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The Minority of Caliban:  
Thinking with Shakespeare and Locke

*The single mother*

And what will become of this *Paternal Power* .... in those parts of *America*, where when the Husband and Wife part, which happens frequently, the Children are all left to the Mother, follow her, and are wholly under her Care and Provision? (S. 65)

*The wild child*

To turn the child loose to an unrestrain'd Liberty, before he has Reason to guide him, is not the allowing him the privilege of his Nature, to be free; but to thrust him out amongst Brutes, and abandon him to a state so wretched, and as much beneath that of a Man, as theirs. (S. 63)

*The foster father*

[Paternal Power] belongs as much to the *Foster-Father* of an exposed Child, as to the Natural father of another: So little power does the bare *act of begetting* give a Man over his Issue, if all his Care ends there, and this be all the Title that he hath to the Name and Authority of a Father. (S. 65)

from John Locke, "Of Paternal Power," *Second Treatise of Government*<sup>1</sup>

This cast of characters drawn from Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* finds its counterpart in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: the single mother Sycorax, the wild child Caliban, and the foster father Prospero. *The Tempest*, dated around 1611, and *The Treatise*, published in 1690, were written in the same century, but from opposite shores of the breach created by the English Civil War. Each text works through models of political power and obligation by testing the analogy between family and state from novel angles, projects that led both authors to probe the psychology and philosophy embedded in non-normative domestic arrangements. Moreover, both Shakespeare and Locke had economic and intellectual interests in the American colonies, and they chose to stage their texts in experimental settings mapped by a mix of Old and New World coordinates and questions, decisions that have placed the texts of both authors at the center of post-colonial rereadings of early modern letters. The post-colonial moment has forever altered our modes of accessing and navigating these texts. Fundamentally acknowledging the

<sup>1</sup> All citations from the *Two Treatises* are taken from Peter Laslett's edition and are cited by paragraph number.

epochal power of such readings, I focus on a secondary theme – the minority or nonage of Caliban – a problem both opened up by the post-colonial attention to Caliban’s position in the play, and obscured by the post-colonial emphasis on Caliban’s subjection to Prospero.

Using Locke’s exploration of paternal duties and filial rights in relation to his accounts of personhood and pedagogy in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,<sup>2</sup> this essay approaches Shakespeare’s Caliban as a *minor*. I define “minor” as a child-subject, in possession of certain rights, privileges and immunities, under the care of a guardian, but presumed capable of rational autonomy and legal enfranchisement at an appointed date in the future. The minor is the bearer of equality *in potentia*, an unrealized capacity for independence sheltered and supported by the institutions of family life and protected when necessary by law. In Locke’s words, children are “not born in this full state of *Equality*, though they are born to it” (S. 54). The very checks to a minor’s freedom during his childhood serve to designate and defend his future capacity for freedom in adulthood; as the great eighteenth-century lawyer Blackstone put it, “INFANTS have various privileges, and various disabilities: but their very disabilities are privileges; in order to secure them from hurting themselves by their own improvident acts” (I.17.3) Using Locke’s discourse to conceptualize Caliban as a minor under the guardianship of Prospero allows us to consider Caliban’s legal disabilities and privileges within a graduated scheme of transition from “nonage” into adulthood. This approach also limits Prospero’s sovereignty over Caliban and holds him accountable for unlawful infringements on the estate of the minor in his care. *The Tempest* is Shakespeare’s most self-consciously Jacobean play, performed before and reflecting on the sovereignty of James I. Reading Locke’s critique of absolutist patriarchalism back into Shakespeare’s play delivers both a counter-Jacobean Prospero, chastened by his imperfect exercise of paternal duty, as well as a rights-bearing Caliban, whose passionate passage through the disparate conditions of the orphan, the foster-child, and the slave ultimately establish his participation in personhood, understood as both a legal category and a subjective possibility.

“Minority” designates the period of nonage, but also a dissenting opinion to a court decision (the “minority ruling”), a smaller voting bloc or interest

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2 I do not attempt here a synthesis of these three complex and sometimes contradictory texts. For one such attempt, see Joseph Carrig. On Locke and the family, see especially Gordon Schochet, plus more recent work by David Foster. Feminists have criticized the contractualism of Locke (see especially Carol Pateman); other have read the tradition more generously (see Victoria Kahn and Constance Jordan). On Locke and childhood (from an educational rather than a political perspective), see Margaret Ezell.

group dominated by a larger one (the “minority” protected by James Madison in *Federalist Paper* Number 10), or, most commonly today, an ethnic group in a plural social body. To these legal and political meanings we might add the aesthetic resonances of “minor-key” and “minor variation,” which ring a secondary sound and signification from a major theme or movement. Caliban’s relationship to ethnic minority has held center stage in recent criticism. By recasting Caliban’s minority in terms of legal nonage, I aim to grant Caliban a different dignity – the dignity of the rights-bearing person – than that afforded him by the particularizing impulses of much recent work on the play. Legal personhood itself has a history, changing over time through cases, commentaries, and statutes and in response to social, political, and philosophical sea changes. Yet definitions of personhood, unlike accounts of culture, aim at universality even when acknowledging the situated arbitrariness of their own formulations. My Lockean analysis and defense of Caliban, conducted within the terms and conditions of Shakespeare’s play, aims to release a liberal potentiality within *The Tempest’s* romance with fatherhood. This reading also intends to bring forward emancipatory elements in Locke’s discourse, supplementing current accounts of the philosopher as a colonial apologist and possessive individualist.<sup>3</sup> By creatively and critically recalibrating Shakespeare’s absolutism from the perspective of Lockean liberalism, while also recovering from Locke a liberalism other than colonial, the speculative figuration of Caliban as a legal minor performs a “minor” variation on the major ideologies that cross *The Tempest*, *The Treatise*, and their trans-Atlantic afterlives. The liberalism of this reading is “minor” in relation to the “major” patriarchal and absolutist themes in the play, but

3 Colonial readings of the play are legion; Stephen Orgel summarizes some of the literature in his magisterial edition of the play, including Mannoni, Greenblatt, and Fiedler (Orgel, ed., 24). More recent offerings include Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, and Jonathan Goldberg, *Tempest in the Caribbean*. Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan have argued against “American” readings of the play. My own reading accepts the validity of the American frame, but supplements the cultural politics of colonialism with a more universal discussion of the rights of minors. The thesis of “possessive individualism” as the essence of Locke’s political theory was put forward by C. B. Macpherson in 1962. The sheer volume of critical responses and qualifications indicates the power of the thesis. Earlier accounts of Locke in America evaluate his influence on the Revolution (e.g., John Dunn). More recent accounts emphasize Locke’s ideological usefulness to the economic enterprises in which Locke and his circle participated (e.g., Lebovics, Tully). The best of this work acknowledges the tension in Locke’s work between colonial apology and a genuinely emancipatory and universal discourse of rights that would extend to indigeneous Americans (Lebovics 579; Tully 176). Gillian Brown develops this alternative strand in *The Consent of the Governed: The Lockean Legacy in Early American Culture*, to which my own essay attempts to add a Shakespearean footnote.

also “minor” in relation to the post-colonial discourse that frames much current debate about both Shakespeare and Locke.

Writing against the main stream of current Shakespeare studies, the analysis pursued here is neither historical nor cultural. This essay is an *essay*, an imaginative thought-experiment, whose layering of Locke and Shakespeare aims to bring out new truths about the nature of political and domestic rights and obligations in both authors. *The Tempest* and *The Treatise* are themselves thought-experiments, in which the New World setting serves as a laboratory for testing the essential components and dynamics of human sociality.<sup>4</sup> I am not concerned to establish direct textual links between Locke and Shakespeare, though the ruptured contiguity of pre- and post-Civil War England frames the project and grants it a certain chronological coherence. This essay is part of a broader enterprise I call “thinking with Shakespeare,” which invites us to think with or along side Shakespeare about matters of continuing urgency – subjectivity and sexuality, creation and creativity, sovereignty and citizenship, politics and personhood – in both their foundational framings and their contemporary unfolding. Thinking with Shakespeare entails reading Shakespeare “with” other figures, including Aristotle, Freud, Arendt, and, in the case of this essay, Locke, not in order to historicize Shakespeare but rather to link his plays genetically and conceptually to ongoing cognitive and political possibilities for human being. Thinking with Shakespeare and Locke about minority allows us to litigate Prospero for failures in fatherhood and to secure certain protections for Caliban in the court of criticism, entering the play into the dialogue between literature and civil liberties staged by this volume. As an imperfect person, a subject on the road to citizenship, the figure of the minor is a lightning rod that repeatedly condenses the brute fact of social inequity with the struggle for emancipation in the literary imagination of liberalism.<sup>5</sup> When transferred from legal minors to ethnic minorities, the paternalistic protections of nonage can simply justify the colonial interests of self-appointed guardians. The “major key” reading of the play treats Caliban allegorically, as a representative of the indigenous peoples of the New World; in such a scene, the theme of childhood, extended to a race or people, reinforces paternalistic and exploitative patterns of colonization. The “minor key” reading, however, stages Caliban in relation to real rather than allegorical childhood, encountering

4 See Rosalie Colie’s marvelous essay on the form of the essay in Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Montaigne represents a reference common to both Locke and Shakespeare.

5 Examples from later British and American literature include: the heroine of Richardson’s *Clarissa*, the monster in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and the hero of Richard Wright’s *Black Boy*. My thanks to Debra Ligorsky for helping generate this list.

him as a young person who has minimally survived orphaning, foster care, and juvenile incarceration. In this scenario, a different set of concerns comes into view, involving parental responsibilities and children's rights rather than colonial power and indigenous subjection. My larger aim is to uncover minority as a valid template for political reform and activism, as when the rights and protections of temporary minors (elite male children) are transferred to "permanent" minors (to women, to prisoners, to the children of the poor, or to the disabled). Indeed, we could say that the Minor embodies the paradox of "Liberty Ltd.," personifying the lived historical constraints of liberty in all its necessity and force, but always pointing forward, through the promise of enfranchisement, to liberty's future expansion. My point is not to overturn patriarchal accounts of Shakespeare and Locke in favor of a liberalism that remains deeply complicit with capitalism and imperialism, but rather to broaden and variegate the political vocabularies and progressive potentialities of childhood in response to both seventeenth-century and contemporary horizons of thinking, being, and doing.

### 1. Such a wondered father, and a wife

Locke begins his discussion of paternal power by challenging the appropriateness of the word "paternal" itself:

It may perhaps be censured as an impertinent Criticism in a discourse of this nature, to find fault with words and names that have obtained in the World: And yet possibly it may not be amiss to offer new ones when the old are apt to lead Men into mistakes, as this of *Paternal Power* probably has done, which seems so to place the Power of Parents over their Children wholly in the *Father*, as if the *Mother* had no share in it, whereas if we consult Reason or Revelation, we shall find she hath an equal Title. (II.52)<sup>6</sup>

The target of the *Two Treatises* is the patriarchal theory of sovereignty, in which the unilateral and indivisible rule of the father over his household authorizes the absolute sovereignty of the monarch, in turn supported by the heavenly King and Father above. The proof-text for patriarchal theorists such as Sir Robert Filmer, as well as the garden-variety patriarchalism that permeated social, political, and religious life under the Ancien Regime, is the Fifth Commandment, "Honor thy father and mother," often conveniently shortened to the simpler formulation, "Honor thy *father*."<sup>7</sup> If the

<sup>6</sup> Locke's emphasis here on clarifying language use echoes key themes from the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*; cf. Chapter X, "Of the Abuse of Words."

<sup>7</sup> Locke never tires of pointing out the ideological convenience of the abbreviation: "I hope 'tis no Injury to call an half Quotation an half Reason, for God says, *Honour thy Father and Mother*; but [Filmer] contents himself with half, leaves out *Mother* quite,

indivisible sovereignty of the king derives from the inalienable and indivisible authority vested by God and nature in fathers, then Locke is concerned to point out that the father's power is inherently divided, shared with the mother, "who hath an equal Title." The real interest of his chapter "Of Paternal Power" lies, of course, not in reforming domestic management or defending the rights of children, but rather in chipping away at the paternal analogy authorizing absolutism. In order to do this, however, Locke finds his way through varieties of family life in Old and New World settings that anticipate future transformations of domesticity under liberalism. Then as now, liberal parenting and liberal politics keep house together.<sup>8</sup>

And so we meet the single mother:

And what will become of this *Paternal Power* in that part of the World where one Woman hath more than one Husband at a time? Or in those parts of *America*, where when the Husband and Wife part, which happens frequently, the Children are all left to the Mother, follow her, and are wholly under her Care and Provision? If the Father die whilst the Children are young, do they not naturally every where owe the same Obedience to their *Mother*, during their Minority, as to their Father were he alive? (II.65)

Locke travels here a path from the most exorbitant case (wives with multiple simultaneous husbands, an idea so outlandish that he names no locale), to the more palatable "American" situation, in which indigenous women separated from their mates raise the children on their own, to the deeply familiar case of fatherless children who "naturally every where" obey the surviving widow "during their Minority." By insisting on the feminine instance of parental power, Locke forcefully divides it from the "*power of the Magistrate*, of which the Father hath not so much as the shadow" (S. 65). Having established the mother's title, he goes on to clarify the limits of the father's power: "His Command over his Children is but temporary, and reaches not their Life or Property. It is but a help to the weaknesses and imperfection of their Nonage, a Discipline necessary to their Education" (II.65). The parent's command is not an independent power in its own right, but rather a secondary supplement to the imperfect freedom of the child, filling in for and protecting the minor's potential for liberty so that it can be effectively realized when the child arrives at "the infranchisement of the years of discretion" (II.65). In Locke's counter-patriarchal scheme, the

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as little serviceable to his purpose" (I.6; I.11, I.61). I develop the civil consequences of Locke's rereading of the Fifth Commandment in my essay "Rights, Commandments, and the Literature of Citizenship."

8 In a 1989 publication, the Population Council placed Locke's chapter in the context of "recent international efforts to codify 'the rights of the child,'" pointing out the ongoing relevance of Locke's largely symbolic political analysis of childhood to the legal rights of real children.

flow of obligation arises from the right of the child to shelter and education rather than from the absolute sovereignty of the father over his offspring.<sup>9</sup>

*The Tempest* features two single parents, Prospero and Sycorax. In the major, “Jacobean” movement of the play, Prospero’s status as a widower heightens and highlights the providential character of his rule over Miranda and the island. In this reading, his absent wife might have ranked first among the “four or five women” that Miranda recollects in the dark backward and abyss of time, the mistress of her household but not an equal partner with the Duke (I.ii.47).<sup>10</sup> Miranda’s mother remains unrepresented because she is not necessary; with a father like Prospero, who needs a mother past birth? As Stephen Orgel points out, such parental majesty evokes the sovereign metaphors beloved by King James I: “I am the husband, and the whole island is my lawful wife; I am the head, and it is my body” (cited Orgel, Introduction, 39). In the play’s Jacobean self-presentation, to be a single father is to embody the full authority, fruitfulness, and consequences of patriarchy, self-sufficient and self-contained.

Sycorax is another matter altogether. Banished from Algiers, she was “hither brought with child,” where she took control of Ariel, ultimately confining him in a pine tree until Prospero liberated him, in effect giving Ariel a second birth into a new and more enlightened servitude: “It was mine art, / When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape / The pine and let thee out” (I.ii.269–85). As critics have pointed out, Sycorax and Prospero sport parallel biographies: both have been exiled, both use their magic to take control of Ariel and the island’s resources, and both run single-parent households. The case of Sycorax can be used simply to reinforce the Jacobean reading: fathers, not mothers, exercise right rule and thus embody the essence of sovereignty. If we bring in the Lockean frame, however, the picture changes in “minor” ways that nonetheless free up major resources for building a liberal interpretation of the play. Locke presents the single American mother as one paradigm of solo parenting within a spectrum of possible norms of parental authority; he does not judge her maternal skills,

9 These arguments, like so much in *The Second Treatise*, are not original to Locke. Pufendorf’s 1672 *Law of Nature and Nations* includes a chapter “Of Paternal Power” (VI.ii.8) that also emphasizes alienability of parental duties to nurses and tutors, the division of sovereignty between mother and father, and the rights of children in relation to the duties of their parents. Pufendorf also uses New World as well as mythological references. Locke’s accent on these themes is decidedly more “liberal”: he is much less definitive on the father’s superior sovereignty in relation to the mother, for example, and he seems to grant more normative value to the non-European exempla than does Pufendorf. Laslett notes the debt, 310n.

10 All citations from *The Tempest* are from Stephen Orgel’s edition. On the question of Miranda’s mother, see Orgel’s essay, “Prospero’s Wife.”

instead taking her very existence as further proof that by definition parental power is distributed among distinct agencies.

Read through Locke, the presence of Sycorax serves to demonstrate not the singular self-sufficiency of Prospero, but rather his qualified status as one half of a couple, always shadowed by the missing mother whose absence leaves his parenting incomplete. Prospero himself seems to acknowledge his insufficiency when he compares his tragic overconfidence in his ambitious brother to the trust exercised by “a good parent” towards his child (I.ii.94). The “good parent” is *too good*, his or her propensity to trust the child requiring counterbalance in another parental voice or instance of authority.<sup>11</sup> As Harry Berger, Jr. observes, both Sycorax and Prospero “are equally antisocial, both have withdrawn into themselves, have proved unfit for, or inadequate to, social and political existence” (16). Prospero finds himself on the island because of his own failures as a Duke at home, and his sojourn here involves his own re-education in the limits and responsibilities of rule in its parental and political valences.

Ferdinand puts the case for dual parenthood a little differently when he exclaims at the conclusion of the Wedding Masque, “Let me live here ever. / So rare a wondered father and a wife / Makes this place paradise” (IV.i.123–8). The reading of “wife” in place of the Folio’s “wise” (an error attributed to the breakdown of the letter *f* in the course of printing) was reintroduced in 1978, a consequence not only of advances in editorial practice, but also, Orgel argues, of changes in the political climate: “after 1895 the wife became invisible: bibliographers lost the variant, and textual critics consistently denied its existence until six years ago ... We find only what we are looking for or are willing to see. Obviously it is a reading whose time has come” (“Prospero’s Wife” 13).<sup>12</sup> The prospect of a self-sufficient Prospero who is both wondered and wise speaks to the play’s Jacobean scenario. The insertion of the “wife” into the scenario works in another direction. It reminds us again of Prospero’s absent wife, and addresses Miranda not in her present condition as Prospero’s dependent but in her future condition as Ferdinand’s spouse. To counter the wondered father with an equally wonderful

11 Many of us are familiar with good cop / bad cop parenting. Consider also the ideal promoted by British psychologist Donald W. Winnicott of the “good-enough mother.” Locke travels related territory in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* when he suggests that parents treat smaller children with severity, and older children with familiarity: “So shall you have him your obedient Subject (as is fit) whilst he is a Child, and your affectionate Friend when he is a Man” (S. 40).

12 See also Jonathan Goldberg’s commentary on the crux, who claims rather differently that the eighteenth-century editors “put ‘wife’ there to assure the domestic relationship and the propriety of Ferdinand’s remarks. They make his future wife present in order to police the male-male relations between Ferdinand and Prospero” (57).

(*miranda*) wife is to suggest a distribution of authority both within and across generations, as the daughter prepares to leave her father's household for her husband's.

Preparing for this transition is one work performed by the action of the play, and it is linked not only to Miranda's sexual maturation, but also to her late education in her own life-story. For Locke, the essence of parenting is education. (We might note here that Locke himself was never a father, but performed the office of education for the sons of Shaftesbury and Sir John Banks, and authored a major treatise on education.<sup>13</sup>) In the chapter on paternal power, Locke writes,

The first part then of *Paternal Power*, or rather *Duty*, which is *Education*, belongs so to the Father that it terminates at a certain season; when the business of Education is over it ceases of itself, and is also alienable before. (II.69)

Notice the qualifying movement of the sentence: Locke redefines "power" as "duty," a set of responsibilities that effectively limit rather than aggrandize the father's authority. He then insists that education, forming the "first part" of this duty, is both *temporary* and *alienable*: transferable to a responsible delegate, as Locke well knew from his tutoring jobs. Prospero, a genuine home-schooler, lacked the opportunity to hire a tutor for Miranda:

Here in this island we arrived, and here  
Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit  
Than other princes can that have more time  
For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful. (I.ii.171–74)

Prospero uses "tutor" in its familiar educational sense, to mean one who is "employed in the supervision and instruction of a youth in a private household" (OED I.3). Yet "tutor" also has an older legal meaning, designating one half of the duties of a guardian for a minor in Roman law. As Blackstone explains, "The guardian with us performs the office both of the tutor and curator of the Roman laws; the former of which had the charge of the maintenance and education of the minor, the latter the care of his fortune [...] the tutor was the committee of the person, the curatore the committee of the estate" (I.17.1). Hannah Arendt picks up on this distinction in "The Crisis of Education" when she argues that children are born into a relationship not only to life (as animals are) but also to a world: "The child shares the life of becoming with all living things ... But the child is new only in relation to a world that was there before him, that will continue after his death, and in which he will spend his life" (185). Tutoring effectively de-links education from the biological instance of paternity by distributing it to representatives,

<sup>13</sup> On bachelor Locke's experiences observing and educating the children of others, see Yolton and Yolton, eds, "Introduction," *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* 5–9.

who participate in the child's acclimations to the world of traditions, meanings, and responsibilities that precede it. Alone on the island, Prospero has performed the tasks of both tutor and curator for Miranda without help from surrogates or helpmeets, once again embodying the self-sufficiency of royal fatherhood. Yet his reference to the fundamental alienability of education, its normative transfer to another party, brings into play one of the elements that qualifies paternal power for Locke and for the Western legal tradition. Enunciating his paternal supremacy (the play's Jacobean major key), Prospero exposes the legal limits of fatherhood (the play in liberal minor key).

And the motif recurs in major and minor throughout *The Tempest*. In the romantic epilogue to the distended expositions of Act One, Scene Two, Prospero, in a moment of sovereign pseudo-pique, chastises the love-struck Miranda for defending Ferdinand: "What, I say –/ My foot my tutor?" (I.ii.470). According to Prospero, Miranda's mild intervention threatens to turn the Jacobean body politic upside down. The daughter, the "foot" or lowliest appendage of the household-state, has behaved as a "tutor," or official delegate of paternal authority, to her own father. Orgel's note to the line (which never fails to perplex undergraduates) cites the proverb, "*Do not make the foot the head.*" The difference brought into view by the Lockean frame is Shakespeare's substitution of "tutor" for "head," bringing substitution as such into the scene of paternal power via the forensic vocabulary of guardianship even while snatching an old tune from popular patriarchalism.

More immediately pertinent to the dynamics of paternal sovereignty in the play, however, is Locke's second qualification of the educational duties of the father, namely its built-in temporal limit, "terminat[ing] ... when the business of Education is over" (II.68). Prospero's lengthy lecture to Miranda in Act One, Scene Two is one of several scenes of explicit education in the drama. Although his monologue flows from father to daughter in a mode that could hardly be called Socratic, it is, in contemporary educational parlance, "developmental," aimed at Miranda's particular moment of intellectual, moral and even biological readiness. Miranda describes the conditions of her ignorance:

You have often  
Begun to tell me what I am, but stopped,  
And left me with a bootless inquisition,  
Concluding, 'Stay, not yet.'

And Prospero explains,

The hour's now come;  
The very minute bids thee ope thine ear.  
Obey, and be attentive. (I.ii.33–38)

The “time” or “tempus” of *The Tempest* is kept according to several clocks. One is the service contract binding Ariel to Prospero and resulting in the emancipation anticipated at the end of the play (“Then to the elements / Be free, and fare thou well” [V.i.317–18]). Another, noted in this interchange, is the period of minority binding Miranda to Prospero, terminating in her equally anticipated marriage at the end of the play. Prospero chooses this “hour” and “minute” to tell Miranda the story of her life not only because objective conditions (“the accident most strange” of the shipwreck) invite their return to Milan, but also because her subjective capacities have reached the point where he judges her ready to understand and absorb this story, to make it her own. In education, as Locke and Hamlet knew, “Readiness is all.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the telling of the story, directed at a moment of ripeness in Miranda’s own development, aims ultimately to emancipate Miranda from her father’s governance (“Obey, and be attentive”) if only by delivering her into the “true contract” of her marriage with Ferdinand, passing her from one form of minority to another. In Locke’s formulation, the father’s command “is but temporary, and reaches not their Life or Property. It is but a help to the weakness and imperfection of their Nonage, a Discipline necessary to their Education” (65). In “The Crisis of Education,” Hannah Arendt makes a similar argument about the qualified inequality that characterizes the scene of education, which deploys “a concept of authority and an attitude toward the past which are appropriate to it but have no general validity and must not claim a general validity in the world of grown-ups.”<sup>15</sup> The education of Miranda announces the approaching termination of Prospero’s sovereignty over her, a familiar Shakespearean theme brought into greater political focus by the Lockean lens.

Although the forceful intimacy of Prospero’s single parenting and home-schooling primarily serves to demonstrate the exclusivity of paternal rule on this uncharted isle, the Lockean framework points up the limits of paternity in the fact of maternity, the pathos of obligation, and the alienable and self-terminating character of education. Though Locke gives these topoi a markedly liberal expression in *The Second Treatise* that substantially distin-

14 Locke’s educational theories emphasize active engagement of the senses in relation to children’s “inadvertency, forgetfulness, unsteadiness, and wandering of Thought” (S. 167). He describes his in-house observations of a mother using a globe to teach her son geography: “being only an exercise of the Eyes and Memory, a child with pleasure will learn and retain [facts] .... It is a good step and preparation to [further study], and will make the remainder much easier, when his Judgment is grown ripe for it” (S. 178). The mother in question was Lady Masham, Locke’s hostess in 1693 (Yolton 235n). The Yoltons evaluate Locke’s relationship to developmentalism (38–43).

15 Hannah Arendt, “The Crisis of Education.” Cited Brook Thomas, *American Literary Realism and the Failed Promise of Contact*, 295.

guishes his writing from that of Shakespeare, his formulations on childhood are largely drawn from older educational, philosophical and legal traditions that both men shared. What Gillian Brown says concerning the state of the child in Locke could equally be said of the family in Shakespeare: “Once the parental function becomes an obligation, a moral response to and respect for a potentially rational creature, all relations and conditions, familial and political statuses, appear as provisional states” (22). If such provisionality characterizes the play’s most regular parent-child relationship, it has even deeper implications for the odder couple formed by Prospero and Caliban.

## 2. The Minority of Shakespeare’s Creature

To speak of Caliban as a minor uncomfortably recalls the Victorian project of narrating the lost childhoods of Shakespeare’s heroines. The risk here is not only engagement in a form of imaginative speculation foreign to the rigors of formalism and historicism alike, but also the false imposition of a modern conception of childhood onto Shakespeare’s play.<sup>16</sup> Carolyn Steedman writes of the Victorian period that “Child-figures, and more generally the idea of childhood, came to be commonly used to express the depths of historicity within individuals ... ‘Childhood’, ‘the child’, as this kind of configuring of the past, emerged at the same time as did the modern idea of history” (*Strange Dislocations* 12). Childhood in this modern sense is not the same as legal minority, whose distinctive shaping of social relations tends to be exterior rather than interior, related to a set of domestic and civil instances and charted by formal more than affective markers of development.<sup>17</sup> Yet legal minority remains part of the deep structure of childhood conceived psychologically; debates about child labor laws, for example, were fueled by emotional identification with the Child, taken as a universal stage of human experience. The Child-Minor fuses sense and sensibility, tendering both legal and emotional claims on our attention. Moreover, legal minority only becomes a literary element when it resonates with broader cognitive and emotional patterns of recollection, consciousness, and conscience (as it does, I argue, in both Shakespeare and Locke). Gillian Brown identifies citizenship with thinking as such: “the key point in Locke’s liberalism [is] the citizen’s continuous labor of crediting and discrediting ideas.

<sup>16</sup> See the classic text by Mary Cowden Clarke, *The Girlhood of Shakespeare’s Heroines*.

<sup>17</sup> Historians of childhood distinguish between “childhood” (understood as the concept) and “children” (taken empirically). See Cunningham 1, 13. The classic social history of childhood remains Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*.

The citizen of the liberal state emerges in the processes of thought, which, in Locke's view, distinguish humans from other animals" (8). Education in citizenship is education in thinking, and vice versa. Attending to the debts and promises, memories and missions, binding the Minor to the Child through the politics and poetics of education represents one strand of the project initiated here.

Minority and childhood intersect in the idea of the "person," a legal category that developed in increasingly psychological directions, in part under the impact of Locke's philosophy. In the Western legal and philosophical traditions, "personhood" implies the protected and responsible exercise of individual freedom in civil society.<sup>18</sup> Locke defines "person" in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* as:

a Forensick Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent Agents capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery. This personality extends it *self* beyond present Existence to what is past, only by consciousness, whereby it becomes concerned and accountable, owns and imputes to it *self* past Actions, just upon the same ground, and for the same reason, that it does the present. (II.xxvii.26)

Locke specifies the "Forensick" origins of the concept of "person," which he identifies here with the moral and legal accountability of a free agent, a concept with its roots in Roman law. Locke's definition bears comparison with that of the jurist Samuel von Pufendorf, on whom Locke often drew: "Among the lawyers mainly, a person is said to be someone who has civil standing, that is, personal freedom – by which token slaves are classified as things" (*Political Writings* 39). Pufendorf then specifies a series of distinct status-types that define a person in Roman law, including gender, "moral status in time" (age-appropriate behavior), "moral position in the civil state," (as citizen, resident alien, or foreigner), "moral position in the family," and "lineage." In Pufendorf's socially calibrated definition, persons are *free* but not *equal*, distinguished from each other by their location in a status-scape variegated by age, sex, class, filial and civic relations. In Roman civil law, the highest form of personhood would belong to an adult male citizen of noble birth, while a slave would not be a legal person at all.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> John Rawls summarizes the tradition, explicitly linking personhood with the capacity for citizenship: "Since Greek times, in both philosophy and law, the concept of the person has been understood as the concept of someone who can take part in, or who can play a role in, social life, and hence exercise and respect its various rights and duties. Thus, we say that a person is someone who can be a citizen, that is, a fully cooperating member of society over a complete life" (59).

<sup>19</sup> On personhood and its disabilities in Roman law, see Jane Gardner, *Being a Roman Citizen*. Status distinctions also continue to differentiate men and women, as well as adults and children, in Locke's scheme.

Like Pufendorf, Locke's definition takes its bearings from the legal tradition; and like Pufendorf, Locke assumes a social dimension to achieved personhood, involving "Actions and their Merit" in relation to a recognized law. This "law" might be natural, revealed, or civil – the last implied by the "Forensick" reference, the first by the emphasis on rationation, and the middle by the concern with conscience. Locke's definition differs, however, by not explicitly linking personhood to status, and by elaborating the psychological dimension of what he calls "*personal identity*" within the legal vocabulary inherited from the jurists (*Essay*, II.xxvii.9). (Status nonetheless returns in Locke's text in various guises, as MacPherson demonstrated in 1962.)<sup>20</sup> Locke's person "extends it *self* beyond present Existence to what is past" through acts of conscientious recollection. Not yet carrying the layered emotional historicity of the Victorian inner child, Lockean personhood does enfold the meaningful accretion of memories over time, and is thus already something more than Pufendorf's purely juridical description. It is perhaps worth noting as well how far this vision of personhood is from "possessive individualism," a term that has become synonymous with the Lockean legacy. The "ownership" involved in "own[ing] and imput[ing] to it *self* past Actions" resembles not the owning of a piece of land or a car, or even the possession of rights, but rather *owning up to* or acknowledging an action as one's responsibility.<sup>21</sup>

Such a person is not born but made. John and Jean Yolton place Locke's "novel account of 'person' as a forensic term, in other words as a term for identifying the locus of responsibility," at the dynamic intersection of his political and educational programs: "If civil society has the task of *protecting* the person, education has the task of *producing* persons" (18). They link the passage in the *Essay* to Locke's discussion of the exposed or abandoned child in the *Second Treatise*:

To turn the child loose to an unrestrain'd Liberty, before he has Reason to guide him, is not the allowing him the priviledge of his Nature, to be free; but to thrust him out amongst Brutes, and abandon him to a state so wretched, and as much beneath that of a Man, as theirs. This is what puts the *Authority* into the *Parents* hands to govern the *Minority* of their Children. (S. 63; Yolton )

The liberty of the homeless orphan is not the reserved and protected freedom of the minor living within family and civil society, but rather a state of

20 See MacPherson's demonstration of "differential rights and rationality" among laborers and land-holders, 229–38.

21 Brown, also qualifying the Locke of possessive individualism, writes on Lockean personhood: "Locke imagines no fixed locus, private or public, for the mental operations of persons because he regards individual deliberations as dynamic, always interactive, even though issuing from a person's particular place in the world" (9).

unguarded license, pre- and anti-social in character, and hence akin to the life of beasts.<sup>22</sup> Such a creature, even if reaching the biological age of adulthood, would likely not have had the opportunity to make the transition from human being to person that Locke counts as the work of education, since such a child would not yet be “concerned and accountable” for his actions to himself and to others. Gillian Brown argues that the child holds a special place in Locke’s conceptions of consent (in its ambiguity, fragility and urgency) and personhood (as a formal envelope of rights and duties whose fruition in freedom is by no means assured): “In authorizing the ongoing agency of individuals within and against society, Locke’s consent theory credits and demands the mental faculties of individuals, who must be educated from childhood for their consensual office” (28).

Using Locke’s definition, Caliban before the arrival of Prospero would have been a person only imperfectly, a person in process. This does not mean that he was a child in years. Orgel makes the following calculations:

Miranda is not yet fifteen – she and Prospero have been on the island for twelve years, and at the time of their expulsion from Milan she was ‘not out three years old’. Since Sycorax was pregnant when she came to the island, and died before Prospero arrived, and imprisoned Ariel in the cloven pine a dozen years before that, Caliban is more than ten years older than Miranda, or at least twenty-four. (*Tempest* 28n)

Orgel posits a Caliban born on the island to his refugee mother and orphaned soon after, at least twelve years old when the Italians arrive. Caliban does not describe a childhood under his mother’s care, but rather a period spent alone, as “mine own king” (I.ii.342). The phrase implies self-governance and self-sufficiency, supported by his intimate knowledge of the resources and habitats of the island to which he was born, with its “fresh springs, brine pits, barren places and fertile” (I.ii.338) – vital elements in colonial readings of the play. Yet without a social arena in which to test his interests and capacities, Locke might have judged Caliban to have achieved a practical but not a moral autonomy, demonstrating the remarkable self-reliance of the survivalist but not the deliberative rationality of an adult person interacting with others in a social scene organized by several forms of law.

Caliban’s use of language is one indicator of this personhood in process. Miranda describes his speech when they first met him:

When thou didst not, savage,  
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like  
A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes  
With words that made them known. (I.ii.354–59)

<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere I have discussed the “creaturely” estate of Caliban (*Citizen-Saints* 161–80).

Her account may simply reflect a European's disdainful misapprehension of a foreign tongue, an approach developed by Stephen Greenblatt in his essay "Learning to Curse" (23–26).<sup>23</sup> Caliban's pre-contact "gabbling" might also, however, indicate an arrested linguistic development, the rudimentary beginnings of a language learned from Sycorax (perhaps Arabic mixed with bits of an indigenous tongue?), but left to turn upon itself in isolation. Caliban recalls Prospero teaching him "how / To name the bigger light and how the less / That burn by day and night" (I.ii.334–36), a formulation that implies a fundamental lack of terms for "sun" and "moon" prior to the arrival of the Italians on his shore. Caliban's early education is all *garten*, no *kinder*, lacking the socializing dimension of formal or informal schooling.<sup>24</sup>

Understood this way, Caliban combines features of the medieval romance figure of the "Wild Man" – an adult trapped in speechlessness due to exposure as an infant – with the "Wild Child" of the Enlightenment, tended and documented out of a post-Lockean concern with the rhythms and hazards of childhood development.<sup>25</sup> Although he lacks the ethereal purity of Ariel, and might seem therefore to be a lesser creature, many critics have argued that his being is more closely and clearly tied to the human condition as such.<sup>26</sup> Caliban's association with the earth links him to Adam, the felt heaviness of his being figuring forth what Locke calls "the Clay Cottage" of human embodiment, of liberty limited by flesh (*Thoughts* 2). Caliban, I

23 For similar accounts of Caliban's language as a misrecognized native tongue replaced by a colonial tongue, see Kim Hall (44–45) and Goldberg (132).

24 On the kindergarten movement in the history of progressive education, see Michael Steven Shapiro. He notes that the "infant-schools" of the early nineteenth century combined Lockean psychology, object theory, and social reform (12). The kindergartens of the later part of the century often merged with the social settlement movement, with urban kindergartens serving as a "social wedge" into the neighborhood (103). By the early twentieth century, "No symbol of humanitarianism was more meaningful to progressives than childhood"; public kindergarten was conceived within a sequence of urban institutions that included family courts, playgrounds, and day care centers (171).

25 On the medieval Wild Man, see Greenblatt 21; Bernheimer; Cheney. Doctor Jean-Marc Itard took over the care and tutelage of Victor, "the Wild Boy of Aveyron," in 1800, when Victor was about 11 or 12 years old, perhaps a little younger than Caliban when first encountered by Prospero. Itard applied principles from Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in his treatment of Victor, who responded only minimally to the educational program of sensory, social, and linguistic stimulation. Steedman 163–4; Itard, *The Wild Boy of Aveyron*, 55.

26 Harry Berger, Jr. cites David Williams on this point: Ariel is "'an airy spirit,' once imprisoned in a pine, and aspiring towards total liberty.' Caliban, on the other hand, 'is capable of not a few human conditions ... so that his appearance, however brutal, must indicate an aspiration towards human nature, whereas Ariel's is away from it'" (12).

have argued elsewhere, is a “creature” in the play, a term whose theological provenance still resonates in Locke’s treatment of childhood.<sup>27</sup> The special creatures we call children may be the responsibility of their parents, but they are “created” by God, as Locke reminds us: “But to supply the Defects of this imperfect State, till the Improvement of Growth and Age hath removed them, *Adam* and *Eve*, and after them all *Parents* were, by the Law of Nature, *under an obligation to preserve, nourish, and educate the Children*, they had begotten, not as their own Workmanship, but the Workmanship of their own Maker, the Almighty, to whom they were to be held accountable” (II.56). By reminding us that children are creatures of God, not of their progenitors, Locke uses political theology to limit rather than expand the sovereignty of fathers by emphasizing parental accountability. In our secular version of this creaturely triangle, the state represents the third party to whom parents are, in situations of abuse and abandonment, “held accountable.”

If the creature whom Prospero and Miranda first encountered on the island was still in the “imperfect state of childhood” (*Second Treatise* S. 58), he had not yet been afforded the protections of a minor, which, like the moral and legal personhood they are meant to promote, exist only in civil society and in relation to family life – even or especially when family services must be supplied by other means. In the first phase of their life together, Prospero institutes something like a guardianship over this young man, neither fully adult nor fully child in his development, and essentially abandoned to nature by the circumstance of his mother’s exile and death. In Locke’s phrase, Prospero becomes “the *Foster-Father* of an exposed Child,” a parenting arrangement that he includes in the list of alternative domestic scenarios, placing Prospero’s guardianship along with Sycorax’s maternal parenting in a set of possible exceptions to classical patriarchy (S. 65).

In this first phase of their relationship, Caliban has indeed been afforded some of the benefits of a minor. Prospero claims that he “used” Caliban “with humane care, and lodged [him] in his own cell” (I.ii.344–45). “Humane” characterizes both Prospero’s moral bearing towards Caliban (he acted *humanely*) and his expectations for Caliban’s moral aptitude (he treated Caliban *as a human*, capable of personhood). “Care” and “curator” share the same Latin root, *cura*; in the terms of Roman law, Prospero exercised the duties of a “curator,” while he largely delegated to Miranda the duties of a “tutor,” since it is she, we learn, who “took pains to make [him] speak.”<sup>28</sup>

27 See “Creature Caliban,” in *Citizen Saints* 161–80.

28 A long critical tradition reassigned these duties to Prospero, but the delegation to Miranda has been confirmed by current editorial practice. On this crux, see Goldberg 119–20.

By housing Caliban and Miranda in the same cell, moreover, Prospero granted at least provisional equality to his adopted and his natural child during this period of guardianship. In contemporary parlance, we might say that Caliban was an “au pair” rather than a servant, invited to sit at the table with his new-created family while nonetheless contributing rather more than his share to the household economy, as foster children often did.

Caliban’s education, such that it was, has already ended when the play begins, brought to a halt not (as in Miranda’s case) by the natural termination of a curriculum that has run its course and done its person-producing work, but rather arrested by Caliban’s act and Prospero’s response to it. Caliban, we learn, had made some sort of advance on Miranda: the three had lived together in one cell, family-style, until Caliban “didst seek to violate / the honour” of Miranda (I.ii.347–48). Caliban’s education into moral personhood, defined as being “accountable ... for Actions,” appears to have been incomplete, while Caliban’s present response to the repeated charge reveals a continued failure of accountability:

O ho, O ho! Would’t had been done!  
Thou didst prevent me – I had peopled else  
This isle with Calibans. (I.ii.349–347)

The “major key” colonial reading would put the emphasis on Caliban’s unregenerate incorrigibility; not only his action in the past but his total lack of compunction in the present justify that he be “deservedly confined in this rock” (I.ii.360), reduced from adopted son and brother in a scene of provisional equality to a prisoner and slave without hope of emancipation. Miranda’s rejection of Caliban as an “Abhorred slave, / Which any print of goodness will not take” establishes in advance the limits of a Lockean pedagogy based on the inscription of sensory experience on the blank slate of the mind.<sup>29</sup> A post-colonial defense might emphasize to the contrary the politics of Caliban’s act: to “people the island with Calibans” is to reclaim it from the usurpers, repopulating it in his own image and for his own offspring.

The problem with this defense of Caliban from both a Lockean and a feminist perspective is Caliban’s initial and continued lack of regard for Miranda’s person, a personhood to be represented and communicated in some form of consent, whether verbal or gestural. The current post-colonial framing of the debate has difficulty defending Caliban without implicitly or

<sup>29</sup> Goldberg links the line to traditions of humanistic pedagogy that form the background to both Shakespeare’s and Locke’s texts (124–6). Enforcing the Jacobean reading from a post-colonial point of view, Goldberg argues that “Miranda’s humanist pedagogy underwrites the program of colonialist education. It also anticipates Enlightenment distinctions between those who have and those who lack reason” (126).

explicitly blaming Miranda, or at the very least diminishing any injury to her person, taken here in the moral as well as physical sense. Thus Goldberg cites Fanon: “Whoever says *rape*, says *Negro*” (139), effectively shifting the focus from Miranda’s injury to her motives and prejudices.<sup>30</sup> The casting of Caliban as minor supplements the post-colonial defense of Caliban with an argument that protects the potential for personhood on the parts of both Caliban and Miranda, sacrificing neither’s dignity to salvage the other’s. Such a defense would run like this: if Caliban was a “minor” at the time of the attempt, he should have been tried as a juvenile, not an adult. Caliban had received some of the benefits of education under Prospero’s guardianship, including a movement into fuller language and sociality, but he did not yet understand his own impulses or how to express them civilly when he approached Miranda; he was not yet, in Locke’s phrase, “concerned and accountable.” After the attempted rape, however, Prospero handed him a permanent sentence of imprisonment and enforced servitude, further stunting his capacities for moral growth. Prospero’s ruling brutally replaced personhood as social process with the imputation and enforcement of slavery as a “natural” condition, substituting the intimate cell of the foster family with the deprivations of solitary confinement. Denied “humane care” in its objective and subjective senses – treatment *as a person by a fellow person* – Caliban has started to become the animal-thing that Prospero, at this terrible juncture in their relationship, has judged him to be. Prospero’s judgment diminishes the humanity of both parties.

Would such a defense have held water in a court presided over by either Shakespeare or Locke, and if so, in what sense? The answer in strictly historical terms is No, if we follow Holly Brewer’s recent study of children, consent, and the law. Brewer argues that minors were tried as adults until the nineteenth century, but that major conceptual shifts concerning the age of consent and reason began to occur in the later seventeenth and eighteenth

30 Kim Hall provides a more balanced version of the same argument: “Caliban’s threat ‘to people the isle’ with his offspring clearly suggests that he would control the island by creating a new ‘mixed’ race and rebuts Prospero on his own terms. Territorial claims here are backed by a need for patriarchal control over women” (143). A post-colonial critic might further say that the consent that Caliban fails to procure from Miranda is a “Western” construct, to which I would respond that post-colonial movements of liberation have succeeded in part by taking up Lockean concepts of consent (if channeled through more republican Rousseauian traditions) as part of their own arsenal of self-determination. See for example Michael Dodson, who discusses the use of Western political theory in Latin American liberation theology: “Their vision of the good society follows along the path indicated by Rousseau rather than Locke. They reject relations of what C. B. Macpherson would call ‘bourgeois man’” (403). The reference to Macpherson indicates that a *particular* Locke, the Locke of possessive individualism, is at stake here.

centuries, partly under Locke's influence.<sup>31</sup> It is in this virtual space of conceptual change and possibility (rather than in the real space of Jacobean courts) that I am retrying Caliban's case. Blackstone's *Commentaries*, written in the eighteenth century partly in response to Locke, but synthesizing centuries of English law, addresses the culpability of minors in his chapter "Of the Persons Capable of Committing Crimes."<sup>32</sup> Children rank first among those who lack the understanding to be held legally responsible:

FIRST we will consider the case of infancy, or nonage: which is a defect of the understanding. Infants, under the age of discretion, ought not to be punished by any criminal prosecution whatsoever. What the age of discretion is, in various nations is matter of some variety. (IV.ii.1)

Calculated in absolute terms, the age of discretion appears to reach back into puberty: "During the other half stage of childhood, approaching to puberty, from ten and an half to fourteen, they were indeed punishable ... but with many mitigations, and not with the utmost rigor the law. During the last stage (at the age of puberty, and afterwards [14 and upwards, according to Blackstone]), minors were liable to be punished, as well capitally, as otherwise" (IV.ii.1). In number of years, Caliban would have fallen in this last category, or even have been classified as an adult, depending on his age and the severity of the attempted rape. (We do not know how violent, if indeed violent at all, Caliban's advances may have been.<sup>33</sup>) The act itself, as the expression of an "adult" urge, itself seems to place Caliban in the "age of consent" – which, we might aver, involves his capacity not only to express his own consent, but to listen for consent in others.<sup>34</sup> Yet Blackstone acknowledges that biological years and moral development do not always correspond: "But by the law, as it now stands, and has stood at least ever

31 See Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority*, especially Chapter Six, "Understanding Intent: Children and the Reform of Guilt and Punishment," 181–229.

32 Robert Wilman insists that Blackstone rejected key aspects of Locke's political philosophy, including his theory of property. Wilman is writing in response to other scholars who have suggested stronger ties between Blackstone and Locke. In either case, it seems fair to say that Blackstone's comments on the rights of minors are not in conflict with Locke's, and reflect the legal traditions that they both shared. For another perspective on Blackstone and property, see Carol M. Rose.

33 Hulme cites Mark Taylor on the question of violence: "Mark Taylor questions whether 'violation' may not be Prospero's interpretation of 'a perfectly honourable action', on the grounds that 'Caliban's pursuance of the normal forms of courtship, with or without Miranda's responding positively to them, would be seen by him, Prospero, as an effort to violate her' (126).

34 I owe this particular point to my student Brian Oglesby, who wrote a brilliant paper on Locke and *The Tempest* entitled "The Locke of the Rape." The paper was written in the context of a seminar on tragedy and citizenship.

since the time of Edward the third, the capacity of doing ill, or contracting guilt, is not so much measured by years and days, as by the strength of the delinquent's understanding and judgment" (IV.ii.1). A Caliban who has spent half his life living in the wild, then reaches sexual maturity in the proximity of Miranda, might have been old enough in years, but not in "understanding and judgment," to gauge the force and meaning of his response to her, while while Miranda's own awkward age may also have heightened the tenor of her reaction. In such a situation of dual minority, a sentence "with many mitigations, and not with the utmost rigor of the law" might have led Caliban into the age of consent, whereas the treatment he has received has had the opposite effect. His instrumentalizing attitude towards Miranda's child-bearing capacities has hardened precisely to the degree that his own laboring being has been harnessed by Prospero.

Prospero and Miranda judge Caliban to be incorrigible, and hence deserving of permanent enslavement. One train of thought in Locke supports this position. Jonathan Goldberg has applied Locke's chapter "On Slavery" to Prospero's reduction of Caliban from person *in potentia* to slave in perpetuity. Glossing Miranda's horrified address to Caliban as an "abhorred slave," Goldberg uses Locke's justification of slavery in wartime to explain Caliban's treatment:

those who emerge from the just war provoked by an attempted infringement on 'my' liberty remain, according to Locke, forever barred from civil society, forever in the state of war that marked their condition when they assaulted 'me.' ... The slave – the person who does not recognize my liberty – is abhorrent, deserving to be put to death. Because he is not a person, he cannot be harmed by slavery. (134)

This is the Locke of possessive individualism, signaled by the critically punctuated "'me,'" who is also the Locke with economic interests in the slave-holding colony of Carolina and hence concerned to justify both the enslavement of Africans and the expropriation of the Indians.<sup>35</sup> This is a major Locke indeed, and Goldberg's book is important among other reasons for establishing with such clarity and urgency Locke's relevance to the colonial legacy of *The Tempest*. A "minor" Locke, however – the Locke of

<sup>35</sup> Locke was actually used on both sides of the slavery debate in America, but seems to have been associated more clearly with the abolitionist argument (Loewenberg). Goldberg devotes several careful footnotes to the debate concerning Locke's role in the institutions of slavery during his own lifetime and in his legacy (181n, 182n). I am not denying that Locke's theory of liberty is seriously compromised by his defense of slavery, nor that this complicity has had a structural impact on American politics. I am insisting, however, that this reading does not exhaust either the meaning of Locke's texts or his significance for counter-strains in American liberal and progressive politics, including abolitionism and feminism.

minority – can also be brought to bear on Caliban’s condition, even within the confines of Prospero’s severe judgment concerning Caliban’s capacities for moral education.

In Locke and the legal tradition he develops, not all minors reach majority:

But if through defects that may happen out of the ordinary course of Nature, any one comes not to such a degree of Reason, wherein he might be supposed capable of knowing the Law, and so living within the Rules of it, he is *never capable of being a Free Man*, he is never let loose to the dispose of his own Will ... but is continued under the Tuition and Government of others, all the time his own Understanding is incapable of that Charge. And so *Lunaticks* and *Ideots* are never set free from the Government of their Parents. (S. 60)

Blackstone makes a similar point in his commentary on English law, and Locke himself cites Hooker’s *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.<sup>36</sup> Locke’s point here is not to defend the rights of the mentally disabled, but rather to suggest that their situation of continuous dependence is a special case that cannot be used to prove the permanent and inviolable sovereignty of fathers (and of monarchs who would derive their claims from patriarchal arguments). Nonetheless, the case of the permanent minor in Chapter Six is rather different from that of the slave who “*puts himself into a State of War*” in Chapter Three (II.17). Madmen, for example, “which for the present cannot possibly have the use of right Reason to guide themselves, have for their Guide, the Reason that guideth other Men which are *Tutors over them, to seek and prepare their good for them*” (S. 60; emphasis added). The language of guardianship is here explicitly applied to the mentally incompetent. Note that Locke’s guardian acts not simply as a “curator” (attending, in Arendt’s terminology, to the minor’s life-functions), but also as a “tutor” (responsible, Arendt tells us, for orienting the minor to a world). As Locke puts it, tutor-guardians are enjoined to seek and prepare “their good for them,” the word “good” implying a shared world of values and responsibilities. The permanent minor, unlike the slave captured in a just war, retains a quotient of personhood; it is a creaturely personhood that remains *in potentia*, perhaps forever unrealized, yet still reserving a dignity and a harboring a good

<sup>36</sup> Locke cites Hooker almost verbatim: “Children which are not as yet come unto those years whereat they may have [reason]; again innocents which are excluded by natural defect from ever having; thirdly mad men which for the present cannot possibly have the use of right reason to guide themselves, have for their guide the reason that guideth other men, which are tutors over them to seek and to procure their good for them” (I.7.4). Hooker’s comments occur in the context of a discussion of the will in relation to reason; he is not concerned per se with either the culpability of permanent minors (Blackstone’s emphasis) or the limited character of paternal rule (Locke’s emphasis).

that requires care and protection – in some cases including legal protection from the neglect or exploitation of the guardian himself. The presumption of personhood on the part of the disabled, including critical work on the normative elasticity of personhood as concept and content, is a foundational tenet of the modern disability movement, which offers still another “minor” framework for addressing the perceived deformity and monstrosity of Caliban’s moral and physical person.<sup>37</sup>

Of course there is no evidence that Shakespeare represents Caliban as an “Ideot” or a “Lunatick,” as a creature deprived of reason in the long or the short term. My point is rather that the paradigm of guardianship that governs the first phase of the Caliban-Prospero relationship, *even if put under almost intolerable pressure by Caliban’s advances to Miranda*, need not have been abandoned in favor of an argument for slavery in just war (the enslavement argument negating personhood, the disabled minor argument preserving personhood in deferred or suspended form). In other words, Prospero’s judgment that Caliban’s action has proved him incapable of reason need not have led him to neglect his obligation to “seek and prepare [Caliban’s] good for [him].” The special circumstances of Caliban’s extraordinary childhood, coupled with the unusual pressures of his cohabitation with Miranda, the only female on the island, might have issued instead in a change in living arrangements, a gentler “confinement” conceived in tutorial and curatorial rather than punitive terms.

The comparison of the estates of the minor and the slave raise many issues that I cannot address fully here. Anthony Pagden, for example, has argued that comparative ethnology in the seventeenth century shifted from conceptualizing indigenous peoples as “nature’s slaves” to “nature’s children,” requiring civilizing education by their European betters (57–108). My reconstruction of a “minor” Caliban might seem to repeat this same shift: yes, a minor has more dignity than a slave, but the relation remains fundamentally paternalistic and ideologically suspect. The difference here, however, is that I am not conceiving of Caliban as a metaphorical minor,

37 The modern sense of “the disabled” as a specific group with certain rights and immunities is modern (draft addition to the OED, 2002, first use attributed to 1922). “Disability” carries a specifically legal sense from Roman law, meaning “Incapacity in the eye of the law, or created by the law; a restriction framed to prevent any person or class of persons from sharing in duties or privileges which would otherwise be open to them; legal disqualification” (OED 3; see Jane Gardner on disability in Roman law). Legal disability in this sense would apply to such persons as felons, women, minors, madmen, etc. “Disability” in its modern sense is thus a reversal of the original legal sense, involving not the *removal* but the *affirmation* and *protection* of rights for this group. It is a classic case of emancipation operating by transferring the future status of the temporary minor (the propertied white male child) to a class of “permanent” minors (the physically or mentally disabled).

that is, as an indigeneous person perceived to be child-like in his culture and moral development, along with others of his race whom he represents. Rather, as a supplement to the allegory of colonialism, I am using Locke on paternal power in order to retrace the lines of the narrative actually given to us in Shakespeare's play, in which Caliban appears as an orphan subsisting alone on the island since his early years, carrying the rudiments of a mother tongue, perhaps suffering from physical impairments or irregularities, certainly exhibiting distinctive behavior and limited speech, and first encountered by other human beings in his puberty or early adulthood. The attributes of minority accruing to such a person may indeed be applied to the condition of native peoples in general, perhaps by Shakespeare himself and certainly by later readers, but this expansion does not exhaust the attributes of nonage borne by Caliban nor their consequences for our critical re-evaluation of Prospero. Moreover, the translation of these features into aspects of "culture" (the culture of indigenous peoples as perceived by Europeans on the road to inventing historicism) effaces the different role these same features can play in a legal tradition that aims for definitions of personhood distinct from, though always grounded in, cultural particulars.<sup>38</sup> My suggestion that we consider Caliban's minority in terms of nonage involves both a special way of imagining his life story and a special way of making arguments about the nature of right and obligation in the play.<sup>39</sup>

38 There is thus in Pagden's analysis a certain complicity between the "relativism" that he attributes to the European ethnographer and his own historicist approach.

39 Another layer in the slave-minor crux concerns the complex relation between abolitionism and children's rights movements in modernity. Hugh Cunningham has demonstrated the borrowings and rivalries between anti-slavery and anti-child-labor activists in nineteenth-century Britain. Arguing against earlier studies that placed abolitionism as the source of emancipatory language that was then extended to new groups such as children, debtors, factory workers, and women, Cunningham argues for a more "dynamic" relationship in which analogies traveled among movements: "In the 1830's, then, the language of slavery was contested. There was no smooth transition from a concern for slaves who were black to those who were white. Rather, the fight for the emancipation of both coincided in time, and ... there were many whose energies and sympathies lay with black slaves or white slaves, but emphatically not with both" (*Children of the Poor* 81). The slave and the child, taken separately and together, have represented both empirical institutions of exploitation and powerful metaphors to motivate emancipation. These nineteenth-century debates have no immediate relevance to the case of Caliban, but they do place the conceptual terms of his predicament within the larger drama of Liberty Ltd. charted in this volume.

### 3. The majority of Caliban

Despite the attempt by some critics to identify Prospero's judgment of Caliban with Shakespeare's, the play does not finally rule that Caliban is incorrigible. (The play is not so generous to Prospero's unreconciled brother Antonio.) Prospero's judgment against Caliban at the crucial moment *prior to the play's action* is not identical with the state of affairs for both Prospero and Caliban *at the end of the play*.<sup>40</sup> Caliban's collaborations with Trinculo and Stephano constitute the experimental period of the play – which is also the time or *tempus* of the play proper – in which Caliban's personhood has become unfrozen, going into process once again. Caliban's confinement is by no means complete, and he manages to act freely in relation to Trinculo and Stephano, seizing on their presence as an opportunity to exercise his own will. Much of the episode unfolds as a parodic replay of Caliban's first encounter with Prospero, as he attempts not to resist mastery as such but rather to install a new master in place of the old. In the refrain of his exultant song at the end of the first scene with the sailors, Caliban sings,

'Ban, 'Ban, Ca-Caliban,  
Has a new master – get a new man!  
Freedom, high-day! High-day, freedom! Freedom, high-day, freedom! (II.ii.179–8)

The “new master” is Stephano, while the “new man,” Orgel notes, would be the servant whom Prospero must find to replace Caliban. Yet “new man” cannot help but resonate with the personhood of Caliban himself, who is also undergoing transformation in his search for freedom through political interaction with others. (As landless laborers, Trinculo and Stephano suffer their own political disabilities.) Flawed though this project is, Caliban increasingly assumes a directorial role, planning the details of the coup and attempting to keep the distracted sailors on track through persuasion and exhortation.

It is within the drama of this experimental phase that Caliban delivers his most beautiful speech. Frightened by the ghostly sounds of Ariel, Caliban reassures his co-conspirators:

Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,  
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,  
That if I then had waked after long sleep,  
Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming

<sup>40</sup> See for example Goldberg: “Caliban's attempted rape thus offers evidence that he is Aristotle's natural slave” (133). Does the play, however, end with this judgment, or rather begin with it?

The clouds methought would open and show riches  
 Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked  
 I cried to dream again. (III.ii.321–41)

This extraordinary passage has undergone multitudinous interpretations, from the gorgeous appreciation offered by Harry Berger Jr. to its post-colonial debunking as colonialist accommodation by Paul Brown.<sup>41</sup> Closest to my purposes is John Gillies in his essay, “Shakespeare’s Virginian Masque,” one of the least polemical of the contributions to the debate concerning *The Tempest’s* American references. Gillies writes, “*The Tempest* shows us two landscapes: the moral landscape in its various phases and a physical landscape of unimaginable strangeness and mystery – the landscape of Caliban ... Poetically speaking, it is Caliban, not Prospero, who possesses the island” (702).

The language of possession here recalls the Locke of the *Second Treatise* – not the chapter on paternal power but the chapter on property. Locke’s labor theory of property was taken up into the main stream of capitalist economic theory (Macpherson), and was also used to defend the expropriation of Indian lands in the New World, under the argument that European forms of labor were more efficient than indigeneous ones (Tully). Yet a “minor” Locke subsists in these pages as well, a Locke who handles a syntax and vocabulary of property whose creative and ethical dimensions have been largely lost in the possessive tradition. Early in the chapter, Locke attributes property to the Indians, in the form of hunting and gathering, and indeed in the form of eating as such: “The Fruit, or Venison, which nourishes the wild *Indian*, who knows no Inclosure, and is still a Tenant in common, must be his, and so his, *i.e.*, a part of him, that another can no longer have any right to it” (26). Although he will later rate the efficiency of different types of labor, here he credits property to anyone who labors, indeed, to anyone who eats. Locke thus attributes an inalienable minimal quotient of property and personhood to the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas. At the same time, property in Locke’s discourse embraces the ethical dimension of its cognate “propriety” – manners, appropriateness, fitness, decorum – and encompassing “Life, Liberty and Estate,” not just land or money (S. 87). Macpherson ascribes this expansive definition to a “confusion in [Locke’s] mind between the remnants of traditional values and the new bourgeois values” (220). But we might also see the complexity and layeredness of the language of property in Locke as a resource for contemporary rereadings of

41 Goldberg summarizes Brown’s position: “rather than indicating that Shakespeare granted Caliban humanity in exalted poetry, [the lines] show instead how fully Caliban is represented as having accommodated himself to colonial inanition, where he can only dream of dreaming” (186n).

liberalism that aim to engage creatively as well as critically with the impulses of early capitalism.<sup>42</sup>

There is certainly a creative dimension to Locke's own thinking. By deriving property from human labor rather than mere occupancy, Locke imagines a creative dimension to property that works both objectively (on the possessed world) and subjectively (on the laboring person). Thus he writes in a syntax whose complex mapping of agency has long disappeared into the reified grammars of ownership that we speak today: "The *labour* that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath *fixed* my *Property* in them" (S. 28). In this laborious sentence, "Labour" holds the place of the grammatical subject, the subject of possession coming into being as an effect rather than a cause of laboring. Labor "fixes" "my" "property" in the world, not only establishing my formal title to the land or object so worked upon, but also, more creatively, imprinting my subjective "properties" or attributes on the world. These actions in turn expand and elaborate the catalogue of properties that make up "me." Lockean labor acts on the subject in the process of creating objects, affixing and affirming the distinctive features of a *personality* to the purely formal structure of the *person*.

In what senses can Locke be used to support Gillies' claim that, "poetically speaking" – that is, through the action of his own poetic language – Caliban "possesses" the island? First, as a hunter and gatherer, Caliban achieves the minimal personhood-in-property that Locke attributes to the Indians. This personhood consists not only in surviving on the foodstuffs of the island, but also in the special knowledges that attend and support this survival. Through the ruminative intimacy of hunting and gathering, Caliban "fixes his property" in the island, removing or extracting foodstuffs from the world he inhabits, incorporating them within himself, and new-creating them as his. In addition, through a form of intellectual labor, Caliban takes possession of the island through the poetic work of his language, fixing his subjective properties in the island in ways that have resonated for generations of readers of the play. Caliban in effect holds the copyright on the island's poetry of place. As Lockeans, we believe him when he claims, "This island's mine" (I.ii.333), though we might urge him to claim title not through birthright ("by Sycorax my mother"), but rather through the

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42 Brook Thomas makes a similar argument: "'Traditional' values are not simply a residual element of a system that is completely determined by the market. They are a crucial part of bourgeois thought. ... Locke's slippery use of 'property' has contributed to liberalism's great resiliency, allowing it to use verbal slippage endlessly to defer the resolution of a contradiction that Macpherson feels should be overcome by a new dialectical synthesis" (95).

appropriative and subjectivizing labor that he of all the characters most fully enacts and embodies in the play.

Finally, there is the recollective dimension traveled by the passage in question, which returns us to the subjective temporality of personhood posited by Locke in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. In the speech, we listen to Caliban recalling the music of his childhood – not the rhythmic lullabies of a mother or a tutor, but the ambient sounds made by the island itself, remixed through Caliban’s linguistic and imaginative capacities into a music we too can begin to hear. A child-like mood saturates the speech, signed above all by the poignantly infantile image of “crying” in order to “dream again.” Yet the speech also unfolds as a series of temporal breaks, including the painful break of the cry itself, that distinguish the chaotic mix of early memory from the ego recollecting the past in the present. In Caliban’s speech, we glimpse the phenomenology of an awakening consciousness yearning for sleep, but reconstructed with great labor in the present tense of personhood. In *The Tempest*, to awaken is to *rouse oneself from minority into majority*, through the risk and challenge of political experiment, deliberative dialogue, and linguistic expression.

Shakespeare affirms this majority in the final scene of the play. Two lines are crucial here: Prospero’s “acknowledgment” of Caliban, and Caliban’s final response. Prospero reintroduces Caliban to the stage in the play’s final scene:

These two fellows [Stephano and Trinculo] you  
Must know and own; this thing of darkness I  
Acknowledge mine. (V.i.274–77)

The Lockean framework of minority allows us to give special weight to the parental meanings of the word “acknowledge.” To “acknowledge” Caliban as “mine” is to re-assume the duties of guardianship after their dereliction. The lines can thus be read to record not only Prospero’s quasi-legal acknowledgement of Caliban (as a father would “acknowledge” his bastard, according him certain rights and dignities previously denied), but also an acknowledgment on Prospero’s part that he has not fulfilled his responsibilities vis á vis Caliban. He “owns” Caliban not in the major key of possessive individualism, but rather in the minor key of the person who “owns and imputes to it *self* past Actions” (*Essay* II.xxvii.26). The acknowledgment remains painfully partial; Caliban is still, in Prospero’s vocabulary and perhaps in the play’s as well, a “thing of darkness,” not fully included in the realm of persons. Yet the political and ethical momentum of acknowledgment as a public act, working towards both commonality and responsibility in relation to felt differences and witnessed by assembled others, might ultimately perform some work on “personhood” as such, stretching the range

of its norms to re-include Caliban within it. In any case, the “fatherhood” delivered at the end of such a process of tested and delayed acknowledgment is a chastened and limited one, not the naturalized sovereign paternity of absolutist apologetics but the temporary, artificial, and fundamentally obligated guardianship of the tutor and the curator.

And what of the minor Caliban? Has he, along side his step-sister, reached some form of majority by the end of the play? He accepts Prospero’s command that he “trim” the cell in anticipation of Prospero’s pardon:

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! (V.i.294–97)

These lines have left post-colonial critics unsatisfied; the speech must be either a cynical ventriloquism of the status quo, or a mock-obsequy mouthed by an unregenerate Caliban who continues to resent the powers of Prospero.<sup>43</sup> In a powerful return to some of the play’s originary impulses and vocabularies of agency and obligation, David Evett has suggested that Prospero, far from simply humiliating Caliban, has in effect placed him in charge of setting the cell aright, “confirmed in a kind of superiority for which his de facto leadership of the retainer raid has prepared him” (200). So too, according to Evett, Caliban’s final lines reveal not an incorrigible “native” constructed and constrained as such by his colonial exploiters, but rather has proven himself to be eminently educable: the speech “is not simply incantatory ... but something grounded in discipline and experience” (201). The “discipline and experience” in question comes from participating in a failed rebellion that has taught him the limits of the drunken sailors’ imitative politics. He has, in Locke’s words, learned something of “The Ways, the Humors, the Follies, the Cheats, the Faults of the Age he is fallen into” (*Some Thoughts* S. 94). He has also gotten a crash course in cooperation and leadership, skills “acknowledged” when Prospero places him in charge of tidying the cell. David Evett describes the pedagogical function of Caliban’s political adventure: “Socially, the process depends on the superiority of experience to precept and of love to fear as pedagogical devices; the Caliban who declined to respond to Prospero’s exhortations or to his cramps and pinches is persuaded by his time with Stephano and Trinculo that the willing service of a worthy master can elevate rather than demean the servant” (201–02). Locke would agree on the linked pedagogies of expe-

<sup>43</sup> Evett summarizes the recent post-colonial consensus on these lines, 201 and 259n. Although my own stance differs from Evett’s in emphasizing proto-liberal rather than Christian-conservative conceptualizations of obligation in the play, I am in sympathy with Evett’s deeply responsive reading of the play’s conciliatory strands.

rience and love, though he might want to associate the “wisdom” sought by Caliban with a form of rational autonomy distinct from the self-subordination of service. In any case, when Prospero leaves the island, Caliban will in effect have no master. Like Ariel, he has been emancipated, not only “by” Prospero, but through his own powers of expression and deliberation. What Gillian Brown argues for Locke is also, I suggest, true for Shakespeare: “by recognizing and protecting an embryonic form of agency in the child, Locke establishes a basis for the principle of self-determination” (“Thinking in the Future Perfect” 116).

If Caliban lives free on the island, he may nonetheless live alone – perhaps cooperating with Ariel, but likely without a helpmeet or a political community. Hannah Arendt – no Lockean, but writing in a tradition of politics sympathetic with the line I have developed here – offers a typology of living alone that may illuminate our speculations concerning Caliban’s biography before and after the action of the play. At the end of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt distinguishes between solitude, isolation, and loneliness. *Solitude* is the leisure of the philosopher, who enjoys being alone with himself because he can return to the *sensus communis* of like-minded others, their communal interaction providing the basis of political action. *Isolation* is the mark of *homo faber*, the artisan who finds himself *alone with his work*, excluded by choice or necessity from politics but still in possession of a private life, a social world, and his own creative activity. *Loneliness* is the condition of totalitarianism, whose subjects are reduced to pure labor devoid of a creative dimension (the condition of the slave and the camp inmate) and who no longer even have access to a private or domestic sphere.<sup>44</sup> In his childhood on the island, Caliban, I would suggest, existed in isolation: his own king, he had no community in which to develop patterns of cooperation and compromise, but he performed his survivalist labor according a rhythm that he set himself in intimate response to the exigencies of the island. This isolation was relieved during his minority in the cell of Prospero, but the community built there was shattered when Prospero reduced the Minor to the Slave. During this next phase, Caliban was subjected to the radical loneliness of bare life, no longer accorded the rights and immunities of a minor and forced to labor without the minimal dignity of self-possession. When the sailors arrive, he breaks out of his loneliness and enters into political relationship; the political project fails, but he has exercised his personhood and begun to enter into a new majority. When the Italians finally leave him to himself, we might imagine that he has gained the capacity for solitude, the at-one-ness of the philosopher, whose higher *sapientia* echoes in Caliban’s pledge to “be wise hereafter.” In any case, thanks

44 Arendt, *Origins*, 474–9.

to his own efforts and those of Ferdinand, a great deal of wood has been cut – the land cleared perhaps for new kinds of labor, new forms of property, and new styles of poetry and personhood.

#### 4. Coda: Caliban in America

There have been two major waves of scholarship on Locke in America: the first, classically political in focus, entails evaluating the impact of Locke's thought on the American Revolution (Dunn), and the second, economic, social, and cultural in focus, looks at the use of Locke in justifying (or in some cases protesting) expropriation of Indian land and maintaining slavery as an institution (Lebovic, Tully). Gillian Brown's *Consent of the Governed* has restored the political emphases of Locke, but within the socially grounded frameworks of education and civil society, and in relation to groups traditionally disenfranchised by political philosophy, including women, children, Indians, and slaves. Following Brown's inquiries into Locke in America, I have tried to conceive of Caliban in legal and political rather than cultural terms, but around a figure – the figure of the Minor – whose political rights come embedded in specific economic structures (that of the *oikos*, the foundation of "economy" as such). The Minor's protected reservation of rights in relation to a citizenship to come stakes out a powerful model of emancipatory transformation through education that has been extended repeatedly from the "model minor" (a white male child of property) to various classes of "permanent" minors, such as slaves, working children, women, non-citizens, racial minorities, prisoners, and the disabled. The figure of the minor as a cipher of potential freedom requiring both the discipline and the protection of the law lies at the heart of the liberal project. It has been put to the worst of uses when the social education of minors is conducted in a paternalistic mode cynically designed to constrain rather than promote liberty, a strategy some critics have discerned in Shakespeare's play. Yet the minor's special capacity to focus and synthesize the affective identifications of diverse subjectivities around the common denominator of a stage of life taken to be universal has made discourses of and around the rights of minors an important resource in progressive political programs around the world, especially when those programs require the rallying of distinct parties around a common cause.

Ernesto Laclau writes of the importance of universal markers in catalyzing the identifications that make political action across groups possible:

If social struggles of new social actors show that the concrete practices of our society restrict the universalism of our political ideals to limited sectors of the population, it becomes possible to retain the universal dimension while widening

the spheres of its application – which in turn will define the concrete elements of such universality. Through this process, universalism as a horizon is expanded at the same time as its necessary attachment to any particular content is broken. The opposite policy – that of rejecting universalism *in toto* as the particular content of the ethnica of the West – can only lead to a political blind alley. (34)

I am suggesting that the minor represents a particularly potent case of the universal moment that galvanizes progressive and emancipatory movements within plural polities and across global interests. There is a strong sentimental element here, of course: the face of an African child dying of hunger may be a more palatable icon for foreign aid than the spectral visage of the same child's mother or father dying of AIDS. But the sentimental face of the *child* floats atop the more muscular structure outlined by the legal claims of the *minor*, giving the composite figure of the child-minor an integrative political potential whose effects are considerably more than imaginary.

My Caliban in America is: a homeless child surviving the best he can in the wilderness of modernity; a survivor of foster-care; a juvenile tried as an adult; a prisoner deprived of rights; a disabled “monster”; a child-laborer both reduced to and alienated from his work. My Caliban is also: in pursuit of happiness and on the road to citizenship through the recollective and self-creating resources of a language that he has made his own and through the chances for civic education that he has found despite as well as because of his self-appointed educators. In each of these formulations an aspect of “childhood” in its psychological and developmental dimensions borrows its political urgency from a set of rights associated with legal “minority.” In the court of criticism, my American Caliban may ultimately be judged a “minor” one: insufficiently historical, unabashedly liberal, founded on the Enlightenment drama of rights rather than the Romantic cult of culture. Perhaps this minor Caliban, however, will reach his majority precisely because he aims for personhood in ways that resonate across authors and interests, continents and centuries, and hence that we can acknowledge as our own – identify with his passion, and take responsibility for his pain, across and in response to the differences made by age, ability, education, and opportunity.

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