

This article was downloaded by: [University of Arizona]

On: 18 September 2012, At: 07:04

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## World Literature Written in English

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjpw19>

### Re-writing The Tempest

Diana Brydon <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of British Columbia, Canada

Version of record first published: 18 Jul 2008.

To cite this article: Diana Brydon (1984): Re-writing The Tempest , World Literature Written in English, 23:1, 75-88

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17449858408588811>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

- 39 Cf. *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, where the action exists within the frame of a single night and where the sun rises in the Epilogue, p. 323. Cf. also V.S. Reid, *New Day* (New York: Knopf, 1949), where a single night's narration, culminating in a "new day," encapsulates seventy-nine years of Jamaican history.

## Selected Papers on the Conference Theme

### Re-writing *The Tempest*

*World Literature Written in English*, Volume 23, Number 1 (1984), 75-88.

DIANA BRYDON

Post-colonial writers are continually misreading and re-writing their inheritance from the imperial tradition in order to re-define themselves according to their own understanding of tradition. Shakespeare's *Tempest*, interpreted by many critics as a fable of the colonial experience, has proved a popular model for fictional re-writings of that experience. This paper argues that English-Canadian re-writings of *The Tempest*, despite real differences in approach, share a reading of the paradigm that distinguishes their experience from that of other ex-colonies. Through my analysis of five examples, I intend to show what each contributes to our understanding of how the Canadian imagination transforms this English paradigm into a Canadian fable.

Those who read *The Tempest* with a radical political orientation tend to champion Caliban as the first rebel to misread and re-write what he has learned under Prospero's instruction: he takes Prospero's language as his own, using it to deny Prospero's version of reality and to subvert Prospero's rule. Ever since O. Mannoni identified the settler mentality and the dependence complex with Prospero and Caliban in his *Psychologie de la Colonisation* (1950), published in English under the title *Prospero and Caliban* (1956), several writers have expanded on this identification, often rejecting Mannoni's conclusions in the process. Frantz Fanon dismisses Mannoni in *Black Skins, White Masks*: "What we wanted from M. Mannoni was an explanation of the colonial situation. He notably overlooked providing it."<sup>1</sup> But Fanon does accept the suggestiveness of Shakespeare's metaphors, particularly for understanding the nature of Prospero.

In *Caliban Without Prospero*, the Haitian-Canadian Max Dorsinville analyses Quebec and black American literature in the light of this extended metaphor from *The Tempest* in order to provide a theoretical context for discussing post-colonial literature in general. Dorsinville argues that the “‘Caliban with Prospero’ relation is a warped one because the post-European writer, so long as he tries to function ever so self-consciously in the ‘mainstream’ of Prospero’s culture, is bound to fail, or to experience the type of frustration that long made the consciousness of the French Canadian, the American (Black and White), the West Indian or the South American writer one of *exile*.”<sup>2</sup> Because “Prospero’s aesthetics does not apply for Caliban’s brand of experience” (p. 204), Dorsinville argues that Caliban must develop his own language (possibly a *joual*, creole, or ghetto subversion of Prospero’s) in order to write his own Calibanic literature without Prospero, and he demonstrates how French Canadian and black American writers have done just that. Dorsinville seeks the “specificities of Calibanic literature” in general (p. 15) in a political reading of Shakespeare’s *Tempest*.

In contrast, the American Leo Marx stresses the aesthetic pattern of pastoral, suggesting that “the topography of *The Tempest* anticipates the moral geography of the American imagination” and that “*The Tempest* may be read as a prologue to American literature.”<sup>3</sup> Marx’s interest in the American “idea of a redemptive journey away from society in the direction of nature” (p. 69) is seldom shared by writers from other parts of the old British Empire. But his emphasis on *The Tempest* as pastoral romance draws attention to an important structural feature that Dorsinville neglects.

Where Dorsinville sought the specificities of a Calibanic literature, I am interested in discovering the specificities of a *Tempest*-centred literature. What are the elements in Shakespeare’s *Tempest* that can be changed and what are the elements that must remain untouched when the potential of this model is being explored? Judging from my five Canadian examples, only three elements are essential: an emphasis on the pastoral setting (some kind of isolation from the outside world); a focus on power relationships involving dominance, subservience and rebellion (between classes, age groups or sexes); and a related focus on the role of art in taming nature. The number and sex of the main characters may be changed and the emphasis accorded each of the essentials in relation to the others may shift. As a character in Phyllis Gotlieb’s *O Master Caliban!* explains, “in chess games there’s millions of moves and not many surprises.”<sup>4</sup> Like a chess game, *The Tempest* contains many possibilities, but all can be predicted from a knowledge of the original play.

Interpreters of Shakespeare’s *Tempest* who see Prospero as dominating the action of the play identify three movements of resistance to his power: “Ferdinand and Miranda resist what they suppose to be Prospero’s will in their complete love for each other”; “the plot of Antonio and Sebastian against Alonso, King of Naples, is an extension of the original plot against Prospero”; and the conspiracy of Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo seeks to overthrow Prospero’s rule of the island.<sup>5</sup> Dorsinville has shown how black writers focus on the implications of Caliban’s rebellion. I intend to show how

English-Canadian writers re-write Miranda's.

With one notable exception – Gottlieb's science fiction *O Master Caliban!* – English-Canadian *Tempests* ignore Dorsinville's focus on Caliban to replace both Caliban and Prospero with Miranda. Many commentators have pointed out that Prospero's maltreatment of Caliban implies a refusal to recognize that what Caliban represents is a part of himself; the English Canadian denial of Caliban also suggests the suppression of important knowledge about the self. Instead of identifying with Caliban, as the French Canadian, black American and West Indian writers do, some English Canadian writers, most notably Robertson Davies, identify with Prospero, while the majority – Margaret Laurence, Charles G.D. Roberts and Audrey Thomas – focus on Miranda. Miranda, absent and silent during most of the action of *The Tempest* yet essential to its happy conclusion, seems a fitting representative of Canada's aspirations as a dutiful daughter of the empire. Yet as the Barbadian novelist George Lamming points out in *The Pleasures of Exile*, Miranda and Caliban are similar in their subordination to and education by Prospero. To Lamming, "Miranda is the innocent half of Caliban; Caliban is the possible deformity which Miranda, at the age of experiment, may become."<sup>6</sup> Identification with Miranda's innocence to the exclusion of all recognition of some Calibanic darkness would suggest a dangerous lack of self-awareness in those English-Canadian writers who make Miranda the centre of their *Tempests*. Such is not the case, however. Caliban remains, although in strangely divergent forms, and Miranda is seldom presented as innocent. I contend that English-Canadian writers have re-defined Miranda as radically as black writers have re-defined Caliban.

An examination of the changes introduced by English-Canadian writers within the limits of the *Tempest* paradigm raises several puzzling questions this paper can only begin to attempt to answer. Why is Caliban so often feminized or in some other way accorded a lesser role than in Shakespeare's version? Why does Miranda assume more prominence? Why is she so often an artist in her own right? Why are sex and rape, heavily stressed in the Caribbean versions, so muted in the Canadian ones? After examining the transformations the English-Canadians *Tempests* effect, we must address these questions, using their differences from Caribbean and Australian *Tempests* for guidance.

Charles G.D. Robert's *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* (1900) first focuses on Miranda as a powerful central figure, wielding her own magic over the creatures of the wood. Her father is absent; nature and Caliban are her teachers. The novel re-defines the Miranda/Caliban/Ferdinand triangle in a way that conforms to Leo Marx's analysis of North American pastoral. Kirstie Craig and her young daughter Miranda flee the evil tongues of society gossip about their desertion by Miranda's father to seek peace in the silent solitude of the ancient wood. Apparently empty, the wood is actually crowded with the watchful eyes of forest creatures. Here, the "great-eyed and fairy-like"<sup>7</sup> Miranda discovers "a sort of puzzling kinship" (p. 47) with the wild creatures, and particularly with the great she-bear Kroof, who adopts Miranda after saving her life. Kroof, as the leading presence in this part of the wood before

Miranda arrives and establishes her dominance, clearly corresponds to Caliban, while Miranda combines the attributes of her namesake and Ariel to become a more powerful figure. The absence of Prospero further increases Miranda's importance. Kirstie remains very much in the background; it is Miranda who gradually takes on some of Prospero's characteristics - his arrogance, his power over others, his skill - as she grows older.

Kroof shows Miranda the secrets of the forest in a passage that echoes Caliban's account of how he taught Prospero the secrets of his island (p. 91). Both are lessons in how to live harmoniously with the spirit of the place. But the novelist warns us that the asexual paradise Miranda enjoys with her mother Kirstie and her foster mother Kroof must give way to sexual knowledge and a conscious taming of the landscape through hunting and lumbering. Dave Titus, the novel's Ferdinand figure, is the agent who awakens Miranda to sexual desire, which is presented as inseparable from mankind's need to kill to eat and actively to impose his will on the natural world. The strange appetite Dave arouses in Miranda for cooked meat, which is described as forbidden food, is clearly a metaphor for a sexual awakening, which in turn brings about increased self-knowledge. Miranda must choose between Dave and Kroof, between human and animal nature. Forced by her love for Dave to kill Kroof with Dave's rifle (a symbol of his sexuality and power she has always resented), Miranda accuses Dave: "You've killed the old life I loved" (p. 275); yet it is clear that Miranda herself carried within her the need to destroy that life. The novelist has already explained that "In fact, Miranda was very close to nature, and she could not escape her part in nature's never-ceasing war of opposites" (p. 150). In other words, it is mankind's nature to evolve, leaving earlier states (exemplified by a friendly, female Caliban) behind.

Roberts' *Tempest* thus becomes an allegory of the tensions between society and nature, the tongues of speech and the eyes of sight, the cooked and the raw, in the building of Canada. He advocates compromise: Dave abandons hunting to become a lumber-surveyor and Miranda abandons her intuitive harmony with the creatures of the wood and vegetarianism to become his wife and cook meat. Patriarchal civilization advances at the expense of matriarchal diminishment and the exploitation of the natural world. Miranda has earlier taken on Prospero's powers in enforcing her "Pax Mirandae" over life in her sphere. Now she willingly gives up her magic to leave the clearing with Dave. His art, not hers, will determine their future.

Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974) extends Roberts' linking of sexual politics and colonial history through an elaboration of Miranda's role. Again Miranda embodies Canada's future, but Laurence takes her beyond her initial rejection of Caliban through an infatuation with imported values to return her to a more fruitful interaction with Caliban's indigenous values. The intuitive magic practised by Roberts' Miranda becomes conscious art in Laurence's. Where *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* ends with expulsion from the original Eden in quest of a new Eden "fairer far than Eden's self,"<sup>8</sup> *The Diviners* begins with Morag's expulsion from the Eden of childhood innocence (effected by her parents' deaths). The *Tempest* section of *The Diviners*

concerns Morag's attempts to extricate herself from a false second Eden (the Halls of Zion) she had mistakenly created with Brooke. Laurence works out the implications of Lamming's analysis of the Miranda/Caliban/Prospero relationship in this section of *The Diviners*. She knew Lamming in England and it is quite likely she knew *The Pleasures of Exile* as well. Certainly she had read Mannoni while in Africa, and less critically than Fanon, commented on the suggestiveness of Mannoni's analysis of the Prospero complex in particular, in which, as she says, "every European who has ever lived in Africa cannot fail to see something of himself, often much more than he would prefer to see."<sup>9</sup> In Brooke Skelton, she invests her knowledge of the imperialist's mixed motives for his paternalistic venture in educating the colonials, and in Morag Gunn she places her knowledge of the colonial, torn between Mannoni's "dependence complex" and Calibanic self-assertion. The episode could be a textbook case study, so close is it to Mannoni's theories.

Morag remembers that the apartment in Toronto she shared with Brooke seemed "like a desert island, or perhaps a cave,"<sup>10</sup> establishing the *Tempest* setting for the drama to follow. In this episode, Laurence carries the implications of Prospero's obsessive concern with Miranda's chastity in Shakespeare's *Tempest* one step further, making her Miranda act not only as Brooke/Prospero's English student but also as his child-wife. This re-writing reinforces the identification of Miranda with Caliban; it discovers the source of Prospero's need to dominate in his fear of weakness; and it focuses on language as paradoxically both the tool of oppression and of potential liberation.

Morag increasingly feels a desire to disrupt Brooke/Prospero's world of "well-modulated grammatical voices, devoid of epithets, bland as Tapioca pudding" with some crude Calibanic cursing, as taught her by Christie, society's outcast - "the loony oratory, salt-beefed with oaths, the stringy lean oaths with some protein in them" (p. 255). Caliban's cursing - his self-conscious mutilation and pulling down of Prospero's language from the abstract generalization to the concrete reality of Caliban's vision - remains Caliban's most distinctive feature for the post-colonial writer. Morag also grows her hair, rejecting the "little perfumed dolly" image in order to embrace her own Calibanic monstrosity - hair that looks a mess and a height of five feet eight - refusing to be chained any longer by Brooke's distorting image of herself.

Lest the reader miss the political implications of Morag's rebellion against Brooke, Morag provides her own analysis of it in a letter to Ella describing her fictional re-writing of it in *Prospero's Child* (p. 330). Morag is both Miranda and Caliban. Initially, her discovery of Brooke seems a brave new world of wonders and she strives to be the child-like innocent he requires as his complement. But eventually her Calibanic tendencies to ugly self-assertion against his beneficent rule destroy this flattering, false Miranda-self. At first she feels guilty for betraying his trust. Then she realizes that she has been the victim in their relationship as much as he. She usurps his realm - his precious English language - turning it to her own purposes, first to curse him in

Christie's voice, and then to develop her own. By rendering the inarticulate Lilac's experience articulate in *Spear of Innocence*, she questions Brooke's assumptions about the irrelevance of such an endeavour and revitalizes the language by taking it back to the folk. In writing *Prospero's Child*, Morag attacks Prospero's tradition at its heart – Shakespeare – in order to re-make its world in her own image. In Morag, then, Miranda realizes her Calibanic tendencies, fulfilling all Prospero's fears for her future. She re-writes her past, casting Prospero as a tyrant and a villain; she leaves him to mate with a figure he perceives as a Caliban – the Métis Jules – and she gives birth to Jules's child.

In *Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island* (1971), Audrey Thomas had anticipated Laurence's deconstruction of Miranda, to show her poised between the self-conscious rationality of the father figure Prospero and the turbulent creativity of her own unconscious, as represented by her novel about Munchmeyer, a character of Calibanic urges. The doubling of Morag's experience in her novel *Prospero's Child* is similar to the doubling of Miranda's desires in Munchmeyer's story. The process of rebellion that Morag goes through has already been completed in Thomas' companion novellas that uneasily mirror one another.

When Alex MacKenzie asks Miranda why she calls him Prospero she hedges, "Only because I happen to be named Miranda."<sup>11</sup> The Miranda-type demands its complementary Prospero to define itself, only this time Miranda is doing the naming. When Prospero tries to extend the metaphor to include their companions, Miranda rejects Sweeney (his name echoing T.S. Eliot's Caliban) as a possible Caliban, deciding, "It'll just have to be Prospero and Miranda" (p. 139), the cosy twosome for whom Caliban represents an unwelcome intrusion. If there is a Caliban here, his presence is implied rather than stated. Caliban speaks through Miranda's creation of Will Munchmeyer, the narrator of the novel she writes during her Platonic affair with Prospero on the island. (I don't think his first name is an accident.) Munchmeyer, who sees himself as "a bastard even unto death" (p. 3) and who is also, less successfully, trying to write a novel, allows Miranda to express her Calibanic urges in a socially acceptable manner, leaving her ambivalent relationship with Prospero unresolved. Miranda's magic re-confines Caliban within a text, enslaving him to her imagination instead of her father's. Prospero freed Ariel from a tree; Thomas' Miranda imprisons both Prospero and Caliban in a text.

Robertson Davies' re-writing of *The Tempest* in *Tempest-Tost* (1951) displays the same tendency to repress Caliban, only to have him emerge in a displaced fashion. The Miranda/Prospero/Caliban triangle, central in Roberts, Laurence and Thomas, appears to be relegated to a sub-plot in *Tempest-Tost*, but in fact formally remains the dominant pattern. Confusion arises because of an almost consistent miscasting of the production of *The Tempest* staged within the novel. Davies provides two Mirandas, mirroring one another, in *Tempest-Tost*. Griselda (the play's Ariel) is Miranda as beautiful, wealthy princess with a benevolently wise ruler-father, courted by Caliban (disguised as Gonzalo) and several would-be Ferdinands. Pearl (the play's Miranda) is Miranda as innocent Cinderella, dominated by her

professor-father and seeking her true Ferdinand. Whereas Laurence and Thomas misapply Miranda's "O brave new world" speech to her discovery of Prospero, Davies misapplies it to his Miranda/Pearl's first encounter with Ferdinand/Roger, but each employs it ironically to reveal how appearances may deceive. Roger, so outwardly charming, is really a cad, not at all worthy of the pearl cast before swine. But Pearl must undergo a confrontation with her own Caliban-like monstrosity before her true worth is recognized. Ironically, it is her attempt to match her appearance with that prescribed by the fashion magazines that turns her into a monster, rather than her deviation from them, as it was for Morag. Like Caliban, this Miranda is victimized by Prospero's authoritarian paternalism, but Davies suggests that her day of deliverance will come, although not in this novel.<sup>12</sup>

Her father, Professor Vambrace, exemplifies all Prospero's faults and few of his virtues, because he aspires to act a part – in his life as well as in the Salterton Little Theatre production – that he cannot sustain. Robertson Davies is the true Prospero of *Tempest-Tost*, wielding his magic in order to manipulate and to judge the cast of his drama. This Prospero does not relinquish his powers at the end of his tale, but he does remain assured of the rightness of his position, particularly of the necessity of keeping Caliban in his place.

Geordie Shortreed, who plays Caliban in the production, not only looks the part but also reveals a Caliban-like nature, according to the conventional English view of Caliban. Geordie refuses to play the game of respecting his betters "according to the rules," being "rather noisily familiar with them" instead, and delighting in perverting Shakespeare's lines "to unexpected uses in private conversation" (p. 147). In his letter to Mr. Webster apologizing for the accidental murder of the horse "Old Bill" (a snide reference to Shakespeare?) "the shrieking figure of Apology was hounded through a labyrinth of agonized syntax" (p. 151). And in a final twist, Geordie apologizes to Mr. Webster personally, twice telling him in approbation, "You're a white man, G.A." (p. 252).

While all of this is apt, Geordie remains a minor figure. Just as Davies plays Prospero to the novel although Professor Vambrace plays him in the theatre production, so Hector Mackilwraith is the novel's true Caliban, though Geordie plays the role in the drama. Although Hector would like to be thought of as a wise old counsellor, choosing Gonzalo as his role in the play, he makes a miserable Gonzalo, because he is really a Caliban. Davies' suggestion seems to be that Canada can't even play the role of Gonzalo properly, Pearson's "honest broker," let alone that of Prospero, a true ruler. Hector misunderstands and misuses his education; he remains a slave to his physical passions (overeating and lusting after Griselda); and when frustrated, ends up trying to kill himself instead of Prospero – a self-destructive gesture similar to what Davies terms "the Beaver Formula" in *Question Time*, a scathing image for our willingness to turn our violence inward against ourselves rather than outward against those who would exploit us.<sup>13</sup> Solly explains Hector's offence:

"I think it's the logical outcome of his education and the sort of life he has led. He's vulgar. I don't mean just that he wears awful suits and probably eats awful food: I mean that he has a crass soul. He thinks that when his belly is full and his job is safe, he's got the world by the tail. He has never found out anything about himself, so how can he ever know anything about other people? . . . The only people who make any sense in the world are those who know that whatever happens to them has its root in what they are." (pp. 279-80)

The two Miranda figures are the only characters in the novel who learn this lesson. Hector remains as he began – vulgar, crass, ignorant, superficial, inarticulate, made blind by his reliance on the physical as the explanation for everything, a wild man, a monstrosity, a slave – Davies' Caliban. As Freddy points out, "you can't make something wonderful unless you start with the right stuff" (p. 282). Hector is clearly not the right stuff. His Canadian miseducation through puritanism has seen to that.

The threat to Davies' Prospero in Kingston's Loyalist island comes not from outright violence but rather from a Caliban who does not even realize he is a slave, both to his passions and to false ideas about gentility and taste. In re-defining Caliban so radically, Davies reveals the true threat to Canadian civilization as something quite other (and much more insidious) than those elements dominant orthodoxies have traditionally condemned. Yet although Davies re-writes the *Tempest* myth to demonstrate that the threat to Canadian civilization comes from an ignorant repression of passion rather than from its natural expression, he assumes Prospero's voice to affirm Prospero's assumptions about civilization and its discontents. Like most English Canadians, I suspect, Davies is still trying to meet Prospero's standards even as he recognizes that the *Tempest* paradigm must be re-written to accommodate a Canadian experience.

Gotlieb's *O Master Caliban!*, although in its science fiction format superficially the furthest from Shakespeare's *Tempest*, is actually closest to the original model. In his history and poetics of science fiction as a genre, Darko Suvin recognizes *The Tempest* as an important antecedent of contemporary science fiction and new world writing, calling it "an anthology of elements of and views on a new locus – with the exception of any sympathetic to egalitarian community."<sup>14</sup> (An interesting observation, since egalitarian community is precisely what Roberts reluctantly and Davies gladly reject, and what Gotlieb and Laurence seek to add.) In Gotlieb's novel, the island has become a world, the fifth planet of Barrazan, "littered with the ruins of failed colonies" (pp. 6-7), an experimental station ruled by the scientist who gives it its name – Dahlgren's World. Each of our examples so far has focused on character; Gotlieb shifts the focus of her writing to plot. Her characters are stereotypes, but her plot reveals further potentials in the *Tempest* paradigm for analyzing the dynamics of colonization.

The story begins with the crash of a spaceship carrying a load of delinquent children in flight from authority on an isolated corner of Dahlgren's World, where they are met by three watchers: a philosophical old goat (the pun is

intended) who reads Montaigne and sounds like Gonzalo; an intelligent, motherly baboon who in her physical mutations is a possible Caliban; and the four-armed Sven, who we later learn is Dahlgren's son. His deformity links him to Caliban and his parentage to Miranda. Like all the Canadian Mirandas, Sven harbours ambivalent feelings about his absent father because of the use he has made of his power. Humans see Sven as the rightful heir; machines see him as an upstart Caliban. Sven is a mutated freak because his embryo was deliberately misshapen by would-be Prospero figures out to challenge his father's authority. These men taught the machines to rebel, and died in the subsequent revolution. The machines, originally designed to serve their masters, have usurped the role of their masters, claiming that men are merely a stage in the evolution towards machines. The human reader sees the machine, particularly the Erg Queen Modal Seven Seven Seven, as Caliban, but she sees herself as a Prospero figure, controlling her world through the magic of technology, her authority challenged by the "monster" Sven.

At first the title, *O Master Caliban!*, seems merely to refer to the new rule of machines, but as the story progresses, it clearly comes to refer as well to that quality in human beings that has allowed the machine takeover. Even Prospero is ruled by those instincts he seeks to disown by naming them "Caliban" and assigning them to another. Gotlieb exploits the ironies of the Caliban/Prospero relation to the full, by showing Dahlgren learning to recognize what he calls "the beast" in his intellectual self.

One of the more important characters in this re-writing of the *Tempest* paradigm is the Ariel figure, a genius trapped in a child's body, who through the magic of intuitional ESP with machines undermines the Queen's authority, enabling Sven and his father to assume command. Shirvanian likes things fixed (p. 42); his god is the Great Artificer (p. 136). Although he prefers machines to men, he is swayed by human feelings of loyalty and friendship. Shirvanian's counterpart is the erg Dahlgren, built by the machines to replace the man Dahlgren, but built so well he begins to develop human feelings that draw him closer to men. Although literally the brother usurper (a rare figure in Canadian *Tempests*), he is instrumental in helping the humans regain ascendancy.

The ambivalence Shirvanian and Erg Dahlgren exhibit towards their parents (Shirvanian turning from humans to machines and Erg Dahlgren from the Erg Queen to Dahlgren) mirrors Sven's ambivalence towards his father, and the ambivalence of the machines towards their human makers. Like each of the English-Canadian writers examined here, Gotlieb re-writes *The Tempest* as a drama of family conflict. But she goes further. By changing the sex of two of her central protagonists, she extends her questioning of the sources and justifications for power into the area of sexual stereotyping. Intuition, emotion, compassion – traditionally perceived as feminine qualities – still characterize the Miranda figure, but are made male in Sven. Cold logic, reason, a will to dominance – traditionally perceived as masculine qualities – still characterize the Prospero figure but are shown to be Calibanic and unsympathetic as they are embodied in the Other, made mechanical and

female in the Erg Queen.

Ironically, the action of *O Master Caliban!* may be viewed in two ways: either it may be seen as involving everything that happened before Shakespeare's *Tempest* begins (Prospero, banished from one world, taking over control from Caliban in another) or it may be seen as involving everything that might have happened if Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo's revolution had succeeded and then itself been overthrown by a resurgent Prospero. The pattern of imposed authority and rebellion never stops. However it is read, it comments shrewdly on the ways in which power defines identity so that it is not always easy to distinguish Prospero and Miranda from Caliban.

Despite their many differences, the variations these English-Canadian writers choose to enact and the options they choose to ignore identify them nonetheless as members of a family when they are compared to the options followed by West Indian and Australian writers. Limitations of space prevent a thorough analysis of all West Indian and Australian treatments of the *Tempest* paradigm. I take George Lamming's and Randolph Stow's versions as representative. While the Canadian *Tempests* focus on the growing-up process through Miranda's rebellion against her father's (or husband's) authority, using her to comment philosophically on humanity's role in civilizing nature and the artist's role in society, the West Indian and Australian writers comment much more directly on the violence of the colonization process and all it entails through a focus on Caliban's rebellion against Prospero's rule. The Canadian versions concentrate almost entirely (Laurence is the exception here) on how politics shapes character, through plot manipulation, whereas the West Indian and Australian versions incorporate an interest in re-writing the language as well as the plot to re-define character.

Lamming has re-written *The Tempest* twice: in *The Pleasures of Exile*, a critical account of "one man's ways of seeing" (p. 13) and in *Water With Berries*, a novel. *Water With Berries* examines the nature of Prospero's legacy to Caliban by imagining possible futures for two Mirandas: the white Myra and the black Randa. Neither has remained innocent. Each has been violated by Caliban. Randa commits suicide. Myra gives her white rapist syphilis (and he her a kick in the teeth). This is the world Lamming predicts in *The Pleasures of Exile* when he warns that "The time is ripe - but may go rotten - when masters must learn the meaning contained in the signatures of their former slaves" (p. 63).

Their former slaves are now in London: Teeton, the painter and revolutionary, member of the secret group The Gathering and Randa's estranged husband; Roger, rebellious son of Judge Capildeo and musician turned arsonist; and Derek, the actor, who once played Othello but is now reduced to playing corpses. Together they present a composite picture of a Caliban who has mastered Prospero's art and returned to haunt his master. But Prospero himself is now divided. He is present as the Old Dowager's necrophiliac husband, Myra's putative father, who assumes responsibility for administering the family estate on San Cristobal taking Myra with him to share his bed; he is present as that man's brother, Ferdinand, the Old

Dowager's lover and Myra's real father, to whom she applies the brave new world speech when he visits them on their island before he murders his brother; he is present as the Old Dowager herself, who sees her husband resurrected in Teeton and murders Ferdinand to save Teeton, only to be killed herself by Teeton. This intricately complicated pattern of doublings and repetition makes Lamming's point that "Prospero is afraid of Caliban. He is afraid because he knows that his encounter with Caliban is, largely, his encounter with himself" (*Pleasures of Exile*, p. 15).

In *Water With Berries*, Lamming pushes that encounter as far as one train of reasoning can take it: the original violence of the imperial enterprise turns back against its source, bringing the violence of disease, sexual perversion, murder, suicide, abortion, lies and finally the exorcism of fire back to Prospero's original island. *The Pleasures of Exile* offers an alternative re-writing, in which that heritage of violence and misunderstanding becomes transformed through the recognition that "what's done is done, and can only be seen as a soil from which other gifts [other than the legacy of language], or the same gift endowed with different meanings, may grow towards a future which is colonized by our acts in this moment, but which must always remain open" (p. 15). Lamming accepts his double ancestry, from both Caliban and Prospero, but revises the account of the legacy each has left him. He re-writes Prospero's historic role as well as Caliban's, recognizing that "what is at stake is the historic result of our thinking; what is under tragic scrutiny is our traditional way of seeing" (p. 63).

He takes up Prospero's weapons to challenge Prospero's assumptions, knowing the dangers involved in allowing one's antagonist to determine the rules by which one plays, but thinking the risk worth taking. Lamming deliberately writes in a densely difficult prose that cannot be read quickly; it yields its meaning reluctantly, forcing the reader to participate in its re-writing of experience. A literary variation on West Indian dialect, of which he is a master, would be much more immediately accessible not only to his West Indian but also to his North American and his English readers. Instead, he has chosen to push Prospero's language to its own extremes, as the most effective way of challenging Prospero's thinking. Where *Tempest-Tost* merely imitates Prospero's tone and manner, *Water With Berries* attacks that surface appearance of control from within its ordered limits. Yet *Tempest-Tost* envisions a future for Miranda where she can grow up, become acquainted with Caliban and survive as a stronger figure in her own right, independent of both Prospero and Caliban, while the encounter with Caliban destroys Lamming's Mirandas.

The Australian Randolph Stow's re-writing of *The Tempest* in *Visitants* reveals further possibilities for re-interpreting these patterns. Like Lamming, Stow is more intrigued by the effects of the colonizing process on Prospero and by the potential for a re-definition of Caliban than he is by Miranda. Like *Water With Berries*, *Visitants* examines the de-colonization process, showing Prospero losing control, and the effects of wielding power on the powerful. Again Prospero is doubled, taking form as MacDonnell, the planter, and

Cawdor, the administrator. Always hiding behind a book, Cawdor is a master of language – he needs no interpreter for his dealings with the islanders; deserted, “shamed” by his wife, he seeks refuge in his job in the Trobriands, where he remains powerful, though a source of gossip. But he carries his power too far, beginning something he cannot stop. He inadvertently calls up the storm of madness and violence – the cargo cult outbreak – by speaking to Benoni about the star-people. He cannot stop the storm himself, however. His sickness, his shame, his alienation, his distance and above all his difference deprive him of the power to stop what he has begun. Only Benoni, the rightful heir to the kingdom, can discipline this particular storm. Significantly, Dalwood, the novel’s Ferdinand figure, takes over from Cawdor as imperialism’s agent, while Benoni, an island Ferdinand or noble Caliban, assumes local control. The islanders generally play a composite Caliban, with two characters assuming prominence: Osani, the resentful interpreter who has learned Prospero’s language and who seeks to overthrow his authority, and Metusela, “whom many described as ‘a deformity,’ ”<sup>15</sup> who seeks to rape Saliba/Miranda, and to take over the town from Benoni. Stow re-writes Miranda as an initially comic figure, unabashedly but naturally sexual, whose loss of innocence comes through murder rather than sex. Forced to kill to save her community from its self-destructive violence and herself from violation by the madman Metusela, Saliba/Miranda encounters her own darkness and emerges with a new dignity.

My interest in examining these contemporary re-writings of Shakespeare’s *Tempest* has been to discover the different perspectives on the imperial/colonial encounter revealed by writers from three different cultures. An ambivalence towards Prospero is not surprising in ex-colonies that have been taught to believe that he represents the height of civilization; in each of my Canadian examples, Prospero’s values are internalized by Miranda but re-defined through her interaction with Caliban. Regeneration lies always with the Mirandas, who can learn from both Prospero and Caliban to develop perspectives of their own. If Caliban takes the form of what Prospero most fears within himself, then the Canadian Prospero in Davies fears vulgarity and provincialism; and the Prospero in Roberts, Laurence, Thomas and Gotlieb fears nature in all its aspects, especially fecundity. These writers show that Caliban will not be denied; he must be faced, accepted and understood. But they also show that Miranda should not be underestimated. She sees, though she seldom speaks, and she learns to act.

For the West Indian writer, too, stereotyped thinking is no longer acceptable: white no longer defines black; innocence no longer defines experience; order no longer defines chaos. A new language must be developed, where innovation may replace mimicry. Lamming goes a long way towards developing that language. Stow’s enterprise is similar. The Australian writer also challenges the authority of a Prospero-centred text in *Visitants* by dividing the narration among seven principal speakers and by showing the irrelevance of Prospero’s values in a Trobriand island setting. Caliban and Miranda speak in their own voices: Prospero’s disintegration is seen through their eyes.

Canadian writers appear reluctant to deal openly with Caliban, perhaps because they set their imperial/colonial encounters on home ground, where the exact nature of the conflict is harder to see.<sup>16</sup> Lamming transfers his confrontation to England because he believes English assumptions must be defeated on their own grounds first of all, and Stow transfers his confrontation to the Trobriands to demonstrate how Australians, who feel themselves Calibans in relation to England, nonetheless tend to play Prospero in the South Pacific. Thus Lamming and Stow reveal two distinct cultures in conflict: the black West Indian with the white English and the black Trobriand islander with the white Australian. The Canadian texts show more clearly how Canadians have internalized the process of their colonization: they are themselves Prospero and what he has colonized is a vital part of themselves. Therefore, the storms in these Canadian *Tempests* are largely internal, whereas in Lamming and Stow they assume external forms. While the heritage of slave plantation or penal colony may initially appear more traumatic, simply because it is so dramatic an injustice it becomes much easier to reject than the legacy of genteel imitation of the mother country we Canadians have inherited. Study of countries where the cultural battle lines are more clearly defined may help us to understand the special nature of the Canadian imagination.<sup>17</sup>

*University of British Columbia, Canada*

#### NOTES

- 1 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (1952; New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 94.
- 2 Max Dorsinville, *Caliban Without Prospero: Essay on Quebec and Black Literature* (Erin, Ont: Press Porcepic, 1974), p. 202. Further references are incorporated in the text.
- 3 Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Idea in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 72.
- 4 Phyllis Gotlieb, *O Master Caliban!* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 109. Further references are incorporated in the text.
- 5 Hallett Smith, "Introduction: *The Tempest* as a Kaleidoscope," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "The Tempest": A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Smith (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), pp. 4-5.
- 6 George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (London: Michael Joseph, 1960), p. 15. Further references are incorporated in the text.
- 7 Charles G.D. Roberts, *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* (New York, Boston, Chicago: Silver, Burdett, 1900), p. 42. Further references are incorporated in the text.
- 8 Isabella Valancy Crawford, "Malcolm's Katie: A Love Story," in *Literature in Canada*, ed. Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman (Toronto: Gage, 1978), I, p. 301. Clearly this motif was typical of much thinking in Canada in the late nineteenth century.

- 9 Margaret Laurence, *The Prophet's Camel Bell* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), p. 227.
- 10 Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (1974; Toronto: Bantam, 1975), p. 254. Further references are incorporated in the text. For an analysis of *The Tempest* as an enabling myth in Laurence's African fiction, see Jane Leney, "Prospero and Caliban in Laurence's African Fiction," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, No. 27 (1980), pp. 63-80.
- 11 Audrey Thomas, *Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), p. 139. Further references are incorporated in the text.
- 12 Robertson Davies, *Tempest-Tost* (1951; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 122. Further references are incorporated in the text.
- 13 Robertson Davies, *Question Time* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 58-62. Here Davies draws an explicit connection between The Honest Broker and the Beaver.
- 14 Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 90.
- 15 Randolph Stow, *Visitants* (1979; London: Picador, 1981), p. 136. Further references are incorporated in the text.
- 16 This observation seems borne out by the fact the only Canadian novel to deal explicitly with Caliban is also the only one that is set outside Canada (and outside traditional realism) - Gotlieb's *O Master Caliban!*
- 17 For a different approach to these issues, see Jeanne de Chantal Zabus, "A Calibanic Tempest in Anglophone and Francophone New World Writing," forthcoming in *Canadian Literature*. This paper came to my attention after my own work was substantially advanced. While we examine similar texts and agree on the importance of Miranda in English-Canadian *Tempests*, we disagree on how to interpret her prominence, and in our readings of Davies and Thomas in particular. She is much harder in her judgements on English-Canadian writers than I am, seeing blindness where I see subtlety. Her article, "*The Tempest and Robinson Crusoe: A Structuralist 'Attention,'*" *English Studies in Canada*, 9 (1983), 151-63, also provides useful speculation on *The Tempest* as a fable of colonialism.

## An Aboriginal Present: Canadian and Australian Literature in the 1920s

*World Literature Written in English*, Volume 23, Number 1 (1984), 88-96.

TERRY GOLDIE

Throughout the various areas which Europeans called the "New World" relations between the interlopers and the indigenous peoples were fraught with complexity. To some, genocide seemed a simple answer. After these demonic dark people were wiped out, good white progress would replace them. On the other hand, some others saw the indigene as the noble savage, the repository of virtue, in opposition to the flagrantly decadent evil of civilization. Both groups saw the problem as good versus evil, black versus white, although which