms "le don sélectif",<sup>13</sup> whereby the native is given or introduced only to that which directly helps the work of colonial exploitation. The means by which the native peoples may take greater control over their own affairs, or may challenge the colonial hegemony, are deliberately kept from their grasp. For example, the colonial peoples are excluded from control of instruments of physical force and aggression, from total self-government, and, above all, from control of the essential riches of colonial exploitation. Colonialism is, basically, after all, the denial of the right of the native

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<sup>12</sup>A. Césaire, Culture et Colonisation, p. 196.

<sup>13</sup>Malinowski, as quoted by A. Césaire, Culture et Colonisation, p. 198.

to historical initiative.

Caliban then goes on to remind Prospero of all that he (Caliban) had done for his master:

Au début, Monsieur me cajolait: Mon cher Caliban par çï, mon petit Caliban par là! Dame! 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 . . .Caliban la brute! Caliban l'esclave! Recette connue! l'orange pressée, on en rejette l'écorce!...Je mens, peut-être? C'est pas vrai que tu m'as fichu à la porte de chez toi et que tu m'as logé dans une grotte infecte? Le ghetto, quoi!<sup>14</sup>

Prospero's reply to this adds to the gradual and systematic devaluation of the colonized native, who tortures his conscience and his life:

Le ghetto, c'est vite dit! Elle serait moins "ghetto" si tu te donnais la peine de la tenir propre! Et puis il y a une chose que tu as oublié de dire, c'est que c'est ta lubricité qui m'a obligé de t'éloigner. Dame! tu as essayé de violer ma fille!...Caliban, j'en ai assez! Attention! Si tu rouspêtes, la trique, c'est le seul langage que tu comprends; eh bien, tant pis pour toi, je te le parlerai haut et clair. Dépêche-toi!<sup>15</sup>

This dialogue reveals two problems proper to the colonial situation. The first is what Albert Memmi calls the "Nero complex", whereby the more he must degrade and humiliate the colonized so as to emphasize his superiority, the more guilty Prospero feels. Hence his accusation that

<sup>14</sup>A. Césaire, Une Tempête, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-27.

Caliban tried to rape his daughter Miranda, which amounts to nothing other than a justification for his hatred. In the colonial situation, it is always the colonized that is used as a scapegoat, and upon whom the colonizer's own complex of sexual guilt can be projected. The same can be said for the insistence of many whites, particularly in the Southern United States, who, in accusing blacks of always trying to go to bed with their women, are, in fact, in most cases, merely projecting their own repressed tendencies towards rape, incest and sadism on those whom they wish to degrade even further, and thereby to confirm their own superiority. It is interesting to note that whereas, in Shakespeare's version, Caliban does not deny Prospero's charge:

O ho, O ho! Would't had been done!  
 Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else  
 This isle with Calibans,<sup>16</sup>

Césaire leaves us in no doubt as to his feeling that Prospero's accusation stems from his own sexual guilt complex, for Caliban retorts: "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".<sup>17</sup> This manifestation of Prospero's sex-guilt is important to us

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<sup>16</sup>W. Shakespeare, The Tempest, (Act I, sc.ii), p. 54.

<sup>17</sup>A. Césaire, Une Tempête, p. 27.

in so far as it is part of his "Nero Complex", in which the more the colonized is degraded and despised, the more the colonizer feels triumphant, and the more his guilt is confirmed. But as the degradation process is accelerated, the more triumphant Prospero feels, and the more guilty he becomes, so much so that he desires the elimination of the colonized, whose very existence as oppressed confirms the role of usurper. Memmi explains in his book The Colonizer and the Colonized the dynamics of that peculiar relationship, with reference to the Roman Emperor Nero:

Nero, the typical model of a usurper, is thus brought to persecute Britannicus savagely and to pursue him. But the more he hurts him, the more he coincides with the atrocious role he has chosen for himself. The more he sinks into injustice, the more he hates Britannicus. He seeks to injure the victim who turns Nero into a tyrant. Not content with having taken his throne, Nero tries to ravish his only remaining possession, the love of Junia. It is neither pure jealousy nor perverseness which draws him irresistibly toward the supreme temptation but rather that inner inevitability or usurpation - moral and physical suppression of the usurped.<sup>18</sup>

But, in the colonial situation, once the colonizer wishes to eliminate the colonized, he also wishes to eliminate himself as a colonizer, to drop his role, for the existence of a colonizer pre-supposes the existence of colonized peoples. The Nero complex operates within a colonial

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<sup>18</sup>A. Memmi, The Colonizer and the Colonized, New York, Orion Press, 1965, p. 53.

context as follows. In order to affirm his superiority and to strengthen his feelings of domination, the colonizer sets about a systematic degradation of his colonial subjects. His feelings of triumph increase to the extent that the colonized become more and more downtrodden. As he does this, he becomes aware of his crime, he has sentiments of guilt. So, in an attempt to absolve himself, he depicts his own presence as usurper in the brightest and most glowing terms possible, while at the same time attributing the degradation of the colonized to their congenital inferiority. It is by this means that he justifies his 'civilizing mission'. In his attempt to free himself of his guilt, Prospero, like Ian Smith of Rhodesia and like the minority white racist régime in South Africa, depicts the native in the worst possible way, while at the same time portraying his own presence as being civilizing and providential in nature. For Prospero, it is because of Caliban's reluctance to be 'civilized', and because of his vile nature, that the island must remain under his (Prospero's) domination. But, in order to consolidate his own position, the colonizer is forced to widen the distance between himself and the colonized, and the 'Nero complex' process gains momentum. The more he oppresses Caliban, the more he is forced to absolve himself of his guilt, and the more he is forced to resort to justifications of his role. It may be said that

in this way the colonial situation carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Albert Memmi says that "in order to triumph, colonization wanted to serve only its own interests. But, by pushing aside the colonized man, through whom alone it could have exalted the colony, it condemned itself to remain foreign to it and thus of necessity transitory".<sup>19</sup>

Tied in with the concept of the 'Nero complex' is the creation of colonial stereotypes. As we have seen many of Shakespeare's characters, and those of The Tempest are no exception, have fixed roles and are punished when they seek to rise above their places, for, according to a Shakespearean critic, Robert Langbaum, "there is a connection in Shakespeare's world-view between biological and social rank and moral obligation".<sup>20</sup> Consequently, as we have also remarked, in order for Prospero to be a complete master, he attempts to impose upon Caliban an image whereby the slave can accept his role and accept the legitimacy of the usurper's presence. In order to exploit colonized peoples more efficiently, the colonizers undertook to reshape the identity of the native peoples, so that they become more willing instruments of their orders. To cite a

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 111-112.

<sup>20</sup>R. Langbaum in Introduction to W. Shakespeare's The Tempest, p. xxvi.

contemporary example, it is not hard to see that the cornerstone of the white minority régimes in Southern Africa is the disfigurement of the black man's reality, so that he may play the role allotted to him by the economic exigencies of those régimes. The black is thus seen by the whites, not as a man, but as a type, even as a thing, a situation which gives rise to the Césairian equation: "Colonisation = chosification".<sup>21</sup> Simultaneously, Prospero's personality is distorted to fit the role of oppressor, and, as Césaire points out, the oppressor becomes decivilized in proportion to the decivilization of the oppressed:

La colonisation travaille à déciviliser le colonisateur, à l'abrutir au sens propre du mot, à le dégrader, à le réveiller aux instincts enfouis, à la convoitise, à la violence, à la haine raciale, au relativisme moral.<sup>22</sup>

He expands on this point later on, by stating that the barbarous actions undertaken under the banner of colonialism prove that

La colonisation . . . déshumanise l'homme même le plus civilisé; que l'action coloniale, l'entreprise coloniale, la conquête coloniale, fondée sur le mépris de l'homme indigène et justifiée par ce mépris, tend inévitablement à

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<sup>21</sup>A. Césaire, Discours sur le colonialisme, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

modifier celui qui l'entreprend; que le colonisateur qui, pour se donner bonne conscience, s'habitue à voir dans l'autre la bête, s'entraîne à le traiter en bête, tend objectivement à se transformer lui-même en bête. C'est cette action, ce choc en retour de la colonisation qu'il importait de signaler.<sup>23</sup>

In turn connected with the destruction of original identities and the recreation of the identities of colonizer and colonized is the notion of the dependency complex or colonizability of the peoples of colonized nations, put forward notably by Dominique O. Mannoni in his book Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization. Mannoni's contention is that colonial situations are "primarily the results of misunderstanding, of mutual incomprehension",<sup>24</sup> and makes the amazing concession that, perhaps after all, the European colonizers should have gone about things in a different way:

European colonizers have battled successfully against hunger, sickness, slavery, ignorance - for all these evils have recoiled somewhat before their attack - but in spite of their good works they have failed to achieve friendly relations with the 'colonized', and we are now inclined to think that theirs was the wrong way to go about it.<sup>25</sup>

Having revealed his pro-colonization stand very clearly,

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>24</sup>D. O. Mannoni, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization, New York, Praeger, 1956, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-32.

Mannoni sets out to describe the colonial situation as a point of contact between two groups of people each of whose personality structure is radically different from that of the other. Using the Malagasy society as a comparison with European society, Mannoni contends that the European colonizer comes from a competitive society, in which he was unable to prove his worth, in which he was unable to stand out above his ruthlessly competitive compatriots. Hence his superior position and his affirmation of his superiority over the colonized native is his means of putting an end to his feelings of dissatisfaction, a process known as Adlerian overcompensation. On the other hand, the native comes from a static society where, according to Mannoni, the individual is safely dependent on a complicated social structure. So long as this structure remains intact, the native peoples remain content. But as soon as the structure is disrupted, as for example with the arrival of the Europeans, the native has to transfer his bonds of dependence to the newcomer. Mannoni explains: "To my mind, there is no doubting that colonization has always required the existence of the need for dependence. Not all people can be colonized: only those who experience this need".<sup>26</sup> But that is not all.

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

Mannoni delves deeper into the culture of the static society and comes up with the discovery that:

wherever Europeans have founded colonies of this type we are discussing, it can safely be said that their coming was unconsciously expected - even desired - by the future subject peoples. Everywhere there existed legends foretelling the arrival of strangers from the sea, bearing wondrous gifts with them.<sup>27</sup>

Thus the contact of civilizations provided by colonization is seen as the meeting of the white man, Prospero, acting in obedience to his vocation, to his authority complex, with Caliban, whose dependency complex is only too willing to be satisfied. As Frantz Fanon states in the chapter of Peau Noire, Masques Blancs devoted to a discussion of the dependency complex, Mannoni deserves our sincere thanks for exposing three things. Firstly, the importance of the colonizer's need to compensate for his feelings of dissatisfaction in his own society, and secondly, for pointing out later in his book the background to characters such as Prospero:

It is characteristic of this type of story - the remark applies equally, for instance, to the 'Odyssey', 'Sinbad the Sailor' and 'Gulliver's Travels' - that the hero has to face either the perils or the miseries of exile; they are either punishments or, as it were, scarecrows, the two ideas being easily linked in that of prohibition. The reason for them is usually a wrongdoing, deliberate or otherwise, and it constitutes disobedience of the gods, the customs, or more generally the father. Prospero had

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

neglected the duties of his office and had been betrayed by his brother in complicity with a King.<sup>28</sup>

In Césaire's adaptation, the point of the exile of Prospero is emphasized, and Shakespeare's version of Prospero being exiled as a result of his neglect of his duties is reinforced in Une Tempête by the actions of the Inquisition in banishing him for heresy, for pursuing research contradicting the teachings of the Holy See. Prospero is therefore a man unable to "fit in" in his society. Likewise, Trinculo and Stephano, the two shipwrecked white sailors, were antagonistic to the society they came from. Speaking of the benefits of being shipwrecked, Stephano says:

Sans compter qu'il nous débarrasse d'un tas de hurluberlus qui ont toujours empêché le pauvre monde de vivre! Paix à leurs âmes! Mais tu les aimais, toi, ces Rois, ces Ducs, toute cette noblesse? Je les servais, dame, il faut bien gagner son vin...Mais jamais, tu m'entends, je n'ai pu les blairer. Trinculo, mon ami, je suis un vieux républicain! Oui, c'est pas pour dire, j'ai les tripes républicaines! A bas les tyrans!<sup>29</sup>

Apart from these two points, Mannoni reveals a third point important to our study. Having stated that the colonizing European is greedy for psychological satisfaction, and that the dependency complex of the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>29</sup> A. Césaire, Une Tempête, p. 62.

colonized peoples meets that need, Mannoni states that dependence gives the average native a feeling of security and relieves him of the need to shoulder his responsibilities or to manifest any form of initiative. But, says Mannoni, when this desire to maintain bonds of dependency, is rejected by the colonizer, it is a lack of guidance, a sense of abandonment and disorientation that gives rise to revolt. Mannoni himself uses the following passage from Shakespeare's The Tempest to elucidate his point.

Caliban says to Prospero and Miranda:

When thou cam'st first,  
Thou strok'st me and made much of me; wouldst  
give me  
Water with berries in't; and teach me how  
To name the bigger light, and how the less,  
That burn by day and night. And then I loved  
thee  
And showed thee all the qualities o'th'isle . . . .  
. . . .and here you sty me  
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me  
The rest o'th'island.<sup>30</sup>

Mannoni, in his desire to prove that Caliban's revolt against Prospero stems from his resentment at the breaking of so-called bonds of dependency with his master, explains the above passage as follows:

You abandoned me before I had time to become your equal....In other words: you taught me to be dependent and I was happy; then you betrayed me and plunged me into inferiority. It is indeed in some such situations as this

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<sup>30</sup>W. Shakespeare, The Tempest (Act I, sc.ii), p. 54.

that we must look for the origin of the fierce hatred sometimes shown by 'evolyed' natives; in them, the process of civilization has come to a halt and been left incomplete.<sup>31</sup>

Caliban's resentment is attributed, not to his unwillingness to put up with cruel exploitation, not to his comprehension of the illegitimacy of Prospero's presence, but to a breakdown of dependence. Césaire, in Une Tempête, however, has no intention of making Caliban's revolt ambiguous. A repetition of Caliban's statement in Césaire's adaptation provides us with a useful comparison:

Au début, Monsieur me cajolait: Mon cher Caliban par çï, mon petit Caliban par lâ! Dame! 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....Caliban la brute! Caliban l'esclave! Recette connue! l'orange pressée, on en rejette l'écorce!<sup>32</sup>

There is a definite tone of bitterness, of resentment in this speech, but it is as much an expression of self-reproach for having allowed himself to be misused thus by Prospero, as it is a reproach directed at Prospero. But Césaire leaves us in no doubt as to Caliban's stand, when he tells Prospero that it is his usurping presence that inspires his revolt, and

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<sup>31</sup>D.O. Mannoni, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization, pp. 76-77.

<sup>32</sup>A. Césaire, Une Tempête, p. 26.

nothing else. Caliban has no wish to live in close proximity to Prospero; it is out of principle that he rejects the colonizer:

Au fond, si je rouspète, c'est pour le principe, car ça ne me plaisait pas du tout de vivre à côté de toi: tu pues des pieds!<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, Caliban's response is a rejection of Mannoni's interpretation of colonial revolts such as the Mau-Mau rebellion in Kenya and the Malagasy revolt in 1947 as the result of the absence of the firm guiding hand provided by European rule, as an expression of the resentment of colonized people at the breaking of their bonds of dependence with their European masters. As illustrated in a previous part of our study, Caliban then goes on to reject the image imposed upon him by Prospero, and assumes the title X. He concludes his rejection of the slave identity by simultaneously rejecting all the lies used by Prospero to justify his usurpation of the island. From now on, Caliban knows that he has the upper hand, that he has undermined Prospero's pseudo-justifications, and that victory is in sight despite the fact that the usurper's Nero complex will gain momentum and lead to further persecution. Having told him that the time of resignation is over, Caliban tells Prospero defiantly:

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

Bien sûr, pour le moment tu es encore  
 le plus fort.  
 Mais ta force, je m'en moque,  
 comme de tes chiens, d'ailleurs,  
 de ta police, de tes inventions!  
 Et tu sais pourquoi je m'en moque?  
 Tu veux le savoir?  
 C'est parce que je sais que je t'aurai.  
 Empalé! Et au pieu que  
 tu auras toi-même aiguisé!  
 Empalé à toi-même!  
 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,  
 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,  
 et cette image, je la hais! Et elle est fausse!  
 Mais maintenant, je te connais, vieux cancer,  
 et je me connais aussi!  
 Et je sais qu'un jour  
 mon poing nu, mon seul poing nu  
 suffira pour écraser ton monde!  
 Le vieux monde foire!  
 C'est pas vrai? Tiens, regarde!  
 Toi-même, tu t'y emmerdes!  
 A propos, tu as une occasion d'en finir:  
 Tu peux foutre le camp.  
 Tu peux rentrer en Europe.  
 Mais je t'en fous!  
 Je suis sûr que tu ne partiras pas!  
 Ça me fait rigoler ta 'mission'  
 ta 'vocation'!  
 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  
 Un vieil intoxiqué, voilà ce que tu es!<sup>34</sup>

Caliban refuses the colonialist's explanation of a  
 dependency complex. In reply to Prospero's question of what  
 he would do alone, Caliban retorts that he would regain

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 88-89.

possession of his island. In reply to Prospero's opinion that his destruction of the colonial structure is negative, Caliban replies that the usurper's absence is in itself a positive fact. The myth of the civilizing mission of colonialism is shattered.

It is not our contention, however, that the dependency complex does not exist. But we contend that such a complex is a result of colonialism, it does not antedate colonialism. It is inevitable that at a certain stage of colonialism the identity of the colonized has been so strongly reshaped that they accept the image imposed upon them and accept the values of the ruling ideology. The rejection of Le Rebelle in Et les chiens se taisaient by his own people takes place based on the values of the colonizer, who brainwashed the native people into believing that Le Rebelle's acts were nothing but gratuitous. The difference between Caliban and Ariel, likewise, resides in the fact that Caliban rejects his master's values, while Ariel is still bound to them, hence Caliban's retort: "C'est le vieux qui t'envoie, pas vrai? Beau métier: exécuteur des hautes pensées du Maître!"<sup>35</sup> Ariel is the patient believer in non-violence, prepared to bide his time until Prospero so pleases to hand him his liberty, which

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

had been promised to him for so long. In so acting, Ariel recognizes the legitimacy of Prospero's rule, and, like the slave-folk in Et les chiens se taisaient who refuse to rebel against their masters, he is possessed by what Césaire calls elsewhere "des peurs ancestrales", he is afraid of reprisals. The following could in fact be a dialogue between two black Americans proposing two different ideological views about the means of attaining freedom:

Ariel: "Je ne crois pas à la violence".

Caliban: "A quoi crois-tu donc? A la lâcheté? A la g nuflexion? C'est  a! On te frappe sur la joue droite, tu tends la joue gauche. On te botte la fesse gauche, tu tends la fesse droite; comme  a, pas de jaloux. Eh bien, tr s peu pour Caliban!"

Ariel: "Tu sais bien que ce n'est pas ce que je pense. Ni violence, ni soumission. Comprends-moi bien. C'est Prospero qu'il faut changer. Troubler sa s r nit  jusqu'  ce qu'il reconnaisse enfin l'existence de sa propre injustice et qu'il y mette un terme".

Caliban: "Oh l  l ! Laisse-moi rigoler! La conscience de Prospero! Prospero est un vieux ruffian qui n'a pas de conscience".

Ariel: "Justement, il faut travailler   lui en donner une. Je ne me bats pas seulement pour ma libert , pour notre conscience, mais aussi pour Prospero, pour qu'une conscience naisse   Prospero. Aide-moi, Caliban".<sup>36</sup>

Ariel's views arise from his failure to understand that Prospero's position is one of economic privilege, and that his position of usurper and his increasing need to degrade

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

the colonized are incompatible with a conscience. Like the hero of Une Saison au Congo, Patrice Lumumba, who on his own admission, wishes to die like Gandhi, Ariel's faith in human nature has no bounds. He goes on to echo Martin Luther King's famous speech in Washington in the mid-1960s' when he repeatedly said: "I have a dream" that men of all races will come together in a spirit of fraternity, and of forgiveness:

J'ai souvent fait le rêve exaltant qu'un jour, Prospero, toi et moi, nous entreprendrions, frères associés, de bâtir un monde merveilleux, chacun apportant en contribution ses qualités propres: patience, vitalité, amour, volonté aussi, et rigueur, sans compter les quelques bouffées de rêve sans quoi l'humanité périrait d'asphyxie.<sup>37</sup>

But, true to his belief that there is no dignity without freedom, and that freedom in poverty is superior to suppression in wealth (which he would not get from Prospero, in any case), Caliban has this to say to Ariel:

Mieux vaut la mort que l'humiliation et l'injustice....D'ailleurs, de toute manière, le dernier mot m'appartiendra....A moins qu'il n'appartienne au néant. Le jour où j'aurai le sentiment que tout est perdu, laisse-moi voler quelques barils de ta poudre infernale, et cette île, mon bien, mon oeuvre, du haut de l'empyrée où tu aimes planer, tu la verras sauter dans les airs, avec, je l'espère, Prospero et moi dans les débris. J'espère que tu

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

goûteras le feu d'artifice; ce sera signé  
Caliban.<sup>38</sup>

Ariel symbolizes not only the westernized middle-class in colonial or newly-independent black countries who are, in many cases, the instruments of the orders of the metropolitan countries, but also a considerable section of leaders and of the élite to be found throughout the black diaspora. Like the predominantly mulatto élite of Haiti in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Ariel acts as a buffer between the former white masters and the black population, and, believing in his master's power, is willing to wait to prove himself to Prospero so as to gain his freedom.

However, despite the marked contrast between Ariel and Caliban, there seems to be a contradiction between Caliban's outspoken demands for freedom and his fawning behaviour with Trinculo and Stephano. In fact, in the light of this, at first sight it would be difficult to differentiate between Ariel's dependency on his master, and Caliban's new dependency on the drunken sailors, who are also white. But the appearance of these sailors illustrates three interesting points for our study. The first is that as representatives of white civilization, both Trinculo and Stephano consider Caliban only for his

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

monetary value, and are interested only in what profits would accrue to them should they take him back to Europe for display purposes. In this way, we see once again the colonizer's interest in the native as being governed by economic preoccupations; the colonized is seen only in terms of his value as an instrument for the enrichment of the colonizer. Secondly, the drunken white sailors represent the Crusoe type of colonizer, in exile or shipwrecked, and whose drunken and outrageous behaviour is symptomatic of the vice of the societies from which they came. Their contribution to the native was their vice, symbolized also by their drink, for which Caliban, unfortunately, has a distinct liking. This is borne out by Stephano's comment to Trinculo when the latter objected to him offering Caliban a drink: "Egoïste....Va! Laisse-moi accomplir ma mission civilisatrice".<sup>39</sup> Even though we bear in mind Wole Soyinka's warning to avoid the evocation of a pre-colonial utopia, it is possible to see the importation of liquor to the island by Stephano and Trinculo as the importation of corrupt Western ways and entertainment, which can only serve as a sedative to the native's will for freedom, and can only corrupt his way of life. For Caliban considers wine to be divine, and

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

when he encounters Stephano with a constant supply of it, he falls on his knees before him, calls him a god, and swears that he will become his faithful servant. However, and this is our third point, he does so with one important reservation:

Eh bien, il y a que cette île m'appartient,  
 mais qu'un certain Prospero me l'a prise.  
 Je t'abandonne volontiers tout mon droit....  
 Seulement, il faudra livrer bataille à  
 Prospero.<sup>40</sup>

He is tactically flexible enough to use Trinculo and Stephano to help him to overthrow Prospero, it would seem, but the fact is that even though at this stage he is still fascinated by the white sailors, he is superior to them in two ways. Firstly, if we agree with Robert Langbaum that "there is a connection in Shakespeare's world view between biological and social rank and moral obligation", then, precisely for the reason that Stephano and Trinculo are higher up the social scale than Caliban, they are even baser than Caliban, and even more 'ridiculous' in their aspirations to go beyond their assigned rank. Secondly, Caliban recognizes his superiority to them in his contempt for their infatuation with mere brightly-coloured clothes, and insists that they pursue their murderous plot regardless. It is only then that he is able to break free from the pernicious influence of the

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

sailors, and refuse to be lulled to obedience. He now realizes, first of all, the corrupt values of the sailors, and secondly the need to liberate himself without outside help:

M'embarrasser de ces coquins! Imbécile que je suis! Comment ai-je pu croire que des ventres et des trognes pourraient faire la Révolution! Mais tant mieux! L'Histoire ne me reprochera pas de n'avoir pas su me libérer tout seul. Prospero, à nous deux!<sup>41</sup>

Apart from Prospero, Trinculo and Stephano, there is another group of representatives of western civilization worthy of note, and whose intentions, upon their arrival on Caliban's island represent the hypocritical views of many a colonizer:

Sébastien: "Faut il encore qu'il y ait des bras pour les cultiver. Est-ce que seulement cette île est habitée?"

Gonzalo: "Evidemment, tout le problème est là. Mais si elle l'est, ça ne peut être que par des gens merveilleux. C'est clair: une terre merveilleuse ne peut porter que des êtres merveilleux (...) cela nous imposerait, à nous, de nouveaux devoirs (...). Je veux dire que si l'île est habitée, comme je le pense, et que nous la colonisons, comme je le souhaite, il faudra se garder comme de la peste d'y apporter nos défauts, oui, ce que nous appelons la civilisation. Qu'ils restent ce qu'ils sont: des sauvages, de bons sauvages, libres, sans complexes ni complications. Quelque chose comme un réservoir d'éternelle jouvence où nous viendrions périodiquement rafraîchir nos âmes vieilles et citadines."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 40-41.

Gonzalo, the "liberal" colonizer, even though he declares that the natives must be respected, in fact shows his disrespect by assuming the right to colonize them, and to usurp their land. He automatically reveals his belief that his civilization is superior to that of the natives, even though he does admit that contact with these peoples necessitates new duties. His specious statement is nothing other than a declaration of the right to deny the natives their historical initiative, and of the assumption of the so-called white man's burden. On the one hand, Gonzalo may be interpreted as wishing to avoid what Mannoni says is the misunderstanding between colonizer and colonized. On the other hand, Gonzalo may also be echoing the view of R.P. Tempels, whom Césaire quotes as saying:

Il serait vraiment inouï que l'éducateur blanc s'obstine à tuer dans l'homme noir son esprit humain propre, cette seule réalité qui nous empêche de le considérer comme un être inférieur! Ce serait un crime de lèse-humanité, de la part du colonisateur, d'émanciper les races primitives de ce qui est valeureux, de ce qui constitue un noyau de vérité dans leur pensée traditionnelle etc.<sup>43</sup>

Césaire then goes on to interpret Tempels as saying that since Bantu philosophy is ontological, the natives seek satisfaction only on the ontological level, have little care for the improvement of their material and economic

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<sup>43</sup>R.P. Tempels as quoted by A. Césaire, Discours sur le colonialisme, pp. 37-38.

conditions, and want only to be respected by the colonizers. We see, therefore, that the colonizer still reserves the right to usurp the land of the native peoples for his own benefit only, without consulting those people, and at the same time intends to put them to work in his service. For him, the colonized is the instrument of his orders, and little else. This is proved later on in the play when Gonzalo expresses surprise at Caliban's unconquerable spirit:

Qu'est-ce que j'entends? Démoniaque! Vous l'avez réprimandé. . .sermonné . . .sommé et requis et vous me dites qu'il reste irréductible!...Eh bien. . .croyez en ma vieille expérience, il ne reste plus qu'à l'exorciser....'Esprit immonde, va-t'en, Au nom du Père, du Fils et du Saint-Esprit'. Pas plus difficile que ça!...Ma foi, vous aviez fichtrement raison.... Encore plus que vous ne croyiez....Ce n'est pas seulement un révolté. C'est un endurci.<sup>44</sup>

The appearance of the African god, Eshu, is also related to the findings of R.P. Tempels in the field of Bantu philosophy, for Césaire quotes Tempels as saying that since the Bantus have always viewed the white colonizers from the viewpoint of their philosophy, they readily integrated the Christian God into their hierarchy of life-forces. This is obviously very gratifying to the colonizer, who sees in this concession the first step towards acceptance of his ideology, for which Christianity

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<sup>44</sup>A. Césaire, Une Tempête, p. 86.

(such as he preaches) paves the way. However, the intrusion of Eshu into Prospero's pantheon of gods who are obedient to his every order and who justify his every action, undermines the psychological control of the colonizer's religion, and thereby questions the legitimacy of the usurper's authority:

Par cette insubordination, c'est tout l'ordre du monde qu'il remet en cause. La Divinité peut s'en moquer, elle! Moi j'ai le sens de mes responsabilités!<sup>45</sup>

In fact, Eshu's intrusion exposes the colonizer's weakness, and puts at stake the future dominance of Prospero's gods, symbolizing western religion, for, according to Janheinz Jahn, Eshu is identified by missionaries in the land of the Yoruba as the devil. Eshu's description of himself as "Dieu pour les amis, diable pour les ennemis",<sup>46</sup> only partially justifies that description by the missionaries, who perhaps fail to recognize that African divinities are not divided on a Manichaeian basis, that they are not all good or all bad. As Janheinz Jahn points out:

Unlike the European, the Yoruba does not conceive the world as a conflict between good and evil, light and darkness, God and devil. He is realistic and recognizes that all forces -- even divine forces -- have destructive as well as constructive possibilities. The secret of life,

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

then, and the purpose of orisha worship, is to establish a constructive relationship with these powers.<sup>47</sup>

This explains also in part why Caliban refuses to give up allegiance to his mother Sycorax, whose magic Prospero sees only as maleficent, as destructive. For Caliban, wishing to destroy Prospero, Sycorax's destructive possibilities are a useful weapon, whereas her constructive possibilities are used to strengthen him in his struggle with the white master. As for Eshu, in Cuba he is identified with the devil, and the dancer in the Santería ceremony who is possessed by him performs strange antics, and clowns around, playing pranks on the onlookers. This is exactly what takes place in Une Tempête, to such an extent that the other gods depart just before he himself leaves. It is his manner of delighting the spectators with his antics that prompts Eshu to say: "Et de la rigolade pour toute la compagnie".<sup>48</sup>

Another African god who is mentioned in the play is Shango, another 'orisha' of the religion of the land of the Yoruba and of Cuban Santería. He is the second son of Yemaya, goddess of the sea and mother of all 'orishas', who, when invoked, strengthens those about to go to war, for he is

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<sup>47</sup>J. Jahn, Muntu: The New African Culture, p. 64.

<sup>48</sup>A. Césaire, Une Tempête, p. 68.

the personification of masculinity and military valour.

Jahn has this to say of Shango:

An orisha is honoured not for his virtue, but for his vitality. It is the intensity of life that attracts men to Shango. When they pray to him, they share in his life force, it helps them to achieve a higher life. At the same time the forces of the orisha are rejuvenated by the prayers, and so the community helps to build up and enlarge his powers.<sup>49</sup>

Shango had acquired the art of making thunder and lightning, symbols of military strength, and just as Christophe had invoked the voodoo loas on two crucial occasions,<sup>50</sup>

Caliban seeks Shango's strength on two important occasions. The first was just after he had had his first confrontation with Prospero, and he tells his master that he refuses the slave identity imposed upon him. The second, and more crucial occasion was when he challenged Prospero to stay on the island:

Shango marche avec force  
à travers le ciel, son promenoir!  
Shango est un secoueur de feu

<sup>49</sup>J. Jahn, Muntu: The New African Culture, p. 115.

<sup>50</sup>Vide Chapter II. Not only was Henry Christophe buried upright, according to Shango custom, but, according to Pierre Laville, ". . . les personnages principaux de 'la tragédie du roi Christophe' sont bifaces. Ils sont dotés sur un plan mythique et symbolique, d'une seconde identité: Hugonin est ainsi Edshou, le dieu malin des Youroubas (...). Christophe est l'incarnation du dieu Shango, dieu du tonnerre, violent, brutal et parfois bienfaisant". ('Aimé Césaire et Jean-Marie Serreau: Un acte politique et poétique', p. 251).

chacun de ses pas ébranle le ciel  
 ébranle la terre<sup>51</sup>  
 Shango Shango ho!

At the end of the play, because Caliban dared Prospero to stay to fight, the usurper makes up his mind not to return to Italy. Earlier on, Caliban had declined his master's offer of an opportunity to kill him, because Prospero refused to stand up and fight. Caliban is content to wait to have his freedom by risking his own life, and hoping to eradicate the oppressor in combat. He refuses to have something which is his inalienable right offered to him, since to accept would be to imply his recognition of Prospero's authority. He knows that the usurper is doomed despite his insistence on not returning to Italy, for now even Ariel has taken it upon himself to reawaken the desire for freedom even among the most resigned slaves. Even though Caliban knows that Prospero has all the weapons of suppression at his disposal, he will fight on, as he reminds Stephano and Trinculo. In fact, the outlook is gloomier than that, but he remains optimistic: "Hommes et éléments contre moi! Mais bah! J'ai l'habitude....Patience! Je les aurai".<sup>52</sup> Optimistic,

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<sup>51</sup>A. Césaire, Une Tempête, p. 89.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

because, not only does he think that his mother's magic is not dead, but also in the belief that Sycorax remains a living inspiration to him, just as Africa, though downtrodden for a very long time, was and is an inspiration to its people longing for freedom:

Morte ou vivante, c'est ma mère et je ne la renierai pas! D'ailleurs, tu ne la crois morte que parce que tu crois que la terre est chose morte....C'est tellement plus commode! Morte, alors on la piétine, on la souille, on la fouille d'un pied vainqueur. Moi je la respecte, car je sais qu'elle vit, et que vit Sycorax. Sycorax ma mère! Serpent! Pluie! Eclairs! Je te retrouve partout....<sup>53</sup>

Prospero's decision to remain on the island is reminiscent of the refusal of the minority régimes in Southern Africa to give way to the wishes of the majority black populations under their control. His refusal to leave contradicts the departure of his Shakespearean counterpart, whose decision symbolizes the renunciation of power and domination. Like the white régimes just mentioned, he openly declares that he is the defender of civilization, and that such a role is in his destiny. But in accordance with his Nero complex, he promises Caliban more and more violence to meet the colonized man's violence, and in increasingly justifying his own presence, his words are belied by his actions, and become in time

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-26.

exceeding unconvincing, as Césaire's stage directions imply:

Du temps s'écoule, symbolisé par le rideau qui descend à demi et remonte. Dans une pénombre, Prospero, l'air vieilli et las. Ses gestes sont automatiques et étriqués, son langage appauvri et stéréotypé.

The future can only bring his destruction, and the return of freedom to the island, though not an immediate possibility, will take place in time. Caliban's shouts of "La Liberté ohé, la liberté!"<sup>55</sup> in the background as the curtain falls symbolizes just such a prediction.

It would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to situate Une Tempête within a strict geographical or chronological setting. It is evident that certain parts of the play refer to specific characters on the contemporary American racial scene, as is shown by the dialogue between Ariel and Caliban on the subject of violence as a means of achieving freedom, but it is a fact that each of these characters embody attitudes to be found in the colonial situation anywhere in the black diaspora. It is in this way that this play, like his other three plays, occupies a natural place in Aimé Césaire's supracontinental notion of Négritude.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

Une Tempête also presents several interesting affinities with the three other plays by Césaire. In all four of the plays, the colonizer or ex-colonizer refuses to recognize the right to freedom of the native peoples, and in all four of the plays the colonizer resorts to pseudo-justifications of his presence. Like Prospero, King Basilio in Une Saison au Congo points to a so-called civilizing mission, whereby the Congolese are subjected to a form of apprenticeship before they can be allowed to take control of their own affairs. The point is that, in fact, training was rigorously withheld from the Congolese by the Belgians, which makes talk of apprenticeship specious, hypocritical and cynical. Hypocritical and specious also are the words of L'Ambassadeur Grand Occidental<sup>56</sup> who expresses the right to control the destiny of colonized or recently decolonized nations:

Je sais bien qu'en tant que Nation, nous avons mauvaise réputation. On nous accuse d'avoir le colt facile, mais peut-on faire la politique du rocking-chair quand le monde, pour un rien, s'agite, et que les peuples entrent en

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<sup>56</sup> In Jean-Marie Serreau's production of Une Saison au Congo at the Théâtre de l'Est Parisien in 1967, according to Pierre Laville (vide 'Aimé Césaire et Jean-Marie Serreau: un acte politique et poétique', in Les Voies de la création théâtrale, II, Paris, C.N.R.S., 1970, pp. 266-268), the actor playing L'Ambassadeur Grand Occidental wore a costume bearing the stars and stripes of the U.S.A., and as he appears in one of the scenes, an immense flag bearing the inscription "JE PAIE LE PLUS CHER" is unfurled.

ébullition! Quand les peuples ne se conduisent pas en peuple décent, il faut que quelqu'un les ramène à la décence. C'est à nous que la Providence a confié cette tâche. Seigneur, merci!...Et puis, vous avez entendu comme dans l'avion, il a crié: 'A Moscou! A Moscou! 'Eh bien, qu'on le sache, on n'est pas seulement les gendarmes, on est aussi les pompiers du monde! Les pompiers préposés à circonscrire partout le feu allumé par la pyromanie communiste, Je dis 'partout'! Au Congo comme ailleurs!<sup>57</sup>

The colonizer who arrogates to himself the right to usurp the land of others in the name of divine providence, then to exploit it for himself alone, despite claims to the contrary, is also seen in Et les chiens se taisaient. The following statement by L'Administrateur about the so-called white man's burden is rivalled only by Rudyard Kipling, for not only does it declare the right of colonized peoples to be enslaved, it justifies such a right by a signal disregard for the culture of colonized peoples. Here is europocentricity at its height:

Et nous leur aurions volé cette terre?  
 Ah! non! et ce n'est pas la même chose  
 nous l'avons prise!  
 A qui?  
 A personne!  
 Dieu nous l'a donnée. . .  
 Et de fait, est-ce que Dieu pouvait tolérer qu'au  
 milieu du remous de l'énergie universelle, se  
 prostrât cet énorme repos, ce tassement prodigieux,  
 si j'ose dire ce provoquant avachissement.  
 Oui, nous l'avons prise  
 Oh! pas pour nous! pour tous!  
 Pour la restituer, inopportune stagnation, à

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<sup>57</sup> A. Césaire, Une Saison au Congo, p. 47.

l'universel mouvement!  
 Et pour que tous en profitent,  
 comme un scrupuleux fermier  
 comme un mandataire fidèle nous la garderons,  
 Peuple ingrat!  
 C'est d'ailleurs un point à se débattre s'il y a au  
 monde, en dehors de nous, quelque peuple  
 qui pense, je dis qui vraiment pense et non qui  
 rumine le confus mélange de quelque brume  
 d'idées ramenée à ras de cervelles toutes tièdes  
 de leur respiration ou de leur sommeil.  
 Ah! nous sommes seuls  
 Et quel fardeau!  
 Porter à soi seul le fardeau de la civilisation!  
 Et qui donc sans nous, recenserait les peuples et  
 comptabiliserait le monde?  
 Et voici que par nous le droit se saisissant de  
 l'héritage de l'instinct immonde, en fait à  
 l'Homme la dédicace.<sup>58</sup>

When these arguments fail, the colonizer resorts  
 to other means, such as the neocolonialist schemes of  
 western bankers and capitalists in the Congo, and the  
 attempts of France, as seen by Franco de Medina's mission to  
 Christophe, to recover Haiti. But the schemes of the  
 colonizer or ex-colonizer in Césaire's plays do not work  
 without the collaboration of certain elements of the native  
 populations, such as the church in Une Saison au Congo,  
 symbolized by Bishop Malula who denounced Lumumba in the  
 name of Christianity, and such as the Moral Rearmanent  
 movement. The latter is a Christian organization, whose  
 adherents are for the most part businessmen; their stress  
 on individualism would negate what we recognize to be the

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<sup>58</sup> A. Césaire, Et les chiens se taisaient, pp. 10-11.

need for collective activity in a nation in the process of reconstruction. Ariel, too, is instrumental in suppressing Caliban, and we have seen that in all four plays many of the blacks are as selfish and as unconcerned about the fate of their people as are the white colonizers.

Lumumba is quick to point this out:

Notre vie est à la merci du premier homme de main venu. Blanc ou noir, ça n'a pas d'importance. S'il est noir, c'est qu'un blanc lui aura armé le bras!<sup>59</sup>

Black or white, the enemies of the people are strong. Prospero possessed magic powers, while Caliban, though weak, is fortified by the knowledge and hope of final victory. The Belgians are strong, Tzumbi is also strong, and the Congolese people are weak, but, like Caliban, has great faith in the future, as Césaire reminds us:

Le joueur de sanza est l'Afrique, l'Afrique traditionnelle, le peuple africain qui survit à toutes les conquêtes, à toutes les oppressions, malgré les gendarmes, malgré le capitalisme, malgré les missionnaires, malgré tout; le peuple africain, indomptable, toujours vivant, qui pèse, qui juge, qui espère.<sup>60</sup>

As both Christophe and Lumumba point out, the native peoples have as much to fear from themselves as from their masters or former masters. The lack of confidence in

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>60</sup> A. Césaire, as quoted by P. Laville, Les Voies de la création théâtrale II, p. 251.

themselves, and in the ability of their compatriots to take control of their destiny is as dangerous a threat as that posed by external aggressors, who will merely encourage such attitudes with a view to more effective exploitation. The spate of army 'coups d'état' in newly-independent countries is symptomatic of such a lack of confidence. For, it may well be that, upon the breakdown of order in these countries, the army is the only institution with an ordered and rigid hierarchy capable of resisting anarchy and of restoring order, but its coming to power in most cases challenges the legitimacy of the new institutions and delivers a stunning blow to the morale of the people, already at a low ebb after years of colonial rule. This is essentially the argument that Lumumba uses in an unsuccessful attempt to dissuade Mokuu from staging his putsch, and from setting an unfortunate example for the rest of Africa to follow:

Lumumba: "Es-tu sincère? Crois-tu vraiment sauver le Congo? Et il ne te vient pas à l'esprit qu'en sapant ses institutions, en ruinant sa légalité, au moment même où le pays se constitue en Etat, tu lui fais courir le plus mortel danger!"

Mokuu: "Il est certain que tu aurais pu, en t'en allant de toi-même, nous faciliter la tâche. Mais il y a des choses que l'on ne peut attendre d'un politicien. Alors, je t'écarte (...). J'écarte les politiciens!"

Lumumba: "En bref, tu prends le pouvoir! Après tout tu n'auras pas été le premier colonel à faire un coup d'état. Mais attention, Mokuu!"

Le jour où n'importe quel traîneur de sabre, n'importe quel porteur de galons, n'importe quel manieur de stick se croira le droit de faire main basse sur le pouvoir, ce jour-là, c'en sera fait de la patrie."<sup>61</sup>

For Césaire, therefore, not only is colonization an attempt to deny historical initiative of native peoples but in so doing, it distorts the identity of both colonizer and colonized. Not only is colonial exploitation not civilizing, it is dehumanizing for both oppressor and oppressed. For him, colonization and civilization are incompatible, colonization is a bridgehead of barbarity:

Nul ne colonise innocemment, . . . nul non plus ne colonise impunément; . . . une nation qui colonise, . . . une civilisation que justifie la colonisation -- donc la force -- est déjà une civilisation malade, une civilisation moralement atteinte, qui irrésistiblement, de conséquence en conséquence, de reniement en reniement, appelle son Hitler, je veux dire son châtement.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>A. Césaire, Une Saison au Congo, pp. 79-80.

<sup>62</sup>A. Césaire, Discours sur le colonialisme, p. 14.

## CONCLUSION

Addressing himself specifically to real and imagined political events in those parts of the world where people of African origin are striving to forge a new birth of freedom, Aimé Césaire has introduced us to some of the many ills in the Pandora's box of colonial domination. In rejecting colonialism as the negation of creativity and civilization, he expresses the view that there is no dignity without freedom and without the right to historical initiative and personality. But, as we have seen, the freedom of which Césaire speaks is not only simple freedom from the oppressive physical presence of the colonizer, but is also freedom from psychological bonds which so many colonized or ex-colonized peoples have interiorized and accepted. Essentially, the keynote of Césaire's theatre, as of the rest of his writings, is his wish to see black peoples united, not in their acceptance of inferiority, but in their rejection of an inferior status, and in their willingness to extricate themselves with the utmost urgency from what Césaire calls "la raque de l'histoire".<sup>1</sup> Such is his basic concept of political Negritude.

All four of Césaire's plays portray the efforts of

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<sup>1</sup>A. Césaire, La tragédie du roi Christophe, p. 98.

the black man to rid himself of the colonial presence. In Une Tempête Caliban is no longer resigned to his servitude and tries to convince Ariel of the need for immediate liberty. The latter's final song of freedom and the former's conviction of the invincibility of the cause of independence, contrasting with Prospero's frantic and unconvincing final tirade, lend an optimistic note to the play. Optimistic too, in a sense, are the three tragedies of decolonization, Et les chiens se taisaient, La tragédie du roi Christophe and Une Saison au Congo, in so far as the three principal characters of those plays, Le Rebelle, Henry Christophe and Patrice Lumumba respectively, correspond to Césaire's conception of the black leader as "prophète", "voyant" and "révolutionnaire". In their eagerness to inculcate in the peoples they lead fresh attitudes towards self-realization, and to urge them to rediscover themselves and their national assets, to reinterpret their values, and to recover their creativity, these leaders were so far ahead of their peoples that their very visions and ideals cast a mantle of loneliness on them. Unwilling to compromise with these visions because of the very urgency of the restoration to dignity of the black man, they do not fit Bertrand Russell's contention that pure idealists make bad statesmen because they are too inflexible. Rather, they were fully aware of the need to be intransigent, they were aware that they would fail, but they realized

that their ideas would transcend their death. Therein lies the optimism of Césaire's theatre.

In the view of Aimé Césaire, decolonization creates a new man, and should create a new identity. In Et les chiens se taisaient, this objective was to have been attained through violence, ridding the colonized man of both his oppressor and of his own inferiority complex and fears. Simultaneous with this revolt was the process of what Glissant calls "connaissance", or the familiarization which the 'déraciné' must make with his surroundings of exile. In this play, the role of Africa as the revitalizing force of the New World black is mentioned, but not emphasized to any great extent. In La tragédie du roi Christophe, Christophe is likewise the leader of a nation of "déracinés", but in this case, the violent revolt against the colonizer has already taken place, still leaving the Haitian people with no cohesive identity. Christophe attacks this problem on three fronts. He pushes his people to build something of which they can be proud, and requires indefatigable work of them. Secondly, he attempts to Haitianize institutions borrowed from Europe, in the hope of building a genuine Haitian civilization, of which all black peoples can be proud. As we have seen, however, the artificial grafting of European forms upon the Haitian situation, gives rise to criticism from Césaire. And thirdly, even though

he discourages his people from practising voodoo, he himself invokes the 'loas', so as to acquire the African vital forces for himself and his followers. In Une Saison au Congo, the problem Lumumba faces is to give confidence to his people to face the external aggression of neocolonialism which cannot operate, however, without internal stooges. Out of a community of tribes, he must create a Congolese nation, a Congolese identity, with the Congo as the sole priority. In all these plays are mirrored the problems of black political independence and nationhood, with the underlying reason for the failure of the three heroes being the lack of a coherent national identity and racial consciousness on the part of their peoples, who cannot recognize or refuse to recognize the overriding implications to all black peoples of the success or failure of their independence.

After writing these three plays on the tragic problems of black freedom, and particularly after basing two of these plays on factual events of black political history, we might have expected Césaire to write a play on the current American racial situation, as he had suggested he would do in 1967, after writing Une Saison au Congo:

Maintenant, ma raison me commanderait d'écrire quelque chose sur les nègres américains. Je conçois cette oeuvre que je fais actuellement comme un tryptique. C'est un peu le drame des nègres dans le monde moderne. Il y a déjà deux volets du triptyque; 'le roi Christophe' est

le volet antillais. 'Une Saison au Congo' le volet africain et le troisième devrait être, normalement, celui des nègres américains, dont l'éveil est l'événement de ce demi-siècle.<sup>2</sup>

We do not know whether Césaire still contemplates writing a play on the Afro-American, but the fact is that after Une Saison au Congo, he wrote Une Tempête in 1969. His reasons for so doing are not known to us either, but we shall offer an explanation. It has been seen that even though the two preceding plays, La tragédie du roi Christophe and Une Saison au Congo, deal with specific political events in specific countries, the problems exposed therein mirror those of almost any black country. Bearing in mind Césaire's views on Negritude and on the colonial situation in relation to the black man, we cannot interpret Césaire's decision as reflecting any feeling on his part that the black American has problems separate or separable from those of other blacks. But we can interpret the decision to write Une Tempête as Césaire's wish to emphasize the singularity of the black colonial situation, and to stress the inseparability of the problems of any one black community or nation from the other, while still drawing on a figure like the late Martin Luther King for part of Ariel's characterization, or drawing on black radicals

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<sup>2</sup>A. Césaire, as quoted by N. Zand, Le Monde, Paris, no. 7071, 7 Oct. 1967, p. 14.

for part of his portrayal of Caliban. But even then, these figures are as representative of non-American blacks as they are of American blacks. Allied with this wish to elucidate the common colonial conditioning of all blacks, is no doubt the desire to reinforce his attacks upon those bastions of racism and reaction in southern Africa, where the black man continues to be denied his right to freedom and to historical initiative. Portraying a Prospero who intends to defend 'civilization' to the end, revealing the ways in which he keeps himself separate from the colonized, and above all, revealing Prospero's lies, Césaire exposes the pseudo-justifications of colonialism, neocolonialism and racist oppression as fundamentally mendacious. And, in emphasizing the undying thirst of the black man for freedom, he reiterates his optimism for the future. His play is the expression of hope for those still in bondage: "Et ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche, ma voix, la liberté de celles qui s'affaissent au cachot du désespoir",<sup>3</sup> and it emphasizes the use he makes of his writings as weapons of political combat.

Like every art, theatre draws upon reality for its content; political theatre explains and transforms reality

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<sup>3</sup>A. Césaire, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, p. 61.

with a didactic goal. That of the transformation of society. In any case, as literary sociologists point out, all art expresses a certain 'Weltanschauung', whether intentionally or unintentionally and no artistic activity can be successfully termed free or impartial. Césaire's theatre is deliberately didactic:

Je fais du théâtre pour pays sous-développés, parce que je suis originaire de l'un d'eux. Quand je considère le problème du sous-développement, il me semble que le salut des pays sous-développés ne sera assuré que lorsque les habitants auront dépassé leur stade actuel de manque de conscience. Par conséquent, mon théâtre, dans cette critique du développement, doit jouer un rôle social. Le théâtre remplira sa fonction sociale, non seulement en faisant voir, mais aussi en faisant comprendre et prendre conscience. Cela rejoint les idées de Brecht. Mon théâtre a une fonction critique, il doit inciter le public à juger. Rien n'est plus terrible que ces formes de théâtre qui en appellent à des gens irresponsables, il convient que chacun soit à même d'apprécier ses responsabilités.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, the commitment of Césaire's theatre gives rises to two points of interest. Bearing in mind the above reference to Brecht, whose view of the theatre was that its critical role should be aimed at the transformation of society, it is interesting to note that the main producer of Césaire's plays, Jean-Marie Serreau, is an avowed Brechtian. It is he who collaborated with Césaire in the modification of the latter's last three plays, so

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<sup>4</sup>A. Césaire as quoted by P. Laville, Aimé Césaire et Jean-Marie Serreau: un acte politique et poétique, p. 240.

that these plays may fulfill their social role more effectively. Secondly, we note that, like its African counterpart, Césaire's theatre is, by nature, committed, even though the nature of the two commitments differs. Césaire's theatre is committed because of the function it fulfills in the author's political activity. His theatre differs from traditional African theatre essentially in the religious and cosmic sphere, for that theatre was, and still is to a large extent, by nature linked with the religious postulate which dominates almost almost aspect of life on that continent, and involved in Negro African man's interaction with the rest of nature. Césaire's concept of a popular theatre is closer to that of the Guinean, Keïta Fodéba, who advocates a typically African theatre using traditional themes and techniques, but adapted to the exigencies of the modern world. For Fodéba, contemporary African theatre must

retracer très simplement quelques moments caractéristiques de la vie authentique des Noirs, en puisant tantôt aux sources de l'Afrique traditionnelle celle des ancêtres, tantôt à celles d'aujourd'hui.<sup>5</sup>

It is necessary to remember, however, that Césaire does not possess the cultural heritage such as that possessed

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<sup>5</sup>K. Fodéba, 'Le théâtre africain de Keïta Fodéba' (Seghers, 1950), as quoted by B. Traoré, Le théâtre negro-africain et ses fonctions sociales, p. 55.

by Fodéba, and thus can only with great difficulty draw upon traditional Africa for his thematic material.

Whereas Fodéba can portray, in a tragedy such as Bigolo, the struggles of a legendary warrior chief against colonization, Césaire draws the subject matter of his plays from relatively recent events, such as the post-independence struggles of Haiti and the Congo. But it is interesting to note that, despite this, Césaire's works are, according to him, better understood and received in Africa than in the West Indies.

The closest theatrical manifestation in the New World to traditional African theatre is Haitian voodoo, or Cuban Santería, but, as we mentioned earlier on in this study, voodoo is a religion, and, as Traoré points out, a differentiation must be made between religion and theatre:

Un théâtre moderne ne s'est pas développé à partir du Vodou et des éléments traditionnels. La raison principale est que le théâtre ne sort de la religion que lorsque la foi se perd. Or, le vodou est une religion; c'est pourquoi il ne deviendra du théâtre que lorsque la foi se sera perdue.<sup>6</sup>

We have also discussed the case of Brazil, where the Negro Experimental Theatre of Abdias de Nascimento had two specific social functions: firstly, the eradication of

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<sup>6</sup>B. Traoré, Le théâtre négro-africain et ses fonctions sociales, p. 55.

the Negro stereotype, which was encouraged by folklore and exoticism, and the elevation of the Negro "au plan de l'art et de l'humanité";<sup>7</sup> secondly, the creation of a new system of aesthetic criteria, to replace the one which associated the colour black with poverty, evil and ugliness, because of the Negro's lower-class origins. But, this theatre is concerned specifically with the Brazilian situation, not with the global situation of the Negro, such as Césaire's theatre is preoccupied with, for Césaire's concept of political Negritude stretches across national and continental barriers. As we have seen earlier, his theatre fulfills the social function of raising the politico-racial consciousness of the Negro people, while at the same time exposing and pointing out their problems, for the benefit of both the leaders and the masses, for, as Césaire points out:

La politique, c'est la forme moderne du destin; aujourd'hui, l'histoire, c'est la forme vécue. Le théâtre doit évoquer l'invention du futur. Il est, en tout cas en Afrique, un art de communication essentiel. Il doit à ce titre être directement appréhensible par le peuple.<sup>8</sup>

This explains why Césaire turned to theatre as a weapon of political combat.

Allied with the function of heightening the

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>8</sup>A. Césaire as quoted by P. Laville, 'Aimé Césaire et Jean-Marie Serreau: un acte politique et poétique', p. 240.

consciousness of the people, is the function of providing a different view of history, to counter that provided by the assimilationist and depersonalizing policies of colonialism. These have done little other than mask the real role of colonial domination, and have contributed to the perpetuation of the colonial system, and, equally dangerously, to the perpetuation of colonial attitudes in the post-independence era. Instead of seeing French West Indian children studying their history through colonial history books teaching them all about "nos ancêtres les Gaulois", leaders such as Césaire wish to provide these people with a new history. To the lies that "il n'est d'histoire que blanche",<sup>9</sup> Césaire and other black leaders counter, through their writings, with an authentic black view of their past:

L'histoire de notre peuple est à faire, et ainsi nous nous connaissons. Je me découvre parmi tant de papiers, de contes, de cris et de sang....Quand je dis le premier mot de ce passé, je dis le premier mystère des choses qui en moi palpitent....Et quand je confirme une date, c'est la gloire et le sang, la confiance et l'ardeur que je confirme en moi.<sup>10</sup>

It is because of these motives, because of the social functions of Césaire's theatre, that he has experienced great difficulty in staging his plays. They

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<sup>9</sup> Gobineau, as quoted by A. Césaire, Discours sur le colonialisme, p. 55.

<sup>10</sup> E. Glissant, quoted by A. Lucrèce, 'Le mouvement martiniquais de la négritude', Acoma, Paris, no. 2, April-June 1971, p. 109.

have been performed in Europe and in North America, but mostly to white audiences, and in France La tragédie du roi Christophe was performed in 1965 only after judicial representations by the Association des amis du Roi Christophe, comprising numerous intellectuals, writers, artists and painters, such as Michel Leiris, Pablo Picasso, Alberto Giacometti, Alejo Carpentier, Gaëtan Picon, Alioune Diop, Georges Balandier and several others. But performed in Europe and North American for white audiences (except when put on by a few black theatre groups in the U.S.A.), the play can only have the role of 'dérangeur'. As regards the Third World, about whom and for whom the plays have been written, there have been performances only in Senegal (Dakar) and Tunisia (Hammamet), as far as we know. In the particular case of the French West Indies, Césaire has had to face the obstructionist manoeuvres of the Departmental Administration, which, in recognizing Césaire's writings as part and parcel of his politics, has managed to make production of his plays there very difficult. Whereas in Brazil, the stage of folklore has been succeeded by that of theatre, in the French West Indies folklore is deliberately given official Administration support so as to keep the culture there as depoliticized as possible. Edouard Glissant is emphatic on this point:

Dans le remarquable processus d'aliénation mentale qui a chance de réussir ici, il est

notable que la louange intervient à tous les niveaux (radio, télévision, carnaval, spectacles touristiques), mais d'un folklore soigneusement dépolitisé, c'est-à-dire coupé de toute intrication ou signification sociales.<sup>11</sup>

Glissant then goes on to describe the attempts of those in the administration and in the local news-media to "Indianize" the folklore of Martinique, and thus to create in the mind of the assimilated Martinique an even greater reluctance to consider his real past. As Glissant points out, this "Indianization" is perfectly understandable in view of the fact that the Amerindians in the French West Indies are all dead, and that those in French Guiana pose no threat whatsoever to the metropolitan administration. He concludes by pinpointing the results of that policy:

L'indianisation a ainsi des mérites: elle masque le problème du provenir martiniquais, elle intéresse la sensibilité, elle offre une pseudo-histoire et l'illusion d'un arrière-plan culturel (pré-colombien), tout cela étant par avance anesthésié (du point de vue d'une revendication collective) par la coupure de l'extermination des Caraïbes. Toute la politique dépersonnalisante du système vise ainsi à évider de leur signification historique les manifestations de la culture populaire: coupé de son passé signifiant, le folklore est neutralisé, stagne. Dont il concourt à l'évanouissement collectif.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> E. Glissant, 'Theatre: Conscience du Peuple', ACOMA, Paris, no. 2, April-June 1971, p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

Thus, at the moment when Césaire turns to the theatre as a more effective means of communicating his ideas to his people, some of his political opponents have also improved their methods of cultural alienation. Unfortunately for Césaire, this cultural alienation is aided and abetted in the West Indies by his former allies, the Communists. Our own experience in the other French West Indian Department of Guadeloupe is of note here. Taken on a tour of the new 'Palais des Sports et de la Culture' in Pointe-à Pitre, we were proudly told of the fact that many plays were staged there. However, when our guide, who was connected with the Guadeloupean Communist Party, was asked what kind of plays were put on there, no West Indian playwrights were mentioned, but the name Brecht was mentioned several times. We do not contend that Brecht should not be staged in the West Indies, but we lament the fact that those whose plays are the mostly directly focussed on the problems of the West Indies in particular, and of the black man in general, should be prevented from expressing their viewpoint to those who are so sorely in need of a heightened politico-racial consciousness.

Therefore, with French West Indian society in such dire need of transformation, Césaire is prevented by both metropolitan authorities and his own countrymen from establishing the fullest possible communication with his

people. Like his own heroes, he is confronted with obstacles laid down by both external and internal enemies, and, in a long term view the influence of the latter group is more harmful to his people. Even if Césaire is not the only writer and politician in the French West Indies prevented from providing his people with adequate political education, he is certainly the best known and the most articulate. Even if theatre is only one of the means of establishing that communication, it is certainly the most accessible of his writings. However, many of his political opponents and an increasing number of his supporters contend that, in view of his demands for autonomy but not for independence, he either has no wish to transform Martiniquan society or that he is too slow and compromising in attempting to do so. Césaire has even been accused of holding an élitist concept of leadership. Indeed, he is aware of this problem, and the following statement of his is undoubtedly an attempt to come to terms with the distanciation of the leader from his people: ". . . à vrai dire ce n'est pas à l'individu qu'il appartient de donner la réponse. La réponse ne peut-être donnée que par la communauté".<sup>13</sup> This is to be contrasted with his own portrayal of the charismatic leader in his plays, who acts as an

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<sup>13</sup>A. Césaire, Culture et Colonisation, p. 205.

ideological focal point for the mobilization of the masses, as a beacon lighting up the road to the formation of a new society. Therein lies the dilemma of Césaire the political leader and writer, as he strives for a closer identification with the masses.

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