

**IN THEIR FATHERS' HOUSE: RESISTANT ALTERITY AND THE LAW  
OF THE FATHER IN *THE TEMPEST*, *OTHELLO* AND *TITUS  
ANDRONICUS***

Peter Mwikisa\*

**Abstract**

The paper offers a reading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus* that sees the plays' black characters as diasporic protagonists seeking alternative constructions of difference from those that are demanded by the dominant white patriarchal culture. The paper deploys two fairly well-known strategies for non-canonical readings of canonical texts. Firstly, the apocryphal approach offers an account of the significance of the fact that details of the origins of the black characters in the plays seem suppressed. Secondly, drawing on postcolonial discourse of the body, the paper reads the characters themselves as texts or spaces in which conflicting discourses can be written and read. I argue that reading the plays this way helps us to understand the struggles of diasporic characters as they attempt to inscribe their presence in the dominant cultures of the West and also to see in their struggles reflections of the trajectory of texts from marginalized communities in the era of global multinational capitalism.

**Key words;** alterity, inter-racial sexual relations, culture, the father, diasporic, bodies, textuality.

Arguably Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus* are easily deployable texts in racist discourses that construct inter-racial sexual relationships, especially between a black man and a white woman, as not only complex but perverse. Whether the interdiction which such relationships transgress is specifically articulated in the law of the land, as was the case in South Africa during the apartheid era, or simply a matter of entrenched bigotry and racism, as has been the case in Western culture since the early modern period, is immaterial. The important point from the perspective of this paper is that the discourses represent white women as a symbol of all that which cannot pass from whites to blacks, i.e., that which is forbidden to the black "other" under any circumstances (Driver, cited in Graham, 2005:160). In an ironic twist that undercuts white patriarchy's pretensions of gallantry, the discourses construct the white woman as the gatekeeper of the inner sanctum of its power and privilege. It is she that must keep at bay all those constructed as the other in symbolic rebuffs of sexual advances. Relations between black men and white women are consequently represented as inherently "complex if not perverse" (Nkosi, 1983:43) because they are presumed to fly in the face of nature. White women are therefore key to racist constructions of black alterity.<sup>1</sup>

Lucy Graham (2005, 147) uses the term “*pere-version*” to suggest that inscriptions of illicitness in inter-racial sexual relationships are linked to the law of the father, or patriarchy. The father is generally at the centre of the psychodynamics of racial identity and difference which frame the conditions of inclusion and exclusion from the dominant culture. The father undergirds all constructions of communal identity, for all those who must belong ultimately trace their line to the one founding patriarch. Such a community is thus seen as a common heritage to which entitlement is defined according to the rule of the father. It is the rule of the father that further determines the terms of exclusion and those of constructions of the other, whose aspirations to belong to the community must be resisted and whose exclusion demonstrated to be natural. It is with reference to the will of the father that black men, for instance, are inscribed with an alterity that constructs them as the perilous “other” who bear the permanent threat of rape. The law of the father decrees that a black man who is guilty of lying with a white woman is castrated (Fanon 1967: 72).

In keeping with the impulse in postcolonial discourse to re-read the masterworks of imperialism in ways that contest readings that conscripted them in the propagation of imperial ideology, I attempt in this paper a re-reading of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus* in order partly to demonstrate that the plays’ black characters, Caliban, Othello and Aaron, may be read as diasporic protagonists reminiscent of today’s immigrants, migrant scholars and intellectuals.<sup>2</sup> They must resist constructions of their alterity imposed upon them by the dominant culture in which they find themselves, and at the same time seek alternative inscriptions of their own alterity that resist the dominant culture’s subordinating “othering.” Inevitably, such a reading locates their bodies as spaces in which conflicting discourses have been inscribed. On the one hand, the bodies as texts contain inscriptions of their own resistant discourses, expressing their desire for acceptance as human beings in the dominant culture in spite of their being different, and on the other, the discourses of the dominant culture that denies them that humanity because they are different. Their desire for inter-racial sexual relations may reflect their vision of a future human community without borders, while the dominant culture’s interdictions against such relationships criminalize such longings and see black men as a “peril” that must be neutralized by incarceration, castration or death.

I am mindful of the ambivalence of my project in this paper. Re-reading Shakespeare the way I propose is useful because it debunks traditional machineries of appropriation which have tended to entrench gender, class, racial and other hegemonic interpretations. On the other hand, it could simply be part of the buzz in the promotional activity which increases the currency of first-world texts on the global cultural marketplace. This paper could thus easily be merely an exercise in

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particular the essay by Lucy Graham which contains the idea of representations of the white woman as a prohibitive sign under the law of the father.

<sup>2</sup> Marco Fazzini’s edited collection of essays *Resisting alterities; Wilson Harris and other avatars of otherness* illuminates my treatment of both the notions of “diasporic protagonists” and “resisting alterity” as I use them in this paper.

what Appiah (1992:240) has described as the supplicatory role of the third-world critic, "mediating the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery" and muzzling the cultural products of the third-world off the shelves.

I argue, however, that the project is defensible. To read Caliban's body, for example, as a text, is to see him as a space bearing inscriptions of conflicting discourses. One discourse is his own and asserts his right to circulate freely in society as a human being on the basis of the way he understands himself to be different from members of the dominant group. The other is that of the dominant culture and proscribes his circulation except on the basis of a socially approved notion of who he is and how he is different from the others. This reading fissures the textuality of *The Tempest* in a way that discloses the possibility of reading it as a text within a text. On the one hand the body as text that at every turn interrogates and contests the hegemonic form of the text of the play itself that contains it on the other. In other words, there is a split of the text between the postcolonial body of Caliban that we read as a text that resists hegemonic containment by the colonial Shakespearean text. So it becomes possible to read colonialism's master texts in ways that do not reproduce colonialism's meanings or representations. In the second instance, fissuring the textuality of the text in the way suggested above discloses further the possibility of seeing in Caliban's struggle to assert his humanity on the basis of his own understanding of who he is and how he is different from other people, the difficulties that are often encountered in attempts to circulate texts from the margins in a global culture dominated by Eurocentric canonical assumptions about literary value. This is the difficulty Fredric Jameson was trying to get to grips with when he tried two decades ago to argue for a promotion of third world literature not on the basis of presumed identity with the masterpieces of Western canonical texts, but on the basis of their alterity (Jameson, 1986).

The aim of this paper is to provide a reading of *The Tempest*, *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus* that sees their black characters as diasporic protagonists engaged in pretty much the same struggles as to-day's postcolonial peoples, namely; to constitute themselves as subjects in a culture that constructs them as "other" and denies them a fully human status.<sup>3</sup> The dominant culture constructs them as other on the basis of their skin colour because it has a narrowly exclusive view of humanity. This paper examines the extent to which Caliban, Othello and Aaron recognize their difference from members of the dominant group from which they are excluded and what that difference means to them. The paper tries to answer the question whether or not these characters suggest an alternative way of understanding difference by constructing an understanding of blackness that is different from that imposed by the dominant culture. The paper argues that, if the three characters' constructions of alterity is seen as not anchored in representations

<sup>3</sup> Both the approach that seeks recourse to recovery of the repressed and silenced aspects of the text through supplementary, apocryphal and speculative readings on the one hand and the other that sees the body as a site for inscriptions of conflicting discourses on the other, are established strategies for decolonizing and alternative readings of colonialism's canonical texts (see Ashcroft et al).

of racialized subjects, they envision a humanity that is not only inclusive but is also constituted through a combination of both cultural and genetic material. Caliban, Othello and Aaron are "Mestizas", to use Gloria Anzaldúa's term (Anzaldúa: 1987), but the future humanity they envision is one they must bring about themselves and not a pre-existing one to which they must seek to be admitted by others. It is this future human society that Caliban hints at in his reply to Prospero's accusation that he, Caliban, had sought to violate the virtue of Prospero's daughter, Miranda:

Caliban: O ho, O ho! Would't had been done!  
Thou didst prevent me – I had peopled else this Isle with  
Calibans (The Tempest, L.2.1340-1349).

The future Caliban imagines here belongs to Mestizas and it is the advent of that future that Prospero's rule of the father thwarts.

Describing Caliban, Othello and Aaron as Mestizas is, of course, to beg the question of their origins: how did these black people come to be problems in white people's culture? The plays themselves and their canonical readers are singularly silent on the issue of the origins of these men who find themselves in this peculiar situation. Caliban, we are told by Prospero, is the son of the witch Sycorax, but we know precious little about her from the jaundiced accounts by Ariel and Prospero. Othello talks of a mother, the source of the fateful handkerchief. Aaron seems to have no history prior to his appearance as a captive together with his lover and vanquished queen of the Goths, Tamora. So what we know about these characters' mothers does not help us much in trying to answer the question of where they came from and how they found themselves in their peculiar circumstances. There is no indication that Othello and Aaron came to Europe as slaves. The absence of other black people in the plays rules out the possibility that there may have been a resident community or a ghetto of black people from which they emerged. The plays' singular silence on the issue of these black men's paternity may be read as intended to conceal a common fatherhood they might share with the white members of the dominant culture. The possibility would appear to be too ghastly to contemplate, as it destabilizes entrenched readings of the texts that rely on and promote racially based constructions of alterity on the basis of a paternal pedigree.

Indeed one of the challenges in trying to work out the respective roles of these characters in the plays in which they feature is the lack of recoverable histories which the characters themselves can draw on in constructing themselves as subjects. The reader too does not have the benefit of such histories. In *The Tempest*, which comes closest to providing such a history, we have to rely on Prospero's account of Caliban's past. To this extent these characters may be seen as diasporic protagonists seeking alternative identities and empowering spaces.

In the same sense as that discussed by Harding (2000) in relation to Blacks in the Brazilian diaspora who, having no recoverable histories, took recourse to the Candomble dance. This is why the critical strategy used in this paper involves speculation both about the origins of these characters and about alternative motives for their actions from those offered in the text. In this way the paper hopes

not only to recover a past for these characters' thoughts, about which the dominant culture has suppressed because not in the texts themselves.

One absolutely crucial fact about all three characters is that, foreign and despised as they were, they seem to have insinuated themselves successfully into the highest echelons of the society. Othello and Aaron hobnob with the rich and powerful of the day. It seems to me that one should at least leave open the question of whether their prodigious talents alone were responsible for such meteoric rises of fortunes. Similarly, although in most readings of the play, Caliban is often placed next to Ariel, as a servant of Prospero, the fact is that he is raised in Prospero's household together with Prospero's own daughter, Miranda, in circumstances which belie any hints of the slavery or servitude which later become his lot. These facts should make us turn, in our search for their origins, to the question of their paternity.

Apart from Caliban whom we are told was sired by "the devil himself" (*The Tempest* 1.2.13-19), which we should regard as an invective rather than as a statement of a biological fact, no references are made to Othello's father or Aaron's. Could their fathers be the missing link between them and the Roman society in which they have risen so dramatically? The question of whether such a rise would be possible in an alien culture without the aid of blood ties, even for somebody as clever and resourceful as Othello or Aaron, should also remain open, leaving us free to speculate about the possible fatherhood of these characters being a part explanation of their ending up in the very high places they seem to have been born to invade.

Alonso, king of Naples in *The Tempest*, has a daughter, Claribel, whom he has married off to the king of Tunis, a black man, since we are told she overcomes her natural revulsion from him out of duty to her father. Gonzalo says:

Methink's our garments are now as fresh as when we put them on first in Afric, at the marriage of the King's fair daughter Claribel, to the King of Tunis

(*The Tempest*, II.1.66-70).

This marriage seems to be a violation of the cardinal rule of the father that inscribes the white woman as a sign of that which cannot be exchanged between whites and blacks. The fact that it is relaxed in this case actually illustrates the absoluteness of the rule of the father. The union is acceptable partly because it is probably a lucrative one for Alonso. Furthermore, it is consummated in distant Tunis, away from the disapproving gaze of home, and is not therefore cause of much anxiety to the rule of the father.

If, for arguments' sake, this fair Claribel were to have had a son, the son would have been welcome in Naples, despite his swarthy hue, particularly if he proved himself as useful a soldier as did Othello. This surely warrants speculation of similar origin for Othello and Aaron. Interestingly, Claribel's marriage is described as a banishment, which reminds us that Sycorax, Caliban's mother, was a banished woman.

Sebastian: Sir, you may thank yourself for this great loss,  
That would not bless our Europe with your daughter,  
But rather lose her to an African,  
Where she, at least, is banished from your eye,  
Who hath cause to wet the grief on't

(*The Tempest*, II.1.121–126).

Later on in the course of this scene, Sebastian, with Antonio, plots the murder of his own brother, Alonso, Claribel's father. Had the plot succeeded, it is conceivable that Claribel would have ended up in circumstances not unlike Sycorax's, a banished noble spouse, so that Caliban's noble birth is not as far-fetched a notion as its conspicuous absence in the play would suggest. Furthermore, when Miranda asks her father how it was that they ended up on Caliban's island, Prospero replies:

By Providence divine  
Some food we had, and some fresh water, that  
A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo,  
Out of his charity, who then appointed  
Master of this design, did give us, with  
Rick garments, linens, stuffs and necessaries  
Which since have steadied much, so of his gentleness,  
Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me  
From mine own library with volumes that  
I prize above my dukedom.

(*The Tempest*, I.2.159-168).

Old Gonzalo, solicitous of the deposed duke's comforts, craftily arranges for the finer comforts of life for his duke's life in exile. It is not illogical to suppose that Gonzalo did expect the duke, despite the ramshackle vessel that bore him, to end up on a habitable island of which he, Gonzalo, had prior knowledge. It could be supposed, therefore, that Sycorax's island was Prospero's choice place of exile because he and Gonzalo knew that Sycorax, his long-standing lover (concubine) owned it. Caliban could easily be, like Miranda, Prospero's child too, but with Sycorax. Towards the end of the play, Prospero introduces Caliban to Alonso thus, "...this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" (*The Tempest*, V.1.275).

The ownership he admits should straightforwardly enough be taken, in keeping with what has gone on before, to mean that he admits to being the "owner" of Caliban in the sense of being his master. However, given the atmosphere of reconciliation, new awareness, forgiveness and facing up to the truth at this point in the play, this statement is, at least ambiguous, and "owner" could suggest a cryptic admission of paternity. If the former is granted, however grudgingly, Prospero's anger at Caliban's attempted violation of his daughter's honour may be tinged with a hint of revulsion at the horror of incest. Caliban's bastardry (he is persistently referred to as a bastard, perhaps, suspiciously, too insistently by Prospero) may have a noble pedigree that Prospero is anxious to conceal.

The pertinent issue here is why there is such a thick veil of mystery over the paternity of these black men, whereas, in contrast, there is a strident openness,

albeit derisive, on the issue of their mothers. One way of resolving the issue would be to suggest that mothers do not play the same role as fathers do in the dominant culture's constructions of alterity. Mothers leave no legacy or investment that confers community in the dominant culture's patriarchal society, but since they are the only incontestable parental link with the child, they are used to inscribe identity and alterity. Since only the mother knows that she is the parent of the child, an alien mother is used as incontrovertible proof of outsider status. The father, on the other hand, even though he is the owner of the heritage that must pass on to offspring, cannot in fact be certain that the child is really his. So the fact that the paternity of these characters is obscured may be explained as a subterfuge of the rule of the father to deny offsprings with mothers from other racial groups access to a heritage which is their due. Representations of black motherhood are deployed in constructions of black offspring of white men as the "other" and to whom a heritage of their fathers cannot be passed. The situation of the black descendants of President Thomas Jefferson with a mulatto mistress in the United States affords us a real-life instance of the phenomenon.

Traditionally, the consensus about Caliban, Othello and Aaron has revolved around constructions of their alterity as projections of the darker side of human nature. Caliban represents the beast that Western man could easily become without the guiding hand of culture. He is a projection of Prospero's repressed primitive or infantile desires, which incidentally do not exclude incestuous desire for Miranda, his daughter. Othello too is used to demonstrate the self-destructive passions which lie under a veneer of the self-control and respectability of a nobleman. In Aaron's apparently gratuitous meanness Shakespeare is assumed to have plumbed the depths of human wickedness. What is offensive about these assumptions is, of course, that other races are used, not only as metaphors for what is reprehensible in our behaviour (which we can change) but that they are themselves in fact evil because of their physical appearance which they are powerless to change even if, as in the case of Othello, they might have wished to do so to seal their identification with the dominant culture.

It is wrong to construct other people as symbols of what in our own nature is reprehensible and must be removed by education or punishment, but it is perverse to see the people themselves as reprehensible and deserving to be excluded from the realm of the human. There are no grounds for critics of Shakespeare to suppose, as many of them do, that Iago's and Antonio's wickedness are theirs as individuals, but that the putative hypersensitivity of Othello's or barbarity of Caliban's are those of their race as a whole. Such a reading of the characters is part of locating them as spaces in which the reader decodes conflicting inscriptions of alterity. The dominant culture's inscriptions of their alterity as embodiments of evil are contested by alternative inscriptions of their own alterity suggested by their own behaviour in the play. Demonized by the dominant culture as manifestations of their evil nature, these black characters' behaviour is no more than a wholesome desire, firstly, to be accepted as human beings and, secondly, to bring about a truly inclusive view of humanity which would include them and their offspring despite their difference.

Although *The Tempest* comes last in order of composition, for the schematic way in which I wish to discuss the three character's resistance to the dominant cultures constructions of their alterity, it is convenient to place Caliban at the beginning. Whether Prospero is his biological or merely adoptive father is really immaterial, since Caliban himself clearly regards him as being in *loco parentis* over him, and Prospero himself initially treats him like a son. He raises him in his own cavern household with his own daughter, Miranda. Caliban enjoys Prospero's parenting in ways that not even Ariel, the favourite nymph, enjoys among the natives on the island. Moreover, the love seems at first to be mutual, a form of father and child reunion, in which Caliban proudly shows off his knowledge of the island to Prospero, who in turn avails to him all the benefits of his knowledge and civilization.

We may suppose, from Caliban's subsequent exchanges with Trinculo and Stephano that he is a refined man, and intellectually stands head and shoulders above them. He has imbibed much of the dominant culture's knowledge, language and culture.

I have seen thee in her, and I adore thee.  
My mistress showed me thee, and thy dog and thy  
bush

(*The Tempest*, II.2.140-3).

I do not think the only view that can be taken of this is that Caliban is horribly childlike (Nuttal 1967) and that his knowledge consists of scraps from kindergarten stories. It is possible also that he is here astutely bringing himself to the level of his drunken interlocutors whom he is anxious to involve in his scheme against Prospero. Joseph Wharton in *Remarks on the Creation of Character* (1753) sees Caliban's remarks to Trinculo and Stephano below as demonstrating Shakespeare's unique ability to unite poetry with propriety of character.

Pray you tread softly, that the blind male may not/Hear a foot-fall.

(*The Tempest*, IV.1.194-5).

However, it is possible to quibble over Wharton's interpretation that the image Caliban makes use of to express silence "is at once highly poetical, and exactly suited to the wilderness of the speaker" (Daniell, 26). The alternative view that the image expresses the speaker's refinement as well as the lowliness of the people he is addressing is also possible. Surely Caliban's love of the ideal of freedom which he expresses in song is not just a desire for release from physical work, but a cultured man's dream for a more just social order (*The Tempest*, II:2.170-180). Like Aaron and Othello, who show more character and learning than the members of the dominant race to whom they must defer, Caliban is more resourceful, more sober and more refined than Trinculo and Stephano who would be his gods. Caliban's depravity in this whole episode seems feigned in order to suit the depraved company whose will he wishes to bend to his purpose, such as when



he tells Stephano that Miranda, "Will become thy bed, I warrant/and bring thee forth brave brood" (*The Tempest*, III.2.100 – 110).

However, despite the obvious education which Caliban has acquired which makes him the candidate for assimilation *par excellence*, he is not really accepted in the culture of his adoption. He is repeatedly reminded of the fact that he is of a different race and an outsider. His plight may be seen in latter-day Caliban-like Stanlake Samkange's Orky in *The Mourned One* (1966), Sibiya in Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* (1987) or Nadine Gordimer's Sonny in *My Son's Story* (1986), who attain all the qualifications for acceptance in the dominant culture, but find that this does not lead to their being acceptable as human beings because of their race. Their skin colour, which they cannot change, becomes an imprint of inerasable alterity and ensures that they remain outside the boundary of the power and privilege which they have given so much to access. The ultimate symbol of this rejection is when they attempt to engage in sexual relationships with women from the dominant race, and they are branded rapists and condemned to die in Nkosi and Samkange. In Gordimer, Sonny is in the end a pathetic broken man, alienated from his family and colleagues in the anti-apartheid movement, left to contemplate a lonely middle age. All three pay the consequences of having wandered into the forbidden territory of interracial sexual relationships with white women. They are not unlike Caliban who ends up condemned to servitude, and to the very humiliation he thought he would escape by adopting Prospero's culture, when he presumes to be as human as Prospero and seeks to engage in a sexual relationship with Miranda. It is this basic denial of the humanity of the "other" which we find in Iago's refusal to countenance Othello's being husband to Desdemona, and in Tamora's sons' refusal to accept their mother's child by Aaron as their brother. All three, Caliban, Othello and Aaron, find themselves in a situation uncannily reminiscent of postcolonial African, Indian, West Indian immigrants, scholars or intellectuals, who having acquired all the trappings of the dominant culture values, find themselves thwarted by those of the dominant culture who alterize them in a double-edged rejection of their difference in which their difference is either acknowledged, in which case it forms the reason for their exclusion, or is ignored, in which it forms the reason for their assimilation on the condition that they suppress their individual identities. It is a situation in which the other cannot win because, to apply Todorov's argument in his general discussion of the question of the other (1984), they can only be accepted as human beings altogether, having the same rights as members of the dominant group, when they can be seen as identical. This attitude leads to assimilation because it is merely a projection of the dominant group's values on the other. At the same time, when the dominant group sees the other as different, it immediately translates this difference into terms of superiority and inferiority. In either case, Todorov argues correctly:

What is denied is the existence of the human substance truly "other", something capable of being not merely an imperfect state of oneself" (42).

In all three cases, as in Lewis Nkosi's protagonist who strains for human contact with a white woman across the colour-line drawn by apartheid on a Durban beach, a relationship with a woman of the other race is an assertion of their humanity, and assertion of a resistant alterity to that constructed on the basis of the racist assumptions of the dominant culture which deny their humanity.

Considering the three characters it is possible to schematically represent their resistance to colonial alterity in the following way: Caliban insistently asserts his ownership of the island directly demands his freedom from Prospero and finally plots a coup against him. This behaviour is prompted by his realization that, much as Prospero may have raised him in his own household and professes to love him, he does not regard him as a human being, as conclusively demonstrated by the fact that he demonizes his attempt at a relationship with Miranda as rape. He realizes that Prospero's attitude towards him had been assimilationist, based on Caliban having foregone his truly human otherness and his claim to ownership of the island that Prospero has usurped. When later he asserts both his humanity and right to the island (it is legitimate to see Miranda as a feminization of the contested island), his actions and desire are criminalized and he is put out of the house and incarcerated. To the end Caliban is determined to rid himself of Prospero's overlordship even if it should mean a temporary submission to yet another overlord. His last speech may be seen simply as a cunning ploy to placate Prospero, to whose mastery for the time being, at any rate, he must once more submit. To take this statement to mean a definitive acceptance of servitude for the rest of his life on his part would be inconsistent with his character. In fact, the speech is ambiguous:

Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter,  
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass  
Was I, to take this drunkard for a God,  
And worship this dull fool

*(The Tempest, V.1.290 - 300).*

It is arguable that what he repents is the choice of accomplices for his enterprise, not the enterprise itself. Caliban's resistant alterity renders him an unrepentant revolutionary who dreams of freedom. His attitude towards the colonial master's language is illustrative.

You taught me language, and my profit on it  
Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you  
For learning me your language

*(The Tempest, I.2.365-367)*

He clearly sees the master's language as an instrument he can use to curse Prospero, which he does at every opportunity. At the same time, he seems to regret having no language of his own and having to express himself in the language the oppressor has forced him to learn.

Othello, like the early Caliban, is blissfully oblivious of his alterity and relates to the dominant group on the basis of a suppressed alterity and presumptions of identity. He is, however, never rudely awakened from this

delusion because superficially, the dominant culture, after overcoming initial hesitations, accepts his marriage to Desdemona. However, this marriage, and therefore the humanity which he presumes to have been accorded to him are based on the delusion that he is not different from members of the dominant culture in any fundamental way, and that his skin colour is only an incidental nuisance. But both his marriage and the presumption of acceptance, of which the marriage is a symbol, are not universally acknowledged. Iago's refusal to accept that a black man can be his superior is equal only to his repugnance at the fact that a black man can marry a white woman. Unlike Prospero who consigns the uppity black to life-long servitude Iago, acting on behalf of a significant part of his society, orchestrates Othello's entrapment into a deadly syndrome of jealousy that consigns him to damnation as murderer of his innocent wife. Othello perishes because, as Echeruo correctly points out, like "the other latter-day Atlantists, he makes the cardinal error of supposing that his blackness is both incidental to [his] being and irrelevant to his historical condition (Echeruo, 175). Caliban is too savvy to be caught out on that. So is Aaron.

Aaron's response to the dominant culture's constructions of his alterity is different from Caliban's and Othello's. His response to a culture which denies him his humanity is to become Machiavelli and Rasputin rolled into one. He cuckolds the emperor by having an affair with Tamora, Queen of the Goths. As the "power behind the power behind the throne" he orchestrates such apparently motiveless violence that Shakespeare leaves us with no option but to conclude that it is due to the evil inherent in his race. Indeed, Aaron flaunts his violence and depravity for all to see. This is what he says as he faces his death:

Ah, why should wrath be mute, and fury dumb?  
I am no baby, I, that with base prayers  
I should repent the evils I have done;  
Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did  
Would I perform, if I might have my will  
If one good deed in all my life I did,  
I do repent it from my very soul

(*Titus Andronicus*, V.3.184-190).

We are, of course, meant to read these lines as indicating that Aaron is unredeemably evil. In a similar way we are supposed to see Caliban as a self-confessed attempted rapist when he regrets the fact that Prospero thwarts his intentions regarding Miranda. Yet the similarity between this speech and Caliban's rings more like the defiant call of a man refusing to give his tormentors the satisfaction of seeing him defeated, humiliated and broken than the unprovoked malice of a demon. An indication of the kind of humiliation that Aaron resists is suggested by the fact that even his lover, Tamora, would not contemplate keeping their child, and orders it to be killed. He is all the more angry because Tamora's decision shows that she had used him merely as a sex-object, and really shares the rest of the community's view that he, Aaron, is less than human.

I have argued so far that Caliban, Othello and Aaron represent different strategies of contesting constructions of their alterity by the dominant culture that deny them humanity. I now wish to move on to consider the kind of humanity their own resistant alterities suggest. As argued above, Caliban, Othello and Aaron may be regarded as Mestizas, if not genetically then metaphorically, in the sense that they represent an admixture of not just genetic but also cultural material. If this is granted, then it is only right to regard their careers in the plays as a thrust towards a genuinely multi-cultural humanity in the sense that Anzaldua (to whom I have alluded above) uses the term, namely; "a mixture that gives birth to a mutable, more malleable species with a rich and variable gene pool" (Anzaldua, 1987: 80).

From this perspective, Caliban's desire for Miranda, provoked surely, in part, by her libidinous curiosity, which we must assume natural in an adolescent girl of fifteen, is not just a question of lust, nor for that matter, only a question of asserting his humanity. It also represents a primeval human thrust towards an admixture of genes which should lead to Anzaldua's ideal of a plural humanity. It seems to me also an unwarranted foreclosure to see Prospero's allegation that Caliban sought to violate his daughter as confirming Caliban's intent to rape, given Prospero's tendency towards invective and exaggeration in decrying Caliban's behaviour and appearance. Such an interpretation is surely belied by Caliban's own words in response to the accusation:

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

(*The Tempest*, 1.2.351-353).

This hardly smacks of someone who had been thwarted in an intended single act of rape, but in an attempt to forge a durable liaison from which there would be offspring. Caliban's dream resists constructions of humanity in which he is altered as an object of ridicule, hewer of wood and drawer of water, and bearer of an ever present threat of ravishing a white woman. It is one in which his island would be peopled by "mestizas." Miranda perhaps shares this dream and would have gone along with Caliban but for her domineering father's reactionary intervention. Her reply to Caliban's statement above can be read to suggest this:

Abhorred slave,  
Which any print of goodness will 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 endow'd thy purposes  
With words that made them known

(*The Tempest*, 1.2.353-360).

This could be interpreted as a piece of over-acting intended to conceal her own sympathy with Caliban's view of humanity from her father, whose rule does not

brook such a view of humanity. We have come across this over-acting already when she declares to her father that Caliban is, "...a Villain, Sir/I do not love to look on" (*The Tempest*, 1.2.308-10).

Stephen Orgel (1994) has noted how Miranda is not guileless herself, and how she is particularly adept at saying the sort of thing she thinks her father expects her to say, in this way, preserving in his eyes, her image of innocence and purity (16-17). While I agree with Orgel about Miranda being complicit in Caliban's design, I do not share his implication that Caliban's intention was rape that Miranda invited or brought upon herself. I offer instead the view that she has no reason to lie and protect Caliban if indeed she knows that he is a rapist. The reason she lies is to protect herself and Caliban from the rule of the father that would have been profoundly destabilized by the vision of humanity that they both shared.

Othello's tragic failure to resist the dominant culture's inscriptions of his alterity leaves him in a situation in which he cannot imagine an alternative to it. He is so ensnared by the dominant culture's constructions of his otherness that he, unlike Caliban, cannot pursue his own inscription of a resistant alterity. All he can do is repeatedly thrust before his tormentors professions of how faithful to their view of him he is in instances of self-loathing. His marriage to Desdemona is an act of willful refusal to believe what the contrast in their two complexions insistently demands, namely; that they should see each other, not as identical, but as different but equal. It is as well that there is no off-spring from the marriage, for Othello's outlook does not envision a future that is made up of a plural humanity and distinct from the present with its binary view of difference.

Aaron, on the other hand, has a child, and more than either Caliban or Othello, affords us the opportunity to see the kind of future his character suggests and the strength of resistance the dominant culture is prepared to mount against its realization. The plural view of humanity that Aaron stands for is symbolized by the child that Aaron has with Tamora, Queen of the Goths, and Empress of Rome as wife to Saturninus. For all his advertised cruelty and bestiality he is probably the most humane of all the characters in the play. He is certainly more so than Titus Andronicus, who dispatches his son, Mutius, over an argument which is none of their business, and over which he is clearly in the wrong. Similarly, he is more human than Tamora's sons, Demetrius and Chiron (who rape Lavinia, cut out her tongue and cut off her hands so that she could not, either by speaking or writing, reveal them as her rapists) because they deny their blood ties to Aaron's child with their mother. Aaron stands alone as the paragon of parental love in the play.

When Tamora orders that her child with Aaron be killed, Aaron protects the child and makes plans for it to be saved. In the end he strikes a deal with his executioners in which he offers to reveal the villainy of Tamora's sons in Lavinia's fate and his own role in it in return for a promise to have his son's life spared:

To save my boy, to nourish and bring him up;  
Or else I will discover nought to thee

(*Titus Andronicus*, 5.1.84-85).

Intriguingly, Aaron's statement suggests that his black son survives to enjoy childhood in a royal household in a manner reminiscent of Caliban's early life in Prospero's cave. However, more importantly, Aaron's determination to save his child with Tamora suggests a defense of the concept of a humanity based on the recombination of genes and cultural material of which Anzaldua, Homi Bhabha, A.K Appiah and others talk, for his child is the *mestiza par excellence*. His dream of a common humanity in which alterity is not based on hierarchically structured constructions of difference is unthinkable to members of the dominant group, as can be judged from Tamora's decision, made without hesitation, that the offending representative of such a future, her own child, should die. Tamora's intolerance of a plural concept of humanity is echoed in Titus Andronicus' failure to cross the cultural boundaries that might have enabled him to perceive that Tamora loved her sons, and respected them deeply for dying for their country in the same way that he himself felt about his own dead children. He brushes aside Tamora's appeal to him to spare her children:

Tam (kneeling):

Stay, Roman Brethren! Gracious conqueror,  
Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed-  
A mother's tears in passion for her son-  
And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,  
O, think my son to be dear to me!  
Sufficeth not that we are brought to Rome  
To beautify thy triumphs, and return  
Captive to thee and to thy Roman yoke;  
But must my sons be slaughtered in the streets  
For valiant doings in their country's cause?  
O, if to fight for king and commonweal  
Were piety in thine, it is in these

(*Titus Andronicus*, I.1.105-115).

What is striking about this speech is that, even though Tamora will think nothing of having her own *mestiza* child killed, she begs Titus to spare the life of her "pure" bred son:

Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge.  
Thrice -noble Titus, spare my first born son.

(*Titus Andronicus* I.1. 119-120)

This is a metaphorical rejection of inscriptions of a future humanity as a terrain which belongs to both whites and blacks. The other striking feature of her speech is that although Tamora appeals to the same values which Titus Andronicus holds dear, so committed is Titus Andronicus to a notion of identity which is predicated on an absolute division between an "us" whom God loves and "them" whom God hates, that he cannot imagine a common humanity which includes himself, the Goths, and much less, Aaron.

Appiah's dedication of his book *In My Fathers House* (1992) perhaps best illustrates the ideal view of humanity for which Caliban suffers incarceration and for which, in different circumstances, Othello and Aaron perish. Appiah dedicates his book to nine inhabitants of the future as follows:

This book is dedicated to nine children – boy born in Botswana, of Norwegian and Anglo-Ghanaian parents; his brothers born in Norway and in Ghana; their four cousins, three boys in Lagos, born of Nigerian and Anglo-Ghanaian parents, and a girl in Ghana; and two girls, born in New Haven Connecticut, of a African-American Father and a “White” American mother (x).

These children, he explains, who are his nephews and his God-children, have names from Yorubaland, from Asante, from America, from Norway, from England. Watching them, he concludes, playing together and speaking to each other in various accents, he at least, feels a certain hope for the human future (x) It is towards such a future that we should perhaps aim to make our thinking about Shakespeare direct us. It is a future that Fredric Jameson's construction of third-world literary alterity paves the way to, for it imagines the circulation of third-world texts and bodies in a borderless global culture based not on elision of differences but affirmations of dialoguing alterities.

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