

THE POETICS — OF — IMPERIALISM

Translation and
Colonization from
The Tempest to Tarzan (1991)

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The Foreign Policy of Metaphor

Indian people are practical and spiritual. We don't horseshit around. We're not coy and cute. Occasionally we're difficult, but that's different. We don't believe in metaphor. Very few of us even understand what that term means in terms of what it means to the greater poetry community around us or to the critical establishment.

PAULA GUNN ALLEN

IN HIS INFLUENTIAL *The Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx ends his chapter on *The Tempest* by suggesting that the play "may be read as a prologue to American literature" (72); for "in its overall design, [it] prefigures the design of the classic American fables, and especially the idea of a redemptive journey away from society in the direction of nature" (69). It is my purpose in what follows to read *The Tempest* as a prologue to American literature, but in a way that moves against Marx's reading. For I do not read the play or the American frontier tradition it can articulate as a conflict between nature and culture, between savagery and civilization. In *The Tempest* the garden is not a form of nature. (The garden is the garden of eloquence.) (The garden is the machine.) And so the conflict cannot be between the machine and the garden, but only between machines, between cultures, between, in this case, the culture of Caliban, which we will need to specify, and that of Prospero. When Prospero laments that Caliban is "a Devil, a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick" (IV.i.189-90), the conflict proposed, whatever Prospero's figuring of it may be, is not between nature and nurture but between two forms of nurture, a conflict of translation, as I will argue.

Further, *The Tempest* that I have in mind as a prologue to American

literature does not confine itself to figuring only "the classic American fables" (by which terms Marx refers to those white, male, middle-class, Protestant writings that compose what until recently has been the largely unquestioned American literary canon). In fact, when I use the term *literature* here I want to use it in the classical sense of everything that appears in letters, the written. I am not ignoring the oral, but simply noting that my emphasis in this book will be the violent politics through or within which Western European writing translated Native American oral cultures. Finally, I should add that just as I am interested in disrupting the integrity of the term "literature" by politicizing it, so I am equally committed to disrupting the integrity of the term "American." Frantz Fanon is my immediate inspiration for reading *The Tempest*. And his name should remind us that Shakespeare's play is the possible prologue not only for the literature of the United States, but for a significant body of Caribbean literature, which itself represents, among other things, the violent history of imperialism in the Americas, a history of crimes from which the United States has yet to disentangle itself.

(At the time of one of the first productions of *The Tempest*, in 1611 for the court of James I, eloquence, so central to the Renaissance vision of the world, was still conceived of as the prime technology, the primary motive force in transforming the world.) The West had not as yet entered the fully modern era, the era we are still part of, in which technology is the principal form of the West's eloquence. Literate men of the Renaissance, who because of the privileges of gender and class could aspire to the ideal of the classical orator of the writings of Cicero and Quintilian, saw true, or morally proper, eloquence—ideally the end result of a formal education centered in rhetoric—as the ability to translate words grounded in "wisdom," or "reason," into power in the world. "The humanists' stand on eloquence," Hanna Gray tells us, "implied an almost incredible faith in the power of the word,"¹ a faith we might liken to the West's current faith in the power of technology, which seems to find its apotheosis, indeed its macabre parody, in the American dream of dominion through technological perfection.

The Tempest conceives of power in terms of eloquence. Commenting on an identity between Prospero and Ariel, Harry Berger, Jr., notes:

Spirit and master have much in common: each has both a histrionic and a rhetorical bent which he delights to indulge, and each savors his performances to the full. In the case of Ariel, this is perhaps unambiguously clear only in his opening speech, but it is marked enough there to set up the

analogy. Notice [in that speech] . . . how his obvious delight in magical performance is doubled by his pleasure in describing it.²

Berger goes on to quote the speech in which Ariel describes his pyrotechnics on board Alonso and company's tempest-tossed ship:

I boarded the king's ship; now on the beak,
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
I flam'd amazement: sometime I'd divide,
And burn in many places; on the topmast,
The yards and boresprit, would I flame distinctly,
Then meet and join. Jove's lightning, the precursors
O' th' dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary
And sight-outrunning were not: the fire and cracks
Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune
Seem to besiege, and make his bold waves tremble,
Yea, his dread trident shake.

(I.ii.196-206)

Ariel's speech is intended to flatter Prospero with a vision of the master's magical power and to persuade him of his servant's faithfulness in translating this power "[t]o th' syllable" (I.ii.503); its eloquence is meant to persuade the audience of these powers as well, by summoning a vision of their effects that the available stage machinery, no matter how innovative for the time, could not have equaled. Thus Ariel's eloquence becomes the double of a technology yet to be realized, and therefore conceived of as magical in the sense that it is a figure of this technology and acts in its place. But, and this is crucial, the Renaissance audience would not have felt the discrepancy between technology and word that a modern Western audience would feel if it could witness and listen to the same spectacle. For the Renaissance audience would have conceived of the eloquent word as a powerful technology.

"Theatre in 1605," Stephen Orgel remarks, "was assumed to be a verbal medium. And acting . . . was a form of oratory; the Renaissance actor did not merely imitate action, he persuaded the audience through speech and gesture of the meaning of the action." And, I would add, in the case of a play like *The Tempest*, dependent as it was on an as yet unrealized technology, this actor had to persuade the audience of the action as well. "Obviously," Orgel continues, "much more than this was in fact being experienced in an Elizabethan theatre—for example pageantry, violence, symbolism—for which the visual sense was essen-

tial. But this did not render the drama any less a verbal form."³ Orgel then goes on to make the central point that unlike modern theater (theater from the late nineteenth century on), where the visual, or technological, and the verbal are opposed (and where the visual takes precedence over the verbal), the Renaissance theater operated under a different conceptual agenda:

The distinction . . . between "verbal" theatres and "visual" theatres in this period is a false one. Both the Globe and the court theatre were spectacular, both were highly rhetorical; the visual and the verbal emphases in no way excluded each other. In fact, if we look at plays that were specifically written to be produced with scenes and machines, we shall find them far more elaborately rhetorical than plays for the public stage. (19)

The Renaissance theater is one of the spaces where we can "see" that the frontier between language and technology, a frontier that seems so familiar to the West today, had not yet been articulated. In the Renaissance, even granting the increasing voice of the bourgeois technical arts in their debate with the aristocratic liberal arts, technology remains predominantly within the territory of eloquence. At the time *The Tempest* was first performed, *nature*, which could be read as the very sign of an emergent technology that claimed experience (hence, *experiment*) rather than authority for its basis, was still predominantly contained within the figure of the Book, the very sign of eloquence.⁴

The Tempest is a figure of the map of Renaissance power as eloquence. When, as noted above, Ariel promises to carry out Prospero's commands "[t]o th' syllable," he emphasizes the verbal character of Prospero's art, which is grounded in the book. Caliban recognizes this source of Prospero's power, when, plotting with the commoners Stephano and Trinculo to usurp Prospero, who has usurped him, he tells his coconspirators

Remember

First to possess his books; for without them

He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not

One spirit to command: they all do hate him

As rootedly as I. Burn but his books.

(III.ii.89-93)

The historic relationship between social class, literacy, and power in the West is simply asserted here. And Prospero implicitly reasserts it, when in the last act of the play he ends the speech in which he promises to abjure

his magic by promising Ariel: "I'll drown my book" (V.i.57), a promise he never carries out in the play proper. Shakespeare conceives of Prospero's power in *The Tempest* as the magical literacy of eloquence. Prospero, for example, associates his magical power with "the liberal Arts" (I.ii.73), not the mechanical arts. And the play opens with a failure of the mechanical arts when pitted against the liberal arts of Prospero. For the technical skills of the sailors cannot save the ship from foundering in the storm, which, as we discover immediately in the second scene of the play, is not a natural phenomenon at all, but a cultural one: the literalization or translation of Prospero's figures of speech into power, the kind of power that Henry Peacham dramatizes in the 1577 edition of *The Garden of Eloquence*:

For by Figures, as it were by sundry streames, that great & forcible floud of Eloquence, is most plentifully and pleasantly poured forth by the great might of Figures which is no other thing then (wisdom speaking eloquently) the Oratour may leade his hearers which way he list, and draw them to what affection he will. . . . By figures he may make his speech as cleare as the noone day: or contrary wyse, as it were with cloudes and foggy mistes, he may cover it with darkness, he may stirre up stormes, & troublesome tempestes, or contrariwyse, cause and procure a quyet and sylent calmnesse.⁵

In *The Tempest* nature is not nature but culture, the culture contained within the norms of eloquence; that is, nature is a form or forms of language, conceived of like its sign, technology, within the territory of the Book. Indeed, the opening scene of the play on board the tempest-tossed ship, which the critical tradition has read as a scene of nature's power over social and political hierarchy, might well have been read by the royal audience at the performance of the play not as a scene of nature over culture, but as the most conspicuous figure of political life available to the Renaissance, the allegory of the ship of state. How, we might ask, given the ubiquitousness of the figure and the sensitivity of the audience to questions of political order and disorder, could this audience not have read it in this way, even before Prospero's appearance in the second scene, when the audience discovers that the storm is his invention, fabricated to help him regain the helm of his ship of state, which his brother Antonio had violently wrested from him in league with Alonso, king of Naples. Importantly, one of the documents that we know influenced Shakespeare in writing *The Tempest*, *A True Declaration of*

the Estate of the Colonie in Virginia, of which the audience at court—among whom were investors in the Jamestown venture—would have been well aware, is structured by figures of the ship of state, comparing the political turmoil at Jamestown to the tempest that wrecked the *Sea Venture* in the Bermudas.

[N]ot only was the ship of state a ubiquitous figure of political life, but it was typically the exemplary figure of allegory in the books of Latin rhetoric that the men in the audience would have gone to school with or could have read in translation. Alonso's storm-tossed ship, in which the "master" appears briefly only to disappear, and the common crew quarrels openly with the nobles, would have announced to the audience its figurative force, its structure as part of (a rhetorical machine), rather than its transparency to a purely physical world. The opening scene of *The Tempest*, at the very least, would have appeared to its audience not simply as mimesis, but also as the Renaissance trope *translatio*, or metaphor, of which allegory was a particular kind. In this opening scene, and throughout the play, Ariel is Prospero's air articulated eloquently, and transformed into the literally spellbinding orations that hold the figures on the island entranced so that Prospero can restore the political order that was disrupted by his usurpation in Milan. Prospero, like the poet-orator of Emerson's *Nature*, "forges the subtle and delicate air into wise and melodious words, and gives them wing as angels of persuasion and command. One after another his victorious thought comes up with and reduces all things, until the world becomes at last only a realized will,—the double of the man."⁶ Or at least Prospero attempts such a reduction of all otherness to the terms of the self. We will return to the point that his imperial translation, like that of Emerson's poet-orator (as I have argued elsewhere⁷), meets significant resistance.

I synchronize *Nature*, published in 1836, with *The Tempest*, not least of all because Emerson's text is one of the best readings we have of the play, and it is particularly useful if one is interested, as I am, in interpreting the play within the context of the Jamestown colony, what Richard Beale Davis calls precisely "Britain's first major experiment in Empire" (14), an experiment that, as we know, would eventuate in the formation of the United States.

Nature is not a declared reading of *The Tempest*. Nowhere in his text or in his notebooks does Emerson declare that the purpose of his first book is to interpret the play, which is, perhaps, why no one, as far as I know, has brought the two texts into immediate relation before now, although Marx

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in *The Machine in the Garden* implies a relation between the two texts within the context of his vision of an American pastoral. Yet as Emerson implicitly tells us in *Nature*, he had *The Tempest* before him as he was writing his book; for he quotes portions of Prospero's long speech in Act V (wrongly attributing part of it to Ariel⁸), in which the magician eloquently evokes his magical powers even as he promises to abjure them (V.i.33-87). These quotes, Emerson tells us, illustrate the "transfiguration which all material objects undergo through the passion of the poet" (66), a passion exemplified for Emerson by Shakespeare, whose

imperial muse tosses the creation like a bauble from hand to hand, and uses it to embody any caprice of thought that is uppermost in his mind. The remotest spaces of nature are visited, and the farthest sundered things are brought together, by a subtle spiritual connection. (65)

Emerson attributes to Shakespeare in this passage the same omnipotence that Shakespeare attributes to Prospero in the speech from Act V:

I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-bas'd promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar: graves at my command
Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth
By my so potent Art.

(V.i.41-50)

This speech, echoing Ariel's eloquent invocation of his pyrotechnics aboard Alonso's ship, embodies the "imperial muse" of Emerson's Shakespeare, who "tosses the creation like a bauble from hand to hand, and uses it to embody any caprice of thought that is uppermost in his mind." The sense conveyed in the passages from both *Nature* and *The Tempest* is of (an imperial figure who acts absolutely, that is, immediately, or without resistance, on the world, even though this figure needs the world as words to express, or mediate, his thoughts (a potential contradiction to which I will return)). This imperial figure dwarfs the world—the creation appears like a bauble in his colossal hands, which seize Jove's lightning and hurl it powerfully down to earth—and uses it to figure forth "any caprice of thought" that enters his consciousness. The

world offers no resistance to the expression of this emperor's thought. "To him," Emerson tells us in the same passage, "the refractory world is ductile and flexible; he invests dust and stones with humanity, and makes them the words of the Reason." Finally, this imperial figure expresses his most "potent Art" through the conquest of time and space; he visits the "remotest spaces of nature" and brings "the farthest sundered things . . . together." And what could be more sundered than life and death, which Prospero unites in his waking of the dead.

The kind of immediate power that Emerson attributes to his poet-orator, of whom, I am suggesting, Prospero is the explicit prototype in *Nature*, can be read as the power to make metaphors—the power to bring sundered, or dispersed, things together—a power that from Quintillian to Emerson is the very secret of eloquence. And this metaphorical power can also be read as technological power. As Marx comments in *The Machine in the Garden*,

No stock phrase in the entire lexicon of progress appears more often than the "annihilation of space and time," borrowed from one of Pope's relatively obscure poems ("Ye Gods! annihilate but space and time, / And make two lovers happy."). The extravagance of this sentiment apparently is felt to match the sublimity of technological progress. (194)

Marx's book has helped instruct us in the ways that the figure of the machine began to become the figure of the United States in the period between 1830 and 1860. "Again and again, foreign travelers in this period testify to the nation's obsessive interest in power machinery" (208), an obsession that was and is, no doubt, American, but might also be seen as the apotheosis of a European vision of immediacy, or absolute power, that was instrumental in founding the New World. Let us continue to work toward a figure of this founding vision, Prospero's vision, by continuing to look for a moment at Emerson's *Nature*.

As one example of what he calls "the rhetoric of the technological sublime" (195, 230), Marx cites the passage from *Nature* that I used to synchronize Emerson's text with *The Tempest*. Here is the passage as it appears in *The Machine in the Garden* (the emphases are Marx's):

The exercise of the Will, or the lesson of power, is taught in every event. . . . Nature is thoroughly mediate. It is made to serve. . . . It offers all its kingdoms to man as the raw material which he may mould into what is useful. Man is never weary of working it up. He forges the subtle and delicate air into wise and melodious words, and gives them wing as

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angels of persuasion and command. One after another his victorious thought comes up with and reduces all things until the world becomes at last only a realized will,—the double of the man. (231)

About this passage Marx makes the following brief but telling comments, which directly precede the passage in his book:

A measure of the depth to which machine power penetrates [Emerson's] imagination is the large part it plays in his figurative language. Here, in a later chapter of *Nature*, he is praising intellectual power in general, but, as the submerged metaphor indicates, the specific example he has in mind is technology. . . . (230)

We might note first that what Emerson is praising in the passage under consideration is not "intellectual power in general" but a specific form of intellectual power, the classical form of eloquence, which was of immediate interest to him, not only as a Lyceum lecturer and former preacher, who had received an education in classical rhetoric at Harvard, but also as a citizen of an antebellum, nineteenth-century America that took the oratorical genius of Daniel Webster, for example, as one of the primary symbols of its power. The specifics of Emerson's description of what Marx refers to as "intellectual power in general" point to the descriptions of eloquence in the Latin rhetorics of Cicero and Quintilian with which both Shakespeare's audience at the royal performance of *The Tempest* and Emerson's audience of New England intellectuals were familiar. It is "melodious words" based on wisdom and capable of "persuasion and command" that Emerson is evoking here (and we should note the conflation of wisdom with power in this representative discourse; it is a classic Western conflation). We can see, both in *Nature* and in the trajectory of Emerson's work from *Nature* to his two late essays on eloquence, that his emblem of absolute power is the "poet, the orator, bred in the woods" who uses nature as a language with which "the spells of persuasion, the keys of power are put into his hands" (52). Emerson surely sensed American affinities in the spellbinding eloquence of Prospero.

(Emerson's language, I would argue then, as an alternative to Marx's vision, does not simply reflect or represent the powerful emergence of the machine in antebellum America; rather, it absorbs this modern lexicon of technological power, perhaps in part as a last desperate act of containment, into the traditional yet still potent figure of eloquence as technology.) In *Nature* it is explicitly "eloquence," not the machine, that

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Emerson gives as one of the "examples of the action of man upon nature with his entire force," one of the "examples of Reason's momentary grasp of the sceptre; the exertions of a power which exists not in time or space, but an instantaneous in-streaming causing power" (79). In *Nature*, as in *The Tempest*, the imperial figure that conquers time and space is not technology but eloquence.

Marx, although he is not at all interested in the figure of eloquence as a force that cannot be separated from the history of technology, testifies implicitly to the lingering force of this figure in antebellum America, when he describes for us how until the 1850s in the United States the mechanical arts sought to justify themselves in terms of the literary arts. In one example that Marx gives among several of a similar cast, a writer argues for the "genius" of the machine by asserting its intellectual equivalence to the very epitome of eloquence, "an oration of Cicero" (199). But, as Marx tells us, "By the 1850's the celebrants of the machine take the offensive" (202). Hereafter, as we know quite well today, it will be the literary, or rhetorical, arts that will have to justify themselves in terms of use, or practicality, which the machine will have appropriated to itself from the historic realm of language's potency.

David Noble succinctly articulates this struggle between rhetoric and technology in his description of shifts in the curricular emphasis of higher education in nineteenth-century America:

In the early nineteenth century the colleges were firmly in the hands of the classicists and the clerics, and there was considerable academic disdain for the study of experimental science and even more for the teaching of the "useful arts." Technical education in the United States, therefore, developed in struggle with the classical colleges, both inside and outside of them. One form of this development was the gradual growth of technological studies within the classical colleges, resulting from the reorientation of natural philosophy toward the empirical, experimental, scientific search for truth and from the pressures of some scientists and powerful industrialists for practical instruction; the other was the rise of technical colleges and institutes outside of the traditional colleges in response to the demands of internal improvement projects like canal-building, railroads, manufactures, and, eventually, science-based industry.

But it was not until 1862, Noble continues, that

the big leap forward in technical education in America came . . . when Congress passed the Morrill Act granting federal aid to the states for the support of colleges of agriculture and the mechanic arts. State legislatures

that had been deaf to all appeals for technical instruction now quickly accepted the federal grants and voted to create the new type of school, while established colleges caught the spirit and added departments of engineering. In the first decade following the passage of the Morrill Act, the number of engineering schools jumped from six to seventy. By 1880 there were eighty-five, and by 1917 there were 126 engineering schools of college grade in the United States. Between 1870 and the outbreak of the First World War, the annual number of graduates from engineering colleges grew from 100 to 4300; the relative number of engineers in the whole population had multiplied fifteenfold.⁹

Before the Civil War, despite the flowering of the machine (the steamboat, the railroad, the cotton gin, the telegraph, and the improved printing press), the principal form of technology was still eloquence, whereas after the war, marking the decline in the idea of a classical education as normative, technology became the principal form of eloquence. If literary texts are any guide to shifts in cultural forces or emphasis, we might note that the texts that are occupying a good deal of the revisionary attention of Americanists at the moment are these that express their technological vision in terms of eloquence. We have been looking, of course, at Emerson for whom language is *the* technology. But we could introduce other texts here. The narrative power of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for example, is based on an already waning yet still potent figure of eloquence, the preacher (a figure that is, apparently, still waning and still potent). Stowe aims to convert her audience, and the figures within her text that she offers for her reader's admiration, Tom and Little Eva, work, however we may take them, through this particular power of eloquence as well. In *Moby Dick*, "a book . . . intoxicated with rhetoric," Ahab is "the greatest orator of all," as Myra Jehlen so precisely puts it.¹⁰ As the business-minded Starbuck sees early on in the voyage, the trip aboard the floating factory of the *Pequod* will be one in which the ideally rational terms of technology (the efficient aegis of profit and loss) will be wildly skewed in the imperial muse of Ahab's eloquence. This voyage can suggest as well that technology does not represent any absolute break from eloquence, but is a particular manifestation of it. Look, for example, at Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), written during a period of the growth of corporate power through the linking of science and technology, when the tradition of eloquence might seem to have been superseded by that of technology. Here Twain conceives of his hero, apparently the epitome of

technological rationality, as a Prospero-like figure whose technological expertise does not rationalize the culture of the thaumaturgic word (the culture of those "white Indians,"¹¹ sixteenth-century Britons, whom the Yankee comes to "civilize"), but is an absolutely deadly version of it.

In his 1845 *Narrative*, Frederick Douglass, ironically I think, but in a way that opens up the most complex entanglements of black and white identity in America, founds his liberation from slavery on a *mastery* of the master's word, a mastery he associates with "a book entitled 'The Columbian Orator,'" in which "[a]mong much of other interesting matter, [he] found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave" (83). In this dialogue the slave through the eloquence of his argument defeats his master's argument for slavery and wins his emancipation (83). Like Caliban, Douglass's narrator realizes that the central act of rebellion (a rebellion that this narrator envisions as a revolution) must be "to possess [the master's] books." Unlike Caliban, however, and the difference is not simply that between a seventeenth-century and nineteenth-century text but between a text by a free European and one by a fugitive black slave, Douglass's narrator wants to possess the books not to burn them, but to learn to read and write from them.

Douglass conceives of the mechanics of slavery in the *Narrative* precisely as Shakespeare does in *The Tempest*, as a differential in the power of language possessed by master and slave. Both Prospero and Caliban curse each other in the same language, the language that Prospero through his daughter and disciple Miranda has taught Caliban. But the absolutely crucial difference is that whereas Caliban's curses remain mere figures of speech, Prospero's figures have the power to literalize themselves, to act immediately, if Prospero chooses, as engines of torture in Caliban's flesh. When Caliban appears reluctant to continue his work, Prospero threatens a curse:

If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly
What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,
Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar,
That beasts shall tremble at thy din.

(I.ii.370-73)

To which severe stricture (the command that Caliban must do his slave's work willingly tells us much about the fantasies of omnipotence of slave-owners), Caliban responds in an aside: "I must obey: his Art is of such pow'r, / It would control my dam's god, Setebos, / And make a vassal of

purged myndes the swete and lively liquor of the gospell. (Taylor, 2, 214-15)

The piece at once recognizes cultural difference as linguistic difference (we will have to learn their language) and obliterates this difference in a belief in the power of eloquence to act immediately on the Indians, a contradiction that is characteristic of the documents of early "discovery" from Columbus's journals onward.

For Douglass, the archetypal slave-driver is one named, allegorically enough, "Austin Gore, a man possessing, in an eminent degree, all those traits of character indispensable to what is called a first-rate overseer." And the first-mentioned of Gore's "powers" is his ability, his absolute power, as a translator of both the body language and the language proper of the slaves: "He was one of those who could torture the slightest look, word, or gesture, on the part of the slave, into impudence, and would treat it accordingly" (65). The process that Douglass describes here, the forcible displacement of what the slave could properly claim, if he or she could claim anything, as proper meaning into the figurative sphere (of the overseer's desires in this case), is quite precisely translation in the sense of the Greek *metaphora* or its Latin derivative *translatio*. When Peacham in the 1593 edition of *The Garden of Eloquence* calls rhetoric "this excellent Art of translating,"¹² he not only points to the central place that metaphor holds in the history of eloquence, but also epitomizes this history as one in which the notion of translation and of metaphor both etymologically and ideologically are inseparable: the notion, first formally defined by Aristotle in his famous and still basic definition of metaphor, of *transporting* a term from a *familiar* to a *foreign* place, from that is, its so-called "proper" signification to a "figurative" sense, with the idea of "resemblance," or "similitude," determining the decorous limits of such transportation.

"Metaphor" (*metaphora*), Aristotle tells us in the *Poetics*, "is the application of an alien [*allogriou*] name by transference [*epiphora*] either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion" (XXI.4-5). *Metaphora* comes from the verb *metaphero* (literally, "to carry across"), which, as Liddell's and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* notes, contains among its other meanings the sense of translation from one language into another. Yet that the same word, *metaphero*, can refer to either the translation of one language into another or the transference of sense within a language

him" (I.ii.373-76), thus confirming the power of Prospero's verbal art to literalize itself. When Caliban responds to Miranda in what are by now quite famous lines: "You taught me language; and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse" (I.ii.365-66), we might well notice a certain irony in the lines. For there is no profit for Caliban in learning the Europeans' language; though he knows how to curse, he does not know how to curse in the eloquent, or lethal, manner of his master. This, as we will read in Chapter 5, is a matter of the politics of decorum. And I would emphasize here that the "rack" of language on which Prospero threatens to torture Caliban is not simply a figure for, or mystification of, that engine of torture employed in Shakespeare's time, but is an expression of an aristocratic *belief* in an incalculably more efficient, an absolutely persuasive, machine of eloquence: one that not only convinces the other to be a slave but to be one willingly. How far is it after all from a belief in Prospero's threatened curse in the text of a Renaissance "romance" to a passage we have already looked at in part from Richard Hakluyt's *Discourse of Western Planting* (1584), in which we find a similar, if ostensibly more benign, belief in the technology of eloquence?

This people [the Iroquoian-speaking Indians whom Jacques Cartier encountered on his second trip to Canada in 1535] beleeve not at all in God but in one whome they call Cudruaigny . . . And yet notwithstandinge they are very easie to be perswaded . . . and were very desirous to become christians . . . It remayneth to be thoroughly weyed and considered by what meanes and by whome this moste godly and Christian work may be perfourmed, of enlarginge the glorious gospell of Christe, and reducinge of infinite multitudes of these simple people that are in errou into the righte and perfecte waye of their salvation: The blessed Apostle Paule the converter of the Gentiles . . . writeth in this manner: Whoesoever shall call on the name of the Lorde shall be saved: But howe shall they call on him in whom they have not beleved? And howe shall they beleve in him of whom they have not hearde? And howe shall they hearde withoute a preacher? and howe shall they preache excepte they be sente? Then it is necessarie for the salvation of those poore people which have sitten so longe in darkenes and in the shadowe of deathe, that preachers should be sent unto them. . . . Nowe the meanes to sende suche as shall labour effectually in this busines ys by plantinge one or two Colonies of our nation uppon that fyrme, where they may remaine in safetie, and firste learne the language of the people nere adioyninge (the gifte of tongues beinge nowe taken awaye), and by little and little acquainte themselves with their manner, and so with discrecion and myldenes distill into their

metaphor
transmission

conscious irony, in terms of this black man's abilities in eloquence). Rather, as I have been arguing, and Douglass does much more than suggest, the terms of power in the world of the *Narrative* are terms themselves. In this world, the ideal, though not abstract, overseer is defined by a strict economy of literalization:

Mr. Gore was a grave man, and, though a young man, he indulged in no jokes, said no funny words, seldom smiled. His words were in perfect keeping with his looks, and his looks were in perfect keeping with his words. Overseers will sometimes indulge in a witty word, even with the slaves; not so with Mr. Gore. He spoke but to command, and commanded but to be obeyed; he dealt sparingly with words, and bountifully with his whip, never using the former where the latter would answer as well. (66)

Figurative language, of which metaphor, or translation, is the model, is the driving force of interpretation, that is, of language itself. For this language within language that is the force of language opens up a space between signified and signifier, a rupture of identity, where the conflictive play of dialogue takes place that constitutes the speakers (writers/readers) for and significantly through each other. Historically in the West, eloquence developed in Greece and retained both a dialogic, or "democratic," component (democratic within the upper class) and an imperial component. That is, eloquence is conceived of both as what makes the *polis* the free marketplace of ideas, the place of open debate in the law courts and in councils, and, contradictorily enough, as what can mesmerize the other into silent assent. In *De Oratore* Cicero evokes these two aspects of eloquence, though not apparently with any irony, when he describes the orator's art as both "kingly [*regium*]" and "worthy of the free [*liberale*]" (I. viii.32).¹⁷ Emerson's entire oeuvre can be read within this dual figure of eloquence.

Now in respect to the passage concerning the overseer Gore, we might say that as the imperial force of eloquence comes to repress the dialogic, or democratic, force, language (which can never be anything but political) loses its figurative, equivocal, or conflictive play and rigidifies into the literal, proper, or univocal. In the equivocal play of language, the literal and the figurative operate as continual translations of each other. For every literal term is only provisionally, or contextually, literal or proper; that is, it is continually open to interpretation, a process that emphasizes the figurativeness of the literal, the impropriety of the proper. In the equivocal play of language, and let us understand *equivocal* in both

its literal and its figurative sense, no single voice prevails because there is no univocality. Rather, the precarious coherence of each voice can only constitute itself in translation *between* other voices. When this equivocality is repressed, the literal and the figurative aspects of language become hierarchized into absolute and oppositional entities, with the masters occupying the territory of the literal or proper and consigning the slaves to that of the figurative.

Gore is the very figure of this literalization, a man purged of equivocality, or otherness, (a monologist of brutal orations) In Gore the space of interpretation that the figurative opens up has vanished. His words and his looks are one. And his only words are commands. Imperious, Gore speaks only in imperatives that must be obeyed. The only language he utters is language that insists on literalizing itself; no jokes for Gore, only words that are whips or, what amounts to the same thing but is even more efficient, whips that "answer" the words of slaves. These are the words of Gore.

Confronted with this monopoly of the literal, the slaves are left in possession of the figurative, which, as we have seen in the translations of their language by Gore, is used to dispossess them. And yet what is a sign of their dispossession, figurative language, also invests them with an ironic, or potential, power. For, as Douglass tells his story, he bears witness to the slaves' most profound language, the language that escapes the overseer's translations, the language, that is, of their songs, structured by the tropes of irony and enigma. The slaves "would sometimes sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone"; and they would sing "words which to many would seem unmeaning jargon, but which, nevertheless, were full of meaning to themselves" (57), a meaning that was decidedly subversive. "Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains. . . . To those songs [Douglass tells his readers] I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery. I can never get rid of that conception. Those songs still follow me, to deepen my hatred of slavery, and quicken my sympathies for my brethren in bonds" (58). Cut off from the language of the literal by the dangers and legalities of the slave system (not only must slaves refuse to speak their truth to masters, but, as Douglass reminds his readers, they must be wary of spies in their own ranks [62] and have no voice at all in the letter of the law), the slaves must cultivate a foreign language of the figurative, an "unmeaning jargon" (to out-

siders), which, if it is a mark of powerlessness, also contains within it and transmits from slave to slave and generation to generation of slaves the power of a critique, an alternative eloquence, that waits for its opportunity to translate itself into literal rebellion.

3

Translating Property

THE NAME OF *Caliban* appears in *The Tempest* through an imperial and colonial act of translation. The name itself, so the critical consensus has it, is an anagram, a kind of translation itself for that matter, of *cannibal*. And *cannibal*, as we know, entered English (and other European languages) in the early sixteenth century as a precisely literal translation of the Spanish *canibales*. It appears for the first time in Columbus's journal on November 23, 1492, where, sailing between Cuba and the island that he would name Española, he noted that

those Indians [Arawaks] whom he had with him called [Española] "Bohio." They said that this land was very extensive and that in it were people who had one eye in the forehead, and others whom they called "Canibals." Of these last, they showed great fear, and when they saw that this course was being taken, they were speechless . . . because those people ate them and because they are very warlike.¹

The origin of the word *can(n)ibal* remains in doubt, except that it apparently is a European deformation of a Native American term, either Arawakan or Cariban. We can't say which, or, of course, what the original term meant. *Canibal* may be a deformation of the word *Carib*, which, after Columbus, came to be the self-ascription of the native inhabitants of the lesser Antilles. Roberto Fernandez Retamar argues that *canibales* is a direct deformation of *carib*, which occurred because Columbus, searching for the Asia of the Great Kahn (*El Gran Can* in Spanish), had a vested interest, no matter how phantasmal, in hearing "n" for "r," which would confirm the imminent discovery of the Asia of gold and spices he longed for. Yet it is possible that *n* and *r* are dialectal variants of the Arawakan and Cariban languages, in which case Columbus's phantasy of Asia would only be a coincidental component of his translation. However, *carib/Carib* itself may be a Spanish deformation of

mated an empire." Nancy Lurie, "Indian Cultural Adjustment to European Civilization," in *Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. James Morton Smith (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 39-40. And, more recently, Karen Kupperman has repeated Lurie's assessment. Both Lurie and Kupperman are interested in emphasizing the similarities rather than the differences between seventeenth-century English culture and the Algonquian cultures that the English encountered, and they are interested in doing this in order to criticize the European ethnocentrism that projects the polar terminology of the "savage" and the "civilized." While it is absolutely necessary that such criticism be rigorously pursued, and while both Kupperman and Lurie make important contributions in giving us a more complex figure of seventeenth-century culture contact, it seems to me that both scholars are, unconsciously, employing Western models of complexity as a universal model, which results in an ironic repetition of the translation process that I am criticizing in the documents under scrutiny. Wolf's conceptual scheme helps avoid this kind of translation, which is ultimately monologic, by providing a dialogic model that, while operating within a common set of economic terms (those of *labor* and *modes of production*) embeds these terms within specific cultural formations that suggest how profoundly divided within, or foreign to themselves, these terms can be. With Wolf in mind, then, we cannot make a statement asserting that "Powhatan was in the process of building something like an empire" (a vague enough statement in and of itself) without querying how we are to translate the language of empire (the language, for example, of the economic exploitation of one *class* by another) into the language of kin-ordered societies, which, as Wolf articulates this language, possesses a terminology of *rank* but not of *class*. Wolf's discussion of "chiefdoms" (96-100) suggests how a kin-ordered society might be translated into an "empire" or, more precisely, into a tributary mode of production. But it remains to be seen whether or not the so-called "Powhatan Confederacy" was in such a state of translation. I have seen no evidence to suggest that it was. More to the point, the mode of production that structured North American cultures at the time, the kin-ordered mode, suggests that it was not.

10. Ronald Reagan, "Freedom, Regional Security, and Global Peace," Congress of the United States, 14 March 1986, Special Report No. 143, United States Department of State, *Bureau of Public Affairs*, Washington, D.C., 2, 3. Since the recent signing of the nuclear-arms treaty with the Soviet Union, Reagan has abandoned the rhetoric of the "evil empire." If, however, we read the speech he made in England shortly after the signing, we will see that the ideology of translation that projects that rhetoric is still very much intact. For in his speech, Reagan reads the signing as a sign that the Soviets are becoming more like us, that is, "civilized." In keeping with this pattern of interpretation, the official U.S. reading of the recent trend toward democratization in the Soviet Union and

Eastern Europe is that this part of the world is finally translating itself into capitalism. I want to thank Dan Seligson for calling Reagan's foreign-policy speech before Congress to my attention.

11. *Cases Argued and Decided in the Supreme Court of the United States*, Book 5, The Lawyer's Edition (Rochester: The Lawyer's Cooperative Publishing Co., 1882), 688-89, 692.

12. The 1831 decision is cited in Vine Deloria, Jr., and Clifford Lytle, *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 16-17.

13. For a reading of Cooper's *The Pioneers* in relation to the ideology of the literal and the metaphoric and the relation of this ideology to translation, see my essay, "Literally White, Figuratively Red: The Frontier of Translation in *The Pioneers*," *James Fenimore Cooper: New Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Clark (Totowa: Barnes & Noble, 1985), 55-95.

14. Leo Marx, of course, in *The Machine in the Garden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), has read *The Tempest* "as a prologue to American literature" (72). But Marx's reading, which reduces Caliban to a figure of wilderness rather than analyzing this figure as an ideological projection that conflates European ideas of Native Americans, Africans, and Europe's own lower classes, remains within the phallo-/ethnocentric tradition of reading the American frontier that I refer to in this essay. I will have more to say about Marx's reading of *The Tempest* in Chapter 2.

15. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Prairie: A Tale* (1827; New York: New American Library, 1964), 293.

2. *The Foreign Policy of Metaphor*

1. Hanna H. Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24 (Oct.-Dec. 1963), 503.

2. Harry Berger, Jr., "Miraculous Harp: A Reading of Shakespeare's *Tempest*," *Shakespeare Studies*, 5 (1969), 256.

3. Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 16-17, 19.

4. Margreta De Grazia has argued that between the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, language lost its divine associations, so that in the scholarly view mathematics rather than ordinary language became the proper language for understanding the Book of Nature. In this reading, traditional eloquence, associated with the divine through the sixteenth century, loses some of its charisma. Even if we accept this interpretation, we should note that the metaphor of the Book, of language, persists in organizing the field. We might, then, read mathematics as an emerging form of eloquence, rather than read the figure of

eloquence as in decline. See Margreta De Grazia, "The Secularization of Language in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 41 (April-June 1980), 319-29.

5. Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577). English Linguistics 1500-1800 (A Collection of Facsimile Reprints), no. 267 (Menston, England: Scolar Press Limited, 1971), A.iii.

6. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature, Selected Essays: Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Larzer Ziff (1836; New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 58.

7. See Eric Cheyfitz, *The Trans-Parent: Sexual Politics in the Language of Emerson* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

8. I have not sought to determine whether this is a fault in Emerson's text of Shakespeare or in Emerson, because such a distinction is of no moment to my argument.

9. David Noble, *America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 20, 24.

10. Myra Jehlen, "The Novel and the Middle Class in America," in *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, eds. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 126.

11. Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889; New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 53.

12. Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, 1593 ed. (London, 1593), 1-2.

13. Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. S. H. Butcher (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961). I am grateful to Professor Victoria Pedrick of the Georgetown University Classics Department for helping me find my way through the Greek, while at the same time I accept all responsibility for the variant translations and the interpretations based on them.

14. Roland Barthes, "l'ancienne rhétorique: aide-mémoire," *Communications*, 16 (1970), 220, 221.

15. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, eds. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (1589; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 178.

16. Abraham Fraunce, *The Arcadian Rhetoric*. English Linguistics 1500-1800 (A Collection of Facsimile Reprints), no. 176 (Menston, England: Scolar Press Limited, 1969), A2.

17. Cicero, *De Oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton, The Loeb Classical Library (1942; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

3. Translating Property

1. *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, trans. Cecil Jane (London: Anthony Blond, 1968), 68-69.

2. Roberto Fernandez Retamar, "Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America," trans. Lynn Garafola, David Arthur MacMurray, and Robert Marquez, *The Massachusetts Review*, 15 (Winter-Spring 1974), 12. Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), 63. The notion of dialectical variants comes from the OED's definition of *cannibal*. In the same entry, which also lists *l* as a possible dialectical variant, we find the speculation that *Caliban* is a variant of *Cariban*. Of course, Shakespeare could have known nothing of such dialectical variations, even if they were linguistic facts. I am particularly indebted to Hulme's fine book for its discussion of the translation of that missing Arawakan/Cariban term.

3. See Columbus's journal entries for Monday, Dec. 17 (102) for his doubts about cannibalism, and Tuesday, Dec. 18 (107) for his dependence on a language of gesture.

4. When I refer to a "significant part of the population," I am referring to the qualitative impact of enclosures, not the actual number of people put off the land, a figure that I have not found in my research. Summing up in her essay "Tudor Enclosures," Joan Thirsk writes:

When Edwin Gay examined the enclosure evidence collected by the commissions of enquiry in the Tudor and early Stuart period, he suggested that the complaints against depopulating enclosure were somewhat exaggerated. If one measures the importance of the problem from a national standpoint, this may be a fair judgment. . . . But this was cold comfort to the husbandman of the sixteenth century watching the progress of enclosure in and around his own village.

So, though "[e]nclosure has first to be recognized as a social problem concentrated in the Midlands," its impact was national, as is attested by the official concern of the Crown in the form of commissions and by the visible body of literature of the period that read enclosure, which entailed the privatization of traditionally common land, as the end of a particular "common" way of life. "To enclose land," Thirsk notes, "was to extinguish common rights over it. . . . To effect this, it was usual for the encloser to hedge or fence the land. Thus in contemporary controversy anger was directed mainly at the hedges and fences—the outward and visible signs of enclosure." When later in this chapter I discuss the fence as an important sign of "civilization" for the English who invaded America, it will be worth remembering that at a certain moment in English history, a moment virtually contemporaneous with this invasion, a significant part of public opinion in England saw the fence as the sign of a savage attack on the commonwealth. See Joan Thirsk, *The Rural Economy of England: Collected Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), 81; and Joan Thirsk, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 4, 1500-1640 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 200.