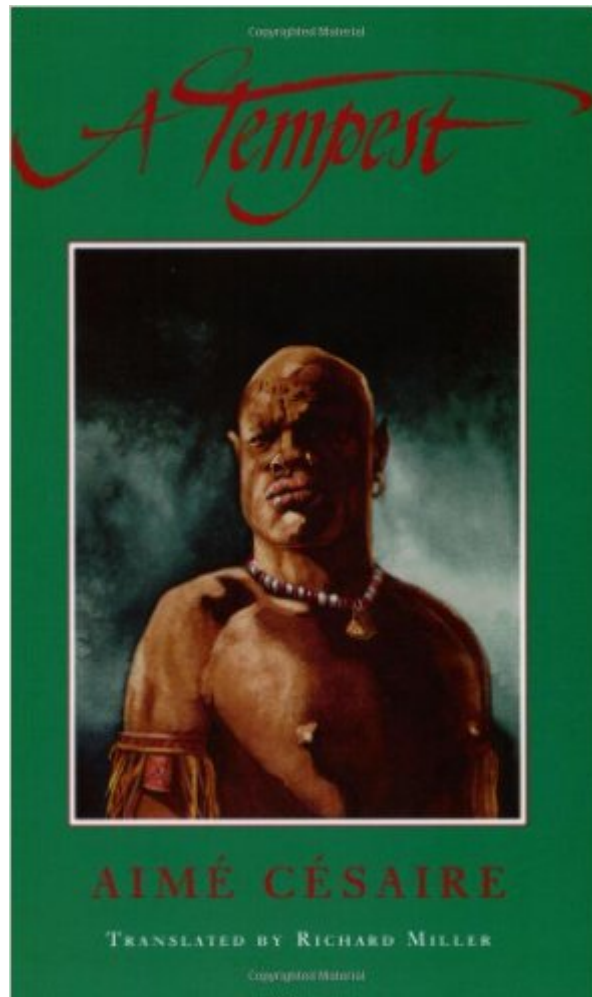


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# A Tempest: Based On Shakespeare's 'The Tempest;' Adaptation For A Black Theatre



## Synopsis

• Césaire's *Tempest*, in translation by Richard Miller, is a sprightly and song-filled enchantment. The luminous intelligence of Mr. Césaire's meditation on the absurdities of colonialism shines through the antics of the bewildered characters. • New York Times; The weapon of poetry may be Césaire's greatest gift to a modern world still searching for freedom. As one of the last truly great • universalists of the twentieth century, he has had a hand in shaping or critiquing many of the major ideologies and movements of the modern world. In his own words: • Poetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge. • from the Introduction Césaire's rich and insightful adaptation of *The Tempest* draws on contemporary Caribbean society, the African-American experience and African mythology to raise questions about colonialism, racism and their lasting effects. AIMÉ CÉSIRE was a world-renowned poet, essayist and dramatist, whose best known works include *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, *The Tragedy of King Christophe* and *A Season in the Congo*. He was the founding editor of *Tropiques*, which was instrumental in establishing the use of surrealism as a political weapon. He co-formulated the concept of • negritude, • which urges black Africans to reject assimilation and cultivate consciousness of their racial qualities and heritage. Césaire held a number of government positions in his native Martinique, including that of mayor of Fort-de-France. Césaire died in 2008. RICHARD MILLER has translated many books, both nonfiction and fiction, including works by Roland Barthes, Brassai and Albert Camus, as well as poetry, many articles and a number of plays. Among his more recent translations are *Scent* by Annick Le Guérin and *Beethoven's Ninth* by Esteban Buch, which was published in 2002. He lives in Paris.

## Book Information

Paperback: 69 pages

Publisher: Theatre Communications Group/TGC Translations; 1 edition (May 1, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1559362103

ISBN-13: 978-1559362108

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.2 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 0.3 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars • See all reviews • (20 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #122,717 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #10 in Books > Literature &

Fiction > Dramas & Plays > Regional & Cultural > Caribbean & Latin American #39 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Dramas & Plays > Regional & Cultural > African #45 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Colonialism & Post-Colonialism

## Customer Reviews

Aime Césaire wrote this variation of *The Tempest* from an Afrocentric, Caribbean perspective. It is a magnificent achievement. Caliban becomes the hero as Césaire advances a variety of different ideas. By changing the perspective, *A Tempest* explores a lot of issues like racism and colonialism. Prospero becomes the Oppressor and Caliban is the Native wrongly robbed of his ancestral right to rule his own land. Ariel is reduced to something of an Uncle Tom. To his credit, Césaire never allows any character in the play become completely unsympathetic. That is a grand feat. It is consistent with Shakespeare who also grants humanity even to Caliban. I found this adaptation to be brilliant. Césaire follows the theme of *The Tempest* all the while making it his own work. I was even compelled to reread *The Tempest* just for comparative purposes. The reread of *The Tempest* served only to heighten my appreciation for *A Tempest*. This is work that should be read by anyone interested in the theatre.

Césaire's *A TEMPEST* wears its politics on its sleeve, and that can be grating even when its political message is agreeable with your own leanings. This is not a particularly subtle work, but it is of supreme importance to understanding a number of socio-political movements, especially as they relate to the Caribbean (though it reaches far beyond that limited geographic range in its implications). Order this in conjunction with Shakespeare's original, Dryden's rewrite, Rodo's *ARIEL*, Retamar's *CALIBAN* and perhaps *PROSPERO'S BOOKS* starring John Gielgud. Then go to town...or perhaps away from it.

*A Tempest*, translated from the original French to English, is a stunning masterpiece in the shadow of the more popular Shakespearean play of many years gone. In short, almost all of the characters are the same, and the storyline follows along the path of the original Shakespeare version, but this has an African twist that is straight from the heart of emancipation and freedom. Amazingly, the author is French born and bred, but while he was active he took many strides towards alleviating the pressure of Western culture upon the black minorities of the WORLD instead of just those of the Americas. A poet and politician, he did not turn from his roots, but rather he fought for them. *A Tempest* is a short play, but laden with intellectual points and rife with critique on the Western

culture. To Césaire, the author, Western civilizations' doctrines were debilitating not only minority races but itself. By becoming barbaric and cruel, westerners drop into barbarism and animalistic cruelty. Prospero, the ruler of the fated island, dictates this relationship with a very heavy hand. Ariel, a mulatto slave, attempts to win over his master through morality and pessimism while his counterpart, Caliban, speaks outright and demands that the injustices of Prospero's rule be recognized and alleviated. Thus unfolds the relationship that is at the center of this play, demanding that all hear the equally sound evidence of Ariel and Caliban in face of great opposition. A sheer stroke of genius can be said for this simple, delightful read that begs to be performed and worked with in even today's culture.

I read this in my post-colonial lit. class and found it to be absolutely amazing. Césaire manages to take a classical Shakespearean play (*The Tempest*) and invert it on his head, paralleling it with the plight of the African slave. It is also an immaculate work of post-modernism, with some of the most brilliant stage directions ever!

For a reader interested in Shakespeare and/or post-colonial theory, Aimé Césaire's *A TEMPEST* is a great resource. Césaire's critique of colonialism is, at times, heavy-handed, but he makes up for this with a fluency in Shakespeare that allows him to produce a powerful and innovative text with strong echoes of its classical predecessor. There is more than a little irony in the fact that Césaire relies on the rigid dramatic structure of the colonizer, but then perhaps this is Césaire's political and artistic legacy - a voice that attempted to affect change from within existing power structures.

Arrived on time. Packaged nicely. Great condition. It is certainly a must for anyone studying literature, but it is also a great read for anyone interested in the application of Shakespeare's play to a historically relevant social movement.

Césaire is one of the fathers of Post-Colonial thought/literature. Shakespeare fans, post colonial readers and those interested in experimental theater will love this play.

A cool alternative perspective on *The Tempest*!

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