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Fashioning Black Cultural Identities to Resist Western Precepts: A Comparative Study of Aimee Cesaire's a Tempest, Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun and Derek Walcott's Dream on Monkey Mountain

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Introduction

No doubt, the theme of colonialism and slavery permeate many of the works of black playwrights of African Diaspora. In various ways, these playwrights preoccupy themselves with subverting the effects of colonialism and the slave trade. In this study, I investigate the strategies these playwrights deploy in forging a distinct black cultural identity to counter western precepts imposed through colonialism and slave trade. How have these playwrights, in the words of Olaniyan (1995), tackled 'Euro-American cultural hegemony on black cultural identity in particular' (6). By examining plays from three different countries of African diaspora, this study investigates the forms of Euro-American cultural hegemony that exists in these countries and the forms of resistance these playwrights mount against the imposed western cultural identity. Also, implicitly implied in this study, is the exploration of the simultaneous affirmation of the sameness and difference of black culture because as Olaniyan reminds us, these cultures are 'diverse but not completely alien to one another' (6). In that regard, how does these plays mediate the diversity but not outright difference of black cultures.

Olaniyan (1995) situates the emergence of black dramatic culture in the Caribbean and the United States in what he calls the 'representation of representation' (16). The former in the Trinidadian carnival (*camboulay)* and the latter in black face minstrelsy. Both dramatic forms involve the whites "performing" as blacks. Olaniyan notes that black face minstrelsy flourished between the early 19th century and the 1920's and it involves white entertainers blackening up their faces with exaggerated makeup and outlandish costumes 'to represent what they consider black "peculiarities," to the hilarity and delight of their equally white audience' (13). In the same vein, camboulay, – the Trinidadian Carnival – also features the 'pillars of the society' that is, the 'white planter aristocrats and overseers' doing a parodic appropriation of the culture of their slaves. This includes as Olaniyan reveals 'caricaturing the slaves themselves and performing slave dances and songs, to the rhythm of "African drums"' (15). Apparently, slavery is the facilitating context of both camboulay and the black face minstrelsy. The origins of these shows can also be traced to the white man having fun at the expense of the degradation the black body and its culture. Despite these overlapping similarities, some differences are noticeable. As Olaniyan reminds us, unlike black face minstrelsy that later became commercialized, the Trinidadian Carnival never did. Also, social revolution sweeping across the Americas by mid-19th century 'democratized' these shows. Blacks and former slaves were able to participate in camboulay and black face minstrelsy in the Caribbean and, United States respectively. According to Olaniyan, 'Unlike minstrelsy, however, what was caricatured in camboulay was not the slaves' so-called peculiarities but their response to a particularly agonizing moment of labor' (16). It is worth noting that the peculiarities that the whites perform in black face minstrelsy are gross oversimplification and essentialization of black humanity deduced from the unequal contact between black and white people within the context of slavery. What, within the context of Middle-East, Edward Said calls Orientalism. This act of black continuing to perform what has been performed about them is what Olaniyan refers to as 'representation of representation.' Clearly, in the United States and the Caribbean, blacks did not have active agency in the formation of their own cultural identity or the way they were represented – blacks were spoken for and about.

The late African-American historian, sociologist and civil rights activist, W.E.B DuBois's famous phrase "About us, By us, For us, and Near us" stands out among various voices that fashions out rubrics that should guide theatrical representation of blacks in the United States. Likewise, the Caribbean postcolonial scholar Frantz Fanon (1961), discusses how a black national culture is important in reversing the dehumanizing colonial representation of black people. 'A national culture,' Fanon argues is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence' (210). Fanon recognizes the similarities that exist between black people but for national culture to be effective in its combative intent, specificity to individual nations is crucial. An example he gives to substantiate this is the difference in the dynamics of challenges confronting the blacks in the United States and those in Africa during the 60's when he was writing. For Fanon, national culture must counter the white man's pre-colonial barbaric black history and must rescue this history from distortion, disfiguration and destruction. It must also be able to incite action. He writes: 'The colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening up the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope' (210). Otherwise, in Fanon's estimation, not following up the words with the action merely amounts to making 'comparisons between

coins and sarcophagi' (211). He conceives culture and its representation not as a codified entity, but what needs constant revision, and update, while staying true to the mission of reviving devalued pre-colonial history of the black race engendered by colonial activities. Hence, in Fanon's words, 'the intellectual often runs the risk of being out of date' because, 'in an underdeveloped country, during the period of struggle, traditions are fundamentally unstable and are shot through by centrifugal tendencies' (209). This constant revision that Fanon espouses strike resemblance with W.E.B Dubois calls "double-consciousness." That is, the identity of an African-American is an amalgamation of both his African and American roots.

This logic of constant revision lies at the core of conceptual paradigms of cultural identity and difference Olaniyan (1995) proposes. For him, cultural identity in African, African-American, and Caribbean drama is either 'expressive' or 'performative.' For expressive identity, 'society itself is taken as given, preconstituted' while in performative identity, society as a 'unitary entity is discarded for mutually impinging social networks of differing scales relating to different types of power – political, military, ideological, or economic' (31). According to him, the claims of expressive identity are rigid and 'oftentimes unexamined ethnocentric biases' while that of performative identity 'is a self-critical model that conceives identity as open, interculturally negotiable, and always in the making – a *process*' (4). He makes a distinction on how both cultural identities conceive society. He goes on to explain how some gaps in the assumption of the performative necessitates his proposal of 'an enabling performative as 'articulation.'" 'This articulation,' he says, is 'not only nonessentialist in its insistence on an abrasion of histories but also emphasizing, as an articulated structure, interactional levels of subordination and the existence of power within, between, and among cultures and cultural forms, structured as they are, in dominance' (5). He goes on to apply these conceptual paradigms to understand the invention of cultural identities in his site of analysis: the drama of the African, African-American, and the Caribbean people. His analysis shows how the dramatic imagination of the playwrights he investigates vacillate between the performative and expressive identity although, one form is more dominant. It should be noted that implied implicitly in these conceptual paradigms is the subversion of West's cultural hegemony over black people even though as Olaniyan points out that 'performative identity is not inherently and automatically insurgent or anti-imperialist' but 'effective forms of these struggles are hardly conceivable without it' (36). This is because in conceptualizing society and culture where 'more productively resistant, insurgent identities could be thought and fashioned,' performative identity is useful in 'subverting expressivity in its different forms: either as singular rationality proposed by the Eurocentric discourse or as unnegotiable autonomy put forward by the extreme relativism of Afrocentric cultural nationalism' (37). While the objective of both the expressive and performative remains to counter the subhuman identity that the West foisted on the black people through slavery and colonialism, a major difference between both models is that while performative identity acknowledges the contact between the histories of the colonialized and the colonial powers, expressive identity stays rigid in its historical claims to the point of romanticizing it. I shall apply these two conceptual paradigms to analyze Aimee Cesaire's *A Tempest*, Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain.* Determining the cultural identity fashioned in these works will illuminate our understanding on how these playwrights were able to mount resistance against western precepts that stifles the flourishing of their humanity. Just like Olaniyan points out in his analysis, the playwrights examined in this study also vacillates between the expressive and performative identity although one form of cultural identity is more dominant. I argue that dominantly Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* articulates performative identity while Aimee Cesaire's *A Tempest* occupies a more ambiguous position. He vacillates between both forms of identities and I argue that his work is hard to be subsumed neatly under a specific paradigm although, he projects most of the qualities of the performative.

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*

In '*A Raisin in the Sun:* Anniversary of an American Classic,' Margaret B. Wilkerson explores how Hansberry's text 'transcended the racial parochialism of American audiences' to clinch the status of an American classic. 'Rarely, if ever,' in her words 'has a play by a Black-American been accorded the status of classic.' This is because the asphyxiating economic and socio-political environment is hostile to 'works based on Black Experience.' *A Raisin in the Sun* emerges as an American classic partly because according to Wilkerson, 'the drama reflects that moment in U.S history when the country was poised on the brink of cataclysmic social and legal upheavals that would forever change its character.' That moment in U.S history is the 60's during the heights of civil rights movement when African-American are clamoring for racial equality. Subjugation and oppression of black by white since the period of slavery continue to play out economically, politically and, socially in the 60's. The doctrine of 'separate-but-equal' that originates in the U.S Supreme court 1896 case of Plessy vs Ferguson which officially segregates facilities between blacks and white was still active in the 60's when Lorraine Hansberry wrote her play. On December 5, 1955 Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, in Montgomery Alabama refuses to give up her bus seat and move to the colored section of the bus. This event sparked a remarkable move during the civil rights movement leading to several protests across the nation.

Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Malcom X, W.E.B DuBois are some of the important figures of the civil rights movement. Despite her family's wealth, they experienced the racial segregation. Born and raised in Chicago, the city's law forced the Hansberrys' to live in the 'ghetto on the South Side.' Her father, Carl Hansberry bought a house in the white neighborhood and the official segregation at that time led to a series of harassment from their white neighbors. The constant pelting of their house, missing Lorraine by whiskers in one of those instances, made Carl Hansberry file a suit against his white neighbors. He lost the case at the state of Illinois but with the unnerving support of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), he won the appeal at the U.S supreme court. The civil rights movement in the United States coincide with the wave of independence from colonial rule sweeping across the continent of Africa. Nigeria became independent in 1960, Kenya in 1963, Uganda in 1962 and Ghana in 1957. Lorraine used her play to articulate her lived experiences during the civil rights movement and the wave of independence that Africa is experiencing.

The plays centers around the Youngers family – an African American family living in Chicago's Southside. It opens in the run-down apartment of the Youngers, establishing that they are struggling to make ends meet. Walter Lee Younger is a driver to a white family; His wife Ruth Younger, does menial job as a maid wherever she finds one; Walter's sister Beneatha, is in college training to be a physician and, Lena Younger (Mama) is a retiree. Travis Younger, Walter and Ruth's son, is a young boy of ten or eleven who is probably in middle school. The family is expecting ten thousand dollars check, the widow's benefit coming in for Mama. In various ways and degrees, each of the family member sees the check as 'fulfillment of a private dream.' Frustrated with his job, and living in his mother's house with his family, Walter sees investment in liquor business as the means of spinning around the family's economic situation and, moving up on the social ladder. Walter's inflated hope is punctured when Mama reveals that she wants to use the money as a down payment for a house in Clybourne Park, a white neighborhood. Realizing how her decision demoralizes Walter, Mama entrusts him with the remaining money stating that a portion be set aside for her sister's education and the rest, he can disburse as he wishes. Walter's elation is short lived. He loses the money to a fraudulent business deal. A more demoralized and disillusioned Walter is faced with the options of accepting the Clybourne Park Association's pay out offer – to preserve the racial 'purity' of Clybourne park – to recuperate the loss of the liquor store deal or preserve the dignity and pride of the Youngers and move into their new home. The play ends with the family moving to the new home.

Joseph Assagai and George Murchison, who are romantically involved with Beneatha are two characters in the play that Hansberry uses to articulate a contrasting conception of identity and difference. Assagai, a Nigerian, who comes to further his studies in the United States and George, a rich middle-class African-American man who Beneatha regards as an assimilationist. Beneatha herself projects a performative identity in the way Olaniyan (1995) delineates it. Pitched against her brother specifically, she embodies self-criticism, self-reinvention and inter-cultural negotiation that Olaniyan claims to be the characteristics of the performative identity. Beneatha's insistence on becoming a medical doctor is almost a taboo for an African-American woman in 60's. Walter voices the prevailing mentality: 'Who the hell told you you had to be a doctor? If you so crazy 'bout messing around with sick people-then go be a nurse like other women-or just get married and be quiet…' Walter's statement gives us a clue to the radical nature of Beneatha. She defies the social construct to follow her dream of becoming a medical doctor. She refuses to surrender to the denigrating social, political, and economic conditions blacks are subjected to during this period and more importantly, black women. The seed of a performative identity that Hansberry sow gets clearer when she reveals through Beneatha, in the scene when her family berates her for 'wasting' money on things like learning to ride horse, or learning to play guitar, she replies: 'I don't flit! I – I experiment with different forms of expression…' This form of identity formation that refuses to accept human as a given but one that entails constant re-invention strikes resemblance with Olga Barrios (2003) argument about African-American women playwrights. In the paper, Barrios argues that African-American women playwrights 'in the process of reconstructing their identities, these playwrights created female characters that, according to Claudia Tate, go through an inner search before they find important links with other people' (613). This inner search combined with self-criticalness and being-as-a-process forges an identity that is performative which Olaniyan will agree to be effective, if consciously deployed, to the resistance of white domination.

Beneatha criticizes the rich black middle class adopting white sensibilities. She voices her disdain to these assimilationists as she refers to George constantly. In the scene where she tells Ruth and Mama why she cannot marry George, she didn't mince words to call out the Murchisons as assimilationists.

> **BENEATHA:** Oh, Mama – the Murchisons are honest-to-God-real-live-rich colored people, and the only people in the world who are more snobbish than rich white people are colored people. I thought everybody knew that. I've met Mrs.Murchison. She's a scene!

In Amiri Baraka's racial taxonomy where Whites and Blacks are on the extreme of the spectrum, these classes of people are the Yellow – A level above the Brown but a level below the White. Beneatha doesn't try to remove the speck in the eye of the Murchinsons while being oblivious of the log of wood in her own family. Like Walter,

her brother, Ruth also belittles her ambition of becoming a physician. If anything, they think she is wasting the family's meagre resources on college. At most, the consensus is that she should become a nurse like every other woman. Shocked that she is not interested in marrying George, Beneatha tells Ruth that anyone that marries her brother will never understand (Her reason for refusing to marry George). At once, she addresses the dysfunctionality in her family's mentality, criticizes Walter's parochial mentality, that of George and, Ruth's mindset that the only thing that makes a man marriageable is money. Beneatha accepts Assagai because, he stands for the opposite of everything he rejects in George ideologically. Assagai is broad-minded, is not gendered in his thinking, proud of his African identity and, not interested in assimilating white man's culture. When the family are preparing to move to their new house in Clybourne Park, Assagai, who has been in Canada all summer, calls he is coming over to the Youngers. Beneatha allays Mama's concerns about the house not being in the best shape to receive visitors. She tells her mother that Asagai is an intellectual and doesn't care about how the house looks. When Mama knows that Asagai is from Africa, Beneatha dispels some of the racist stereotypes about Africans that the white has been peddling for centuries. She warns Mama: 'Well, do me a favor and don't ask him a whole lot of ignorant questions about Africans. I mean do they wear clothes and all that… It's just that people ask such crazy things. All anyone seems to know about when it comes to Africa is Tarzan.' She uses that opportunity to tell Mama that what Africa needs is not more salvation from heathenism but from colonialism: 'I'm afraid they need more salvation from the British and the French.' It is important that Hansberry makes this point because the dual forces that has devalued the history, identity and culture of the African continent remains colonialism and missionary activities. As Fanon (1961) makes us understand that, "white of America…were used to putting all Negroes in the same bag," Hansberry then finds it important to begin the revival of identity and cultural appreciation from the mother continent, Africa. When Asagai arrives, he brought her a Nigerian dress and records. She adorns the dress beautifully eliciting a Yoruba word for admiration from Asagai. Their conversation extends to her hair and Asagai refers to it as being mutilated. By this, he implies all sorts of things women do to their hair to conform to the "dominant, universal forms of beauty" as Sarah Banet-Weiser (1999) calls it. In the context of Hansberry's play, a racialized form of beauty and femininity that is white. Noticing that she is uncomfortable that he calls her out about her hair, Asagai quickly takes her down memory lane why she was attracted to him.

> **ASAGAI*:*** *(laughing aloud at her seriousness)*: Oh…Please! I am only teasing you because you are so very serious about these things…Do you remember the first time we met at school?... (*He laughs*.) You came up to me and you said – and I thought you were the most serious little thing I had ever seen – you said: *(He imitates her.)* "Mr Asagai – I want very much to talk with you. About Africa. You see, Mr Asagai, I am looking for my identity!"

Beneatha sharply reminds Asagai that she is not an assimilationist if the hair incident is leading him to that conclusion. In contrast to Asagai who prefers Beneatha's natural hair, Ruth and George reprimands her for going natural. She reprimands George for referring to his heritage as 'raggedy-assed spirituals and grass huts!' reminding him that, these are the first set of people to make ground-breaking technological inventions when the English were still 'tattooing themselves with blue dragons.'

In act two where Beneatha performs an African chant song, the stage direction says she turns off the good loud blues playing saying "Enough of this assimilationist junk" and puts on the Nigerian song that Asagai gives her. She performs a freedom struggle and mentions two African nationalists – Jomo Kenyatta and Chaka – in the process. In a related scene, when she was talking with Asagai about what the situation of post-independence Africa will look like, she reminds him that independence will not make the all the challenges of the continent go away overnight and care must be taken that Africans won't be a replacement of the old colonial order.

> **BENEATHA**: Independence and then what? What about all the crooks and thieves and just plain idiots who will come into power and steal and plunder the same as before – only now they will be black and do it in the name of independence – WHAT ABOUT THEM?!

Currently, this is the situation of many African countries almost sixty years after the play's first performance. Hansberry's insightful projection into not only the black situation in the United States but also in Africa no doubt, makes the play merit the award of an American classic. Hansberry articulates 'the mutual abrasion of truths,' 'a conception of otherness in flux,' that is central to the articulation of performative identity as Olaniyan (1995) claims. The history of African through the character of Asagai meets that of blacks and the United States. As Wilkerson (1986) rightly notes that the play 'touched the vibrating nerve of a country on the verge of change and a people on the move.' Hansberry brings into dialogue the ongoing change in America and the one happening in Africa. She criticizes them accordingly and frames both society as an on-going process. Politically, Africa is going through changes as many of her countries are gaining independence, yet she predicts correctly that the independence must be well guarded. Ongoing social crisis in the United States accounts for many various identities that is being fashioned. While some believe assimilation is the way to achieve racial equality with white, some believe an embrace of African cultural heritage is more effective approach. This rehashes the old debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B DuBois. Hansberry's work embraces both

and her work suggests identity for African-American should be fashioned in that open space that both extremes open. In her work, she deploys these identities to resist the denigrating, demeaning and subhuman identities that the white patriarchy of America foists on black America. She contests the marginalization of people of black ancestry politically, economically and, socially in a cross-continental manner without oversimplifying the challenges.

Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain.*

First produced in 1967, *Dream on Monkey Mountain,* dramatizes and resists the hegemonic racist Eurocentric construct of black identity within the context of English Caribbean. The protagonist, Makak, starts out as the embodiment of the racialized Eurocentric formation. Described as 'black, ugly, poor [thereby] worse than nothing.' This image serves as an archetypal depiction of black in a racist Euro-American imagination. Makak's march to self-redefinition begins when he dreams of a white moon goddess who purges him of his subdued mentality by revealing to him that his lineage is of a royal ancestry in pre-colonial Africa. Inebriated, his efforts to make his friends believe his dream lands him in jail. In his telepathic journey to Africa, he is an affluent and powerful king that, stands in sharp contrast to his present reality as a poor, ugly, inferior charcoal burner. The Edenic Africa as Olaniyan (1995) puts it, that he envisions, contradicts a "warring" and heterogenous people and cultures that he encounters. Makak wakes up to the same living conditions but now, as Olaniyan notes 'now psychologically West Indian self.' Walcott uses Makak to upturn the hegemony of colonial order, to reverse the power relations between the empire and the colony. Corporal Lestrade reveals that he is the enforcer of the imperial law and the guardian of the interests of Her Majesty. After his 'African experience,' Makak did not bat an eyelid when he stabs Corporal to escape from the prison. This initiates the process of liberation from mental and psychological subjugation that has bound him for years. This liberation is finalized in the last scene when he beheads the white goddess that, reveals his royal African ancestry to him. The direction reads:

> **MAKAK:** *[Removing his robe]* Now, O God, now I am free.
> *[He holds the curved sword in both hands and brings it down. The WOMAN is beheaded]* (320)

It is significant to remember that it is this goddess that leads Makak to Africa in dream-like experience and it is his experience in that state of dream that initiates the process of liberation. However, it is this same goddess that paints a picture of Edenic Africa for him – Africa that is the opposite of what exists. When Makak hesitates in killing the Woman, Corporal reminds him:

> **CORPORAL:** She is the mirror of the moon that this ape look into and find himself unbearable…She is…the mother of civilization, and the confounder of blackness. I too have longed for her… She is the color of the law, religion, paper, art, and if you want peace, if you want to discover the beautiful depth of your blackness, nigger, chop off her head…She is the white that paralyzed your mind, that led you into this confusion. It is you who created her, so kill her! (319).

Olaniyan argues that the significance of Corporal's line is that giving a false image of Africa, is a more insidious form of enslavement and Makak rejects this deception by beheading the white goddess. This form of self-criticalness and rejection of essentializing narratives are crucial to the performative identity articulated by Olaniyan. He calls attention to the significance of Makak removing his robe before carrying out the decisive act of beheading the goddess. The robe signifies the romanticized Africa Makak embraces that, still blurs his vision of apprehending himself clearly. 'The challenge to resistance,' Olaniyan argues, is no longer simply to invert the hegemonic discourse, but to radically alter the terrain of production of discourse and the relations of the subordinated to it' (108).

Walcott borrows from a broad range of performance and linguistic traditions. 'In A Note of Production' to the play, Walcott mentions that the would-be producer "will need dancers, actors, and singers, the same precision and vitality and that one has read of in the Kabuki." Linguistically, the play is a combination of French, Caribbean English and standard English. This eclectic approach, Olaniyan labels "mulatto aesthetics." This eclectic style Olaniyan reminds us is 'free to borrow not only from Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Brecht, Shakespeare but also from ancient Japanese and Chinese theaters, contemporary American opera, and West Indian carnival and folktale' (113). He quotes Walcott confirming that, he is a split writer. Olaniyan (1995) identifies the organizing principles of Walcott's mulatto style as 'coherent deformation' which is 'subversive in its undermining the stability of signs, the destruction of the established order of meaning and classification, and the suggestion of the possibility of a realignment of forces' (114). Through the character of Makak, Walcott disrupts the hegemony of the colonial order, rejects Western precepts that has devalued and denigrated his Caribbean identity. No doubt, Walcott's eclecticism is a 'deconstructor of rigid identities.' He crosses cultures and 'creatively plunders' traditions in his work to resist white hegemony. In what he frames as "The author as Text and Character," Olaniyan maps out the way Walcott's identity evolved over the years. Starting out as white, he progressed to African before finally settling for West Indian. The initial great assimilator became uncomfortable in his 'African phase' before espousing that 'West Indian exists' 'but we must find it' (110). Olaniyan aptly

summarizes the Caribbean identity Walcott projects: 'For Walcott, therefore, an authentic cultural identity for the Caribbean cannot be forged outside the parameters of conscious assemblage: a mulatto style to confront West Indian Schizophrenia, a "bastard" aesthetics for a "bastard" reality.' Walcott demonstrates self-criticalness, self-reinvention and contact of culture and histories in fashioning a Caribbean cultural identity. Aesthetics that is not necessarily an heir of a specific tradition for a reality that is a collage of many traditions and cultures. This is a key component of the performative identity.

Aimee Cesaire's *A Tempest*

First performed in Paris in 1969, Cesaire's *A Tempest* is an adaptation of Shakespeare *The Tempest*. Michael Etherton (1982) says that adaptations of play-texts are "the means by which play-texts have survived the process of history" (102). The fidelity level of such adaptations varies. Etherton suggests that re-working play texts may involve minute alterations of the titles, period, name of characters, theme or the physical context of the original. Or, as Etherton notes, it may be a radical overhauling or re-writing of the original. "At one extreme," Etherton says this is nothing more than translation; at the other extreme it is a new play: an original play influenced by or alluding to an earlier work" (103). While Cesaire's *A Tempest* involves minute alterations in the titles, name of characters and, physical context of Shakespeare's original, the revolutionary intent of *A Tempest* makes it to be radically different from Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* Cesaire adapts *The Tempest* to resist the inferiority of the black race that colonialism assumes, which is implicitly implied in Shakespeare's text. In an essay, Cesaire (1972) equates colonialism to "thing-ification" (6). In his play, he reverses the thing-ification to humanization. What James Harding will call 'apostate adaptations' within the context of avant-garde performance tradition. That is 'adaptations that owe no allegiance to the integrity of their European origins and that become experimental precisely because of that lack of allegiance' (154). Whether Cesaire's text can be read as an avant-garde text is outside the scope of this work but suffice for the task at hand, is to note that there is a glimpse of experiments in Cesaire's text that is lacking conspicuously in Shakespeare original. This occurs at the level of characterization. In terms of characters, Cesaire's inclusion of Master of Ceremonies to allocate roles before the play started implicates meta-theatricality, which can be a satiric device.

Besides Master of Ceremony, Cesaire includes Eshu whom he refers to as 'a black devil-god,' alters characters like Ariel who becomes a mulatto slave and, Caliban who becomes a black-slave. Naming Caliban "a black-slave" is stating explicitly the racial connotation Shakespeare implies when he refers to him in his text as a 'savage and deformed slave' (9). Judith Holland Sarnecki (2000) reflects on how Cesaire employs linguistic means to achieve revolutionary ends. She argues that Cesaire uses 'French [language] in new ways to achieve, bringing about a revolutionary shift in how colonized people view themselves' (278). Language is an aspect of culture as Ngugi wa Thiong'o reminds us. In that vein, Cesaire appropriates the colonizer's culture for decolonizing the colonized. Hence, the title of Sarnecki's work 'Mastering the Master.' Sarnecki calls attention to how Cesaire takes Shakespeare's 'plot and distorts it, turns it inside out and stands the relationships in Shakespeare's text on their heads' (279). For example, unlike Shakespeare's Caliban who Prospero continues to torment, Cesaire transforms his own Caliban to an active subject who talks back at Prospero. The colonial hierarchy of the colonizer and the colonized that Prospero and Caliban embody respectively, that, Shakespeare preserves in his work, is vigorously resisted in Cesaire's text. The resistance is quickly established in their first encounter when Caliban confronts Prospero by equally calling out his own physical defects when Prospero calls him an ugly ape. Caliban reminds Prospero that his civilizing mission is far from being a noble gesture but rather, it is meant to make him subservient and keep him subjugated.

> **CALIBAN:** In the first place, that's not true. You didn't teach me a thing! Except to jabber in your own language so that I could understand your orders: chop the wood, wash the dishes, fish for food, plant vegetables, all because you are too lazy to do it yourself. And as for your learning, did you ever impart any of that to me? No, you took care not to. All your science you keep for yourself alone, shut up in those big books (347).

Caliban reminds him that his 'enlightening' as brought him more harm than good and without Prospero, Caliban says he will be the king of the Island. An Island his mother Sycorax gives to him. Cesaire is saying colonial civilization has left the black race worse than it met them. In a Fanonian sense, Cesaire drives home the point that European civilization ultimately plundered the black race not only materially but also, culturally. By talking back at him, Cesaire's Prospero becomes vulnerable. He loses that aura of invincibility within that Master-Slave relationship which Shakespeare endows him. Sarnecki notes how 'Cesaire unmasks Prospero's "magic," which turns out to be none other than the delusion and rationalization of "white superiority"" (280). While recruiting the two drunks Trinculo and Stephano, in preparing for his attack against Prospero, Caliban addresses the trepidation of the duo when he tells them that 'You mustn't underestimate him. You mustn't overestimate him, either…he's showing his power, but he's doing it mostly to impress us' (365). At once, Cesaire acknowledges the privileges and power that comes with being white and at same time, his whiteness does not equate invincibility. He demystifies 'whiteness' and unveils the deception that white superiority thrives

on. Echoing Porter, Sarnecki remarks that the goal 'is not catharsis but to incite action' (280).

Awareness of the 'magic' powers that both the Center and Periphery possess is key in Olaniyan's performative identity. For a relevant identity to resist the precepts that westernization and its baggage have foisted on the black race, Olaniyan (1995) advocates that, all histories and cultures that have been contacted must be put into consideration. Cesaire expatiates on this in 'Discourse on Colonialism.' He writes 'I think it is a good thing to place different civilizations in contact with each other that it is an excellent thing to blend different worlds; that whatever its own particular genius maybe, a civilization that withdraws into itself atrophies: that for civilizations, exchange is oxygen…' (2). Therefore, it is then not surprising why he brings Eshu, the Yoruba god on stage during the wedding ceremony of Ferdinand and Prospero. Simultaneously, he connects with his African roots and indicts the great "Euro-American" civilization that doesn't regard other civilizations outside their own. By omitting African gods among the European pantheon, he calls attention the parochial civilization of the West that they pride as the best civilization and, gives visibility to African culture. A situation Soyinka (2012) claims that, betrays the much-vaunted western claim of multiculturalism. In the same vein, Cesaire uses Eshu, to resist the dominance of Christianity and Islam. These religions are introduced to the African people from across the Atlantic and Sahara respectively. As a result, they continue to suppress indigenous African religion and, not to mention lives that have been lost because of the unhealthy rivalry between these religions. Imbrication of cultures and histories, according to Olaniyan, serves as a more useful approach in the invention of cultural identities for the people of black race.

Conclusion

Unlike *A Raisin in The Sun* and *Dream on Monkey Mountain, A Tempest* falls short of the kind of self-criticalness that Lorraine Hansberry and Derek Walcott bring into their text. The revolutionary agenda of the text overwhelms the level of self-criticality Olaniyan proposes that, makes dramatic works sit at home comfortably with the performative identity. The revolutionary ideal that Caliban embodies is undeniable, but he eschews the dialectical negotiation between self, society and history that is the crux of performative identity. The 'self' part is conspicuously missing. The closest that Ceasire gets to being self-critical is through the character of Ariel. The mulatto character serves to criticize the Martinique's racial hierarchy and all the innate challenges. Ariel's privileged position exposes how some people of color might remain passive in face of oppression if some trickle of privilege passes to them from the table of the oppressor. Although, it can also be argued that Ariel uses strategy of patience thereby, exposing Prospero's insecurity in his own 'compliant' way. In contrast to Hansberry and Walcott, Cesiare lacks the rigor of self-criticality that they both brings to work which is transnational and transcultural. For example, Beneatha's insight into the post-independence situation of Africa and Walcott's rejection of an idyllic Africa. Despite lacking this rigor, identity formation in Cesaire is performative to the point where it embraces society, history and culture as process that needs constant re-invention and cannot survive in isolation. Speaking within a colonial context, Barrios echoes Ashcroft when she says, 'Subjectivity and identity formation are closely connected to the concepts of place and displacement, which show the complex interaction of history, environment, and language that one encounters in examining the lives and experiences of colonized people' (613). This complex interaction is also relevant to the fashioning of African-American identity because they are not just 'placed' in America they were 'displaced' from Africa. In fashioning an African-American identity, both factors need to complexly interrogated. Certainly, a trend becomes noticeable in the evolution of black drama: It moves from representation of representation to representation that is infused with the originality and creativity of these playwrights. They take active ownership of their cultures and their history to tell refute the stories that white man has told about them. For a play like *A Tempest* that can be argued to be a representation of representation, the radical departure from the original is still discernible.

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