

**University of Alberta**

**The Tempest as a Pretext: Shakespeare's Last Major Play  
and  
The New Allegories of Order**

by

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## Abstract

A “smooth” abyss separates the Middle Ages from the Modern Era, and this period is marked by a new play between culture and citizenship, noticeable as an emerging mythology of statesmanship and civic sacrifice. Shakespeare’s last play represents a transitional text towards the modern *episteme* marked by the fading of magic assumptions in thought and by their correspondent reinsertion into the new conjectures of political science. In a critical reading of Frances Yates’ theories, I investigate some of the Italian influences upon the English Renaissance: my analysis re-discovers that Dee’s and Bruno’s occult-political philosophies and other “magical utopian” texts of Neoplatonic breed as textual instances allowing the researcher to place *The Tempest* into its proper epistemological niche. The aforementioned thinkers radicalize Thomas More’s early utopianism, by proposing allegorical strategies of government in a world that finds itself in an epistemic *degringolade*, set astray from the traditional medieval institutional, theological and symbolic milieu. In effect, the utopian genre is reconfigured to suit the projects of a never-accomplished Hermetic reformation, proposed in the name of perennial gods, and correspondent myths of rejuvenation. Shakespeare’s three decades of authorial activity were precisely inscribed in this climate of political prospecting, where the representations of kingship were readjusted for a public gaze that needed both a different nourishment and a stable background to the symbolic play of sovereignty. Elizabethan theater was an experimental stage where the political resources of dramatic representation were summoned for their formative power upon the political subjects of developing urban communities. In spite of its Puritanism, the Jacobean

era hallowed theater as a medium fit for political fashioning that encouraged the crafting of political scenarios featuring the pillars of a perfect society organized around the leader's omnipotence. In this context, I will look at *The Tempest* as a dramatized utopia of a unique kind, a "dynamic" model of political persuasion, no less a lesson regarding the proper use of royal prerogatives in a world haunted by the specter of secularization. *The Tempest* inaugurates an age of theatrical representation in modern politics, which centers on the symbolical emplacement of the monarch's "state" religion.

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## **Introduction: critical sources and methodological intertext**

Emerging from the re-evaluation of the persuasive arsenal of power, the underlying history of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods corresponds to a transitional interval in the wake of modernity, a time in which the old repository of order based on the symbolism of the Late Middle Ages was replenished with original allegories of political authority typical of the absolutist order. During the English 16<sup>th</sup> century, political and representational rituals around the king's figure substituted the medieval order based on fate and on the king's intercessory mandate; as most contemporary cultural historians agree, the emergence of new themes and genres in Western literatures became a constituent part of a long series of subversive and re-assertive moves addressed to the pre-modern citizen's collective unconscious. In fact, at the turn of the seventeenth century, a new "science" of consensus and compromise was slowly outlined in Europe in response to the long series of epistemic shocks provoked by the discovery of the New World. Literature, the main seismographer of cultural distress, did not stay indifferent to this age of marvelous challenges. On the contrary, philosophers and writers took the leading role in rejuvenating the cognitive dreams and social representations of the Old Continent.

America, as the new playground of European politics, attracted the energies of political architects in a game of re-tabulation and re-assertion of those classical assumptions of value that could still inspire civic respect. This state of facts showed itself productive for the visions, artistic expression, and philosophical intuitions of those gifted pioneers of modernity, who, while bound to living at home, discovered themselves part of a new intellectual era, open to new cognitive borders and correspondent representational shocks. In seventeenth-century English, Italian, French, and Spanish courtly arts, the serendipitous language of manipulative magic is carried on as a subtext of theatrical encomium, helping the discovery of the principles of early modern political persuasion. This generated what Louis Marin defined once as "a science of effects" (*Portrait*) to the world of



propagandistic exploit. The notion itself echoes unprecedented intricacies typical of modern theories of sovereignty. Finally, Marin's work can be relegated to the studies of political anthropologists who think of representational arts as generative of social control. In my demonstration, I am particularly interested in the aforementioned views of modernity, because the cross-*generum* designation of a theatrical play as a political allegory could prove productive in the expanding field of political anthropologies. In the Preface to *Portrait of the King*, Tom Conley writes "that the West since the seventeenth century has its beginnings not only in the growth of capital economy but not only in the growth of capital economy but no less crucially in the 'hidden' persuasion of public medias" (II).

An incompletely mapped maze for the history of hermeneutics, Shakespeare's last major play is topped off with rhetorical paradoxes. This requires a new critical understanding of "ambiguity" as a carrier of meaning throughout different interpretational eras: the metaphor of a dramatic vortex both mercurial and corrosive, which has the peculiar power to alter the surroundings of its own representation, goes well with the image of this play. Indeed, *The Tempest* looks like an inexhaustible source of inspiration for each epoch of understanding. Hence, knowing that the dramatic resources of this particular drama are not exhaustible by means of a monological interpretational strategy, I am attempting in my study to reconstruct the First Folio's intellectual milieu, in addition to charting the most valuable insights of a never-ending history of critical contradictions. Doubtlessly, this more proper description of the late Shakespearean era's intellectual environment has to take into account the influence of neo-Platonic ideas, which present man as a new demiurge at the hub of a fantastic cosmic compendium. To articulate a multi-layered comparison, I review some of Ioan P. Coulianu's "semiotics of the magic," which discusses the formative and the conveying role of phantasms in Late Renaissance politics and esthetics. Furthermore, I develop my interpretation in conjunction with the ideas of John Mebane, who, in his singular study of the history of Elizabethan magic literature<sup>1</sup> published shortly after WW2, assumed that transitional figures of the Elizabethan era match a double-fold

portrait, which invalidated the former categorization into “occult philosophers” and “scientists.” Shakespeare’s concern with the world of magic pertains less to folklore than to his attraction to the scholarship of the occult and its political-religious reformatory designs. In *The Tempest*, written and staged during the period of “the Elizabethan revival within the Jacobean age,” John Dee is depicted in Prospero’s figure as a positive magician at a time when any “unorthodox” view was sanctioned by Puritan censorship. Like Yates, Mebane suggests that the occult philosophy’s dream of absolute knowledge survives the failed projects of Hermetic Reformation and is finally incorporated into the philosophical assumptions of modern science, one that typically carries forth into the new era the dream of human mastery over the laws of nature.<sup>2</sup>

In an attempt to complement Louis Marin’s take on Louis XIV’s era, my investigation pays attention to the culture of the Northern shore of the English channel and takes into account a fictional lineage of Shakespearean fictional princes. In my demonstration, I will discuss a social “history” of imaginary acts centered on the metaphors of kingship that are found conducive to the paradoxical quality of symbols present in Shakespeare’s last major play; in this context, I touch on issues common to an intertextual scholarship, to synthesize the various views of three generations of critics. Clifford Geertz’s cultural-anthropological theory informs the logic of my own demonstration. Geertz found that, in pre-modern societies, political authority is transmitted through the psychological association with the leader’s image; the author determines that the royal figure represents itself for those who need to emulate in its imitation. Another close source of Marin’s work might be found in the work of Louis Althusser, who proves that the leader’s main task is the institution of “a collective imaginary order,” by which, the dreams, expectations and desires, of the group can be monitored, therefore defining power as dependent upon the “representation of the imaginary relations that individuals of a given society hold with their real conditions of existence” (Althusser, *passim*; cf. Conley IV-VI). However, Althusser’s assumption does not develop on new grounds. In *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*

(Princeton, 1957), the American historian Ernst Kantorowicz described the medieval law in relation with the subsequent conceptions of royalty<sup>3</sup> and discovered that judicial practice was based upon the symbolic meaning of the crown and the displays of ritual kingship (Conley VII). Kantorowicz located the notion of the king's two bodies in its proper context of medieval political theory. His analysis identified Edmund Plowden, a sixteenth-century lawyer, whose *Reports* (1571) have been described as the origin for of the Elizabethan metaphor of the king's two bodies. The medieval lawyer differentiated between the monarch's Body natural, which was also mortal, "subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age" and the allegorical Body politic whose infallibility came from its symbolic constitution: "his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age" (*Bodies* 6). Medieval jurists thought, like Plowden, that the king's Body natural and his Body politic were "together indivisible."

It was during the late Middle Ages that the two bodies started being conceived of as separate notions. The shift began when theologians described the body of Christ as dual, the *corpus naturale* standing for the host and the *corpus mysticum*, the political and social body of the Catholic Church. The innovative denomination of Christ's Body mystic as designative of the community of believers informed the new concept of "body politic," as applicable to political entities.<sup>4</sup> The king's two bodies notion evolved during the Elizabethan and Jacobean political eras as the pillar of the modern sovereignty theories. Anglican Royalists, in particular, understood the homogeneous collectivities as singular, unified entities, living within territorial borders, led by a suprematist ruler, endowed discretionary decisional powers. In the aftermath of Kantorowicz's political anthropological studies, Shakespeare's fictional monarchs have been rediscovered as typical illustrations of the paradoxes of legitimacy during the English Reformation: if the king's natural body would perish with his physical demise, he was also assumed to

have an everlasting, indestructible body politic of supernatural dignity and legitimacy. The modern representations of political authority discovered in early modern Europe displayed the attributes of the community discovered by the American scholar.

In fact, my analysis will relegate *The Tempest's* statutory ambiguity to an economy of substitution in the English perceptions of sacredness, which can be most properly described as a compensative economy of signs visible in Tudor monarchs' reigns. Next, my own comparison of Shakespearean kings applies Kantorowicz's eminent theory of the king's two bodies to the Shakespearean iconography, and, specifically, to Prospero's paradoxical situation. In Shakespeare's theatrical iconography, the fiction of the "king's two bodies" is newly relegated to the symbolic economies of substitution, succession, re-emergence, and ubiquity, which represents a sizeable freedom of interpretation, if one takes into account that Richard Plowden's theory presented the symbiosis of the two bodies, Natural and Politic, as inseparable. The English Reformation brought on center stage a monarch whose royal supremacy takes on a new meaning, which epitomized both clerical leadership and legitimacy as a lord of the domain. Accordingly, theatre illustrates what seems to be a new age of political representation, replete with allegorical and encomiastic suggestions.

I will prove in the closing sequence of my thesis that during the Age of the Baroque, a new quality of symbolic ubiquity associated with the monarch's image inaugurates the desecrated play of symbols typical of modern imperialism. This is mostly visible in the themes and representational techniques of Baroque theater, with its *Deus ex machina* effect of reconciliation by means of "divine" interventionism, most often manifested in the theatrical monarch's ability to place the process of reconciliation in sequence with state interest: to cite Julia Reinhardt Lupton's witty remark, "the Baroque drama of sovereignty kills its tyrants without burying monarchy itself" (5). Indeed, the ritual disembodiment of monarchs on stage does not generate a revolution on the wooden grades of the theater-house, given that its scope is already broader and that it hints at a readjustment of public

gaze within a new horizon of absolutist rule. However spectacular, this new paraphrase of Christian monarchy had to render historical epiphanies visible and propose an adequate background to the new mythology of sovereignty, abandoned by Providence into the long, all-embracing hands of the absolutist leader. My examination of the evolution of theatrical and textual forms will show relevant similarities between the Renaissance occult philosophies and the assumptions of modern propaganda, founded (in its early absolutist designs) on the remote prerogatives of the leader's image and actions.

This said, I will prove that the symbolic depiction of kingship on the Elizabethan stage followed a progressive pattern. In the following chapters, I also broaden the focus of my research in drawing meaningful parallels between the political cultures of absolutism in the West at the turn of the seventeenth century. This direction is most obvious in the transition from a judicial system based upon the medieval prerogatives of kingship and devotion to the new royal symbolism, which placed citizenship in a biased relation with the traditional agencies of order and meaning in Christian history. The blending of representational techniques visible in the texts of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period is thus significant for a synthesis of two major registers of public discourse, related to the symbolism of male and female royal presences. In the first phase, during the Elizabethan era, the fusion of providential-symbolical and political speech favored a social reconciliation to female rule: Queen Elizabeth's late cult as Astraea, whose "charming power tames nature as well as men,"<sup>5</sup> attempts to gain for the monarchic myth the mystical attributes of immortality and omnipotence.

In a second sequence, the Jacobean rhetoric attempted at a "re-paternization" of symbolic kingship through innovative propagandistic strategies: the imperial myth, promoted by Elizabeth in her last years was conducive to the royal "state religion," as described by Richard C. McCoy in his *Alterations of State*. The coronation of James I to the throne of England in 1603 inducted a profound cultural transformation. Elizabethan symbols of feminine power were substituted by the authority of a writer-monarch who described himself as an absolute king and

God's anointed delegate. The period itself is one of hybridization of political discourses, given that James' vision of his special role in British history had to save the symbolism of the sacred empire, ascribing it to its own crown. Thus, James I inaugurated original political roles, which alternated the triumphal processions of Roman inspiration with the new symbols of the court-mask and the political allusions to a patriarchal royalty in *Basilicon Doron*. Meanwhile, if the Hermetic philosophy of the Elizabethan era looked obsolete in the anti-occult climate of James' court, the spirit of imperialism embedded in John Dee's mystical cartographies that placed the monarch in the position of the anointed emperor of the New World survived in the new epoch. In spite of downplaying the Cabalistic gist of John Dee's visionary science, Bacon's writings on cartography and navigation displayed awareness of the underlying magic assumptions in John Dee's treatises, as well as retaining other philosophical aspects of the occult philosophies regarding the art of government; his plea for knowledge as power represents such a significant instance of symbolic amalgamation.

The new blending of rhetorical and encomiastic strategies in James' period saved the knowledge of the previous era, while re-ascribing knowledge to actualized ideological commandments. Meanwhile, the hermetic doctrines of magic persuasion were redefined by (intellectually famous) court-protégés to offer a principle of accomplishment for the emerging symbolic tactics of royal dominance. (Bacon's notion of "science as power" was not isolated, for the power of science is seen by most of the early-seventeenth century scholars as an attribute of wise government, thus blended in the philosophical explanations of sovereignty and divine right.) My analysis indicates that within this twofold reconciliation process, namely the transition from a female to a male symbolism in the denomination of British imperial power, the archives of pagan and magic mythologies are spread out in the new space of public worship. In effect, the allegories of occult guardianship established the modern symbolisms of authority in a long trend of ideological mutations, which conserve the Baconian reciprocation of omniscience and omnipotence.

Thus, looking at *The Tempest* as a text that suits the priorities of a genuine political anthropology, I rely on the potential powers of comparison with texts that traditionally fall under the same spell of an incipient modern political science. Late-sixteenth and early seventeenth-century encomiastic arts and royal festivities, I hold, crystallized the themes of the occult, typical of the former decades, in a new system of *genera et speciae*. This becomes particularly visible in the courtly pantomimes. The masks and intermezzos also experimented with the allegorizing shows of royal festivities and were finally absorbed into the innovative doctrines of political science, a cultural fashion that updated and supported the elaboration of the modern rhetoric of persuasion. Beyond doubt, Conley and Marin are right in their assumption that the absolutist designs of the Baroque era discovered an empirical “science of effects” anticipative of modern social psychology. In a positive way, a comparative study of *The Tempest* and the seventeenth-century “magic” utopian texts of Tomasso Campanella can shed light on a less visible chain of intellectual reflections. Hence, the culture of the Late Renaissance magic did not become an extinct *episteme*, as many historians raised in Michel Foucault’s tradition inferred, but survived in a semi-illicit background of the coming Enlightenment, informing the hidden assumptions of the official esthetics. “The Hermetic Revolution,”<sup>6</sup> emerging as a conciliatory plan addressed to inimical theological camps, had its peak between 1580-1650, in a complex of political and cultural manifestations labeled on the whole by Frances Yates as the Rosicrucian Enlightenment:

To define the opposition as Protestant versus Catholic would be a misleading and a much too narrow interpretation. On one hand there is a “Rosicrucian” type of culture, inheriting the traditions of Renaissance magic as expanded by alchemical and Paracelsist influence, an esoteric approach to religion involving tolerant and kindly attitudes to religious differences, and a hope of reconciliation through the younger generation. This is Shakespeare in *The Tempest* and in the last Plays.

(*Shakespeare’s Last Plays* 95)

Yates' study takes into account Shakespeare's last major play as an epistemic hybrid that prospects the possibility of reconciliation between divergent worldviews in the name of a spiritual reformation. (Bacon's *New Atlantis* is looked at with the same lenses by Yates.) Nonetheless, one is to take into account that texts such as the late Shakespearean theatre and the various Masques designed for the Court festivities of Elizabethan and Jacobean eras were the "swan song" of an epoch whose cognitive assumptions based on the fantastic episteme of the Renaissance vanished into thin air during the first decades of the Age of Reason. Indeed, the phantasms of Hermetic Reformation have exhausted their creative potential by 1630,<sup>7</sup> and their assumptions can be discussed as a failed alternative to the future iconoclasm of René Descartes. If the Cartesian craving for an articulate methodology of reason apriorically excluded the "empty boastings of the imagination," conversely, the surviving "Rosicrucian" representations of order specific of courtly culture inscribed the fantastic, allegorical, and occult assumptions of the Late Renaissance into new discourses of "fore-knowledge and enlightened compromising"<sup>8</sup> precursory of modern social sciences, particularly of social psychology.<sup>9</sup> Thus, René Descartes' era (1596-1650) marked a period consisting of coexistence and hybridization of discourses, which surpassed the logical oppositions between the world of scientific abstraction and the propagandistic conceit. In relegating the notions of power and omniscience, the said period between the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries discourses proves productive for the long-term propagandistic strategies of modernity and indirectly inspire the rhetorical injunctions of totalitarian politics of communist, fascist, and national-socialist breeds.

In my thesis, I investigate a period that has its origins in the humanistic tradition, in particular in the projects of "Hermetic reformation" and the Utopian experimental textual constructs. As a fresh look into the recent new historicist speculative repertoires, my analysis treats each of the texts introduced above as representative of a new historical and cultural circumstance, while attempting to identify the less visible points of transference among written materials, ideas, and



cultural mentalities. In the first part of my thesis, I look at Shakespeare's last major play alternatively with the eyes of the critic, cultural historian, and literary comparatist. The first chapter reviews the evolution of critical apparatus around the play's multifarious structure and discourse, reviewing the most significant interpretations of four centuries of critical tradition; my own undertaking is defined in relation with the theoretical foundations of cultural and generative anthropologies, particularly in connection with the ideas of "new meaning," and "progress" as resulting from a non-deterministic view of the formative powers at work in history. The second chapter summarizes the most important discussions on theatre and Reformation in England: emphasis is placed upon the specific functions of theatrical representation in Protestant Britain, a world subjected to irreversible ideological and political transformations. In Chapter 3, I take a closer look at the intricate mythical, folkloric, and imaginary intertext of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, particularly to those motifs that became associated with a return of a Golden Age in English politics. In the closing section, I describe the serendipities of Neoplatonism as productive of a new semantics of meaning that relegates political discourse with the symbolic figure of the magician-king. In their preoccupation with knowledge as clairvoyance and control, English and Italian philosophers, John Dee and Giordano Bruno lay the theoretic and symbolic foundations of both modern science and social psychology.

Central to my demonstration is the discussion of the cultural significance of "magic" utopian literature is followed by a speculative analysis of *The Tempest* as a peculiar epistemological product, one that "etches" the regal phantasm within a new economy of theatricality, brought on a clashing course with the world of absolutist and imperial politics. Representation as the aim of rational knowledge (I will conclude in a Heideggerian note) brings forth new definitions of truth accompanied by a subsequent *telos* of historical action. Modern public space becomes a plastic stage for the subtle infusion of meaning from and by the agencies of social power, in a movement that acknowledges – within a broader theoretical tradition starting in Max Weber's critique of capitalism and closing in Hans

Blumenberg's epistemology – both substitution and secularization in the world of political dreaming. My work deals implicitly with the emergence of universalist politics in the beginnings of modernity and deals with those texts that can signify the preambles of modern social psychology. In trying to avoid digressive turns of thought, I have explicitly avoided the discussion of the full range of experimental texts that could be related to my partial instantiation of moments. I have deliberately limited my comparison only to those primary texts that were found most relevant for a political-theological rendering of sovereignty imagined around Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. As for the chronological sequence, the present study's thematic and historic horizon is the period between 1530, the beginning of proactive Reformation policies in Henry VIII's England; and 1651, the publication of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, as a time of transformation, conversion, and reconciliation of previously disjointed representational techniques.

## Chapter I. Preparing *The Tempest*

Motto: *To man it is allowed to be whatever he chooses to be!*

Pico della Mirandola, in "Oration on The Dignity of Man"

### I. 1. Prolegomena

This study was born in the belief that the new historicist critique of *The Tempest* can still profit from an adequate reinsertion of the play in its original repository of themes, as part of a cultural era whose theatricality has integrated and converted the themes and modes specific of the Renaissance occult philosophy into the meta-narrative strategies of modern encomium. In the following section, I will take another look at Shakespeare's *The Tempest* from two alternative angles: one philosophical and implicitly critical, the other analytical and deliberately structuralist. Indirectly, the first perspective draws upon the Heideggerian apparatus behind the contemporary *critique* of representation. In my view, *The Tempest* unveils an *ars poetica*, a statement on the condition and potential of theatrical art; Prospero, its inaugural voice, acts as a "poet who speaks being," in other words as an originator of meaning on the emergent stage of political science. In this train of thought, I choose to define the festive climate of the play's first representations as a select environment where the postulates of the Renaissance occult philosophy are newly "condensed" into original theatrical and political metaphors.

*The Tempest*'s innovative artistic conventions, I hold, discover a theatrical "world" in which the (magic) agencies of the plot interact in innovative manners that propose a new "conativity"<sup>10</sup> (vocative or imperative addressing of receiver) based upon "phatic" (checking channel working) and "metalingual" (checking code working) paradoxes and ensured by fantastic mediators. Certainly, Prospero uses Ariel as the magic executioner of his unspoken intentions and, when he speaks, he does so only to adjust the course of events. My analysis places Jakobson's functions

(originally descriptive) in a dialectical tension, which tries to track meaning at the crossroads of two imaginary universes: the standard questions of conativity “who says what?” and “who calls who?” are replaced by a more baffling search for the proper response: “who and what is conjured through what is said?” and “how did this become possible?” – questions that can find their proper answer within an applied semantic of fictional worlds<sup>11</sup>. Certainly, Shakespeare brought to surface the major philosophical questions of his play through a paradoxical, asymmetrical positioning of discursive agencies; he does so by placing the conjurer and the listener back to back, beside revolving walls and yet, in search of a face-to-face encounter.<sup>12</sup> The paradox of this undertaking corresponds, on one hand to the creative standards of *poetike*, imaginary action that follows the new constraints of a fantastic fictional world, and, on the other hand, is made possible by the ironical setting, locating characters in distinct hierarchical compartments of the same revolving stage. I would also like to discuss Prospero’s magic in relation with the character’s alleged intuition, a faculty that, in blending the attributes of enlightened vision, cynicism, and creativity, is shown as instrumental of prudent leadership.

My other perspective is set on *The Tempest* as an *ars politica*, a text whose originality resides in its potential to encode political principles in dynamic pictures that offer prescriptive instructions to the symbolic language of persuasion. Its meta-linguistic stance consists, I will demonstrate in the next chapter, of its *phatic* voice-hierarchization: “checking channel-working” in this perspective signifies the new position and manner of persuasion of the agency of power in relation with its beneficiaries, which, in opening new channels of communication inside the island’s magic maze provokes an asymmetric response between hierarchical agents endowed with different potentials. In consequence, space-time works differently in the conjurer’s magic cave and in the conjured slumber of the neophytes, while the island’s maze works as a wonderland – a magically articulated space where surprises are educed in the form of initiatory trials. In my attempt to identify different roots to the economy of kingship in *The Tempest*, I will propose a discussion of the Shakespearean kings’ discourses rooted in the same logic of the

spectacle, one that supports asymmetric communicational effects around the theatrical rendering of royal prerogatives. As Christopher Pye indicated in his 1990 study, *The Regal Phantasm: Shakespeare and the Politics of Spectacle*, Richard II, Henry IV-I & II, Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, Leontes and Prospero can be understood as experimental characters, whose functions display Shakespeare's need to append the symbolic logic of sovereignty to a superior technique of theatrical representation, centered on the monarch's figure as an emerging hero of modern historical knowledge.

## **I. 2. Beyond Aristotle's *Poetics*: "unities" and their new functions in the play**

A common note of classical and modern interpretations of *The Tempest* is that, in acknowledging the strangeness of the play, they elaborate around the intricacies of plot in relation with the innovative narrative agencies. It is the very imposition of unity in the plot that creates an effect of illusion about the subsequent coherence of dramatic space and dialogical interchange, on a stage that otherwise would not "hold" the characters on the same plane in a credible manner. Surprisingly, *The Tempest* is one of the few texts in which Shakespeare respects the formal use of unities, spatial and temporal. Even so, the representational effect of unity of time and place is forged through recourse to new conventions, which cannot be identified any longer as part of the Aristotelian tradition. In effect, they need to be understood as a new type of "traffic," preeminently fantastic, between uncanny rhetorical agencies. In this direction, critical intuitions are not at all new. For example, Castelvetro's and Sir Philip Sidney's 1595 denouncement of the abuse of unities in Elizabethan playwrights who choose unskillfully to show "Asia of the one side, and Afric of the other," (48) and opt to condense the adventures of a man's whole life in two hours' space (cf. Carson 83); the Elizabethan critics demonstrated that the violation of unities was a common practice of 16<sup>th</sup> century dramatists. Correspondingly, their zest for more spectacular representational techniques did not necessarily prove skill at mastering the new narrative wagers. In compensation,

since licentious transgression of convention was excused in Elizabethan theaters, the most skilled playwrights took experimentalism to its peaks. Shakespeare himself asserted in one of his last plays, *The Winter's Tale*, through Polixenes' voice, that, on stage, the relationship between art and nature favors the former:

Yet nature is made better by no mean

But nature makes that mean: so, over that art

Which you say adds to nature –change it rather; but

The art itself is nature. (IV.iv. 89-97)

Obviously, when Sir Philip Sidney acknowledged the origins of the art of verse in the Aristotelian mimesis, redefining poetry as “an art of imitation... that is to say, of representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with its end, to teach and delight” (9), he did not speak any longer the pure Aristotelian theoretical idiom. Sidney's following description of poetry marks a visible point of departure from the Aristotelian doctrine of imitation of natural phenomena. The poet's skill - he held - gives a proper expression to the ideal forms in the mind of the Demiurge, that, in the works of nature are present only in a diffuse, not yet crystallized manner. Accordingly, the philosopher's duty is to “follow nature.” In contrast, the poet's craft of verse bounds him to replicate creation in demiurgic images:

[the poet] lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, does grow in effect into another nature, in making things either better than nature brings forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature...<sup>13</sup>

Sidney's concept of imitation, modern critic Marvin Carson infers, “is thus closer to Neoplatonist than to Aristotelian thought” (82). Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* also unveiled the purpose of poetry in the call for a virtuous action in resolution of experiential learning (Carson 82). Thus, in both comedy and tragedy, we are taught

the language of moral utility: in comedy our attention is drawn up to the common errors in “ridiculous and scornful sort” (Sidney 28)<sup>14</sup>, whereas in tragedy, we are shown the intricacies of ethical choice “making kings fear to be tyrants” and instructing us of a newly revealed epistemological dilemma, given in “the uncertainty of the world.”

Sidney’s original accent in dramatic representation was one of quality, given that the new purpose of comedy, as John Lyly (1553-1606) wrote in his *Prefaces* was “to moue inward delight, not outward lightness, and to breede (if it might be) soft smiling, not loud laughing.” (II. 371)<sup>15</sup> The movement from strong effects to a finer attunement of action and voices corresponded to the discovery of the character with its psychological particularities, a tendency also visible in the visual arts of the Baroque. Such was Ben Jonson’s innovative description of characteriology in the Introduction to *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1600), where, in the tradition of the Renaissance occult medicine, the author examined human personality in connection to its four bodily fluids, determining the noticeable behavioral tendencies in relation with the pondering of fluids in one’s blood. Carson notes that although the general purpose of comedy in the Elizabethan era remained a moral quest, the new culture finally learned how to transgress classical theory when it came to choosing the tools of creativity over formal demands: on one hand, Ben Jonson’s text outlined the classical laws of Comedy, such as equal separation into scenes and acts, adequate number of performers, presence of the choir, and coherence of spatial and temporal unities; on the other hand, he argued “that a poet need not hold too closely to these and that in fact classic authors themselves did not always do so” (Carson 85). The (newly discovered) uncertainty of the world was finally assumed as an innovative exercise in the stylistic hybridism of the major Elizabethan plays, such as the dramas of Marlowe, Kyd and Shakespeare. These authors, in spite of their apparent disregard for the contemporary theory of theater, chose to blend the formerly distinct postulates of genres in amalgamated scenes, whose function was to elicit sympathy with admiration and also to steer the course of action from initial irony towards

seemingly moral resolutions. The correspondent transformation of the traditional passage from terror to pity into a more mature scenery that elicited the urban spectator's smile and esthetical nuisance represented a noteworthy thread of the innovative understanding of theater within the English Baroque cultural milieu. This tendency is significant for an era whose kings chose theater as a form of entertainment in support of civilizing strategies and whose playwrights rediscover the secret correspondences between the systems of narrative signs proposed on stage and the glamorous shows of royalty. Notably, the inflation of good theater in Elizabethan London, an urban environment that gains a distinct cultural identity, produced a generation of subtle artists, less interested in articulating the effect of verisimilitude than in promoting genuine imaginary worlds, and more preoccupied with emancipating mimesis as an esthetical doctrine separate from reality. This original age of elaboration in the craft of stage showed that, under the pressure of competition, theatre-owners became increasingly preoccupied with the science of production, where the very idea of drama took a new course as a result of artificial, purely theatrical solutions.

### **I. 3. Historical Interpretations; *The Tempest's* baffling transitivity**

Prospero's list of occult psychological endowments determine *The Tempest* as one of the extreme experiments in the history of the English stage. Among the valuable studies on *The Tempest*, the 1995 collection of essays edited by Nigel Wood counts as a book that reviews and enriches the new historicist scholarship. In the first place, Wood has retained Greenblatt's interpretative manner, which takes *The Tempest* as a quizzical text whose exemplary ambiguity condemns to a quick failure any encapsulating interpretation. In Wood's reading, Prospero's cell and his art denote a deliberate lack of clarity on Shakespeare's behalf:

Is the island projected as the enclave of the mind and the whole action a projection of Prospero's psyche, or its is merely terra incognita, lying just



off the charts, yet, early quotidian stuff, transfigured only by his painfully acquired magic tricks?<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, “that divinity [...], Prospero, whose powers in fact come attended with and even derive from a magic garment and his copious library<sup>17</sup>” acts as a peculiar experimenter of odds, who conjures the spirits of the pagan repository and restores his classical royal prerogatives through uncanny magic spells and “brave new world” prophecies. No matter how many excuses classical critique found for Prospero’s oddness, the play does not match the exact standards of the Restoration drama, other than by its historical destiny, that of being performed in front of James. In a common note, recent interpretations of *The Tempest* by Katherine Eisman Maus and Matthew H. Wikander<sup>18</sup> take the play as a ciphered statement on kingship and its prerogatives (cf. Wood 5). If they are right, it means that the decoding can be understood on both hermeneutical and structural levels. The showing “has often a complexity that theatrical telling cannot match” (5), Nigel Wood infers from Peter Brook’s dramatic-interpretational tradition. Thus, dramatic analysis cannot advance without the recourse to “audience” and its receptive disposition; the alleged focus on the quality of passages has to take into account a different audience, one of urban breeding, most likely already familiar with and probably indifferent to the stereotypes of traditional theater. Evidently, the alleged transition is both esthetic and epistemic because it raises new questions about the intermingled connotations of the world in the findings of experience and the subsequent assertions of power. Unquestionably, the wide variability of historical-cultural contexts from the 1667 Dryden and Davenant adaptation to Peter Greenaway’s 1991 *Prospero’s Books* reveal a text that has plenty of oddities and plays on words relying on ambiguity. Presumably, this new type of theater, which engages in a deliberate transgression of formal postulates through hybridness and exoticism, cannot be comprehended as a mere set of circumstances conducive to a unique denotative elucidation: *The Tempest*, a text whose multiple valences defy the fact the play was initially staged for a festive event, does not make an exception from other Shakespearean plays when discussed in relation with the broad range of

interpretations it invited. Old plays sound different in new contexts, says a common-place maxim of the post-Deleuzian critique, which values the difference made possible by repetition. In effect, the quietness of already outdated interpretational clichés needs to be overcome by a sensuous voicing of the play's untouched potentials. *The Tempest's* multifarious productions expose a folio whose potential might reside in its meta-theatrical rendering of political power, where meaning and stage form are collated within a mercurial event – one that summons its ideal audience in the very act of delivery. When seen through this lens, many untouched beehives are revealed on Caliban's island.

*The Tempest's* subsequent effect is one of “transitivity,” and this makes the communicational process on stage even odder if we take into account that the echoing of sounds and voices on stage is not produced in a conventional setting: for, indeed, the misty island of Prospero's magic belongs to an alternate world of coherence, where the magic *mana* fills the space, opens alternate channels of communication, and supports an ethereal flight of fantastic agents who nurture a different logic of facts. Not only is this turn in Shakespeare Neoplatonic, but it is also one that conflates magic and verse – placing the dramatic accents on erudite philosophical lyricism. This is quite predictable, if we take into account that Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* described the poet as a creature whose mission is to “make things better than nature brings forth, or quite anew forms such as never were in nature.” In essence, poets are creators endowed with a unique gift for metaphors, which surpasses even the philosopher's skill with words:

Poetry and man-the poet's talents stem from the fact that he is able to create from a pre-existing idea called the fore-conceit. Poetry is the link between the real and the ideal worlds. Poets therefore take part in the divine act of creation.(IV)<sup>19</sup>

Thus, to the Elizabethan artist, poetry has at its core the power to perfect nature, by elevating its intelligibility to the beauty of the ideal forms. The true poet is therefore a tutor of beauty, whose aim is, by elevating history thorough

imagination, to create “notable images on virtues and vices... with that delightful teaching” whose ultimate end is, “...to draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls...can be made capable of.” (VII)<sup>20</sup> Man, Sidney says, is thus persuaded to enjoy “what makes him divine.”

#### **I. 4. Perspectives of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries: the social mission of the canon**

Classical interpretations of *The Tempest*, if we are to accept once again Nigel Wood’s reading, in their very insistence upon the play’s potential for bedazzlement tend to overlook the other ethical questions related to Prospero’s dominance on Caliban’s domain. In his classical 1709 *Account*, Nicolas Rowe is enchanted with the play’s “very Solemn and very Poetical” magic, and Joseph Warton’s 1753 note shows admiration for the playwright’s “boundless imagination” that proceeds to writing with “pleasing extravagance.”<sup>21</sup> Warton observed that formal consistency imposed the observation of the unities of plot, time, and place in relation to the duke’s supernatural reinstallation to his political domain (Wood 5-6). Moreover, this is a period of enrichment for British metaphysical poetry, on the one hand, and a time of fashioning, on the other, when the imaginative metaphors of the age of adventure blend in the new perceptions of cultural aptitude. In his essays (significant of the century’s intense preoccupation with literary criticism), Joseph Warton brings to the fore Shakespeare’s exploit of “fancy” that in turn founded a cult for modern poets of fancy, such as Warton himself. Warton praises Old Will’s poetry, but draws a new limit of good taste in public conversation, denouncing the abusive employment of Shakespearean tropes in eighteenth-century Britain.<sup>22</sup> This tells much about the new age of English literature: in its wish to install Shakespeare as a national monument, it needs to define “the social mission of the canon” as a new tactic of treasuring cultural assets, a tendency that, on stage, again looks like a conservative, statutory in intent, reading of the classics. Seventeenth-century incipient *critique* seemed to agree unanimously on the play’s artificiality and also show insight for Shakespeare’s structural constraints when it came to dealing with

“unnatural monsters” such as Caliban, a character who challenges the very conventions of mimetic representation and balances Prospero’s otherwise totalitarian drive<sup>23</sup>. Excusing Prospero from his alleged guilt as an invader of the island, William Dryden (1679, *Troilus and Cressida*, Preface) insisted upon the fiend’s monstrosity, described (in a genuine blow which anticipates modern theory) as a creature “not in Nature,” and “a Species of himself.” To the seventeenth-century critique, this perception seemed legitimate and it was justified by the play’s preeminent “romance” style. Dryden’s comments on Caliban, Patrick M. Murphy ponders, “were a touchstone for Addison and Steele, Joseph Warton, and Samuel Johnson. It is also possible that Charles Gildon’s remarks about the relations between fable and conduct in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* were intended to qualify Dryden’s discussion of plot and manners” (10). Michael Dobson, a contemporary exegete, thinks that Dryden’s adaptation owed its success to the stereotyped version of patriarchal monarchy, which, in classical England, supported the structure of the patriarchal family within an ideological chiasmus.<sup>24</sup>

Perceptions about the play’s strangeness do not change much during the eighteenth century; they just appropriate empirically what seem to be Prospero’s genuine potential for bedazzlement, in a movement that precludes the discovery of the fantastic and the marvelous as literary modalities. In 1712, Addison praised Shakespeare for his genius when he invented Caliban, a character whose profile is supplied by the poet’s “imagination,” unlike other characters of historical inspiration. Yet, Addison seems somehow concerned with Shakespeare’s innovative writing, when he writes that “there is a kind of writing, where the poet quite loses the sight of nature, and entertains his reader’s imagination with the characters and Actions of such Persons as have many of them no Existence, but what he bestows upon them” (qtd. in Murphy 11). He labels this new style as a “noble extravagance of fancy” but ends his comments in an irresolute note, pondering that Caliban’s presence defies the realm of worldly experience, leaving us with “no Rule by which to judge them.”

Dryden's already classic comment, Murphy suggests, "is elided as Caliban's categorical difference (as a construct of imaginative artifice) is subsumed within a re-description of nature and the natural" (11) as ascribed to the statutory qualities of the fanciful island. Plausibly, this ascription of nature to the elevated order of magic summoned the language of more elaborate interpretations. In the edition of 1765 (note I.ii.250; Wood 6), Samuel Johnson, who, otherwise, praised Shakespeare's virtue for creating "just" representations of "general nature," considered Prospero an enchanter and classified Ariel and his fellow spirits as creatures of "the fairy kind, an order of beings to which tradition has always ascribed a sort of diminutive agency, powerful but ludicrous, a humorous and frolick controlment of nature..." (Wood 6)<sup>25</sup> Against Johnson, William Guthrie argues that the Shakespearean characters are pure (this is to say, "odd") individualities that transgress classificatory criteria.<sup>26</sup> Samuel Johnson, in response, dismissed the power of fancy and strangeness in the adjudication of canon and insisted on the poet's skill to speak "generally and not individually," thus generating works that abide. Written 150 years after the play's inaugural representations and following several non-orthodox productions of *The Tempest* as an opera and as a pantomimic show,<sup>27</sup> Samuel Johnson's comments offered a valuable indication with regard to the progression of cultural mentality in Georgian England. Accordingly, the Georgian age was an intellectual period that, on the one hand, kept alive a fabulatory memory on magic themes, and, on the other hand, appeared already familiar as part of the intricate symbolism of experimental theater. This is designative of a mature, "fashioned" public that was able to grasp the flavor of Shakespearean puns to their full complexity.

Patrick M. Murphy, one of the contributors to Wood's critical anthology, enumerates some of the most important forms of expression in response to *The Tempest*. Such are the notes and the critical comments attached to the editions of Hanmer, Pope, Rowe, Theobald and Stevens, Warton's periodical article "The Adventurer," the literary essays of W. Richardson, and the paintings of William Hogarth (cf. Murphy 12). A special formative message emerged from the drawings

of John Boydell who, having sponsored entirely the publication of his engravings in the *Shakespeare Gallery*, added a significant statement for the “canonization” process: “the great object of the present design” was to “advance the art towards maturity and establish an English School of Historical Painting.”<sup>28</sup> Boydell’s license consisted of the attunement of history and fiction in the depiction of historical subjects. This attitude became stereotypical for the next generation of Romantic critics, especially for the “nation-builders,” who treated culture and history as a mythical and foundational intertext to their own search for expressive authenticity.

### **I. 5. Victorian criticism: Coleridge, Hazlitt, and the critical aftermath**

Only the nineteenth-century Romantic interpretations discussed the play as a locus of unsolvable moral queries and subsequently rediscovered the folio’s original theatrical potentials. However, this preoccupation with critical accuracy overlaps in time and counter-balances in tone a long sequence of nonchalant adaptations, all of which produced interesting generic hybrids, vacillating among opera, comedy, and masque. Recently, Jonathan Bate showed credible proofs that nineteenth-century Romantic poets, such as Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Keats, Shelley, and Byron, not only lectured often about *The Tempest*, but also touched upon the play’s characters in their poems and letters, taking Shakespeare’s last text as a landmark to the measure of their own achievements in literature and culture (see Murphy 15). Given the Early Romantic enthusiasm for Elizabethan drama, the classical dispute between William Coleridge and William Hazlitt around the functions of each character within the play became momentous of another critical ferment, nourished around the emerging ethics of colonialism. Together with Romanticism, the world of British academia inaugurated the long series of “Caliban oriented,” that is to say ethicist readings of the play, that inspire both post-colonial and neo-historicist contemporary interpretations.

In 1818, Coleridge's lecture on *The Tempest*, labeling Caliban as the "original and caricature of Jacobinism," triggered Hazlitt's prompt reaction: far from being a model of Jacobinism, Sycorax's progeny embodied "strictly the legitimate sovereign of the isle," while Prospero and the others were the "usurpers who have ousted him from his hereditary jurisdiction by superiority of talent and knowledge"(qtd. in Wood 7).<sup>29</sup> In complete agreement with Schlegel, who took Caliban as a poetical presence who "always speaks in blank verse," Hazlitt re-discussed the character as an entity whose "deformity whether of body or mind is redeemed by the power and truth of the imagination displayed in it." Hazlitt excused Sycorax's progeny for his genuine grossness, which he saw as part of Caliban's "of the earth, earthly" essence, "uncramped by any of the meannesses of custom."<sup>30</sup> The critic's thoughts also seemed to break the veil of insularism, re-opening the discussion of sovereignty on (uncharted yet) epistemological grounds. Significantly, he used Bacon's theory of the idols as raw material for the emerging question of political anthropology, namely that the mind's (inner) theater encompasses both real and royal presence,<sup>31</sup> empowering "a relation to a reality as vivid and as real as our own thoughts." Yet, the great dispute was resumed in a contrast of positions with regard to the nature of plot, which illustrated the intrinsic limits of Romantic theory, attuned to totality: Coleridge had to resist both Hazlitt, whose interpretation insisted on the vivid quality of images, and August Wilhelm Schlegel, who denied the sense of motion in the play and understood the transformation of action in connection with the lyrical potential and flow of the verse. In contrast, Coleridge found in each moment an indication of new interactions, anticipating the modern theory of "foreordainment." In a justificatory paragraph, the British poet reviewed his own assumptions in the famous essay on *The Tempest*. Not only did he discuss the play as a lesson whose *morale* relies in its civilizing strategies, but he also eulogized Shakespeare for his skill at dramatizing ethical polarities:

In this play are admirably sketched the vices generally accompanying a low degree of civilization; [...] Shakespeare has [...] shown the tendency

in bad men to indulge in scorn and contemptuous expressions, as a mode of getting rid of their own uneasy feelings of inferiority to the good, and also, by making the good ridiculous, of rendering the transition of others to wickedness easy.<sup>32</sup>

Coleridge subdued the moral questions of Shakespearean drama to his longing to institute Shakespeare as a national monument. This is what informed his choice to describe the civilizing mission of his plays in relation with its access to meta-linguistic dramatic potential, a liminality which acted as a builder of cultural awareness and, implicitly, of cultural institutions.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, *The Tempest* was a play that did not allow the reader to take sides and offered satisfactory resolutions for each character, since all parties took benefit first from Prospero's magic, then learned one more lesson from his Act V renunciation. Nonetheless, if one is to speak about liminality in the play (a term and a particular perception developed primarily by Post-Colonial writers), one also has to take into account that Romantic interpretations discover the *Tempest's* unique conglomeration of voices, curses, and noises as a symphony of passages, shown in the multivalent speech of characters, that is, as polar effects in the management of rhetorical agencies. My own view is supportive of such liminal, ultimately symphonic discussion of the play's narrative structure. After all, it is Coleridge who saw order at the very heart of strangeness, discovering the "organic regularity" of the drama, "which all the parts obey, conforming themselves to the outward symbols and manifestations of the essential principle."<sup>34</sup> This important principle, which is typical of the Romantic rejection of verisimilitude, stands for a pristine endowment of imagination; thus, *The Tempest's* alleged oddness is described anew as *fancy*, and the play is read in an ideological key, its name becoming embedded in Coleridge's introductory proposition on romantic theatre.

After Coleridge, the romance genre was defined by the very conglomeration of tragic, comic, and imaginative items and further noticeable by a happy ending (often closing with a masque, a triumph, or a dance) in which all, or the majority of, the voices are placed in a reconciliatory situation. *The Tempest's*



“fantastic” structure becomes the primer of the purely romantic drama: recognized as a romance, the play is described as the pilot text of a new species that, relying on fancy, might take advantage of the very “improbability” of the plot for its own outcomes, transgressing the traditional reference to “history” and (particularly important for my demonstration), bypassing the “natural connexion of events.”<sup>35</sup> Once more, *The Tempest*’s exemplary ambiguity showed itself adjustable to various cultural lenses, fitting the interpretational needs of a new era and intellectual mentality.

In other critical material by the same poet (*Biographia Literaria*, 1817), we find out more about the expected quality of poetical act, which resumes a series of discussions with William Wordsworth. In an esthetical view typical of Romantic theory, poetry can elicit the reader’s sympathy by two registers, one mimetic and one imaginative, and can be categorized into two complementary sorts. The first is realistic, taken from “ordinary life,” made of characters and incidents to be “found in every village;” and the second one is fantastic, whose “incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural,” the aim of which was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. The power of this last sort, the two Romantic poets agreed, springs from an innate ignorance of “every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency.” In other words, the spectator’s “suspension of disbelief”<sup>36</sup> has deeper anthropological roots, residing in the need for meaning at the core of a supernatural order. Consubstantially, Coleridge describes *The Tempest* as a moral fresco and re-discovers the play as a quintessential text for the very condition of dramatic art, where are shown “the springs of the vulgar in politics, of that kind of politics which is inwoven with human nature.” The Romantic poet praises Shakespeare for his ability to create eminent models and narratives, showing “a profound veneration for all the established institutions of society, and for those classes which form the permanent elements of the state, especially never introducing a professional character, as such, otherwise than as respectable.”<sup>37</sup>

Accordingly, Shakespeare's genius consists in his capacity to survey "all the great component powers and impulses of human nature," which was seen by Coleridge as raw material with the innate potential for self-discovery and self-betterment.

For all intents and purposes, the playwright is sanctified as a civilizing hero of modern England, in a play of ideas that seems to insist on the constructive structure and enlightening mission of his last major text. Within the new typological reading, "truth" is understood esthetically as an effect of characteriologic polarities, a desirable outcome of fantastic events internalized in the timely oppositions of asymmetric rhetorical agencies: those who know knowing ahead-of-time (*avant-la-lettre*), teaching those who need to learn the proper answers. As a result of traditionalist readings, Prospero's totalitarian potential not only appears pardonable, but is legitimized by the character's uniquely tailored stature. Nonetheless, this interpretation springs within a logic of facts that places civilization, the ferment of that politics "inwoven in human nature," above naïve sovereignty.<sup>38</sup>

#### **I. 6. Victorian fin-de-siècle: Shakespearean articulations of the British Empire**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, theoretical interpretations still took advantage of Coleridge's already accredited perspective. Moreover, even if the successive generations of critics agree on one point, namely that *The Tempest* is a deliberate exercise in poetical fancy, a contemporary reader feels as if the doctrine of verisimilitude found its end in Prospero's book of magic, or, in other words, that the very ambiguousness of *The Tempest* acted as a magic spell upon a world of critics that made the text into a source-argument for their most heteroclitic views. In this note, Edmund Clarence Stedman's comment in *The Nature and Elements of Poetry* (1892) seizes the double-fold paradox of *The Tempest*'s rhetorical agencies<sup>39</sup>, "realistic" in separate depictions, yet preeminently magical when it comes to observing the modalities of traffic. *The Tempest*'s most synthetic poetic imaginative experiment is articulated through a play within a play (the Masque in

Act IV<sup>40</sup>) where the “realistic” depiction of fantastic characters depends upon the insertion of poetical discourse, while the credibility of the whole scene depends upon the Duke’s “stately abjuration of the magic art.” In reversing the initial functions of rhetorical agencies and in substituting natural majesty for its radicalized deliberate humbleness, Shakespeare establishes a rhetorical mechanism of dramatic self-sustainability, which relies on the validation of Prospero’s poetical dreaming.

Significantly for this new insight of Victorian critical school, in a *Short History of English Literature* (1898), George Saintsbury will review the hypnotic potential of Shakespeare’s last play, in relation to Prospero’s “absolute supremacy in poetry.” Saintsbury sees *The Tempest* as Shakespeare’s “splendid” sunset and reads the play as an allegorical closure of Shakespeare’s retirement:

...the sternest opponent of guesswork must admit the probable presence of a designed allegory in the figure of Prospero and the burying of the book, the breaking of the staff, at the close. [...] Both in the blank verse and the lyrics, in the dialogue and the set tirades, in long contexts and short phrases alike, he shows himself absolute, with nothing out of reach of his faculty of expression and suggestion, with every resource of verbal music and intellectual demonstration at his command. (328)

In a distinctively politicized tone, Richard Garnett (1890) reassesses the play’s alleged uniformity, whose aim, he rediscovers, does not consist “in strong dramatic situations,” but in “imaginative pleasure.” Nonetheless, in denying Shakespeare’s motivation with action, the Victorian critic calls into question an innovative facet of the plot. Garnett claims that the course of action is disclosed from the very beginning, given that “Prospero is too manifestly the controlling spirit to arouse much concern for his fortunes. Ferdinand and Miranda are soon put out of their pain, and Ariel lies beyond the limits of humanity.”<sup>41</sup> He also takes note of the predictable course of the narrative, appreciating the action as simple and uniform, with all occurrences “converging slowly towards their destined point”

(535). To Garnett, imaginative pleasure in *The Tempest* is only surpassed by the astonishing spectacle of intertwined *power and right* [e.m.], which, he assumes, is the cornerstone of every authentic work of art:

Above and behind the fascination of the plot and the poetry we behold  
Power and Right evenly paired and working together, and the  
justification of Providence producing that sentiment of repose and  
acquiescence which is the object and test of every true work of art.

What peculiar imprint in this *fin-de-siecle* interpretation of *The Tempest*! It is almost as if the oddness of the play was able to generate strange twists in the critical-theoretical mold. Regardless of how much celebrative zest one finds in the plain conjunction of right and power as intrinsic values of the work of art, the surprise of Garnett's ideologized reading does not rely on the quality of his judgment, but merely on its biased application of *The Tempest*. Not only was Shakespeare assimilated as a national monument for his language and vibrant illustrations, but his last major text, one that is not often read as part of his didactic (English) cycle, is now canonized in a reading that grasps *The Tempest* as an allegorical lesson of majesty, or in other words, as a text perfectly fit for the representational needs of encomiastic art: only in courtly art can the preeminent aim of the artist be the glorification of power in an esthetical proposition of value, since only courtly art can afford allegorizing apart from the world of real experience, trapped in the fascination for the poetical resources of power. If this is indeed the case, if the quality of poetical imagination needs to be discussed in relation with its potential to establish a new order of meaning, then this unique instance of creative activity needs to be addressed both as a process of intention and as a metaphorical quiz: more than with any other text of Shakespeare's works, I will have to investigate the original context of *The Tempest's* production and its early festive destiny to reconfigure 'the proper sound' of the play. Next comes the relation between metaphor and its reception, when the game proposed is part of a political persuasive act. Furthermore, since I do not think that *The Tempest* should be read preeminently in allegorical key, then it is only the doctrine of the divine right that

can validate such an allegorized reading and only as an undertone to its main sound, which is, I think, that of an enchanted concert. This quasi-orphic harmony of noises, conjurations, and unfettered voices carries forth a lyricism not-so innocent after all, in which the creativity of the agency of power can prevail over any meaning of social experience gained from exposure to history. Furthermore, modern history, as a place of disenchantment, loves nostalgically enchanted islands and symbolic hagiographies. *The Tempest's* vacillating symbolism accomplishes both hermeneutical tasks of substitution and reassurance in a process that corresponds to a re-ontologization of public gaze: the drama offers a coherent imaginary universe governed by its own rules, and it also justifies, like no other play, the modern obsession for omniscience and control in politics. Inevitably, my interpretation will take into account the new language of political anthropology in the readjustment of the critical key-questions.

#### **I. 7. Interpretations that count: modern commentaries and creative efforts**

During the early decades of the twentieth century, the typical issues of reception came into the spot. Twentieth-century interpretations seemed to discover a common awareness to the play's already proven potential for ideological readings. They also displayed an innovative preoccupation with the adjudication of the grand theoretical queries left unanswered during the previous centuries. Nigel Wood suggests that Romantic and Victorian interpretations that declare Shakespeare as the bard of nature, have hindered the possibility of a careful political re-examination of action and of the subsequent analysis of *The Tempest's* allegorical keys. The interpretations by J. Middleton Murry and E.M.W. Tillyard reveal aspects of the plot systematically ignored by Romantic and Victorian critique. These are given in the interdependency of characters, especially in Prospero's dependence upon the young Ferdinand and Miranda in devising the newfangled order of things. In a study that revolutionizes the field, Middleton Murry's *Shakespeare's Dream* (1936) introduces a Duke of Milan more adequate with his meta-theatrical functions, an

exceptionally adorned character, who stands for the “sensational” quality of imagination in the play:

Prospero’s function in the drama of *The Tempest* is altogether peculiar. He is its prime mover; he governs and directs it from the beginning to the end; he stands clean apart from all Shakespeare’s characters in this, or any other period of his work. He is the quintessence of a quintessence of a quintessence.

“Foreordainment” of events is the key word used by Middleton Murry, as the critic questions Shakespeare’s intention to create a new type of theater, which takes into account omnipotence as a dramatic possibility at hand: if in *The Winter’s Tale*, Shakespeare dealt with a relatively “simple tale, a sequence of chances” (Middleton Murry 110), in *The Tempest*, the playwright was concerned with “the obliteration of evil done and suffered by one generation through the love of the next.” The possibility of a late reinstatement of lawfulness made the playwright think, like never before, of a counter-symmetry between the past, represented “in the tragedy done and suffered” and the future, which can bring justice back in its own rights. Shakespeare’s new attitude transgresses the preoccupation with a mere technical solution, for “a whole religion is implicit in it” (Middleton Murry 112).

The initial accident (although Providence’s work) that brought Prospero’s old enemies on the island, precludes an original dramatic arrangement that cannot be explained by the action of chance in the course of the plot. Prospero’s magic powers include abilities such as raising storms and bringing his personal enemies to him. However, Shakespeare cannot create an explicitly omnipotent Prospero, because that would make the whole drama predictable and would deem Prospero’s abilities as devilish, for only an evil spirit can control undisturbed “the presence of evil and wrong in the world.” Instead, Middleton Murry sees Shakespeare’s last text as “a tremendous criticism (although not deliberate – n.m.) of vulgar religion” (114), implicit in the conjectures of his compositional method. The island, in effect, is shaped as a realm governed by superior rules, made possible by the goodness of

reason. Prospero, as a man who won the battle with his inferior soul, has the capacity to fashion the spirits of the island, restored through the Duke's Act V renunciation to a more finely attuned version of their selves, "not what they were, but what they should be." Shakespeare's intention is to explain Prospero's occult art as pedagogy of fashioning, "where by Art or Nurture Prospero transforms man's Nature to true Human Nature" (Middleton Murry 114). In contrast, Prospero's failure to instruct Caliban, one "on whose nature / Nurture can never stick" (IV.i. 188-91), gives credibility to the Duke's power of persuasion founded upon humanistic assumptions and designed "to work the miracle of a new creation" (Middleton Murry 118). Middleton Murry's interpretation takes *The Tempest* as Shakespeare's dramatic will and sees Prospero as a character "shot" with the playwright's dream: a renewed world and a rejuvenated race, redeemed through the formative control of culture.<sup>42</sup>

#### **I. 8. The play's dynamic adverbials: how things should be made to happen**

Looking at *The Tempest* with the eyes of the contemporary critical theorist, one cannot lose from sight the historical fluidity of the very notion of realism, relegated with the occurrence of burlesque, fabulous, somehow devilish characters such as a Falstaff or a Caliban. Preoccupied with the evolution of neoclassical verisimilitude in Western Europe, A.D. Nuttall (*A New Mimesis*) places *The Tempest* in its proper context. Thus, he comments on the vacillating quality of definitions of realism in the wake of modern culture, where each new generation of writers reinvents poetry at the expense of the immediate predecessors,<sup>43</sup> in a movement which, during the early Romantic era, stood for an emancipation of newly discovered "literary truth" from the shackles of dogmatic verisimilitude. Nuttall retains Roland Barthes' definition<sup>44</sup> of *vraisemblance* in the seventeenth century literature, where, the French critic suggested, verisimilitude did not follow an initial acceptance of reality (a baffling notion, when released from the former isomorphism with language), but instead accurately conforms to the tenets of public opinion. In this context, Pierre

Nicole's famous line in his *Treatise on True and False Beauty* (approx. 1697) resumes the Neo-Classical doctrine of *vraisemblance*, in a manner that discovers the question of representation on pure epistemological grounds:

One should not regard things as they are in themselves, nor as they are known by the speaker or the writer, but only by their correspondence with the knowledge of readers and hearers.<sup>45</sup>

*Vraisemblable* maintains an established core-meaning, yet this meaning does not follow the order of nature, but rather the symbolism of cultural representations. Shakespeare's characters are no different: in transgressing the "natural" tabulation in species, Old Will better succeeds at creating comedy personages "in representing the oddities of nature rather than her general characters." Of course, Caliban represents such a preeminent oddity, but this monstrous individuality calls into question the epistemological foundations of "realism," which cannot any longer be localized in nature. "The fact that the general rule may itself be founded on reality becomes immaterial," Nuttal concludes in Barthes' aftermath. Thus, the very notion of an objective universe is subdued to the rules, norms, and cultural contexts embedded in language. In consequence, linguistic operations can bring within their spell the category of the unreal (or immaterial), which can be conceived as a coherent entity of language: "the typically aberrant as typically realistic."

Not only is the neoclassical period rich in such intellectual disputes, but Neoclassicism is also centered on a transitional age of Western culture: this begins the transformation of rhetorical forms from an "adjectival realism," descriptive of existent qualities in nature, towards awareness of new epistemological conjectures that inform an "adverbial realism." Relying upon the power of adverbs to describe qualities of action, that is to say dynamical contexts, the adverbial realism is essentially an anticipative movement. Against classical dialectics, where syntheses appear as a result of crystallization in experience, the newly discovered quality of Neoclassical literature hints at the possibility that theoretical-imaginative coherence can trigger the proper modalities of manifestation into a science of desired effects,



where the esthetic rendering of the material educes the ethical message through innovative theatrical effects, in a manner that bypasses the classical (Hegelian) chain between experience and wisdom. The employment of the adverb brings into play the prospective status of representations: for the interrogation “what is such-and-such really like (?), we find that the term naturally attaches itself to hypothetical events which are unfamiliar, yet possible.”<sup>46</sup>

The seventeenth century operated with two intermingled concepts of realism that stem from a single notion of “reality,” a linguistic reality where the “adverbial” and “adjectival” propositions about truth can become alternately preeminent in the common-sense representations of the real. René Rapin’s description of truth in art (1674) as “regulated nature,” taken as a literary conceit is still ostentatiously resonant with the Neoplatonic doctrine, which places truth beyond the visible: “Truth gives things only as they are, *vraisemblance* gives them as they ought to be. Truth is almost always defective, because it consists of a mingling of specific conditions”<sup>47</sup> If Caliban’s “crippled” appearance defies the categorial pigeonholing of nature, in contrast Prospero’s “adverbial” humanity summons, in contrast, the superlatives of the human condition, marking a change in ontological accent. Prospero’s prospect of a Golden Age corresponds to the adverbial search for a prospected ideality in the existential realm described by verbs, being, and action: “planting” the seeds of the future in the verbs of the present. Yet, this ideality is one that keeps action in high esteem and relegates the intrinsic qualities of humanity to the realm of mundane accomplishment. If Nuttall is right, then Prospero’s powers not only need a proof on the historical stage, but they also represent history in the making generated by a rhetorical agency that realizes the modalities of successful persuasion: the realm of *quidditas* denied for the advent of *quemadmodum*, descriptive assessment exchanged for prospective bidding, Christian hermeneutics replaced by Hermetic reformation of meaning.

### 1. 9. Contemporary readings: learning from the clash of cultures

Frank Kermode's 1954 Introduction to *The Tempest* discusses the relevance of Montaigne's Essay "Of Cannibals" to *The Tempest*: like Shakespeare, the French philosopher is preoccupied with the dissimilarity between natural and civilized societies; unlike the playwright, Montaigne values the New World example of "naturally virtuous life uncorrupted by civilization."<sup>48</sup> The concurrent views of nature are the object of Kermode's analysis. Montaigne's essay seems to leave open the path for a positive reading of "naturalness, as skill of innocent virtue, untouched yet by the hypocrisy of civilization." Shakespeare, Kermode says, rejects Montaigne's "naturalism" (176),<sup>49</sup> ascribing his perceptions to those narratives of the New World unfavorable to the natives, widely popularized during the epoch.

If Montaigne's narrative relied on Jean de Lery's reliable account, Shakespeare's play depends upon Montaigne's view second-hand. Nevertheless, both Montaigne and Shakespeare exaggerate the description of natives with elements that suit the mythological repository of Western imagination. Coming from the adventurous, brutal, and pragmatically oriented pioneers of colonization, their underlying assumptions play on the ethical polarity between savage nature and virtuous society. No wonder that the first narratives of colonization were bound to the same chauvinistic undertone. In 1493, when the Spanish Ambassador at the Vatican announced Columbus' discovery on behalf of the Spanish monarchs, he called on the name of Christ in support of the Spanish claim: "Christ has placed under their rule the Fortunate Isles" (Kermode 178). Thus, Prospero's proclamation of his entitlement as the "lord" of the island has its deeper grounds in the law of natural rights, as Purchas explains in "The Lawfulness of Discoveries" (Kermode 178). The claim was not at all innocent, for, beyond requesting the new lands for the dominion of Spanish kings, the symbolic ascription of the Fortunate Isles to the Christian rule legitimated, then reinforced a politics of "casting miracle," which allowed the unscrupulous conquistadors to play the role of Elohim in the field. In fact, many manipulative stratagems were devised to tame, reconvert, or simply take profit from the naïve, polytheistic imagination of the natives. Significantly for how

literature converts the themes of experience, “Stephano’s assertion to be descended from the moon,” Kermode says, “was commonly made by unscrupulous voyagers who seized the chance of turning to account the polytheism of the Indians” (179).

There is ample testimony to the corrupting effect upon natives of contact with dissolute Europeans: “Christian savages sent to convert heathen savages” (Kermode 179). Nonetheless, Shakespeare’s portraiture of Caliban finds its complexity in its double standard, ugly innocence used as a measure for the ugly cynicism of the civilized plotters, Antonio and Sebastian—or, in other words, criminal and civilized barbarianism brought on to the same page. Caliban’s depiction in the play is sketched against the background of a pastoral nature, a salvaged and deformed slave, a portrait that epitomizes the stereotypical European views of the West Indians. Not only was Shakespeare’s monster born inhuman, a sexual product between a witch and an incubus, but “he” was crippled in a form that does not leave any doubt about Caliban’s accursed nature: he is “a born devil,” ... “got by the evil himself,” ... a very land-fish, languageless, a monster.”<sup>50</sup>

At many turns of the play, Kermode remarks, the playwright uses Caliban to show “how much baser the corruption of the civilized can be than the bestiality of the natural, and in these places he is using his natural man as a criterion of civilized corruption, as Montaigne had done” (Kermode 180). If Caliban belongs to the New World, his mother, the goetist witch Sycorax, paradoxically belongs to the Old, endowed with all the powers of Medieval witches and also recognizable as a typical character in modern demonological scheme (Kermode 181). In opposition, Prospero masters the Neo-Platonic book of signs, which deals with the divine signatures and correspondences between natural, ethereal, and intellectual realms: as a theurgist, his art is “to achieve supremacy over the natural world by holy magic” (Kermode 181). Set within a logic of Gnostic origin, Prospero’s conjuring operation on the island corresponds to the elevation of a defective nature, a reparation that follows the initial corruption of matter through the spells of evil. Brought in contrast with Sycorax’s black magic, Prospero’s occult discipline should be understood as an “Art of supernatural virtue which belongs to the world of

civility and learning” (Kermode 182). The Duke’s instructional project looks indeed like a magic reform, because he uses magic to reinforce the commandments of civility, wherever civility loses access to grace. The qualities of spirit lay hidden in the energies of nature; the mage’s craft is to release the spiritual potentials and make them part of a civilized world of intellectual elevation, lyrical expression, and resonant harmonies. And not accidentally, says John Demaray,

contrasting virtuous and corrupted dreams of a Golden Age, a coming millennium, haunt the imaginations of central characters. In the manner of a host of utopian and millenarian writers of the late Renaissance, the characters speculate, with different degrees of casualness, seriousness, selfishness or moral rectitude, on some personal variant of an ideal future time, a period when their sometimes wildly imaginative reveries on power, wealth, possessions, or natural plenitude may be fulfilled. External “reality” is placed in ever-changing perspectives as it is cast against the characters’ imagined visions, and these visions are constantly tested against that reality. (111)

Prospero’s project of governance has two faces: one is certainly instructional and the other universalist, yet describing the two sides of any value coinage; thus, he shifts between private and public masks, in the alternative expressions of persuasion and empathic concern. Initiation in that fantastic form of instruction is accessible to princes only, a craft that can reconcile on new grounds the apparently divergent worlds of “Art and Nature.” However, this hope of Christian Cabbalistic breed alludes to the possibility of spiritual enlightenment in history through political organization and also establishes a new mission for the agency of authority in history, as a central catalyst of this “magically engineered” social awakening. In the following chapters, I will investigate the various historical motifs, cultural contexts and epistemic paradoxes that articulated the unique background to Shakespeare’s last major play. Inspired by the new historicist statement that qualifies the late Renaissance as a period of cultural rehearsal prefacing modernity, I have founded my study upon the premise that literature,

history, and political thought must generate interrelationships that are harmonic rather than divergent. Using this interpretational key, I am particularly interested in validating new connections between the Utopian representations of order and the projects of Hermetic reform on the one hand, and the new mimesis of dramatic representational strategies, on the other.

### **1. 10. Transformations in Elizabethan Culture: cultures as generative sieves**

I will begin this theoretical prolegomenon on an epistemological note, by asking the following questions: What was the new course of cultural expression during the Elizabethan era? How did the tension between tradition and innovation affect Shakespeare's generation, as contemporaries of the "great disjuncture" of times? The discussion needs a proper methodological articulation, as the cultural period is characterized by many layers of eclecticism, generated by the intertwining complexities of the Reformation and Humanism in England, a country whose affiliation with the continental Renaissance in the sixteenth century was in many ways delayed after decades of religious and political reorganization. Was this transformation productive for a new state of mind in Britain, associable with more effective civic values? The topic is especially debated by contemporary scholars, raised anew in the post-structuralist period, in conjunction with the contemporary theories of identity. New contributions to the field of cultural studies have emphasized that the Anglican Reformation has worked effectively on the alteration of Albion's subjects' imagination. The alleged transformation, cultural historians agree, has become visible in the political structure of the state, as much as in the common psychology of endeavoring, where the Crown benefits from its prestigious image in the colonial enterprises, and its new, almost otherworldly possessions.

The newest and most valuable discussions of the shifting Elizabethan and Jacobean eras take historicity into account as a dynamic factor of social mutations, whose alleged complexities defy any linearity in analysis. Indeed, a common motif

thrives in recent discussions: the cold fervor of skepticism finds its pioneers amongst the young generations of Elizabethan and Jacobean intellectuals – in a move that signifies dissatisfaction with the explanations of classical Aristotelian cosmology and with its insertion into Christian metaphysical tradition. Many European intellectuals were deeply surprised by the amplitude of discoveries from sighting a different face of humanity from what was accepted as the confined territory of Christendom. European expansion to the New World radicalized moral and political attitudes, as the theme of America magnetized all sorts of intelligences in search for either practical solutions or ideal projections to their common craving for freedom. Contextually, the theme of epistemic disruption in sixteenth-century England has become generative of original literary and philosophical attitudes in the said period. Associable with skepticism, the unprecedented consciousness regarding the relativity of perception and experience encourage a manner of philosophizing whose assertions become, paradoxically, emulative. The common foundation of man and nature in a world that is discovered as broader than any accepted intellectual “geography” informs the incomparable outlook of a century of intense conceptual hybridization. Moreover, often, what is said of the new world’s inhabitants is no truer than what has been assumed previously of otherworldly realms within Christian mythology. The process in itself is too intricate to give here more than a short theoretical insight: the quest for the epistemic, historical, and psychological clusters of identity in British pre-modern culture marks the core of cultural historians’ preoccupations of the last four decades – who look at the question of social formation from the two twin notions of representation and performance in communication acts. No wonder that misrepresentation rules during the first decades of colonization, and the serendipitous games of perception in language show the inherent limitations of cognitive vocabulary and descriptive registers. More than a definite agenda of conquest, the first European colonizers brought with them their own imperatives, related to the quest for a grand narrative of civilization and progress, revealing the imagination of Europeans as dependant upon the *ethoi* of the Bible and classical antiquity. To this initial trend (a long lasting propensity of mythographism), the brightest minds of those days counter-

reacted promptly, as the representational biases were invoked in justification of genocidal actions.

In a new study (*Columbus and the Interpretation of the New World*, 2003) that brings under scrutiny the quality of representations in the first American travel narratives, Jonathan Hart sees the first descriptions of the New World as totally ascribed to the ideological agenda of the colonial mindset:

It is no wonder that Europeans talked of “discovery” as much as about “conquest” because for them, as the Mediterranean island far from Milan was for Shakespeare’s Miranda, these lands in the Western Atlantic were a place of newness, wonder, and some hoped, uncovering and recognition. By erasing or eliding this term, “discovery,” a kind of peripatetic anagnorisis for explorers like Columbus, we lose as much as we gain. It is important to remember the pain, death and disruption that landfall caused for the Natives of the New World, so that to make “discovery” a problematic word is helpful. The Europeans had a tradition of travel-writing that could be as mythographic as proto-ethnographic. From their reading of Herodotus, Pliny, John de Mandeville and from other oral traditions, Europeans especially brought with them to the New World a set of expectations, gleaned from their tradition, of fantastic natural phenomena, such as pygmies, satyrs, cannibals and Amazons. Europeans were sometimes prone to recognize or hope to discover something that was not actually there. Discovery was not always a triumph of knowledge and God in search of spices and riches, but it could also be a misreading of new lands and peoples. The cautionary function of throwing the term “discovery” into question has been salutary because there was, for so many centuries, a tendency towards a kind of triumphalism that could creep in to the European discovery of America. (*Columbus 2*)

The adjustment of attitudes does not come from naturalists, but from pioneers of ethical thought, such as Bartolomé de Las Casas, Michel de Montaigne, or even

Thomas Harriot whose positive perceptions of the new humanity were at loggerheads with the narrative of colonization, in which the prospect of domination was safeguarded by the alleged inferiority of the aboriginals who were in need of a new religion. Montaigne's age-changer essay "On Cannibals" – even though inspired by the presence of a native captive – was in fact a counter-reaction to a recent history of oral and narrative testimonials, in which the politics of dominance determine the ideological renderings of The New World's inhabitants. A new dialectic developed slowly between counter-stereotypical representations of the "Indian," as European thought discovered and denounced its ingrained inability to deal with the idea of alterness. Yet, a fully articulated "paleography" as a systematic comparison of the documented encounters bloomed only centuries later, in our age of Cultural Anthropologies and Postcolonial critique, where the interpretative methodologies discovered the perspectives of liminality as more accurate ways to deal with the colonial past than the recourse to normative objectivity.

One could say that the New World had to wait for more than three centuries for its proper rhetorical discovery, since most of the first interpretational efforts suited the vagaries of a mentality that did not understand the qualities of difference, indecision, and passage as essential. But when the desirable language of proof in the New World testimonials was biased by either the genuine fictional excesses of the narrator's zest or by deliberate misrepresentations of the new realms, as was the case with most of the firsthand accounts, a re-balancing strategy of interpretation was required. Thus, among intellectuals, the fictional excesses of the naïve sailors' folklore created the need for a more systematic methodology of observation: one that could correlate data and impression in a productive manner for the pragmatic priorities of colonization. In works authored by firsthand witnesses of the New World, such as Thomas Harriot (*...Report of Virginia*), skepticism itself adopted the rhetoric of curiosity, becoming a forerunner of rational epistemic methods. That is, skeptical inquiry accelerated progress, by putting at test the confined limits of the medieval episteme. Furthermore, when coming from



skeptical philosophers such as Montaigne, the deliberate idealizations of the primitives were not naïve, since they fought against perceptions of either ignorance or deliberate bias. Bound to reassess its own protocols in relation with a remote signifier, America, often personified as a feminine character, the civilization of Europe discovered utopian thought as a counter-narrative to the bigotry of its traditional politics: one where irony opened the space for a reconstructive idealism. Nourishing its imagination in either written narratives or in the rich folklore of the New World encounters, the age of Shakespeare has been unanimously treated as the preeminent period of such transformations taking place in the wake of modernity. The Elizabethan era is a period where theater, often at loggerheads with the establishment's dogmatism, took the leading role in discovering original facets and expressions to the many burning epistemic impasses; Shakespeare's age was one where theatrical representation foreruns the protocols of modern communication.

In consonance with my intention to present the intricate theme of transformations within Elizabethan culture in a manner that summons the potential of interdisciplinarity, in the following section, I cluster terms from epistemology, political history, and cultural studies, particularly texts that have been integrated as fundamentals of postcolonial studies. One of the typical dilemmas of the comparatist found in my position resides in the status of the texts chosen for discussion, given that I try to view cultural expressions as interconnected ingredients of a phenomenology of imaginary acts. Thus, feeling limited by the inherent constraints of my study, I will concentrate here on one of the most recent trends in the theories that summarize the notion of culture in relation with the formative-dynamic quality of representational processes as introduced in the contemporary theories of social imagination. These are the assumptions of Cultural and Generative Anthropologies, which draw upon the ideas of postmodern philosophies of language and representation set in relation with the notion of community. Drawing on the fundamentals of Fiction theory, this view is one that attempts to build a study of imaginary phenomena in connection with the social and existential determinants of a given culture. This method, originating in Saul

Kripke's applied modal logic and in the structuralist-formalist theories of Roman Jakobson and Roland Barthes, placed a new emphasis in newer theories of possible worlds, where the fictional realms outside the text found a stronger "anchorage" in the idea of "reality". Developing the principles of fictional semantics involved by Georg Henrik von Wright, Lubomir Doležel's contribution updated the theory of fictional worlds with a fine description of applied logical connectives, which found the modal operators to be responsible for the status of fictional worlds, given in the attitudes present in their conception, such as necessity, possibility, belief and the correspondent status of knowledge. Narrative worlds, Doležel demonstrated, are not devoid of historical grounding, since the structure of imaginary worlds described by the University of Toronto professor depends on cultural, psychological, experiential and axiological characteristics. Doležel's possible-world semantics should be read as a (militant) proposition for a "unified theory of fictionality" that brings under the umbrella of interdisciplinarity "the various developments in literary studies, semiotics, art history, anthropology and so forth" (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 3-4).<sup>51</sup>

### **1. 11. Kermode's milestone: the imaginary concord between past and future**

Frank Kermode took an alternate route in discussing the status of fiction in relation with psychological-teleological needs. *The Sense of an Ending* is a unique study, since it denounces the falsity of our understanding of temporal transformations. Our psyche is bound to establish connections between language and time, to discover "meaning," that is, to look for narrative clusters in the world of endless temporal transformations. The apocalyptic imagination of thinkers is independent of determined social conditions; its purposeful design can be found within an ideological clustering of historical facts, for, in imagining a pattern of transformations, they also devise a teleological end of the world, establishing a false symmetry among myth, fiction, and factual reality. "A satisfying consonance" of the end in sight "with the origins and with the middle"<sup>52</sup> becomes possible from the perspective of the dominant ideological agency, yet this symmetry of thought

should be taken as a psychological-anthropological tenet, not as a sociological determination. However, since the infinite broadness of the connected horizons of time and understanding, “prophecy” is always falsified and reassessed in the benefit of “factuality.” Thus, our fictions attempt to mold time in their symmetry, and “peripateia,” as the sudden reversal in the final move of the social plot’s structure, should be seen as consubstantial with the naïve need for meaning at the heart of reality’s chaos. Either catastrophic or oppositely resurrective of the original mythical expectations, the typological intellectual construct of “ultimate meaning” is nothing more than an ideal function of the end, as an outcome in sight. Fiction is thus phenomenal, meaning that the fictional universe amounts to a quality of collective imagination that bands together the stories of individuals who strive for common sense with regard to a world that otherwise allows very few certainties to its survivors.<sup>53</sup>

Kermode’s view pays tribute to Hans Vaihinger’s *Philosophie des Als Ob* (as if) whose assumption was that human need for fictions represented ways of adaptation to a hostile and nearly incomprehensible environment. The alleged “as if” of fictional storytelling reconciled expectations with cognitive shocks, integrating the unpredictable venues of experience with the more credible postulations of the myth. Yet, Kermode reaches further, in his assumption that the psychological propensity for apocalypse “depends on a concord of imaginatively recorded past and imaginatively predicted future, achieved on behalf of us, who remain in the *middest*.” Thus, apocalyptic thought is seen as more than a function of cognitive imagination, since, at least in the West, it signifies a way to govern lives, shown in consonance with the Revelation of Saint John, a chiliastic fiction that has governed the imagination of Christians for centuries. This is what Doležel would ascribe to the alethic mode of his narrative theory, in which “the natural world generates stories of human condition,”<sup>54</sup> a plot, the tragic flow of which triggers the narrator’s need for a second, justificatory world of supernatural elements, where the management of causality (and thus, of narrative temporal frames) takes place with

the broader economy of the supernatural agencies. Richard Webster's commentary to Kermode's ...*Sense of Ending* is particularly relevant in this context:

Apocalyptic [thought] cannot thus reasonably be compared to the bleak doom-mongering we find in some quarters of contemporary society, for although it is invariably written against a background of social dislocation or oppression, what it asserts is the enduring optimism of Christianity. Biblical apocalyptic was traditionally derived from the creation myth as recorded in Genesis; in relocating a state of Edenic bliss it futurises nostalgia and holds out to a minority who are suffering for their faith the promise that the oppressor will be overthrown and a New Jerusalem ushered in, where the faithful live in harmony with God. No single interpretation can be applied to the way in which this myth has functioned throughout history and in that a structure of oppression is built into the Revelation of John, it lends itself all too readily to the causes of religious or racial intolerance. These features, though, do not by any means characterise all apocalyptic movements. It can be suggested that it is by legitimating and focusing utopian fantasies and imaging them, as does John, in erotic terms, that apocalyptic writings play their most important role in revolutionary social movements. What they provide is a vision of a transfigured future without which no revolutionary movement could retain its idealism, without which it would be psychologically difficult to permanently disengage belief from prevailing cultural orthodoxies. Such a function, we may presume, was played by the Revelation of John among the small persecuted minority of Christians for whom it was written.<sup>55</sup>

The vision of transfigured future becomes thus crucial for the resurrectionism of Utopian and religious militant thought, as much as for the idealist zest of any reformatory movement in Western political history. In other words, since the apocalypse is always there as an untold fear with history's sudden collapse, both religious promise and utopian thought can be seen as panacea, while

progress itself as confined to the historicity of the Enlightenment should be taken as indicative of a growing fear of the deontologization of time, as *horror vacui* with the failure of prophecy. Signifying the way in which we grant time historical meaning and procuring us a “consolation of form” the fiction of teleological transformation has imposed its negative meaning upon our civilization, in disagreement with Saint John’s vision, who took *apokalypsis* as *apokatastasis* (reintegration, regeneration), the catastrophe as crystallization of a new, heavenly order. Again, Webster’s commentary proves useful at this juncture:

The import of this argument is obscure but it becomes clear later on that “apocalyptic” is regarded as a fiction whose purpose is to “humanise time” and provide us with the consolation of form. Its predictions are held to be figurative, although it is admitted that they can be taken literally; with the exact nature of these predictions the argument is not concerned. In spite of the fact that the Revelation of John actually predicts not an end but a new beginning, Kermode appears to view this new beginning as the terminal point of history.<sup>56</sup>

But how can Kermode’s “theory of ending,” a bedazzling idea of the early seventies, be applied to the more specific proceedings of cultural anthropology? If one can easily agree with him on the issue of “meaning as derived from the end,” where “meaning is forged afterwards as a late metaphorical explanation of the lived past” (Webster, *ibid.*); conversely, one can hardly miss from sight the idea that in this view, common sense arises as identical with the quality of formative persuasions upon the psychology of communities. Does the coalescence of different perspectives owe to mutual strategies of survival that absorb the apocalyptic as common, or should one rather take the power of narration itself as fertile for the hopes and expectations of a community whose common future would be otherwise denounced as pure delusion? And if the obsession with an imminent end is the key theme of Western civilization, how should we look at the idea of progress? Is progress programmable through alternative fictional strategies to the chronic swan-song of our imaginations, lured in the habit of delusional teleologizing? Kermode’s

study concludes in designating inextricable associations among fictions, time, temporality as ascribed to human perceptions, and apocalyptic notions. However fascinating, these are already too broad inquiries for my research, which is purposefully limited to the applied functions of temporality in Shakespeare's last play.

### **1. 12. Theoretical updates: the discursive production of "selves"**

Two major ingredients could lead the contemporary researcher to applied views of temporality and novelty in cultural acts: these, I think, are the specific intentions of authorship, as much as the historical and local contexts of recollection, which become crucial markers of the hermeneutic efforts in the discipline of Cultural Anthropologies. Significantly, Clifford Geertz's late structuralist and interdisciplinary approach to the *Interpretation of Cultures* proposes that the notion of "culture" itself can be studied as an assemblage of texts, where the performative functions of the ritual serve initiatory and cognitive rationales. Geertzian theory allows me to discuss the major "textual" motifs in their significant correlations as part of the historical tapestry of events that changed England at the turn of the seventeenth century, insisting on the epistemic quality of "new expressions" as found in a non-deterministic relation with the tradition of cultural modalities that "novelty" either opposes or simply transgresses as part of a transformative process that empowers the possibility of sudden mutations. Knowing that such enterprise is always doomed to an incomplete determination of facts, I have chosen to illustrate my exposition with a number of textual clusters that help me reach an in-depth understanding of the epistemic transformations in the said period: these are significant connections between politics and the new geographic and cognitive horizons that aim to an insertion of the New World's themes into political and culturally acceptable contexts. Thus, my study owes to the major assumption that firsthand testimonies of colonization have been in fact subjected to a staunch transformation. Such hybridization of imaginary symbolism is not necessarily

mischievous. Rather, the allegorical touch of the first reports amounts to the European need for symbolic transference of the New World's "provocation" into established rhetorical and metaphorical contexts, emerged in unique cognitive contexts such as Columbus's persistent illusion that he had discovered the passage to Biblical Eden at the mouth of the Orinoco river. That such perceptive illusions would persist for at least two centuries, in spite of the more realistic countertrend of ethnographic and geographical observation, says much about the quality of knowledge and imagination in the pre-modern era, where the notion of truth was still established in accordance with Biblical and vernacular mythologems. Still, the underlying question of my discussion remains the same: namely how does cultural theory apply to unconventional texts, such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, a play to which no resolute critical determinations survive?

My analysis in this section will expand in concentric waves around a thematic core that deals with Shakespeare's last major piece of theatre as a pretext for an ampler discussion of the epistemic correlatives of this strange piece of drama. First, my answer engages along Derridian lines in the poststructuralist descriptions of the "subject" taken as an outcome of cultural and linguistic impositions. This will, I believe, convince my reader of what has been assessed as Caliban's reluctance to participate in Prospero's "linguistic empire" as embedded within a counter-narrative assertion of subjectivity. Next, I take into account Clifford Geertz's broad theoretical undertaking in the *Interpretation of Cultures* (1982), where the theoretician re-launches a traditional theme of modern cultural theories; that is, the quality of typical events. In spite of its postmodern anchoring, Geertz's manner of thought is significantly different from Derrida's deconstruction. Geertz's system aims to take advantage of both structuralist and poststructuralist moments by re-anchoring the issue of language within a psychological perspectivism that asserts the possibility of universality within a different assessment of commonalities. Yet, Geertz's deliberate partiality in thought explains only obliquely the possibility of novelty in cultural acts. Given my explicit intention to discuss the possibility of originality in cultural expression, I introduce terms and

analytical strategies inspired from the newer analytical core of Generative Anthropology developed by and around the works of Eric Gans – himself motivated by Durkheimian and Girardian discussions of sacred violence as a formative element in cultural discourse. Otherwise, my sources integrate valuable insights belonging to a broad range of contemporary contributions to the intertwined analyses of theatre, reformation, life, and culture in the said era, whose common note resides in the late-poststructuralist approach (also defined as post-poststructural) to the language of cultural theory. The theoretical contributions mentioned here, even when animated by different assumptions of value, can be included within a common methodological horizon, articulated around the need to anchor research within a set of assumptions grouped around the possibility of generation and novelty in cultural modes; my project is analogically developed around the same key theme, which takes into account the possibility of entirely genuine cultural production on already existent foundations.

However diverse, the common reliance upon terms such as *sieve*, *social picture*, *bildungs-narrative*, *performance*, *power*, *rare event*, *formative discourse*, *center*, *identity*, *freeplay*, *differentiality*, *presence*, *absence*, *teleological illusion*, *fashioning*, *substitution*, *thick description*, *syncretism*, *original event*, *mediator*, *mediation*, *sympathy*, *contiguity*, *mimetic conflict*, *performance*, *recognition*, *ending*, *stage of expression*, *temporality*, *reversal*, *charisma*, *identification*, *abortion* and *emplacement* can be judged as part of a contemporary tendency to locate the idea of culture in a broader idea of *context*. Evidently, the idea of “context” itself is grasped here within a philosophy of experience that defies the schemata of determinism. When contrasted to early renderings of Straussian and Jacobsonian ideas of *meaning* as fixed within systems of signification, a period when culture was said to be produced and reproduced in standardized descriptive rituals, contemporary cultural studies bring in common a touch of nominalism and relativism, where the idea of totality is re-ascribed to the fictional universes of power and their connoted mythologies. Thus, in agreement with postmodern theory, I employ a notion of a totality that does not look at structural coherence through



universalist lenses. But what is the best manner to start a description that looks at the quality of imagination as both “alluvionary” and “ablutionary”? Maybe the most adequate way would be to start in a recollection of the principles of deconstruction. The desirable “transcendental signified” of structuralist semiotics has been denounced as fallacious by Derrida, who proved against Levi-Strauss that events can rely on their own structures and that “eventness” corresponds to the unveiling of totalities at the core of autonomous structures, as truth found within, not outside self-sufficient worlds of meaning.<sup>57</sup> At the outset, I retain one of the most important assertions from Derrida’s classical discussion of language:

Language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique, deconstructive criticism aims to show that any text inevitably undermines its own claims to have a determinate meaning, and licences the reader to produce his own meanings out of it by an activity of semantic “freeplay”.<sup>58</sup> Deconstruction, the operation that has expressively been compared with the operation of “peeling away like an onion the layers of constructed meanings” ... designates a strategy for discovering the archeological strata of connotation acquired through cultural praxis, where denotations were either censored or emphasized in order to bring expression to the actual shape. (89)

Thus, to make use of a classical phrase from Appignanesi and Garrat, I look at the text in relation with what the expressive form has concealed or repressed, “in particular the assumptions of *presence* (the hidden representations of guaranteed certainty) referred to as logocentrism.” (Appignanesi 79) In short, one can trace the development of postmodern analysis of identity as defined in the aftermath of Derridian philosophy referring the question of identity to its social-psychological clustering, which is, in fact, a way to deny the ascription of “truth” to metaphysical continents. From deconstructionism, one learns that “any meaning or identity is provisional and relative; because it is never exhaustive, it can always be traced further back to a prior network of differences, and further back again” (Appignanesi 79-80). The alleged stability of representation, a hope of all possible

Structuralism,<sup>59</sup> is thus scattered by the philosopher of deconstruction, together with the connoted possibility of a constant subject of representation. Hence, Derrida postulates (in a Nietzschean and maybe also Sartrian gloss) that human fear of nothingness is the motivation of complacency around the mythical metaphors of identity. Furthermore, a Post-Derridean scholar, Chris Weedon, analyzes the vacillating, ephemeral effect of representation in relation with subjectivity in the following note, reproduced from her 1987 *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*: “The effect of representation, in which meaning is apparently fixed, is but a temporary retrospective fixing. Signifiers are always located in a discursive context and the temporary fixing of meaning in a specific reading of a signifier depends on this discursive context” (25). The poststructuralist response to Saussurian determinism has reviewed the possibility of subject-repositioning in relation with its particular perspective upon the world of social discourse, thus discussing the status of individuals’ changing social roles and identities in relation with their situation in social hierarchies. That subjectivity migrates between rhetorical systems has already been proposed by Derrida. However, post-Derrideans ventured further in discovering the subject’s adaptive attitudes in communication situations that reveal the need for common perspectives. In particular, the notion of “positioning” serves my broader aim to explain the meta-theatricality of *The Tempest* as a strategy of hierarchization around Prospero’s privileged (allegorical) perspective and agency. In an already classic study, “Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves,” Bronwin Davies and Rom Harre discuss the notion of “subject positioning” as “the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself” (48). Reflexivity and separation appear now as self-motivational moves to joining the projects of “grand historical narratives” from individualized positions in the choir of social hierarchy, connoting the absorption of particular symbolic roles and missions of the hero within the generative sieves of cultural systems. Davies and Harre see identity as a self-assuming search for uniqueness, as

craving for self-determination in the already existent world of communication and discourse:

We do struggle with the diversity of experience to produce a story of ourselves, which is unitary and consistent. If we don't, others demand of us that we do. We also discursively produce ourselves as separate from the social world and are thus not aware of the way in which the taking up of one discursive practice or another (not originating in ourselves) shapes the knowing or telling we can do. Thus we experience these selves as if they were entirely our own production. We take on the discursive practices and story lines as if they were our own and make sense of them in terms of our own particular experiences. The sense of continuity that we have in relation to being a particular person is compounded out of continued embodiment and so of spatio-temporal continuity and shared interpretations of the subject positions and story lines available within them. How to do *being* a particular non-contradictory person within a consistent story line is learned both through textual and lived narratives.<sup>60</sup>

But this late revelation is one of existential-phenomenological descent, edging on Heidegger's rejection of the transcendental ego: looking for a proper niche, the incomplete subject "abandoned" to the clear and overwhelming presence of the world, converts the narrative of history into meta-historical "storytelling." This allows the subject's insertion into the dynamic world of experience as a new player, as one who adapts the essential mythology of culture to its own cognitive priorities: its incompleteness craving for totality, its marginality aiming to centrality, its instinct of temporality always in search of narrative-teleological clusters to the epochal question of being.

Seen from the perspective of incompleteness, the politician's proper "instinct" can be entirely related to his ability to operate with the symbolism of signs: as bound to the horizon of historicity, modern politicians are recognizable by their

instinctive skill at associating politics with the mythical prestige of cultural icons, within a dynamic of gestures that aims at the reinsertion of “meaning” into the experiential language of difference. Similarly, Prospero’s *translatio imperii* consists precisely of persuasion, yet the unique metaphor of *The Tempest* places nature and civilization in a unique vicinity, a stage allowing a temporary association between forces of nature and nurture (cf. Hart, *Comparing Empires*).<sup>61</sup> Thus, the unique “climate” of Prospero’s bewitched island does not refer to its meteorological qualities as much as it reflects the power of semiotics visible in the clash between Prospero’s magic and Caliban’s curses. Disenchantment of the insular realm from Sicorax’s spells by the Duke of Milan signifies the re-ascription of the island’s elemental spirits to a higher power, a magic contract directed at restoring their initial autonomy. Analogically, I will prove that the architecture of modern politics, as determined for addressing the need for meaning in the age of disenchantment, is inextricably dependent on the quality of symbolic expression, which can be seen in fact as the re-enchantment in relation with the quality of a new paradigm.

In one of the guest-lectures offered at the University of Western Ontario, in 1997, Julia Kristeva<sup>62</sup> reiterated a classical concern of Nihilism: namely, that the illusion of autonomy enjoyed by the subject of modernity could soon be replaced by a revival of pessimism in ethical thought, given the strong hypothesis that we come to grow and live totally hypnotized; to the modern psychologist, the undeniable supposition that all our modes of consciousness might be given from the outside might be the most frightening thought. Louis Althusser’s analogical definition of ideology, a major source of reflection for our own study, is, in fact, easily comparable with Kristeva’s reflection. In a Post-Marxian stanza, Althusser defines ideology as the “representation of imaginary relationships of the individuals to their real conditions of existence.”<sup>63</sup> The need for totality compels the subject to presuppose completeness in the anarchic domain of experience, subduing cognitive shocks to already accepted assumptions; thus, in order to avoid fragmentation (a Lacanian idea) the subject chooses to form an ego in conjunction with the stage of social imagination.<sup>64</sup> But this process unveils a dynamic play of cognitive tensions

between competing subjects and their alternate perspectives upon the prospected quality of the whole. Poststructuralist thinkers have labored, ever since, to collate the theories of substitution and of the incongnoscible within their definitions of experience. Poststructuralism, in the aftermath of Austin's and Wittgenstein's philosophies of language, also speaks of an *order* of such substitutions, governed by the rules of semiotics, a phenomenon in language to which the classical Marxian theory of dialectic transformations does not hold any longer. Hence, poststructuralists define language and history as phenomena governed by specific psychological laws, a superimposition in which language determines the ideas of value and the rules of historical recollection. By denying the access of experience to essences, they also denounce the illusion of autonomy enjoyed by the citizen-subject<sup>65</sup> in relation with the symbolical persuasion of the official rhetorical systems. Dialectics itself, as conducive to ethical resolutions, belongs ascribed to the mechanisms of deliberation in language, these being devoid of historical grounding. The "semantic freeplay," the celebrated syntagm proposed by Jacques Derrida,<sup>66</sup> has been invoked ever since in theories that acknowledge or deny their tribute to the deconstructive method.<sup>67</sup> The appearance of new structures, Derrida writes, has always been visible in history: the advent of genuine systems of thought and expression is determined as "rupture" with their past, their origin and cause, and this defines the very condition of structural specificity.<sup>68</sup> The idea of a centered structure, Derrida says, corresponds to the notion of freeplay, which is founded "upon a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which is itself beyond the reach of the freeplay." Such false teleologies belong to the syntax of meaning, being denounced as mere facts in language.<sup>69</sup> Stability in language, Derrida iterates, is motivated by the need to avoid anxiety, as a way to unconditional exposure and submission to the new facets of the game of temporal experience:

With this certitude, anxiety can be mastered, for anxiety is invariably the result of a certain mode of being implicated in the game, of being caught by the game, of being as it were from the very beginning at stake in the game. From the basis of what we therefore call the center (and which,

because it can be either inside or outside, is as readily called the origin as the end, as readily *arché* as *telos*), the repetitions, the substitutions. the transformations, and the permutations are always *taken* from a history of meaning [*sens*] - that is, a history, period - whose origin may always be revealed or whose end may always be anticipated in the form of presence. This is why one could perhaps say that the movement of any archeology, like that of any eschatology, is an accomplice of this reduction of the structurality of structure and always attempts to conceive of structure from the basis of a full presence which is out of play. If this is so, the whole history of the concept of structure, before the rupture I spoke of, must be thought of as a series of substitutions of center for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the center. Successively, and in a regulated fashion, the center receives different forms or names. The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies ("Structure" 278-294).

"Freeplay" ensures the coherence of meaning within sign-systems as imbuing them with the illusion of transcendental signifiers, the alleged need for mythical truths present behind the utterance of new denotations. Yet, defying the constancy of aggramatical terms (*pharmakon*),<sup>70</sup> *freeplay* is always "bi-polar,"<sup>71</sup> opening and sustaining two alternative referential spaces in the cognitive field of the subject: first, the tension with "history" around transformations that need to be legitimized as part of the original meaning; second, the tension with "presence" that needs to be re-acknowledged metonymically as presence of a transcendental authority behind the gestures that modify history as part of the open experiential horizon. This train of thought forces Derrida to acknowledge the intrinsic character of "freeplay" as equivalent with

the disruption of presence. The presence of an element is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain. Freeplay is always an interplay of absence and presence, but if it is to be radically conceived, freeplay must be

conceived of before the alternative of presence and absence; being must be conceived of as presence or absence beginning with the possibility of freeplay and not the other way around.<sup>72</sup>

The nostalgia for origins is assessed as a phenomenological tendency of social interaction, of its alleged resistance to change. Consequently, in traditional cultures, the theme of presence needs to be purged of all its contingencies. Since this is shown as impossible, the logic of original innocence snowballs in pre-Nietzschean philosophies or, on the modern level of hermeneutical methodology, informs the search for ideal structures in human behavior.<sup>73</sup> Any teleological prospect in relation with the assertion of fixed meanings is thus denounced together with the illusion of “real presence” – this is to say of a full presence of the metaphysical guardian as part of a teleological design of nature. The dream of a true origin to be found behind the knowledge of signs needs to be abandoned in light of Nietzschean propaedeutic of the *Übermensch*, in which meaning is entirely subdued to the logic of self-assertion.<sup>74</sup>

Obviously, Derrida points the finger at the artificial character of any possible *bildungs*-narrative, denounced as an ideological assumption built around the dominant mythology of power. To me, as a searcher of applied terminologies, “freeplay” signifies the need of illusion and re-assurance in all possible cognitive acting, or, in other words, subjectivity attempting to discover a coherent conjunction between gesturing and the ideology of the day. Deconstruction presents the manner of self-cognition in relation to the subject’s need for identity, while change of fashion in thought is supportive of such interdependence. Freeplay would be, then, equivalent with the notion of fashion in politics, a kind of fashion dedicated to the possibility of formative persuasion. Yet, if real, such seminal powers can spring only from the mythical quality of language as logos. In the world of traditional politics, where “freeplay” is perceived as the agent of entropy and transformation, the coherence and stability of mediation depend on the subsequent clarity of rhetorical and symbolic assumptions. These embody the leader’s particular idiom of promises: to use an Austinian term, I will call them

“performative utterances,” statements devoid of truth value whose effectiveness depends entirely on their contextual clarity.

How does the theory of performatives apply to the Duke of Milan’s statements, or, better said, how should the symbolic language of promises be read on Prospero’s sullied lips? In the last section of my study, I analyze Prospero’s position as the central character and as the performative agency of the play’s intrigue. Prospero’s meta-theatrical role, I will propose, is bound to redirect the need for centrality in social behavior around the assessment of the crown’s invisible presence in language and social acting. To expand upon Derrida’s thought, I would add that the coherence of cultures as referential systems of signs depends on the relation between “freeplay” and its allegiance to “transcendental” signifiers.<sup>75</sup> A *pharmakon* in this instance represents the ambiguous gift of the providential leader, who by his magic voice and presence, chooses to utter those performative utterances<sup>76</sup> that threaten the expected course of dialectics, “reteleologizing” history by means of proper acting. Even though my purpose does not bind interpretation directly to the theories of magic (e.g. Mauss, Eliade, Culiano), I will acknowledge the possibility of association between the said theory and the special status of imprecatory magic in the theory of performance. Mutuality of social actions takes place when “freeplay” as a space of meaningful difference from the mythical schemes, arises as reassessment of the initial cognitive horizon within contextual manners that are perceived as harmonic with the core of ideal assumptions. This is to say that the theme of origins is updated by each era of understanding and that (taken in the most general sense) each era uses typical magic performatives as its preeminent formative metaphors. Like in any ideological rendering of speech, the inherent historical contradiction is solved in language by means of an option that hides the irreconcilables of lived experience within the symmetry of allegory.



### 1. 13. Mimetic perplexities: towards a post-historical analysis

From Clyde Kluchohn's notable work *Mirror of Man*, Clifford Geertz, a thinker who inaugurated the era of *post-poststructuralism*, adopts several convergent definitions of "culture" of which we retained only the most powerful: according to Geertz, in general, "culture" – Geertz asserts – might define "a total way of life of a people," but the notion can also acquire more technical connotations in the realm of semiotics. A culture can be defined as a way of thinking, feeling and believing" which is to describe it paradigmatically, "as a behavioral map, sieve, or matrix," in which "learnt behavior" is determined as cognitive perspective of and upon the world, belonging to a certain group at a certain moment in history. A designated culture can also be described as a "storehouse of pooled learning," writes Geertz, or simply as "learned behavior." This semiotic view of culture proposed by the Princeton professor reviews a classic assumption of social sciences, "believing, with Max Weber that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" and taking culture "to be those webs."<sup>77</sup> The historicism and relativism of post-structural views is entirely visible here, and Geertz's dilemma seems to be that of proposing a valid terminology within a framework that has already been shown as extremely relativistic and dynamic. Consequently, the anthropologist acknowledges the unavoidable partiality and incompleteness of his search. Geertz advocates for an interpretational method that offers a view of the system in its intimate theoretical underpinnings, where the central symbolism as the underlying core of articulations of esthetic and ideological expression should not freeze the interpretational act in a lifeless hermeneutical effort<sup>78</sup>.

A dynamic look at cultures as cultural histories should take into account the reciprocity between historical and cultural registers, within a clustering of mutual reverberations where the typicality of human acts is discussed in relation with the universe of specific behavioral motivations. At this juncture, Geertz<sup>79</sup> revives one of Frye's classical interpretations of cultural acts: he does so by re-addressing the question of Aristotelian *poetike*, and discovering, with the Canadian scholar, the poet's craft as an art of "typical events," by use of ideal patterns that, in

their appeal to universal psychological determinants transcend the quest for historical verity.<sup>80</sup> However, this intuition opens the possibility of new anthropological definitions, in which the affirmation of power is entirely dependent upon its articulations in the mythical representations of collective memory. The effort of assertion in politics requires the leader's theatrical effort and skill, while power itself – when analyzed from Geertz's skeptical anthropological stand – appears as an epiphenomenal outcome of theatrical propaganda. Geertz's discussion of *Negara, The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali* concentrates on the joint functions of ceremonial theater and mythical politics. These generated, in pre-modern Bali as well as in many other societies, a self-appointing cult of the leader, in which the princely actors participate in festivities specifically designed to support their central roles within allegories of power. In a similar note, Louis Marin described the ceremonies at the court of Louis XIV, where the young king's dance at sunrise was seen as a portent of universal order. Taking a new step towards a political theory of gesturing, Bevington and Holbrook's comment in the 1998 study *Politics of the Stuart Court Masque* adds a sharp edge to Geertz's "theatre-state," specifying the universal value of "masking" as a preeminent ritual of political action, equally present in classical and contemporary political settings:

Through ceremonies of music, dance and public display, the leaders essentially become what they have created through their impersonations of power; the medium of the ceremony becomes the reality of political authority. This anthropological approach is a skeptical one in that *it sees power as the end product of illusions that are being consciously manipulated* [...] [e.m.] The Renaissance court masque flourished in this environment as confirmation that some things in the world of political power never really change. (Bevington 6)

Instead of alluding to Levi-Straussian universalism, Geertz speaks of a typicality of human events, centered around clusters of behavioral psychology. This is a way of acknowledging structure and repetition in communication processes without missing the quality of the original cultural contexts. When contrasted to the

dogmatism of cultural traditions, the vacillating symbolism of cultural expression can reveal a commonality of behavioral aspects across designated cultural borders, such as the typical needs for symbol, ritual and ideals in all possible community life. The experiential, lived aspect of communication binds psychologies together, inside or outside the internal border of cultural difference, and this is what Geertz sees as the humanistic touch of his method: the notion of a universal human condition is taken as paradigmatic. Playing skillfully with words here, Geertz calls this a “saying something about something,” – a communication event that in its essentially *ritual* aspect

accomplishes and so creates what, better than typical or universal, could be called “a paradigmatic human event” – that is, one that tells us less what happens than the kind of thing that would happen if, as is not the case, life were art.” (Geertz 445-450)

But how could this preliminary view of communication find its proper roots in dynamic historical conjectures? Life is not art, and Geertz is entirely aware of Poststructuralist contributions to expand the search for meaning to a more comprehensive view of the *contexts* that make possible cultural production. The hermeneutician’s initial temptation for proposing *weltanschauungen* (devised as conceptually crystalline world-pictures) is transgressed, being re-discussed from a post-Bakhtinian perspective, where the “choir” of historical voices is said to empower unique constellations of relations between cultural actors and their actions.<sup>81</sup> Attempting to “take the pulse of life” and of its embedded historical specificity within his method, Geertz acknowledges the implicit insufficiency of his own posture: his own vision of intentional expression might be broadened to integrate every possible definition of cultural acts, even those beyond language, now treated as “texts.”<sup>82</sup> Geertz’s “updated” hermeneutical method consists of choosing to see events as narrative reservoirs, in the moment where existence is remembered as the humanized intertext of a universe whose infinity entices the continuous surprise of human experience. Religious emotion makes no exception,

since the maxims of religion also get altered in the fabric of social interchange, as clusters of a dynamic history of imagination:

As life moves, persuasion moves with it and indeed helps to move it. More bluntly, whatever God may or may not be—living, dead, or merely ailing—religion is a social institution, worship a social activity, and faith a social force. To trace the pattern of their changes is neither to collect relics of revelation nor to assemble a chronicle of error. It is to write a social history of the imagination. (Geertz 20)

The text and meta-text of cultural imagination can be now meaningfully opposed and compared as interdependent forms of psychological consistency. Participation makes the difference; it brings a different coherence into the subject's world. Predictably, the notion of subject positioning is crucial for Geertz's entire theoretical system. The alleged immanence of experiential shock, as genuine potential for transformation of meaning in communication, is also invoked.<sup>83</sup> Here, the cultural anthropologist insists on the special situation of "performative" aspects in communication, taken as semantic contexts and dynamic conjectures of existence. (Of course, he refers to a "civilized" existence that is able to discover its nourishment in language and understands the generative value of key-gestures performed in special circumstances.) Such interpretation restrains deliberately from relativism in its survey of cultures as assemblages of "texts," now understood as extensions of imaginary and discursive meanings beyond the material (written word) and "even beyond verbal" (Geertz 448-449). An optimistic semiotician, Geertz attempts to sketch the original glyphs for the connoted events of human experience, in an ample move of thought that hopes to surpass the fear of incompleteness and relativism in analysis through a deeper understanding of social psychology.

"Culture," Geertz writes elsewhere, can be understood as "shaped behavior" whose gesturing confers symbolic meaning upon actions and speech.<sup>84</sup> But how does meaning get attributed to entirely innovative gestures or original

communication strategies? Original expressions always “occur,” but for a gesture to become part of a culture, that particular act needs to be recognized as meaningful by the whole community, which makes it part of a dynamic context.<sup>85</sup> Although necessarily incomplete and always producing methodological debates on the right ponder of analytical discourses, such a method<sup>86</sup> asserts the possibility that symbolic forms can be understood in their dynamism, as either shaping new modes of perception or as being already encoded in the historical perceptions of value. Such a view of Postmodern extraction (written in the era of cultural relativism and anti-totalitarian hermeneutics) asserts the particular relevance of places, and, as such, of individual positions within designated cognitive horizons, cultural, ethnic or geographical. It is only from this angle, labeled as “microcosmic,” “miniaturesque,” and “circumstantial” (23), that Geertz proceeds to articulate the greater pictures of social analysis, where notions such as “legitimacy, modernization, integration, conflict, charisma, structure” [e.m.] make possible a view that asserts creativity and imaginativeness in analytical processes. To use one of his recurrent terms, this is to discover cultural expression as part of a “social semantics,” in other words, as a web of syncretism, where spatial, temporal and ethnic particulars become markers of the dynamic cultural imagination. My own analysis of Shakespeare’s era retains this theoretical perspective. But speaking of “charisma,” Geertz is often used as a source by younger theoreticians of culture preoccupied with refining original theories of performance in cultural acts. In a move of thought important for my own demonstration, one of the contemporary performance anthropologists, Thomas J. Csordas, emphasizes the importance of charisma in the constitution and transmission of ritualized religious messages:

If charisma is a rhetorical process that transforms self and habitus, and if the locus of charisma is in the language and performance of religious ritual, a central hermeneutic task must be to determine the way *language and performance achieve their transformative effect* [e.m.]. Can the characteristic persuasiveness, the metaphorical vividness, and the evocation of the sacred in ritual language justifiably be said to be

creative, orienting the self toward new patterns of engagement and experience? Or, on the contrary, is such language primarily the servant of a linguistic and cultural status quo, lacking the creative potential inherent in the language of poetry or even in everyday speech? (Csordas 158-159)

Csordas looks at the creativity of ritual language as a “self process,” one that can adjust time and plant the seeds for a “new way of understanding the world.” His definition of the ritual process includes objects, gestures, somatic expressions and language. The predominantly spoken character of Catholic ritual relates the calendar of festivities to a psychology of events that depends upon the authority of symbolic formulas, the so-called “words of knowledge.” The ceremonial system “includes a system of genres and a specialized vocabulary” as well as a role-system developed around the theatrical performance of rituals. Yet, to Csordas, the difference between rites in traditional societies and rituals in Catholic society is one that amounts to the epistemic status of rituals:

Anthropological accounts of traditional societies customarily treat ritual as a window on the nature of society, as events that throw light on underlying cultural and structural patterns: *society creates ritual as a self-affirmation*. In a movement like Catholic Pentecostalism, this relation between society and ritual is inverted. Ritual events like prayer meetings are both historically and structurally prior to the generation of distinctive patterns of thought, behavior, and social organization. The events provide the earliest models for the organization of aspects of community life that subsequently transcend the boundaries of the events: *ritual creates society as a self-affirmation*. (Csordas 158)

Thus, Csordas’ synthetic theory of performance reverses the status of mediation in concordance with Austin’s theory of performatives<sup>87</sup> and also with the original Geertzian analysis of creativity in performative utterances. Geertz had described performance as being able to order and to update structure in the themes of social life, in a manner that “...puts a construction on them, makes them to those

historically positioned to appreciate the construction, meaningful –visible, tangible, graspable– real in an ideational sense” (Geertz 412-453). This had led Geertz to the strong conclusion that the quality of cultural performances becomes determinant for the possibility of religious life, a statement that inspired Csordas in his analysis of psycho-cultural themes, seen “not only in the ideational sense but also in a phenomenological sense,” an attitude “consistent with the notion that cultural performance has a power to transform both experience and social relations” (Csordas 159). The reiteration of metaphor’s special cognitive roles and powers re-sensitizes anthropological thought to Geertz’s idea, who sees performance as able “to order the themes of life into an encompassing structure,” presenting the themes of life in connection with their fundamental nature (Csordas 159).

#### **I. 14. Girard, Gans and the theme of ritual sacrifice versus dissociation**

Clifford Geertz, a pathmaker in cultural anthropology, has not been alone in his desire to understand the collective psychological mechanisms of representation. The study of singularities in cultures, where unique events are accounted for as emerging from contexts to which they cannot be related deterministically, makes the core of a new current in cultural studies, named “Generative Anthropology” by its founder Eric Gans.<sup>88</sup> A brief introduction of the terms used by each of the two scholars, René Girard and Eric Gans, will clarify my own methodological language and foci in the following chapters. First, one has to look at the quality of Girardian theory of typical events, founded around the central concept of mimetic desire; this has become a landmark in contemporary anthropology, while his already classical discussion of the mimetic mechanisms in *The Violence and the Sacred* has inspired a new current of thought in contemporary cultural studies. Rooting any possible cultural gesture in the psychology of violence, together with all its possible deferral and detour in *politike* has become the core of this growing school of thought.

The postulations expressed by Girard crystallize around the staggering idea the human psyche has deep ties with the archetypal gesture of violence, and that the formation of social-linguistic abilities in human groups can be explained in connection with social strategies that aim to the deferral of violence and its re-tabulation as sacrifice through ritual, worship, and storytelling. In accord with the poststructuralist tradition, Girard’s main assumption is that social communities share models of behavior in the institutional cultic symbols. In this context, the formative myths bring at their core sacrificial characters that offer the community mimetic models: the hero’s symbolic attributes are reproduced by the group in a manner that presents the mimesis of desire and the sacrificial episode as fundamental notions of cultural anthropology. Girard also suggests that the formation of *desire* in human minds is not at all an original impulse. Either borrowed directly from the mythical hero, or adopted through the mediation of contemporary imitators of the original sacrifice, the object of common desire complies with the rules of mimesis and can be discussed as a core of social



psychology, given its role in the formation of common-sense around religious archetypes. Since any possible desire signifies the need for identity in the world of the subject, one could assert that even in our deepest, untold desires we choose to imitate mythical heroes and to re-ascribe the symbolical clusters of meaning to our own cast on the ethical stage of history. Predictably then, similar desires provoke mimetic conflicts and generate a psychology of competition. Considering that the object or the symbolic status of the model generates an antagonism among imitators who find themselves fighting for the same object (or symbol) of value, civilization itself represents a compromising strategy of relation with the common myth of desire, whose narration and further theological elaborations aim at proper strategies of violence deferral.

One of Girard's chief assertions is that the generation of human language represented an event of unique importance in the evolution of primates, empowering the further development of human cultures. Ancestral cultures are animated by a similar "blood-thirst"; hence, their initial moments of solidarity and compromise with the other world was set around the ritual significance of blood offerings. In the *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (1981), the Stanford professor describes the victimary process as "the missing link and the boundary between the animal world and the human world." Given the importance of his intuition, one can draw more than one direction of future research from this line. The victim-gods are found almost everywhere in the history of religious thought, and our reliance upon sacrificial victims in social value systems can be explained by recourse to ages of humanity where ritual violence took the center stage of community-life. To Girard, this reveals the common horizon of remote cultural psychologies: the contemporary anthropologist does not lose from sight the fact that the infinite variety of cultures and myths display striking similarities around the archaic motifs of ritual sacrifice, a fact that determines Girard to revitalize Durkheim's old postulation that takes the beginning of all culture in relation with archaic religion and sacrifice.<sup>89</sup> At this juncture, Girard introduces one of his key-assumptions: originary speech has occurred as an attempt to mediate and

compromise among individuals whose common interest had been the compromise of survival, equivalent with the deferral of innate violence in communication acts. From this post-Darwinian perspective of community, Girard goes further in discussing the mechanism of mimetic rivalry in desire as a double-fold propensity of behavior, an ambiguous energy responsible for both escalation and deferral of violence in social groups. This is to say that communication receives symbolic value in relation with the conflict that the mediation of speech tries to defer, and also any possible discourse can be ultimately analyzed in relation with the tabooistic impositions of value in communication. In other words, all possible discourse carries along with it the priorities of negotiation and compromise.

Relevantly, Girard's elegant formulation ascribes the semiotic process to a tripartite organization of communication that adds a new element to the classical division of subject– object. This is the mediator, whose function consists of crystallizing the mimetic process of desire around the mediator's attributes. The motif repeats in each of Girard's books, yet each time thought is elevated to new qualities of elaboration. The formation of common sense around communal tenets of value, Girard suggests, comes from an original social conflict around the themes of guilt and justice. The Hebrew core of traditions is discussed at large, in connection with the “archetypal” situation of the first Christian martyrs, whose punishments signified the transgression of the law when judged from the perspective of the prosecutors. But history, in the case of Jesus of Nazareth, has chosen to save the counterfactual version of events, in which the martyrdom of innocence has become preeminent within a different economy of sacrifice and salvation, that of the first Christians,<sup>90</sup> defiant of the old norms, whose initial effectiveness in the application of cruelty opens the space for a counter-effect in the redistribution of values:

There truly would be a mythological genesis if all these crimes were incorporated into the final apotheosis. The Christian saint would become a mythological hero. He would embody aspects of both supernatural benefactor and all-powerful troublemaker, capable of punishing each act

of negligence or indifference toward him by sending a plague. What is essentially characteristic of the mythological quality of the sacred is its dual nature – it is both harmful and beneficial. It leaves the impression of a double transcendence, a paradoxical conjunction, because we understand it from a Christian perspective considered by us to be the norm, whereas in fact it is unique. (Girard, *Scapegoat* 199).

Whenever the “sacredness” of the sacrificial interpretation thrives, new mimetic motifs arise. Thus, institutional order needs to adjust itself to the new language of times, either by acceptance of the counter-narrative or, more subtly, by replacement with a substitute-formative narrative, where the values of political correctness prevail, while the metaphors of sacrificial violence are brought under stricter control. Hence, the author’s key-statement in one of his last volumes (a book of interviews), *Quand les choses commenceront* (1994), where the cultural historian designates *desire* as a psychological mechanism of imitation, in both its sacrificial and glorious aspect, as cognitive propensity beyond the quality of individual need, hinging on the axis of metaphysical elaborations. Here, we discover Girard’s memorable maxim: “all desire is a desire to be” (28), where the subject’s aspiration for completeness is primarily credited to the sacred mediator.

Complex social orders depend on initial acts of mediation, whose significance is only possible *in distance*, a distance supported both by the epiphanizing quality of cultic mystery and the unreachable remoteness of the sacrificial episode in time and space. Once the original history has been forgotten, it is oblivion that ensures the quality of myth as set within a horizon inaccessible to the subject, an *illud tempus*,<sup>91</sup> “a time before time” inscribed within an ideal horizon beyond the world of experience and historical transformation. Girard names this “external mediation” and opposes its trait of remoteness to the semiotic situation of “internal mediation” – where both negotiation and settlement take place in the cognitive and social space of the subject. The original quality of this historicized form of mediation resides in its immediacy to the world of social interactions, where, on the one hand, the original message of mimetic example is

reasserted, while, on the other, the historical mediator produces *envy*, embodying an antagonist and a hindrance in the acquisition of the desired object and status. Acting in the name of Gods is only human, yet this contest between competitors fighting for recognition produces a fertile tension in the space of social expression, where the internal and the external qualities of mediation are antagonized between rivals struggling for the same status. From this stage on, any description of civilization can be assessed as an “evolutionary”<sup>92</sup> process in the symbolism of social acts, where the initial propensity for violence is hidden under new layers of linguistic significance.

If, in classical societies, the mimetic rivalry had been solved by the integration of social energies into ritual and ceremonial practices, in advanced societies, such mimetic dilemmas make the subject of literatures, whose “anthropological” functions have been to denounce and to solve the symbolic quandary generated by contradictory modes of mediation. Here, Girard makes an assertion of crucial importance for our theoretical method: *catharsis*, as the medical metaphor of reconciliation through theater can be seen as related to the anthropological function of “conflict deferral” gained through rhetorical sublimation of the conflicting individual positions in the economy of mimetic process: “if there is normal order in societies, it must be the fruit of an anterior crisis” (*Quand ces choses commenceront* 29). However, this assertion can be seen in relation to the anthropological notion of *theatricality*, taken here as the living, performative aspect of human expression, as the ideal testing polygon of social experiment, where rhetorical-symbolic injunctions are tested for their persuasive potential. Indeed, the idea of subject-positioning in the struggle for social compromising should be clearly discussed in relation with the ideal qualities of theatricality, as dialogical posturing of performers. But, here, as Geertz suggests, the world of anthropological theory can learn from the more applied discipline of Narratology. Perpetually embodying the world of cultural representations, literary characters “do” nothing but illustrate our own conduct in exceptional conditions. We do become those characters, then, as soon as their rhetorical and behavioral

strategies are adopted as part of a coherent cultural symbolism. Life also imitates art, as art re-conjures the generative power of the myth. The fiction-writers denounce the gullibility of human passions, the intricate web of dissimulations and deceit weaved around the desires for privileged status on the social stage.

Any possible ethical position with respect to the character's special situation in a literary work, Girard says, can be ultimately reduced to the complex of dissimulation strategies aimed to the deferral of truth that articulate the *topoi* of literary conventions woven around the central presence of the hero. The quality of literary works can be, without mistake, thus assessed in relation with the authenticity of the character's complexity, whose psychological convolution can be assessed by failure to attain "the Grail of desire," and whose tragic quality matches the proximity to reach an impossible ideal. To Girard, this is the identification with the unreachable figure of the original mediator, a process that ends necessarily (and positively) in failure. Predictably, one of the first applications of Girardian theory comes through the discussion of the Biblical text through a hermeneutic effort to discovering the Scriptures as the science of man. In *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, the theory of violence receives its first use in the discussion of the Gospels, whose guiltless victim, Christ, founds a religious myth based on the initial act of illegitimate cruelty and its further transgression through acceptance of the sacrificial character of crucifixion.<sup>93</sup> Both Girard and Gans insist on the following aspect: murder prevails in the narrative of the passion; Christian society has evolved in relation with this myth, whose insistence upon violence and sacrifice has placed medieval Christians in an impossible position with the Christian fathers' original postulations of value.

One might rush to assume that the narrative of sacrifice has fashioned mentalities to the extent that the Gospels have been assumed as the key items of an active ethical code. In fact, Girard suggest, the Middle Ages man grew in a world of contradictions, where the example of the Gospels has rendered visible the space of opposition between ideal morality and the construction of prescriptive ethics, while Medieval political societies empowered violence and discovered systematically the

status of exception to the original spirit of Christianity to justify extreme brutality in the treatment of enemies and the application of punishments. The man of the Middle Ages looks at Christianity with the eyes of passion and, with the exception of very few, submits to the notion of kingship in total ignorance of the philosophical attributes of devotional love. In short, Medieval subjects were exposed to the Christian ideas as part of a political horizon of violence, where authority, hierarchy and law were administered in the very name of the Gospels. This state of affairs in the world did not and could have rapidly changed, and the temporal horizon of emancipation has in fact proven the opposite of the projected appropriation to Christian ideals.

The secularizing cultures of European states did not know of any alternate possibility since the desired appropriation of the extra-mundane ideal of Christian perfection would have pre-supposed a universal community of hermitage. Finally, it is secularization, not revelation, which has to be seen as the solution of the mimetic crisis brought about by Pauline Christianity, a religion built on inoperable metaphysical foundations.<sup>94</sup> And it is modern societal abandonment of the conflicting theme of sacrificial violence – not its prospected internalization – that has brought about the possibility of tolerance in ethical life. But, predictably, this shows that modern ethics has been instituted at a great price: the gradual oblivion of the sacrificial model that would have otherwise assured the symbolic coherence around mythical mediators.

In the absence of a proper motivation for imitation, the effectiveness of sacrificial violence needs to be re-discussed in relation with the application of justice, and Girard associates the continuous recession of sacrificial violence throughout the centuries of the Enlightenment with the connoted decline of ignorance in the West. In addition, the great Renaissance humanists have brought their share to the process of cultural deritualization. Consequently, modern man has indeed learned to forget the power of sacrificial violence, but his following refuge in the strategies of reason has condoned the all-human need for victimary heroes. Frightened by the possibility of recurrence of a major mimetic crisis, the moderns

have continuously labored to expand the domain of the law and of civic responsibility to areas of behavior that were once assigned to the foundations of religious life. Protestant societies, through their insistence on the ethical message of Scriptures, have led the journey to rationalization and self-assertion, the two pillars of order in the West. Eric Gans has started his own thought in agreement with Girard. Gans's newest contributions to the emerging field of Generative Anthropology expand on Girardian basic concepts, found as key-notions at the crossroads of otherwise separate disciplines, namely literary critique and social studies. Discussing social condition in connection with the themes of sacrifice and community, this emerging branch of contemporary anthropology owes many of its philosophical insights to the epistemic critique of representation. Yet, Gans attempts to develop the formerly defined concepts into a new field. Thus, he emphasizes the nuanced quality of repetition in ritual gestures, unveiling both similarity and difference at the heart of recurring processes. In a move directed at questioning the philosophical status of immanence in cognitive acts, Gans understands the notion of deferral through representation as a creative process, allowing both implosion and separation of original meaning into and from the texture of cultural tradition:

All culture is a defense of the social order against conflict, a deferral of violence through representation. What is at the center of the scene of representation is forbidden to the participants at the periphery. From the elementary levels through the establishment of primitive society, the central object is sacralized by the real reproduction of the scene and can never be appropriated by an individual member of the community. The unsatisfiable "producer's desire" for the object is consoled by the consumption of a portion of the sacrificial feast. Here, all are equal rivals, their rivalry held back by the community's hypostasis of its own potential violence. However much content may be later added to the ritual, its basic forms remain unchanged; the model of ritual behavior implies an equality of the profane participants with respect to an

inappropriate sacred center. Hence, when the ritual itself becomes a source of satisfaction for desire, the potential for conflict thus brought about cannot be regulated by ritual alone. The differential satisfaction of the central “big-man” figure gives rise to resentment, and resentment becomes the basis for a new stage of culture. (Gans, *The End of Culture* 303)

Consequently, it is the differential status of participants that rediscovers mimetic conflict as fertile for new assertions, and it is the mono-logical relation to an inappropriate center, that gives rise to resentment, a resentment seen as a power able to generate and disseminate the polar energies of a new culture.<sup>95</sup> “Magic” is nothing more than a cultural effect generated remotely by collective participation to the presupposed quality of a “common center.” Its alleged commonality relies on taboos and on mutually shared mythographic illusions. Indeed, new meanings are thus “staged” in genuine social acting, new meanings are tested in real time as genuine potentials for reconciliation between the half-lost horizon and its accidental recurrence in unacknowledged (this is to label them as “illegitimate,” or “apocryphal”) deliveries. Yet, their original turns have to be seen as timely “updates” designed for an oblivious audience, whose oblivion learns to keep pace with the “mythical.” What is novel in Gans’ discussion of representation is that the denial of an epochal being, as applied in particular to the question of human language, is explicitly seen as a product of aborted appropriation to the imaginary stature of the mediator<sup>96</sup>. It is by failure of identification with the mediator’s stature, also by delusional persistence and reenactment, then departure from myth that cultural expression creates such paradoxically fertile economy of frustration, resentment: ultimately sublimation has seldomly been described so thoroughly. Yet, such methodic affiliation with major ideas of the representational critique does not deprive the scholar’s writing of subtlety and originality.

In *The Origin of Language: A Formal Theory of Representation* (1981), Gans has pioneered a set of theories regarding human culture, in a move of interest for my discussion. Given that my analysis refers to a period marked by the radical



transformation of ritual practices in the West, I need to keep in focus Gans's remark in the Introduction to *The End of Culture*, where he discusses the historical tension between traditional Greek and Roman literary heritage and Jewish ritualism as the propelling mechanism of secularization in Western modern societies. First, Gans remains faithful to his promise to discuss *culture*: "not so much as a body of representations" since such a simplistic view would reduce to nothing the difference between culture and the rituals of pre-classical societies."<sup>97</sup> Alternatively, he sees the idea of culture as "an open and dynamic system of representations" (*The End of Culture* 4) including every form of expression from arts to the specific modes of the discourse. The particular situation of Christian Western culture, he asserts, is developed in a major rift between imaginary continents. Western hesitation between the spirit of Greek antiquity (also reproduced in the Roman successor-civilization) and the letter of the Biblical scripture are reflected both in the epistemic status of the text and the condition of the reciting Subject. His suggestion is that, since the culture of the Late Roman antiquity vanished without letting itself be changed in a way that would have ensured its continuity, the early combinations of Greco-Roman with Judeo-Christian elements have not led to a long lasting amalgamation. In other words, the substitutive process is entirely subordinated to the monotheistic force of the Christian idea, whose insertion into the ideal of classical Roman morality takes into account the qualities of Latin classical culture only at the level of rhetorical and philosophical justification:

Such fusion could only take place within a society whose hierarchy was based on universalist Judeo-Christian morality rather than on the still-primitive traditional ethic of antiquity. The unquestioned authority of the Subject of discourse drives the culture of antiquity ever further from the lived experience into a "higher" realm. The mythical sources of the context of this culture - the careers of Gods and warriors - incarnate this distance. But it would be facile to let this incarnation serve as an explanation. What made the heights of antique culture ever more inapproachable from below, so that "low" content could no longer be

integrated within it and it exhausted itself in sterile conventionality was not its ritual origins but the absence of any thoroughgoing transcendence of them. The apriori authority of the Subject-of discourse precludes the universalization within discourse itself of its ethical basis, the definitive transcendence of ritual violence and dissimulation. Christianity arrived too late to revitalize the ancient forms – forms primarily not of discourse, but of social organization. The real cultural synthesis was not to occur until the Renaissance. Here culture was recreated with the power to adapt itself to the changing world of experience and, in the process, to work through its functionality as a historical phenomenon. The decline of culture in the modern world is not a collapse, but a dilution through universalization. The dialogue of high and low has not led to uncomprehending silence; it has rather been so successful that the partners can no longer be distinguished from each other. (Gans, *The End of Culture* 5)

In this particular note, Gans proceeds to his next set of assumptions. Of particular importance for our demonstration is his discussion of the Renaissance as a phenomenon too complex to be discussed within the classical definitions of culture devised by either anthropologists or sociologists.<sup>98</sup> As seen before, the order of importance proposed by Gans takes into account the effectiveness of mimetic mediation, as the proper denominator of value in cultural mutations. But, here, he proceeds to a second assumption, which designates the culture of the Renaissance as a late bi-product of irreconcilables, whose hybrid undertaking becomes possible only in light of the devaluation of original Christian ideals. Reformation, taken as the late major historical attempt to resurrect the original power of Christian ideals, is also discussed by both Girard and Gans as a late compromise, one whose rationalization of the Law has connoted the growing distance between the original authority of the mythic mediation, founded upon the symbolism of Resurrection and the latter philosophical elaborations of the Christian Middle Ages that, insisting

on dogma, betray their growing inability to grasp the spirit of time and produce credible answers to the dilemmas of experiential philosophy.

By now, my endeavor has found its theoretical bedrock: the reading of *The Tempest* as an *ars politica* takes into account the notion of significance in language as part of a meta-lyrical stage where Shakespeare's proposal can be read alternatively through poststructuralist and new historicist, then through generative anthropological lenses. Both the theory of charisma and the theory of magic in performative acts can shed light upon its semantic paradoxes, because *The Tempest* is a play that adjusts the fantastic topologies of the enchanted islands to the laws of drama. The play, when discussed through the theoretical grid of Generative Anthropology, can reveal itself only as a drama of language and power delivered through a meta-theatrical negotiation: this is the search for a universal mediation, which in the particular context of the play's production, becomes one with the historical mediator's dilemma, given that the mediator is to be remembered and avoid ritual dismemberment within a unique (narrative) move. Certainly, the play can be read as a magnified metaphor, one that absorbs the world in its triangulation. But what matters here, beyond the alternation of narrative frames, is the way in which the processes of reversal and recognition take place, as part of a drama which exemplifies the historical mediator's paradoxical position. Hence, in agreement with Gansian theoretical framework, I will discuss the Greek *catharsis* versus the Judaic notion of *theophanic* recognition as an alternate means to emphasize the hero's sacrifice, technologies of elevation springing from different cultural cores and dealing with different narrative economies of the climax. Could it be true that Shakespeare's dramatic solution in *The Tempest* stands for a new (and experimental) technology of reconciliation between alternative modes of mimetic climax?

The fusion between Judaic spirit and Greek imagination favored the first, whose more radical spirit prevailed over the Greek psyche, a cultural community unaccustomed to the monotheistic sturdiness. When blended within the new assumptions of Christian culture, the alleged monotheistic motifs seem to produce

an everlasting hesitation between ethical and esthetical options of either classical or evangelic extraction. From this angle, the character Prospero can be now analyzed as a proponent of original mediation strategies. As a meta-play, whose ethical proposal consists of an innovative way to look at the “deferral of violence through representation,”<sup>99</sup> *The Tempest* will be interpreted here as an act of creative representation that can be judged in relation with the ample “deritualization” (Gans, *The End of Culture*, passim) of clerical-political sermons in Protestant England. Explicitly, my interpretational effort is aware of the epistemic and historic paradoxes of the play’s production: in consequence, I read the folio as a text that challenges the classical Aristotelian tradition of *catharsis* through a uncommon logic of representational climax, partaking of and attempting to resolving the conflict between Greek and Judaic literary traditions, as part of a game where cultural heroes are given entirely different “missions” as subjects of different narrative economies. This approach indirectly reflects the general tendency of Anglican theology, where the doctrine of transubstantiation (although not entirely dismissed) is brought under close scrutiny of Protestant reasoning; Shakespeare’s unique dramatic gloss of his disjointed times, which could have been easily read as heretical in different historical circumstances, questions the mythology of power from perspectives that incorporate motifs of the Renaissance occult philosophy and philosophical skepticism.

Where both Catholic and Puritan extremes fail, the playwright, as a magician of fictional islands of meaning, can afford a unique rhetorical experiment, one that takes into account the very hesitation between paradigms as a third option. The imagination of English collectivity needs new ways of nourishment; given that the proper symbols of linguistic community have been displaced, theatre provides such a privileged medium of expression, if we accept that imagination itself articulates thought as a fundamentally *scenic* process<sup>100</sup> in need of parabolic illustrations. My tribute to the neo-historicist idea of “locality” determines me to discuss the confluence of historical, cultural-geographical, ethnic-biographical, and social variables that underlie *The Tempest*’s creation and first productions. A proper

description of the context comes from a bi-fold discussion of the play's cultural background: on the one hand, *The Tempest* belongs to an age where theater foreruns the progressive and democratic social views, an urban stage suitable for the entertainment of the middle-class; on the other hand, the conditions of its production ascribe the folio to the special stage of court-theater specifically designed for royal audiences. The theory of positioning here discusses the multiple valences of a text that can be read on multiple hermeneutical keys. *The Tempest* can be seen as a meta-text that "positions" reception by its constitutive ambiguity, "a play within play," that underlines the meaning of hierarchy in mediation, showing *differentiality* as a key to meta-linguistic strategies of civilization and order. Not only do we witness a new logic of signs, owing, like many of Shakespeare's plays, to Renaissance cultural glosses, but these already syncretic symbols visible in the play's text display their relevance only in unique political conjectures, such as the prenuptial ceremonies at James' Westminster (November, 1611).

One can see the worth of such economies as set beyond the horizons of utility and compromise in social linguistic exchange. To the sixteenth-century English intellectual, the "return to antiquity" carried a different significance than for the "unreformed" Italian: logically, the return to the Classical Era has to propose a different economy of the sacred, whose "detour" had to take into account the many quandaries generated by the Reformation in England, including here the cultural resistance, the many imports, and the quality of innovation resulting from the social need of both compromise to and transgression from the new norm.<sup>101</sup> In Elizabethan culture, where intellectuals strove to coin an original language of value and dispense with the outdated notions of sacredness, no generalizations applied. The inventiveness of writers such as Marlowe or Shakespeare attempts to heal wounds, as proposals of reconciliation in both the experimental arena of theatrical relations and on the expanded stage of social intercourse. The skepticism of their writings is almost distressing, if we consider that not a single aspect of Christian beliefs has remained unchallenged by the new heroes of either the Hamletian or Faustian<sup>102</sup> breed, the overall tendency in their writings remains associated with

protean innovations. As suggested before,<sup>103</sup> reorientation of social energies can be discussed from both perspectives of innovation: as a transgression of the obsolete norm and of the re-adaptation of old mimetic needs to the logic of substitution and rationalization of ethical behavior. Language itself re-discovers its multivalent symbolism at this theatrical juncture between fiction and representation,<sup>104</sup> in a move that connotes the cultural subject's desolidarization from (ritual) tabooistic contexts and the re-inscription of meaning within new esthetic (deritualized) clusters. Modern cultures are meta-sacrificial, summoning cognitive horizons where the image of God is played in distance. This is to say they become games of their own stakes, detaching from the coined language of value and experiencing value as internalized to new commitments. Such are the special moments when religious motifs are rationalized, or, in other words, have their initial "magic" dismantled by a detached view of the old rituals. The advent of skepticism in Europe marked such a unique moment, signifying an initial "implosion" in the cognitive lenses of the subject, whose inner space of self-reflection rejected the cognitive mirror of social order and, in compensation, broadened to adopt a structured view of the cogitative faculty. At this point, I acknowledge Benjamin Berthram's valuable methodological insight, who, in his 2004 book *The Time is Out of Joint*, proposes the analysis of sixteenth-century English skepticism in relation with Althusserian discussion of the ego-formation. Together with neo-Marxists, Berthram believes that although

we cannot escape ideology and do not have much control over it; we can critique some of its effects. The formation of an ego depends on the mirror image of wholeness, yet resistant subjects may well strive to reveal that there are alternatives to the dominant order that only *appears* to be complete, unified and unchanging. Hamlet's "the time is out of joint," for example, is one of many images of fragmentation we find throughout the play that call into question Claudius's ideological image of the whole kingdom "contracted in one brow of woe." (Berthram 155)

Moreover, Berthram chooses to add that "only the most vulgar materialistic determination would dismiss religion as ideological masking."

Religious dissent favors skepticism,<sup>105</sup> given the limited impact of nonconformist intellectuals in the religious and political decisions. As a form of “non-attachment,” skepticism signifies a silent distancing from motivational political commitment.<sup>106</sup> However, Berthram does not limit his view of English skepticism in agreement with these general theses: the author reminds the modern reader that Walter Raleigh, a discoverer of new worlds and populations, has acquired the fame of a skeptic, even of an overt atheist whose views on God triggered the 1594 investigations against him.<sup>107</sup> During the same investigation, his tutor, Thomas Harriot, was denounced for his unorthodox questioning of the immortality of the soul. But Thomas Harriot – as much as Raleigh, who read, translated, and interpreted in his own notes the thoughts of Sextus Empiricus – was animated by a cold-minded cognitive enthusiasm entirely different from quietism, an iconoclasm whose receptivity and epistemic interests ranged beyond the mentalities of his time. Their proper location within a protean and endeavoring view of human nature “provide a window onto the difficult choices – social, religious and intellectual - that confronted people in many areas of life in Shakespeare’s England” (Berthram 27). Thus, Berthram, whose views will be alluded to at different turns of my demonstration, shows that English expansion has empowered the views of skepticism as part of an objective rationale of observation of foreign customs, in a move that transgresses the original frustration with political and religious dissent. Here, I am mainly interested in the symbolism of royal power during the Elizabethan and Jacobean epochs and of the new “theatrical” strategies of dissemination that answered the needs for an original propaganda. The affiliation of theatre with the foundations of skepticism, in this particular case, would match the language of allegorizing and irony that was embedded in the elaborate rhetoric of the Masque and anti-Masque, as forerunners of “the philosophy becoming the world”<sup>108</sup> vision of secular politics.

## **I. 15. More phenomenological clustering: power and the spectacle of analogies**

Stephen Orgel's 1975 work *Political Theatre in the English Renaissance* is a source of inspiration for my discussion. As ascribed to the effect of encomiastic magnanimity, the political theater presents both theatrical space and theatrical objects in relation with their alleged symbolism within the logic of royal power. Or, to use Orgel's own words in designation of the Jacobean masque, "the truth of the royal productions was the truth of appearances. Power was asserted only through analogies, faith affirmed only through symbols" (89). This is Orgel's way of reminding the reader that theatrical objects are not shown for their original functions. As markers of invisible contexts, theatrical things stand for broader allusions to the outer world of life; in this setting, they symbolize whole missing worlds of meaning, connoted only by their ostentation. Court-theater and the Masque in particular, when dealing with allegorized gestures and situations, rely entirely on the symbolic meaning of such objects, in a play where the quality of performance may depend less on action than upon proper scenographic representations. When it comes to discussing the function of ritual drama in Reformed England, one should not forget that the phenomenology of such theatrical elaborations carries forth the repressed memory of the old days, when the wounded body of Christ was "shown" as part of the sacramental mysteries performed on Easter. Such enactments of Christ's bleeding wounds became, of course, obsolete, in the Shakespearean era. The 1537 Pilgrimage of Grace determined the end of the flow of official doctrine towards Protestantism. From the Ten Articles, four of the seven sacraments were eluded, and those preserved were kept mostly because of the Catholic protests. But their omission, added on to the other cultic interdictions, leaves a vacuum in the symbolic lives of English communities. In compensation, authorities decide to replace the mysteries by a religious form of drama whose desired impact on the first Reformed generations would supersede the vivid remembrance of the old sacraments. As Michael O'Connell asserts in his 2000 study,



it would be extraordinary if the 150-year tradition of vernacular Biblical theater had left no trace on the vigorous theater that succeeded it. This is the theater Shakespeare saw in his boyhood; references and allusions in his plays testify to the impression it made upon him. (87)

The substitution theory is not new in epistemological analysis. Hans Blumenberg elaborated on the epistemic connotations of the notion “substitution” when he described secularization in relation with the need for symbolic alternatives to the crumbling imaginary edifice of Catholicism, and advocating for the symbolic need for “fresh” metaphors as a thread of human communities caught in the web of history<sup>109</sup>. Here, however, the alleged theoretical perspective unfolds particular contexts of major importance for the understanding of the representational alterations of English drama. In spite of its ambiguous presence in hermetic metaphors, the true “primer” of these plays stays in the English culture of those days, a cultural “matrix” or “sieve” that after the interdiction of the old symbolic food reopens its “chalices” unto the absorption of new motifs. The thin line between the two ages of representation in Elizabethan drama was identified by contemporary cultural historians in the end of the Mystery plays in 1579, particularly in their last occurrence of the Coventry cycle performed in Warwickshire, followed by their repression. Such forced enclosure from the officials of Elizabethan government left visible traces in the memory of the English gentry. As O’Connell suggests, “the glimpsing of continuities between the stagecraft and dramaturgy of the mystery cycles and the public theaters is an important beginning” (87; n. 169). of the new *critique*. In this view, owing to the assumptions of new historicism, the whole relation between the *body*, as the agent of meaning on stage and the theatrical background of the scenographic context, transforms in a typified manner that takes into account the substitutive approach to former dramatic “technologies of representation.”

Another important cultural phenomenon studied in my thesis identifies the evident connections between the occult philosophy of theatrical spaces: on the one hand, conceived of as displays of an idealized *mathesis* and, on the other, as

instances of the proper rhetoric of court festivities. Both employ the same logic of signs: it is generally accepted that the Masque and the English Court theater of the late 1500s share a common philosophy with the Theater of Memory – the ultimate elaboration of the Renaissance philosophy of space, where the viewer, carried through a museum of mystic representations, is granted privileged access to the archetypal images of initiatory magic. But what is the underlying logic of such subtle coincidences among theatre, idealist architectural design, and occult philosophy? Such a theme, specific to the scholarly studies in the later Renaissance, has been only rarely discussed in conjunction with the study of the English Reformation. Luckily, we can take advantage today of two converging currents of thought within British studies. Both emerged very recently from the same inspirational source in the neo-historicist critique of power: the first stream of ideas comes from contemporary Reformation scholars, who analyze the epistemic transformation within the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras; the alternate tendency is visible in the work of Shakespeare academics preoccupied with the location of Elizabethan drama in the broader web of European civilization. As indicated once by Frances Yates, both the Globe Theater and the later *Wunderkammern* of European collectors of curios were inspired from Giulio Camillo's drawings in *L'Idea del Teatro* (1550). Such renderings were brought to the knowledge of the Elizabethans by Giordano Bruno, and later incorporated into John Dee's and Robert Fludd's acclimatized Arts of Memory. In the culture of the Renaissance, the term designated a schematic concatenation of iconic images and symbolic linguistic clusters, whose function was to activate the spiritual perceptions of imagination, seen as a repository of magic skills.

Second, one should not forget about *The Tempest's* original representation in front of the King, with the occasion of a royal festivity. From this particular circumstance, I will determine the second level of analysis, where we will discuss the specific rhetorical symbolism of Elizabethan and Jacobean Court theater, a language whose designated address was originally limited to a few aristocratic contemporaries of Shakespeare's late days. But, here, given the extreme

hybridization of cultural paradigms visible in the world of theatre, I find the most intriguing aspect of my demonstration: since dramatic representation consecrates objects and figures to different uses from their original ones, the application of “theatricality” must be understood as a deliberate extraction of objects and their alleged meanings from a repository of common knowledge. This repository was, of course, the English culture of those days, a linguistic structure under construction, a “mercurial” idiom bringing forth old objects, sayings, and customs used deliberately as a reservoir for novel effects and outcomes. Given the permissiveness in language, artistic expression in the age of Shakespeare, discussed here as a symptom of broader transformations within the rhetorical and symbolic foundations of power, is examined for its catalytic function: its uncharted potential might be that of supplying meaning in areas of psychological life that have been traditionally been ascribed to the religious unconscious, to superstition and to personal mythologizing. In the following chapter, I will investigate the various historical motifs, cultural contexts and epistemic paradoxes that articulated the “social imaginary” background to Shakespeare’s last major play. Inspired by the new historicist statement that qualifies the Late Renaissance as a period of cultural rehearsal prefacing modernity, I have founded my study upon the premise that literature, history and political thought must generate interrelationships that are harmonic rather than divergent. In anticipation of my Conclusions, I intend to reveal and to validate original cultural connections between the Utopian representations of order and the projects of Hermetic reform on the one hand, and the new mimesis of dramatic representational strategies, on the other.

## Chapter II. Christ, the Crown, and the Nation

### II. 1. Before Shakesper became Shakespeare: The Politics of Reformation

My intention here is to locate more properly *The Tempest* within the epistemic foundations of its era and of Shakespeare's intellectual biography. Is this episode of Court theater an isolated experiment or should I try to venture further into designating *The Tempest* as a symptom of a secularizing mythology of power? The cultural historian Paul Sinfield uses the memorable expression "warrening from within"(5) to designate the alterations of elitist culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, also visible in other instances of courtly art. I take his statement as a starting point to our own intellectual excursion, especially given that the Elizabethan reign is described by contemporary cultural historians as the *age* of hybridization of the beliefs and social mentalities in pre-modern England. The complexity of such alterations has to take into account the coexistence of three distinct coexisting realities. The first is the culture of Christian Humanism, which drew on the classical assumptions of the Renaissance, inspired by its protean view of the human condition. The second is represented by the Reformation, the proselytizing zest of which opposed the speculative spirit of Cinquecento. This marked the delay of the English Renaissance, which discovered the speculative philosophies of the Renaissance only after the Reformation accomplished its major targets. Finally, the Age of Discoveries superseded the first two tendencies through the addition of a dynamic and pragmatic element in English politics, broadening the epistemic horizon beyond the confinement of original tensions. In discussing these, one cannot lose from sight the intensive and effective work of the English Reformers of the Elizabethan era, a period that had little in common with contemporary Anglicanism.<sup>110</sup>

The period between the 1533 Act in Restraint of Appeals and the 1660 Restoration can be analyzed as a long phase of political uncertainty, generated by the successive modifications of the status of monarchy and by the subsequent alterations of dogma. In this context, the sixteenth-century English accent on

Christian Humanist ideas and, during the last decades of the century, the new insistence upon the uncanny Neoplatonic speculation, needs to be explained as part of a complementary symptom, in which the cosmopolitanism of London's intelligentsia counter-reacted to the ideological excesses of the Reformers. From this angle, I align with the perspective of contemporary cultural historians like Rowse, Webster, Marshall and Hart, who speak of the two-layered structure of the English Renaissance: accordingly, this current was delayed by the first decades of Reformation, then re-emerged after the 1588 victory of the Spanish Armada and continued in the first decades of the seventeenth century, when the success of naval expeditions changed England's destiny as a power. I also need to emphasize that the aspiration to integrate the imperial British dream within a new structure of political values was typical only of the urban and learned mentalities that proposed an original reconciliation of the coexistent epistemic and political spheres, devising new "tunes" for the new days. Dee, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Florio, and finally Bacon and Fludd are epitomic examples of this transitional age, which can be seen as the final rehearsal of modern episteme in England.

The discussion of this period starts with Hobbes' classical Argument against Religion in *Leviathan*, in accusation of the inner contradictions of English Protestantism, which by removing the church's traditional role in society, left the weight on the believer's shoulders (Sinfield 8): "*That which taketh away the reputation of wisdom in him that formeth a religion... is the enjoining of a belief of contradictions.*" (Hobbes XII. 25) Indeed, the Protestant tenet of salvation as a discretionary process in the hands of God was based upon a traditional Augustinian motif, but once revived in Protestant theologies, it enticed innumerable ethical quandaries: if the Creator was to be taken for an omnipotent being, then it was hard to conceive of Him as not entirely aware and responsible for worldly outcome. Indeed, for the theologians of the Reformation, it was difficult to imagine a perfect God that allowed imperfection and injustice in His world. Luther's maxim, in *The Bondage of the Will* (1524), stressed the ontological difference between man's will,

limited to the humble acknowledgment of his creatural limits, and God's generosity, whose favor can be gained only by irrevocable submission:

...No man can be thoroughly humbled until he knows that his salvation is utterly beyond his powers, devices, endeavors, will, and works, and depends entirely on the choice, will and work of another, namely, God alone." (Sinfield 8)

How could such an extreme idea gain ground in a society accustomed to identifying grace with God's presence in existence? This radical take, associating predestination with a supposedly pre-determined providential design and drawing a firmer line, after Luther, between the kingdom of man and the kingdom of God, was a great challenge and a perpetual source of dissent for the learned classes in Tudor England. In fact, in the name of Luther's ethical maxim, the Reformation was forcing new power relations, in which the old clerical establishment was discharged, together with the structure of Catholic authority and property. In spite of the minor doctrinal particularities of Anglicanism, the English Reformers were fast and effective in adopting the Continental curriculum. Broad transformations of liturgical practice accelerated the birth of the modern communities of believers, committed to the rational and positive applications of Biblical ethics in social life<sup>111</sup>. As a long-term result, England's Reformed society, perceived as a community of ethical action, became for the following centuries a "testing ground" where individual worth was measured and fashioned in the goodness of deeds and the quality of works. English society found its new pulse in the experimentalist prevalence of the civic sphere, governance, trade, and community participation. It was in this stage that modernity found its ancestry in a glossary of secularized spiritual themes, where the threatening vacuums of sacramental and clerical vacancies were slowly replaced by the institutional functions and ethical attributes of lay-power. The relevance of the same themes in relation with the formation of a new culture of the spectacle will be discussed further. In later pages, I will look at the symbolism of power as part of a compensative economy of signs, able to reveal the theatrical strategies of political agency, whose functions can be seen as both

remedial and projective of alternative political promises. Thus, the struggle to keep at bay anxieties regarding the question of faith in a society in need of different agencies of spiritual reassurance can be seen as the major test for the power of Reformation monarchs.

It is no surprise that from the first days of the English Reformation, Thomas Cromwell had used the name “empire” to define England as a political entity free from any debt to the Papist jurisdiction.<sup>112</sup> The label was extended by Parliament to define the new political and legal status of the British kingdom (during the 1535-1542 annexation of Wales). The term was productive of both the new legal definitions and the insurmountable ethical quandaries around the new status of monarchy. From this period, sprung the major debates on the meaning of intertwined notions, such as predestination, election, and free will in relation to the greater design of nature and history that were the core of Protestant debates in continental Europe and in Britain, where the English Protestant dogma found, thanks to the Marian exiles, who returned to England in 1558, its preeminent source of inspiration in Calvinism (in spite of Elizabeth’s coldness for Calvinists and for religious zealots). As for the particular context of English Reformation, some of the Elizabethan intellectuals often stamped as Christian Humanists did not hold Calvinist beliefs, but, fearing repression, wisely tried to compromise with a doctrine that was otherwise “widely mistrusted,” as Alan Sinfield suggested in his condensed study, *Literature in Protestant England*.<sup>113</sup>

Thus, contemporary investigations of the Elizabethan epoch take into account the tension between the official and the marginal cultures to investigate political pressure as generative of structural transformations in the realms of cultural expression. In Sinfield’s examination,<sup>114</sup> social communities are seen as eclectic organisms, whose many strata reflect various, often irreconcilable, interests within dominant classes, and have to deal with a common layer of traditional mentalities. Like in many other neo-Marxian and Neo-historicist interpretational traditions, it is the social clash of interests that is found responsible for the conflict between hierarchical centrality and the marginalized or the excluded. For the fast-

paced Elizabethan civilization, this tension became particularly fertile, allowing the marginals and the newcomers to English culture to develop alternative idioms and beliefs that are no longer perceived as heresies to the contested Catholic tradition, but as the genuine articulations of the nation's vitality, a vitality that, for those who adopted the new faith sincerely, connotes righteousness, as liberation from the tyranny of ignorance. The slow tension between trends is not gratuitous, given that the newcomers, who had to coexist with a dominant tradition, undermined tradition from the inside, producing a slow deprecation of all those values that were taken for granted as stable. As Protestantism gained ground, it can be inferred that the Reformation's effectiveness upon religious, political, and educational grounds was based upon both the erosion of Catholic practices in England and the explicit formulation of a hierarchical, indeed tyrannical, attitude to human affairs, which was manifest in the state and local courts, in schools and in family (Sinfield 3).

Predictably, in a culture that engaged the figure of the monarch in the configuration of a social model founded upon the idea of unanimity in religious and political goals, the king's expanded prerogatives found resistance in almost every social group.<sup>115</sup> The more traditionalist sixteenth-century gentry believed fervently in the imminence of a Second Coming, and the feeling of urgency was likely amplified in the thoughts of Catholics, who felt betrayed by the Protestant Queen, and those of the Puritans, whose accusations of corruption aimed at Catholic ministers invoked the urgency of such ethical transformations in agreement with God's will. In contrast to both ideological camps, the few minds inclined to philosophical skepticism (certainly the most productive for the history of early modernity) might have lost their esteem for theological elaborations and re-invested their motivations in the logic of reconciliation and compromise. The Elizabethan era was one of acute religious dissent, when, unavoidably, people turned their heads to the Church, an institution that before the Reformation had signified a certain relation with the idea of providence. Unlike the Reformed congregation, the age-old Church mediation delivered the sacramental rites through the hands of an ordained priest - whose unction designated him as a mediator between realms. The fact that



Judgment Day was seen by many sixteenth-century Englishmen as an event to occur during a person's life, placed a burden on the representatives of Protestant political institutions, who had to assume responsibilities that before the Reformation had been associated with the traditional foundations of Catholicism. How could someone, in the absence of traditional theological framework, and without a way into the traditional expiatory rite of confession, explain satisfactorily the decrees of a God whose intentions and ways were described as unavailable to human comprehension?

The idea of individual value, which had been present in Medieval Catholic theology, insisted on the congruous collaboration between the creator and his creation and offered the possibility of harmonious traffic between the two ontological orders, specifying that merit depended upon grace and blessedness upon virtues.<sup>116</sup> To Catholics, access to salvation depended upon the scale of individual worth, and it was fully acceptable that God's presence signified a balanced equilibrium of functions, where both spiritual elevation and belief in universal salvation were seen as matching answers to the quality of participation into faith *and* good works. This was equivalent to designating grace as a redemptive potential within human spirit, always aided and rewarded by angelic hierarchies. By insistence upon the dogma of human wretchedness, Reformation brought to a fast close the traditional assumptions of association and common aims between God and His creatures. Peter Berger, a Lutheran sociologist of religion, suggests the radical secularization of Protestant societies sprung directly from the

immense shrinkage in the scope of sacred reality. The sacramental apparatus is reduced to a minimum, even there, divested of its more numinous qualities. (111-113)

The Catholic idea of faith was founded upon the miraculous ritual of the mass, a core which animated the psychological world of the believer through channels of mediation that proposed "a vast continuity of being between the seen and the unseen" (Berger 124-125); or, in other words, a hybridization of the spiritual and

mundane spheres. Disallowing prayers for the dead and abolishing “the most ancient and most powerful concomitants of the sacred – mystery, miracle, and magic,”<sup>117</sup> the Reformers dismissed the Medieval perceptions of sacredness as the presence of the holy spirit in the world. While abolishing the core of traditional assumptions, Berger asserts, Protestantism “broke the continuity, cut off the umbilical cord between heaven and earth, and thereby threw man back upon himself in a historically unprecedented manner” (Berger 84), impoverishing man’s relation to sacredness. The Protestant theological dilemma extends, then, into the realm of lawfulness and social justice. First, the theory of elective salvation elicits queries about the meaning of law and the need for mercy in a world where the rejected were the result of God’s deliberate omission. Many, especially those least fortunate, might think that they were abandoned in the hands of a ruthless deity, who has designed for many an inescapable doom. Published in 1583, William Lawne’s treatise *Abridgment of Calvin’s Institute*, written in dialogue form, offers the modern reader a clear insight into the acuity of these theological (and by now, legal-philosophical) polemics. Not only is God’s mercy selective, but the Judge’s rational grounds are not questionable, suggests William Lawne in his 1587 work, *Abridgement of the Institution of Christian Religion*:

All are guilty: but the mercy of God relieveth  
and succoreth certain.

Objection. Let it succour all.

Answer. It is meet that by punishing he likewise show  
Himself to be a judge. (224)<sup>118</sup>

What a typical instance of mimetic conflict and what a radical “surgery” in the logic of mimesis, where the differential stature of God is employed against all possible human need for protection! The Protestant assertion of God’s magnanimity does not allow a space for benevolent miracles, since the inscrutability of God’s mind stands here for a radicalization of ethical commandments (whereas the opposite prioritization of Christ’s image would have empowered the logic of

mediation between realms). It is thus explainable why the English Protestant work needed a “redemptive” politics of social integration to rebalance the “boat” of the sovereign State after the displacement of dogma. The fear of an imminent Apocalypse made many disobey the authority of a state whose ministers were divorced from the Holy Eye. Especially during the early years of Reformation, the radical assumptions of Lutheran and Calvinist formularies could only amplify this feeling of imminent doom, expected as God’s “intervention from the outside.” In this polarity of irreconcilables – mundane reason of complacency brought against transcendent reasoning of awe – the state was bound to assume new roles. Once the Church was finally subdued to the Crown, the old prerogatives of the clergy fell under the incidence of worldly power. This act (coinciding with the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity of 1559) placed the Reformation monarchs in an impossible position within the legal and theological tradition. As the sole mediator between the two realms of religious dogma and political affairs, the Protestant monarchic institution had to integrate a broader set of aims within a sole network, while being asked to reconcile the seemingly natural distance between apparently disjoint realities: that of moral excellence in religious practice and that of pragmatics in politics. What a paradoxical situation: a Reform destined for the many, but apparently limiting the promise of salvation to a few.<sup>119</sup> The Pauline assumption of a coming age of universal salvation was shattered, while the coming kingdom of glory needed to be re-described in relation to the limited power of human reason.

The Reformation’s insistence upon the inscrutable character of God’s decrees placed another burden on the institution of English monarchy, outstripping the Crown of its traditional medieval prestige. The original Calvinist model was not entirely suitable for England, a country whose geographical isolation and different political history from the continental Reformed countries determined an ample movement of social cohesion around the national Crown. But the spirit of Reformation made the English Protestant monarch into a *Ianus bifrons*, one whose office supposed an ability to replicate the once transcendental figure of providence

within the symbolism of ostensible power. The Protestant monarch's only possible option was to impose himself on his subjects as the true warrantor of stability in history, in an age that, in its loud craving for the Savior, had to accommodate the Savior's absence as a growing effect of secularization. The Elizabethan Reformation connoted a slow process of subversion of dogma and the correspondent re-assignment of the classical priestly attributes to the symbolic and legal powers of the Crown. For Elizabeth, herself a fine theologian, the problem enticed both theological and legal quandaries: traditionally, the English did not favor the doctrine of the Divine Rights of Monarchs. From the early days of Magna Charta (1215), English monarchy was seen as a formal political instrument, while the will of kings was bound by the law. (Moreover, in Elizabethan days, the Parliament acted alongside monarchy, so the authority of the Charter was never opposed overtly to the Queen's power, as happened in 1628, during the reign of Charles I.)

In addition, in a society where the patriarchal structure was an undisputable fact, Elizabeth had to engage in an elaborate strategy of defense against the masculine designations of the royal office. The laws of succession to the throne and the property law were both ruled by the principle of male primogeniture. Susan Doran suggests in her study on Elizabeth's reign that, "in theory, at least, women were not expected to assert any independent authority but were deemed subservient to male relatives whether fathers, brothers or husbands" (Doran 5). The preconception was shared by many Protestants, who perceived Mary's ascension to the Crown of England as illegitimate: among the loudest opponents, the Scottish Calvinist preacher and polemist, John Knox, labeled female monarchy as an abomination<sup>120</sup> in his anonymous 1558 Geneva tract. However, at the time of Elizabeth's coronation, Doran reminds us, the female monarchy represented a widely accepted reality in other European states, having been seen in Castille and Scotland; princesses were often appointed as regents in Scotland, France, and the Netherlands during the prolonged absences of their male-kings. The only possible route for a Queen in Elizabeth's position was the reassertion of her role as unique,

sprung from the classical Biblical roles of Deborah, Judith, and the classical models of righteous women in the Bible. In effect, the determination of her presence on the throne was described in correlation with the half-forgotten attributes of grace, a quality now ascribed to the relatively unusual position of the female monarchy in England.

## **II. 2. Liturgical Drama: questioning the metaphors of cruelty**

Nurtured in the spirit of her era, Elizabeth's successful strategy was one of purposeful fashioning of social mentalities through education and culture that in Protestant England matched the new accent placed on duty and patriotism. The "Love of God," displayed by Protestant reformers, needed to be redirected as a new commandment of political complacency: redirected towards the throne of England, as the site of both worldly and religious authority. Threatened by both external enemies and internal disagreements, English society found itself at a crossroads, and it was mainly as a result of the new motivations of civic commitment that the old rivalry between religious factions could be overcome by the young generations. But what could be the shortest route to acquiring the effect of common sense in an anti-Catholic environment? And how could the idea of grace, taken as the presence of the divine in the world, be re-ascribed to the agency of the throne in a manner non-contradictory with the new foundations of Anglicanism?<sup>121</sup>

One of the Queen's tactics was to redirect the her subjects' hopes to her office by converting the eschatological prospects into positive expectations as part of a new perception of history. This move is ascribed to the uncanny symbolism of her appearances: the female-monarch at the highest point of her reign determining her public image as a pagan deity of fertility<sup>122</sup> (bestowing from the horn of abundance the fruit of life upon her domain) shows the epistemic roots of modern leadership, where the idea of faith is circumscribed to the internal logic of historical improvement. As accepted by modern historians, the process has been shown as

productive for both secularization and modern capitalism.<sup>123</sup> Modern cultural anthropologists agree that Protestant cultures engaged in a compensative epistemic optimism, which, in conjunction with economical growth generates (in the long calendar of Reformation and colonization) the effect of “faith in progress.”<sup>124</sup> Gaining autonomy in ethical matters, the Reformed countries had to re-ascribe their moral energy around the wellbeing of their own communities, discovering new perspectives to moral behavior and social interaction. This was a process that disguised<sup>125</sup> the Christian relationship to chiliasm in a new format, namely as a potential to be avoided by recourse to proper politics. In the classical discussions of epistemology, this process corresponded to the remedial actions of the Protestant monarchs, one that took the immanence of historical transformation as its very logic and chose this immanence as its favorite stratagem to avoid the collapse of state in eschatological craze. *In extenso*, the innovative-fashioning role of Protestant art can be described in relation with the twin processes of secularization and the formation of a civil sphere of values.<sup>126</sup>

As I have already suggested, in the process of social fashioning, the individual’s imagination was slowly “tamed” –that is, oriented to new civic commitments, in a world that learned slowly an innovative management of age-old symbols. Unmistakably, if one is to look at the particular quality of theater in the English sixteenth century, namely that of enacting religious and political allegories, one also has to analyze the new functions of Reformation drama, whose origins can be found in the liturgical drama proposed by the generation of English Humanists encouraged by Thomas Cromwell. The first generation of Reformation intellectuals’ chief task was the promotion of Reformation ideals through the medium of print.<sup>127</sup> Animated by a common preoccupation to define religious and ethical duties against the traditional manner of Catholicism, now denounced as idolatry, the promoters of the English Reformation showed, however, support for all those forms of *visual* and *dramatic* expression that could endorse the desired renovation of mentalities. To me, this aspect is of special significance, as I will attempt to locate the symbolic elements of Courtly theatre within their initial

relation with the medieval tradition of dramatized Mysteries and Miracle plays. Notably, in the recent study *The Idolatrous Eye* (2000), subtitled *Iconoclasm and Theater in Early Modern England*, Michael O'Connell discusses the new relevance of emerging theatre in relation with the traditional Incarnational and Liturgical dramas, a vanishing genre, yet very alive in the cultural memories of Elizabethans:

The central significance of Reformation iconoclasm for drama in England lies in the anxiety it generated toward the visual and with it toward visual modes of understanding and interpreting. The first two decades of Elizabeth's reign saw a consolidation of the iconoclasm that began in the late 1530s, which had reached a highwater mark in the reign of Edward VI, and was briefly reversed under Mary. The churchmen who had sojourned on the continent brought back a more thoroughgoing and Calvinist Protestantism; they would see their task as the more complete establishment of a word-centered Christianity and a correspondingly complete extirpation of the survivals of incarnationalism of the Late Medieval Culture. The major play cycles still being performed at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign should be understood as the last significant survivals of that culture. (O'Connell 61)

The religious plays of the Middle Ages are seen by cultural historians as a late outcome of the liturgy, whose most important moment consisted of the sacramental office. The distribution of clerical functions within Christian communities of the Middle Ages was supportive of a hierarchy of roles that empowered the transmission of the Biblical message during and *in extenso* of the Holy Mass. Like the great hierophants, the priests, accompanied by their ministers at the altar, the choir of singers, and the group of parishioners, partook of and supported the same logic of the miraculous and shared similar expectations with regards to the quality of the moment. The actors of Liturgical dramas, volunteers from Christian congregations, acted in the very name of their beliefs, prepared to re-instantiate the sacred moments of Biblical history for their fellows. The thematic economy of liturgical playing took into account the classical moments of the

Christian Calendar, Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, and, after the thirteenth century, the Feast of Corpus Christi, or the Holy Eucharist. On these occasions, the priests granted indulgences to the local parishioners. Such celebrations, developed in England after the twelfth century<sup>128</sup> and meant to inflict upon the laity the awe of religious ecstasy, were numerous and their elaborations incorporated thematic allegorical processions depicting Christ's passions and the Calvary. Litanies, sequences, and hymns were interpreted by choirs of boys; on occasion, the Office was interrupted by the priests themselves, who presented a dialogical version of the events observed. From these customs, liturgical drama developed as a short, theatrical rendering of the Gospel or from the day's office, recited in Latin and following closely the original prose format of the scriptural narratives.

In England, dramatic tropes date from the tenth century and were initially performed at Easter. Soon, in each of the Catholic countries, adornments and additions in the emerging vernaculars became acceptable: the transition to vernaculars, beginning with the twelfth century, corresponded to the emancipation of the genre from the initial constrictions, allowing original versification and dramatization. During the thirteenth century, the celebrations of Corpus Christi were adopted in most European countries because of the direct input of the Papacy. Emerging from France, the matching festivals represented the Passions as dramatic displays set on carriages followed by allegorical processions, whose function was to render visible the Biblical episodes to entire populations, bringing the crucified performer, Christ, to the sight of every community of parishioners. The pageants spread quickly throughout England,<sup>129</sup> whose festivals competed in grandeur with similar processions of continental countries. Lasting for at least three centuries, the celebration of Corpus Christi in conjunction with its various vernacular expressions has been described as a movement that allowed the deployment of local linguistic and representational symbolisms, a modality of allegorical expression that has built solid bridges between the liturgical language and the emerging historical consciousness of nationhood.



In large European towns, dramatic associations of amateur performers were formed, while each guild brought its contribution to these pageants, whose grandeur inspired feelings of civic pride in the people of the middle classes, such as artisans, clerics, and craftsmen. In the fifteenth century, the mysteries, a species whose specific conventions developed during the former period, took center stage during festivals, developing original dramatic conventions<sup>130</sup>. Mysteries (whose names derived from *mestier*, *métier* or trade), known in Spain as *autos* and in Italy as *funzione*, transgressed the traditional dogmatic core and gradually incorporated profane subjects, such as the Homeric motif of the fall of Troy or the recent historical narrative of 1428-1429, *The Siege of Orleans*, dedicated to the mystic Jeanne D'Arc. Other mysteries were dedicated to the lives of Saints, such as the famous text composed in 1450 by the canon of the church of Le Mans, in France, comprising no less than sixty-two thousand lines, the performance of which lasted forty days. These plays, written by priests, dealt with local traditions of Christian mythology, thus becoming effective motivators to the formation of national identities. The *mysteries*, shorter in duration than traditional liturgical dramas, were more exact in the representations of the Passions and of the Crucifixion; yet, following closely the lines of the Gospels, they called attention to the supernatural episodes of Christ's life<sup>131</sup>.

The Wakefield cycle comprised thirty-two pageants, each of them presenting episodes that can be related to the chronological order of Biblical events from the narrative of Creation to that of the Crucifixion. For instance, the English mysteries, whose introductory and final moments are associated with the order of heavens, showed the fall of rebellious angels from the Heavens. As in many other *mysteries*, in the Wakefield cycle, God was an allegorical character in the play, depicted as an old man. These supernatural presences that determined the course of events in relation with a cosmic design of events were set within an economy of moments that can be seen read as an anticipative motif of Protestant lay lyrics, Milton's Fall of Lucifer in *Paradise Lost*, or Goethe's Prologue in the Heavens in *Faust*. The display of supernatural occurrences brought the logic of the miraculous

to a very specific relation with the quality of special effects. (The cultural historian can literally sense the difference between the apophatic core of Sacramental Liturgy, in which the Invocation of God's miraculous presence takes place in the sacred space of the altar<sup>132</sup> as the office of a mystery, in contrast with the cataphatic outlook of Liturgical Drama, in which Biblical history becomes a subject of allegorical re-enactments.) If the decorum was generally reduced to a few symbolic items suitable for the needs of mobility, the fewer stable scenes of the agoras were sophisticated, designed for the generation of marvelous visual illusions.<sup>133</sup> In one of the Towneley plays, the dramatic plot involved ship carpentry, because Noah's ark was assembled in front of the spectators; once the vessel was completed, animals were embarked, while the corpses of the drowned were enacted by volunteers. In this context, Noah displayed attitudes that present him as a symbolic ancestor of Christ, while his wife, a protector of innocent life, reminded the audiences of the Virgin's hieratic postures. In the Wakefield cycle, the ontological accent is different: Noah executes God's burdensome command in anticipation of a catastrophe that nobody else foresees. In some of the surviving versions, Noah has to listen to his family's ironical comments about constructing a ship inland, and, when the rain begins flooding the earth, his wife shows reluctance to leave her village and follow him. In these representations, the "waves" were carved in wood and moved around the arch at the moment of embarkation. In the final scenes, Noah's family changes the attitude: the characters display exultant gratefulness for having been chosen to continue human life, while a dove and a rainbow are present as reminders of God's contribution to the triumph of life.

Questions regarding the symbolic functions of these spectacles are of particular relevance for my analysis, since what was shown and the manner of expression in these festivals made the core of the Late Middle Ages' social imagination. My initial theoretical excursion into the world of generative anthropology has insisted on the importance of the ritual destruction of the victim for the quality of the originary scene setting, taken as a mythical episode whose main significance lies in the fact that the victim becomes a mediator of all possible

relations between subjects and signs, a symbolic model for imitation that ensures the stability of social order. In the absence of the original mediator, the medieval Mysteries ensured the possibility of the myth-reiteration and its issuing positive re-inscription in the social memory of the Medieval subject. Significantly, the representation of crucifixion in these Mysteries had to match the duration of the real-time Calvary. Sometimes, even though the ideal adjustment was impossible by reason of the itinerant character of the spectacles, the realism of interpretation went too far, as devotional volunteers agreed to suffer the traditional humiliations of Christ.<sup>134</sup> From these “archeological” reviews of Liturgical drama, where the violence of depiction summoned the extreme of physical wounds, another question of crucial importance arises. What is the function of ritual violence in these symbolic assertions of Resurrection, whose gradual departure from theological themes corresponds with the progress of aesthetics? Were these new outcomes typical of Liturgical Drama replaced by a compensative logic of (either conflictive or entirely positive) symbolic upshots on the Shakespearean stage? Two ages of mimesis come into view here during the first decades of English Reformation, marking two rationales of the dramatic spectacle whose different cores lay in their opposite exploitation of cruelty and their different summation of the sacrificial. One mimetic mentality reminds me of medieval devotional practices, through its repetitive display of the crucified body, while the other looks at an alternative core of generative images, whose function would be the substitution of ritual violence with alternative strategies of ethical persuasion.

What were the typical dramatic conventions set forth by the liturgical dramas? Normally performed in open spaces, they engaged entire communities – groups who wanted to take glimpses of the spectacle. Since everybody was to take advantage of the theatrical events, the amateur actors regarded accessibility to and visibility of the plays as the chief functions of liturgical-dramatic dramatizations.<sup>135</sup> This is to say that the proper spaces of these productions were the squares and the streets themselves, an ample space that required a fit condition from the actor. Thus, the moving tableaux of Crucifixion were entirely allegorized, while the unity

of action was totally absent, one could say sacrificed, for the sake of extravagance. In effect, the succession of scenes abandoned narrative coherence for a manner of display that amalgamated symbolic episodes and mythical sequences, exaggerating allegorical postures or exaggerating expression in agreement with the actors' inspirational moods. Amateur poets, whose skills at rhetoric were often surpassed by their genuine devotional zeal, touched at times the spheres of the sublime in spite of themselves, Sainte-Beuve once observed, adopting expressive postures that triggered the enthusiasm of entire gatherings. These moments, whose common logic was the recollection of the Gospels for an illiterate public, engaged hundreds of fervent parishioners in their performance, which is to say that the local circumstances had a strong impact upon the course of events displayed. Glosses were spontaneously added to the general lines of the long plots in ways that diminished even further the coherence of the themes.

The various topics of seventeenth-century English drama account for the gradual departure from the display of Christ's ritual body and for the compensative recourse to thematic and narrative clusters inspired from the English tradition. In the days of Elizabeth, the urgency of such laicized thematic repository brought both courtiers and commoners into Southwark's theaters. In the meantime, theatrical companies defied the Corporation of London in gaining the Queen's and the Privy Council's support for their profane occupation. One of the major re-adaptations of the drama might have occurred, not necessarily in relation to the themes chosen by Elizabethan playwrights, but in relation to the functional coherence of dramatic episodes. Traditional *mysteries* can be hardly acknowledged as dramas, since their thematic axis does not reside in *vraisemblance*, taken here as the coherence of thematic, dialogic, and narrative clustering. Their main interest, which was summoning social energies around the ritual of Crucifixion, was an opportunity for the emulation of entire communities around the metaphoric episode of the Passions, Calvary, and resurrection, whose magnanimous displays engaged the mimetic enthusiasm of whole communities of volunteers. During the Middle Ages, the original theme of Salvation, a motif reiterated yearly in Liturgical dramas, was

already part of a common horizon of knowledge and imagination. Further elaborations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries added glamour to the already known subjects. As Pollard once suggested, the Protestant dramas brought a triumphal ethical touch together with exaltations that attempted to represent the guardians of Heavens announcing the future age of Salvation.<sup>136</sup>

Given my specific focus on Shakespeare's dramatization techniques in *The Tempest*, a play whose representational innovation consists of the systemic deferral of violence by means of magical interventions into the expected clash between the legitimate ruler and its usurpers, I can anticipate from here interrogations of relevance for the thematic preoccupations of generative anthropology, as a discipline centered around the discussion of language as a "mover" of symbols able to suspend violence through representation. As suggested already in the passages where I introduced the foundations of Gansian theory, I am also considering the possibility of a second set of substitutions: the transitional period between liturgical drama and modern theatre signified an allegoric "surgery," modifying the hero's outlook. If the model-heroes of sacrificial violence were replaced by characters whose ethical behavior accommodates "softer" ideals of virtue, this was generated by the hero's ability to outdo his enemies, survive, and reinstate order on a stage where mimetic conflict, or, in other words, the anarchy of unbridled desire, threatened to win. The whole process needs to be analyzed in relation to the powers of autonomization and self-assertion, where the heroes are granted individual voices and postures significant for the emergent ethics of historicity.

### **II. 3. Moralities, Reformation, Secularization**

Moralities, dating from the late fifteenth century, were the late adaptation of the Mysteries, where the themes were progressively laicized. As opposed to classical liturgical dramas that typically took place in the agoras, the moralities were rescaled

to suit the needs of a more refined audience, who afforded sponsoring and encouraging private representations. Designed for entertainment, the Moralities were shorter, while the number of actors was significantly reduced. Later known as Moral Interludes, the moralities allegorized Virtues and Vices in stanzas that elaborated on the themes of lay folklore. Derived from the classical Dutch *Everyman*, whose translation into English dated from the fifteenth century, these dramatic innuendos dealt with the episodes of human life and experience. Moralities were suited for autonomous performances, or, as often happened, they were shown as intermezzos in the interlude between the parts of a banquet or of an aristocratic entertainment<sup>137</sup>. These plays, whose emergence corresponds to the gradual decline of the Mysteries, were at the origin of Protestant Moralities, whose new cognitive accent suited the ideological priorities of the Reformation. But, strikingly enough, the gradual disappearance of Liturgical Dramas corresponded to an “aggravated” disjuncture of the times, empowering a form of social emancipation that transcended the confessional affiliation of participants.<sup>138</sup>

In England, too, in the first years of Elizabeth’s reign, the mystery play cycles disappeared. Their suppression between 1565 and 1579, writes O’Connell, can be seen as a significant triumph of the Crown. This inaugurated a new generation of metaphors on stage, described by the same O’Connell as expressions of a polemical dialogue in the name of Scriptural themes:

English Protestants embraced the stage as a polemical weapon; as playwrights and performers, patrons and audience, they attacked the doctrines and practice of Catholicism and promoted even Calvinist theological positions. Most of the polemical theater took the form of moral interludes, whose dramaturgy, based on the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century models, was well suited to ideological usage. But there were also several significant attempts at Biblical theater, generally through a melding of moral interlude with biblical narrative. There would remain the impulse (perhaps, viewed in hindsight, the temptation) to return to the Bible, the central subject for the vernacular stage in the

previous century and a half – and, of course, the imaginative mainspring of Protestantism. (89)

As protesters against the Catholic rituals, early English Protestant reformers inspired anew from the theological vein of Tertullian, viewed theatrical spectacles as much as the adoration of images as forms of idolatrous ignorance. “It is less fitting for the eyes than for the ears to be trained on sacred objects,” we learn from the prologue of John Foxe’s *Christus Triumphans*, in a move of thought that insists on the importance of reading and listening, as opposed to idolatrous worship of Papist cultic representations. When interpreted in such a way, the iconoclastic attitudes and actions of English Reformers need a more adequate description. O’Connell’s subtle remark in this context is that the Reformation drama quickly abandoned the mysteries in favor of a didactic approach to theater that took Biblical subjects as pretexts for moral debate. In spite of a long-term preconception of Reformation studies, it is now accepted that, in spite of any dogmatic biases, English reformers *did* value images, or, better said, they had to relearn how to value the power of symbolic images – when detached from iconographic functions – for their genuine corrosive potential in a world of semi-illiterate parishioners. This is to say that the iconoclastic and anti-idolatrous tactics of Reformation were applied selectively, with preference to traditional cultic contexts and with extreme laxness with those forms of expression that supported the Reformation views.

As a predictable cultural reaction against the memory of Catholicism, the typical imagery of Reformation scholarship did not wait long to rise. Where could its first illustrations be found? Some years before O’Connell, another English cultural historian, Paul Whitfield White, identified such new functions in the famous wood carvings depicting anti-papal allegories. One of the said artifacts, the carved bench end, Brent Knoll,<sup>139</sup> displays the allegorical Mitred Fox Bishop preaching to birds and rabbits, in a representation whose main function is satirical and whose graphic-compositional structure possibly caricatures the layouts of traditional Italian vignettes and frescoes depicting Saint Francis’ Sermons to the Birds<sup>140</sup>. According to Whitfield White, the Reformers did not limit themselves to

caricaturizing Catholicism only in images. *Three Laws* is the name of a dramatic satire by John Bale, where two symbolic characters, the ambition of Vice Infidelity and the Catholic Bishop is to “resolve to suppress ‘the Byble readers’ who threaten the Pope’s authority.”<sup>141</sup> In these dramatic sketches, Bale shows an immoderate taste for bawdy language and stylistic figures likely to denunciate the Catholic camp. Popular sympathies were effectively elicited by the profanities illustrated in these bald parodies. Furthermore, although seventeenth century intellectuals such as Anthony Wood qualified Bale as “foul-mouthed,” the ideological effectiveness of such plays brought about a fast evolution of satirical productions, expressed in the lines of morality plays. (This is a hybrid species that merged from Medieval mystery plays and developed during the fifteen and sixteenth centuries, whose raw conventions, interspersing allegorical and historical characters, anticipate Shakespearean historical drama.) Thomas Cromwell<sup>142</sup> became aware of their effect in the 1530s and promoted them, together with proposing Bale’s other miracle plays, defending the author of anti-papist comedies against the detractions of English Catholics. Significantly, after her ascension as a monarch, Elizabeth offered Bale in his last years a prebendal stall in Canterbury Cathedral, where he was buried as a pioneer of the Reformation, a gesture of consecration that speaks of the fast transformation of the times.<sup>143</sup>

In fact, in adopting the theme of traditional liturgical drama to the semantic contexts and social priorities of Reformation, the theologians of the 1530s discovered the practical view of modern education, an Erasmian *via moderna* applied to the empirical insights of a pedagogy of ethical learning. Since “wit” is the common name for these dramatic drafts, sixteenth century English Protestant activists came to ask themselves the following: *Why not* act wittily and take advantage of the visual significance of the stage to promote the new culture, showing the true face of the Catholic? During the early days of English reformation, Chambers confirms, drama was seen as compatible with Protestant ethics under strictly controlled conditions. Significantly, in 1535, Thomas Cromwell’s secretary, Morison, unveiled an ample plan of social action against a



Papacy perceived as a competing political institution.<sup>144</sup> Along the same lines, Whitfield White states that “Protestant leaders [...] used drama as a means to effecting religious change.” In the meantime, strong appeals to the reinstatement of common beliefs and expressions of faith were heard from patriots. This did not exclude the arts, now valued for their power of persuasion. Foxe’s famous exclamation in support of Protestant social action, asked “players, printers, preachers be set up of God as a triple bulwark against the triple crown of the Pope, to bring him down” (qtd. in White 2).<sup>145</sup> From one of these satirical interludes, significantly entitled *A comedy concernynge thre laws* (published during Bale’s exile at Antwerp in 1547),<sup>146</sup> we learn that mortal sins, at fault for the corruption of the Laws of Nature, the Ten Commandments and the spirit of Christianity, were to be associated with the ideological enemy, namely Papism:

Let Idolatry be decked like an old witch, Sodomy like a monk of all sects, Ambition like a bishop, Covetousness like a Pharisee or spiritual lawyer, False Doctrine like a popish doctor, and Hypocrisy like a gray friar.<sup>147</sup>

When the symbolic personifications of allegory forged the new morality, polarizing the symbols of ethical life, any discussion of the Reformation’s alleged iconoclasm seems inadequate. In this context, White denounces the classical methodological error that views the Reformation as a consortium laboring to dispel theatrical and symbolic images as inappropriate, as one that misses the right emphasis on the Protestant employment of images and satirical expressions favored for their ideological impact.<sup>148</sup> Such a theme, discussed largely in White’s study and supported with an extensive body of evidence, was made the object of a new ideological accent in Tudor politics. The scholar exemplifies his historical research with insights from the early days of Reformation, a period when mystery-plays probably coexisted with anti-papist satires. A credible hypothesis is that English Reformation Churches of the 1530’s proposed the interludes *in lieu of* the Classical mystery plays. The new theatre, whose initial recourse to themes such as Robin Hood and other secular subjects, insisted on the lay common ground of English

medieval folklore in order to develop that consciousness of commonality needed for the successful insertion of the new anti-papist motifs. Meanwhile, White suggests, Catholic drama survived intact for more than another decade in those remote communities where state censorship was less active:

No doubt Catholic plays espousing papal supremacy, transubstantiation, image worship, and the cult of the Virgin, continued to be performed under parish auspices well into Reformation, perhaps more frequently in the relatively isolated communities of the north and west than in the more heavily Protestant southeast, but if the great cycle plays are any indication, those offensive elements were either suppressed by state censorship or voluntarily expunged from play texts while leaving their biblical story-lines basically intact.(White 190)

Nonetheless, the dissemination of anti-Papist theatre was quick and effective, being recorded first and spread from Eastern English parishes, such as Kent from the early 1530s. Whitfield White writes that Bale's interludes performed at St. Stephen Church in 1538 and Thomas Willey's anti-Catholic plays produced in his own vicarage at Yoxford, Suffolk, are the key-items of a new genre that proliferated during the following decade. The process of transformation he espouses, takes into account the eventful discovery of the anti-papist theatrical interludes in communities such as Hadleigh, Suffolk. Found under Reformed Archbishop Crammer's patronage, Hadleigh was one of the earliest communities "that received the word of God in England" according to John Foxe. White recounts the spectacular history of drama performed in churches by visiting players, under the direct patronage and supervision of the Reformation clerics. These performances, which could not take place without the explicit approval of the city councils, left indifferent very few attendants; at first, they were associated with preachers, helping the parishioners associate the new civic and religious ideals.<sup>149</sup>

After Elizabeth's coronation, the practice of showing anti-Catholic plays in churches became common, and the Queen often attended such performances

produced for her during her legendary “progresses.” In these special productions, the whole space of the church was adapted to the central presence of the monarch and of her suite. On the royal performance of Udall’s Hezekias in King’s College Chapel offered in honor of the Queen during her first visit to the University, the witnesses recorded the entrance of Elizabeth on a railed bridge leading from the choir door to the oak-wood platform stage. The Queen’s throne was built on the edge of the stage, “where she was enthroned in full view of the spectators” (White 143), a position that inspired associations between the monarch and the ethical message of the play. Significantly, the action of Udall’s Biblical interlude, performed in the Queen’s presence, was packed with religious-militant examples and allegories of God’s greatness illustrated by the recourse to miraculous interventions. The plot showed King Hezekiah’s “destruction of the idolatrous brazen serpent, pagan altars and other superstitious images worshipped by Israelites” (White 143) while producing a short-lived return to the true religion. In accordance with the Biblical message, a new fall into apostasy was avoided by the marvelous descent of the Prophet Isaiah, “who warns of impending retribution, which subsequently manifested itself on the stage in the form of the heavily armored Assyrian invaders” (White 143). Finally, God answers King Hezekiah’s prayers to intervene on Israel’s behalf and, (in a fantastic turn that anticipates the sudden slumber of Prospero’s usurpers), Udall’s interlude ends with the mysterious decease of the Assyrian invaders in their sleep, on the night before the combat.<sup>150</sup>

English Reformers, White suggests, saw the theatrical stage as a pretext for a broader range of social polemics. Fighting the doctrines of Catholicism and promoting ideas inspired from Continental Reformation, the English scholars found a perfect structure in the short and impacting form of moral interludes, whose vernacular stage uses the Biblical injunction in a new direction, that of an imaginative rewriting of old themes made suitable for the new ethical priorities.<sup>151</sup> It is now, in these interludes, in works of people such as Udall, Bale, or John Foxe, that a new mode of representation was slowly discovered. Given the common stress on the theatricality of such productions, whose success depended on the

exploitation of “the histrionic potential” found within Biblical narratives, one can easily draw a parallel with the manner in which the Protestant sermon unveiled the message, as “an essentially dramatic performance” (O’Connell 90). The qualities of a sixteenth century successful preacher, somebody who could make himself listened to by parishioners for hours, suggests O’Connell, were similar to the skills of a dramatic actor. Here, he reasserts the insight of another reformation scholar, Bryan Crockett, who sees the sixteenth-century preacher as somebody who genuinely assumes the dramatic quality of his role at the pulpit, in the manner inspired by the attitudes and of Biblical prophets whose inspirational preaching relied on the conveying a higher message to believers:

Like Shakespeare’s Prospero, the preacher quite literally dons a robe and heightens his language for the prophetic performance. (Crockett, qtd. in O’Connell 169, n. 3)<sup>152</sup>

Such instances are particularly important for our exposition, given our aim to demonstrate further that the emerging theater of power absorbs ritual and sacramental functions. These records show more than a monarch vouchsafing the new course of militant drama; they indicate the monarch becoming part of the spectacle through the designated position of the throne, which, to paraphrase Stephen Orgel, determines the spectators look at the king watching the play, a major breakthrough in the formation of the theater of power. Paradoxically, the story of emancipation of theatrical forms from the supervision of the Church started in the very cloisters of the newly Reformed Ministry, where the themes of future lay theater were rehearsed in the guise of religious propagandistic expression. First, the Reformation performers of interludes were bound to use the limited scenic potentials of the given spaces in new manners, dismissive of traditional ritual symbolism and clerical functionalities. Next, the allusion to a wide range of Biblical moral stories and traditional themes of the Medieval plays had to take place in a context where the theological message of Catholic religious drama is either opposed or transgressed.

Elizabethan Protestants themselves felt unsafe about their own dogma and tended to refine the doctrine of Predestination with new theological insights. The official doctrine of Anglicanism, defined in Thirty-Nine Articles and finished in early 1571, placed the possibility of grace<sup>153</sup> entirely in God's hands. This idea was enriched with more specific doctrinal definitions of *election and reprobation*, writes Sinfield (12-13), since in article XVII we find that "predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God," that are "decreed by his counsel secret to us," a favor reserved to those chosen and forbidden to "curious and carnal persons, lacking the spirit of Christ."<sup>154</sup> The ambiguity, not solved during the Elizabethan era, enticed many ethical questions at the turn of the new century: Cambridge scholars William Barret, Peter Baro, the Archbishop John Whitgift, Lancelot Andrews, and finally Richard Hooker are involved in a history of intense disputes with regards to human potential to play a part in salvation. Significantly, the Queen herself acted as a moderator in many theological debates, proving a quality of judgment that expanded the art of diplomacy on shaky theological grounds.<sup>155</sup> Such controversies reached a climax in the Arminian-Calvinist debate that continued during the years of James' and Charles I's reigns. These disputes proved productive for the destiny of English drama, which found nourishment in the political climate of similar quandaries. Thus, White concludes, the relationship between dramatic arts and Protestant reformation in England proved productive for the destiny of English politics, encompassing

a period of some fifty years up to around 1580 when English Protestants extended the medieval tradition of promoting drama, along with other cultural activities, as a means of legitimating and celebrating religious teaching and practice, only now the authority which sanctioned that teaching and practice was no longer the Papacy and its emissaries but the English Crown and the ecclesiastical and civic officials under its control. From the 1530's playwrights and players, both amateur and professional, contributed to the formation of an emerging Protestant culture; moreover, they were patronized by reform-oriented leaders from the royal court to

provincial grammar schools in an effort to win popular support for the religious and ecclesiastical policies of the protestant Tudor administrations. (White 188)

Also, it is reasonable to assume that the most intelligent minds of the day tried to transcend the Puritan enthusiasms of the staunchest Reformers by broadening the foundations of the Reformation with lyrical, philosophical, and symbolic subtleties that were not on the initial agenda of Reformers. Did the high culture attempt to resist and survive the decades of religious proselytizing? Recent answers from younger academics schooled in the Greenblatt tradition have elaborated along these lines. In agreement with a significant number of new-historicist renderings of the said period, propaganda should be viewed as a twofold action: not only did it support a complacent view of history, but by its intrusion into the private spheres of psychological life, it summoned the rise of a counter-consciousness of alternative discourses. Propaganda's immediate effect – that of calling together social energies around the themes of the day – is not devoid of hazards, since the integration of the new contexts into the main framework provided by its artisans alters the dogma, changes mentalities and, not last, opens the social field of reception for new polarities of comprehension. The practical campaign of institutional Reformation in England was to be kept at a safe distance from the zeal of the Puritans, many of them prone to reasserting in public the Biblical importance of paternal hierarchies and correspondent ethical attitudes. Entirely aware of the potential for national dissent, the first reformation monarchs, Henry VIII, Elizabeth and James, adopted the middle-route of compromise between secular and religious principles of governance. Thus, lay-culture and its corollary in modernization emerged not immediately as a synthesis between polar options, but as a third route: one that avoided dead-ends of dogmatic clashes. Sinfield insists on this particular epistemic aspect, acknowledging that

other structures of ideas were available to Elizabethans and Jacobean.  
Pagan literature was immensely potent and endorsed by sixteenth century humanists, but at odds with Protestantism in respect to human potential,

ethics, literature, religion, sexuality and politics. The nascent empiricism associated with Machiavelli and Bacon also promoted a rival view of the world. Protestantism did not endure, so its dominance was evidently not total. (8)

This is in fact a more indirect way of asserting that great cultural movements always breed the seeds of subversion, in particular when their message aimed “to hybridize” dogmatic worldviews, “cloning” imaginary perspectives to accommodate new cognitive horizons. Another tendency can be seen here: of cultural gestures that, in spite of their justification in the local historical background, cannot be seen as entirely dependent upon tradition, since breaking novelty and invention in artistic expression should be seen as a gesture aiming to avoid the dead ends of dogmatic politics. This is the case in Elizabethan theater, a genre that in spite of its many affiliations to the liturgical drama, was beyond doubt born in an epistemic “vacuum” following decades of traumatic transformations, a revolutionary art aimed at the democratization of artistic expression. Peter Goldman’s undertaking in “Hamlet’s Ghost,” a research article published in 2001 in *Anthropoetics: The Journal of Generative Anthropology*, is the author of a valuable insight in this context, where the lay-drama is integrated with the epistemic discussion of secularization. Neohistoricist analyses have pioneered research on Renaissance drama in relation to the destabilized or fading religious institutions. The traditional Catholic involvement of “Purgatory,” for instance, in religious politics was first condemned in the Prayer Book of Edward VI, then entirely suppressed by the Church of England during Shakespeare’s times,<sup>156</sup> some four decades before *Hamlet* was first produced:

Leading Protestants in England sought to minimize the purely ceremonial dimensions of late medieval worship; in this effort many of the hallowed images, the statues, carvings, and the furniture of the parish churches were destroyed or defaced with ill-advised haste and violence. Reformers often rushed to discard age-old customs and practices that had acquired the familiarity and authority of ancient tradition. The iconoclasm of the

Reformation left an enormous gap in the cultural and spiritual life of the English people, and Renaissance drama stepped in to help fill that gap. It is worthwhile to note in this regard, that the rise of the Elizabethan theater followed immediately on the Protestant suppression of the annual mystery play cycles, a rich element of late medieval culture. The more tradition-minded laity found the bare austerities of the Protestant worship service unsatisfactory, in their insistence on duty and punishment. Protestant worship in its most rigorous forms was intellectually and morally strenuous. Shakespeare's theater, according to New Historicists, was able to appropriate and transform the spiritual "energy" or charisma associated with forbidden Catholic practices such as exorcism or services for the dead. The attacks on Catholic ceremonies commonly associated them with both magic and theater. The repression of Purgatory was part of a larger attack on the belief in ghosts in general. Efforts to eliminate magic and superstition added to the cultural vacuum created by the forces of modernity. ("Hamlet's Ghost")

Goldman acknowledges his source of inspiration in Greenblatt, when he analyzes the epistemic quality of *substitution* present in the subsequent modernization of English letters. Thus, the alleged secularization should not be understood as a process of accelerated elimination of religious beliefs from institutional and social practice. The ritual "evacuation" procedures are targeted mainly at those ritual forms of worship that need to be discarded or adjusted, such as the Mass for the deceased: "It is precisely the ritual forms that are left behind; traditional ceremonies such as the Mass for the dead or ritual exorcism were abandoned, while the psychic energy invested therein continued in new forms, including art. The sacred does not simply evaporate in the modern era; it is rather integrated into the fabric of our culture, integrated so profoundly that we hardly recognize it as such any more." ("Hamlet's Ghost")

Yet, literature's permanent potential for transgressing official symbolism could not leave the state indifferent, given that the politicians needed to stay in



touch with the expanding limit of the ideological domain. The modern state, contoured in the civic designs of English Protestantism, had to broaden its ideological foundations and stand as a guardian of civility while reexamining the new assumptions as products of its own culture. In the meantime, the wise monarch knew that her/his other duty was to counteract by adopting those intellectuals who could ascribe the movement of historical transformations to her/his side. At least in theory, the movement was one of absorption and extended protection on the monarch's behalf, in which ultimately, freedom became the fertile ground of comparisons of all kinds, allowing an accelerating sense of historicity in the foundations of cultural practice, and adapting intellectual and social dissimilarity within the enriched confines of wise governance. In fact, from its first days, the Protestant Queen found herself in an uneasy position. The notion of "progress" (as social growth), in these early stages of Reformation, equated an accelerated pace of mutations born from the factual opposition between dogmatic theory and genuine expression in cultural practice. Progress also connoted the quality of social response to the ideological action of the Protestant Crown, which was determined to educate new civic mentalities. How fast and to what extent could the state allow these transformations to take place spontaneously on its "playground"? When should repression be seen as a consolidating action in the service of stability and order? Finally, what are the proper policies of governance when the maxims of political theory do not any longer suit the challenges of real life?

Political strategizing, as the moderns have learned from the lessons of history, is often a hazardous process, whose dependence transcends the powers of individual leadership, and depends upon objective resources as much as upon demographic and social factors. Nevertheless, the overall success of social progress is always shown as contingent upon social stability. Given that progress itself is seen as internalization of social energies to the logic of governance, the figure of the Protestant monarch (as a pre-modern leader) needed to engrave its shape on the history's quadrant: this was to anticipate, guard, and finally ascribe to its symbolism all possible transformations in the realm of social communication. This

strategy bound the Protestant monarch to the local imagery of power, and attached the roame an ambiguous and metaphorically fertile figure, transitive to the point of its possible association with every other reality of its domain and acting as a signifier even in its very absence. Hiding its severed umbilical cord with the world of ecumenical Christianity, the Protestant monarch embodied a half godly, half usurping image embodying history's great motivator onto immanence. This is the assumption that lies beneath the following reconstruction, where I try to look at different aspects of Elizabethan and Jacobean cultures in connection with my theme of study. My aim, by the end of this analysis, is to reveal a common dynamic of political symbolism and of theatrical strategies, as visible in the new metaphors of the Court Masque or in the mythological apocryphal literature of the Late Renaissance, uncovering a common symbolism that is reflective of the transformations in the political unconscious of the said period. As broadly accepted in modern epistemology, in this process of identity fashioning anticipating modern capitalism, the political subject "lends" its imagination (also its affective intelligence and ethical motivations) to *the state* and to its political ideals, in a process whose quality gravitates around the metaphoric potential of the gerund *taming*, where the process of taming stands for the possibility of a reformation in the world of social imagination. More intense than in any other preceding period of Western civilization, the fashioning of psychological contents by political agency is discussed in relation with the acquisition of civilized behavior: culture shaping the modes of knowledge; also, culture softening the violence of the anarchic imaginary of the pre-historicist subject; and also, through its newly established affair with the agency of power, culture putting in motion the wheels of self-assertion and self-determination.

In fact, the process of imaginary exchange between the Crown and its subjects is not left unanswered by the agency of the state: the corresponding "rewards" granted to the subject-patriot, such as wealth, civic freedoms, and social prestige often discussed as the catalysts of secular modernity - have as their long-term effect the irreversible alteration of subjectivities in the fabric of social

progress, their ascription to the higher designs of historical and political commitment. The success of the Elizabethan era in politics depends entirely on the effectiveness of such strategies of co-involvement and this new binder of social energies shows, among other tactics of persuasion, its utmost cohesive force in the new metaphors of dramatic stage, whose field of application expands beyond the confinement of the traditional entertainment zone. By reference to royal propaganda, I attempt to describe the new “theatrical” technologies of representation, especially those pertaining to the more elaborate and private conventions of Elizabethan and Jacobean Court theatre, as evolved either in conjunction or in parallel with the symbolism and persuasive technologies of power. But this take cannot find its coherence without a broader epistemic analysis of the English civilization of Reformation and cannot find its proper articulations without a preliminary discussion of the English cultural milieu of the time. More explicitly, I will articulate our demonstration around the same interrogation as we have done to this point: since Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* is taken here as a symptom of an intellectual era at odds with its own foundations, what is the gallery of items in English culture that “announces” this epistemic hybrid, neither classifiable as classical drama, nor as fully fledged comedy? My analysis is aware of the proper context of cultural imagination at the time: the emerging urban folklore, described as a heterogenic puzzle of folkloric tales, rural customs, and narratives from the returning colonists represent the complex background of our discussion in the following chapter.

Predictably, the first colonizers’ revelations about nature, geography, and human condition set off the need for a new epistemology, a discipline whose aim was to relate knowledge and power in an objective and positive manner. This becomes visible in the transition from the age of Elizabethan reformation, where the theological metaphors still prevail in the works and *fin de siècle* of Walter Raleigh, Thomas Harriot<sup>157</sup>, John Dee, Robert Fludd, and the other intellectual path openers. As we know, the attempted reconciliation between what is known from tradition and what is suggested as the new norm of behavior in politics does not take place

immediately, nor is it part of the traditional cognitive horizons. Historians tend to agree that the most acute trend of the period was generated by England's struggle for expansion and political dominance as a naval empire: these factors brought to the British the sight of different worlds than their own islands and also developed a sense of awareness of England's unique position, as an insular civilization in search of new continents. The imagination of seafarers in the Age of Discovery was enriched beyond the wildest dreams of their sedentary contemporaries, and upon their return home, their tales and discoveries built new cognitive horizons and inaugurated "semantic new-markets" in a Western Europe otherwise decimated by successive bouts of plague and by subsequent anarchic social migrations. The effort of expansion marked a tendency that showed the fast dislocation of any predetermined cognitive themes and tenets of value. Hence, the English nation's imagination borrowed the outlandish and uncanny motifs of the New World, in a game of fascination, attractions, and serendipitous reactions that generate, as their long-term effect, the seeds of modernity in the twin fields of knowledge and political power.

#### **II. 4. James I, "The Phoenix of all Souraignty"**

In analyzing Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Christopher Pye contends that "the complex, formative relationship between sovereign, subject, and theater articulated by the proto-modern contractual theorist in fact unfolds a potent contradiction which had always informed the sovereign's spectacular presence and defined the subject's theatrical condition. At the same time, reading the development from an early, organic theory of sovereignty to the Hobbesian contractual account specifically in terms of theater's function helps uncover a decisive shift from a political subject minimally shored against spectacular dispersal to a perspectively delineated and relatively fixed subject." (10) The alleged transformation of subjectivity, Pye considers, was consistent with both the beginning of a bourgeois conjecturing of the self and "with the transformation from a maternal to a paternal figure of

sovereignty” (10-11). To the early seventeenth-century English subjects, the said makeover corresponded with James’ ascent to the crown of England, a period that marked the Scottish claim to the mythical throne of Britain. As Tristan Marshall notes in his *Theatre and Empire* (2000), the Scottish idea of a unified Britain revived a thirteenth century prophecy by Thomas Erceldoune and took into account John Knox’s argument in *The First Blast*, who appointed the British as “the people of Gods covenant, which after the name of Christian is the most glorious and honorable name, that any man in the world may enjoy” (qtd. in Marshall 28-29). The chiliastic aspect was all-pervading in the political texts of the Scots, who identified the restoration of the ancient monarchy with the approach of the Doom Day, an event that in James Maxwell’s 1615’ *Admirable and Notable Prophecies* was seen as the beginning of a Christian empire that would be prepared for Christ’s impending return. Still, one could see James’ “paternalism,” in its deep connection with the reassessment of Elizabethan political hagiographies and geographical discoveries, where the image of the fatherly, providential monarch corresponded to a more pragmatic need of colonial expansion.

Indeed, Jacobean iconology took into account the continuity of the Tudor attainments into a new political epoch, corresponding to the new dynastic designations and to its unifying vocation. The new message of Christianity matched the broader imperial ambitions of James’ rising absolutism that saw Britain’s civilizing mission in association with the Christianization of the heathens, a task unaccomplished by the ruthless *conquistadores*. “Paternalism, displacement, exploitation and conversion of the Natives were also part of the example of Spain,” Hart observed in *Comparing Empires*, “a pattern the English and French followed in modified forms, so that they could not turn away from the Hispanic model” (91). Overcoming the anti-imperialist reservations of his Scottish philosophical tutor (George Buchanan), James followed the more pragmatic suggestions of thinkers like William Alexander, who defended the political project of an imperial Britain at home with a colonial domain overseas. James’ imperial project, Marshall wrote, transferred in the new era John Dee’s older ambitions advanced in the name of

Elizabeth. After the Queen's death, in 1604, Dee, looking forward to reconfirm his position with the new court, reasserted the imperial dream in a petition addressed to James, in a text that reviewed the principles of his two political treatises, *Brytanici Imperii Limites* (1576), and *Thalattokratia Brettaniki* (1597) (see Marshall 30).<sup>158</sup> Dee's project mixed the attributes of visionary politics with the innovative motif of preemption, describing a monarchy whose adequate strategy would be "the PERPETVALL POLITIK SECVRITY and better presecuration of this famous Kingdom, from all Forrein danger, or Homish disorder... and most needful Publik Benefit" (see Marshall 30-31).<sup>159</sup> The religious imperative of the imperial vision corresponded, Anthony Webster noted, to the Protestant ideological battle against Papacy and to its designs for a compensative model of sovereignty in the New World; blossoming from the root principle of *terra nullius*, this imperative is one that produced alternative territorial claims and, sometimes, mercantilist doctrines, such as Locke's tenet that those superiorly prepared to make the land productive deserved to rule it (see Webster 21).<sup>160</sup> As a consequence, the ideological battles for the New World's symbolic integration within a civilized England did not forget their politically proactive and ethically dispensatory commitments.

Dedicated to Jacobean innovative political spirit, English and Scottish intellectuals soon rediscovered the spiritual mission of England as dependent upon a renewed ecumenism. To many Protestants of the time, the symmetries between the Biblical past and the promise of a Golden Age appeared to reveal ancient truths and providential prophecies, announcing a revelation whose proper time was near. In opposition to continental Catholic monarchs, whose claims over the New World took into account the symbolic map of Jerusalem, as the proper center of the Christian world, the British found themselves in a strange geographic and historical position, whose marginality strove for a "redemptive" mythology of sovereign power, in concordance with the joined political commitments of Reformation, unification and expansion. Yet, as I implied in the former sections of this chapter, the update of classical Christian symbols into an operative, formative metaphysical gloss was not a facile work, considering its radical points of departure from late

medieval episteme. Hence, the “protochronic” reading of Arthurian and Proto-Christian apocryphal legends amounted to the quality of an original symbolic geography: this “political spirituality” blended with either occult-cosmological or Protestant neo-ecumenical attributes had its essence in John Dee’s “thalassocracy,” a project that took into account the occult aspects of the Renaissance astronomy in juxtaposition with the visionary qualities of prudential leadership.

Of the many hagiographical elements that amalgamated into the original iconography of the British Empire, I have chosen to discuss only those that disclose the invisible metaphorical connotations of *The Tempest*. In the context of England’s late rise as a colonial power, James had to review the Elizabethan iconology and associate himself with the incipient iconographies of the former monarch. The phoenix, a typical encomiastic element used in praise of Elizabeth, became associated with Jacobean rise to power, in the reassessment of Roman imperial symbolism. *The Tempest* depicts it too, indirectly, in Prospero’s re-appearance to his old subjects and foes in Act V, and directly, in Act III (iii.24), when the conspirators and their accomplices followed by Gonzalo have been shown a banquet by the island’s spirits, which makes Sebastian call out in bedazzlement that, having witnessed such “living drollery,” he will accept as true that “there are unicorns, that in Arabia / There is one tree, the phoenix’ throne, one phoenix / at this hour reigning here” (III.iii. 21-24).<sup>161</sup> Earlier, in *The Phoenix and The Turtle*, Shakespeare had used the same symbol in relation with Elizabeth’s reign. As Christiane Gillham observed in her 1992 article,<sup>162</sup> the bard was accustomed with the iconographic value of this motif, used for its intrinsic ambiguity, given that the Greek *phoinix* (Φοινῖξ) denominated both the bird and the palm tree, revealing, she thought, the hidden congruence between verb and res in Renaissance analogical, that is, logic of sympathetic thought. According to Gillham, the supernatural bird’s deaths and resurrections were believed to be entirely dependent upon the natural cycles of the tree, as shown in Pliny’s *Book of Nature* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The relevant bond between the phoenix and the palm tree was preserved in medieval Christian tradition and its associated heraldic representative conventions,

“where the bird was often seen to be roosting on top of the palm in delineations of paradise”(Gillham 126).<sup>163</sup>

Finding in Theophrastus relevant associations between the mythical palm-tree's germinal ashes and the development of the date-palm fruit, Gillham identified an identical occurrence in Pliny, where, she held, “the sexual correlations in the fertility of the palm (*phoenix*), the tree and the bird had been seen to be related by their common reliance on either the substance or the motif of the fertile ashes” (130) Furthermore, reassessing Gillham's themes, James H. Simms found earlier occurrences of the *phoenix* motif in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* play cycle, where “characters find encouragement in prophecies of revengers rising, phoenix-like, from the ashes of dead heroes” (Simms 67)<sup>164</sup>. The obvious instance is identified in *1 Henry VI* IV.vii.92-93, in Sir William Lucy's prediction uttered in memoriam of Talbot and his soldiers killed in the battle: “from their ashes shall be rear'd / A phoenix that shall make all France afear'd”; and, as Simms continues, in *3 Henry VI* I.iv.35-36, where Richard, Duke of York, informs his murderers that his “ashes, as the phoenix, may bring forth / A bird that will revenge upon you all” (67). The parallels are not limited here: Simms finds relevant coincidence between the seminal ashes of the phoenix tree and the verses in *Richard III* IV.iv.423-25, where a foreseen bird prophesizes to Queen Elizabeth that her slaughtered children will be buried in her womb “where in that nest of spicery they will breed / selves of themselves”(in Simms 67). Furthermore, in *Henry VIII* V.v.40-43, the hermeneutician identifies Shakespeare's explicit intention to conflate Elizabeth's “phoenix-like” death with James' ascent to the throne, corresponding to a symbolic transmutation of the feminine monarchic attributes into the masculine royal prerogatives: “When / The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix, / Her ashes new create another heir / As great in admiration as herself, . . . / Who from the sacred ashes of her honor / Shall star-like rise, as great in fame as she was, / And so stand fix'd”(68). These similarities become relevant for the insidious symbolism of *The Tempest*, where the mythical empire continued in Ferdinand's and Miranda's



fortunate meeting, mirroring the engagement of Elizabeth and Frederick, thus adapting the resurrectional theme to the situation of a new era.

If the phoenix and the tree were known as sharing the same essence, their lately emphasized consubstantiality defined the setting of Britain under James, as a Protestant nation compelled to adopt colonialism as an alternative ecumenical option. Marshall (32-33) notes that Henry Petowe's 1603 poem describing James' ascent to the throne named the king a Phoenix of all Soueraignty, "while Dekker's arch for James' welcome to London, Nova Arabia Felix, associated Britain with 'happy' Arabia"(33). This was the realm of serenity and bounty, corresponding to the Biblical and Qu'ranic countries of Sheba and Nabatea, the location of the graves of the Three Magi (according to Marco Polo), and mythical abode to the phoenix. Thus, "James is not merely the great Western prince – possessing the three crowns of the British islands, a feat not achieved by his ancestor Brute – but he is a king "about Kings now," one ready to restore the mythical splendor of Arthurian Britain (33-34) and to prepare, like Augustus, a state ready for the second coming of Christ. This view, embraced before long by most political writers, matched the spirit of earlier Scottish designs for a unified Britain. Thus, James Henrisoun's 1547's *Exhortacion to the Scottes* sustained the crossing out of the separate misnomers "English" and "Scotts" in favor of an integrated view of British sovereignty that claimed that "the lande is an empire free in it self, & subject to no superior but God" (Marshall 38). Only years after James' coronation, the first illustrations of the Jacobean period became discernible as legitimate and acceptable revisions of Elizabethan encomiastic repository. Published in 1609, Robert Johnson's *Nova Britannia: offering most excellent fruits by planting in Virginia* represented a unique plea on behalf of the Virginia Company for the re-colonization of the said territory: the front page showed a symbol typical of Dee's epoch, namely the ship of England at sea. As Marshall observed, the following volume, *The New Life of Virginea*, published in 1612, (attributed to Johnson), had on its front page two emblems, one showing James wearing the imperial closed crown, next to a badge of the monarchal crest, accompanied by the motto "Pro Consilio Suo Virginiae." In

this case, the explicit attribution of the colony to the new king owed to the success of Jacobean policies of repopulation.

Another heraldic element under revision was the depiction of the two pillars of Hercules, initially a Spanish imperial motif, assimilated to the repository of English heraldic after Elizabeth's 1588 victory over the Spanish Armada, rediscovered again in association with James' imperial crown. For instance, the former "terrae incognitae" added to the Jacobean possessions were framed in Francis Bacon's *Instauratio Magna* by the mythical pillars marking the ascription to the empire of domains set beyond the known world. And, of course, Shakespeare did not forget to remind the royal audience of this symbol in *The Tempest*'s closing act. Gonzalo's surprise at the sight of a living Ferdinand expressed in a paean, an Apollonian formula of adulation, offering thanks to the masters of providence and celebrating the kindness of divine justice: "O rejoice / Beyond a common joy, and set it down / With gold on lasting pillars: in one voyage / Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis, / And Ferdinand her brother found a wife / Where he himself was lost: Prospero his dukedom / In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves, / Where no man was his own" (V.i.204-12). As Marshall claims, in the Jacobean epoch, the pillars received the graphic adornments of vines warped around them, an attribute that empowered mythical associations with St. Peter's basilica in Rome, where the vines were told to have been brought from Solomon's temple. And if the redemptive quality of Prospero's reconciliation has been often debated as insubstantial, the critical reader does not have to overlook that Shakespeare's final construction relies on the prospect of magic reconciliation, where the agency of forgiveness belongs ultimately to the emperor's [substitutive] power to "pontificate," that is, to grant new identities in the island's *nowhere* land, "where no man was his own."

Marshall comments on the dual quality of *The Tempest*'s oceanic symbolism, associative in nature and culture, but dissociative in what concerned the binding of identity to determined geographic-historic horizons: "Solomonic imagery was of course significant in that it reflected both the king's concern to appear as a divinely blessed ruler as well as the idea that the Jews had prospered

under Solomon's divinely sanctioned rule. There was also the belief that Solomon was the father of the navigation" (39). This led Samuel Purchas, the main advocate of imperial politics in Jacobean era, to indicate in his *Purchas his Pilgrimes* the source of Solomon's riches in the golden mines of Ophir (Genesis 10:30), the mythical mountain of the East, whose imprecise location indicated it as set within three days from Asiongaber (1 Kings 9:26-28; 10:11, 22; 2 Chronicles 8:17-18; 9:10) where Solomon's sailors found silver, gold, santal, gems, ivory, as well as exotic creatures, such as peacocks and apes (see Marshall 40). From Marshall's observation, one could articulate another feature of *The Tempest's* symbolic "alexandrianism," taken here as the deliberate artifice, obscurity of mythological allusion, and initiatory function of princely eroticism. Conflating the allegorical visions of Pre-Christian blessed realms with the Greek pillars of Hercules, *The Tempest* provides a double frame to the symbolic lesson of sovereignty - embraced now as a quest for alternative horizons, prophetic and prothetical at the same time. The *dramatic* scheme of reconciliation, as I will show in the closing section, follows in the same logic of compromise as the one evident in the symbolic collage. Neither tributary to the Christian reconciliative models, nor explicitly cathartic, "the theater of absolution" inaugurated by the Jacobean scaffolding of *The Tempest* relies on a different assignment of dramatic agencies, where the worth of the future gains eminence in the indication of Prospero's reconciliatory promise: an imperial triumph of an odd kind, and one sustained by the twin props of occult philosophy and Gnostic symbolism.

### **Chapter III. Elements for the new imagination of sovereignty**

#### **III. 1. Elizabeth's London, the center of a larger planet**

Shakespeare's London was, no doubt, an exotic place. With a population nearing 300,000 inhabitants and growing quickly, the capital was ten times larger than any other British community. Such spectacular transformation can be explained only in relation to the greater picture of Elizabethan history, a period of major mutations in the political status of British civilization. Modern historians agree that the proper survey of the historical and political transformations in Elizabethan England takes into account three different periods of her reign.<sup>165</sup>

Looked at by modern standards, the quality of life in the city matched the contemporary definitions of an unwholesome environment. The persistence of the Bubonic Plague must have made the 1580s, the years of Shakespeare's youth, into a strange decade for Londoners. In the quarantined neighborhoods of Southwark crossed by wagons loaded with corpses, the trumpets, and the hoarse voices of revelers calling the people to theater may have sounded at least sarcastic, if not openly blasphemous. However, between 1563 and 1564, the period Shakespeare was growing in his mother's womb, the Black Death took its weekly toll of no less than 1000 in the city only, while the theater inn-yards of London hosted four times more people. Yet, the contemporary estimates acknowledge the fast rate of population growth in Elizabeth's era, eleven per cent, and even a more spectacular progress in James' epoch, nearly 20 per cent<sup>166</sup>. In contrast, the city that was losing 52,000 of its inhabitants yearly vibrated with new human energies, which, in the long run, prevailed over the menace. Apprentices in their early twenties in search of work were everywhere on streets, and their openness to social intercourse counted for the most important survival skill in a community whose migrants outnumbered the established inhabitants by three to one.<sup>167</sup> This new population was not fully branded into established social classes; moreover, given the composite social composition of the metropolis<sup>168</sup>, new Londoners seemed ready to adopt any eccentric customs that could turn into new sources of entertainment. In those days,

the contagious beauty of life surpassed the dumb fear of infection with plague. Throughout the early decades of Shakespeare's mature life, the Black Plague did not vanish, yet in a city whose life expectancy did not surpass the age of forty-two, Londoners, very much like Florentines in Boccaccio's *Trecento*, forgot slowly about their religious ordinances and learned to enjoy the perfume of the day above the smell of death, thus defying the danger in merry laughter. New accents were heard in the loud calls of the merchants who came from everywhere around the four corners of the British Isles. The Londoners' latest tongue spoken on streets mixed dialects, invented new words, and acknowledged bizarre miracles that revealed uncharted routes of existence. Two rich idioms, the basic one of the firsthand witnesses and the more elevated of the many storytellers-playwrights, were ready to fuse into an original urban folklore, which added up to the Biblical narratives and to the ethos of the late Middle Ages. A new consciousness of commonality was quickly up-and-coming in Britain, yet this rather "urban" state of mind was, like no other communitarian mentality before, one of boundless openness and curiosity, distancing quickly from fixed traditions and dogmas. Learning to forget its old and newer wounds, the City of London was slowly becoming the heart of a cosmopolitan civilization, one whose emerging common imagination was in search of tangible miracles.

The sources and manners of amusement were vast and their dominance in the out-of-city suburbia were credibly associated with demographic and migration factors. The modern separate entities of the theater, the tavern, the bath, and the brothel often overlapped their designative functions in sites of Sybarite enjoyments. The new era was already there, waiting for its new-age magi. Along the muddy banks of the Thames, playhouses and inn-yards hosted a form of entertainment that was matched only by the return of the large galleons from the New World that were bringing ashore odd artifacts, outlandish creatures, and uncanny histories. Often, the unsavory customs of the suburban inhabitants, many of them discharged soldiers in search of food, shelter and loud company (Holmes 94), affect the good traditions of old citizens.<sup>169</sup> The two shores of the Thames were

the smelliest, yet the most colorful routes of London: they housed the stock-fishmongers market, while the wet-fishmongers brought their daily catch onto Knight Riders and Bridge Streets. The other shore hosted the brothels, the spooky taverns, and the playhouses. How did these proto-*literary cafes* earn their wild reputation? For just a few pence, the theatre-inns of London were allowing more than mere access to their afternoon shows, presenting inexhaustible lists of Epicurean delights, such as bloody steaks, dark house-brewed beers served twenty-four hours of twenty-four, and teen prostitutes of both sexes intermingled with customers. Young noblemen, in particular, were indulging themselves in these clandestine pleasures, attending the parties from behind dark cloaks and leather-masks. In this environment, mixing up theatre with night life, new theatrical productions were sold out instantly. If London's first theater was built when Shakespeare was only twelve years old,<sup>170</sup> by the time he moved to the city, the amateur and professional companies were innumerable. One can easily imagine the legal problems that arose around the issues of authorship and licensing. England's classiest aristocrats were sponsoring their own companies around their estates: Lord Oxford and Lord Buckingham themselves supported the new fashion by hiring their own men actors, three or four in number, aided by a boy, who would play the women's roles. At the same time, theater was an endemic phenomenon of the new urban slum, where the succulent gags, biting wit, and slapstick made the good themes of the classical drama almost unrecognizable. Besides being stereotyped as places of ill repute, London theatre-inns were places of intellectual emulation, where customers spoke out their minds baldly, and young literates often engaged in political diatribes. The royal censors did their best to stop the bawdy language and the licentious allusions of some of these gossipmongers in disguise, not much more esteemed than vagabonds. In order to avoid being labeled as dishonorable, some of the established theatrical companies took the liberty to name themselves "*Servants of this or that lord*" (Bellinger 207-213).

During the reign of Mary, licenses had been limited to a few groups protected by noblemen and political criticism was not tolerated. The theatre of

mysteries was encouraged instead, as a didactic means to spreading the spirit of good faith. The Medieval mystery plays continued in oral community gatherings until Elizabeth forbade them; the Coventry mystery play was suppressed in 1579.<sup>171</sup> In Elizabeth's era, as the trade grew and the population diversified, the atmosphere relaxed too.<sup>172</sup> In spite of the repeated efforts to censor the playhouses, no city commissioner was ever expected to enforce the rules. The few triumphant attempts to close the theaters came from the Church.<sup>173</sup> In the early Elizabethan period, London authorities lifted the licenses of the companies established within the city and pushed the theatrical business to the other bank of the Thames into Southwark, a suburban slum outside the Mayor's control. However, the order was never enforced, because it would have brought behind the same bars both noblemen and wandering performers.<sup>174</sup> Paradoxically, from the tension between the repeated repressive interventions of the London Corporation<sup>175</sup> and the Queen, vocal sympathy for theatre might have been, in the long run, a positive motivator for the ethical climate of performances. As members of reputable companies, the gifted actors felt encouraged to stand out, while amoral performers and playwrights started self-censoring, in the fear of losing their rights to act (Bellinger 207-213). After 1576, the old inns would have already become too narrow for the large crowds of theatre-goers<sup>176</sup>; in compliance with the Crown's newest orders, modern "painted" playhouses were built in timber instead. Burbage's Theater was erected in 1576. The Courtain's construction followed only months later. Martin Holmes noted that "in 1583, Mr. Secretary Walsingham arranged for a selection of twelve best actors from the various companies available: they were granted wages and livery as Grooms of the Chamber, and for the first time a company of players was borne on the official establishment as Her Majesty's Servants."<sup>177</sup>

The moment was unique, for it denoted the transformation of theater from a low form of entertainment into a select one, where, gradually, the artistic functions became distinct from those of consumption. Behind the open-sky stages, modern machines erected fabulous sceneries, which fascinated the spectators with faraway landscapes. And, if the newer playhouses were still condemned by the

clergy as monuments of “London’s prodigality,” this happened for a good reason, given that the active adult population of the city increasingly migrated from the austere benches of the Gothic churches into the lavish atmosphere of the new theaters. After 1598, Richard Burbage built the Globe, which dominated the Bankside of Southwark, branding positively a street that was once known only for its stew-houses and its bear and bull pits.<sup>178</sup> The Fortune, which rivaled the Globe in fame, was erected in 1599. Shakespeare and Burbage used to stage their plays at the Globe in the summer, while in winter they used Blackfriars, a stage on the northern bank of the Thames developed after 1596 on the site of an old 1538 monastery.<sup>179</sup>

The English Reformation, which attempted to modernize the Church rituals, transformed the liturgy into a sober, often unappealing ritual, less worthy of note than the competing shows offered on the other bank by itinerant companies. Even if the obligation of English subjects to attend the Sunday mass subsisted in Elizabeth’s era, in London, unbounded urban development around the city’s limits was not destined to bring the new settlers closer to the established parishes of the old neighborhoods. As an indication of what seemed England’s Last Days for Catholics, the renewal of customs took place under the scandalous patronage of the omnipresent young Queen, who was laboring to adorn her political power with cultic elements of pagan inspiration. Indeed, Elizabeth’s fervor for laudations was blended into her deep passion for theater. This fact did not pass unnoticed by court poets and playwrights, whose poems were a source of inspiration for the queen in adopting the Gloriana effigy mask and performing the corresponding hieratic attitudes. As a composer of sonnets and a zealous translator of the classics, the monarch was not indifferent to the quality of the plays written under her patronage. Even if ready to sanction any allusion of sedition, the queen would bend her own rules when she liked the play. Her creativity in politics was often to be associated with her unique stage instinct, a quality that made the monarch step on stage to change the lines when she felt like altering the course of the plots or letting herself be associated with the fictional heroes.



In spite of the recurrent plague, after twenty-five years of Elizabethan rule, the whole city was breathing fresh air; the wind of cultural rejuvenation blew from every quadrant of the royal domain. In this period, urban audiences, Gurr and Hart emphasize, developed a new judgment of taste, derived from an unprecedented awareness of modern theatre as a medium of reflection of contemporary social life. The intricate notion of *theatrum mundi*, a concept that defines the hybridization of esthetical and social spheres, can be identified with this quality of participation to the social life of the metropolis, governed by a common sense of taste and wit in social behavior:

The 1580 and 1590s playgoers began to pay money to hear poetry and, [...] the plays composed between about 1590 and 1610 largely explore the relation between playwright and playgoer. The metatheatrical aspects, those that highlight the *theatrum mundi*, would be more apparent in the daylight, where the Elizabethan actors could see the audience, which observed itself. (Hart, *Theater and World* 233)

By 1611, eight years after the Queen's demise, when Shakespeare presented *The Tempest* at the Whitehall, London would indeed have become a great metropolis, a place blessed by Gods and cursed by the demons of prodigality. In 1605, in the last days of the Elizabethan reign, London had no less than eleven theaters, not including the private houses with stage facilities. James did not close any playhouses: on the contrary, he ordered and sponsored the renovation of a few famous stages. The Rose, as the first of the Elizabethan playhouses built in 1587 by Philip Henslowe, was still in place and would already have gained its indestructible prestige after the performances of Shakespeare's and Marlowe's plays.<sup>180</sup> The first building of the Globe burnt, but the place was so famous that King James encouraged its renovation in 1613. Paradoxically, the crystallization of an original dramatic language in Shakespeare's London was entirely dependent on the double standard of theatrical activity, under the patronage of the lord chamberlain, yet perpetually exposed to the abuses of censorship. Again, Hart's comment points at the relevant connections between Shakespeare's political theatre and the growth of

urban space as a stage of liminality, allowing the autonomization of theatre as an original idiom: “In representing self-conscious theatricality, Shakespeare creates characters who both celebrate and are wary of theater. Quite possibly, this is what a life in the theater engendered for Shakespeare. His plays were produced on the margin and the center but not in the ‘Puritan’ or at least anti-theatrical middle ground” (*Theater and World* 235). By 1642, more than three decades after Elizabeth’s death, the Puritan zeal succeeded in a late symbolic battle against the spirit of the city: the playhouses were closed by order of Parliament to “appease and avert the wrath of God.” But, by then, the language of drama became a fully crystallized reflection of the historical world, one that took into account the entire repository of social-formative and also of corrosive-satirical powers of theatrical representation.

In the 1961 study, *The England of Elizabeth*, Rowse described the unique pace of London’s urban growth in connection with the long-term success of Elizabethan policies of colonization, which motivated the “hiving-off of English men to found colonies overseas.” According to Rowse, this long-term effort of expansion kept the Englishmen alert, generating a climate of dynamism and preparedness among young folk, who crossed the seas in search of new fortunes and brought back to the island the seeds of novelty. Indeed, the demographic figures stand for the same reality: in a Europe haunted by the recrudescence of plague, the English found the power to beat the threat and increase their population. A hardly expected inflow of wealth came into the country during the last decades of Elizabeth’s reign, particularly after 1588, the years following the first major military success against the Spanish fleet, when the British expeditions broadened their geographical range and the Royal Navy strengthened its task force. Marking a turning point in British politics, the 1588 triumph was seen as an intervention of God on behalf of a Protestant nation and was consequently commemorated with medals inscribed with the words “*God blew and they were scattered*”: a victory that consecrated the patriotism of a community whose power stood in its majestic lords “that broke the bonds of Rome” (qtd. in Rowse 36, 38).<sup>181</sup> From then on, the

long chain of events that consecrated the age of Elizabeth as a turning era in the advent of modern politics is often discussed within the boundaries of political anthropology. This type of analysis takes a more focused look at the world of imagination in relation to the representations of social worth, and attempts to provide an interdisciplinary critique of facts and their connoted representations of value. During the four decades of the Elizabethan reign, London took advantage of the monarch's colonial politics like no other city in England. This unprecedented transformation marks a unique, yet explainable phenomenon for the modern historian, whose analytical method tries to correlate political, economic, and demographical factors. Certainly, the British capital grew beyond any expectations at the turn of the seventeenth century, but this change did not emerge exclusively as a result of progressive policies. Paradoxically, it was the resurgence of plague that generated fast mutations in English social life, since the alternative prospect of an immobile existence in large communities would have equated with the peril of Black Death and poverty. Away from home, on the commercial roads of the kingdoms, in search of fresh venues and new ways of life, many Englishmen felt motivated to survive.<sup>182</sup>

After eras of feudal order, those who left their country-homes were driven by the dream of prosperity, as well as by the prospect a more colorful lifestyle. No wonder that the capital, with its many promises and resources, became in only a few decades a strong magnet to all those in search of new fortunes.<sup>183</sup> According to Rowse, by the 1590s, London "was already the largest town in Europe, and one of the most beautiful" (*The England of Elizabeth* 188). Yet, the same wealth that made the city expand became an encumbrance to the comfort of its inhabitants.<sup>184</sup> By the late 1590s, the suburban growth of London became almost uncontrollable. The massive immigration from the country brought new labor into the city in compensation for the dramatic loss of young lives. In this intensified interchange between towns and rural communities,<sup>185</sup> the structure of class relations modified hastily. At first, the process took place naturally, in the wake of modern economic and financial traffic. During the second part of the Elizabethan reign,

however, the social mutations were also engineered by royal policies, always prompt in rewarding with aristocratic ranks and new possessions the gentry recruited in the Queen's service. No other strategy could have brought better results to the desired readjustment of social energies around the sovereign's political endeavors; the best proof of its effectiveness was its continuation during the reign of James, a monarch broadening the already existing infrastructure of Elizabethan era, and an astute leader whose generosity to his favorites remained unmatched by any other British king.

In fact, the climate inaugurated by Protestant monarchs was favorable to all those honest men, willing to devote their lives to the service of the Crown. For decades, in the fast-expanding state of England, every yeoman could find an opportunity for a more exciting life, with excellent prospects of social ascension.<sup>186</sup> The Reformation Parliament itself discovered its own voice in promoting those national policies that opened the constitution towards property, rights, and the national liberties.<sup>187</sup> In truth, the Elizabethan newly appointed noblemen – as the product of a social reform – had to discover novel virtues, matching the uniqueness of times. Often emerging from middle-class families, they had to compensate by displaying the ideal qualities of the classical Virgilian heroes, brilliance and temerity, piety and sacrificial devotion to their monarch. Like many other English intellectuals protected by the Court, Shakespeare himself took advantage of the Queen's acceptance of liberal entrepreneurs. In exchange, dedication to the Queen offered unique chances for fortune-making and fast ascension of social ranks; traits like courage, sagacity, or assiduousness became equivalent to the uncommon attributes of self-made fortune. As in many other eras, creators who provided the solutions for Court entertainment and who brought new ingredients to the monarch's cult were held in high esteem by the high aristocracy. Moreover, the generous royal rewards were suitable for the great disorder of the times. In a country like Elizabethan England, surrounded by powerful enemies and challenged on the inside by the twin menaces of civil war and plague, a proactive policy of social reformation and expansion, matched by a revival of national pride was seen

as the unique solution to avoid the dissolution of the state. Its main actors, the gallery of daring pioneers in the twin occupations of politics and culture, were more active than ever in founding the avenues of progress. And Elizabeth had no other choice than acting as a broadminded monarch, one who took every single risk to make her throne, her time, and her capital the center of an entirely new world.

### **III. 2. Navigators, monsters, and the origins of Caliban**

The wide diversity of the many cultural imports of the Elizabethan era is not always appreciated in its full importance.<sup>188</sup> Once given the means and the motivations for seafaring, the English were more effective than expected by their own monarch. In 1496, attempting to outclass Portugal's and Spain's achievements in trans-continental discoveries, Henry VII assigned John Cabot to pilot an expedition, the scope of which was the discovery of a navigational passage to Asia through the Northern Atlantic ocean. In spite of Cabot's accidental anchorage to Canada, the discovery was not given its worth until the era of Elizabeth. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that the British imperial motif had its historical beginnings in Henry VIII's political and religious reform. It is no accident that the 1533 declaration of independence proclaimed England an Empire. Discovering the political and economical advantages of colonization later than their continental competitors, the English were, however, bound by their insular position to compensate for their late start in the quest for new lands. However, without Scotland and Wales attached to his state, Henry's imperial claim would have remained a mere symbol. It was during the Elizabethan era that the seafarers procured England a colonial dominion; furthermore, it was due to the ascendance of James I to the throne of England that the Scots, formally a separate state for another century, joined the United Kingdom in 1707.

The creation of the British Empire, corresponding to the era of discoveries and expansion, thus generated many quandaries; those political

dilemmas, belonging to the changing status of sovereignty are present only marginally in my discussion, because my research foci are on the cultural and symbolic aspects of this transformation. The connoted cosmographies, attempting to ascribe the new maps to the cultural dominion of the empire, though, are of central importance for my dissertation, as the iconographic metaphors of expansion became ascribed to the prospective models of representational coherence. To Elizabethan scholars like Richard Hakluyt,<sup>189</sup> to whom the modern English owe the first printing and manufacturing of the cartographical globe<sup>190</sup>, the acquisition of colonies appeared as a priority strategy for the survival and expansion of England, a country surrounded by enemies and confronted with a surplus population in need of economic prosperity. Furthermore, Hakluyt's disciple, scholar Samuel Purchas (c. 1577-1626), discovered the spiritual imperative of the imperial dream, stressing the importance of colonial growth as the Protestant antidote to the Papal "antichristian" policies.

And the expeditions reached widely. By the 1580s, Queen Elizabeth's crews had reached and contacted every single known friendly nation and harbor mentioned on the British cartographers' maps. Such were Hawkins' 1562-1564 semi-piratical expeditions in Sierra Leone, Santo Domingo, and Vera Cruz, followed by Frobisher's inauguration of the Cathay navigational route to India and China in 1577 and succeeded in 1578 by his Northern expedition to Greenland. In 1553, English navigators led their ships into the White Sea and opened a new navigation route with Russia. They also inaugurated commercial ways to Morocco and Tripoli and sent envoys to Egypt and Istanbul.<sup>191</sup> Others advanced into the Middle East, to Arabia and Persia, and, from there, they imitated Alexander's Macedonian Reconnaissance corps into rediscovering the passage to the Indies. In 1578, Sir Humphrey Gilbert was commissioned by the Queen to journey to the West, in the attempt to expand the English influence in the newly found waters. Stepping late on the shores of the Atlantic, the English had to deal with the presence of acerb competitors on the Atlantic navigational routes, such as the omnipresent Portuguese, who had initiated a line of harbors, fortifications, and

naval patrols from Africa to the Brazilian coasts, or France, whose settlers advanced along the estuary of the Saint Lawrence River. In the Mediterranean, British sailors experienced again the muddled course of Ulysses' sea voyages between the Greek islands, trading with each Hellenic marine city from the Cretan Mycenae to the main harbor of Piraeus. Other crews circumnavigated Africa around the Cape of Good Hope: fighting to win the competition with the Portuguese galleons, they set up the East India Company, the forerunner of the British Empire in the Indies. Drake's 1577 famous voyages established English presence on both the Atlantic and Pacific shores of the Americas, while Sir Walter Raleigh's 1584 failed expedition in Roanoke, North Carolina, then in Virginia paved the way for the future Jacobean colonization. As suggested before, his travel log and account of the shipwreck on Roanoke Island, quite popular in the era, is thought to be the narrative primer of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Of equal importance for Shakespeare was Thomas Hariot's *Brief and True Report of The New Found Land of Virginia*. Written in the aftermath of the Roanoke expedition and coming from Raleigh's navigating pilot, Hariot's firsthand account of native populations encountered by the English was particularly valuable for English intellectuals because Hariot, who had a unique gift for anthropological observations, learned the language of the Algonquin Indians and brought back to Europe the first documented account of Algonquin indigenous language, religion, and customs. Unlike the Spaniards, who, in reaching the Americas first, displayed genocidal cruelty in their colonial enterprise, the English travelers, arriving late, needed to affirm higher ethical standards in their attitudes towards inhabitants.

The English settlements were growing fast: between 1607 and 1609, John Smith founded communities in Jameston and in Bermudas; the colonization of Newfoundland began in 1610; departing from Holland and from the East Midlands of England, the Pilgrims founded Plymouth in 1620 around Cape Cod in Massachusetts. Notably, the narrative tension between the Spanish and the English moral title upon the new lands reiterates the Protestant dissent to Catholic colonial politics. The reports from the English pioneers were many. Here, I am including

only the most significant examples: Michael Lok, an adventurer and voyager who acted as Hakluyt's editorial assistant, in 1612, left written testimonials of the Spanish draconian treatment of the prisoners. William Bradford, a Pilgrim and the governor of Plymouth plantation, acknowledged the quality of Spanish intrepidity, but also left us typological accounts of Spanish cruelty. In fact, the positive and negative perceptions of the New World's encounters vary with the narrator's position, because the Catholic Spaniard and the aboriginal "primitive" embody different kinds of enemies. To the English Puritans of Leyden, to whom colonization was a no-return route, the colonies of Guiana and Virginia posed a new riddle, since the lack of Spanish control in New England could be seen as the sign of a stronger aboriginal resistance. Here, Jonathan Hart's comment in *Comparing Empires* is relevant:

These Pilgrim exiles had to choose between this graphic Native cruelty if they sailed for America and Spanish cruelty if they remained in the Netherlands as war loomed over the horizon. (81)

The Pilgrims had to warn each other about difficulties and barbaric treatments from the New World's natives, whose exaggerated depiction in the work of Bradford show the aboriginals as "barbarous and most treacherous, being most furious in their rage and merciless where they overcome; not being content only to kill and to take away life, but delight to torment men in the most bloody manner may be" (qtd. in Hart, *Comparing Empires* 81; spelling modernized). But the negative perceptions were soon counterbalanced by compassionate comments: Michael Lok (1612) deplored the poor condition of the Indians in Spanish colonies, witnessing that "myriads of millions of poor naked Indians were slaughtered, and subdued through the conquering sword, and the number of the Spaniards that attempted, and performed the same" (qtd. in Hart, *Comparing Empires* 81). Furthermore, Hart assumes, the Pilgrims' quandary was where to place the proper cognitive accents in the experience of the New World, an enterprise in which the Puritans were irrevocably involved:



The sympathy with the Natives as casualties of the Spanish contest is something echoed in English texts during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. This ambivalent attitude in these works toward the Spaniards long persisted: the relation to the Natives was also ambivalent. The Puritans to the north in New England also embodied this two-way movement in attitudes toward the Spanish and the Natives.

(*Comparing Empires* 81)

The godless “ghost of Spain” (Hart, *Comparing Empires* 84-87) in North America motivated the English and the Dutch to establish the colonies of Plymouth and New Amsterdam in 1620, while later, in 1655, Edward Winslow, Admiral Penn, and General Venable captured Jamaica, in accordance with Oliver Cromwell’s Western design. Speaking of the legal status of these late settlements, the principle of “terra nullius” prevailed in the English and French undertakings, which defied the papal decision to grant legitimacy of possession to Spain and Portugal. The principle of uninhabited lands falling under the authority of the new settler constituted the main source of legitimacy to Elizabethan possessions in the New World. Thus, most likely, we, the moderns, owe the first moral accents of the English historical reports to the same opposition of Protestant cultures to Spain. Still, not all settlers were motivated by religious commitments. To many, the promise of riches and adventure was stronger than the religious instinct of duty. With time, England gained incontestable economical advantages from these voyages, but as Rowse suggests in his study, “there is a clear distinction between voyages for opening up foreign trade and voyages for colonization. The former normally made money, the latter invariably lost it” (155). No doubt, upon bringing their ships home, returning buccaneers felt often tempted to conflate their adventure tales with colorful episodes. Such justifications could provide credible excuses. Often, their narratives incorporated Biblical elements, as the comments added to these stories invoked the name of Christ to accredit the uncanny reports.

The incontestable genuineness of some of these reports consists of the writer's attempt to draw the monarch's attention to unclassifiable documentary information; yet, the narrative episodes themselves seem animated by the same quality of awareness, where the perceptions of novelty are patterned into an "updated" Christian cosmological view of the empire. Often, the iconography of the narrative composition re-appended the commonly used themes of the mythical struggle between good and evil to the uncanny, quality of encounters. The abundance of fantastic elements in the first descriptions from colonizers prevailed in the first decades after the discovery of the New World, and this propensity for the mythical, the uncanny and the fabulous registers seems ascribed to the narrators' need to legitimize their voyages; the naïve and unsound taste for exaggerations vanished slowly towards the end of the sixteenth century once the newly found lands were charted and ascribed to the Crown.

During the Elizabethan era, the confluences of heroic and hagiographic elements remained present in the sailors' narratives, as the metaphors of "sacred quest" prevailed among English boatmen. The countless references to "monsters" supported the endeavors of a civilization whose journeys of discovery reached beyond "the pillars of Hercules," taken here as the limits of the Medieval episteme. Often, following in the traces of age old-customs, the stories of the returning seamen involved sea snakes and monstrous creatures met on the islands. An age-old tradition claimed Saint Patrick banished all snakes from Ireland by calling all the snakes into a box and throwing it in the sea. A thousand years later, Sir Humphrey Gilbert maintained to have encountered a lion-like monster with "glaring eyes" on his return voyage, after formerly claiming St. John's, Newfoundland (1583) for England. The recorded tradition of encounters is much older: Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587), used extensively as a source by Shakespeare for his history plays, account for a similar encounter reported in the mid-fifteenth century:

In the moneth of November 1457, in the Ile of Portland not farre from the town of Weymouth, was seen a cocke coming out of the sea, having a great creast upon its head and a red beard, and legs half a yard long: he

stood on the water & crowed foure times, and everie time turned him about, and beckened with his head, toward the north, the south and the west, and was of colour like a fesant, & when he had crowed three times, he vanished awai.(Holinshed III. 346)

Most significant for my argument, these eerie creatures were often depicted on navigational maps to mark the locations of the encounters and became instant markers of fantastic topologies. The custom was common in the Middle Ages, and its foundations are rooted in the deliberate exaggerations of Medieval travel narrators and also in the drawings accompanying the descriptions of natural oddities. John De Mandeville's book of *Travels*, written in Anglo-Norman French and published between 1357 and 1371, represented such a unique collection of uncanny voyages, born in a desire to circumscribe every known journey of Western cultural heroes to the theme of mythical discovery, an original fictional species best suited for the future Age of Discovery. To this period of compilations and intense cultural glossing, pre-moderns owe some of their most illuminating fantastic stories: the legend of Prester John, a late adaptation in Mandeville's account, was already present in the Muslim and Nestorian legends of the Middle Ages. They illustrate alternative beliefs to the world of dogmatic Catholicism, assertive of the existence of a blessed realm, a kingdom populated with fabulous creatures. Prester John, presented as one of the Three Magi, was told to rule over a land full of treasures and odd creatures, a domain of uncertain geographical location, sometimes located in Ethiopia, but always found on the fringe of Earthly Paradise:

This emperor, Prester John, holds full great land, and hath many full noble cities and good towns in his realm, and many great diverse isles and large. For all the country of Ind is devised in isles for the great floods that come from Paradise, that depart all the land in many parts. And also in the sea he hath full many isles. (Ch. XXX, opening lines)

Hard to believe, yet, this might have been the very tale that bemused Columbus on August 14, 1498, into thinking that he discovered the rivers of Eden in the muddy

waters of Orinoco. Perpetuating the ancient typological confusion between mythical and physical geographies, this land was said to include the Gates of Alexander and the Fountain of Youth—the apocryphal source of immortality that haunted the imagination of Juan Ponce de León during his 1513 exploration of Florida. Popular among Syriac Christians, who believed in the symbolic immortality of Saint Thomas, the legend conflated religious and fabulous stories, known in Europe dating from the age of Pliny the Elder. From Pliny’s *Historia Naturalis*, Mandeville saved the reference to Moncolis, one-legged, human-like creatures “also called Sciapodae, because they are in the habit of lying on their backs, during the time of the extreme heat, and protect themselves from the sun by the shade of their feet (Pliny, *Natural History* 7:2). Cyclopes, Phoenixes, and Monoscelides were just a few of the other mythical creatures depicted in *The Travels*. Another similar motif in Mandeville’s narrative is that of Anthropophagi or the Blemmyes, initially described by Pliny the Elder as creatures belonging to a Nubian tribe with “no heads, and that their mouth and eyes are put in their chests”<sup>192</sup>; in the writings of Tertullian and Salvian, they appear as a stereotype used by Roman pagans to portray the Christians, often accused of sacrificing children and eating their flesh during the Eucharist rituals; Shakespeare himself was inspired by Mandevillian anthropophagi in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Othello*, and *The Tempest*; Samuel Bochart reiterated the motif in his 1663 *Hieroicoicon sive bipartitum opus de animalibus sacrae scripturae*, a zoological treatise on the Noahite animals.

What do these metaphorical markers stand for in a century that identified the notion of *peras* (limit, border) with the otherworldly elements of mythical geographies? Mandeville’s text indicated that the traveler’s knowledge of cartography was ahead of its time. A skilled sailor, John de Mandeville had an idea of longitudes, latitudes, antipodes, and of the Equator, notions associated with the Earth’s sphericity, yet he also restated the old Ptolemean and Dantesque motif, which placed the city of Jerusalem at the world’s centre.<sup>193</sup> Notably, these medieval beliefs were associable with the ancient notion of plurality of worlds, repressed in the Age of reason: this shows the Medieval imagination as tributary to

the classical notion of *loci amoeni*, an imaginary framework entirely dependent of symbolic centers, corresponding to either mythical or historical locations of the mapped longitudes. Marking a multitude of fictional realms as zones of interference with the “real,” the locations of fantastic encounters frequently matched the locations of “grey zones,” taken here as insufficiently charted regions. The habit of fantastic taxonomies survived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, expanding the old Western fabulatory “malaise” to the description of newly discovered lands. For instance, a 1578 map of Norfolk includes the Elizabethan vessels, fish, and also the marine monsters described by explorers, in a combination of marvelous, decorative, and practical elements that belongs to an infancy age of modern imagination. From these iconic images, a whole mythology emerged, as an early preview to the fantastic literature of the last two centuries. In one of his widely enjoyed travel accounts, Sir Walter Raleigh described the King of Guyana as a monarch who, not entirely satisfied with his many kitchen utensils and furnishings made of precious metals, ordered his craftsmen to decorate his gardens with flowers and trees made of silver and gold (Neilson 22). In a narrative of Sir John Hawkins’ piratical expeditions to South America,<sup>194</sup> the pleasure of story-telling overpowers the author’s inspiration to the point that the chronicler’s preoccupation for objectivity becomes null. In the genuine-eyed description of the crocodile, Hawkins personifies the green-skinned reptile to match the Christian stereotypical image and parable of a Biblical monster:

His (the crocodile’s) nature is ever, when he would have his prey, to cry and sob like a Christian body, to provoke them to come to him; and then he snatched at them! And thereupon came this proverb, that is applied unto women, when they weep, ‘Lachrymae Crocodili’: the meaning whereof is, that as the crocodile when he crieth goeth then about most to deceive; so doth a woman, most commonly, when she weepeth.<sup>195</sup>

The invisible connotations of these tales were in many instances political, and their message extrapolated the Christian narrative of St. George’s slaughter of the dragon: spiritual civilization at fight against an anarchic pre-human nature, heroic

behavior keeping the forces of chaos at bay. After all, monsters and fairy-like non-human creatures were reported in all the newly charted locations, but these visual markers were already circumscribed by an ingrained logic of triumph in the traditional Western literary *topoi*, whose functions served the ongoing expansion of the symbolic Christian empire (as part of its modern British effigies) in the newly discovered worlds. Caliban's grotesque portraiture certainly originated in these uncanny tales, which stereotyped the New World's aboriginals as hairy, somehow human creatures, yet anatomically monstrous. Caliban's significance as a cultural motif of the West is discussed extensively in Alden T. Vaughan's and Virginia Mason Vaughan's 1991 study:

Among Shakespeare's numerous stage characters, probably none has been more variously interpreted than the 'savage and deformed slave' Caliban in *The Tempest*. For nearly four centuries, widely diverse writers and artists from around the world have found the rebellious monster an intriguing and useful signifier. He has been portrayed in the theatre and in literary criticism as—among other things—a fish, a tortoise, the missing link, an American Indian, and an African slave. He has also appeared extensively and diversely in poems by Browning, Auden, and Brathwaite among others, and in illustrations by Hogarth, Fuseli, Walter Crane, and other major artists. In the twentieth century, he has been widely adopted as a cultural icon, especially in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa: first as a symbol of imperialist North Americans and more recently as an emblem of colonized native populations. Shakespeare's Caliban looks first at the historical, etymological, literary, and folklore contexts in which Shakespeare created Caliban.<sup>196</sup>

On many occasions, the voyagers seemed to compete for whose story would be remembered as the strangest: some reported to have found hybrid progenies that defied common-sense taxonomies, some described dog-faced men; others saw amphibian creatures, such as sirens, tritons or satyrs, others encountered "men with one large foot they used to shade themselves."<sup>197</sup> Moreover, during the decades

spent in London, the bard might have heard some of these entertaining travel tales from firsthand sources since the returning sailors enjoyed the society of Southwark's bohemians and vice-versa. Pirates, cartographers, painters, actors, poets, philosophers, magicians, and aristocrats could share a common imaginary space, a world located partly in fiction, partly in remoteness, much richer than the immediate reality—an orb governed by hyperbole, metaphor, and fantastic rules. At the far end of England's glorified political history, the emerging urban folklore favored the creation of an aura of mystery and glory around figures of adventurers, such as John Hawkins, Francis Drake, Martin Frobisher, or Richard Grenville, who were bringing to the Crown not only new charts and possessions, but also exotic indigenous specimens from the new shores explored and bizarre artifacts by the native tribes. Commenting on Elizabethan testimonies, Holmes writes that Londoners who had a special feel for eccentricities and uncanny entertainments were always ready to crowd around the curiosities of nature:

It seems to have been in 1581 that a Dutch giant and a dwarf were to be seen in London. The one was over seven and a half feet high and twenty-eight inches broad across the shoulders, but lame of both legs, having broken them when lifting a barrel of beer; the other was only three feet high and malformed about the legs and the right arm, in spite of which he would dance a galliard, toss a cup and catch it again, perform various feats with bow and arrow, rapier, axe, hammer and trumpet, "and drink every day ten quarters of the best Beere if he could get it." (Holmes 57)<sup>198</sup>

After all, Ulysses' encounter with the Cyclopes looked no different than the hyperboles in fashion. No wonder that at home, in the harbors of Plymouth, Dover, and along the Thames, people were beguiled by the surrealistic reports of the new populations, by their apparently blissful nakedness and by their unrestrained savagery. But the spectacle offered in those days to Londoners was more than a circus performance. However, one of the ways in which navigators in search of credibility hoped to gain the favors of their monarchic sponsors for novel

campaigns was to capture New World natives and offer them as presents to their princes-protectors in the harbors of origin. Another possibility, given that not many British colonizing missions succeeded in Elizabeth's era, is that exaggerations about the new world's unearthly inhabitants were employed to justify the failure on military and political grounds. Now, the heroic epopees that updated the already-known travel folklore could work as good excuses for the humbled, unexpected returns of the proud navigators. In proof of his reaching the American continent, Sir Walter Raleigh brought, after his first failed New World expedition, a group of dark Indians who, aided by soldiers, descended on Westminster bank adorned in brown taffeta clothes. Although his idea was not original, it can be counted as a major political innovation. Natives, of course, had been already seen on English soil. Sebastian Cabot had brought three Inuit aboriginals with him in 1502; another Brazilian tribal leader had been brought to Henry VIII's court where his presence entertained the king's visitors. In 1569, North American aboriginals were depicted in a statuary group on the Harman Monument in Burford Church in Oxfordshire. Another group of living natives was shown to the curious citizens of Bristol in 1577. Kept in cages built atop of carts, or hosted in the back-rooms of ale-houses, the sight of Indians became so common to Londoners by the end of the century that their masters had to take them through the country once the spectators lost their interest in paying for such sightings.<sup>199</sup>

But the English were not alone in their frenzied interest for extravagances. French navigators had organized abductions of American individuals since 1550. In fact, whole villages and ecosystems were transferred from the Amazon jungles for the original entertainment parks of the French monarchs. Such an unseen-before event took place in 1550, when the *Entrée* of monarchs Henri II and Catherine de Medici in Rouen was illustrated with a *tableau vivant*, an elaborate open-space allegorical performance for the royal court, whose theme concentrated on the glorious colonization of Brazil. For this occasion, the French architects raised a replica of a Brazilian village on the Rouennais banks of the Seine, and Indo-Brazilian captives were relied on as authentic impersonators of



aboriginal life, among other masked actors. The directors went far beyond the King's expectation, adapting exotic Brazilian flora and fauna to French soil and erecting aboriginal abodes. The dramatic moment, unmatched in grandeur by any encomiastic festivity, included a mock naval battle between the Indian supporters of the French and a captured Portuguese vessel that ended, predictably, in the victory of French-favored Brazilian Natives (see Brunelle). However spectacular, the triumphal showing of exotic aboriginals opened the space for more consistent interrogations regarding the status of knowledge in a world whose innovative assertions of power were not able to produce an instant assimilation of correspondent epistemic boundaries. The effect of magic, corresponding to the fantastic taxonomies associated with the new worlds and to their prospective assimilation to the orb of bedazzled imagination subsided for the first decades of the seventeenth century, before the full advent of the scientific paradigm and the 1660 foundation of the Royal Society, also known as the "Empire of Learning."

### **III. 3. Curiosities and the empire's imaginary riddles**

In early Elizabethan England, a country under the spell of the Reformation, the Court festivities were less demonstrative, while the more pragmatic English governors kept a close count of the strategic benefits gained from each new journey. Gradually, together with the amazing testimonies of their expeditions, returning pioneers opened another perspective to the language of value. London Elizabethan entrepreneurs, such as Richard Garth and William Cope,<sup>200</sup> initiated a revolutionary trend for England, that of collecting curios from the far lands, and opening, maybe in competition with the German, French and Italian Late medieval fashion,<sup>201</sup> their own cabinets of curiosities. Such *wunderkammern*, once the exclusive space of royalties, housed exotic plants and minerals; odd artifacts from aboriginal cultures; relics; mummies; parts of exotic creatures, such as horns, claws, or skeletons; and, often embalmed animals from foreign lands. During the Late Middle Ages, cabinets of curiosities, found in most royal courts of Europe, "took

over the representative function of ecclesiastical and royal houses,” acknowledges Patrick Mauries in his 2002 study *Cabinets of Curiosities*(6). The *Schatzkammern* (treasure-chambers of German medieval aristocratic houses), where the curiosities were categorized by provenience as *naturalia*, *mirabilia*, *artefacta*, *scientifica*, *antiquites* and *exotica*<sup>202</sup>, were in fact so shocking, that, when displayed to the scholars of the day, the immediate effect was to motivate and to inspire free thought and the most daring scientific projects. The humanist movement in the days of the Reformation paid its debt to these epistemic shockers. The wonder-cabinets reflected the collectors’ idea of art; however, the classificatory criteria were lax, including objects made by nature, man and God. This last category referred to the uncanny artifacts—said to display the Creator’s fantasy at work. The main function of the cabinet, as a collection of unclassified natural objects, was to induce in the viewer a sense of awe and bedazzlement, the two future virtues of scientific curiosity. It is no wonder that monstrosities were highest priced because the taxonomic difficulty specifically made the world of nature look devilish or supernatural, but, most often, collectors had a scientific interest in the study of biology and pharmacopeia.

Unlike Germany and France, England’s collections were not dynastic; they belonged to those new men, meritorious servants of a naval kingdom. During the early years of the seventeenth century, Elizabethan cabinet-keeper Walter Cope,<sup>203</sup> a member of the Elizabethan college of Antiquaries, proudly kept a whole museum in his Kensington castle. His collection was unique in England, including popular garments from Java and Arabia, porcelain artifacts from China, African charms, a Madonna made from feathers, holy relics taken from a Spanish galleon, an Indian canoe suspended on the ceiling, a chain of monkey teeth, stone-shears, the tail and horn of a rhinoceros, a canoe with paddles, Javanese and Arabian garments, and exotic insects preserved in amber. The peculiar wonders, unidentifiable as part of the acknowledged *mathesis*, made the subject of uncanny stories, like a horn allegedly taken from an English woman’s forehead, the baubles and bells of Henry VIII’s fool, an embalmed child, a unicorn’s tail, the Turkish emperor’s golden seal,

and some little flies “*which glow at night in Virginia instead of lights, since there is often no day there for over a month*” (*Journals of Two Travellers* 33-35).<sup>204</sup>

Another Englishman fascinated with the fabulous and the exotic was John Tradescant the Elder (1570-1638), the famous Elizabethan gardener, whose collection in his South London house became the object of England’s first public museum. Following Ulisse Aldrovandi’s illustrious Bolognese initiative, Tradescant the Elder inaugurated a botanical garden in Lambeth, South London, in 1568, where he adapted plants collected from other parts of continental Europe and from Northern Africa; his son, who continued his father’s profession, enriched the garden with exotic specimens brought from Virginia (Mauries 141). The natural museums soon outgrew these wonder-rooms that by the end of the century filled spacious quarters of the new virtuosos, wealthy men whose idea of art took reality as equal to their imagination. Museums such as Aldrovandi’s and Tradescant’s wonder-spaces preserved in their glass cabinets rich botanical collections and had their own acclimatized solariums—the ancestors of modern botanical gardens. Also labeled as Theatres of Nature, in the aftermath of Aldrovandi’s iconographic book of Botany, these spaces allowed the collectors to rearrange Nature according to their own imaginary priorities. By the mid-seventeenth century, such cabinets of curiosities were found at every court of Europe, and their value matched the collectors’ originality and knowledge of natural philosophy. After 1618, the year of inauguration of the *Museum Tradescantianum*, ownership of cabinets became a marker of snobbery and social wealth, a room to be held by the expeditions’ Maecenas as the privilege of the initiator-sponsor. A list of uncanny shopping items was left to us from 1625 by John Tradescant the elder; by now, the collectors displayed specific esthetic preferences, connected to the fantastic topologies in use by the cabinet collectors:

on Ellophants head with the teeth In it very large  
on River horsses head of the Biggest kind that can be gotton  
on Seabulles head withe horns  
All sorts of Serpents and Snakes Skines & Espetially of that sort that

hathe a Combe on his head Lyke a Cock  
All sorts of Shinging Stones or of Any Strange Shapes...

...Any thing that Is strang. (Weschler's book, 1625)

The rise of humanities and the persistent fashion of wonder-rooms share a common history. Rabelais and Montaigne traveled to Rouen to study the Brazilians encamped on the right bank of the Seine. Dee, Bruno, Digges, Shakespeare, and Fludd should have been more than familiar with their oddities, whose contemplation revealed the logic of sympathy in the works of nature, displaying the language of coincidence in variation and dissimilarity, as much as human historical progresses in the direction of unifying knowledge.

After all, the wonder-cabinets inspired the Renaissance scholars to the rediscovery of *Ars Memoriae* as a hermetic perspective on the structure of voluntary recollection and its symbolic underpinnings, defined as techniques of communication with the higher *mens* of the Demiurge. The designs of the Theater in Shoreditch, Lord Chamberlain's company's home, and the two Globes, the first of which had Shakespeare as a co-owner, were devised as emblematic places for the symbolic constitution of perception. The shapes and the symbolic qualities of mental images, the visual and linguistic clusters of remembrance were taken into account as markers of the theatrical space, accomplishing the experimentalist functions of expression on stages on which the themes of early modernity were rehearsed and elaborated as scenographic and dramatic conjectures. Francis Bacon is known to have spent long hours in cabinets of curiosities during the years he wrote *Instauratio Magna*. Accordingly, a learned man of the new age, Bacon wrote in 1594, was to have unbridled access to

a goodly, huge cabinet, wherein whatsoever the hand of man by exquisite art or engine has made rare in stuff, form or motion; whatsoever singularity, chance and the shuffle of things has produced; whatsoever

Nature has wrought in things that want life and may be kept; shall be sorted and included. (Francis Bacon, 1594)

The contemporary semiotician's attention is drawn to the apparent disorder of seventeenth century cabinets. The splendor of such wonder-chambers lies in the effect produced upon the beholder's eye, taking the imagination on a trip where its looming around the economies of the fantastic and the fabulous brings into play another sort of certainty, that of lucid dreaming. The cabinets of curios are indeed bedazzling in their persistent confusion between the orders of nature and of culture and demonstrate that they purposefully associate artifacts in an inconclusive manner, inviting to poetry, hallucination, and fervor for the occult. However serendipitous, the obsession with collecting curiosities has its certain cognitive value that transgresses the psychological needs of eccentricity. The fascination for uncategorized natural objects stand for an age of knowledge in which, if we are to follow Patrick Mauri  s' remark, "imagination has not been divorced from reason." The cabinets of curiosities, signifying an order of the universe that has not been entirely ascribed to the categories of encyclopedic classification, stand for a prospective model of order, in which the authority of human knowledge has to expand upon the entire network of uncharted epistemic domains. Such "serendipitous" objects as curiosities mistakenly explained as proofs of the supernatural" were not only semantically fertile when housed in royal cabinets, they were also sought for as an intentional effect of power, where the exoticism of nature is enriched with the auras of imaginary domains. One has to take into account the persistence of forgeries mixed in with real curiosities, such as the long list of "misfits," surgically amalgamated by embalmers from bodily parts of different species after 1500, in the aftermath of Severo Calzetta da Ravenna's<sup>205</sup> invented dragons and mermaids. For a modern viewer, it would be entirely legitimate to question the forger's respect for scientific and factual truth in these hoaxes. Yet, such hybridizations between biology and mythologem (between the mummified bodily part and the fantastic resultant entity) represent an age and a particular spirit of transition of Western culture to the forms of iconoclast modernity—

chronologically begun in the discovery of the New World and ending in the elaborate collections of Sir Ashton Lever's 1775 London embalmed zoo, significantly named "Holophusicon." These oddities show a different face of the West, regretful of the vanishing paradises of naivety and purposively autistic to the voice of iconoclastic reason, speaking of an age of nostalgia where the need for confirmation of mythical worlds prevails over the quest for certainty in the study of reality.<sup>206</sup>

### **III. 4. English folkloric motifs**

The study of Elizabethan customs has to take into account the urbanization of beliefs, with all the psychological and behavioral transformations enticed by the rapid growth of urban communities. During the sixteenth century, many magic pagan customs were still alive, but it is not certain how many survived in the suburbs of London, other than by absorption into the imaginary worlds of the new urban folklore and literature.<sup>207</sup> Likely, there was a biographical touch in Shakespeare's love for magic, the uncanny and the pagan: he was raised in the countryside, close to the woods, and was thought to hide his early passion for poaching, which, if real, might have made him a deep knower of the hunting customs and legends. As a countryman settled in London, he was not unique: English subjects arrived from all over the island in search for labor or struggling to establish small merchandises, based upon their lifetime savings. These rural backpackers also brought with them their silver groats<sup>208</sup> in addition to family tales, their amulets, and local superstitions. Not entirely "tamed" to the customs of urban life, these migrants brought to the suburbs of Elizabethan London age-old customs, whose reiteration in the environment of the capital brought a touch of authenticity to the city's life. What would Shakespeare's ingenuous eyes learn from his first years in the metropolis?

In Stow's classical *Survey*, a modern reader can find an original passage from a twelfth-century writer, Fitzstephen, on the topic of urban entertainments and recreations: on May-morning, young people "would walk into the sweete meddowes and green woods, there to rejoice their spirits, with the beauty and savor of sweet flowers, and with the harmony of birds, praying God in their kind" (Holmes 48). Philip Stubbs' view, in *The Anatomy of Abuses* (1583) is more sober, reproving Maying as idolatrous. During the last decades of the sixteenth century, many of the traditional customs were still alive in the capital and Maying was still celebrated in all the major cities of England. Flora, a pagan Roman deity, was the English May queen. To her, people dedicated small shrines garnished with wild flowers; in the old days, they used to do the same with the Virgin's statue. In spite of the fact that the cycle of seasonal celebrations received Christian names, the memory of pagan practices was still alive. The folklore of the Elizabethan era was a hybrid idiom, whose composite aspect does not allow the modern ethnologist to "take the one way street" (Alford 27)<sup>209</sup> and to judge Christian customs as linearly derived from the repository of English pagan cults: "Christian influence, firstly on full pagan cult and belief, and secondly on their dwindling remains, must always be taken into account" (Alford 4). Nevertheless, many Christian practices were mere substitutions for the correspondent pagan traditions. Such was St. John the Baptist's Day, whose origins and rituals were reminiscent of the pagan Summer Sun Festival. Paraphrasing the Greek cult of Adonis, the Saint's statues were placed in nichés, with waterfalls behind, adorned with jars of enchanted basil. On the roads wandered tableaux on trucks, evocative of the Chester cart pageants. Costumed teenagers embodied mythical shepherds and shepherdesses as infant Baptists waved garlands on the shuddering stages. On Midsummer, people sang their foul-mouthed tunes, while their priests conscientiously conducted songs fitting for the occasion (Alford, Introduction 4). Midsummer Eve was used by the church to convert pagan customs to Christian rites, but, like many other ancient traditions, it resuscitated ancestral memories of the pagan days, when farmers lit torches and descended the mountainsides "beneath blazing bundles of faggots that have nothing to do with St John" (Alford 4).

During Christmas, a celebration that reiterated the Augustan salutation of the Saturnalia, the theme of the Winter solstice as the symbolic struggle of light with darkness reemerged as an autonomous metaphor, associated with unyielding customs, such as eating and drinking in excess, typical of Roman and Teutonic unholy traditions. Early prohibitions of the Church had tried to quiet down the Chthonic, Dionysian, and Epicurean energies involved in the popular festivals. But the early interdictions issued by the first Ecumenical Councils had instituted interdictions that were never entirely respected. For instance, the Council of Auxerre (573-603) forbade the disguise as animals and other divinatory practices: “It is not permitted on the Kalends of January to make the calf or a stag or to celebrate devilish omens” (Alford 6-7). The earlier prohibition issued by Caesarius of Arles<sup>210</sup> had been more radical in associating the animal-disguise practices with transgressions of the sexual norm. Arles, writes the folklorist, speaks scathingly of the English custom to dress men in women’s clothes and animal skins: “For what is so demented as by a foul disguise to change one’s male sex into womanly form?” (qtd. in Alford 8). If these mentalities ever softened during the Catholic Middle Ages, they definitely rose up again during the days of Reformation, when the old priests lost the authority over their parishes.

By Shakespeare’s time, the darker functions of the pagan rites would have already been half-forgotten; the surviving elements of pagan mythology, related to the cosmic cycles of renewal and death, survived only in isolated communities, where the church was not close enough as to bear a decisive influence upon ancient mentalities. The wide variety of pre-Christian traditions makes difficult their complete enumeration here. Stephanie Hughes of *The Oxfordian* (The Annual Journal of the Shakespeare Oxford Society) lays down a convincing presentation of the era’s customs in her article regarding the influence of the ancient revels on Elizabethan Court Masques, where she associates the functions of surviving rituals with the reinforcement of communal solidarity through the “cohesion of the group mind” around the same emotional experiences.<sup>211</sup> Other ancient revels were preserved as part of the acceptable civic folklore. Hughes writes



that in spite of the many foreign influences, English folklore in the Elizabethan era followed analogous patterns: the festivities were anticipated by a Church observance, yet they ended leisurely with banqueting, singing, dancing, and alcohol-drinking. These events were meant to annihilate social divisions and to suspend dissent between ranks. Such was the New Year's custom of the burning of the bush<sup>212</sup>, which involved the flaming of a hawthorn globe filled with straw in a bonfire surrounded by other twelve blazes, as part of a typically pagan rite of cosmic rejuvenation and transgression.<sup>213</sup> Maying was also awaited by youth as an ideal occasion for prenuptial rites. The squares of Medieval London became open-dancing arenas on these occasions, filled with youngsters spinning around the flagged Maypoles. The explicit sexual focus of Maying provoked many moral disputes during the Elizabethan era. This determined Edmund Spenser's reaction, who celebrated the beauty of the scene in his poetry (*Youth's folks now flocken in everywhere / To gather May baskets and smelling brere*); however, as soon as the politics at court turned against pagan customs, he condemned the rite as immoral and futile.<sup>214</sup> In spite of the Puritan censorship, this old custom might have still been observed in London's suburbs during Shakespeare's time. As a matter of fact, the wanderings of Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena in the *Midsummer Night Dream's* enchanted clearings were directly inspired from the customs of Maying.

The summer solstice celebrations, held on June 23 and 24, involved gatherings around bonfires, where mummers performed pantomimes and enacted stories.<sup>215</sup> Alford mentioned the dualist nature of the practice, since "the Summer solstice demands the same sort of rites as the Winter solstice, at the last to magic back the dying sun to his course in the heavens, at the first to honor his apogee" (Alford 60-61). During this occasion, laymen believed that magic powers could be gained through knowledge of wild herbs, such as the ones laid by Puck on the young lovers' eyelids, or they looked for seeds that would grant the user the supernatural powers of the fairies.<sup>216</sup> One could easily fathom, in a leap of imagination, the state of mind of Elizabethan villagers, searching the woods of

Arden for medicinal plants, or running with the Kern baby through the fields. The last uncut stalks, Alford writes, protected the vital energy of the corn, the *mana* of life that must be preserved for the spring sowing. One could also realize the importance of magic places and remedies for the sixteenth century folk. But above all, the Elizabethan man had a deep respect for nature and for its sacred calendars. The new crops would not mature without the fulfillment of the age-old rituals; life would not abide without the benevolence of Nature and of its guardians. When left without offerings, such spirits would rebel and turn the magic tide against the farmers, playing the nastiest tricks upon the peasants, putting their crops down, skimming the fresh milk, or blowing frozen blasts on the flowering orchards. It is likely that Shakespeare, whose ancestors farmed near the forests of Arden, had a deep knowledge of these customs.<sup>217</sup>

While discovering these folkloric rites as relics of the pagan pantheist and animistic beliefs, the modern critic is given a rare insight into what could have been the first drafts of modern Western imagination. *The Man in the Moone* was such an uncanny folkloric fable that spoke of a strangely colored race of Lunars who lived on islands surrounded by vast oceans and were fond of tobacco.<sup>218</sup> What changes in these updated versions of old beliefs are the designated contexts of attribution, where original significations become possible grace to the plasticity of language. For instance, the Moon-Calfe was initially an idiom used by brewers to designate inanimate mass, but then, only a few decades later, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, it signified something else, a retarded child or a monstrous progeny. In many of the early colonial narratives, linguistic and imagistic analogies were employed to designate the otherworldly creation of the wild continent, a more genuine creation, that, to many travelers seemed the bizarre work of a mocking demiurge. Such epistemic prodigies, replete with fabulous features, became typical for the early age of discovery. In Shakespeare's latter plays, these uncanny fables would echo strongly, matched only by the master's unbridled curiosity for the inherent magic beliefs and practices.

Partaking of a collective imagination, the main qualities of which remained attuned to the themes of magic and sacredness,<sup>219</sup> the lay culture of those days discovered the other facet of the time, in historicity and civic consciousness. Elizabethan culture, in spite of the many alterations proposed by the fathers of Reformation, kept its folkloric roots alive, at times glossing historical and traditional elements. October 25<sup>th</sup> was St. Crispin's day, the patron of cobblers, tanners and leather workers, whose day and name were used by Shakespeare in *Henry V*, to place in time the Battle of Agincourt. The last day of October and the first two days of November were marked by the Halloween festival, a surviving Celtic rite of cosmic transition, when the allegedly returned souls of the dead were warded off with bonfires and grotesque masks (which certainly exerted their expressive power upon *Macbeth*'s author; see Alford 63). November 1 was the Christian correspondent of the Halloween tradition, and it was a public holiday. At this time of the year, the Souls of the Dead came back to visit their old dwellings. If they had not settled their business here, in the world of the living, they might choose to avenge and to damage the lives of their old acquaintances. To protect themselves and their chattels, people engaged in apotropaic magic. Because warding off the returning spirits was not always possible, the ghosts were contented with soul-cakes. In Ancient Greece, the Festival of the Dead was held in February, when large amounts of food were left outdoors for the nourishment of the returned. As soon as the designated days were over, Alford notes, they were brushed away with ritual imprecations: "Out of the doors, ye souls; it is no longer Anthesteria" (Alford 71). In Gallo-Roman provinces of the Mediterranean France, tables were laid for the Souls—"a loaf with the knife stuck in it or merely crumbs on the tablecloth."<sup>220</sup> In the British islands, the custom followed Celtic traditions. In Orkney, Norfolk, the souls' return is safeguarded by impersonators, who act as guides, leading the guests of the underworld to the designated places in the villages. In remote communities of Somerset, children carefully make "scooped-out mangolds,"<sup>221</sup> carving designs and "then begging candles to put inside" (cf. Alford 151). In Cheshire, the Halloween custom was combined with other local practices, such as the celebration of Saint George and the Dragon, initially held during the

Christmas season. The Old Tup was another odd presence of these rituals. This was a boy covered in animal skins or rags, while wearing on his shoulders a ram's head. Even if such impersonations of evil were the privilege of children and teenagers who amused themselves, the masks were supposed to abate the Souls from the people's households. Halloween bonfires lit before the days of Reformation were expected to relieve the Souls in Purgatory.

The 17<sup>th</sup> of November marked Queen Elizabeth's ascension to the throne. The day was remembered as a victory of Protestantism in England and was celebrated with solemnities, public feasts, and bonfires. The 6<sup>th</sup> of December was the day of Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of children. In the Northern parts of England, a "boy bishop" was chosen as ruler. The boy bishop's temporary authority ended three weeks later, on December 28, the Holy Innocents' Day. The boy elected, aided by a group of male-infants, entered the Church and performed all the Holy Offices, except for Mass. The custom, repressed by Henry VIII, then encouraged by Queen Mary, was finally abolished during the reign of Elizabeth. In other parts of Europe, the occasion was associated with the popular celebrations of the Feast of Fools, held at the end of December. During the two weeks at the turn of the year, each community appointed one of its lowest social-rank members to a position of authority, undisputed by anybody inside the group, including the legal guardians. The embedded philosophy of this tradition, which relied on the quality of role-reversal, became possible in a social climate of wit and transgression that explain the latest urban taste for slapstick and farce in theater. Uncomfortably enough for the guardians of civic order, the carnivalesque celebrations were carried out in ways that summoned the virtues of disobedience: in such situations, a marginal in the community was temporarily granted the power and the impunities of the sovereign. The feast did not survive beyond the sixteenth century.<sup>222</sup>

The longest and most popular festival of the year was Christmas, which during the Elizabethan era was celebrated for no less than twelve days, beginning with Christmas Eve on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December and ending on the day of Epiphany, on the sixth of January.<sup>223</sup> Alford associates Christmas with age-old celebrations of the

Winter Solstice and the day of New Year's Eve, which, in secular traditions, become one (cf. Alford 22-25). In the South, homes were festooned with greenery and mistletoe. In the North, houses were adorned with the kissing bush. In the cow-houses, beasts were said to kneel at midnight.<sup>224</sup> In Scotland, farmers lit the Midwinter fires for centuries, and practiced "the burning of the bush" to mark the transition into a new astronomical year; in Allendale, Northumberland, the Midwinter festivals involved processions of young men, crossing the town with "trays of blazing tar on their heads" (Alford 23). Christmas meals were rich in both animal protein and ritual connotations.<sup>225</sup> The twelve days following Christmas were seen as an interval of time when the two worlds, that of the Living and the Dead, intermingle. In many parts of Europe, these days represented another occasion for the reversal of norms, a turning upside-down of the world of social hierarchies that carried the symbolic roots of emancipation. Reminiscent of boy bishops, the licentious Lords of Misrule, elected for the twelve days, "governed" entire communities from the mayor's seat aided by full councils of party-goers. George Dumézil acknowledged the ancient symbolism of other New Year's traditions involving hobby horses, men-goats and other disguises—reminiscent of the terrific guardians of the pagan underworlds, said to wander on earth at the turn of the cosmic tide (Alford 137, 25).<sup>226</sup> But among the other typical themes of the Twelve Days, one motif, that of the "mock king," is of particular worth for my study, since this image is incorporated into a broad set of timeless mythologies. In a move of thought that attempts to transcend the scholarly disputes around this widespread tradition, Violet Alford takes the motif of priestly royalty as a milestone of modern anthropology:

The King of the Night is assuredly a far off descendant of the Divine Monarch who, in many parts of the world, had divinity thrust upon him for a short period before his ritual death. This theme has been reworked upon and reused since James Frazer's *Golden Bough* accustomed us to accept the proposition as he applied it to the Priest-Kings of Nemi.<sup>227</sup> It must, in its first explosion, have burst upon the anthropological world

with quite stunning impact. There are other schools of thought partly founded on this, also directly opposed to it; the simplest method is to accept, to begin with, the terms of the cyclic Priest-King, and, in case there are some still unfamiliar with the thesis a bald expression of it must suffice here. At one stage of early culture men confidently believed their Chief or King was something more than human, the representative of nature's powers contained in himself. In him lived manliness, virility of man and beast, of vegetable life and ultimately – this must have been a still more ancient stage – the generating power of the sun. Never must this divine person be suffered to deteriorate for then, logically enough, everything in life would deteriorate with him. When old age came upon him he would be ritually removed from office and from life. Or, to prevent even the first signs of deterioration, this ritual removal might take place after a certain period, a determined cycle of years. The King is dead, long live the King. And warmth, fecundity and above all *food*, will flourish with the new, young Chief. (26-27)

The survival of these customs is a proof of their archetypal nature: there are many communities in Europe where the recollection of the custom is at the origin of the annual miming of the King's death (and rebirth). In many places, the divinity takes an animal form, such as a bear. But the relevance of this symbolic figure expands far beyond the historical and geographical foci of our research. In ancient mythologies, Sumerian or Aztec, mock kings reigned for longer periods before their ritual entrusting to Gods. Their death ensured the continuity of the Universe, whose existence was told to be entirely dependent upon the sacrificial fuel. A stage beyond in the evolution of cultural elaboration, "kings of the bean" had more endowments than their folkloric ancestors. Their election was based upon a divinatory act, which involved the finding of a bean cooked in a cake. The Queen of the Pea was chosen in the same fashion and invested with similar attributes. Any possible connotation of fecundity and natural magic rose around this custom. The short reign of kings of the bean was believed to bring fortune and fertility to the

contributing households.<sup>228</sup> As in many other instances, the New Year's rituals adjusted extreme pagan practices to a more innocent form, acceptable in a Christian environment.

During the Reformation, England, a civilization that has come to play the chief role in the discovery of new worlds, became a realm in need of majesty and of model heroes. If on streets, irony and pun were sometimes punished, on stage—a space invested with the sacred prestige of the magic circle—the language of extrapolations and speculation added a plus to the quality of imaginary experiment. In a period when each question becomes an emergency matter, traditional customs had to be adapted to the new demands of moral history. In such unique moments, original metaphors mediate between irreconcilable horizons, securing the foundations of social order. Paraphrasing a Hegelian motif, one could say that *Zeitgeist*, or the Spirit of Time, seems to ask for its levy from the world, while the *Volksgeist*, or the Nation's Soul, is determined to discover the language of historical realization as part of the greater metaphysical project, where the nation's memory of historical experience fuses with the *Weltgeist*, or the predetermined memory of the World Spirit.

### **III. 5. Averting regicide**

John Guy, an eminent Tudor scholar, chooses skepticism in his discussion of the Elizabethan reign. According to Guy, the traditional view of English historians who took for granted the legend of the omnipotent queen has been demounted with lucid arguments.<sup>229</sup> For many traditionalist historians, Elizabeth's supremacy remained an inflexible assumption:<sup>230</sup> at any rate, Guy concluded that the reevaluation of Elizabethan Elizabeth's reign is still open; new documents recently found in the Public Record Office, in the British Library, and in Hatfield House, have helped historians adjust to a more insightful view of the Queen (Guy, 2007). Given the inherent limitations of my excursion, our description here takes into account only

those aspects that relate to the cultic elements of Tudor reign. When Elizabeth was crowned in her sister's place, John Aylmer wrote a "defence" of the Elizabethan rule, entitled "An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subiectes" in 1557. As another Tudor scholar noted, this was "faint praise" written without explicit royal permission. It was not remembered as an original eulogy, since Aylmer barely distanced himself from the official iconography of the English Parliament. In a train of thought that denied Knox's and Calvin's preconceptions on female monarchy, Aylmer held that the gift of a female ruler was proof of God's "secret purpose" and "wonderful works."<sup>231</sup> Elizabeth herself never thought that her reign was the offshoot of a miraculous occurrence or an extraordinary privilege, and she denied vehemently such views. Thomas Norton, a famous lawyer of the times and an erudite Calvinist thinker, discussed the many disputes around the status of female monarchy in an article (1563 or 1566) that searched for a legal and a moral settlement. Accordingly, Elizabeth's claim to the throne had to take into account dynastic reasons, not metaphysical feminist maxims. If her entitlement was to be founded upon "God's special and immediate ordinance" dispensing the hereditary right, it "setteth all her subjects at liberty, who acknowledge no such extraordinary calling" In addition, her royal prerogative was

a title established solely by an "extraordinary miracle" of God that left the validity of the dynastic claim and title unresolved. Elizabeth would be left with no defence by law but an ostentation of God's dispensation against law, in which case the pope and papists may as easily say that the queen ought not to be queen though she had the right. (Guy 199)<sup>232</sup>

A feminist icon for the modern-day British, Elizabeth was remembered as a female monarch who was able to stay on the throne in a world of male conspirators. Elizabeth legitimized her right to the throne of England on the non-gendered foundations of the laws of birthright,<sup>233</sup> the will of Henry VIII, and the Act of Succession of 1544. It is commonly accepted by contemporary historians that Henry VIII's excommunication in 1533, followed by his daughter Elizabeth's in 1570, aggravated the split between papists and English Protestants and directed the



energies of religious zealots towards the Queen's ambiguous figure, seen either as a savior of Christianity or as an Antichrist. For John Foxe, an anti-papist theologian, whose *Book of Martyrs* was printed in England in 1563, the last days of Christ's Second Coming were predictable in the superlative reign of Elizabeth, viewed as a second Constantine (cf. Weber 71-72). During her reign, the Protestant Queen had to avert several Spanish coordinated plots to assassinate her.<sup>234</sup> Standard denunciations against the Queen's enemies often involved mentions of conspiracy with the Catholics and the Spanish agents. Conversely, she continuously had to avoid the mystical hysteria of the staunch believers at home. In a period when the Crown's Catholic enemies were hanged at crossroads, the drastic division between theological assumptions produced an alternative culture of mystical prophecies and religious maniacs, acting as "a small army of pseudo-Messiahs," as Keith Thomas suggested in his 1971 study, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.<sup>235</sup> The seventeenth century English kings would rarely leave these self-appointed prophets in freedom. However, the royal punishments softened with time, because the illiterate crowds felt tempted to grant these fanatics the status of martyrdom. Regardless of religious condition, millenarians were the natural enemies of the absolute monarchies because they all announced the imminent doom of an order that proclaimed the kingdom as the worldly pillar of the divine will.<sup>236</sup> But none of these recent socio-psychological English malaises was unknown to Elizabeth, a monarch who learned quickly that her success in religious politics depended on her ability to adorn her worldly crown with new jewels.

At this juncture, I feel compelled to discuss the origins of the Elizabethan cult as it emerged in the fantastic cosmology of the mysterious John Dee, a figure who, directly or indirectly had access to Giordano Bruno's ideas, during the Nolan's 1582-1583 visit in London. Hence, my preoccupation to read *The Tempest* in conjunction with Bruno's principles of "bondage" in politics, that, I assume, were already present in the parallel speculative traditions of the English Neoplatonists. The history of Giordano Bruno's stay in London is known from other studies and I don't see any reason to repeat its anecdotal registers here. Bruno

and Dee had similar preoccupations, since both belonged to the last generation of Hermeticians, sharing an obsessive preoccupation for the occult reformation of the West. Neither Bruno nor Dee were original in their assumptions, other than by their common habit of conflating conjuration and prophecy in their dedications to their aristocratic patrons. Dee was already in his fifty-third year of life in 1582, when the thirty-four year old Bruno arrived in London, while Robert Fludd, the occultist who was going to develop the theories of both in a synthetic Art of Memory, was only eight. Although the three philosophers differed in style and voice, the core of their epistemic assumptions was nearly identical, gravitating around the seductive possibility of a programmable Cosmos, in which human intelligence could cooperate actively with angelic entities. The mature William Shakespeare, no doubt, met Dee many times at the court before choosing the white-bearded astronomer as source of inspiration for the character Prospero. For Dee was indeed seen as “The White Magus” at the time of Shakespeare’s rise at the Court. John Dee became famous in 1555, when his reading of princely horoscopes forecasted the ascension to the throne of Princess Elizabeth, while correctly predicting Queen Mary’s decline. Accused initially of high treason by Mary’s supporters, Dee’s star rose again when Elizabeth, counting on Dee’s theoretical knowledge of navigation and astronomy, called him to the court as the permanent advisor to the Crown’s expeditions of discovery.

Inspired by earlier Cabbalistic and Hermetic sources, Elizabeth’s astrologer composed a new “art” of cognitive studies, which blended the fundamentals of cosmography, geography, and political philosophy to correspond with the new royal cult. As a royal advisor in navigation and cartography, Dee’s influence was unshakable, for he continuously had an eye upon the fresh accounts of sailors and was in the position to interpret and corroborate their assumptions.<sup>237</sup> Elizabethan epistemology, an appendix of the Late Renaissance thought and fantastic denominations of sacred female monarchy, shared a number of common perspectives with the court poetry and, particularly important for this

demonstration, with the court prophecy, a genre in which Dee remained unparalleled.

The *modus operandi* of the occultist's mind took into account a different cosmography than ours. In an age when the ideas of Copernicus were just finding their way into main-stream knowledge, The Neoplatonist Chain of Being was the model preferred by magician-philosophers like Ficino, Agrippa, Pico, Dee, or Bruno. In spite of its many inaccuracies, their cognitive perspective was paradoxically broader than the Newtonian scheme of the Universe: Hermetic philosophers were chiefly preoccupied with spiritualist connections between what they thought of as a revealed scheme of order extending across the intermingled domains of mineral, animal, and spiritual existence. In a common note of Neoplatonism, most Elizabethan thinkers believed that the heavens were made by fire and that light was consubstantial in the highest essence. Made of ether, the heavens were endowed with the quality of permanence, in opposition with the corruptible, impermanent regions represented by the moon and the sub-lunar world. The traffic and hybridization between different regions of a polymorphic, "multi-dimensional" cosmology was ensured by the fantastic intermediation of aerial creatures, demons, or angels: typical of Neoplatonist *gnoses*, these angelic spirits can be invoked and their powers can be summoned to the benefit of human knowledge. As underlying factors of order in a magic universe, another function of the heavenly guardians was to generate and secure the cosmic order. The scheme was predominantly Pythagorean, since the physical universe was thought to reverberate the musical harmonies generated in the spiritual orbs. Yet, the late Renaissance philosophers refined the orphic and pre-Socratic views with Cabalistic and neo-pagan elements. Such was their common belief in the possibility of meaningful interference from the perspective of human volition and language with superhuman, ethereal intelligences.

Since Elizabeth's belief in astrology was not total, Dee's mission was a delicate one: every major event of her reign, starting with the day of her own coronation had to be established by accurate astrological calculations. But the

Queen's conjurer was aiming even higher. The occult philosopher's obsessive interest in numerology and astronomy was not gratuitous: upon becoming a prefect initiate in old Hebraic, his obsessive hope was that, by cracking the code of *The Cabbala*,<sup>238</sup> the Elizabethan age would take advantage of the original language of creation. Dee's first occult treatise, *Monas Hieroglyphica* (The Hieroglyphic Monad), published in 1564, was a strange book indeed, for it produced an extensive and original Cabbalistic hermeneutics of a grapheme revealed to him in one of his meditations, a symbol to stand for the unity of heavens and earth, which designated symbolic names and values on the classical (Aristotelian) Chain of Being. In his desire to describe a universal science of the physical and the metaphysical, the royal astrologer looked forward to the friendship of one of the most illustrious cartographers of the time: the Flemish Gerarde de Cremere, known as Gerardus Mercator, the author of the first *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* originally printed in 1570, in Antwerp. In his bibliophile travel to Antwerp, Dee also bought one of the rare copies of *Steganographia*, a book by a fifteenth-century monk, Johann Thritemius who, in the Aeropagitical tradition, described the structure of the solar system (in its Ptolemaean outlook) in conjunction with nine hierarchies of angelic guardians.<sup>239</sup> In 1577, he published *General and Rare Memorials pertayning to the Perfect Arte of Navigation*, a book that described Britain as a rising naval empire and reinforced English political entitlement to the colonization of America. In fact, Dee's broader project aimed at the discovery of the rules of a universal science of magic, to be applied in every single domain of life and particularly in politics. His occultist research intended to reconstitute the prelapsarian understanding, a spiritually transformative knowledge that would render man equal to God, given that Enoch was the only man who "walked with God and was not, because God Took him, in other words was elevated to heavens."<sup>240</sup> In Dee's magnificent visions, which show striking ideological resemblances with Bruno's "Italian" project of Hermetic reform, the royal domain of Elizabeth-Astraea included not only the island of England, but also the symbolic reign upon the uncorrupted domains of Nature, and, *in extenso*, upon the celestial realms of supernatural presences. As Cormack notes, Dee's efforts combining occult-astrological symbolism with astronomical and

navigational charting, inspired Elizabethan geographers to think of England as the center of a naval empire:

Elizabethan geographers and cartographers, led by such important and influential men as Dee, helped develop a set of attitudes and assumptions that encouraged them to view the English as separate from and superior to the rest of the world. Geography supplied the many students and politicians who studied it with a belief in their own inherent superiority and their ability to control the world they now understood. Indeed, the study of geography helped the English develop an imperial world-view based on three underlying assumptions: a belief that the world could be measured, named, and therefore controlled; a sense of the superiority of the English over peoples and nations and thus the right of the English nation to exploit other areas of the globe; and a self-definition that gave these English students a sense of themselves and their nation. This message of superiority and the possibility of imperial expansion was aided by the iconographic images present in many geographical works. Through the constant repetition of such messages, students of geography began to envisage a world open to the exploration and exploitation of the English.<sup>241</sup>

In philosophical terms, Dee attempted no more, no less than the Queen's political dominion to the greater articulation of the Neoplatonic Chain of Being. Not only did the conjurer foresee the universal ascension of the Crown, but he also seemed able to predict and advise accurately on political matters, such as the auspicious days for the Queen's major offensives. Yet, against any potential charges with regicide, Elizabethan reign found itself adorned with the attributes of divine splendor: according to Dee, the starry heavens indicated unique conjunctions, provoked by angelic benefactors to the explicit advantage of an elect nation. Peter J. French wrote that "Dee and other philosophers like Guillaume Postel interpreted cosmography a science of intellectual as well as geographical discovery. They thought oriental wisdom might reveal a means of establishing a *Concordia mundi*

and a universal faith” (181).<sup>242</sup> To Peter J. French, Dee “was the major guiding spirit behind the projects of English expansion.”

But Dee, always ready to produce a new astrological chart favorable to the queen was not alone in his visions. Christopher Saxton, graphic artist, cartographer and publisher, created a unique geographical atlas in 1579. Saxton’s frontispiece, as Cormack ponders, “contains an overt message of English power and the utility of the geographical sciences in achieving such power. ...In Saxton’s frontispiece, Elizabeth sits enthroned in the centre of the image, patron and ruler over the men on either side of her canopy. On the right stands geography with compass and globe; on the left is astronomy with his armillary sphere. The usual female personifications of these disciplines has been replaced by men in middle eastern garb, perhaps alluding to the two works of Ptolemy. In the cartouche above Elizabeth’s head, Righteousness and Peace, both female, embrace under Elizabeth’s rule. Below, the two aspects of map-making, geometric and panoramic, seem to set their sights on England and Elizabeth’s patronage.”<sup>243</sup> Richard Hakluyt’s 1582 study, following ten years of research, entitled *Divers Voyages Touching the Discoverie of America and the Ilands Adjacent unto the Same, Made First of all by our Englishmen and Afterward by the Frenchmen and Britons* had already brought credible evidence to English colonial claims and made a new world look like a natural appendix of the royal domain. Coincidentally, Thomas Harriot’s remarks saved in his famous travel *Report* showed no difference from those of the Queen’s advisor. Seated at the helm of the ship of the state,<sup>244</sup> the “celestial” queen became associated with the civilizing mission of British domination. The Queen’s tactics to impose effective domination on her growing empire never lacked creativity. In becoming such an effective motivator to the many cultures and nations found under her rule, the monarch understood the meaning of soft politics. However risky for the foundations of royal authority, this strategy of expanding the base of power was associated with the empowerment of local rulers. In newly conquered territories, the queen appointed lieutenant-governors and viceroys, often selected from her most experienced naval commanders and soldiers, who were given control of the regions

in exchange for a fair share. To balance Spain's presence on sea, which was threatening to become the dominant naval empire, Elizabeth secretly consented to piracy against Imperial galleons. Elizabethan seafarers were issued letters of marque and reprisal to differentiate them from uncontrolled pirate vessels. This allowed them a share of power overseas and entitled them to enjoy a great deal of wealth and honors when returning home, where they made substantial deposits into the Royal Treasury. These policies formed an aristocracy of entrepreneurs, often perceived as the nouveau-rich by the old families. Nonetheless, they were more prone to commitment to the Crown than the old establishment, whose claims were proportional with their traditional position in English society. Thus, the state's destiny became increasingly dependent upon their successes on sea. Twice betrayed by her favorites, Elizabeth adopted a stricter attitude with her late protégées, from whom she demanded complete compliance with her divine right, a request that sometimes involved the abandonment of their private lives.<sup>245</sup> Answering positively to the monarch's political demands, famous Elizabethan privateers, such as Drake, Hawkins, and Raleigh, turned England from a "rogue" state with unsolvable debts to the continental monarchies in Europe into a global financial actor and steadily brought London to the position of marine trade capital.

The logical inference of these episodes supports a more complex view of history, consistent with the idea that the Elizabethan state policies were in fact devised as a preemptive strategy aimed at averting the permanent risk of regicide. The dynastic succession problem was going to become the Achilles' heel of the monarch and a stumbling block for her advisors; nonetheless, the Queen's preference for inventive propaganda seems associated with her desire to carve an original significance for her reign in Western history. No other English monarch invested more energy in promoting her triumphal image and myth in the remote corners of her dominion. The success of the Elizabethan reign could not have depended more on the quality of propaganda; however, given the incessant hostility of her internal and foreign enemies, it was by a stroke of good luck that she remained on the throne.<sup>246</sup> After the execution of the Queen of Scots in 1587,

followed by the repression of her Catholic accomplices, Elizabeth herself seemed haunted by the tormenting image of regicide and feared to assume her own role in promoting the execution warrant. In effect, during her late years in power, she avoided, whenever possible, the unjustified punishments against religious opponents. But, overall, the assertion of brute power, orchestrated by a shrewd and hasty Walsingham, did not serve the image of the life-giving monarch. It served her interest, yet her public image needed a major retouch. Thus, the Queen's images of the first years were granted with stronger iconographic and encomiastic attributes, while her mythical virtues were emphasized above the virtues of Christian affiliation. Moreover, how could these pagan representations act as an effective substitute for the classical Christian iconography? And how could an aging monarch, who spent most of her life surrounded by political and theological adversaries, inspire her courtiers to manufacture such a diverse palette of mythical attributes?

In *The Cult of Elizabeth*, Roy Strong discusses the cult of Gloriana in relation with its formative effects upon the civic sphere. Days after the monarch's death, John Hayward gave a sermon at Paul's Cross, commemorating the queen who was "by many names most dear to us." Hayward was alluding to a scene of Dekker's play *Old Fortunatus*, written in 1599 and famous in the epoch, and well-known at the Court, where it was performed frequently. Coinciding with the preparations for the royal funeral, the cultural historian suggests, the elements of the cult were reiterated in public, as to assure the crown's symbolic permanence:

Are you then traveling to the temple of Eliza?

Even to her temple are my feeble limbs traveling. Some call her Pandora: some Gloriana: some Cynthia: some Belphebe: some Astraea: all by several names to express several loves: yet all those names make but one celestial body, as all those loves meet to create one soul.



I am of her country, and we adore her by the name of Eliza. (Dekker, qtd. in Strong 15)

In this diadem of allegorical names, a strange feature of post-medieval imagination is unveiled. Frances Yates noted that the alternative proposal for the encomiastic cult of Astraea originated in the association of Elizabeth's reign with the rise of Virgo in the astrological charts of the late sixteenth century. W. Camden noted in his 1674 study, *Remains*, that "in the beginning of The late Majesties Reign, one upon happy hope conceived, made an half of the Zodiack, with Virgo, rising, adding JAM REDIT ET VIRGO." (Camden, qtd. in Yates, *Imperial Themes* 59).<sup>247</sup> Significantly, the employment of this metaphor reached its days of glory after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Court theater absorbed and developed the metaphor. John Marston's play *Histriomastix*, whose first production, originally located by Yates in 1589 and dated by Wharton in 1598-1599, took place during the Christmas revels<sup>248</sup> of The Middle Temple, brought the art of encomiastic praise to new peaks. Astraea is surrounded by mythical guardians of the Greco-Roman mythology, like Bacchus, Ceres, and Plenty to whom new personifications of Elizabeth's virtue were added, such as Peace, Fame, Fortitude and Religion, Virginitie and Artes. "Here we have Elizabeth-Astraea as the empress of the world, guardian of religion, patroness of peace, restorer of virtue; she is hailed with a Roman triumph which extols the wealth and prosperity which her Golden Age has brought" (Yates, *Occult Philosophy* 59-60). To this thematic model, initially found in George Peele's 1595 Ascension Day Poem, many variations were added over the years. Virgilian and Senecan elements were present in later plays by Peele and Thomas Hughes. In the latter's play, set in Ancient Britain, the final scene ends with the prophecy of a new political cult, dedicated to Elizabeth, called to "reduce the golden age again, Religion, ease and wealth of the former world" (qtd. in Yates, *Occult Philosophy* 62).

Maybe the most celebrated work of court poetry in the Elizabethan Era was Spenser's epic poem, *The Faerie Queene*, published in 1590 and 1596. Spenser, who was a friend of Raleigh, announced at the poem's beginning his

intention to allegorize the royal virtues as part of a mythical realm named *Faerieland*, guarded by the traditional figures of Arthurian knights. Each book had to express the qualities of a classical virtue: Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, Courtesy. To these, Spenser added a seventh quality, Magnificence, the crowning virtue of emperors, originating in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Through magnanimity, Spenser related Elizabeth's era to the mythical states of Virgilian and, in particular, of Arthurian literary traditions. By then, the theme of the Virgilian Fourth Eclogue was already understood as a premonition of a new Golden Age, referring particularly to Elizabeth's England. In the 1579 Survey of England by Christopher Saxton, Yates notes, the engraving of "Queen Elizabeth enthroned is flanked by figures of astrologers, holding spheres; in the bottom left-hand corner a man with compasses draws a map; in the right-hand corner, a man gazes through a telescope at a sign in the starry heavens. Here, we see a representation of Elizabeth as a celestial portent whose advent has been mysteriously foretold" (*Occult Philosophy* 64), one that uses the Neoplatonic logic of divine correspondences to insert the monarch's figure into an allegorized view of power, a symbolic portent whose apotropaic function was to keep at bay the inimical forces of Papism. This corresponds to Frances Yates' classical vision of the Queen's cult, who pondered that

The building up of Queen Elizabeth I as a Neoplatonic heroine by Spenser was in itself a challenge to the Catholic Counter-Reformation powers and their attitude to Renaissance philosophy. Spenser's Neoplatonism is of the Hermetic-Cabalistic variety, expressive [...] in poetic form of the Dee outlook and the Dee patriotic occultism.(64)

In both portraits or poems dedicated to the Queen, progressively, the symbolism of Virgo-Astraea was associated with a cosmic guardian. John Davies' poem made her into an allegorical figure of fertility, resembling the attributes of Ceres-Demetra in the ancient Mediterranean mythologies. John Case's engraving in *Sphaera Civitatis*, published in 1588, shows the allegorical image of a monarch who, supervising the concentric structure of virtues of the Aristotelian Ptolemaic Universe, can appear as

the unmoved mover of the world of virtues (Yates, *Occult Philosophy* 70). Entirely strange to us, the moderns, these images were not “merely fanciful flattering labels but embody attributes of the person concerned – a comprehensiveness in multiplicity matched only in religious cults,” suggests Strong. The cultic elements are not, however, to be taken for a genuine phenomenon of adoration.

To the sixteenth century scholarly politicians, the memory of the monarch’s image represents an arcane strategy aiming at the state’s survival and designed to keep alive the sacred heritage of the royal “sacred” presence.<sup>249</sup> A slow process of subversion is revealed: in the echo of the Renaissance pagan imagination, the cult of Gloriana was deliberately invented to reinforce civic consciousness and order: this was a move that substituted “the pre-Reformation externals of religion, the cult of the Virgin and saints with their attendant images, processions, ceremonies and secular rejoicing” (Strong 16). Moreover, the politics of substitution, typical of the imperial policies in Augustan Rome, extended to incorporating biographical elements of the Queen’s life: “Thus, the loves of the Virgin Queen were meant to replace the cult of our Lady, while Elizabeth’s Day and Birthday were chosen to replace the festivals of the Corpus Christi, Easter and Ascensiontide” (Strong 16). As a sovereign whose love for festivals became the pillar of her self-appointing cult, Elizabeth understood the importance of the revels for the cohesion of her empire. Elizabeth’s Ascension Day on November 17<sup>th</sup> was the occasion of a national festival, comprising celebrations all around England and involving every single parish in the praise of the Queen.<sup>250</sup>

These occasions were not the only ones, but, given that secular celebrations were discouraged by the Church of England, the re-channeling of social energies became crucial for the state. As Andrew Gurr noted, “there was some truth in the claim that Elizabeth enjoyed plays” (*Shakespeare Company* 167), and as many other historians remarked, this was particularly visible in her inexhaustible energy for social acting, given in her readiness for elaborate entrances, processions, and imaginative festivities based on elaborate scripts. In this embarrassing context for the mentalities of clergymen, the alternative occasion of

allegorical pageants gave everybody the opportunity to rejoice in the market square. January 15, Elizabeth's coronation day, was celebrated in London with a royal procession, which took place on January 14, followed by four pageants. Pageants and morality plays were the preeminent species of dramatic routine that were presented on the official days for the public's instruction and enjoyment. The pageant consisted of a dramatic procession offered in praise of an aristocrat, often followed by a morality play that instilled in subjects the desire for a virtuous existence. The lessons on the various ethical virtues of a honest life were transmitted in allegorical format: that is, embodied by costumed and masked figures gravitating around a central performer. The first pageant highlighted Elizabeth's genealogical legitimacy and her symbolic mission as a dynastic appeaser, insisting on her Englishness and on her ascendancy in Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, the Tudor monarchs who pacified England after the thirty-year War of the Roses. This procession showed the Queen as "the sovereign of a medieval order of chivalry, the Order of the Garter" (Strong 149). The second pageant emphasized the four virtues of the royal rule—True Religion, Love of Subjects, Justice, and Wisdom—and also caricaturized the opposite vices, such as Ignorance and Superstition. The third pageant, during which the mayor of London offered the Queen a gift of gold, emphasized the City's loyalty to the Crown. The reason for these propagandistic efforts might have originated in Elizabeth's traumatic memories. After Henry VIII's ideological campaign for the institution of sacred kingship, most of the strategies for an original sovereignty status were shattered by both types of opponents, the Marian revisionists and the Puritans, as McCoy emphasizes in *Alterations of State*:

When Elizabeth succeeded her sister, she too refrained from completing her father's monument. And it remained unfinished for more than a century. During the Civil War, parliamentary forces dismantled its stones and sold them, and soldiers led by Robert Hartley smashed the high altar in his father's sepulcher at Westminster. Puritan militants had little regard for monuments of Puritan kingship of any sort. (53-54)

“Royal supremacy and divine right,” McCoy suggests, were unsuccessful in creating shrines and symbolic order of values compatible with the idea of sacred kingship. Elizabeth needed a fast remedy and the culture of festivities offered the most effective resort for a pro-monarchic office campaign. Thus, the fourth pageant is perhaps the most important for the experimentalist attributes of Elizabeth’s authoritarianism, providing symbolic indications with regard to the Queen’s emerging cult: prominence was given to the allegorical figure of truth embodied by an actor dressed in white who was carrying an English Bible; the crumbling reign of Mary was compared with the prosperous rule of Elizabeth, depicted as Deborah,<sup>251</sup> the female Biblical prophet, both political leader and military commander, who freed ancient Israel and then reigned for forty years.

Unlike James’ later “paternal” prestige, the early period of the Queen’s cult depended entirely on her popularity: being known and vividly remembered as present all around her kingdom was crucial to her imagistic strategy. Not only did she travel much more than other kings to her favored courtiers’ manors, but her visits were elaborated as allegorical productions that centered on the suggestions of supernatural eventness and being played within the logic of fortunate coincidence, the same logic that stood behind the novel courtly masques and allegorical masquerades. Inspired from the progresses of early Christian monarchs, like Constantine or Charlemagne, and employing the repository of symbolic gestures connoting sacredness, Elizabeth’s ritual entrances were civic ceremonies skillfully elaborated that promoted an image of spontaneity and bliss to her subjects, a rare blend made possible by the Queen’s unique talent for acting. The Queen’s visits were anticipated by the distribution of printed portraits, leaflets, and inexpensive books, which had a definite contribution to the development of propagandistic rhetoric and encomiastic visual symbolism.<sup>252</sup> A recent investigation into the political mythology of Deborah could shed a new light on Elizabethan personality cult. According to Rabbinical scholar Pnina Nabe Levinson, the Biblical Deborah’s dilemma was how to impose complacency on a community of reluctant men, who understood the commandments as emanating from the fatherly Yahweh, a male-god

figure. At times, Deborah's defenders had to remind the conservatives that women were men's equals in the eyes of Yahweh. Why did God choose to send a woman to his children? The original answer, preserved in the Torah and discussed (in a different context) by the contemporary rabbinical scholar, can be also apprehended as an invocation of the Law brought in support of Elizabeth, given the similarity of their vulnerable positions in politics:

I will call witnesses from heaven and earth that the *ruach hakodesh* (the Holy Spirit) rests on the deeds of people, be they non-Jew or Jew, man or woman, knave or maid.<sup>253</sup>

In classical Hebrew, Deborah translates as *the bee*. The symbolic image of the bee is an insect that "makes honey and defends herself when threatened," Levinson writes. The bee signifies a permanent threat for the world of men, whose prayer, "Give me neither stinger, nor honey"<sup>254</sup> expresses to the world of men terror with a different, maybe stronger sense of identity in the feminine leader.<sup>255</sup> Elizabeth seems to have been fully aware of the problematic role she had to play: a woman-monarch has to inspire fertility and abundance, to avoid being stamped as infertile; however, in a Christian society where the idea of holiness is associated with the prerogatives of male spirituality, the Queen can avoid only the effect of bastard-reign by sacrificing her personal life. Indeed, Elizabeth's symbolic image embodying Diana is one of godly chastity, able to bestow life upon her own kingdom like the Greek Artemis, eternally young and always ready to fight for the wellbeing of life on her virginal dominion. Such urgency for a female cult was the major political factor involved in the re-design of courtly festivities around feminine figures. Strange indeed, moreover, the young Queen's unbridled grace in acting was matched only by her mannish skill at politics. The cult of the queen depended on her popularity: being known and vividly remembered as present all around her kingdom was crucial to her imagistic strategy. Not only did she travel a lot more than other kings to her favored courtiers' manors, but her visits were elaborated as allegorical productions, that centered on the suggestions of supernatural eventness and being played within the logic of fortunate coincidence,

the same logic that stood behind the novel courtly masques and allegorical masquerades.

Elizabeth's court founded its own division for entertainment, which adapted the popular festivals to the standards and symbolic requirements of a courtly art. But the logic and symbolism of representation was very much the same, since the professionals allowed to perform at the court, were, in fact, chosen from the best actors in town. Slowly, a new category of cultured entertainers was around the queen's palace. They were literate, often born of the lower-ranks aristocracy, with a taste for bohemian life, feasts, and lyrical and dramatic contests. Moreover, they did not find it an offense in singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, or even acting in the newest form of courtly entertainment, the masque, a new and cryptic genre inspired from the ancient custom of mumming,<sup>256</sup> whose complex symbolism required a great deal of subtlety from both producer and performer. During the courtly masques, writes Stephanie Hughes,

everyone was masked, or in disguise. Since the Court could not afford the broad license of the country village, nor the psychological release of total anonymity, nor the consequences of social reversal, they came as close as they could by the partial disguising of the entire community in a Masque, which sought to create a fanciful "disguising" of all ranking members of the Court as some exotic community, such as a forest gathering of country swains and shepherdesses, a confluence of the forces of nature, a meeting of the gods and goddesses on Mt. Olympus, or of a fairy court ritual, with the monarch cast in some appropriately central and glamorous role.<sup>257</sup>

A spirit of utopian equality and cheerful solidarity in sharing seemed to have been the common note of these revels, which voiced nostalgia for the Roman Saturnalia (the pagan representation of the Eden) "when all humans lived with each other as equals, before some had made themselves masters over the rest."<sup>258</sup> During the masques, class and rank differences were forgotten and the aristocrats in disguise

could venture to imitate the Lords of Misrule. The court was opened to all kinds of symbolic costumes, whose thematic tailoring defied any conformity in fashion. A new Olympus, another Arcadia with shepherds and shepherdesses, floated slowly in gondolas along the Thames to the royal palace as a sign of the city's temporarily induced forgetfulness, an armistice between minds and hearts, transgressive of political hierarchies. The same motif might have inspired Shakespeare to describe Gonzalo's impracticable society in *The Tempest* as a commonwealth that he would rule only by contraries to the principles of feudal politics and "execute all things" against the common "traffic" typical of modern democratic social communities.<sup>259</sup> Such fantasies of uncensored hedonism were popular in the cultures of the Late Middle Ages. In Shakespeare's England, they might have resonated harmonically with age old customs, such as the folkloric institution of "the lords of misrule."

### III. 6. The art of political dreaming: Hypnerotomachia Poliphili

Other possible origins of the later Elizabethan cult might have originated in the anonymous 1499 Venetian occult allegory, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a book that revolutionized typographical design and decades later during the Elizabethan Era was owned by all the major collectors of incunabulae in Europe. The narrative structure of this epic fantasy, which combines images, symbols, and neo-pagan themes in unique ways, offered an inventive representation of architectural *Loca Ficta*: these artificial spaces imagined by architects throughout centuries, a repository of blueprints that inspired encomiastic artists across Europe in their designs of royal processions, anticipated Fludd's *Art of Memory*. The background of the love between Poliphilo and Polia is those of a bucolic dreamland, a "magic" world of theatrical spaces where Poliphilo is abducted by nymphs in a series of "nested" dreams, a journey the stakes of which remain bound to the hero's search for the exaltation of a perfect erotic union. As an architectural treatise, *Hypnerotomachia* found its consecration in Leon Battista Alberti's visionary ideas, where the architect discussed the power of architectural motifs in relation with their



power to create a humanist civilization, founded upon a newly founded enthusiasm for the pagan themes of erotic and initiatory knowledge.<sup>260</sup> As a humanistic proposition, the proposal reached broader, as it signified an attempt to revitalize a symbolic knowledge of sacred spaces associated with the myths of classical Greece and imperial Rome. Rejected by Polia, whose name translates into English as “many things,” Poliphilo begins a journey of self-discovery<sup>261</sup> that would take him into a bewitched world. First, he finds himself lost in a wild forest that signifies the unbridled powers of the Nature. Meeting the nymphs in a new dream, he is magically transported to the ethereal palace of their queen, where he is required to affirm his affection for Polia. Once he does so, the nymphs stage their engagement ceremonies, in a bucolic setting that, reminding of Vergil’s *Eclogues*, lay the symbolic stage for Philip Sidney’s 1590 *Arcadia*. A disciple of Dee’s occult philosophy, Sidney emphasized a different aspect of poetical art, that of world-making, where lyrical inspiration was seen as a key to the designs of the divine. Both Dee and Sidney, French wrote, “worked though images operating within the psyche” (147) in the attempt to find the common avenues of prophetic poetics and political prophecy.

In agreement with the Neoplatonic ideal of visionary ascension through erotic elevation, the exaltations of love define the union of Poliphilo and Polia as “erotomachia,” an archetypal struggle between souls that dance in the preamble of a mystical fusion, where the emotion of sex procures the actors the insights of an epiphany. Indeed, the Heavens themselves rejoice the partners’ wedding in a scene that, reminiscent of *The Tempest*’s Act IV Masquerade, establishes a new philosophical canon for the culture of festivities: before letting themselves be carried away on the bewitched island of Cythera by a boatswain whose identity is the same as the God of Love, Cupid, the two partners stumble upon five triumphal processions, generated by the divine *mens*.<sup>262</sup> Here, the Neoplatonic metaphor of sacred royalty reveals its constitutive ambivalence: to princes, building futures or giving birth to heirs corresponds to a sacred “exaltation” that gives history its very course and shape. Corresponding to the metaphorical body of architecture, the

monuments represent the essence of Poliphilo's revelation, once the ethereal body of Polia vanishes in thin air. More precisely, the "nested" imaginings of Poliphilo's sleep are "archetypal" in ways that inspired Karl Gustav Jung over the centuries. They present the themes of love and nurture as a chapter of a *philosophia perrenis*, whose symbols, known to a few, could move the hidden wheels of the world, once re-ascribed to the secret logic of civilization as prolific, creative leadership.

Detaching itself from the dogmaticism of the Middle Ages, the Italian Renaissance strove for a crystallization of the pagan ideal of harmony. The "poliphilism" of the Medici era, visible the themes of the Baroque and Neoclassical art is one that survived the Enlightenment and was brought to an end only in the displacement of social forces generated by the technological Revolutions of the nineteenth century. This hedonistic spirit of return to the imagination of Antiquity, replete with pagan symbolism, became the obsession of a civilization whose attempt to survive the new beat of time resurrected the idols of the Greco-Roman world. Giulio Camillo's and Robert Fludd's mnemonic techniques were late elaborations of the same Poliphilic model, in which the art of exaltation leads to the emulative generation of new spaces in the architect's mind. Normally, this propaedeutic of imagination finds its immediate illustration in the field of symbolic politics. This move of resistance to the disenchantment of scientific paradigm - philosophers of culture tend to agree - was a frail idealism, yet one backed by glamorous renovation proposals. First, across Europe, it enforced a culture of courtly rituals centered around the ideas of natural right. Regardless of the daring imaginary quality of its Hermetic fantasizing, the high culture of the Late Renaissance was essentially defensive, in its rediscovered reliance upon the idea of divine right as a function of the esoteric paradigm. As Joscelyn Godwin notes in her book, "it was a Quixotic dream of a restored polytheism, in which worship could be paid to the gods and goddesses of one's choice" (259). These forms of purposeful autism can be hardly labeled as Christian, since their propensity for Gnostic and apocryphal themes matches the desire for an idyllic reassertion of cosmic stability.

### III. 7. Anticipating Gonzalo's utopia: Cockaine, a peasant realm of leisure

As alternative texts to the "official" canon of Christian ethics, some of these cultural recollections were not devoid of ironical overtones: another mythical trigger for the sixteenth century audiences was "the land of Cokaygne," a popular theme in medieval English and German traditions. Cockayne, known in German as Schalaraffenland, was a peasant paradise, a land of plenty after the political and economical failures of the Crusades. The Goliard troubadours of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries employed this myth in their poems, where the themes of class reversal prevailed. Resembling the French and Dutch versions, the early middle-English anonymous poem was a satirical parody replete with Biblical allusions: in Genesis 5:24, Enoch, Methuselah's father, was taken by Yahweh to a Paradisial domain; in 2 Kings 2: 1-18, we learn of the Prophet Elijah's similar fate. In the apocryphal Apocalypse of Saint Paul, the Paradise was described as a realm bordered by rivers of milk, honey, oil, and wine. In the realm of Cockaigne, we discover in the thirteenth century French poem, the deadly sins of idleness, promiscuousness, gluttony and greed were the norm. In Netherlands, the subject inspired Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting *Luilekkerland*.

The "surreal" land of Cockaigne was located in "the West of Spain," sometimes associated with the Spanish Azores<sup>263</sup> and, after the sixteenth century, associated anew with Pizarro's geographical discoveries in Peru. In sixteenth-century England, the myth signified a remote land of milk and honey<sup>264</sup>, an exotic paradise adorned with rivers of wine and culinary delights, and fertilized by a fountain of youth<sup>265</sup>. Its most significant use during the Elizabethan era is in Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, which reiterated the Hesiodic motif of the Golden Age, a place where Shakespeare is said to have found inspiration for lyrical motifs in *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Furthermore, the positive representations of the Arcadian motif appeared as a late innovation in English letters, since the satirical, anti-hierarchical and carnivalesque representations had prevailed for centuries in these themes, traditionally associated with the transgressions of the Christian paradigm. Ironically, Gonzalo's principle of the "commonwealth of contraries"

found its modern illustrations in a long series of libertarian, anarcho-primitivist, and gift-economy-based experiments during the nineteenth century, from Luddite movements, to Bakunian libertarian anarchist communities, or Fourier's phalanxes, to mention just a few. Conversely, Prospero's symbolic reformation inaugurating a reconciliatory era in politics could be seen as the balancing outcome of cosmic energies and political wisdom bound together by the prince's enlightened will. In this note, I have to define again *The Tempest's* ingenious cultural proposal in relation with the theory of *locus amoenus*: Caliban's paradisiacal atoll in *The Tempest* is not an "outopia," since its principle of non-locality empowers the alternative of a historical community of justice and bliss; alternatively, one cannot venture to label this realm as "heterotopian," given that its otherness does not empower an escapist perspective upon existence. The subsequent question relates to anthropological discussion present in the writings of Mircea Eliade, who designates the "creation of centers"<sup>266</sup> as a typical generative operation associated with the foundations of cultural imagination around the *loci* of power. The remaining alternative, consonant with the spirit of the seventeenth century's encomiastic culture, is that of an *Eutopian* island, where the positive utopian element prevails in the form of the symbolic prescriptions typical of Prospero's hermetic-enlightened governance. In the following chapter—the final section of my thesis— I will investigate this barely charted territory of the Shakespearean *Tempest*.

### **III. 8. Exaltations: *Theatrum Mundi* and *The Tempest's* invisible atoll**

To what extent does Shakespeare's creative imagination in *The Tempest* employ the cognitive context of such curiosities, a world of connotations more visible for the sixteenth century audiences? Can the intertext of the new World's curiosities be invoked as a renewed theology of nature, a proto-Gaia theory, in which the homeostatic cooperation of elemental energies stands for the suggestion of a paradisiacal realm, where the fantastic agents and their powers should be read as emanations of the living sphere? And, when we question the meaning of visible

sceneries in *The Tempest*, let us learn more from the lesson of the era's encomiastic *tableaux vivantes*: namely, is Prospero's island "alive," that is, glued together by the elemental energies of magic? Is the Duke of Milan's science entirely dependent on the sympathetic cooperation of elements on an island that preserves its Edenic harmony? And how should one place the metaphor of "dreaming" in proper sequence with Prospero's politics? I read the following lines belonging to Caliban, in Act III, Scene ii as supportive of such an interpretation:

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,  
The clouds methought would open and show riches  
Ready to drop upon me that, when I waked,  
I cried to dream again. (III. ii. 135-144)

If this hybrid emanationist and immanentist vision of the play's discourse proves valid, then the play's proposal should be discussed in relation to the innovative status of representational techniques and their corresponding agencies, nature versus culture. What matters here is that to the Elizabethan and Jacobean epochs, already bedazzled by the transformations in politics and religion, the new horizons of colonial possessions revealed an unexpected "market" for the original assertions of English sovereign power. This speaks of a civilization whose empirical awareness of new continents grew faster than the rational paradigms of scientific comprehension, and whose project of reconciliation between knowledge and power relied on a provisory paradigm, rooted in the need for *ontologically* coherent modalities of ascription, domination, and denomination. Science, politics, and religion, it was hoped, could at last find their proper reconciliatory notes in the twin projects of exploration and expansion that would grant England the joint legitimacy

of spiritual and ethical leadership over the New World: a larger Universe for a greater epoch. Here, the pragmatic strategies in politics found their necessary adornments in the neo-ecumenical motifs of the Renaissance Hermeticism. The philosophical project of a Golden Era supplemented the symbolical elements for the vision of an empire, taken here as an imaginary world striving for its proper “heteronomic” designations and searching solutions for the integration of the autonomous marginalities. In Elizabethan/Jacobean drama, as Greenblatt suggests, such early elaborations of modern culture rehearsed their grand themes and typical modalities. Hart recounts an episode that could be labeled as emblematic for the course of the Baroque culture in England:

Ronsard’s Epilogue to a comedy that was played before the court in the year of Shakespeare’s birth contains the line “Le Monde est un theatre, et les homes acteurs.” And that it includes stock expressions of the *theatrum mundi* in which men are actors, Fortune is the stage director, and the heavens and the fates resemble the spectators. (*Theater and World* 233)

The theme of “a world theater,” which characterized Shakespeare’s era, found unprecedented illustrations in its mature work. In the scenic situations typical of mannerist drama, the new narration of arts draws the experimental backdrop for the future narrative of history. Such changes related to the dialogue between dramatic and visual arts can expand the lesson of the spectacle to domains of intellectual life where the ropes and pulleys remain invisible, while the notion of stage can be broadened to incorporate the very idea of civilization. A philosophy of progressive revelation—as appended to a theology of nature gradually dismissed by the institution of Catholicism, yet kept alive in the speculative texts of Hermetic thought—found fervent adepts in Elizabethan culture. Shakespeare might have been one of them, since most biographers seem to agree that William, a Renaissance spirit belonging to a family of Catholics in an Era of Reformation, found a strong ground in the assumptions of Hermetic thought.<sup>267</sup> Notably, Elizabethan intellectuals’ new reliance upon a principle of divinity that allows intercourse with

human mind encourages an epistemological take that associates the idea of God with enlightened governance in ways that bypass the Catholic theology of revelation. Solomonic symbolism, as already suggested, drew upon already existing Biblical elements in ways that represented the fortunate British islands at the middle point between the Old and the New World. The Neoplatonic philosophies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to which the character Prospero “owed” his art, carried out more than a promise of reconciliation between inimical religious and political doctrines, as they attempted to incorporate the fantastic taxonomies within a definition of the world that relied on the One’s (The Plotinian: Hen) diffusion in things, proposing a renovated view of the Cosmos in the context of a renewed ontology. Still, this initial assumption generated another set of epistemic interrogations, related to the special situation of English culture, in an era that hesitated between the postulations of Protestant ethics and the already existing framework of Late Renaissance Hermeticism.

The notion of a world theater pertains to a humanized environment, where the stability of institutions allows the hybridization of political and artistic-social spheres. Indeed, the revolutionary theatrical settings of a Globe or of a Whitehall seem specifically designed for the production of unique scenic effects, metaphors whose magnitude will change the understanding of history. Sublimated from occult depictions and obscure architectural symbolism, a second art of memory rises. This is a science of theatrical elaborations as creative effects, as the rehearsal of new outcomes of stage is shown in close dependence to the narrative of origins and its mythical-dramatic potential, a science of outcomes that empowers the expectation of new beginnings. When applied to the recollection of history, the Baroque *deus ex machina* effect stands for a deeper social-psychological need, namely the suspension of disbelief needed for any rennovative or innovative action in history. Correspondingly, the notion of *theatrum mundi* interlocks arts and science in a cosmogonic metaphor, whose effectiveness depends on collective participation to the game. Audiences and players become partners in an imaginary dialogue, whose performativity is generated by the relatively un-differentiated

medium of the psychological scene of imaginary acts and their thematized rehearsal on theatrical stage. As Charles Whitney suggests in a recently published study,

that performativity both provokes and supports the motto of the Globe Theatre, *Totus mundus agit histrionem*, “All the world plays the actor,” the sense that characters, players, and playgoers are all encompassed in one articulated theatrical continuum, a *theatrum mundi*, not entirely divided into knower and known. The structure of the medieval stage figured a map of the world long before the Globe got its name.(Whitney 8)<sup>268</sup>

And, to the intellectuals of the Baroque Era the idea of a *theatrum mundi* was not at all new, if we are to follow the critical insights of Marcus Otto or Christine Buci-Glucksmann.<sup>269</sup> Its pattern became possible in Presocratic times; for sailors exchanging goods and learning the art of methodic curiosity, the Mediterranean basin represented the sea as the common medium of civilization and mythical origins of mankind. The outcome is paradigmatic, meaning that the Mediterranean world is represented as a *mundus in nuce*, metaphorically self-sufficient, a place of wonder, where the public sphere of social imagination relates to the protection of immanent gods, seen as the guardians of *loci amoeni*. Speaking of acquired qualities of social imaginary spaces, Otto defines *theatrum mundi* in relation with the expected quality of showing and presence.<sup>270</sup> This corresponds to a cultural proposal that, in superimposing the vision of the empire with a correspondent poetics of representation, attempts to reintegrate the notions of presence and performativity with the mythical foundations of power. A “holistic vision of a world society” is born in the “allegorical hybridity” typical of “genuine Mediterranean culture.” Otto’s assertion reveals a symmetry between the spirit of the Elizabethan Renaissance and the philosophical essence of paganism, whose imperial representation of *mundus* places the twin notions of agonality and concord within a multifarious environment imagined as one, rather than representing the world as a provisional order devalued by subservience to another one. For Otto, “the emergence of modern theatrical culture out of agonistic cults within the



Mediterranean can tell us something for social theory of modernity” as a world whose deliberate or genuine hesitations between pagan and ascetic representative modes transcend the monological quality of medieval representations.

At this juncture, I have introduced the theoretical and historical outcomes that inform my own reading of *The Tempest*, which will be articulated in the following section. Essentially, I take the uncanny suggestion of the play as a reconciliatory proposal between the classical “Pagan” and Medieval imaginative epistemic modalities. In Prospero’s meta-theatrical version of the art of governance, the “public sphere” expands beyond the idea of “place,” on an island whose hyper-topical location opens it to a new logic of centrality. (If I were to use the slang of Quantum philosophy, I would have to play on the epistemic differences between “transcendence” and “hyper-locality.”) In essence, Shakespeare relates nature and culture through Prospero’s purposeful “agonality,” where the idea of center is re-ascribed to the epistemic status of leadership. Undeniably, the key question of political plays is whether the idea of a multifarious, conflicting and dialectical play of sovereignty can be uniformly attributed to the symbolism of reformative power. *The Tempest*’s lesson shows the worlds of power and social life as interconnected. When read through these lenses, Shakespeare’s proposal might correspond to a novel definition of the “public sphere,” which integrates the domains of subjectivity and privacy within a holistic social, cultural, and psychological environment. I will assume Simon Sheikh’s definition of public sphere as “both localizable and imaginary” in connection with the ideological re-designation of “art production as communicationary toolbox and representational politics in the public realm.”<sup>271</sup> In these circumstances, art can be taken as “a cross field, intermediary for different modes of perception and thinking” (Sheikh).

In this note, my supposition is that the enchanted masquerade in *The Tempest*’s Act IV can be read as a proposal for an art that allows deliberate persuasion and intervention, relating interdisciplinary fields like drama, architecture, mechanical science, astrology and astronomy, painting, philosophy and social psychology in ways that subdue esthetical principles to the desirable outcomes in

politics. More than Shakespeare's historical plays, *The Tempest* is a meta-dramatic text where Shakespeare's proposal of agonality hinges at reconciliation of the mundane and supermundane spheres by reference to Hermetic motifs and to pagan mythologems. In other words, the spiritual nature of Prospero's atoll could mask a mythical form of reconciliation between the agencies of *civilization* and *nature*, taken here as the portents of an ontology of power that tries to avoid the classical heteronomic juxtaposition of political and civic orbs, through the invocation of a third sphere.

While reading Prospero's gestures as an echo of Hermetic reformative proposals, the Shakespearean scholar could reorient research in a different direction, regarding the theatrical environment of *The Tempest*'s productions: as unveiled by Frances Yates, in her *Art of Memory*, the second Globe was a building that (in celebrating the imperial cultural ideal) rendered visible a cosmogonic metaphor, associated with the Hermetic proposal. Should one think of connecting the symbolic representations emerging from *The Tempest*'s exotic lyricism with an esoteric cosmology, where the emanationist idea of epigenesis reigns? If this is true, what is the proper norm of interpretation in a play where the idea of kingship is played in a "magic" and "omniscient" note? Finally, here is a chain of rhetorical interrogations, that, even if not answered in my thesis, could form the topic of a future study: was the circular scaffolding of the (second) Globe such a "middle-earth" between Neoplatonic heavens and theatrical evocations where the art of dramatic representation was expected "to move the wheels" of spiritual heavens, summoning angelic powers to the benefit of historical order? Given the epistemic and rhetorical hybridness of *The Tempest*, should one consider that Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* as a Rosicrucian metaphor, one that saw the production of history as an occult art ascribed to the prince's skill at "lucid dreaming"? Evidently, the use of "epigenesis" refers to its determination in Hermetic and Neoplatonic philosophies: there, the idea of gradual enlightenment takes into account a (pre-Hegelian) panentheistic paradigm, advancing a notion of divinity seen both as immanent and transcendental, or, in other words, imagining God's presence in the world as a power that supports and allows

manipulative magic. Indeed, the notion of an omnipresent God taking active part in the spiritual evolution of humanity empowers original thought in the field of political leadership, where “Virtue” reads as an art of inspired dreaming.

## Chapter IV: Prospero's linguistic empire: *para que aprendan a hablar*

### IV. 1. Re-learning of the breach between nature and culture

An original discussion of *The Tempest* has to start with a summary of contemporary critical perspectives dedicated to the topic. Frank Kermode's 1954 Introduction to *The Tempest* in *Arden Shakespeare* takes a different route, discussing the relevance of Montaigne's skepticism, more precisely his age-making essay "Of Cannibals" to *The Tempest*: like Shakespeare, the French philosopher is preoccupied with the dissimilarity between natural and civilized societies; unlike the playwright, Montaigne values the New World example of "naturally virtuous life uncorrupted by civilization." (Kermode 6-7) The concurrent views of nature are the object of Kermode's analysis. Montaigne's essay seems to leave open the path for a positive reading of "naturalness, as skill of innocent virtue, untouched yet by the hypocrisy of civilization." Shakespeare, Kermode says, rejects Montaigne's "naturalism," (176)<sup>272</sup> ascribing his perceptions to those narratives of the New World unfavorable to the natives, widely popularized during the epoch. If Montaigne's account relied on Jean de Léry's reliable account, Shakespeare's play depends upon Montaigne's view second-hand. Nevertheless, both Montaigne and Shakespeare exaggerate the description of natives with elements that suit the mythological repository of Western imagination. Coming from the adventurous, brutal, and pragmatically oriented pioneers of colonization, their underlying assumptions play on the ethical polarity between savage nature and virtuous society.

No wonder that the first narratives of colonization were bound to a distinct chauvinistic undertone. In 1493, when the Spanish Ambassador at the Vatican announces Columbus' discovery on behalf of the Spanish monarchs, he calls on the name of Christ in support of the Spanish claim: "Christ has placed under their rule the Fortunate Isles" (Kermode 178). Thus, Prospero's proclamation of his entitlement as the "lord" of the island has its deeper grounds in the law of natural rights as Purchas explains in "The Lawfulness of Discoveries" (Kermode;

cf. Fuller 178). The claim was not at all innocent, for, beyond requesting the new lands for the dominion of Spanish kings, the symbolic ascription of the Fortunate Isles to the Christian rule legitimated, then reinforced a politics of “casting miracle,” which allowed the unscrupulous conquistadors to play the role of Elohim in the field. In fact, many manipulative stratagems were devised to tame, reconvert, or, simply take profit from the naïve, polytheistic imagination of the natives. Significantly for how literature converts the themes of experience, “Stephano’s assertion to be descended from the moon, Kermode writes, was commonly made by unscrupulous voyagers who seized the chance of turning to account the polytheism of the Indians” (Kermode 179).

There is ample testimony to the corrupting effect upon natives of contact with dissolute Europeans: “Christian savages sent to convert heathen savages” (Kermode 179). Nonetheless, Shakespeare’s portraiture of Caliban finds its complexity in its double standard, ugly innocence used as a measure for the ugly cynicism of the civilized plotters, Antonio and Sebastian—or in other words, criminal and civilized barbarianism brought on to the same page. Caliban’s depiction in the play is sketched against the background of a pastoral nature, a salvaged and deformed slave, a portrait that epitomizes the stereotypical European views of the West Indians. Not only was Shakespeare’s monster born inhuman, a sexual product between a witch and an incubus, but “he” was crippled in a form that does not leave any doubt about Caliban’s accursed nature: he is “a born devil,” “got by the evil himself,” a very land-fish, languageless, a monster.”<sup>273</sup> At many turns of the play, Kermode remarks, the playwright uses Caliban to show “how much baser the corruption of the civilized can be than the bestiality of the natural, and in these places he is using his natural man as a criterion of civilized corruption, as Montaigne had done”(180). If Caliban belongs to the New World, his mother, the goetist witch Sycorax, paradoxically belongs to the Old, endowed with all the powers of Medieval witches and also recognizable as a typical character in modern demonological scheme (Kermode 181). In opposition, Prospero masters the Neo-Platonic book of signs, which deals with the divine signatures and correspondences

between natural, ethereal, and intellectual realms: as a theurgist, his art is “to achieve supremacy over the natural world by holy magic” (181).

Set within a logic of Gnostic origin, Prospero’s conjuring operation on the island corresponds to the elevation of a defective nature, a reparation that follows the initial corruption of matter through the spells of evil. Brought in contrast with Sycorax’s black magic, Prospero’s occult discipline should be understood as an “art of supernatural virtue which belongs to the world of civility and learning” (181). The Duke’s instructional project looks indeed like a magic reform, since he uses magic to reinforce the commandments of civility, wherever civility loses access to grace. The qualities of spirit lie hidden in the energies of nature; the mage’s craft is to release the spiritual potentials and make them part of a civilized world of intellectual elevation, lyrical expression, and resonant harmonies. And not accidentally, says John Demaray:

contrasting virtuous and corrupted dreams of a Golden Age, a coming millennium, haunt the imaginations of central characters. In the manner of a host of utopian and millenarian writers of the late Renaissance, the characters speculate, with different degrees of casualness, seriousness, selfishness or moral rectitude, on some personal variant of an ideal future time, a period when their sometimes wildly imaginative reveries on power, wealth, possessions, or natural plenitude may be fulfilled. External “reality” is placed in ever-changing perspectives as it is cast against the characters’ imagined visions, and these visions are constantly tested against that reality. (111)

Prospero’s project of governance can be definitely defined as instructional and universalist, yet describing the two sides of any value coinage; this is to say its use to private and public empowerment. Initiation in that fantastic form of instruction is accessible to princes only, a craft that can reconcile on new grounds the apparently divergent worlds of “Art and Nature.” However, this hope of Christian Cabbalistic extraction alludes to the possibility of spiritual enlightenment in history through

political organization and also establishes a new mission for the agency of authority in history, as a central catalyst of this “magically engineered” social awakening.

Constantly preoccupied by the linguistic underpinnings of historical processes, Stephen Greenblatt reads *The Tempest* as a theatrical incursion into the formative strategies of colonization. In his “new historicist” foundational argument, developed throughout *Learning to Curse*, he discusses the interdependent semantic fields of wilderness and civilization in relation with the instructional power of articulate language and the correspondent perceptions of reality. Greenblatt quotes selectively from the early journals of Spanish and English expeditions; the New World aboriginals are repeatedly stereotyped as lesser beings whose nakedness and allegedly inarticulate idioms justify the imperialist policies of linguistic and cultural colonization. When associated with nudity, strangeness was almost immediately taken for a “token of cultural void,” he suggests (*Learning to Curse* 17). The strange idioms of aboriginals sounded like gibberish to European navigators, who noticed the natives’ propensity for monkeying the conquerors’ words and gesticulations. For Columbus, who fathomed himself as a Biblical prophet, the Indians would be easily convertible to Christianity since they seemed to have no ostensible religion of their own. This claim was based on a stereotypical view: even if the pioneers knew that the aboriginals could speak, the recurrent accounts of close encounters seem to minimize the fact that the natives were heard articulating a language of their own. Being sure that the Indians would make good servants to the Spanish kings, Columbus initially abducted six of them on his ship, in the hope “that they may learn to speak (*“para que aprendan a hablar”*)” (qtd. in Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse* 17).<sup>274</sup> In the same year of 1492, in the Introduction to his *Gramática*, the first grammar of a modern European dialect, Antonio de Nebrija writes that language is the perfect companion (“compañera”) of imperial order (qtd. in Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse* 17).<sup>275</sup> A hundred years later, Samuel Daniel, the British poet and historian, praises the use of English in colonies as a “treasure” sent “T’inrich vknowing Nations with our stores” (qtd. in Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse* 16).

Essentially, colonization was imposed by means of linguistic persuasion, Greenblatt writes, as a replacement of the natives' cultural assumptions through mythological and linguistic refashioning. Renaissance cultures, the critic implies, will have already rehearsed this encounter in the various literary curricula of the Humanities by the time pioneers discovered the new populations. Cicero had already left his signpost in Italian rhetoric through his view of eloquence as a motivator of civilized complacency. Andrea Ugo of Siena's and Andrea Brenta of Padua's fifteenth century statements regarding the formative role of eloquence in Renaissance cultures were alike: in the Ciceronian tradition, discursive coherence was perceived as the very foundational force of community, lawfulness, and civic respect.<sup>276</sup> Conversely, the alleged wilderness of the primitive's condition is associated with inarticulate response and, implicitly, indiscriminate violence. Christian civilization has to solve by institutionalization the three major sources of anxiety of Western man, Greenblatt suggests (paraphrasing here another theoretician<sup>277</sup>): these are the issue of sex, which is ascribed to the institution of family; the issue of sustenance, as empowered by the state apparatus; and the issue of salvation – as administered by clerical organization. These three obsessions of pre-modern European politics counted as motifs of an early rehearsal of the principles that were going to inform the ideological core of colonialism after 1492. Significantly, the first pioneers are staggered by what they perceive as depravity and perversion<sup>278</sup> in the social life of Indians, visible in their supposedly amoral tribalism lacking family values. As one of "the profoundest literary explorations of these themes" (Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse* 23), *The Tempest* parodies the encounter of mere savagery and alchemic erudition. This becomes visible "in the relationship between a European whose entire source of power is in his library and a savage who had no speech at all before the Europeans' arrival" (Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse* 23).

I read this sentence as more than a memorable assertion: the phrase represents the intellectual nucleus of Greenblatt's theoretical undertaking, who, otherwise, ascribes to his own discourse insights originated in other schools of



thought. Such is the extensive quotation from Terence Hawkes, a British critic who reads *The Tempest* as a symbolic manual of colonization: “a colonialist acts essentially as a dramatist,” Hawkes writes<sup>279</sup>, since the colonial invader redesigns his own culture in the persuasive speech whose aim is to shape the new community in a recognizable manner through the new imprint. Conversely, “...the dramatist is metaphorically a colonist. His art penetrates new areas of experience, his language expands the boundaries of our culture, and makes the new territory over in its own image” (Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse* 24). As a chiasm, the lines above allow the new historicist a finely attuned view of power: this associates the need for political compromising visible in Shakespeare’s play with the new contexts of historical experience that promote a creative rendering of civilization’s unexplored potential. Is this eloquent work of hybridization one without risk for the colonizer? Not at all, as Shakespeare shows through the deliberate conflict of legitimacy between Caliban and Prospero. The war between Nature and Culture reveals a deeper inadvertence between the voices of each: “All man, the play seems to suggest, are not alike; strip away the adornments of culture and you will not reach a single essence” (Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse* 26).

Caliban’s rebellious cast seems to remind us that souls are unique precisely because of their impregnation with the magic energy of their own grounds, as part of the “locality” of their original nourishment. The Natives’ psychological destruction, Greenblatt puts forward, belongs to a deliberate misunderstanding on the colonists’ behalf, “a willful falsification” based on the assumption that values are translatable (this is to say “exportable”) and that the language of cultural fashioning addresses identical human essences. Greenblatt invokes here Bartolomé de Las Casas, often called the father of anti-imperialism, who denounces the “Requerimiento,”<sup>280</sup> a text written at the Spanish court in Spanish and destined to be read in front of the natives, as a preamble to their abduction and enslavement. Ironically, the text is intended to request from an understanding audience submission to the monarchs of Spain and to the preachers of the Catholic faith.<sup>281</sup> Another source of misunderstanding came from the lack of

linguistic common grounds between the Natives and the Europeans. In many cases, the observer took the liberty of stereotyping the observed, in virtue of an isomorphic view of language and reality, assuming that words depicted universal essences. This is matched by Hart's more daring reflection (in *Columbus, Shakespeare and the Interpretation of the New World*), who emphasizes that in many of the genuine encounters between Native and Colonizer, the first did not understand the suggestions advanced by the newcomer, while the second, having access to a broader pool of cultural preconceptions, insisted on seeing things that were not there (2-13). Thus, Caliban – as a rebel to a magic instructional project designed to integrate the creature into the family of humanity – embodied a proof of the opposite, namely that locality makes the individual soul's essence. The bitter irresolution of Caliban's destiny at the end of the play - liberated, but unenlightened – also hinges on Prospero's endowment as a civilizing hero. The Duke of Milan's failure in giving his prisoner a human soul makes here the key argument of new historicist methodology, which associates linguistic, historic, and experiential understanding within unique aggregations of meaning.

According to Greenblatt (who, likely, has borrowed the notion from Geertz), local cultures are “locked-in,” irreducible representational universes, an assumption that directs my thoughts to the echoing skepticism of contemporary anthropologies, which claim that cultural core-assumptions are untranslatable. If locality is the valid background of cultural specificity, then the opposite also becomes true. Words are the irreducible primer of cultural identity, the very medium in which the newborn's quest for origins receives its enchanted epics: “discard the particular words and you will discard the particular men” (*Learning to Curse* 32). In effect, the new historicist notion of reality as a social construct relies on the specificity of linguistic representations; accordingly, idioms as singular manners of experience, depend unpredictably upon the pace and manner of being in its designated environments. Literary works, also, should be judged with respect to the original context of their production. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* celebrates the powers of imagination within the New World encounter and also explores the

qualities of representation in relation with the magic of power and language; its meta-theatrical dialogue can be equally seen as an incursion into the outer limits of communication and common sense. One step beyond the interpretations of new historicism, the original proposal of post-poststructural readings abandons the determinism of former paradigms: this is an attempt to ascribe the possibility of historical common sense in relation with the original scene of representation, where the original event born in the founding gesture of the sovereign acts as a portent to new cultural structures. As I have already suggested in the second chapter, the fascinating lines of convergence between this new paradigm and *The Tempest* are visible in the “magic” status of sovereignty, as ascribed to the creative potential of leadership: this opens the possibility of symbolic governance consubstantial with an originary act allowing social formation in view of agonality, taken as the imposition and re-ascription of meaning in the lively annals of collective imagination.

#### **IV.2. *Post-Colonial Shakesperes* and some deliberations of post-colonial critique**

Originating in *Orientalism*, Said’s 1978 celebrated study, the body of post-colonial theory integrates the various responses to colonial legacies and attempts the construction of a theory of cultural persuasion, identity and social memory based on comparative methods. The name “Orientalists” was traditionally associated with the translational work of nineteenth century Western scholars, who rendered the first English versions of the national ethoi in search of either exotic new tales, or, more pragmatically, for the inter-cultural tools needed for effective persuasion. By understanding the colonized world, the civilized West came to ascribe it, in a game of knowledge and power whose stake resided in the possibility of a monological hybridization of the colonized identities. Taking shape in colonial academia, the postcolonial intellectual ferment contradicted the ingrained Western preconception of a passive Orient, ready to submit to the more complex civilizational strategies of the “benevolent” masters. Many postcolonial scholars were not English by birth, or

belonged to a world whose multiculturalism worked both ways, in developing a moral instinct placed at the confluence of linguistic and cultural paradigms. It is no secret that, either in America, or Asia and Africa, British educators used Shakespeare plays in the colonies to buttress the ideas of social division, assimilation and ideological integration of the new possessions. Colonial politics, by exposing local populations to the English culture, furthered the formation of new social orders and, associated with the schooling system, helped the erasure of old taboos and cast preconceptions. Moreover, the British settlers, even though unique in their formative strategies with their colonized populations, were not the singular colonial empire involved in educational politics abroad: this is to say that their persuasive practices were not unique, being shared with the Spaniards, the French, the Dutch, the Portuguese or the Italians. Predictably, postcolonial academics “counter-attacked” the colonial establishments, forming a cross-cultural methodology more than once born in political militant commitments. Paradoxically, the English language was used as a vehicle for a symbolic counter-strike, while the typical clusters of European instruction were explicitly associated with the reinforcement of triumphal mentalities and with the strategies of assimilation. More than encountering an explicit resistance from the cultural world of the “colonizer,” the radicals of this critical movement had to fight back against the preconceptions of modern formalist critical methods: one is not to forget that decades before postmodernism and poststructuralism, the new criticism fashioned the mid-twentieth Anglo-American cultural theory in the opposite direction, namely a pro-textual hermeneutics that in its insistence upon semantics and tropes kept reading a safe distance from extraneous social contexts. Its supporters, such as F.R. Leavis, Robert Penn Warren, John Crowe Ransom, and T.S. Eliot, took the text as an autonomous, immutable entity, and, in their insistence upon deep reading and structural assessment of meaning, rejected excessive associations derived from biographical and political conjecturing. Thus, in opposition to this interpretive tradition dedicated to formalist and structuralist readings, postcolonial studies have focused on the uniqueness of reception protocols and on the existential authenticity of cultural interactions. Hence, postcolonial critique has asserted the undisputed

power of dramatic production where the original words of the play either fade or get polarized with the new meanings. Indeed, post-colonial critique of the last decades seems inspired by Deleuzian notions of repetition and difference, given that, to postcolonial scholars, cultural adaptation reigns as the marker of singularity. Essentially a moral accent within the postmodern body of theory, the postcolonial idea of dramatic production as a “floating opera” in which each production shed light upon new facets of social locality was not entirely original. The genuine idea of “positioning” within the embedded colonial histories was central to a democratic hermeneutics emerged in Hazlitt’s 1817 analysis of *The Tempest’s Characters* and, as discussed already in the first chapter, generated a vast repertoire of pro-democratic, “dialecticised” readings of the play, at odds with Coleridgian critical tradition.

Originating in Marvin Harris’ 1968 study, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, cultural materialism aims for the construction of a “pan-human science of society whose findings can be accepted on logical and evidentiary grounds by the pan-human community”(Harris XVIII). Initiated in Marcuse’s and Gramsci’s preoccupations with the reevaluation of marginality and of the misrepresented subjectivities in alternative historical judgments, cultural materialism was a term employed in the eighties by Raymond Williams and developed into an applied tool in Early English studies by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield since their 1994 co-authored *Political Shakespeare*, subtitled *Essays in Cultural Materialism*. In opposition to post-modernity taken here as an inclusivistic and “morally neuter” trend, cultural materialism crystallized itself as a moral discipline launched around the issues of hybridization, allowing a critical look at the issues of value and encouraging deliberative questioning of the issues of social and cultural clash. Beyond asking what the typical protocols of submission in the asymmetrical contact between colonizer and colonized are, cultural materialist scholars have found a common perspective in the careful assessment of the interplay between text and context; that is, questioning whether or not the dramatic rendering of such pragmatics is effectively supported by the original Shakespearean dramatic agencies. And often, cultural materialists made the idea of historical specificity into

their stronghold against the laxer associations of postmodernism. At this turn, one has to acknowledge the converging preoccupations of postcolonialism, new historicism and cultural materialism, where the last term stands for the most elaborate web of theoretical concepts.

It was the agony of political imperialism followed by the abandonment of possessions by European empires that inspired elaborate critiques of colonial policies in ways that promised the convergence of postcolonial and cultural materialist theories into a “pan-human” anthropology. Thus, pro-Marxist readings of colonial history, feminist and pro-queer reassessments (see Loomba and Orkin 29) of dramatic agencies, psycho-analytical and linguistic insights provided the tools for a systematic challenge to the metropolitan views based on the opposite universalism of structuralist hermeneutics. Certainly, contemporary scholars have struggled to unveil “archetypal” trends in Shakespeare’s depictions of race, status and correspondent assessment of social hierarchies, such as the typical situations of identity failure in relation to the consistent and tantalizing otherness of the colonizer. Alongside with new historicism, cultural materialism denied the macro-analytical clusters of earlier Marxist sociological judgments, discovering a method more attentive to the formative qualities of political commitment, socio-historical context and identitarian paradox. Unlike classical Marxist proponents of social revolution, adepts of cultural materialism and, to a broader extent, of post-colonialism, do not justify their ingrained militancy by reference to greater Utopian commitments, sharing with the Postmoderns the contempt for “grand narratives.” Their rather recuperative assessment of social mentalities is dedicated to an approach to cultural individuality that is supposed to discover cultural difference and perspectivism as portents of “an intersubjective view” of contemporary history, one that attempts either to detach from or to deliberately oppose what is perceived as the innate pessimism of Eurocentric reason. Yet, the main interest of cultural materialism has not been defined so much by the definition of the chief rhetorical agencies implied in the generation of cultural acts; its leading preoccupation has been deliberately ascribed to the recuperation of the marginalized, focusing on an aspect often overlooked in classical humanist studies: in fact, cultural materialist

methodology owed to the (subversive) logic of counterfactuals, assuming that cultural acts depended on an entire underground of repressed frustrations and untold fears obscured in the triumphant displays of dominant ideologies. In this context, Graham Holderness' description of cultural materialism as a "politicized" form of *historiography* (Holderness 91) and his subsequent view of Shakespearean adaptations in *Cultural Shakespeare: Essays in the Shakespeare Myth* as an ideological body of knowledge distinct from Shakespearean drama can be taken as important affirmations in the recent history of a polemic between overtly "postcolonial" and less engaged "post-post-structuralist" scholars, with whom Holderness aligns. In spite of the significant differences between "militant integrative" and "objectivist constative" views, the broader contemporary preoccupation with deconstructing the "meta-narrativity" of historical dominant voices in early English letters has been discussed as a common motif of postcolonial readings, revalidating the notion of a philosophical subjectivity aside from Europocentric conceptions, or, alternatively, showing the deep interconnectedness between social and ideological formative markets (Loomba and Orkin 30). Thus, the discussion of Shakespeare's plays in postcolonial cultural environments has become equivalent with a recuperative and innovative labor, in which the colonial patterns are either denounced or "dismantled" by recourse to alternative expressions of value. As Loomba and Orkin write,

reinterpreting Shakespeare's plays became, at least for some critics, part of the business of reinterpreting and changing our own world. How "Shakespeare" functioned in contemporary classrooms, in films, television, theatre and the tourist trade, and how his cultural authority was built up over the past four hundred years, became the subject of new critiques. These re-readings of Renaissance culture and power opened up, in at least two important ways, questions of colonialism and race in relation to Shakespeare(30).<sup>282</sup>

Hence, an objective assessment of “meaning” in Shakespearean hermeneutics answer is particularly difficult due to the counter-demonstrative movement of postcolonial theories that engaged in typical denials of the conservative, “colonial” critiques. It is not once that Shakespeare’s plays were deliberately moved into different environments than the sceneries initially alluded to in the original texts, given to the material’s suitability to localized recontextualizations. Echoing the investigative methods of cultural materialism, recent postcolonial discussions of Shakespearean productions described the *modus proper* of Shakespearean dramatic agency as deeply connected to the idea of status, discrimination and ideological persuasion. As Loomba and Orkin have pondered in their Introduction to *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, in spite of the many fertile challenges from the Saids and the Bhabhas of post-colonial theory, the majority of English speaking scholars of the last two centuries remained attached to the dominant colonial perceptions:

Such critiques have shown how Anglo-American literary scholarship of the last two centuries offered a Shakespeare who celebrated the superiority of the “civilized races”, and, further, that colonial educationists and administrators used this Shakespeare to reinforce cultural and racial hierarchies. Shakespeare was made to perform such ideological work both by interpreting his plays in highly conservative ways (so that they were seen as endorsing existing racial, gender and other hierarchies, never as questioning or destabilizing them) and by constructing him as one of the best, if not “the best”, writer in the whole world. He became, during the colonial period, the quintessence of Englishness and a measure of humanity itself. Thus the meanings of Shakespeare's plays were both derived from and used to establish colonial authority. (Loomba 1)

An early period of Shakespearean postcolonial theory can be drawn back to Samuel Chew’s 1937 *The Crescent and the Rose*, a study tracing the representations of Islam in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century England. The incipient field is broadened three



decades later, in 1965 by Eldred Jones's "Othello Countrymen" and enriched in 1971 with the historian's second study "The Elizabethan Image of Africa." Dedicated to the investigation of racial status of Shakespeare's characters, G.K. Hunter's 1978 study, *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Traditions*, brought to light major essays such as "Elizabethans and Foreigners" and "Othello and Color Prejudice" (Loomba and Orkin 9, 10, 13). Among the many points of Loomba and Orkin's pro-domo argument, one becomes typical for irreducible difference of cognitive perspectives between "disengaged" post-poststructural criticism and the specific "engagement" of postcolonial readings. This deals with William Hamlin's 1995 *The Image of America in Montaigne, Spenser, and Shakespeare*, a scholarly work inspecting the relationship between Renaissance ethnographic writings and mainstream literary production. Hamlin attempts to operate a differentiation between "Renaissance ethnography" taken as "primarily a descriptive rather than a manipulative or hegemonic discourse" and "colonial discourse" per se.<sup>283</sup> Hamlin ponders that many Renaissance writers were "genuinely" curious about outsiders as opposed to being either bigoted or committed to conquering them, but both ethnography and colonial discourse are caricatured in being thus opposed. Indeed, the proper status of the observer has been a theme much debated by postcolonial scholars, and Loomba accepts that Hamlin's theoretical clarification has shed light upon one of the most controversial issues in the postcolonial field:

This confusion regarding the relationship of "observation" with ideology or social structures, or indeed the nature of the latter, is not confined to studies of the early modern period but is common also with respect to later periods when many more writers were in direct colonial service. From Edward Said's *Orientalism* on, postcolonial examinations of imperial culture have been routinely accused of overlooking the "genuine" intellectual contributions of Orientalists or of ignoring the real "love" and "curiosity" they had for the lands they studied or visited. As it happens, postcolonial scholars are not in agreement with each other about the relationship between knowledge production and colonial

power, individual presence and social structure, but to oppose impartial observation to colonial discourse is to miss the point of postcolonial debates about these issues entirely. (Loomba “Response to Peter Hulme”)

Yet, not all postcolonial readings took the motif of historical authenticity lightly. Shakespeare, in either performance or study has become “a colonial battlefield”(Loomba and Orkin 2), one supported by complex interpretations of the intricate associations between state power, the advent of new social groups and ideological proposals, the reassessment of patriarchal right, the rise of national consciousness, the intertext of sexual customs and social rhetoric about sex, the remote worlds’ perceptions in the imaginations of the English, and their cognitive shocks in their relation with the others, such as continental Europeans or the marginals of the English world, “Jews, gypsies, the Irish, the Welsh and the Scots“. Second, by quoting Hamlin, Loomba and Orkin (willingly or not) act in good faith with postmodern relativism, since their engagement with intersubjective perspectives dismisses the theoretical possibility of an “objective,” that is of an “absolute” observer. The said theoretical efforts have been done in conjunction with a philosophy of “otherness,” likely elaborating on the preoccupations of contemporary existentialism, producing in this field

sophisticated readings of the webbed relations between state power, the emergence of new classes and ideologies, the reshaping of patriarchal authority, the development of the idea of an English nation, sexual practices and discourses, and the real and imaginary experiences of English people in the Americas, Africa and Asia. These experiences built upon and transformed ideologies about “others” which filtered down from earlier times, particularly the experience of the Crusades, or which emerged in interactions with other Europeans such as the Spanish, the Italians and the Dutch, or, most importantly, those that were developed in relation to those living on the margins of English society—Jews, gypsies, the Irish, the Welsh and the Scots. (*Post-Colonial Shakespeares* 4)

Political criticism of the early modern English culture has demonstrated “that it is virtually impossible to seal off any meaningful analysis of English culture and literature from considerations of racial and cultural difference, and from the dynamics of emergent colonialisms” (Loomba and Orkin 14). Together with Stephen Greenblatt, the persisting methodological riddle in contemporary postcolonial Shakespeare studies has looked for a universal equation of power in Shakespeare’s plays, as new historicism has explicitly devoted its investigations to the relations between the authority of language and the language of authority. Greenblatt views new historicism as a current that has as its goal the illustration of the “mutual permeability of the literary and the historical” (*Greenblatt Reader* 1-2) and treats history itself as a cultural intertext, “historically contingent on the present in which it is constructed” (*Greenblatt Reader* 3). Expanding upon Greenblatt’s critical concern with either the discovery of the Americas or with Far Eastern cultures, a significant core of new historicist studies have applied the critic’s ideas regarding power, its formative strategies and subversive counter-practices to national contexts of colonization. Assuming that Shakespeare himself generated an art whose deliberations, understandable by reference to an “archetypal” political anthropology, were set above the goal of esthetic indoctrination, one could alternately employ the methods of new historicism to understand the colonial history of Shakespearean dramatic interpretations as charged with apocryphal-localized and vindicating irony able to disclose genuine middle grounds between the Englishness of Shakespeare’s language and the dramatic transcription of “foreign” adaptations. Put it simply, even if Shakespeare, as the author of histories and tragedies was not entirely subversive of the official culture of his times, then, the opposite assertion of a playwright explicitly dedicated to the consolidation of state power through a new esthetical grid also lacks credibility, given the unprecedented power of subversiveness embedded in the words of Shakespeare’s plays.

Yet, which of the two views should be granted eminence: that of a court artist complacent with the political commandments of his era, or that of a bard in

love with “the underground” culture of Southwark, and often driven by his bohemian fervor for transgressions? Explicitly, any recuperative view of Shakespeare from the second angle has to discover an alternative grid of lecture able to deconstruct the aesthetical preconceptions of the dominant, “pro-Prospero” hermeneutic tradition. Jonathan Dollimore brings forth a pertinent scholarly observation in his essay “Shakespeare and Theory” by denouncing the “metropolitan” (this is to say, modern colonialist) theory as lumping together commodities and proposing relativism in a cultural environment mined by discriminations and unfinished cultural struggles. Gesturing “so much towards difference as a fundamental premise” the metropolitan critique has ignored its “material realities”(in Loomba and Orkin 259-260). Dollimore’s distrust of metropolitan theory associated South-African urban culture with the Europocentric mentalities attributed by cultural materialists to early modern cultures. In this respect, Dollimore solidarizes with “leftward critics” of early modernity and thinks of their unfinished project of rewriting the history of criticism from the protean position of a recuperative optimism (In Loomba and Orkin 260). At this turn, Dollimore invokes Marcuse’s denial of the “culture of death,” associated with “the introspective fatalism of a Christian [subjectivity] and soon-to-be bourgeois militantism” (265). Deliberating upon the quality modern critical perceptions, the idealist, the fascist and the materialist, he ponders that traditional materialism shares with fascism not only a sense of historical failure, but also a strong “conviction that radical social change is both possible and imperative” (263). Beyond the acknowledgment and the multiple attributions of failure present in the works of traditional Marxist thinkers, Dollimore takes cultural materialism as a current endowed with the power to associate anew the methodology of a realist critique with a subsequent trust in human condition, taking “realism” as the key-term of an optimistic critical proposal. Conversely, Dollimore sees European culture contaminated with millenarist pessimism, and the best proof of European angst with its own condition becomes “visible in the question of how art and politics relate” a question “usually asked more urgently in the context of perceived historical failure of one or the other, and usually both” (264). Having stated these,

the critic makes a second observation, namely that traditional “pre-colonial societies might have dealt with the same amount of pessimism later attributed to postcolonial social realities,” and that “the sense of historical failure and the culture of pessimism was never more acute in Shakespeare’s time, when the expansionist, colonialist and imperialist and commercial ambitions of England were getting underway” (264). More precisely, he ponders that “leftward critics of early modern culture have never adequately confronted the pessimism endemic to it, which included [...] the notorious pessimism of Jacobean literature, most notably its drama [...] haunted by a theology of failure” (264). Jacobean tragedies are replete with pessimistic motifs, while Shakespeare’s histories are concerned with the possibility of state entropy. Walter Raleigh’s poems, taken here as epitomical for the navigator’s expansionist doctrine, are haunted by the specter of “erosion, of dissolution of what is precious” (264).

Particularly interesting is Dollimore’s take on postmodernism as the sheer playground of metropolitan hegemonism, a current supporting a logic of hybridization that leaves aside deliberately the notion of social conflict, discovering heteroclitic discourse as a prop of cultural amalgamation. Dollimore’s contention is that “it’s the aestheticizing of politics, rather than the aesthetic escape from it, that postmodernism is making attractive once again”(261). Loomba and Orkin broaden the logic of the argument as to show this concern as emblematic for post-colonial theory. Here is where they cite another scholar, namely Nicholas Dirks, who warns that “in calling for the study of the aesthetics of colonialism, we might end up aestheticizing colonialism, producing a radical chic version of *raj nostalgia*, invoking the need for a more focused postcolonial methodology in what regards the specificity of social political and institutional histories” (qtd in Loomba and Orkin 17).<sup>284</sup> Here, Loomba and Orkin not only acknowledge the ossification of colonial institutional practices in colonial epistemologies, but they also pick up on a more radical statement by a colleague, Dipesh Chakrabarty, who looks at history as a product of institutionalized academic environments. Europe is seen as the ultimately “sovereign theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call *Indian, Chinese, Kenyan* and so on.” That “sovereignty” reads self sufficiency

becomes visible in Chakrabarty's train of thought, who deplores that "third-world historians feel a need to refer to works in European history, historians of Europe do not feel any need to reciprocate," inviting postcolonial historians to reciprocate analogically "by provincializing Europe," that is showing its limits and its failures.<sup>285</sup>

Still, a mere equivalence of postcolonial and militant discourses would be hazardous. The critique of the last two decades has discovered a finer attuned determination of rhetorical registers in Elizabethan drama. As Loomba and Orkin note, several contemporary critics, among whom the academic contributors to *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* are included, have indicated that contemporary uses of terms such as "race" and "colonialism" are irrelevant to the study of historical cultural mentalities. It is feasible, for instance, that blackness may not have been the most visible indicator of racial difference in early modern Europe. Cannibalism, as Peter Hulme (1986) has indicated, can be seen as yet another powerful cultural preconception that pushes various non-European populations on the boundaries of human condition. While discourses of cannibalism targeted primarily Caribbean and New World inhabitants, different coexisting populations, such as the Jews, were also blamed for eating their human victims.<sup>286</sup> Such counter-hypotheses denounce the priorities of a postcolonial discourse founded upon the issues of racial discrimination: one critic has recently argued that post-colonial criticism emphasizes European domination and the victimization of colonized subjects to the extent that it misleads Shakespeareans into assuming that the same inequities between Europeans and others existed in early modern England<sup>287</sup>. In a world where the dislodging of identities has become the rule, reading or re-reading the past has grown to be a contemporary cognitive exercise, by which one crystallizes along the proper themes of identity and of self-transformation. Implicitly, such self-cognitive recollections are bound to acknowledging cultural difference and bi-location of themes as belonging to conflicting, coexisting frames of reference. Coming from the hybrid minds of the postcolonial set, remoteness from colonial centers needs to be acknowledged as a positive element, while undecidability between paradigmatic truths needs to be seen as a carrier of fertile cultural

dilemmas. To avoid the stereotyping equivalence between “postcolonial” as “equitarian,” Loomba and Orkin (7-10, 143-63, 199-203) elaborate on the motif of multi-leveled hybridity:

Colonial masters imposed their value system through Shakespeare, and in response colonized peoples often answered back in Shakespearean accents. The study of Shakespeare made them “hybrid” subjects, to use a term that has become central to post-colonial criticism and which is increasingly used to characterize the range of psychological as well as physiological mixings generated by colonial encounters. Many post-colonial critics regard the hybridity of colonial and postcolonial subjects as a potentially radical state, one that enables such subjects to elude, or even subvert the binaries, oppositions and rigid demarcations imposed by colonial discourses. Thus Shakespeare's work not only engenders “hybrid” subjects, but is itself hybridized by the various performances, mutilations and appropriations of his work. Indeed, from the perspective of this volume it could be argued that any act of reading and performing Shakespeare in the later twentieth century generates multiple levels of hybridity. Not surprisingly, certain Shakespearean characters have circulated as symbols for intercultural mixings. (*Post-Colonial Shakespeares* 7-8)

One does not have to forget, that, if in principle, postcolonial studies rejects the idea of a universal hermeneutical grid, but, on the other, its consistence relies upon the denunciation of the universal standard by which the colonizer assesses identities and appoints himself as an epitome of “human nature.”<sup>288</sup> One illustrious example invoked by Loomba and Orkin in this context is Cuban writer Roberto Fernández Retamar's essay on Caliban as a an icon of “mestizo America” (Loomba and Orkin 37), a land whose uniqueness resided in unremitting racial hybridity, and a realm that has been lived to understand its common themes through the linguistic mediations of the colonizers. This stereotype would have been less appealing to the

Cuban writer if Prospero, the typical image of the European colonial lord would not have been there to specify Caliban's detrimental position.

But is this newly appointed "mestizo," namely Caliban, an authentic fictional ancestor of modern Americans? Or, is Othello, Caliban's cultural double, a prototype of the Africanus, "a converted Moor," as stereotyped by either anti-Islamic or anti-African Elizabethan perceptions of alterness? (Loomba and Orkin 9, 12)<sup>289</sup> In fact, these apparently innocent queries have opened the box of Pandora in contemporary Shakespeare criticism. Leaving aside the various disputes around Othello's symbolic origins and moral attributes, I have to mention here Caliban as an iconic character by most of the post-colonial critique believing in the possibility "recuperative" reading of *The Tempest* in light of the irresoluteness of the master-slave relation. Is the irredeemable Caliban, indeed, a Bermudan savage, a "New World barbarian" inspired by Stratchey's account of the failed Virginian expedition? Critics who opposed the Postcolonial readings of the play invoked the Mediterranean symbolism of *The Tempest*, in an attempt to denounce the clichés resulted from the misleading conflation of European and Colonial political geographies. As Loomba and Orkin appreciate - commenting on Arif Dirlik's view - in the absence of a broadened definition of the specific locations and institutions of colonialism, "post-coloniality verges on becoming a rather vague condition of people anywhere and everywhere" (Loomba and Orkin 39). In contrast, Dirlik points out, the obsolete term "Third World" at least allowed a vague "concreteness of places of origin." Oppositely, "*post-colonial* does not permit such identification," empowering, in compensation, the dangerous concept of a "seemingly shapeless world" and of a global method able to configure a hygienic belt against contemporary discriminations.<sup>290</sup> Thus, the cross-cultural discussion of postcolonial investigations can take advantage of a more refined set of epistemic determinations such as "location," and "authenticity" whose denotations vary in connection with the diverse perspectives of postcolonial perceptions.

Mostly important for the logic of my own demonstration is Jerry Brotton's essay, "This Tunis, sir, was Carthage: Contesting Colonialism in *The Tempest*", treating the many disputes and critical biases generated around the fictional island's



imprecise location. Stephen Greenblatt's critical method in *Shakespearean Negotiations* is brought under scrutiny, particularly his justification for a new historicist perspective invoking the motivations of symbolic compromises in the "Elizabethan and Jacobean visions of hidden unity" seemingly anxious "to conceal cracks, conflict, and disarray". Greenblatt then invokes "the continued doubleness of Shakespeare in our culture: at once the embodiment of culture, freed from the anxiety of rule, and the instrument of empire" (*Shakespearean Negotiations* 2).<sup>291</sup> Greenblatt's inference is that Shakespeare's writing as a plastic material, allowing the hybridization and coexistence of representative strategies, "a negotiation of joint stock companies" (*Shakespearean Negotiations* 2) allowing the erosion of cultural memory and often, the definitive alteration of those initial circumstances of textual production. Little surprise then that the American critic decides on relating *The Tempest*'s conflict with the Caribbean; not that a social vision of the play in relation with racial and cultural alterness would have been impossible, but its deliberate "anchoring" into the new World's longitudes by Greenblatt was bound to forgetting the former part of the island's "commonwealth," namely its Virgilian imaginary geography.<sup>292</sup> Here, Brotton takes into account Barker and Hulme's<sup>293</sup> polemical essays on the topic, suggesting, too, that in undermining the significance of the play's Mediterranean, or Old World connotations, "colonial readings have offered a historically anachronistic and geographically restrictive view of *The Tempest*, which have overemphasized the scale and significance of English involvement in the colonization of the Americas in the early decades of the seventeenth century" (In Loomba and Orkin 24-25). In defending his theoretical position, the critic also invokes Anne McClintock's argument that takes postcolonialism as a potentially dogmatic term, reflective of modern obsession with the neutralization of specific nineteenth-century colonial preconceptions and cultural practices (Brotton 25). Brotton starts his essay from Act II's introductory (II.i 68-84) dialogue between Alonso's entourage regarding "widow Dido" and the historical location of Carthage on the northern African shore, maintaining that

The presence of a more definable Mediterranean geography which runs throughout the play, and which emanates outwards from the disputation over contemporary Tunis and classical Carthage, suggests that *The Tempest* is much more of a politically and geographically bifurcated play in the negotiation between its Mediterranean and Atlantic contexts than critics have recently been prepared to concede. (In Loomba and Orkin 24)

His suggestion is clear, namely that in forgetting the importance of the Old World in dismissing the significance of the Mediterranean or Old World indications to *The Tempest*, colonial readings proposed “a historically anachronistic and geographically restrictive view of the play, which have overemphasized the importance of English involvement in the colonization of America” (in Loomba and Orkin 24). In this context, Brotton evokes Anne Barton’s and Stephen Orgel’s remarks concerning the bedazzling allusion to Homeric and Virgilian Mediterranean geographies. Brotton also cites Frank Kermode’s contention regarding our “badly adjusted” frame of reference in reading a passage that has the power to “modify the image of the whole play” (24). Here, Brotton’s chief concern is to warn contemporary critics against the reflexes of a politicized, ethically-oriented critique, “which has been too quick to insist on the validity of claiming a direct relation between what it terms early English colonialist discourse and the play itself” (24). At this turn, the cultural historian targets American new historicism as a critical practice that has favored the recontextualization of the play within a sequence of alternative political histories. Brotton takes seriously Alden T. Vaughan’s theory that appoints new historicism as a current that has motivated its preoccupation toward an American-oriented analysis of *The Tempest* “drew much of its inspiration from a concurrent cultural and political rapprochement between England and the United States’ which began to develop towards the end of the nineteenth century” (24). Cultural historians such as Greenblatt and Knapp have favored an interpretational model of *The Tempest*, emphasizing the play’s central theme in the early history of Virginia colony. Later discussions of *The Tempest* by American critics such as Leo Marx and other new historicists have made the play

into a “prologue of American literature.” The movement, says Brotton, is one of re-investment and over-investment in the seventeenth-century English expansionist endeavors, given that the systemic colonization of America started decades after 1611, the year of *The Tempest*’s production:

In claiming an exclusively American context for the play's production, American new historicist critics overinvest something of their own peculiarly post-colonial identities as American intellectuals within the one text that purports to establish a firm connection between America and the culture which these critics analyse with such intensity: early modern England. As a result, their critique of the supposedly 'colonial' politics of a play like *The Tempest* tends to reinvest early seventeenth-century England with a politically and territorially dynamic expansionism which has been questioned by more recent historical studies of the period. (In Loomba and Orkin 27-28)

One specific outcome of the duplication of nineteenth-century colonialist discourse in either cultural materialist or new historicist readings of *The Tempest*, Brotton ponders, has generated a stereotypical view of the relation between Prospero and Caliban, one that, in extrapolating the main questions of the play from their textual and cultural environment, appointed Prospero as a fatherly figure of colonial rule and Caliban as a paradigmatic victim. But this typified view whose assumption relies on *The Tempest*’s New World’s setting discloses its fallacies once the island’s imaginary location is placed in the proper context of seventeenth-century naïve epistemology. To Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences, this odd knowledge of geographically remote phenomena is associated with the privileges of “esoteric knowledge,” approached with such awe that its operator is invested with the magic prestige of a “political-religious specialist”, or, in other words, a magus.

The play makes quite clear that Prospero is just such a “political religious specialist’, who brings together his status as an exiled leader of a ruling political elite (as Duke of Milan) with his experience of 'geographically distant places’. His immersion in “the liberal arts” (I. ii. 73) allows him

unprecedented access to the arcane mysteries of the elements most feared and respected by early modern cosmographers and travellers—the sea and the stars.

To the seventeenth-century intellectual, geographically remote places are perceived “within essentially supernatural or cosmological contexts, then knowledge of, or acquaintance with, geographically distant places, peoples, and things rightfully falls within the domain of political-religious specialists whose job it is to deal with mysteries” (Brotton 37). Thus, Brotton accredits the hypothesis of a play that relying primarily on Mediterranean geographies, proves the “belatedness” of colonial projects and the groundless rush of new historicist and post-colonial readings of the play that conflate “geographical and geo-political elements for contexts that precede the history of English colonial endeavors into the New World” (37).

#### **IV. 3. *The Tempest* as a maze: Opening new doors between critical continents**

Particularly important for my demonstration is Howard Felperin's innovative interpretation *Political Criticism at the Crossroads: The Utopian Criticism of The Tempest* in Nigel Wood's critical anthology (1995) where Felperin elaborates on Fredric Jameson's assumptions in *The Political Unconscious* (1981). Felperin also proposes several points of departure from materialist and historicist criticism. Inspired by Frye's counter-materialism in *The Anatomy of Criticism*, Felperin uses Shakespeare's play to demote the modern critical assumptions of either formalist/idealist or historicist/materialist canons. The theoretical skeleton of his original demonstration is complex, one that inscribes its trajectory along the boundaries between distinct critical traditions; this requires a short preamble. Jameson's theory of "political unconscious"—Felperin's theoretical key to the interpretation of *The Tempest*—stands as one major attempt of reconciliation between formalist and post-Marxist materialism. A more elaborate rendering of Marxian esthetics is crystallized in Louis Althusser's theoretical undertaking; he takes the phenomenon of ideological contamination as typical of all forms of social interaction, including forms of art. Ideology, suggests Althusser, is central to all intellection: the very forms and motivations of individual thought receive shape in the symbolic designations of political authority. Thus, we, moderns, live in a quasi-institutionalized society, where the political guardians' privilege consists in their endowment to "interpellate" us, or subject us to their persuasion in the name of freedom. Moreover, since "interpellation" is only possible in the name of moral narratives, literary accounts are not innocent, for they invite us to become part of their imaginary world of coherence: offering us an "identity," they also grant us "a place within their structures," writes Felperin, commenting on Althusser. This "interpellation" is primarily psychological, since it stands for the possibility that common sense is nothing more than solidarity imposed through rhetorical injunction: "what we recognize in the characters and action of the literary text, in the 'world' encapsulated by its form and apparently sealed off from history," writes Felperin, "is not some essential form of our deeper selves with which we are said to

“identify.” Rather, the ideological forms of our lived existence, represented in the text, “hail” or “summon” us—as a policeman might hail someone in the crowd.” In essence, the designation of ideology as an overarching trend of intellectual life might be equally counterproductive for literary criticism. The latter finds itself deprived of its speculative functions as literary expression becomes embedded into the linguistic universe of politics. How to tell good literature from mere ideological statement becomes hard to answer in a world that has already conquered language through politics. In a Marxian vein, an ideological critique is equally non-productive: wherever we acknowledge ideology, we have to recognize it as part of our own critical judgment and this removes any possibility for an emulative criticism. Explicitly, this is recognized by Felperin as a clear limit to the interpretational horizon typical of post-Marxist theory.

Preeminent to all ideological structures is their need for a steady view of human nature: a scrutiny of humanity reinforced through the ideological tenets of value that reproduce a “subject to whom the very idea of radical change seems inconceivable or futile.” At this point, the tension between “bourgeois”-formalist criticism and Marxist understanding of culture stems from their radically different attitude towards valuing literature: Marxist reading values emancipation from what it takes for the idealist illusion of “eternal presence” of literature, seeing in this negative reading a potentially cathartic revolution. In contrast, formalism looks at literature as uncontainable through ideological pigeonholing and proposes the phenomenon of literary creation as the determinant for spiritual life. Hence, Marxist esthetics qualifies art as a production of individuals animated by the conception of their class roles and the search for proper expression within a society of inherited hierarchies, traditions, and tenets of value. Correspondingly, Marxian cultural theory is articulated dialectically when it comes to defining the set of historical, economical, and political circumstances under which a new work of art can be produced. The impositions generated by such determinism, counter-materialist critics assume, generate unavoidable limitations upon the views on artistic freedom. Anti-determinist, pro-metaphysical definitions of *eventness* in art are hardly

possible at all within a Marxist horizon of historicity as a play of economical and political conditionings, given that Marx ascribes the explanation of creativity to the question of needs and their recurrent expression, which is strictly dependent upon the modes of production.

In Fredric Jameson's interpretative note, the re-ascription of political awareness to the most fundamental issues of the psychology of social interaction has major implications for the definition of literary expression; Howard Felperin hopes to expand the range of applicability of this view to a multi-dimensional Shakespearean theory. First, the need for expression is deeply rooted in the unconscious and this has to be understood in relationship to the longing for meaning and coherence within social interaction. Thus, Jameson takes interpretation as a "metacommentary," an operation whose function is to integrate the splintered suggestions of a text within the intertext of collective representations, understood as "the master interpretative code." Paraphrasing again Althusser, Felperin suggests that, since the "absent cause" of the real needs to be understood rather in relation with symbolization than representation, literature cannot be taken simply as a reflex of ideology. Ultimately, Marxism provides access to that rival hermeneutic set against ideological critique, proposing an interpretational code that can validate texts "sectorally," with respect to their local importance and contextual specificity. This is to render Marxism as a totalizing thought of society and time, one that can account for its own advent and further elaborations. Invoking a pluralist vocation of Marxian critique, Jameson thinks that a protean neo-Marxian analysis, developed as an extension of its original Hegelian root, can provide the keys to an integrative reading of literary images, one that considers "apparently antagonistic or incommensurable critical horizons" (Jameson, qtd. in Felperin 38).<sup>294</sup> Thus, Jameson comments enthusiastically upon Northrop Frye's willingness to relegate the issue of community with the deep background "of religion as collective representation".<sup>295</sup>

In Frye's aftermath, Jameson – supported by Felperin, who accepts integrally Jameson's idea - also takes into account modernity as a culture whose

substitutive representational practices have rendered obsolete the “historical interpretative system of the church fathers” that has been “recontained, and its political elements turned back into the merest figures for the Utopian realities of the individual subject” (Jameson, qtd. in Felperin 44).<sup>296</sup> The issue is of crucial importance for Frye’s critique, whose reconstitution of subjectivity originates in his re-ascription of political unconscious to what is seen as a primarily *individual* patterning of experience. Commenting upon Frye’s statement, Jameson implies that the perfected poetic machine of high modernism has avoided any explicit allusion to the “political” in both literature and bourgeois life, reifying it in an underground of semiotics, which, in time has reconditioned imagination, having become part of a “genuine unconscious.” In other words, Jameson relegates literature to its formative vocation, in a point where its inherent ideological formative instrumentality is counter-balanced by a simultaneous “utopian power as the symbolic affirmation of a specific historical and class form of collective unity” (41). This is where Felperin articulates his own interpretation of *The Tempest*. He restates one of the most challenging questions of Jamesonian critique with respect to its potential for application to Shakespeare’s dramatic riddle.

If *ideology* and *utopia* are the invisible flipsides of any literary artifact, these are given in virtue of a more baffling power of culture, which (in a Benjaminian tradition) consists of the victor’s reification of his political triumphs. How does this become possible? Felperin’s answer draws across post-Marxian schools: this becomes possible by “by the insertion of victory into updated rituals of public memory that shape the ideas of history, citizenship and moral value in a dogmatic note. Any vision of community is articulated within this symbolic preface of victory, a protective space of ideal civic values, and Prospero’s magic instauration of order makes no exception from the rule, having arisen, Felperin writes, “in response to the threat posed to it by that of Caliban” (42). Thus, we deal with a Utopian “strike,” presented as legitimate riposte to the peril of chaos. In those texts, like *The Tempest*, which are successively displayed in history as keystones to irreconcilable value philosophies, Jameson’s core question takes on a



new dimension: “How is it possible for a cultural text which fulfills a demonstrably ideological function ...to embody a properly Utopian impulse, or to resonate a universal value inconsistent with the narrower limits of class privilege which inform its more immediate ideological vocation?” (qtd. in Felperin 44). It seems that Felperin’s means to render the ideological post-colonial critiques of *The Tempest* is secondary in importance to what he sees as the possibility of a redemptive cross-lined historical criticism that

keeps in view the totality of the play, and the play of totality within it, a “utopian hermeneutics” through which the political unconscious can be brought to light *in its entirety*, in its positive as well as negative aspect, in its fragmented Utopian longings - as well as its repressed class consciousness. (51)

Not only does Felperin invite us to marginalize post-colonialist readings, but he also proposes in response a totalizing and integrative metaphorical view of history that finds its proper altitude in the transgression of neohistoricist perspectives, whose common tendency, the critic asserts, is to misrepresent Prospero as the agent of “dispossession and tyranny” (Felperin 55). Or, to put it bluntly, Prospero’s discourse has to be reconsidered as an extensive metaphor of enlightenment through civilization, a critical reading whose prerequisite is disengagement. Correspondingly, Felperin’s subchapter “Practice: *The Tempest*” proposes a reading rooted in a Virgilian imperial theme, whose symbolism is deeply anchored in the Mediterranean cultural space, a view that is harmonic with the theoretical assumptions of Castoriadis, Tarde, Deleuze, Hart, Glucksmann, and Otto. Published in the same year as the King James Bible, *The Tempest* re-opens the Aeneid’s hermeneutical archives, inserting into his play the symbolism of imperialism. Paraphrasing Virgil, who “at once celebrates and unmask[s] the *pax Romana*” (Felperin 53), Shakespeare devises in his last play “an apocalyptic vision of history that promises *more* [e.m.] than another *translatio imperii*, in which the harsh impositions of civilization are only displacements of barbarism, and ‘every new order’ a repetition of the old” (Felperin 53). The reassessment of tradition becomes

possible in virtue of the status of imitation in the Renaissance art, which is more contemplative than illustrative, allowing artists to shake the idols of the past and reposition them at the doors of a new era: “Imitation is, by its very nature—the historian infers—an act of historical reflection” (Felperin 53). This makes Felperin think of the play as a text that is neither to be placed in the domain of “high art,” separated from history and politics, nor to be limited to a historicist rendering of early colonialism in Jacobean era. After all, creative imitation as *repetition with a difference* can stand as a credible figure of historicity—taken as radical change. By placing the historical and political discourses of Jacobean era under the broader epistemic horizon of *The Aeneid*, *The Tempest* incorporates contemporary topics “within a discourse of historical totality,” a meta-discourse that points at Jameson’s intellectual project of a positive, quasi-Utopian hermeneutics. In his closing paragraph, the English critic prophesizes an age of critical pluralism, where Shakespeare’s last play will be legible as a meta-historical work, “a new age maker” to be read against the grain of the new historicist politics of cultural specificity.

#### **IV. 3. Absque medio. Emanationist designs for a golden era in politics**

If Felperin is right, and *The Tempest* could, indeed, provide the material for a legitimate “meta-historical” reading, then a new set of theoretical paradoxes need to be acknowledged. Indeed the “new age making” message of *The Tempest*, does not bring great changes in the themes of Western encomiastic literary tradition, as the play’s proposal is to accommodate the Virgilian theme to a new era. Here, the “anti-Greenblatians” find their stronghold, for most of the “pro-Caliban” contemporary readings, they affirm, have been based on a deliberate choice, rather than on solid textual evidence: indeed, they might be halfway right, because Shakespeare seems to have anchored the play positively and credibly within Greek, Roman, and medieval English representational practices.

Having summarized four centuries of critical efforts in the previous sections, I will now build my own demonstration around the premise that we, as modern readers, have systematically failed to identify the odd variety of imaginary ingredients present on Prospero's banquet table: the bottom line is that both major interpretational tendencies, kept alive in the artificial conflict between pro-metaphysical and the anti-colonial interpretations - hold only one half of the apple of what I will label as *The Tempest's* structural and commendable meta-theatricality. Consequently, I stress, the play's protean "meta-historicity" needs to be explained from a different "altitude," not denied apriorilly in the name of a pro-metaphysical traditionalism: Shakespeare's last play instantiates one of those very few instances of high art, where the (otherwise legitimate) recourse to the figures of cultural tradition does not reveal any valid, "major" interpretational key.

Alternatively, if Shakespeare's *The Tempest* shows relevant coincidences with the symbols of Virgilian, Terentian, and mysteric traditions, this analogical field, I hold, does not grant sufficient credibility to critical efforts intended at "nailing" the play as an offshoot of ancient cultural models. Alternatively, one should look more deeply at the ways in which the correspondent dramatic modalities fuse into a new theatrical language, based on the epistemic traits and symbolic agencies of the magic, as Shakespeare's last play instantiates—far more than a mere product designed for royal entertainment – the experimentalist creation of a period of epistemic irresolution. Thus, even if not much happens in this play, those few things that come into the viewer's sight in this drama should be discussed through the philosophically adequate anti-determinist framework of Renaissance Hermetic thought. Given my explicit intention to continue a discussion that alludes to multiple strata of critical readings, my own investigation – which doesn't miss from sight the technicalities of recent hermeneutic revelations, will stay focused on the philosophical quandaries enticed by the play's unique "traffic" of energies. By articulating my research in this less charted direction, I will develop an interpretational perspective that, in acknowledging the roots of *The Tempest* in the Hermetic project of spiritual reformation, will, it is hoped, discover original

parallels between the agencies of the play and the broader occult reformatory designs of its days.

In *A History of Utopia*, Jean Servier suggests that Neoplatonic Hermetic thought may have influenced modernity to a greater extent than acknowledged by cultural historians. According to Servier – who follows a stream of thought originating in Mircea Eliade’s scholarship – the spirit of Hermeticism must be subject to in-depth investigations in order for its long term effects in European thought to be understood, having exposed the foundations of Western knowledge to renewal in an unprecedented manner. At this juncture, a brief review of Hermetic ideas is useful, as the notion of semantic hybridization takes into account the deprecation of Medieval Ptolemaism in a view that places human condition in conjunction with the graduated universe of Neoplatonics: Cusa’s *quattrocento* was an age preoccupied with the revaluation of Scholastic philosophical assumptions from a broadminded perspective. As suggested in the third chapter, Italian Renaissance philosophers emphasized the emancipation of man as a spiritual entity and treated the theory of state objectively, in relation with human possibility to acquire perfection with the aid of divine powers. The principle took more than a century to reach its full bloom: the first breakthrough was offered by Cusa’s *De Docta ignorantia* in 1440. Cusa re-assigned man’s subjectivity the Platonic faculty of innate knowledge: the principle of “learned ignorance” (“*visio sine comprehensione, speculatio*”) ascribed the cognitive faculties to the infinite potential of the divine intelligence.<sup>297</sup> Cassirer emphasized the eclecticism of Hermetic thought, whose attempted reconciliation between Platonic and Aristotelian ontologies associated the Platonic dialectics of the intelligible with the Aristotelian concept of development. Ascribing the synthesis to the sphere of mundane (Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos* 38-39), the notion of “emanation” can be seen as an epistemic clone, which, in introducing the notion of “graduate mediation” proposed the re-affiliation of the formerly remote domains of the transcendent and the created to anew cosmology.<sup>298</sup> The Hermetics’ common look took the material world as the lowest emanation of the divine *mens*, a region of

indirect reflections bound to a multifarious diversity. Diversity itself became the primer of revelation, since its understanding was told to empower that much desirable *unio mystica* between “culture”—as the knowledge of diversity and “elevation”—as the ecstatic intuition of the whole. As a consequence, individuality and subjectivity, the double-condition of personhood, recovered their primacy in the early Renaissance philosophy. In view of the idea that only the totality of images-faces has the potential to reveal the unity of the Divine, the emblematic strain of a unifying civilization would be that of mutual submission to all possible diversity and contrasting

for only the totality of faces gives us One view of the Divine. The world becomes the symbol of God, not in that we pick out one part of it and provide it with a singular mark of value, but rather in that we pass through it in all of its forms, freely submitting ourselves to all its multiplicity and antitheses. (Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos* 37)

*Videlicet*, the desired unity becomes a hope of enlightening politics, as the proper outcome of this future state becomes ascribed to prospective biddings. In Cassirer’s classical explanation this epochal switch of mood in the methods of Scholasticism<sup>299</sup> is explained as a portent of emancipation: if the mind itself was the author of temporal and spatial confines, man had the task to evaluate history as a productive antithesis between the complementary forces of complication and explanation, and to understand his freedom as an occasion to restore God’s image in his own face (cf. Cassirer, 1964, 43). The answers, found both in the cosmos of nature and in the metaphors of history, seem, however, to have always been at hand. This revolutionary perspective on experience had its implicit limitations: enclosed in his temporal condition, man was invited to fulfill his cognitive potential by representing the incarnated hypostasis of the Divine.

Here resides the protean essence of the Renaissance thought: and, I feel ready to add, this is the philosophical alchemy from which “Prospero’s atoll rose.” If during the Middle Ages the proper measure of adequacy between the world and

heavens fell upon the domains of logic and theology, in the Renaissance the new denomination originated in the subject's magnified power to emulate individual images that re-ascribe knowledge and experience to the congruity of an infinite totality. In a neo-pagan mystical note, Renaissance ascertained universality as a function of the singular, while the individual work of emulation found its proper resources apart from the externals of nature and history, in the soul's foundations (Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos* 14-39). The Bishop of Brixten thought of man as the cluster that integrated the destiny of the Universe and because the Cosmos was created for his salvation, reciprocally man's redemption reinstated the reign of the divine in the entire Chain of Being. Like Plato, Cusa (still) kept the two realms, Creation and the Divine, separated by the epistemic vacuum generated in the very absence of common logical quantifiers. But, unlike Plato, he revealed the order of totality as appended to the frightening idea of infinite potentiality. Hence, to Cusa, no common measure could be found between finitude and the infinite: "the distance between the finite and the infinite remains the same no matter how many intermediate terms we may place between them" (*Finiti et Infiniti nulla proportio*) (Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos* 66). Undoubtedly, the theme became a favorite motif to astronomers like Dee and Digges, who postulated the infinity of the Universe. The same idea marked the thought of Giordano Bruno, who broadened Cusa's ideas on the indeterminacy and infinity to the extent that that he postulated the infinity of the universe and raised the Earth's ontological status to that of a star.

Like Erasmus, Cusa identified Christ as the unique *natura media* between the orders. In theology, Cusa reasserted the Nicodemian theme of the Harrowing of Hell, a motif that inspired Pico's description of Christ's descent into Inferno. In the living image of Christ and within the echoes of His parables, Cusa held, man could strive for the miracle of Resurrection through intimate self-knowledge, a theme which, later, preeminent in the works of the Reformers. Returning on Italian grounds, it took five decades until the Florentine Academy devalued Christ's *natura media* and inclined the ontological balance towards what

would form the cognitive drama of the Faustian hero, a character whose perpetual craving for self-overcoming called the powers of darkness. In *De christiana religione* (1500), the founder of the Florentine Academy, Marsilio Ficino, denied the Augustinian dogma of predestination and rephrased Cusa's idea of the soul to make it dependent upon the world's ensoulment. Ficino's proposal was daring, indeed, because it ascertained the psyche's complete autonomy and self-determinacy, while describing nature as an animated, nourishing sphere to the soul's development: accordingly, man's ontological privilege made the divine attainable through *innate* spiritual powers and grace through the knowledge of favorable fastidious astrological moments. Thus, *grace* was classified as an exterior supplement given to a Soul already destined to salvation through its own nature, whose main attribute was immortality. In the echoes of Gnostic doctrines, Ficino's philosophy related salvation to the commandment of self-knowledge and self-experience. Man's ingrained divinity can be discovered within the world of the senses, because senses in themselves constitute a vehicle to salvation. God enclosed these powers in the psyche, with no need for additional mediums or instruments of mediation. Subsequently, man's chance to redemption was described as innate: it consisted in being united to his Creator *absque medio*, without intermediaries. "With this thought we are on the way to the Reformation: but the transformation has been prepared by a genuine and basic Renaissance's motif. It is the self-affirmation of the man which now also becomes the affirmation of the world" (Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos* 66-67). It was precisely the unbound power of Renaissance imagery, given in the free-circuit of its symbols that was censored by the Reformed zeal. Yet, Reformation never expelled from its own constitution the (proto-Faustian) craving for totality, given in the way of dealing with the Divine from elective positions, favoring the rationalized views of self-assertive enlightenment through the intimate reflection of the scriptures.

Ficino's motif of unlimited striving, read into the symbolic mediation of the Renaissance, made possible the sixteenth century philosophies of Bruno, Dee, Fludd, or Campanella, and of many other European intellectuals, princes, friars,

architects, poets and navigators. Bringing the idea of magic knowledge to the fore, they discovered in the hidden analogy between God and the occult philosopher: as opposed to the philosopher king of the Platonic paradigm, the magician-king of the High Renaissance's Hermetics was a god-like knower of the Universe whose politics struggled to reform the world by magic. A century earlier, Cusa had underlined that the ontological difference between God and man consisted in the break between the Creator's *vis entificativa* – the power of conception and the human *vis assimilativa* – the command of understanding and resourceful imitation. Accordingly, since the *mens* of the Divine and man's intellect belonged to different dimensions, they were "disparate both in the form of their existence and in their object of their production" (Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos* 67-68). However – Cassirer makes evident – there was a connection between the two, which was illegible as long as man employed comparisons "taken from the world of finished things" (*The Individual and the Cosmos* 68). Given the primacy of ontological difference, the only possible analogy was a dynamic one: "not an essential similarity of substance but rather a correspondence in act, in operation" (*The Individual and the Cosmos* 68-69). Generated by the said analogy, an intense and fascinating history of philosophical transgressions and was ready to bloom.

Ficino's protégé, the Paduan scholar Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, adorned the Neoplatonic philosophy of his master with Cabalistic insights. In Pico's early thought, the anti-canonic propensity became associated with a parallel, protean reading of the Genesis: once God finished the creation of nature, he thought of nurturing a more intelligent creature, one that would be endowed with the power of discernment and, thus, admiration for the beauty of the demiurgic construct. This was, of course, man, for whom no free niche was left any longer in the Chain of Being. Hence, the Creator's choice was to design man's abilities in his own liking and image, being allowed to migrate, like a free element between zones ascribed to different levels of intelligence and to learn from every other creature in the universe. Thus, man's newly defined dignity in relation with his unique transformational gift related his desire for absolute knowledge to the qualities of



philosophical curiosity, for, in imitating the mind of the designer, man is said to elevate his own essence toward the ultimate communion with God. In spite of his later discontent with astrology, in *Heptaplus* and *Oration on The Dignity of Man* (1486), Pico asserted the stellar origin of human condition, in the introductory notes to a proposal of Hermetic Reformation that abandoned the dogmatic narrative of the Genesis, in favor of the Hermetic construct.<sup>300</sup> The work of art is the Renaissance man's chance to grasp the archetype through the multiple magic correspondences offered in the Neoplatonic Chain. An eclectic humanist, Pico learned from the grand opus of history that ways of thought and institutional sources of authority were often subject to unpredictable changes, designating society a hazardous place for moral investment. That tells much of Pico's lack of interest for the world of practical politics, given his epoch's lack of insight for the spiritual. Yet, Pico's proposal for a universal reconciliation placed new demands on the spiritual philosopher's shoulders: against the institutionalized order of fear and punishment, it was only the dynamics of visionary action, he assumed, that would transform the world into a place of mutual acceptance, tolerance and creative elevation. In this vein, the "second generation" philosophies of Dee, Fludd, Bruno, and Campanella<sup>301</sup> showed a consubstantial preoccupation for spiritual elevation, employed as an effective and fast remedy to religious and political factionalism: a generation of thinkers who shared the obsession of an exceptional man playing-God on the infinite stage of the Universe and looked at the hypothesis of infinity as a miraculous portent for an inter-confessional reconciliation. In addition, they adjusted the speculative preoccupations of their intellectual ancestors to a more structured view of the spiritual reformation of the state, a scheme of thought employed, as I will stress later, to strengthen the imperial and absolutist designs in seventeenth century Europe.

Thus, leaving behind the medieval teleological assumptions, the Italian sixteenth century looked beyond the Augustinian meaning of history and furnished time with a new dialectic of gradual revelation, said to renew the play of diversity and totality and to be able to reorient the commitments of leadership towards the

schemes of enlightening governance. Again, Cassirer's commentary is telling: accordingly, God prepared a single revelation expressed in the wholeness of history. God's innumerable masks have been animated by a living understanding in the arts of representation, because the final key to the philosophical assessment of diversity was given in the revelation of unity beyond the divinity's apparent fragmentariness. Moreover, representation, as a cognitive gift of creative imagination, was rediscovered as the key to the new game of speculative, cognitive mimesis, while the logic of mimesis was shown as intrinsically bound to the notion of sovereignty. In view of that, the highly syncretic doctrines of Bruno and Campanella adjusted the "classical" motifs discussed in Ficino to the theoretical complexities of a proto-psychological language: relieved of the burden of an original sin, man became both a subject to political reformation and to spiritual illumination as part of the same formative sequence, where the idea of leadership is granted innovative and symbolic resurrective prerogatives.

#### **IV. 5. The classical Utopian motif. Designs of omniscience.**

Originating in the failed project of Hermetic Reformation, the philosophical notion of the "magic state" described the state as the locus of this desired unity in diversity, where diverse revelations and insights upon the prospected whole would be filtered towards a gradually harmonized quality of common sense. The symbolic task of the "magic state," (to expand on a classical motif of Adornian critique) might be to redistribute the ratio between guilt and hope around the symbolic priorities of collective interest. This describes a philosophy of government entirely dedicated to the soft politics of persuasion, state festivities, economic control, and instructional indoctrination, foreshadowing a state that has learned how to deal with marginality through the opposite movement of persuasion. Inclusivist social designs have been often discussed in relation with contemporary ascendancy of the media in the Western world, as radio, television, satellite guided antennas and broadband

frequencies have become indispensable tools of persuasion, control and instant communication in the hand of modern political agency.

In analogy with the epistemic analyses of utopian and occult philosophies, in contemporary social studies, the performative space of “the magic state” is metaphorically expanded to a larger social arena, able to incorporate the previously disjointed domains of the public and private interaction. The subsequent assumption of contemporary social scientists is that of the quasi-effective presence of a field of psychological commonality, namely the collective unconscious, empirically approximated as a noetic sphere whose psychological energies can be subjected to formative persuasion and social modeling. Here, a cross-epistemic reader could find similarities and inadvertencies between modern and hermetic political theories: unlike contemporary “objectivist” theories, employing a paradigm confined to strict physical and social determinations, the cognitive space of the Renaissance “chain of Being” allowed speculations around the themes of inter-dimensionality and magic persuasion. But, given today’s new winds of epistemic change, Hermeticism marks a trend of thought that certainly could be read as a preface to the paradoxical preoccupations of contemporary “quantum nominalists”: like many modern physicists, the genuine philosophies of the sixteenth century denied the objectivity of matter, appending the “external” world to the powers of intentional thought. Grace to the art of theurgic magic, the Hermetics believed, the doctrine of sympathy (the similar heals the similar) could be properly invoked for the sake of man. Thus, in an era still blind to the aspirations of democratic thought, the political subject of Hermetic reformation was told to benefit from the conjoined designs of astrology and prudent leadership, a theme that could elicit legitimate questions about the alleged originality of contemporary preemptive politics.

Irrefutably, one major symptom of the sixteenth century’s “disjointure” of times resided in the mundanization of mythical themes present in the utopian visions of intellectuals. Utopian texts proliferated in the culture of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, either in architectural visions of ideal communities, or,

after 1516 (when More's *Utopia* was published) in fully autonomous texts, crystallizing into an original genre. They were significant of a period of epistemic transition, where the imagination of political prospects came together in anti-eschatological, idealist projects of renovation, aiming for the re-centering of English political unconscious around the idea of a mythical Albion as an island of bliss, purged of historical-existential contingencies. As Jeffrey Knapp emphasized in his 1991 study, *An Empire Nowhere*, the most striking similarity between More's *Utopia* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest* resides in their hyper-topic location, neither part of an entirely transcendent spiritual geography, nor fully confined to a cartographical representation:

The most striking similarity among these works, however, is their setting: in each case they combine otherworldly poetry and nation, and then direct them both toward the New World, only by placing England, poetry, and America—or rather by *displacing* them Nowhere. Such a displacement could seem ironic, a product of skepticism regarding American ventures; ...the seemingly providential separation of England from the Catholic world during the sixteenth century helped make many of the English more isolationist, more absorbed in their island as the trifling material index of England's spiritual power. But the purpose of Nowhere for More, Spenser, and Shakespeare, ...is rather to turn the English into imperialists by differentiating their other-worldly potentiality from their other-worldly island: each writer imagines the more appropriate setting for England's immaterial value to be a literary no-place that helps the English reader see the limitations of a material investment in little England alone. (57-58)

Philosophically, they imposed the social desire to represent an ideal “common sense” whose norms were designed either to rejuvenate or to substitute the Augustinian foundations of historical understanding; on the other hand, they were employed in the Age of inter-confessional conflicts, begun in the early days of the Lutheran Reformation (1517)<sup>302</sup>, in a period when the optimistic designs in

politics can be employed as “weapons” against the chiliastic obsessions of the radicals. Having already summarized some of the conjectures that favored the fusion of distinct mythologies into the new myth of imperial England and having observed the said mythologems as symptomatic for an era of epistemic and territorial opening out, I will analyze now the odd poetical quality of the emerging imperial themes, confined to a narrative horizon set both in remoteness and epistemic accessibility to the reader. In the long count of the Enlightenment, the polar tensions between fantasy and iconoclasm, between inductive and deductive thought, finally between superstition and reason crystallized the modern notion of progress, an invocation of man’s emancipation from the laws of nature. But in Shakespeare’s, Bacon’s, and Milton’s seventeenth century, the teleological motif was still powerful: “progress” still connoted the appeal to a transcendent salvation, considering that the advancement of politics was invoked in connection with the motif of a universal Resurrection, while the seventeenth century’s utopian librettos celebrated the birth of the New World in providentialist and eschatological tones. The utopian texts, as pilot proposals of modern community theory, readjusted the foundations of medieval political science in ways that helped intellectuals “think outside the box;” this is to say, looking beyond the classical theories of kingship and the embedded hierarchies of knowledge. Derived from the original model of More’s age-changer text, the new genre crystallized in the utopian designs of intellectuals like Shakespeare, Campanella, Andreae, Burton and Bacon. Ahead of their era, such Utopian projects “dared” to imagine such intentional communities, whose theoretical layouts relied upon resembling philosophical principles. Notably, the largest part of utopian literature had in common a tendency to either rationalize or simply abandon Augustinian foundations of history, where the knowledge of salvation was seen as a privilege of the providential agency. Complementarily, in the utopian picture, the obsolete *telos* of Aristotelian and Augustinian thought, received another dimension, in consonance with the renewed mission of the commonweal government. This defined a process that, in opening the idea of a “future” appended to historical and individual-experiential understanding, could be

qualified from a traditional epistemic perspective as “the proliferation of alternatives,” thus one opening the epistemic *degringolade* of modernity.

A brief exposé of the classical notion of “need” in relation with the value of human experience is momentous for my theoretical demonstration. In Aristotelian teleology, the demiurge (*noesis noesos*) was understood as the supreme good and the final cause of the Universe (*Phys.* II, 198a, 199b), while the function of intellection (*nous*) was limited to that of making possible the rational projects of humanity (*techné*). In other words, the power of mimesis was elevated by Aristotle to that of a “human desire to know,” which, in crowning human reason with the potential gifts of creativity and spiritual insight acknowledged, however, the irreducible character of ontological difference. In *Nicomachean Ethics*<sup>303</sup>, *eudaimonia* (translated as either “flourishing” or “happiness”) was defined in relation with *peras* – “boundary,” or what was acknowledged as the inherent limitation of human condition and perspective upon the whole: *eudaimonia* was not conceived of as a means to an end, but as an end in itself, the ultimate goal of reflection and self-restraint specific of a wisely lived life (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, Ch. 4). In spite of the major disagreements of their ontologies, neither Plato, nor Aristotle denied the role of the need, *ananke*, or the all powerful presence of “necessity” in the world, understood as objective limitation placed upon human cognitive abilities. In a balancing move meant to place a renewed emphasis on the goodness of creation, Christianity found the utility of *ananke* in the moral sense of all suffering, which denoted the preparation of the individual soul (*psyche*) for the other world. In acknowledging the role of necessity in relation to the moral message of suffering, Christian theology related the postlapsarian guilt with the reliance on a future redemption. Hope was thus predicated on the value of suffering and was directed towards the otherworld: *ananke*, the need, constituted the ontological boundary between men and angels.

For anti-Christian philosophers like Plotinus or Porphyry, to whom the hermetic philosophy of the Renaissance owed its core, the accent of self-realization took into account a different notion of virtue, one devoid of Christian teleological

accents. To Plotinus, this revised definition of *eudaimonia* resided in the philosopher's *spoudaios* - translated as either "earnestness," or "excellence" in the labor of spiritual self-attainment - in relation with the inherent position of the individual as confined to a world of existential needs. The possibility of attaining "*sophos*" - wisdom, while in this body, corresponded to an art of "mortification", as withdrawal from the illusions of sensitive world, thus empowering a knowledge that believed in the potential abolition of suffering. The radical move of ontological accent was already visible in Plotinus' third-century's pantheistic treatment of "enlightenment": in *The Enneads*, the proposed quality of revelation empowered thought of the One as part of a future age of political bliss, revealing the unity of the previously disjointed spheres of nature and immortal wisdom. Relegated to a project of worldly realization in a philosophical climate that took the abolition of needs as its favorite theme, the utopian genre attempted to generate its own truth in the rationalized quality of reconciliation. Paraphrasing Louis Marin, one could say that the utopian text indicates its own structure as symbolic figure of the truth and designative purpose in the meantime: its promise is the vanishing of *ananke*, the terrifying dependence upon biological wants by producing the *techné*, the desired common sense as a rational concert of certifiable values, expressed in an ideal vision of converging economical and metaphysical foundations.

Let us remember for a moment that, in his dream, Caliban fathoms "riches ready to drop upon [him]" (*The Tempest*, III.ii. 142-155)<sup>304</sup> then wakes up in disappointment; following the episode of Gonzalo thinking through his utopia of leisure, Sebastian and Antonio are interrupted from their criminal attempt by Prospero's ethereal banquet (III.iii.), staged by servant spirits. Yet, when seen through epistemic lenses, Shakespeare's alternation of surreal episodes could reveal the hidden stakes of his meta-theatrical "sermon": why would the utopian dream of usurpation be interrupted by the deceitful magic of an immaterial banquet? Now, returning to the philosophical quality of Utopian promise, one can see the presence of "abolitionary" propensity, as part of a broadening hedonistic imperative, which, against the grain of Biblical thought, takes suffering in particular and ontological

limit in general as illegitimate, thus symptomatic of ignorance. Also, throughout *The Tempest*, it is merely the ignorance of usurpers that needs to be preempted through shows of illusionism, as it is only the stubborn rejection of Prospero's magic will from Antonio and Sebastian that brings trouble for the shipwrecked crew. In contrast, in Act V, we see Prospero's rule over his Dukedom reinstated. This is followed by the series of spectacular pardons granted to his old enemies, by the munificent benedictions to his associates, the discharge of Ariel, the definitive release of Caliban, and finally, by Prospero's loud abjuration of magic once the wheels of providence have been put again in motion.

One of the most intense questions surrounding *The Tempest's* ambiguity is with regard to Prospero's final abjuration. More precisely, why should one give up on such amazing magic powers, once their proper use ameliorated the world, bringing to life the logic of justice as mercy and replenishment? As known, the answers have gravitated around the same clusters, either attributing Prospero's renunciation to magic to a pro-Christian logic of denouement, or, alternatively, explaining the Fifth Act as Shakespeare's metaphorical farewell to the society of the Revels. In an innovative note, my reading proposes a deeper analysis of the epistemic notion of "mundanization" as a more proper key of interpretation.

As proto-utilitarian views of happiness, the utopian proposals no longer directed hope towards the other world, because their constitutive movement was one of self-sufficiency and cornucopian replenishment. Thus, the utopian prospects disregarded the Christian theme of salvation because they empowered "happiness" as their own teleology and saw *eudaimonia* in relation with a different proposal of self-achievement. In other words, the utopian Good no longer conformed a transcendental criterion of adequacy to an unrepresentable divinity. Instead, it discussed the possibility of social wisdom from the alternative perspective of depersonalization and re-ascription of subjectivity to the common goals of an enlightened commonwealth. Proclaiming the possibility of social harmony, utopian designs required the submission of the individual egotism to the ideological denomination of happiness.



One of the most obvious illustrations can be found in the magic “panoptikist” and proto-communist society of Tommaso Campanella’s *Civitas Solis*, where the proper administration of knowledge and power brings to accomplishment the prospected society of hierarchical harmony. In Campanella’s “magic utopia,” the powerful becomes the discretionary administrator of the Good, because he, alone, grace to his privileged position, is seated in the proper place to judge. In the echoes of More’s and Campanella’s utopias, Burton’s 1621 *Anatomy of Melancholy*, prefaced by an utopian proposal, discussed melancholy as the great evil of ignorant societies and imagined a monarchic absolutist community minutely governed by a strict order, seen as the only possible remedy for vicious boredom and spiritual corruption in the world. All these instances have determined me to analyze Prospero’s magic as an unprecedented lesson of political virtue, intrinsically associated with the “panoptikist” modalities of Utopian control and in a broader sense with the emerging theme of absolutism.

It is the new status of representation in the Utopian fiction that makes the utopians the proto-cynics of Modernity, within an economy of thought which blends utilitarian denominations with the reformatory zeal typical of anti-apocalyptic Hermetic proposals. According to thinkers like Dee, Bruno, Campanella and Burton, the blueprint of the state must represent all the necessary knowledge that one needs in order to restore the Adamic disposition: the process has to start here on earth, in the vestibule to the garden of paradise. Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* stands for the same language of resourcefulness in politics, appended to the prospect of Hermetic elevation. These views can be considered as incipient designs of systemic representations, empowering *hypertopic*<sup>305</sup> associations between the non-canonic themes of spiritual philosophy and idealist designs in politics. In trespassing the domains traditionally ascribed to the mystic and apophatic views of divinity, utopian designs ascribe the logic of paradisiacal elevation to the logic of historical becoming, producing a counter-emulative movement centered on the semantic possibilities of an endless *kataphasis*. In this deep transformation of cognitive accents, “utopia” becomes indeed a “spatial” play, as

Louis Marin defined it in *Utopiques*: unavoidably, its subject matter is man's return to the prelapsarian disposition by means of (re)formative, restorative reason. Dealing with the twin threats of infinity and of identity loss, the imaginary space of utopia is radicalized, producing the long series of "know-hows" aimed at the control of chaotic proliferation in the realm of self-appointing thought. Congruently, utopian designs are rational-idealist, aiming for the preemption of infinite regression in metaphysics. Thus, the ambiguous play of verity in a text whose semantic tensions conceal its desire to institute new epistemic foundations to the issue of meaning in history: in More's *Utopia*, Marin suggested, the reality of unconditional knowledge as lived experience is legitimized by the occurrence of a mysterious place where faultless knowledge from human perspective becomes possible.

Hence, the fusion of formerly incompatible spheres is shown as virtually feasible, as part of an imaginary orb where the foundations of historical truth correspond to the successful outcomes of agonality: in Amaurot, knowledge and experience are brought together (not in a mythical *illud tempus*), but in a remote, hyper-topic space, whose representational image is shown as fertile for the future of social community. This forms a fictional world of similar ontological status, "brought at hand," that is described and validated through a new narrative strategy. As in a reverting mirror, the intertext of English history and the image of the ideal society are interconnected by the paradoxical constitution of plausibility: More, a non-fictional person, mayor of London, and later Lord Chancellor, uses pseudo-real historical conjectures and a second lector in fabula, Peter Giles, to retell the fictional story of another, the absent Raphael, whose "voice" is performed by the narrative voice of Morus. The inhabitants of the island of Utopia may know England, in turn, as a remote province, whose social setting and historical turmoil are to be deplored or simply ignored. In this movement, the true state of England is ironically exposed to a fictional model, whose perfection eclipses the historical mandate of Tudor monarchy, and offers the English reader a lesson on alternative cultural ideals. Here, we reached the heart of Levi Strauss's dichotomy: "while rites

transform events into structures, play transform structures into events” (*La Pensée Sauvage* 44-47). More’s narrative voice fulfils the rite of storytelling: its “disappearance” into Hythloday’s elocution bridges the dissimilarity between a mythical past and a historical present. A fictional event thus becomes a remote episode of the narrator’s “real” experience. Morus’ witty story re-structures the hierarchy of fictional and real, by navigating between the mythical tale and the historical account, between the fictional *memoir*, and the frame of the chronicle. The Utopian island’s narrative blueprint instantiates a spatial play of topological figures: here the prescriptions of necessary experience meet the roads of administered knowledge. Thus, the utopian “map” stands as an indication of how a political structure can produce the desirable events of a real history. Moreover, as semantic construct regulated by ideal laws, it presents the performative stage of the myth as the locus where the symbolic quality of historical verity is poetically generated through the purposeful play of the ritual.

Taken at its full value, Levi Strauss’ complex trope reveals an inner dynamism, represented by its persuasive potential: precisely, the asymmetric relation between non-temporal myth and factual history facilitates the unconditional reliance of historical narratives modes upon the dramatized structures of collective mythical imagination. If More’s narrative confession impersonates Hythloday’s absent voice, this is done to ascertain the ritual quality of an imaginary event, or, better said, to transform the event into a coherent semantic structure: this is a “a world” governed by autonomous rules and “validated” by the hyper-topic narrative strategy. The opposite effect is less obvious, pertaining to the expected quality of reception: to the sixteenth-century reader, the island of Utopia foreshadowed an ideal England that came to loggerheads with Henry VIII’s revisionist state. Thus, “utopia” empowered irony and critical interpretations with regard to the state of the nation, because any of its textual dialectical accents could be read as motivator of the imagination of change: and, indeed, in the series of long-term effects on pre-modern politics, its narrative play facilitated the “transformation of structures into

events,” motivating, throughout the last centuries, the imagination of various social reformers from Owen to Fourier.

If this is, indeed, an “anamorphic” semantic figure, then the fictional island can be seen as “taking over” the formative ideals of historical understanding. The intrusive power of utopian text consists in its ability to revalue positively the social imagination of happiness, as a text addressed to an age of *kataphasis*, a time ruled by the powers of representation: those who read More’s text will never be the same, because they exchange the fearful expectation of the City of God for the remote contemplation of an earthly utopian garden. A text that has as its object the constitution of a figure presents the figure as its single possible truth. Not only does the utopian genre does not allude to any truth outside of its body, it also has the power to arrest the veracity of the chronicle, by making it a self-referential alibi: “A,” the lector in fabula, has learnt about Utopia’s existence from a “B,” whose incomplete witness was corroborated upon the apocryphal accounts of a C, whose direct experience of Utopia acknowledged the Utopians’ inverted knowledge of Europe—a land whose primitive customs did not elicit the particular interest of utopians. In this mirror-like effect, the utopian text becomes the “true” reality of an absent event that is the rediscovery of paradise as an ideal metaphor for the individual who makes history and, reciprocally, making possible the hope of paradise on earth for his historical subjects. The mythic narrative of history, says Marin, becomes a “possible object of knowledge”, a “possible place for understanding and action” (*Utopiques* 77). “Utopia” in its very structure is a mercurial metaphor, in which none of the constituting terms gains the leading position. History is fiction, as fiction is historical, suggests Marin; the utopian metaphor connects the two poles “within the props of the figure,” presenting each pole as the virtual name of the other, in mutual grounding.

The leader’s new status remains to be determined in relation with the quality of the self-reparatory political structure entrusted to him. He cannot be taken for the medieval *rex*, the medieval monarch of divine right, for the traditional reliance upon teleological foundations and natural right was brought to a dead-end

by the transformations in the social paradigm. The only possibility left is that the new prince, presented in either Utopian or Hermetic garments, develops into a preemptive agent, “un mal nécessaire,” being invested with attributes for which he appears unfit: in the Post- and Counter-Reformed environment of the Baroque West, the leader becomes the conjectural center at the heart of an endangered history, an interventionist, and somehow histrionic figure destined to repress the possibility of state dissolution. Expanding on princely portraits from Machiavelli to Bruno, from Hobbes to Pascal, one can spot the new leader as a prototypal<sup>306</sup> cynic: as one who, in reinforcing and updating the anthropological need for symbolic centrality, replaces the absent referent of an ideal promise. A space of all-knowledge, Utopia, invests the leader with the same prerogatives of omniscience on the historical stage. Utopia opens the space of error, where the sign is mistaken for the referent, the symbol for the being itself, and in this formula language becomes the locus of transcendental subjectivity.<sup>307</sup>

Further theoretical and historical demarcations are welcomed at this turn: the seventeenth century placed, for the first time in Western history, progress and universality in conditional order, universal freedom having been thought of as virtually attainable through emancipation from historical preconceptions. Stephen Toulmin suggested in his study, *Cosmopolis*, that the substantial conflict between the humanism of Erasmus, Shakespeare on one side, and the later *Philosophes* of the French Encyclopedic era on the other, opposed “the accumulation of concrete details of practical experience, and the analysis of an abstract core of theoretical concepts” (43). As a result, the civilizing endeavor of the Age of Reason sacrificed diversity for stability and left aside “the oral, the particular and the timely” typical of the Renaissance—in favor for (the Cartesian) preoccupation for argumentation and concreteness, and in favor of proofs that could be set down in writing and judged as written” (Toulmin 32). It was finally the Cartesian cogito that, by bringing knowledge and experience under the same spell, started “flattening” Shakespeare’s or Bruno’s world of emotional emulation, passionate moral diatribes, and uncanny expectations from the angels of metaphysical imagination. In contrast,

medieval scholastic philosophy separated the domains of science and experience, as it had distinguished between the transcendental subject of philosophical knowledge and the empirical subject of living (ontic) experience, a distinction erased in Kant's rational idealism. By the mid-seventeenth century, the rational views of society were in bloom. Both Oliver Cromwell's England and Mazarin's France advanced original philosophies of stability and engaged in ideological crusades for order, seduced by the theoretically legitimate designs of a perfect future. Melvin Laski wrote that in England, three generations of scholars— Joseph Mede, Samuel Clarke, and William Worthington among them—moved the prospect of revolution from theology into politics, “as the millennium lost its transcendence and became part of this world” (Laski 419). The beneficent, rational employment of anti-eschatological politics involved more than administrative models of order, the reorientation of social thought from the theme of punishment towards the anti-chiliastic, rational prospect of communitarian happiness. The possibility of a longer, wealthier, and happier life was shown as dependant upon “the large and comprehensive plan for the recovery of the whole creation,” as Henry Archer expressed the age's hopes in 1642.

The downfall of anti-eschatological politics came in 1651's Hobbesian theory of Commonwealth. Embittered by the defeat of Charles I during the years of Civil Wars (1642-1651), Hobbes, self-exiled in Mersenne's Paris, wrote his famous defence of the absolutist monarchy in *Leviathan*. Hobbes' cynical overtones dismissed the metaphysical foundations of free will, and associated the notion of goodness with the perceptive-psychological coordinates of pleasure and pain. Given, the “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” condition of human life in natural condition, Leviathanish human beings were not expected to bring their innate freedom to proper uses: in consonance with the embryonic cynical political philosophies of Machiavelli, Bruno or Campanella, Hobbes' view of humanity distrusted the metaphysical ends of the free will and discussed “desire” and the need for its accomplishment as basic motifs of creaturely corruption. Hence, the anti-democratic “geometry” of Hobbesian social contract, whose thesis alluded for

the decaying sense of memory and for the subsequent need for a strategy of its preservation and nourishment associated with the omnipotent monarch. In a speculative philosophical note, one could affirm that the acknowledgment of “desire” as the anthropological foundational motif of modern political theory—corresponded with the period started in Jacobean domination and likely ended in the dethronement of James II in 1688, the year of the Glorious Coup and the subsequent Bill of Rights. During this period, England unraveled more than a prolonged constitutional crisis, having to accept a symbolic corrosion of the absolutist ideology based on the analogy of King and God.

But between its early years and its age of glory, the utopian genre changed its status from that of a social critique to that of a portent of revolution. The early Utopian projects, from Gioacchino da Fiore’s (1135-1102) *Tertius Status* to More’s text, had fathomed a radical departure from the corrupt state of the world. Yet, if More’s utopian island had been solidly “anchored” in the distancing horizon of liminality, its blueprint offered a versatile argument for sweeping philosophical reformers, like Hume, who read the utopian promise as a necessary pattern for a profitable governance. This radical turn would have probably bedazzled Thomas More, whose deep seated skepticism made him ponder that “we cannot make heaven on Earth” (qtd. in Laski 28, 30). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Utopian zeal was shared by all those social reformers who strove for an immediate political resurrection in the name of reason – militant figures such as Paine, Robespierre, Bakunin, or Marx. To Romantic thinkers like Friedrich Schiller, the appeal to proactive cultural politics was a matter of urgency: if the mission of modern history was to write the script of human progress from scratch, then the utopian propensity should be seen as the representation of an absolute future, in the hands of the daring contestant.

#### IV. 6. Hermeticism reviewed: the play's occult aspects

Undeniably, the interpretative tradition has taken a long road to adjust its methods to the incredible complexities enticed by the said “cosmological questions”; if they are to be taken seriously, their proper reading should take place into a new context, made possible by the advent of three disciplines: psychology, comparative religion, and cultural anthropology. At this stage of my demonstration, I take John Mebane’s half-forgotten opus *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age: The Occult Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare*, published in 1946 in New York, to be a unique path-opener for contemporary Shakespeare studies. Described by its author as a survey of the Renaissance occult tradition, the American scholar’s text reexamined the role of Neoplatonism and Hermetic, Cabalist magic in the Renaissance, summarizing the recent debates concerning the “relationship between the occult tradition and Renaissance humanism, and discussing the extent to which Renaissance magic may have contributed to the emergence of genuine science”(Mebane 3). I find the intrinsic value of Mebane’s perspective in the critic’s finely attuned interest for an exploration of the philosophical and historical registers of Elizabethan culture, intended to open a theoretical counter-front to a long tradition of interpretations delivered in an allegorical and ideological key. Mebane compared a variety of critical positions regarding Frances Yates’ assertions that placed the occult philosophy at the root of a new optimism about human nature and tried to find the middle ground between the assumptions of Peter French, R.J.W. Evans, who continued and developed Yates’ theories, and the objections of her challengers, such as Charles Trinkaus, Wayne Shumaker, Andrew Weiner, Brian Vickers, and William G. Craven. The latter questioned the extent to which magic was central to the English Renaissance and who considered Yates’ views inaccurate, particularly the English academic’s esoteric *parti pris*. Although critics who unveiled the epistemic incompatibilities between magic philosophy and genuine science might be right in principle, the occult philosophers’ hope to determine the course of nature and history might



elucidate the sixteenth century's particular notion of progress, Mebane says. Transitional figures of the Elizabethan era, he suggests,

cannot be categorized purely and simply as "occult philosophers" or "scientists"; and even more advanced and methodologically sophisticated researchers, including Francis Bacon, were influenced by the occultists' dream of a renovation of knowledge by the assertion that human beings can command and perfect nature. (3)<sup>308</sup>

Hence, occultism, when predicated on philosophical grounds, does not oppose humanism apriorilly. On the contrary, it heightens humanist understanding to a "logical extreme, affirming the power of human beings to control both their personalities and the world around them" (Mebane 3). In comparison with the modern scientific episteme, the Renaissance occult philosophy relied upon a structure of cosmological assumptions whose fantastic *modus operandi* had to be denied when the principles of modern science took center stage. Its failure in the decades following Bacon's 1620 *Novum Organum* (I would have to add here) was most likely connected with the radicalized iconoclasm of Cartesian skepticism, which, in its obsession for evidence, becomes counterproductive for the speculative fantasizing manner of thought typical of the Baroque era. Nonetheless, Mebane's thesis, namely that the sixteenth-century intellectuals understood the magic obliquely and eruditely, as a form of pan-endemic gnosticism, which supported the whole edifice of self-affirmation in every single domain of social activity, carries the logic of arguments in a new intellectual environment, marked by the introduction of official propaganda. In this new political context, writers such as Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare display a new awareness of the importance of occultism in humanist thought, since their works make explicit use of images and ideas that originally appear in the treatises of occult philosophy. (Chapters 1, 3-4) Furthermore, those who looked with curiosity at "natural magic" transgressed the historical cultural assumptions, searching for truth in directions that challenged the outmoded views of traditionalists:

Purely literary traditions [Mebane reflects] do not entirely explain why plays on magic suddenly became of vital concern in the 1580s and continued to be such a compelling subject on the stage until 1620s, when the interest in plays on sorcery and magic gradually declined. (7)

Giordano Bruno's 1583 visit to Oxford, an extremely productive episode for the intellectual history of the English academia, might have been determinant of the distinctive fashion in thought during the alleged four decades marked by disputes between those who claimed the ideas of progress in the name of tradition and those who, oppositely, felt the need to restart the epistemic inquiries in denial of former postulations. Bruno's prospect of a Hermetic religion, initiated in the texts published between 1583 and 1585 in London (which will be discussed in a future section), gives us a picture of a religious practice of Gnostic breed, in which the apprentice of magic cleanses his mind through the practice of a self-enlightening asceticism: this is achieved by the gradual elimination of worldly appetites and by constant reflection at the inner world of the soul (Mebane 87-88).

In this note, the transitional figures of early modernity, from Marlowe and Shakespeare to Francis Bacon, appear in a common light, becoming representative to a new dimension of intellectual awareness appended to the attributes of unlimited striving. Given that *The Tempest* signifies the period's extreme theatrical experiment, Prospero's semi-divine qualities cannot be taken for nothing, for in Prospero's hymeneal mask the amoral realm of mundane politics is re-ascribed to the original heavenly order. In this perspective, Shakespeare's last romances (particularly *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*) appear as a series of experiments that broaden the ethical questions of the previous tragedies, allowing us to recognize the effects of human immorality "while simultaneously emphasizing that such consequences are not ultimate" (Mebane 175). Shakespeare reinforces the fate of the "magicians" in the human ability to channel the divine power. However, Mebane suggested, Shakespeare's understanding of human nature is more skeptical than that of Bruno's "coreligionaries," Ficino or Pico, as the playwright's suggestion seems to be that no one can avoid the determinants of

human nature and elevate completely to the life of the spirit. Otherwise, Mebane feels that by re-rooting the play within its philosophical and esthetical milieu, he can safeguard a positive reading of Prospero's qualities. The Duke's superhuman endowments, Mebane believed, are analogous with the protean skills of Hermetic magicians. Frank Kermode's later definition of Prospero's power as "art," which is to label his craft as revelatory of civilization and moral discipline grows from the same core of ideas. In transcending the dogmatic approaches to magic theory, Mebane concludes, *The Tempest* reinforces "the parallels among *magia*, learning and drama as forms of art which endeavor to perfect nature" (180).

#### **IV. 7. Bruno's visit in England and his later theory of bonding**

A turning point in the intellectual life of England was 1583. A new generation of Renaissance intellectuals, less preoccupied with the application of dogma, was rising. They were raised during Elizabeth's reign and, to them, the aging monarch showed extreme benevolence. The young poet Christopher Marlowe, who was working at Cambridge towards his bachelor's degree and fighting against those many detractors who accused him of treason, heresy, and homosexuality, prepared in secret his debut as a playwright with *Tamburlaine*. Francis Bacon, whose precocious intellect had been remarked by Elizabeth during one of her visits at Oxford, was twenty-three years old in 1583, and having graduated from the school of Law, was already working as an outer barrister and preparing for his future seat in the Parliament. Elizabethan London<sup>309</sup> looked like an ideal safe haven for all those foreigners who faced political persecutions elsewhere in Europe. Furthermore, if in England, as much as on the old continent, time seemed to be out of joint, the promises of spiritual and political renewal, coming from poets, metaphysicians, and doctors of the occult summoned a halo of splendor around the monarch, keeping the corroding agents of anarchy at bay.

Constrained by space here, my exposition of events will enumerate only the most important elements conducive to the credible hypothesis of Bruno's indirect intellectual influence on Shakespeare: in 1583, a few apparently disparate episodes began altering the course of English culture. In a country frenzied for good drama, the Queen's company took shape, bringing together the best showmen of London's private corporations. Six years earlier, James Burbage<sup>310</sup> had received the lease and permission to erect the Theatre in Shoreditch, which was to become one of the first experimental stages of Elizabethan historical drama. A year earlier, in 1582, Hakluyt's *Voyages* had already provided contemporary playwrights with a comprehensive New World chronicle. Raleigh and Harriot were bringing into London similar accounts: the mature Shakespeare is said to have been inspired from Hakluyt and Harriot extensively, and *The Tempest* looks like one of the textual places to search for such parallels. Approximately at the same time, under the auspices of Henry III,<sup>311</sup> the foreign influencer of the English Renaissance, Italian philosopher and magician, Giordano Bruno crossed the Canal in 1583 to England, where he lived for about two years in the most elect company of English intellectuals, among whom Philip Sidney, Thomas Harriot, and John Florio were the most resonant names. But through intermediaries such as the French ambassador Marquis de Mauvissiere, the Polish Prince Albert a Laski, and Thomas Twyne, Bruno became acquainted with the aristocratic world of Elizabethan England, and, on a few festive occasions found himself in the proximity of the Queen herself.

Following Frances Yates' earlier insights, Benjamin Woolley produced a convincing review of Bruno's 1583 disastrous encounter with Oxford scholars. The occasion, represented by Prince Laski's festive visit to Oxford, ended in a conflict of anecdotal proportions between Bruno and the Oxfordians, who rejected his thunderous expose on Copernican cosmology. But the Polish prince became attracted by the Nolan's ideas in *De Umbris Idearum*, where the philosopher "he imagined a world divided between the creatures of light and darkness" (Woolley 187). Laski became Bruno's protector during their simultaneous stay in England. In

the same period, the Polish prince, a passionate alchemist, contacted and had extensive conversations on Enochian science with John Dee and his assistant John Kelly. The coincidence could reveal a common obsession of the four occultists for the magic reception of seals, the cosmic keys to the invocation of angelic guardians, a field in which both Dee and Bruno left extensive notes. Dorothea Waley Singer's 1950 study is maybe the most careful depiction of Bruno's English period, but the many written testimonies from the said era lead scholars to similar conclusions: either directly, or indirectly, through Laski's intermediation, John Dee became acquainted with Bruno's cosmology. Furthermore, in spite of the initial clash with the Oxfordian scholars, Bruno's occult philosophy became a trendy portent of Hermetic ideals in the highest circles of the Elizabethan Court, and also grace to emulative socializers like Sidney and Florio, were brought to Will's knowledge.

Bruno's influence on Shakespeare's theater has been discussed at length during the last decades, mainly generated by Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy. Definitely, the phrases "the whips and scorns of time, the proud man's contumely" are directly inspired from Bruno's "Oratio valedictoria" – written at his departure from Wittenberg university.<sup>312</sup> Bruno whines of "the whips and scorns of vile and foolish men who, although they are really beasts in the likeness of men, in the pride of their good fortune, are full of evil arrogance." Numerous other similarities to Bruno's expressions and philosophical maxims have been identified in *Hamlet*. Yet, it is John Florio's name that was invoked as the missing link in the puzzle: Florio, who felt at home in London intellectual circles and, according to Turner, frequented the legendary School of Night,<sup>313</sup> was often thought of as a social contact of the mature Shakespeare and, as early as 1583, was in the position to introduce Giordano Bruno to the Oxford scholars. The acquaintance between Bruno and Florio is confirmed by the later lines in *Love's Labor's Lost* (1591), Shakespeare satirized Florio<sup>314</sup> as Holofernes – an attitude that would not have been possible without a former familiarity between the two poets. In 1595, the bard satirized Florio for a second time, as the character Parolles in *All's Well that Ends Well*. Moreover, Heisler contends, Walter Raleigh and Philip Sidney, both of whom

Bruno came across in his Britannic sojourn of 1583-1584, met William Shakespeare at one point in their life. Such parallels between Bruno's occult philosophy and Shakespeare's writing are almost overpowering. For instance, in the nineteenth century, the eminent German historian, W. Konig, proposed similar perspectives in his studies; other contemporary critics, such as D. W. Singer, have advanced convergent comparisons: for instance, Singer summarized the preoccupations of an entire group of hermeneuticians drawn in establishing credible connections between the texts of Shakespeare and Bruno. Yates' studies are replete with analogous examples. Such close parallels between Bruno's and Shakespeare's literatures were sought by Spampato: in his 1926 study, *Soglia del secento*, the Milanese scholar finds echoes of the *Candelaio* in the etymology of *mulier* in *Cymbeline*, V.v.; the necessity of a ring in *As You Like It*, III.iii. and IV.ii.; the attribution of ills through pride to Fate or stars in *King Lear*, I.ii.; the distinction between sharp and gentle madmen in *King Lear*, I.iv.; the view of sorcery in *Macbeth*, IV.i.; the discourse of the Queen with two gentlemen in the Duke of York's garden, in *Richard II*, III.iv. To these, Singer adds the pun against Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Relevantly, Benedetto Croce also associated the character Berowne in *Love's Labour's Lost* with Giordano. After that, Frances Yates produced a more elaborate analysis of the Italians in London in association with Shakespeare's textual allusions, in her 1936 *A Study of Love's Labour's Lost*, where a special section was dedicated to Walter's Raleigh influence upon the "School of Night".<sup>315</sup> Roy T. Eriksen, the author of "*Un certo amoroso martire*", held that Shakespeare's "The Phoenix and the Turtle" and Bruno's *De gli eroici furori*," argues persuasively that "the relationship between Shakespeare's birds in "The Phoenix and the Turtle" resembles that of the phoenix and the *furioso* in the *Eroici furori*" (194) and ponders that the association of form and meaning in Shakespeare's poem "depends on Bruno's allegory of divine love to a very high degree".<sup>316</sup> In a recent study, Philippa Berry, of King's College, Cambridge, interpreted elements of Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* as derived from the Renaissance arts of memory, particularly from Bruno's mnemonic techniques, aiming for a revival of Egyptian magic.<sup>317</sup> Berry discovers relevant coincidences

between Bruno's 1588 Treatise on The Art of Memory, *Lampas triginata statuarum* (*Torch of the Thirty Statues*), and Shakespeare's allusion to mnemonic devices in the play,<sup>318</sup> revealing "how recollection and forgetting, anamnesis and oblivion, are intimately allied in Shakespeare's remembering of the Egyptian mysteries" (Berry 70).

All these revelatory instances lead me to the logical conclusion that Bruno's personality and ideas were so close to those of Shakespeare's contemporaries that their prestige, exoticism, and maybe the Nolan's "dark aura" influenced Elizabethan courtiers and, ultimately, the course of Elizabethan letters. In this note, Sidney's 1583-1584 friendship with Bruno was the beginning of a fruitful intellectual comradeship—in a relation that was soon to echo in each of their literary contributions. A closer look at Sidney's nonconformist poetics shows striking similarities with Bruneian intellectual agenda: passionate with the same Hermetic attributes of the prospected *Restauratio*, both thinkers celebrated poetical truth above historical verity, both struggled to expand the Aristotelian epistemological core, both fathomed the idea of restoration in quasi-similar notes of Neoplatonic extraction. Moreover, they gratified each other with praiseful dedications. Sidney's great poem, *Arcadia* is deeply impregnated by Bruno, wrote Alfonso Ingegno, who "is aware of the fact that the fall of Aristotelian cosmology implies the end of traditional metaphysics" (x). His proposed reform has "religious consequences. It challenges the developments of the Reformation; it calls into question the truth value of the whole of Christianity and claims that Christ perpetrated a deceit on mankind" (x). Thus, Bruno, an overt anti-Catholic, reasserted the Ficinian notion of love as a source of power that can generate both "heavenly" and "infernal" consequences in the universe of moral values, while man's ascent to the higher spheres of knowledge depends on individual qualities and cognitive attitudes.

Less disposed to question the epistemic and institutional foundations of his age, the aristocratic Sidney, however, followed the Ficinian trend, describing Love as a protean energy modeling the realm of human intelligence, and taking

Neoplatonic exaltation as the spiritual power inscribing civilization on its proper course when placed in proper sequence with social imagination.<sup>319</sup> In 1582, Sidney, aged thirty, was knighted and learned quickly the manners of a perfect courtier; by then, his genius as a poet was fully ripened: in 1580, the manuscript of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* was already finished, although the first print was only produced in 1590. As a romance, the poem is replete with historical and allegorical images of troubadouresque inspiration: Shakespeare, who owned Sidney's book, was inspired for the Gloucester narrative in *King Lear*. In 1582, Sidney came up with a new surprise for Elizabethan intellectuals, manifesting himself as a literary theoretician and unveiling his original *Defense of Poesy*, a book<sup>320</sup> whose ideas were likely the subject of his animated philosophical debates with Giordano. In his *Defense...*, Sidney imagined a political, metaphysically justified revolution, stating that "ethical science arranges the elements which poetry has created." Bruno advanced similar ideas in his works, particularly in his 1584 *Lo Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* (*The Expulsion of The Triumphant Beast*), where he introduced the principles "of a new ethic, capable of guaranteeing peaceful civilian co-existence in the rediscovered harmony between human needs and the divine will" (xxi).

In disagreement with Plato, who banned poets from his ideal *Republic*, on account of their ill-suited understanding of nature and the divine,<sup>321</sup> Sidney praises poetry for enabling civil life, by means of awakening and enlarging "the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand un-apprehended combinations of thought." The view was not new in essence. Aristotle himself associated human experience with the acquisition of knowledge. But Sidney's utilitarian accent on human ability to discover "the highest end of the mistress knowledge, by the Greeks called *architectonike*," (or, in modern words, self-built, self-fashioned attainment), was innovative, given its original application of the Classical and Poliphilic themes of *exaltation* to the epistemic notion of self-fashioning.<sup>322</sup> The art of verse, Sidney held, had to find its privileged place among the muses of an aristocratic modern state, considering its formative power for the



national and civic consciousness. In his proto-critical theory, imagination is given precedence over the real, and the poet's mission is to enlarge the domains of speculative thought. Bruno's assumption was identical in form, but lacked the ethical insight of his friend. The core of Sidney's defense<sup>323</sup> presents poetry as a composition that blends historical fact with the moral vocation of philosophy, as more efficient than either history or philosophy taken alone in instilling virtue upon readers. At this juncture, Jonathan Hart's reflection in *Theater and World* sheds light on the most original aspects of Sidney's reformatory poetics, namely the poet's original recourse to the concept of "poetic justice," an idea that reached its peak only in the following decades, during the Restoration:

Like Aristotle, Sidney values the truth of poetic fiction above the truth of historical fact. He follows Aristotle in showing the inferiority of the historian to the poet, whom historians emulated when they invented long orations for their kings and captains. Great poetry, according to Sidney, tries to mend fallen heroes by creating heroes, demigods, cyclopes, furies, and other beasts not fallen in the fallen world, so that a great poet creates a golden world. ... For Sidney, historical or philosophical poetry ... lacks invention and does not lift up the soul ... At some point, Sidney says, the historian must go beyond the solidity of the example or fact or interpretation. He will find events that will "yield no cause" and then he must imitate the poet, to whom he is, therefore, subject. The poet can "beatify" with imitation the historian's causes and descriptions and can teach and delight more than the historian. According to Sidney, the poet can teach more about virtue than the historian because he can use poetic justice, a term that was not used to describe the phenomenon until the Restoration, whereas the historian cannot because life does not necessarily punish the wicked and reward the good. (*Theater and World* 14-15)

In the world of the Fall, Hart writes, the poet's skill is above the historian's knowledge of value, for the imitation of the first, in avoiding the

resolutions of historical factualness, stays at safe distance from the determinations of a corrupt world, dedicating the powers of lyrical imagination to the reparatory vision of a golden world. Influenced by other intellectuals of his epoch, Sidney held that the decay of Elizabethan drama had its causes in the decay of imagination in the works of writers who neglected to understand that tragedy was “ruled by the laws of poetry and not of history” (*Theater and World* 15). Bruno’s view matched Sidney’s to the extent that is hard to assign its origin without giving credit to both names simultaneously: The Nolan believed with ardor in the restorative powers of creative imagination, yet he applied the same principles in an entirely different direction. It was in his *De Gliheroici Furori* (or *Heroic Frenzies*), finished in 1584 and dedicated to Spenser, that Bruno defended the belief that in the end, love triumphs over all. But Bruno’s notion of emulative love, blending ascension techniques of Cabbalistic origin with the notion of a stellar man, deified by the inner contact with the orbs of spiritual infinite, remained an unsavory topic for many: to start with, Castelnau’s eccentric Italian visitor denied the theology of the Eucharist, explaining the dogmatic misunderstanding around the ubiquity of the glorious body of Christ by reference to an “old erroneous cosmology” (xxi), and proposing a new Christ, a divinity able to manifest simultaneously on any populated star in the infinite cosmos of divine magnificence. Moreover, Bruno accused the spirit of Medieval Christianity, whose error, Ingegno writes, “was the desire to begin with a divinity conceived in its absoluteness, arising from the illusion that in this way one could enter into contact with it and enjoy its favor, without respecting the intervening natural and cognitive levels” (xxi).

Bruno’s proposal for a new cosmology based on universal animism remained abstruse to many of his fellow contemporaries. Like Sidney, Bruno saw no difference between poetical and imaginative acts, since both needed to be appended to the same phenomenology of intuition, where the gradual revelation of universal soul was said to become accessible through creative expression. Thus, when re-appended to the gnostic world of lucid dreaming, the politician’s skill appeared to match the quality of his inspirational vision: in an anti-Platonic note,

Bruno saw the poet as the good charmer of his political community and, driven by his (proto-Faustian) striving for the infinite, identified inspired poetical acts with fertile occult intuitions. Seven years after his English voyage, in 1590, the same postulations, voiced in the Catholic environment of Rome, brought the Nolan's condemnation by the Italian Inquisition judges. It was the very logical, speculative and humanistic allure of his thought that brought him at odds with the defenders of the clerical universe. Had Bruno continued to live in London, he would have likely abated the bad faith of his last years. In the literary circles of London, the groups Shakespeare himself became more familiar with after 1587, the accusation of atheism looked obsolete. After all, it was Bruno's best friend, Philip Sidney, who, revaluing many of the Nolan's poetical ideas, inspired the major political metaphors of the Elizabethan era.

If Sidney epitomized the Elizabethan court poet, Bruno, an emulative and self-conscious spirit obsessed with his prophetic calling, embodied the paradoxes of the Late Renaissance syncretism in the symbolic mask of dissent. A Janus-bifrons, he can be equally regarded as the last of the Renaissance magi and the prophet of the heliocentric era. Towards Bruno's work, the regretted historian of religions, Ioan Petru Couliano has left innovative contributions in *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, an original study that sheds light on many genuine pages of the Nolan's manuscripts. Giordano Bruno's strange opus *De vinculis in genere*, an appendix to his late *De magia* (finished in 1590) might be taken as the most accurate prescriptive text of the Hermetic reformation, because he exposed a new-fashioned technology of thought, which understood *phantasmata* as "objective" bonds between the perceiver and the perceived. Symptomatically for his sixteenth century, Bruno's project of religious reformation attempted to reframe the Christian subject in the new tapestry of an infinite Cosmos. Let us not forget that the Hermetic doctrine of sympathy assumed the quasi-physical influences behind names and things, between the cosmic harmony and the play of historical events. Bruno's cultural dreams reflected the heteroclitic tendencies of his philosophical temperament. Years earlier, Agrippa von Nettesheim and Paracelsus had described

the subtle correspondences between minerals, animals, heavenly bodies, psychic powers, and parts of the human body. Years after Bruno, Campanella wrote his own opus on magic bonding. No wonder that the Nolan's personality was dear to many Elizabethan intellectuals: resonating with the fabulatory zest of the first seafarers, Bruno's spiritual cosmology brought a touch of "magic realism" to Agrippian instances, populating celestial universes with fantastic demons and, no once, adorning his imaginary domains with elements seen in contemporary cabinets of curiosities during his European voyages. Yet, Bruno's propaedeutic of knowledge was, on the one hand more "articulate" than the empirical psychological intuitions of his predecessors, on the other hand, more "discriminative" in all those aspects regarding the possibility of self-attainment, Alfonso Ingegno suggests:

On this basis, in *On Magic* and *Theses on Magic*, Bruno posits two types of humanity, one superior and one inferior to the general level of mankind, who are distinguished by their ability (or lack thereof) to monitor and direct the process of our consciousness and in particular its inevitable passive aspect. This, of course, is one of the constant themes in his philosophy and in particular of his polemic against Reformation. In addition, it illustrates his belief that real processes and cognitive processes have a common foundation which has a magical aspect.(in Blackwell and de Lucca, Front matter)

Such extraordinary cognitive powers, associated with the advent of a superhuman *mens* in the history of Western philosophy, involved the interaction between the image of thought and its (real) objects: literally, the hermetic magician thought he could move the skies at will and explained the notion of epiphany along the same logic. One facet of Aristotle's epistemology retained in Bruno's thought is that knowledge is generated by a perceptive "trace," a sensory image that has been impressed in memory. This impression was a "phantasm": rediscovering the method of Proclus, Bruno thought of a mnemonic technique designed to "unleash" the visual impressions to the benefit of an elevated self-awareness in relation with archetypal psychological modes, also to a more effective control of the social

unconscious. Bruno's connoted desire for absolute power made him imagine that he could consciously produce and manipulate phantasms. The Nolan's "alchemic" mind offered him the symbolic path of action: this can be either defined as a resurrection of the demiurgic imaginative potential in the magic operator's meditation, or, put metaphorically, "action-dreaming," as the ground of correspondence between the personal images and the universal soul. By this method, inspired from Cabbalistic accessional techniques, some human souls can elevate their ethereal body and ascend the metaphysical spheres to acquire direct knowledge of the One. Hence, Bruno explained the Christian fear of God as appended to an erroneous paradigm, and proposed instead a new philosophy of mimesis, founded on a protean imitation of the divine and upon the permissiveness of ontological boundaries. Like Pico, Bruno placed the human and the divine in a friendly intercourse: "with magic and divine rites, [man] ascended to the height of divinity by that same scale of nature by which the divinity descends to the smallest things by the communication of itself" (Yates, *Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* 777).

In Bruno's philosophy, *Magia* constituted the desired universal science while the Hermetic reform became a work of universal enlightenment. The renovation of knowledge was thus imperative, he believed with ardor: the principle of reconciliation between the dogmatic parties was the natural magic, an art whose mastery, known only by a few, was the source of all possible religious revelation. The Bruneian Magician assigned his spirit to the magic identification with the Divine and, symptomatically for the alchemical doctrine, to the direct transfer of knowledge from the Divine. Nonetheless, Bruno, the last "pneumatic," was the first to define magic as a psychological theory of manipulation. The retention of images, he inferred, preceded the formation of thought. In this context, the hidden knowledge of the engrammatic bonds (*vincula*) licensed the magician to fulfill his dream of universal mastery. The Bruneian "ties" – *vincula* (in *De vinculis in genere*) – are nothing but personalized hypostases of erotic experience, as the inter-subjective, erotic energies are constituent of all human attachments. Couliano<sup>324</sup>

described the abstruse expression *Vinculum vinculorum* as “the synthesizer, receiver, and producer of phantasms” equivalent with the sensitive and creative “ground” of “imagination.” But Bruno’s employment of this expression is often appended to the qualities of Eros, seen as “*the demon magnus*,” since its presence is the portent of all possible magic. As a *vinculator*, the magician knows of secret ways to take advantage of psychological predispositions with the intention of determining durable bonds that would substantiate his domination over individuals and groups.<sup>325</sup> Still, when understood apart from its carnal determinations, Bruno’s Eros can be also taken as a “combustible”<sup>326</sup> of divine ascension that empowers man to lean “across the armature of (the celestial) spheres, having broken through their envelopes.” Thus, when placed in proper sequence with the infinity of the Bruneian universe, the Bruneian Eros subsists as a cosmic power in a heliocentric and infinite cosmos, where the magician can only act from the edge. And, as Couliano suggested, in Bruno’s cosmological design everything belongs to Love, because Eros is the secret force of life and the power that animates the infinite Universe. In the absence of the proper understanding of the physical notion of “force,” Eros, the “*demon magnus*”, is equated with gravity and the cause of gyration. The Bruneian magician has to achieve the revelation of infinity as a counterpart of his marginal position in an infinite Cosmos. Compelled to redefine the idea of Christ as part of the infinite universe, Bruno transgressed, again, the assumptions of Medieval theology of salvation: myriads of other globes, indistinguishable from ours, may await for their Redeemer, whose spiritual virtues blend the attributes of omniscience and the magic potential of ubiquitousness.

Bruno’s cosmological model broke the quietness of celestial spheres by animating countless worlds and imparting the divinity’s function of being an image to the infinite. Employing the notion of a graduate cosmos showing the natural and the super-celestial spheres in a relation of *contiguity*, his syncretic philosophical vision re-fashioned the Plotinian One in harmony with recent topics of heliocentricity and infinity: “it is by one and the same ladder that nature descends to the production of things and the intellect ascends to the knowledge of them; and

that the one and the other proceed from unity and returns to unity” (Acquilecchia, qtd. in Yates, *Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* 329). To Bruno, the limits of an infinite Universe should be understood epistemologically, which is to say *set beyond the horizon of present human comprehension, coincident with the ascribed boundaries of knowledge*. No doubt, the first application of this theory was related to the abstruse, yet practical proposals of the occult philosophy, Couliano inferred: the human mind was itself sacred and, through reflection of the divine, found occult perfection, *absque medio*, without the active aid of traditional soteriological agencies. Here, a short review of John Dee’s “cabalistic” doctrine reveals quasi-similar principles between the two philosophies in question. As an acknowledgeable Neoplatonist thinker, Dee inferred that the power of cosmic symbols was superior to the mechanical astronomical descriptions of star-movements. Josten’s Introduction to his 1964 rendition of Dee’s *Monas Hieroglyphica* showed Dee deeply preoccupied with the creation of a new esoteric system, up to the point where he did not know any longer if the zodiacal seals revealed to him and to his occult assistant in ecstatic visions represented the seeds of a genuine divinatory knowledge or an inspirational-anamnestic disclosure of the divine wisdom. One of Dee’s letters to King Maximilian showed this “meta-alchemy” as a contemplative art, whose epigenetic and introspective essence was different from the gimmicks of pseudo-alchemists. Considering that Bruno himself authored his own treatise of magic in the guise of the earlier contributions, and that scholars like Robert Fludd (the alleged master of the Priori of Sion) developed this Ars Memoriae in conjunction with the intuitions of the former intuitions of Camillo, Bruno and Dee, one could literally discover as converging intellectual contributions to a unified spiritual science, whose aim was to discover the analogy of microcosm and macrocosm from the standpoint of operative magic. These notions also prove the broad intellectual traffic between the scholars of the Renaissance.

Indeed, the object of the true Platonist is to get nearer to the one ideal truth, which is secretly, and more or less perfectly, mirrored in the depths of the human mind just as it may, with more or less clarity, he recognized in the vestiges

of a venerable past that had been nearer to the golden age of knowledge than the debased present. This reconstruction of Dee's impassive attitude towards the world of external appearances and of action, and of his skeptical view of the chances of spiritual attainment remaining in his own age is confirmed by his opinions on alchemy. The alchemists, i.e. those labouring in the transmutation of metals are denounced as wretched and inexperienced impostors; in the context a hint is given to the effect that man, not metal, is the subject of alchemical transmutation, if rightly conceived (Josten 100-101). However, the "Queen's conjuror" did not ascribe the alchemical knowledge entirely to the spiritual world; the magician's quest for self-discovery was viewed as a *sin-qua-non* of broader abilities that amounted to the magic possibility of a broader transmutation, one that ascribed the illusive world of existence to the powers of mystically enlightened imagination. Yet, as Lesley B. Cormack pondered, an a priori identification of Dee's effective alchemy with the aim for a magic work of imperial domination seems exaggerate:

Indeed, there are a number of hints that magic may play a part in England's greatness, from the Latin motto surrounding the title, "Plvra: Latent: quam: Patent" (More things are concealed than are revealed), to the Greek symbols in the four corners, which add up to Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica*. It is tempting to see a strong parallel between the discovery of the philosopher's stone and the creation of England as an imperial power. It is a mistake, however, to take this too far, since this text was intended for a select group of Elizabeth's advisors and some vague claim to mystical transformation would not have been particularly appropriate.<sup>327</sup>

As usual, when dealing with Hermetic works such as Bruno's, Dee's or Campanella's aggregations, one should not forget that their spiritual side is often balanced by empirical and pragmatic views of social order. To the Hermetic thinker of the Late Renaissance, the world of reason seemed appended to the cosmos of imagination, while the embedded inductive cognitive method appeared to reveal an all-encompassing sense of homology between human being and the macrocosmic



order. In the indefinite cosmos of endless reflections, Bruno, too, converted imagination into man's chief cognitive faculty. Bruno's magician's *will to power* defied a Ptolemaic-oriented civilisation that did not consider the Copernican view. Crucial for the discussion of secularization, the new religion of "universal harmony" is unique in its contempt for the Christian mediation: self-servicing his psycho-somatic aptitudes like an Oriental yogi, the Bruneian Gnostic attains his "salvation" within the spectacle of the universe, rather than by the protection of a divine "moderator." Moreover, Bruno states that all theologies, including the Christian one, are public convictions established through magical operations, and concludes by saying that the Hermetic reform should be imposed alike. Here, Bruno's cynicism went so far, that he was able to rouse Marx's and Engels' famed slogan: "Religion is the opiate of the masses." In fact, Bruno's *credo* expressed the first cynical turn of the "pneumatic" consciousness, one that can be read as an inspiration for my own reading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: namely, that nobody and nothing can stand apart from intersubjective relations (Couliano 74). Thus, it is precisely the deceptive objectiveness of this truth that makes Bruno an ontological pessimist, since he sees human beings intrinsically ascribed to the foundations of politics as collective psychological engrams. In fact, the Bruneian God does not act as an absolute will through history, but is rather a plastic, omnipresent, yet indifferent medium to be apprehended and speculated on accordingly. Like most Neoplatonists, Bruno felt tempted to abolish the ontological difference by suggesting that life could be seen a dream in God's all encompassing reverie. Subsequently, he limited the hierarchical difference between common man, the initiate occult practitioner and the Creator to one of *degree*. Hence, the originality of his innovative proposal (most likely a motif of Hellenistic inspiration originating in Oriental philosophies) takes awakening as one's ability to resuscitating God in oneself, and one's being awoken as embodying the divine principle (*On, Hen*) in the metabolism of existence.

Furthermore, if Philo Juadaeus had once described the statesman as an interpreter of dreams, it is likely that the Bruneian complex manipulator could be

qualified “an inductor of dreams,” one that proposes iconic figures and exemplary myths to the dreaming souls of his virtual subjects. One could literally trace back the modern idea of a collective unconscious in Bruno’s unconditioned belief in a *Spiritus Mundi*, as an intelligent medium supportive of remote interaction.<sup>328</sup> The many incompatibilities between the ontological condition of this animistic *Spiritus Mundi* and the Aristotelian and Averroistic definitions of *ens rationis* were most clearly depicted in the late work of Campanella, who, in summarizing the contributions of his direct philosophic ancestors, came up with the most synthetic version of the Panentheistic vision. A contemporary analysis of Hermetic political ideas, I believe, cannot ignore this last articulation of Neoplatonic idealism, considering that, voluntarily or not, the Dominican friar was the one who accomplished the great work of mundanization in the realm of mysticism. Campanella described this *Spiritus* as a shapeless, passive entity, yet one capable of expansion, division, and generation of multiple manifestations - a formless material confined to physical determination.<sup>329</sup> Equivalent with *mana*—the magic power of the world’s soul employed by ancient shamanic beliefs, this amorphous entity, whose substance resembled the subtle matter of ether and the fluidity of plasma, provided the proper medium for impregnation from the actions and agencies of magic volition. Unable to unleash itself from the corporeal universe, this *spiritus* perpetuates itself in the physical medium of life, bringing and returning the world to its living “body” in ways that secure its permanence and its inner potential. Knowing the ways of a divinity present at the heart of physical world matches the knowledge of its archetypal modalities, or differently said, of its ethereal “physiology,”<sup>330</sup> allowing alchemic mutations and empowering the magic reversal between the states of being and non-being. This “art” midway between spiritual medicine and magic, is represented by the great knowledge of the seals, to which figures like Bruno or Dee dedicated their entire lives. To this plastic and submissive *spiritus mundi*, Prospero owes most of his occult endowments, I think. (It might not take long until the new century’s critical theory will acknowledge this untold, yet omnipresent intelligence as one of the play’s autonomous, sine-qua-non semantic

agencies: an invisible God who, hiding in the island's lush, speaks in voices and generates the adequate chimeras of either punishment or triumph.)

It is only the magician-statesman's sublime distance around the question of fate that restores the social consensus through the secret knowledge of oniric manipulation: a knowledge, which, in channelling human frailty, offers itself a justification to act amorally—beyond the subject's awareness. For it is merely the statesman's enlightened lack of belief that makes possible the future of the state. Moreover, it is solely the power to induce, to experience and to survive images (*phantasmata*) that makes him a prince. His serenity may help him to seize the secret bonds between the lovers and the objects of their desires. Couliano defines the attributes of magic leadership as a triad; he has to act as a “magician, physician, prophet” (104), all in one. Bound to solitude by his own lack of belief in the objectivity of social values, the Bruneian operator teaches himself the art of super-human detachment, playing shrewdly the old game “*indiferencia santis*,” since he has decided for different reasons not to lure his soul into cupid love. That speaks in itself of the solipsist quality of Bruneian dreaming, as one who, in denying the objectivity of historical and existential determinations, falls prey to an inherent solitude, namely that of asserting multiplicities without acknowledging their ontological grounding. In *Infancy and History*, Giorgio Agamben believed that imagination was, until the Age of Reason the supreme medium of knowledge: in ancient and medieval culture, imagination was assigned the same role that modernity later reserved to experience (24). Agamben designated the phantasm as the true source of desire and emphasised that love takes as its subject not the immediate sensory being, but the phantasm. Bruno's philosophical assumptions were alike, with the single difference he read love in the *kinical* filiation: by turning the phantasm into the absolute subject of love, he devalued love as existential experience. By searching for a common denominator to the symbolic figures of knowledge and to the individual experience, Bruno was among the first thinkers to deprive images of their (medieval) ontological value. As attached to an external sun, the Bruneian eyes can be easily infected with the beautiful shadows of Illusion.

The Bruneian illusion of absolute power invested images (*phantasmata*) with the dignity of an absolute subject of all possible experience: given that Bruneian images do not illustrate with respect to the original, they reshape and replace the original in a manner that destroys the ontological priority of lived encountering, rendering the truth of experience as equivalent with the scarce, fluid quality of individual recollection.

From Ficino to Bruno, the magic of love abandons its natural “entitlement” and adapts the universalist obsession of absolute power. *Magia* becomes, through its new intersubjective application, the fantastic platform for the emergent political anthropology of absolutism. In other words, the art of intersubjective magic discovers the power of image as the locus where experience becomes possible and invests the image with the semiotic power to generate dialectical oppositions in language. Bruno’s distopian bonding and Campanella’s “magic” Utopia can be read as complementary illustrations to the same preoccupation for social control: the first starts from images, presenting them as the source of all dialectics in history, the second play images on words, prescribing a new semiotic regime of conformity between the Law, its symbolic originator, and its ritual space of performance. In Campanella’s *Civitas Solis*, Bruneian bonds are first employed for the possible jurisdiction they can confer on the ideological slogan. Between the two poles of image and word, the modern play of origins inaugurates its characteristic stage. Myth loses its metaphysical prestige; instead, it defines its prescriptive utility.<sup>331</sup> Subsequently, the modern art of manipulative politics (as we inherited it from Machiavelli, Bruno, Campanella) relies, as I suggested before, on a reductive interpretation of origins. After loosing their transcendental truth in the play of analogy, the hybrid figure of analogy absorbs the magical power from its forgotten demiurge. In Agamben’s terms, history is no longer understood as transcendently bound by the will of God, because its object is no longer Christian diachrony but the abstract “opposition between diachrony and synchrony that characterises every human society.”<sup>332</sup> Most important for our argument, he continues—the absolute presence (a precise instance as intersection of

synchrony and diachrony) *is a pure myth*, which Western metaphysics makes use of to guarantee the continuation of its dual continuation of time.” Thus, the beginnings of modern historicity implied the devaluation of ritual, whose necessary performance no longer accommodates the contradiction between a mythic past and a profane present, but re-forms time in its necessary opposition between a lost diachrony (as an ideal regime of participation to the mythical narrative) and a desirable structure (as a predetermined order of history).

#### **IV. 8. Eliade’s “archetypal persuasive argument”**

When measured on a broader philosophical scale, mythical traditions bring into play a common preoccupation with the reinvention of meaning: they relate human condition to its symbolic position in the cosmos, a universe that, during the sixteenth century, threatens to reveal the fallacies of the Ptolemean idea. At this point, a short excursus in the language of history of religions will be beneficial for the comprehension of my analysis. In the anthological study *Images and Symbols*, subtitled *Studies in Religious Symbolism*,<sup>333</sup> historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, proposed an original terminology for the understanding of myths. In concordance with Karl Gustav Jung, Eliade discovered that myth and symbol are constitutive of a particular manner of thought that anticipates (this is to say comes before and has autonomy over) both psychological and chronological-historical sequences. Symbolic intellection, Eliade thought, is not only typical of children and poets: it represents a universal quality of human existence, one that precedes and also supplies images to speech and logocentric reasoning. His description takes into account the ontological status of signifiers, without which the world would remain unintelligible:

The symbol reveals certain aspects of reality – the deepest aspects – which defy any other means of knowledge. Images, symbols and myths are not irresponsible creations of the psyche; they respond to a need and

fulfill a function, that of bringing to light the most hidden modalities of being. Consequently, the study of them enables us to reach a better understanding of man – of man “as he is,” before he has come to terms with the conditions of History. Every historical man carries on, within himself, a great deal of prehistoric humanity. (*Images and Symbols* 12)

Eliade contends that man’s ante-historic condition does not carry him back to the Darwinian stage of the ape. The non-historical part of the human being partakes in a quality of memory that is allegedly richer and most adequate to the psychological needs of a “beatific existence.” Besides this metaphysicist undercurrent in Eliade’s proposal, one is to remember the embedded value-proposition surrounding the discussion of an archetypal repository of images and symbolic actions that inform the complex needs of knowledge by recourse to hyperbole. Such need for totality in ontological explanations reflects an even deeper craving for meaning on the level of individual perspectivism. Accordingly, it is the human need for meaning that brings under the scrutiny of symbolic reasoning both the horizon of time and the questions of historical experience. This is a move of thought, Eliade assumes, that attempts to transcend the alterations of time:

In escaping from historicity, man does not abdicate his status as a human being or abandon himself to ‘animality’: he recovers the language, and sometimes the experience of a “lost paradise.” (*Images and Symbols* 13)

Eliade’s definitions of myth find themselves at odds with the assumptions of deconstructivism. There are realities that belong solely to the world of the image, and also layers of significance that cannot be “peeled off” in the deconstructivist fashion. Even if language discloses all its possible relativism in its treatment of mythical themes, one can gain a sense of insight when looking into the common glue of myths, something that amounts to the universal quality of human condition and its dependence upon time, place, and destiny. First, one could say that the definition of mythical narratives does not follow the requirements of *genera et speciae*, or, that myths are more than traditional tales.<sup>334</sup> Answering the most

diverse psychological needs for coherence and bringing together subjectivities at the common table of social commitment, the myth's "authenticity" does not depend as much on its narrative clusters, as it is bound to social clusters, determining the quality of reception. This is to say that a myth's "truth" is not affected by "factuality." Myths, as narrative paradigms, can generate their own train of contingencies while binding the world of human experience to their own spells. (Eliade also speaks of the death of myths as "relics" of an archeological rendering of imagination.) In an effort toward intellectual concision, Rennie rephrases Eliade's definition of myth: accordingly, a myth is as a tale whose profundity, imaginative quality, and other-worldliness determines its universal quality as "larger-than-life."<sup>335</sup> Thus, placed above experiential reality, the indirect language of the metaphysical spheres is given in hierophanies, conveying into the language of metaphor realities from above and beyond the world of the listener. In fact, Rennie notes that the qualities of mythical narration emphasized by Eliade's methodology "are truth and reality, in the sense that ... fables can exceed historical reality in truth value." Thus, the valuation of myth depends on the community's "epistemic" dispositions. As such, myths can be acknowledged directly for their formative power: all the pre-classical ages in world cultures display the same "thirst" for the grand ethos. But the opposite is also true: myths can also act as the half-hidden background to the commitments of iconoclastic philosophies that insist on the formative role of denotative reason. In the history of Ancient Greek thought, myths were seen as valuable tools for positive polarizations, as opposed to their use in the analytical philosophy of the Socratics, who look for a different kind of truth – the truth of philosophical analysis:

myth in pre-Socratic Greece, as powerful narrative pieces, was used as supportive material for philosophic standpoints. Even Plato, although reviling this *poesis* of myth as the enemy of philosophy, falls back on this tradition. In the post-Socratic tradition, the reliance on "rational" rather than "mythic" forms of persuasion can be seen as developing from an increased valorization of the empirical/historical as the "real." This

provides a convenient touchstone to determine the “reality” of an argument: that which actually historically occurred would be seen as more “real” (i.e., sacred; more powerful, meaningful, significant, and finally authoritative) than that which was a human fabrication.(Rennie Ch.7)<sup>336</sup>

The breach in Greek culture occurred during the post-Socratic period. This period emphasized rational language as a more powerful tool than mythical persuasion—denounced to be lacking philosophical proofs. However, Eliade points out that in myths, one could see the quintessential true story. Unlike history, which favors the victors, myth – Eliade writes elsewhere—“tells only of that which *really* happened.”<sup>337</sup> In this exemplary tension between Truth and truths, the figure of modernity emerged as a *Janus bifrons*, out of irresolution between cognitive modes. Indeed, modern man finds himself in an antagonistic relation with the world of the sacred, one that can be assessed as a psychological loss. The reality of the sacred speaks of a different ontological quality of the truth, the breakthrough of which “establishes the World and makes it what it is today... The Myth is regarded as a sacred story, and hence a “true history,” because it always deals with realities.” Thus, when judged from the perspective of mythical truths in cognitive acts, the differential language of historicity and historical experience reveals either inferior or conflicting versions of the truth, emerging out of the loss of genuine feeling of sacredness as an accessible horizon. This association of truth with the original period of creation can itself be labeled as “an archetypal persuasive argument” (Rennie Ch.7). Myths cannot be judged by reference to any other central quality than their commitment to sacredness, in spite of the fact that thematic and functional classifications can be used successfully.<sup>338</sup> Eliade’s insistence upon the autonomy of mythical truths in relation with the world of historical actuality is essential for the proper understanding of his system. The Cosmos “exists” because human consciousness absorbs the notion within its cognitive modalities. (It exists for as long as it comes into the sight of the reasoning individual as a universe.) As intuitions of totality, hierophanic truths are the most elevated form of participation



to existence. Historical truths as local perspectives upon the whole are always present, yet, the “truth” of experience is tested by its exposure to mythical lenses.

Eliade’s claim is that the world of modernity that emerged out of the sixteenth century has not abandoned its reliance upon mythical structures, as it has often been asserted. The modern episteme diverted its need for self-confirmation in rationalized, diluted explanations of the truth.<sup>339</sup> Thus, modern man’s reliance upon myth, even if not acknowledged overtly, has positive effects upon the *psyche*: it heals the web of social memory and it also legitimizes institutions, whose authority is established by reference to a myth of sacrifice and order. Myths justify the logic of historical transformation, reintegrating the short memory of cognitive shock in the broader horizons of totality. Conversely, “the destruction of an established order, the abolition of an archetypal image was equivalent with a regression into chaos, into the pre-formal, undifferentiated state that preceded cosmogony” (Eliade, *Myths and Symbols* 38). In other words, the psychological investment in myths has to be seen as a perennial trait, even though their functions suit the ideological priorities of different epistemologies. Their common function is to connect reality with the story of origins, to ascribe understanding to a mode of thought committed to teleological interpretations:

Every myth shows how a reality came into existence, whether it be the total reality, the cosmos, or only a fragment – an island, a species of plant, a human institution. (*Sacred and the Profane*, passim)<sup>340</sup>

The cosmogonic myth, Eliade thinks, is the prototype of all possible myths because it is the pattern of all myths of origin. The cosmic egg, a holistic pattern, is analyzed at large: in the cosmic egg (a common motif of cosmogonic myths) all the possibilities of the future world are present *in nuce*. The need for totality is central to Eliade’s system, since “totality” is said to denote a propensity of thought present in every human act. But this search for totality needs to be discussed in relation with a second element, which is the need for centrality, typical of all human perspectivism.<sup>341</sup> Man’s understanding of the Cosmos grows in dependence on his

immediate universe of experience, which produces the irreducible perspective of any possible identity project.<sup>342</sup>

The twin-idea of the center, the Center of the World and that of the presence of the Universal Sovereign (seen as the guardian presence of historical and cosmic transformations), must be taken into account as a value concept imported from the language of the History of Religions. In this situation, the idea of center has to be discussed in relation to its differential attributes in the collective imagination. Indeed, such centers of cultural identity can be seen as sacred spaces, while their sacredness depends upon the community's memory and symbolic values. "Centers" can be found in every culture, and their symbolic position equates the boundaries of the collective imagination. In other words, centers mark clusters belonging to collective imagination and they are to be associated with the guardian figures, with the properties of beliefs and with the quality of the cognitive perceptions. "Every [cultural] microcosm, every inhabited religion has what may be called a Centre; that is to say, a place that is sacred above all" (Eliade, *Images and Symbols* 52). One could easily connect these customs with the symbolism of time and renewal, in which the world of history looks for its redeeming sacrificial actors. Thus, the tension between the "archetypal" and the "historical" becomes visible out of the need for proper figures of reconciliation. Indeed, leaving aside for a moment any reference to poststructuralist skepticism, we cannot miss from sight that, in spite of the different attributes of historical variations, "the morphology of the sacred" is the same, producing similar figures and inducing comparable offshoots. In other words, the human psyche relies on archetypal images that render themselves visible in "the tendency of every historical form to approximate as nearly as possible to its archetype, even when it was realized at a secondary or insignificant level." Eliade's system is structured around the central pillar of the sacred, yet the alternative is also acknowledged as possible. The historian of religions admits that the knowledge of the spiritual worlds can be used in the quasi-magic wisdom of "binding," signifying the magic operation of creation of a new

cosmogony. The terrible sovereign of Dumézil's studies—a figure of the Indo-European mythologies—is described by Eliade as a figure, who

at the very heart of the function of sovereignty is opposed to that of the Sovereign Law-Giver. (Varuna is opposed to Mitra, Jupiter to Fides); and, on the other hand, compared with the warrior-gods who always fight by military means, The Terrible Sovereign has a kind of monopoly of another weapon – magic. (152)

As such, the sacred can be constructed by applying “practical” knowledge of the archetype. Their construction signified a new creation of the world, whose possibility was ensured by similarity with the first creation, the beginning from an embryo” (Eliade, *Images and Symbols* 52). In one classical instance, the Vedic ritual fires ignited on the New Year signified a rejuvenation of cosmogonic order. (The English custom of “the burning of the bush” stands, I assume, for the same sort of renewal.) But rituals need to be kept alive. When the old customs or the ancient holy places lose their magical force, the thematic structure of myths adopts new names, places, and figures. Eliade gives here a definite example, namely the construction of a *mandala*. Even though the following fragment is not directly relegated to my theme of study, I am attempting here to build the basis of an original comparison between the structure of Utopian representations and that of sacred spaces. In fact, Eliade's discussion of *mandala*'s initiatory functions can prove productive for the future discussion of Utopian and scenic symbolic spaces:

The term itself means “a circle”; the translations from the Tibetan sometimes render it by “centre” and sometimes by “that which surrounds”. In fact, a mandala represents a whole series of circles, concentric or otherwise, inscribed within a square; and in this diagram, drawn on the ground by means of coloured threads or coloured rice powder, the various divinities of the tantric pantheon are arranged in order. The mandala represents an *imago mundi* and at the same time a symbolic pantheon. The initiation of the neophyte consist, among other

things, in his entering into different zones and gaining access to the different levels of the mandala. (*Images and Symbols* 52)

This instance should be understood as part of a broader discussion on how to construct “magical centers” in a historical and spatial environment that takes into account the sovereign’s privileged position. Binding thus signifies the typical operation through which the power of gods is invested upon the sovereign’s shoulders. He is bound by the distant God of the first creation and is allowed to bind, in effect, the world subdued to him. Here, the historian of religions acknowledges his tribute to Dumézil’s work: Romulus, “a tyrant as terrible as marvelous, who binds with all-powerful bonds, founder of the wild Luperci and the frantic Curiaces,” (Dumézil, qtd. in Eliade 93)<sup>343</sup> resembles Varuna, Ouranos, and Jupiter. Among other classical sources, Dumézil based his theory of “the binding king” on a text by Plutarch (*Romulus* 26) according to which Romulus was always escorted by two magician-assistants, “men armed with rods, and girded with straps, ready to bind at once those whom he ordered them to bind” (Eliade, *Images and Symbols* 93). Dumézil described the magic power of the Indian God “Varuna” as an archetypal mastery of bonds. Eliade goes a step further in discussing the themes of the magician god in relation with the magic of “binding” (*Images and Symbols* 94-95). He also talks about its range of applicability to different Indo-European traditions. Accordingly, Varuna, as the archetype of the terrible sovereign, is noted for his power to “bind and unbind men at a distance” (Dumézil, qtd. in Eliade, *Images and Symbols*), a magic virtue of leadership reiterated in Bruno’s *A General Account on Bonding*. The Hindu iconographic depiction shows Varuna with a cord in his hand—a key to understanding both sovereignty and bonding; significantly enough, Bruno’s magician of Gnostic and Cabbalistic extraction, displays the power to ascend the spheres on the silver “woven” from his ethereal body. Again, discussing the occult status of “centers,” Eliade develops an idea found in Dumézil:

the bonds of Varuna are also magical, *as sovereignty itself is magical*;  
they symbolize those mystic forces retained by the chieftain, which are

called Justice, administration, the royal and the public security and all the powers. (Eliade 95)

Nevertheless, Eliade does not hide his dissatisfaction with Dumézil's explanation, because he believes that Varuna's nature transcends the qualities of a sovereign magician, embracing the attributes of omniscience, and meeting the standards of an Ouranian divinity, thus displaying magnetic power in conjunction with immobility and clairvoyance. Varuna's attributes are diverse, and Eliade's analysis expands far beyond the focus of my own study.<sup>344</sup> However, what needs to be retained from this short excursus is that the magical powers of gods correspond to the mythical prestige of the first rulers. Other divine beings, such as Varuna, have their own *maya*, here explained as the supernatural power to bind.

The re-creation of the center around the sovereign's figure, who can reconstruct the symbolic center of an entire civilization around his charisma, makes possible a mythical geography as an actualization of the archetypal play. Designating the new *axis mundi* in the sovereign's presence, this geography corresponds to the magical foundation of sacred orders in history. The principle of "centrality" acts as a differential theme of sovereignty within these sacred geographies that have in common the plurality of spiritual realms connected with the "governor's" world. In fact, the difference between knowledge and ignorance amounts to the leader's shamanic abilities, particularly to his memories of the world of the departed. Given the principle of communication between worlds, the knower of this special art "embodies" the sacredness of the space, as a main actor in their philogeny. Centrality is worshipped in temples, the sacredness of which can be discussed with reference to their functions as places suited for rites of passage. Every temple can be seen as an *axis mundi*, translated as "a zone of intersection" between ontologically different worlds, thus ensuring a "link between Heaven and Earth" (Eliade, *Images and Symbols* 41).<sup>345</sup> In this context, the role of the mythical sovereign is that of a path-opener, where the symbolism of the path speaks of a typical principle of communication between semantic entities fused in a region of common structuring. The "pathway" corresponds to a ladder between physical and

metaphysical regions, the “climbing” of which triggers the shaman’s abilities of omniscience and omnipotence.

## V. Conclusions: Emplacements

### V. 1. Reassurance in lieu of redemption

In this architecture of metaphysical zones described by Eliade, where human access to other realms is restricted by spiritual guardians, the sovereign's symbolic position finally assimilates the divine status, as his knowledge of the occult breaks the ontological barrier. This amounts to a quality of mediation that compensates for both the dissimilitude of regions in the world of metaphysics and for the correspondent oblivion in the realm of postlapsarian morality.<sup>346</sup> Here, "in the world of sublunary regions," the magician king's presence is seen as a unique opportunity for universal salvation, a "self-serving" redemption through enlightened politics offered to the world of the blind in response to the recognition of sovereign power.

Now, returning to Prospero's "magic," interpreted further as a theatrical lesson on the magic foundations of sovereignty, I feel tempted to broaden Eliade's original context, by re-ascribing the traditional shamanic qualities to the "the new leader's" epistemic prerogatives. From a cultural anthropological perspective, this re-ascription cannot be taken for an interpretational abuse: such returns to the psychological *fons origen* of mythical power have been symptomatic of all the documented political histories of the world. When compared to the traditional themes of theocratic politics, the task of the lay-politician is different only in degree and perspective, since any approach to "mythologems" needs to take into account another *zeitgeist*, seen as different economy of social relations. Like never before, the pre-modern *regio dissimilitudinis* between the theological assertions of paradise and the goals of practical politics needs a compensative order, found in the proactive reorientation of public imagination to the alternative futures opened by utopian texts. The already introduced notion of "agonism" in the discussion of *theatrum mundi* stands for the same tendency, where the idea of center finds operative designations in the symbolic map of the imperial order.

To the first Protestant monarchs, taken here as pre-modern leaders, the re-assertive creation of “the center” becomes a political operation that takes into account the broader “politics of paradise” (maybe less Augustinian and more Miltonic), where the general desire for wealth has to take into account the symbolic promise of a new history, foreshadowing the project of a global civilization to which the promise of “milk and honey” has been re-ascribed.<sup>347</sup> Leaving aside the exotic instances of Eliade’s analysis, the anthropological principles of sovereignty are the same, regardless of cultural borders. To the history of British expansion, the principle of “terra nullius” becomes a portent of an original political history, and, implicitly, of an updated hagiographical gloss. Analogically, I can support now an interpretation of Prospero’s undisputed sovereignty over Caliban’s island in light of similar moral ambivalences, occurrences in the light of which, we will have to admit, it is hard to revalidate the pro-Christian hermeneutical tradition of *The Tempest*.

In justifying a situation for which the maxims of traditional Christian ethics did not find proper applications, the compensative imperial motif emerged as an original moral standard, where the normative of civilization as order and knowledge prevailed. As acknowledged in other contemporary contributions to postcolonial studies, the tension between genuine shock and persuasiveness becomes productive in the field of cultural creativity: “magic realisms,” as creative perceptions of paradoxical encounters, are always born in the inverosimile contacts between communities or individuals that do not share the same epistemic lenses. The different psychological recollections of mythical history and historicity, as the carriers of meaning in these clashes, become strong portents of significance in the world of literature, to which any possible confusion and collision shows its sublimated outcome in the world of moral narration. If epic misunderstandings can supply the raw material for future literature, conversely, in a territory without linguistic bridges or definite exchange values, the historical colonizer has to strive for a different virtue: a powerful voice, one that could bring the aboriginal’s cognitive shock to a either seduce or tame from the distance of irreconcilables.



## V. 2. The magic of sovereignty applied to the rules of drama

With the first representation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, English theatre opened its stage to an uncommon event in the history of dramatic intrigue. At the beginning of June 1609, nine ships departed from England. Six hundred colonists had just embarked, heading for the recently founded American settlement of Virginia. Seven weeks into the voyage, a hurricane dispersed the convoy and pushed the Sea Venture, one of the frigates, to another latitude than that of its destination. After losing sight with its escort, the frigate was considered lost, once the hurricane abated. The badly damaged boat reached - with no human losses - the Bermudas, a place reputed to be a stormy Hell, inhabited by harmful spirits and fairy-tale monsters. In the following nine months, under the captain's guidance, the colonists, who seemed to have enjoyed their seclusion on the Robinsonian island, built a new ship of indigenous timber. The new boat reached Jamestown by May, 1610, after sailing northward for two weeks. The experience of colonists provoked rumors in new and old England, and, within a few months, became the favorite subject at Court. William Strachey's letter, entitled *True Repertory of the Wrack and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates Night*, certainly inspired Shakespeare to write *The Tempest*, a play that satirized a failed (probably real) attempt of the shipwrecked sailors to depose the newly appointed governor. Sylvester Jourdain's *Discovery of Bermudas* published in 1610 was certainly the playwright's alternative source. But Shakespeare could have found additional inspiration, Demaray says, in *Hakluyt's Principall navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation*, published in 1583, or in John De Mandeville's and Montaigne's essays. According to Demaray, the first documented performance of *The Tempest* "took place in front of King James at court, almost certainly in the Masquing House, on the evening of 1 November 1611 just after All Hallows Eve when demonic spirits were believe to roam the earth" (24). Even though many cultural historians have found valid parallels between Shakespeare's drama and the Virgilian ethos, or between *The*

*Tempest* and the Renaissance Court Masque,<sup>348</sup> the play presented an original idea of the plot, as new as the event the play was relating.

Twelve years after losing his Duchy, a learned magician, having miraculously escaped from a storm with his daughter, deviates the ship of his former usurper, and through magic powers never invoked before on a London stage, raises a tempest that causes a ship and its occupants—those who had stolen his Duchy and cast him adrift—to wash ashore on his island. Earlier plays, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, had already accustomed theater-goers to Shakespeare's meta-theatrical excursions into metaphorical spaces and to the language of action-magic performed by fantastic agents. Other Shakespearean texts, such as *The Winter's Tale* or *Hamlet*, prove that the late Shakespeare's preoccupation with the reformation of theater engaged the fictional gaps and the lapses of time within a coherent strategy of world-remaking; the English cycle and the following tragedies show Shakespeare's slow roadwork towards an original political axiology, sustained by a correspondent aesthetic of performance. Yet, in spite of the many portraits of displaced kings in Shakespeare's historical plays, no other play treated the symbolic royalty in a similar manner. Along these lines, I will analyze Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as a crucial turning point in the evolution of the Western political imaginary. Prospero, enjoying a great deal of those prerogatives once given to Christ, will be shown to theatrically embody the Savior on the historical stage.

The connoted abandonment of classical teleologizing techniques represents a gradual move in Shakespeare's historical theatre: as Hart shows in *Theater and World*, the thematic transgression of Christian agency did not occur explicitly until the histories in the Second Tetralogy. Throughout his career as a dramatist, Shakespeare showed a constant preoccupation for the modus proper of depicting England's history in conjunction with the rules of classical drama. Elizabethan century culture took into account a multitude of sources that qualify as common loci of dramatic representation: among them, Hart writes, were "the Senecan reworking of the story of the house of Atreus," based upon the classical

tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides; “the miracle and morality plays: the humanist drama about politics; and the history plays from about 1580 to the closing of the theatres in London” (*Theater and World* 238-239).

In some instances, this cultural heritage might be only marginally related to the Bard’s innovative strategies in historical plays, yet Shakespeare’s thematic and stylistic repository situate his plays in this dramatic tradition (cf. Hart, *Theater and World* 239). The classical repository of satyr plays certainly offered Shakespeare occasions for transgressing the Aristotelian conventions, since their mixture of sophistication and baldness, bravery and satire, gravity and wit “could occasionally involve burlesque and tragic myths” (Hart, *Theater and World* 240). Beyond, the bard’s unique position in Elizabethan London is that of an aspiring playwright who is bound to compromise between theatrical modalities associated with antagonistic theological and historical accents. “Shakespeare’s history faces the difficulty and obtains the advantages of dramatic representation, so that although it may share characteristics with epic and non-dramatic representations it can never face identical problems” (*Theater and World* 239), writes Hart. Evidently, in writing his historical plays, Shakespeare made use of solid primary sources, such as Holinshed and Froissart. But Shakespeare’s reliance upon of medieval chronicles was supplemented by a more creative insight into the classical plot and dramatic conventions of the Aeschylus trilogy, whose Atrean tragedy was a vivid motif of medieval and Renaissance moral and historical narratives. “How can a playwright shape and cut off time, write a history or a story about the past, when time or history continues?” Hart asks rhetorically in *Theater and World*. The self-reflexivity of the Second Tetralogy, where the “generic friction” rules, is analyzed in relation with the birth of meta-theatricality:

This self-reflexivity and self-critical language may contribute to the problems that characters and critics have of deciding the significance of history, the nature of kingship, and the relation of public and private in these plays. The works question themselves and lead to generic instability in the history play when it most needs order. *Henry V* and the

tetralogy it tries to end debate the possibility of the history play and of history and lead toward the self-reflexive debate of the problem plays.  
(*Theater and World* 240)

The bard's positioning to classical English history took into consideration the ideological tenets of the English Reformation, and conflated these with the "protochronist" readings of English history typical of the emergent Tudor myth, "in which England is punished," Hart writes, "for the deposition of Richard the Second until Richmond can unite the Red and White Roses and so redeem the broken country" (*Theater and World* 240). It is probable that the formative accents present in each of the four history dramas of Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy were articulated in response to the omnipresent succession debate in Elizabethan history. To Shakespeare's viewers, including the Queen herself, plays like *Richard II*, *Henry IV, Part One*, and *Henry IV, Part Two*, and *Henry V* could have offered pretexts of reflection with regard to the future of the Tudors and Albion's future.

A current theme of recent Shakespeare scholars associates the displacement and disparagement of the king's two bodies. The complex applications of the alleged "migration of the holy"<sup>349</sup> and the subsequent translocation of the mythical privileges of kingship from myth to ideological attributions remain a marginal edge of my demonstration. In agreement with Hart's analysis in *Theater and World*, I will limit myself to reassert his view, namely that these plays discover either the disenchanting semantics of secularization, or, complementary, they invent ways of reassurance between contemporary English history and teleological models:

Unlike Corpus Christi plays, the histories in Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy do not contain constant reassurances of Christ's agency. ... In these plays he often focuses on immediate political and human concerns, implies that English history will continue, and suggests that all literature can be seen as a fall when observed from the point of view of the Bible, so that all unbiblical writing is words; if the Bible is viewed as the

supertext, literature is subsumed in the triumph of humankind in the mercy and grace of Christ. My focus assumes the irony of human ignorance or blindness, the middle earth of Augustine's sixth age. No direct intervention or participation occurs in the Second Tetralogy. Ultimately, the premise, the frame of reference, origin and end determine meaning in history. (*Theater and World 4*)

"Elder" Shakespearean kings had already summoned the specters of political absolutism throughout their political dilemmas. Inevitably, Shakespeare rewrote the history of Richard's and Henry's,<sup>350</sup> often making innovations suitable for an empirical political philosophy, in which the legitimacy of the ruler was made dependent on both natural right and knowledge of either Machiavellian or "magic" strategies of state control. Having speculated to the limit the chain of disasters that followed Richard's death, Shakespeare built anew a historical drama that understood history as a stage of action—a disaffected platform, where traditional order could no longer hold for cosmic harmony.<sup>351</sup> Necessity ruled on Shakespeare's historical stage, absorbing the symbolic registers of power within its convoluted logic. Thus, for the king's performance, which was bound to simulating the incorruptible body's immortality, the *theatrical* monarch had to incorporate Christian prerogatives and repress alternatives. Otherwise, his reign may have confirmed itself ineffective, while disclosing its tyrannical side: however, the metaphysical drama of Henry's personal guilt remained a secondary issue when compared to the possibility of political failure. Noticeably, Shakespearean monarchs are illustrations of the symbolic and historic paradoxes of legitimacy, when the state of exception justifies either the separation of the two notions or their reassessment as part of new confluences. In this context, Richard McCoy (*Alterations of State: Sacred Kingship in the English Reformation*, 2003) analyses the deep cultural resonance of Reformation debates around Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. McCoy suggests that the dawn of the Reformation in England determined a "migration of the holy" from the Savior's real presence in the Catholic Mass to the "animating and redemptive royal presence" of the Tudor kings. He also

describes the emerging culture of modernity as increasingly divertive in relation with the understanding of sacredness, whose absence from recent historical experience corresponds to an alternative internalization of sacred space, where imagination is designated as the new place of sacred communion.<sup>352</sup>

From the theological and spiritual perspective of the Middle Ages to the political anthropology of history, Shakespeare's heroes stop at each station of the journey towards modernity, denouncing the inconsistency of the Medieval *episteme* and advocating for new public rituals aided by theatrical effects. And when the Elizabethan spectator chooses the magic of the old symbols, he / she presumably pays little attention to historical conformity.<sup>353</sup> Elizabethan audiences may have indulged themselves in the facile enjoyment of their emotions, and their expectations might have been entirely fulfilled by the Shakespearean warriors' allegorical disputes. And if Shakespeare often misapprehends the historical chronicle for the sake of representative coherence, the new drama's hidden *blueprint* becomes evident once the Critique re-discovers *it* within its thematic and structural progression: the young Shakespeare's quest for a common denominator between the language of drama and England's half-mythical history, given in his ambition to stage England's "quasi-biblical history," is counterbalanced by the late Shakespeare's propensity towards unconventional theatrical forms of expression.

It is finally *The Tempest* that refines these proceedings beyond the stereotypes that held for the action of fate on stage, and this late aesthetic revolution, granting the character an unprecedented degree of autonomy, can also qualify as the seed of a new political axiology. In conjoining the traditionally divergent conventions of magic ritual and tragic drama, Shakespeare's last major play is built on a modern and esoteric logic of episodes typical of the "theatre of absolution." This has been carved as an original syntagm in my work, where I employ an original term that aims for the proper denomination of the play's unique denouement. Hypnosis-centered, the social construction of reality envisaged by Prospero could be read as a prefiguring metaphor of Louis XIV's absolutist reign, in anticipation of this period's understanding of the ways in which collective

desires and certainties can be programmed. Given the historical and philosophical horizon of my analysis, corresponding to the emergent years and period of the Baroque era, I will identify the modern art of statesmanship's semantic frame in the narrative conventions of the "magic theatre," a drama whose meta-rhetorical agencies and mimetic constructs find inspiration from the postulations of inter-subjective magic. Having abandoned belief in the *telos* of history, the enlightened politician of Shakespeare's last major play will be shown to consciously construct social meaning (i.e., systems of constraints) in ways analogous to the rules of narrative composition and dramatic performance. Furthermore, in accord with the Adornian critical tradition, *embodied language in action* will be considered as *the essence of statesmanship*. In all likelihood, in Shakespeare's late theatre, the question of representation takes centre stage in *The Tempest* and offers the subject a new habitat whose immanence does no longer need transcendental support or transport.

*The Tempest's* novelty, I am going to assert at this stage of my demonstration, did not reside in the presence of a magician king as the main character, but in the distribution of events within their magic framing. To quote Peter Greenaway's opinion, Prospero, an alleged alter-ego of the playwright himself, a creator and manipulator of figures, "is the last major role that Shakespeare invented, reputedly, in the last complete play he wrote, and there is much, both in the character and in the play, that can be understood as a leave-taking of the theatre and a farewell to role-playing and the manufacturing of illusion through words" (9). The implausible conflict (furnished with the magic spells that Shakespeare evokes in the play) requires from contemporary critical responses awareness of a modern logic of episodes and correspondent narrative agencies. Undoubtedly, the duke of Milan tattooed his lips with cabalistic symbols and sullied his forehead with celestial inks. Visionary and vindictive, his sorcery is essentially an apotropaic act, a wager with time itself, given in the lines of conversion between Prospero's recuperative work and the legitimizing ends of the royal performance. And the inventive techniques used at the Whitehall (then at the Globe) empowered

the representation of omniscience as effective differential positioning of “generative” narrative agents, supporting the “Deus ex Machina” effects with ingenious backstage aggregations of wheels, ropes and pulleys. As Demaray emphasizes,

During the first vision, Prospero is said to be “on the top (invisible),” that is, in court theatrical terminology, at the highest, most commanding position in the Whitehall scenic heavens wearing iconographic “weeds” designed to signify invisibility. Apparitional shapes on the stage below – shapes that the iconography implies are subject to the Magus’s power, given his “top” hierarchical position – carry a banquet into view and then, with inviting motions while dancing, beckon the conspirators forward toward false delights which remain out of reach. (Demaray 58)

Still, the manner in which Shakespeare chooses to present Prospero as the legitimate ruler implies the effective re-territorializing of the Duke’s prerogatives on the cloudless island. Because the Milanese survivors did not settle as colonizers on the island, Prospero’s jurisdiction does not attempt to redeem the whole atoll, neither would it invest excessively in Caliban’s potential humanization. After trying to rape Miranda, the monster’s presence is tolerated by the princess merely because he chops logs for the fire and brings water from the hidden spring, a secret that Caliban attempts to barter each time he looks for another master. Significantly, Caliban’s betterment no longer preoccupies Prospero after their first educational failure, or maybe Prospero’s magic reprisal places the depraved Caliban in the same frame with the drunken jesters, Stephano and Trinculo, secondary characters prone to desecration. Finally, it is debatable if the monster is left alive to restore again his power over his domain, or, simply to witness the Duke’s omnipotence over the inimical Creation. Creeping to and fro on Prospero’s island, Caliban delineates the Duke’s magic territory, embodying the fate of all those unfaithful to the Prince’s protectorate.



Prospero's power never abandons itself to ubiquity. As Bruno advised in his *De Magia* (III) "it is essential that the performer of magic have an active faith and that the subject a passive faith" (qtd. in Couliano 93-94). The bonding operation becomes possible grace to the bonder's <sup>354</sup> exceptional mastery of his imagination. This is a four-step process, Couliano states; my decision to summarize these stages below reflects my intention to describe the logic of "remote action" as a ritual in its own right, one that, in this play, penetrates the logic of dramatic coherence:

the first [operation of bonding] is fastening the bond or chain (*iniectio seu invectio*), the second is the actual bond itself (*ligatio seu vinculum*), the third is the attraction resulting from it (*attractio*), the fourth is the enjoyment of the object that gave rise to the whole process (*copulatio quae fruitio dicitur*). (Couliano 96)

Likewise, Prospero's patience will make possible his magic triumph. However, before the magic resolution, his visionary dignity condemns himself to a sovereign immobility, which generates the "alephic" point of his learnt art of omniscience. He is not, however, to be taken for an indifferent generator of outcomes. Prospero "loves," but he does it in his own way, mixing detachment and prevision. Again, Bruno's instructions are relevant: "The love of the lover is passive, it is a chain, a *vinculum*. Active love is something else, it is power active in things and it is this that enchains. [*est ille qui vincit*]" (qtd. in Couliano 96-97). <sup>355</sup> Nonetheless, in anticipation of the boat's magic renovation, the exiled alchemist had to build a magic atelier: Prospero's cave can be metaphorically described as a Borgesian mirror, reflective and encyclopedic at the same time, an "alephic" intersection of physical and metaphysical coordinates, bringing to his sight remote worlds. Prior to assuming the role of the judge, he is for now the unworldly seer and charioteer, the "*shasrākṣa*" or "thousand eyed," reminiscent of either Cabbalistic illuminates or of Eliade's Ouranian sovereign. And, like prince Oberon—his earlier magic alter-ego—Prospero enjoys unlimited benefits from mastery over the elemental spirits, yet, unlike his nocturnal predecessor, the Duke's motivation to conjure the magic

bestiary resides in a provisory note: he will release the airy spirit, sworn to his authority as soon as his justice will come in its proper place, aided by their wizardry (a promise fulfilled in Act V.i., before the Epilogue). Dressed in stylish Venetian garments, apparently self-sufficient, invisible originator of all present and virtual occurrences, Prospero rather prefers to use his alter-ego Ariel's services for celerity, whenever distances limit his direct intervention into the collateral actions of the play.

Throughout the play, Shakespeare relies on Ariel's mercurial ubiquity more than he invests in Prospero's all-encompassing immobility. Ariel's cultural genealogy is ambiguous: he could be a spirit of the English woods, but most likely he originated in the oriental family of djinns, spirits capable of assuming animal forms and putting their magic knowledge in the service of potentates. Not only does Ariel listen to Prospero's orders, but - as a mercurial apparition with some psychopomp attributes (such as celerity, shape-shifting, trans-location in between the intra-mundane and trans-mundane domains, magic guidance and oniric intrusion) - he fulfils Shakespeare's needs as a playwright. In comparison, Ariel's mischievous cousin, Puck, had enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy in thought and movement, and had a better knowledge of human nature: unlike Ariel, Robin - the fiend took active part in judging his victims and enjoyed a distinct theatrical destiny, relegated to his farcical vocation. Acting in *sotto voce*, or displaying limited mastery over spiritual creatures, Ariel merely acts as a narrative agent between the remote worlds put together on stage: Prospero and Miranda's cave, the wild island, and the cliffs where the Milanese and Neapolitan courtiers were pushed by the magic wind. None of these conjectures would have been possible without his inter-mediation, because Shakespeare assembled his plot around the assumptions of magic. In other words, he did not deliver a single plausible episode with respect to the classical conventions of classical storytelling—unity of time, place and action—as relegated to the postulations of *thematic unity*, taken as the material of dramatic verity. And if the unities are still there, maybe more so than in any Shakespearean

play, yet they are employed as the ligatures of a singular dramatic construct, a last provocation addressed to the Jacobean proto-imperial culture.

Despite its apparent structural unity, the *Tempest*'s narrative reveals that Prospero's logic of magic fully replaces the postulates of the Aeschylean tragedy, which required a dramatic action built in the confines of presence and a dialogue followed by a resolution in accord with the first. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the action as such is no longer held in play by the conflict of the actors: all the local discussions between the dramatic groups illustrate, beyond their dramatic flawlessness, a local determination of Prospero's providential will. Nonetheless, if Shakespeare disengages the moral positions (taken by the characters present on stage, but always separated by a glass wall) there is no (evident) ontological hierarchy between the human and the fantastic instances dramatized on stage: the struggle between the moral instances of good and evil is determined as the magic war of those who manage the occult against those who are managed by the same magic powers, in a play of values where Shakespeare's recourse to the amoral plasticity of "bonding" as the operation designed for the institution of religious orders seems the most valid supposition.

Shakespeare's tribute to the logic of contiguity institutes a new equilibrium of forces between the present narrative instances and a different stake of theatrical representation. I will analyze them in the following lines, while attempting to inquire into the possible consequences of such an inversion. Originating in classical tragedy, the classical drama had two traditional tasks: first, to represent a mythical narrative, second, to make the public community recognize itself on stage (Marin, *Portrait of the King* 68-69). In the Aeschylean tragedy the recognition was mediated by the comments of the chorus; in the Elizabethan drama it was either through a common knowledge of the sacred histories, or through public empathy with the characters' evolutions on stage. In both cases, the subject of the play hinted at a mythical past and a common sense of intuition about the moral implications of the history that the characters were continuing and alluding to on stage. The transcendental value of justice resulted in the confrontation of the two

concurrent perspectives: human fate tragically witnessed its non-conformity to the will of the gods. Thus, the drama of human destiny firmly interrogated the unrepresentable will of divinity, yet it rarely represented the Olympian gods other than through the oblique predictions of the prophet and the ascertaining resolutions of the chorus. Two different layers of objectivity opened the ritual space of identification for the public: the prophet's mediation, which marked the disproportion between the divine perspective over time and the human destiny in history, and the chorus's accompaniment, which, without being able to change the course of the plot, is still acting in the drama, "At another level and at another distance from action" (*Utopics: Spatial Play*, 68). Still, both functions, that of the choir and that of the prophet, were intended only to express the ontological layers of a dramatized ritual. Tyresias' blind apparitions expressed precisely the limits of a narrative agency that can only express a higher will without distorting the message or altering it through subversion. The choir's lack of power to change the course of events on stage stands at the other end of the ontological platform, since its resolutions always come after the resolution has been fulfilled. Human morality cannot concur with divine predicaments; kings do not raise their tombs on Olympian grounds.

Despite Shakespeare's earlier displacements of dramatic unities, no other dramatic experiment went so far as *The Tempest* in reversing the traditionally confined representative frames, spatial, temporal, or axiological. *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare's extreme heterogeneic experiment, limited its search to the production of a novel (a romance), one that beyond proving the superiority of the dramatic genre over its narrative source, did not launch particular strategies to deal with political power as such. Originating in Robert Greene's *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*, the *Winter's Tale* had to bridge two major gaps: spatial remoteness and the temporal lapse, both being overcome by means of the association of miscellaneous episodes written for the same cast of characters. Within a classical situational symmetry that starts in Leontes' misunderstanding, continues in his defiance of the oracle, and ends in his well-deserving repentance,

*The Winter's Tale* conventional closure represents Time as a medium of (providential) displacement. Or, to quote Fitzroy Pyle,<sup>356</sup> “besides stifling critical objections, Time is there simply to pass smoothly (“slide”) from one side of the gap to the other.” Not only is Time itself cast, but the chorus carries within itself Shakespeare’s self-justifying voice, apologizing for having challenged the taboos of the Classical stage:

Impute me not a crime  
To me or my swift passage that I slide  
O’er sixteen years and leave the growth untried  
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power  
To overthrow law and in one self-borne hour  
To plant and o’erwhelm custom. (IV.i. 4-9)

The choir’s statement might bring forth more than an apology, the apology as an *ars poetica*, a meta-narrative consolation emerging in the very disparity of theatrical representation, stemming from the elapsed time of the dramatic stage. Indeed, Time personified, while not having the power to change the events, represents itself as the proper medium for providential reversals,<sup>357</sup> bringing all the subsequent resolutions under its allegorical umbrella. Otherwise, the order of time joins the logic of theatre, ascribing the order of events - following Perdita’s unexpected survival—to its symbolic legitimacy. “Natural” closures are no longer possible along this representational artifice: the breaches in time correspond to the gaps in performance, which, in change, require the playwright’s fervent allegorization of voices. (This sort of schematization proves unproductive for the relation between the life-time friends Polyxenes and Leontes—whose sole authenticity relies in the Sicilian’s jealous misunderstanding. The same recipe, along the second part, renders the Arcadian couple implausible and delivers their drama along intertextual clichés, such as Greene’s popular novel.) Instead, Time’s impersonation grants the character’s agency unlimited pre-eminence over the moral

course of action. Perdita's sixteen years' moratorium corresponds with her pendency (state of suspension, undecidability) between two fathers, the king and the shepherd, which determines her double-fold evolution on stage: neither princess nor shepherdess, she embodies Flora – bringing to life a bucolic Arcadian landscape populated by decorative pastoral groups. Not last, Perdita's allegorical cast compensates Hermione's absence and paradoxically stands for the mother's implausible return "from the dead." In dealing with the thematic difficulties of staging a myth, Shakespeare had first to split the scene, to play the plot at two different levels of theatricality, then to invent two art directors on stage, Camillo and Paulina; finally, the playwright had to recant frames, twisting the initial orders of life and art, by bringing life back to the statue's (already fretting) nostrils. In doing so, Shakespeare showed more than that sculptures and scenic chimeras are both designed to imitate life; he designated mimesis as the pure ground of revelation, and he made the final reversal into a transposition specific to the status of fiction (see Hubbert 127-130). The Aristotelian "limitations upon the poet" that require the artist to describe objects as they are, or as they seem or are said to be, is thus challenged in its very essence: transferring meanings THROUGH poetic confusion, Shakespeare does not close the text within its poetic confines, that is to say, consecrating its intentional allegorical construct, but makes use of poetry to restore the standards of political correctness, which follows, according to Aristotle, "a different denomination of truth".<sup>358</sup>

As a meta-king, Leontes is given complete autonomy in relation to the constraints of plausibility; beyond elaborating his fictions "from scratch," *he visualizes his fantasies and tries to impose them on his counselors*; moreover, once his fabulatory potential comes to an end, Leontes, against any norm of decency in penitence, repents with each occasion he is given to restore his moral image, betraying at both sides of the stage his clumsiness in the "fabric" of vision. Unlike Prospero, who seems to care more for his dynastic line than for his own "vanity," Leontes proves at every station of his role to be a victim of his own fantasy, in both its sad and happy occurrences. Furthermore, the Sicilian's fast-footed helpers,

Camillo and Paulina, victimize their king to the extent that Leontes is manipulated unto his own benefit, a device that endangers the monarch's moral betterment. What saves Leontes from derision is the alternation of angles, the shifting of focus from distinctive nearness to general illustration and vice-versa—or, in Hubbert's words, "a stereotypical view of the proceedings, capable of compensating for any deficiency in the narrative" (113).

Finally, once Prospero's visionary interests obtain Ariel's mercurial help, the two poles of the dramatic intrigue and of its moral ending - as England understood the theatre by the late sixteenth century - were subverted and reverted. First, Shakespeare suggests that not only that the Prince is a prophet, but also that the nobleman has the power to revert history's course with the aid of magic instances. And, not accidentally, Prospero's designative position is articulated in the very antinomy of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. If Oedipus gained and lost his throne from the uncontrollable character of fate, Prospero's visionary capacity appears as the true art of governing, known only by the true. Instead of apologizing in meta-theatrical stanzas for having provoked providence like Leontes, Prospero takes his scenic destiny into his own hands, proposing a different coherence of unities.

Here, one can start fathoming the real price that sixteenth-century knowledge paid in exchange for Prospero's omnipotence. The character Prospero—embodying two traditional poles of the classical tragedy, Tyresias and Oedipus—unifies narrative functions, those of the prophet and the king, that significantly oppose each other in classical tragedy. Oedipus was bound the power of fate through to the prophetic voice of Tyresias, the same predicting voice that had determined that his father, Laius, abandoned Oedipus as a child. In the Sophoclean tragedy, the un-representable character of fate made possible *narration*, while the elucidation of the human passions involved in the plot conformed to the metaphysical commandments of the oracle. The prophet appeared at the turning points of intrigue as an arbiter of Chronos: his task was to circumscribe the representable causes of human actions to the ungraspable reasons of the divine will, thus linking the temporal sequence of moments with their connoted moral ends. In

classical tragedy, the denotation of moments from the beginnings to the end of the play was announced and held by the apparitions of the blind prophet, whose indexical-finger kept and turned the pages in the right order. And the right order, as we know from Aristotle's *Poetics*, always transcended the story presented on stage: the cathartic effect –pity and terror– is aroused by the spectacle of a man who “is not pre-eminent in virtue and justice, and yet on the other hand does not fall into misfortune through vice and depravity, but falls because of some mistake, one among the number of the highly renowned and prosperous, such as Oedipus (Epps’ translation, 1942, II. 11).

Subsequently, the Aristotelian catharsis is generated by the spectator’s revelation of transcendental justice, a justice that “was always there,” having the power to anticipate, determine the manifestation of and bring to a close the inherent mistakes of human acts. In Shakespeare’s play, however, Prospero is both the victim and the redeemer of his own situation: he provokes actions that he has already programmed in his magic atelier, he brings to an end situations that he has already forecasted. Nonetheless, within this programmatic heresy, Shakespeare challenges the classical rules of “probability” and “necessity” for the reign of an episodic arbitrariness, exclusively mastered by the-one-character’s omniscience; finally the plot is no longer stretched ‘beyond its natural possibilities,’ but, as part of a new normative, it is defined against the possibility of any “naturalist” sequence (against *vraisemblance*). The order of wonder competes with the order of nature: as *natura naturata*, the work of art as a meaningful imitation of nature abandons the traditional stage of mimesis for the modern age of representation that worships anew *natura naturans*, celebrating the demiurgic power of poetry, and discovering fairness within its poetic determination. Not only does Prospero create his own justice, he stands as the only source of legitimacy for the “poetic”<sup>359</sup> justice he brings at his hand with the aid of mythological masquerades. In the symbolic reversal of roles with *Fate*, Prospero becomes the unique knower, yet his knowledge knows only about its-own-self and brings each exterior viewpoint



towards verisimilitude with its own: in this sense it owns—both its prerogatives as well as those to whom they are addressed.

Nevertheless, the absorption of functions that Prospero embodies produces a second paradox: Prospero does not belong to the time of his determinate condition as a shipwrecked, hopeless prince, he masters time and, implicitly, fate along his magic traces, being able to provoke his second coming into power. Being a generator of events, he chooses to manipulate their course not only around his political enemies, but against Aristotle himself. *The Tempest's* magic injunction suspends the “real time” of the drama (as *vraisemblance*), imposing the virtual tempo of the magic spell: on the desert, island garments stay new, plotters betray themselves in sleep, and Ariels are constantly at work, ready to take Sebastian and Antonio's daggers from their hands. In the disguise of Aeschylean theatre, a new principle of order articulates chronologically simultaneous moments: that of the sliding doors, namely the narrative agent's (Ariel, in this case) power to navigate to and fro, to synchronize and to bring to a common end apparently disparate narratives (In the twentieth century, the formula will be developed by Hermann Hesse in his *Steppenwolf*).

Theatre pays a fabulous price for the sake of Prospero's order. Shakespeare's choice of showing certainties in the manner of the magic theatre dismisses the ethic and the aesthetic of *catharsis*, and sweeps fate away from the dramatic stage. In *The Tempest*, the denomination of the present is always determined by dynastic interests: the errors and terrors of the past command that the future be always held in check. Notwithstanding, the formula of a representative certainty is given at the Globe in the form of an exclusive *as if*: Prospero's island is a fiction meant to make visible a new strategy of power for the ruler's third eye, it is a private theatre for the aristocrats, with no other rooms for public participation except for the remote gallery. *The Tempest's* representational effect is meant to astonish the spectator, to embarrass the viewer for trespassing in the sovereign's magic atelier: the play refuses the spectator any possibility of identification with the shipwrecked sailors, nor would it allow the viewer's identification with Prospero.

*The Tempest* articulates itself as a comedy of manners at the margins and as a drama of mysteries at the center. The implausibility of Prospero's apparitions could only amplify his mystery: for the aristocrat, the play furnishes a dramatic model for a new mythology of power, based on the remote management of symbolic prerogatives. *The Tempest* brings on stage more than a theatre of the Prince's enlightened justice of absolution, the *futuribles*; it is the showing of a representational space where the future itself can be programmed and channeled through the art of politics.

### V. 3. Prospero's theatrical lesson

Prospero's book of magic takes over the causal logic of events. He himself never hides that he prizes his books above his kingdom. Genealogically, Prospero is a Bruneian magician, an art-director, generator of reality, a visionary dreamer, whose art consists of projecting his own phantasms outside, yet, he never succumbs himself to his own spells. After losing most books of his library in the storm, Prospero's knowledge of occultism, far from being diminished, enriches itself on the insular (play)ground. Nonetheless, Shakespeare suggests that Prospero being temporarily dispossessed of his Duchy is itself an initiatory experience: the Duke, who had neglected the public affairs of his state while in power, finally rediscovered the art of statesmanship on a deserted island where his art was put to work to subdue primitive, half-human shaped spirits. Prospero's triumph over Sycorax,<sup>360</sup> a witch whose depraved power and disgusting offspring intimidated her intercourse with the devil, proved the effectiveness of the erudite, civilizing magic of the Renaissance prince over the elemental demon's wicked boasting.

Yet, Prospero magnified the venture of his exile beyond the initial demonstration of mastery over natural forces. Not only does he gain a victory over the wicked mistress of the island, but he liberates Ariel from the rift in a cloven pine where the witch had kept him for "a dozen years." The Duke of Milan's innate

nobility implies his entitlement over the elemental. Prospero's use of magic conjuration recalls the Paracelsian and Agrippian postulates of alchemical transfiguration. Prospero uses the natural correspondence between signs and nature, and knowing the secret marks of the natural signatures - *convaenentio*, *aemulatio*, *analogia* and *sympatia* (Foucault, *The Order of Things* 28) - is able to impersonate the figure of the savior, for the tiny, delicate spirit of Ariel. Compared with Ariel's new master, Prospero, Sycorax, "the blue-eyed hag" appears to have been nothing more than an archaic spell caster whose allegedly "black magic" consisted of sucking energy from the elemental fields, while interposing between full moons and high tides. Likely, she would qualify as a voodoo priestess, like one of the many African enchantresses relocated from Africa into the New World's plantations (Sycorax, says Prospero, was banished from Algiers [I.ii. 279], practicing sorcery, "so strong / that she could control the Moon, make flows and ebbs, / And deal in her command without her power": V.i: 269-271). Sycorax's accursed power consisted in having the mediumic capacity of coupling with the underlying spirits of earth, but, of course, the witch lacked the visionary capacity of Prospero's forecasts.

Presumably the dead hex's curses were uttered in animals' tongues, because Caliban, her son was not able to articulate a single word until Prospero taught him "what to call the big light and how the lesser that burned by night". However, Caliban, a low-spirited creature, does not have a reason for being separated from the enchantment of his exotic garden: once he learns how to name the stars he suddenly finds himself cut off from the magic order to which he belonged. The very nature of language enslaves Caliban (I.i), and he must follow a master whose ethical commandments required the Neanderthalian creature's unapprehended obedience. The use of words subjects Caliban to the mastery of those who play with words, such as the half-witted Trinculo. After meeting Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo (II.ii) start their favorite play, that of playing God to the unspirited monster. Stephano invites Caliban to kiss the bottle of wine, which he presents as the Holy Book. Caliban, ready to drink, does not receive more than a

few drops from Stephano who, keeping the bottle tight, pretends not to have found the monster's right mouth, and kneels at Caliban's back in search for the seeming orifice. Stephano's voice, whose silhouette is visually obstructed by Caliban's hairy body, frightens Trinculo, who thinks he has met a fiend speaking in two voices. The fiend's two voices stand here for a symbolic allegory of usurpation: Caliban's vile one, which knows only of the animal tongues is amplified by the second mouth, and Stephano's, which resonates in the echoes of the first due to their common passion of desecration. After ridiculing the rite of Eucharist the two anti-mimetic voices find their common tone in the "vaudeville" impersonation of the obedient slave and the omnipotent master. Nonetheless, the duo Caliban-Trinculo reveal their real vocation only in their symbolic relation with Prospero, both the clown and the monster populating the Duke's bestiary of trophies. Legitimate sovereigns have a right to hold in their power: this is to control and display the aborted offspring of chaotic, unnatural couplings. And, as monsters carry out inhuman persuasive abilities, only legitimate rulers can remain untouched by their grotesque aping.

Prospero's alchemic language operates in the manner of Plotinian *logos spermatikos*, of Reason empowered to decant and recall souls from their immemorial sleep, and also to institute a state of legitimate harmony. All the other situational dialogues in the play lay the groundwork for Prospero's final annunciation: after drinking with Sebastian and Antonio, Gonzalo imagines himself the father of a welfare commonwealth, where all things would be achieved "by contraries," for no kind of traffic, no name of magistrate, nor any type of social contract would be allowed, and the reigning, untold rule would be that of eternal laziness. Gonzalo is Prospero's old "maiden," devoted, but doddering after having served Alonso for twelve years. Ironically, the servant's bastardized Eden can only magnify the forthcoming magic kingdom programmed in secrecy by the real Duke: what is unfeasible in Gonzalo's "Neverland" is that "the latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning" (II.i.), in other words, no legitimate order would regulate the time of their happiness. Is this not precisely the pledge of any

usurper to buy a crown at the expense of hopeless promises? Is this not the intimate hope of any bastard, that self-appointed power can be established with the aid of welfare politics?

The bastardized enthusiasm thinks that the return to nature carries out its greed for prestige. However, Alonso, Antonio, and Gonzalo have already been trapped in Prospero's hourglass: their clothes never gather dust, a sip of wine quenches their thirst and hunger for a full day and night. Has time stopped for them? Why are they not falling asleep? What strange tongue moves their lips, what is that drowsy language that their lips are whispering in sleep? Antonio's imagination sees a crown dropping upon Sebastian's head. Sebastian, listens to him "asleep, with eyes wide open; standing, speaking, moving, and yet so fast asleep." Time has stopped. Words deepen their dreams, and Prospero's magic has absorbed their souls into a black box. They have desecrated a miracle, and now the miracle turns its power on those who laughed in the wizard's temple. Their speech neither expresses nor asserts, nor could it be taken as a *logos* –oriented towards the other– even though words are echoed clearly due to the bizarre "quality of the climate." Sebastian's and Antonio's drowsiness made possible their dreaming together, thus betraying their common passion for usurpation. Their words echoed inwardly; what made communication possible was not their expression, but their shared phantasm– a crown that the one has stolen from Prospero in Milan, and for which the other is about to kill Alonso on the island. Antonio dreamed of a crown for Sebastian, while Sebastian dreamed of a throne for himself. However, the island that they were thrown onto is a mute tribunal, a limbo where the rule of *contrapasso* is applied in anticipation, in the sense they betray their most secret desires, at the very moment they fathom them as their own dreams.

In other words, Prospero suits Eliade's definition of sovereignty. Like the mythical Varuna, Prospero sees and knows everything from his privileged location and can punish "by bondage anyone who infringes his laws."<sup>361</sup> Analogically, the Shakespearean stage is a simulating screen where the virtual conspiracy is represented and discharged through the art of magic: Prospero's omniscience works

as an atmospheric medium. The very act of speaking seized them at once in the lure of their reverie; their subjectivity is subjected to an unknown instance, to whom they unconsciously pay tribute. Hence, in the midst of the representation, the two halves of the poisoned apple placed themselves together. And they suited each other. Antonio, the old usurper of Milan, teaches Sebastian, the second born progeny in Naples, how to kill his elder brother Alonso, the legatee of the crown. If Ferdinand has drowned, the future belongs to Sebastian on the condition that he stabs Gonzalo, the crown prince's tutor (II.i. 270-290). Not last, any objective action might bring the desired awakening: if their plan succeeds, their hallucinated desire would flee from Morpheus' arms and would allow them to the real drowning, of falling deeper into the darkness of sleep. Unlike Prospero, whose knowledge of the occult makes him the center of the whole universe, Antonio and Sebastian's individual standpoints need cardinality as a certitude of their ignorance. Therefore, Prospero, subjecting them to the torments of their own subjectivities, saved them from the implicit evil of their own nature, making them encounter the dead ends of their will. Implicitly, the art of magic addresses their free will, whose submission is required in the name of a "greater chain of being": that of living in harmony with the legitimate ruler, supplier of a greater truth, intermediating the continuity between the social microcosm and the higher, celestial spheres. Here, *The Tempest* shows its real scaffold: the play reconstructs the dramatic genre as a *theatre of absolution*.

This minor usurpation that Shakespeare inserts in the middle of the play is a *mise en abyme*, foregrounding the "real" one that has to be required. Its function in the economy of the play might be that of a warning: the germinative dream of conspiracy has to be repressed (by the legitimate ruler) *prior to* its first articulate utterance. In this respect, *The Tempest* deconstructs most of the paradoxes of Shakespeare's earlier tragedies, such as *King Lear*. Indeed, Prospero's aging does not disembody his body politic, such as Lear in senility. (Being preoccupied with recovering his domain, Prospero is bound to keeping his offspring in high esteem, meanwhile playing for Miranda's sake both roles of father and master.) Second,

Prospero does not deprive himself of his crown until his domain is redoubled. Not last, his language of recognition in Act V, together with the symbolic end of his magic career, can be equally understood as a celebration of the symbolic endowment: the Duke proves himself a bona fide aristocrat, possessing the true vision of lawfulness.

Through the art of magic, the legitimate king makes his image the node of his servants' dreams, and Shakespeare discovers the paths of *his theatre of absolution*: the virtual has been re-disposed to prevent any possibility of a real malfunction, the magician smoothed the path for the cortege of blinds, and all forking paths converge in the same *grotto*. The representation of power on stage does not explain or justify anything about the side-scenes of politics; its aesthetic blueprint reveals the whole world in the prince's occult mirror. The Duke's magic atelier is just the pillar of his magic theatre. This tautology does not reveal anything about the Duke, yet it postulates the two hopes of an ideal political guidance: that is, being absorbed in a visionary dream showing the future *in nuce* and also absorbing everything into its visionary dream. Prospero's wisdom is not made possible by the Duke's faithfulness; rather, his knowledge is learned in books and practiced as self-restraint and self-initiation, in other words, a faculty innate in the authentic prince, developed through systematic exercise. Finally, Antonio, Gonzalo, and Sebastian wake up. Without warning, a banquet table appears in front of the shipwrecked sailors. They would happily start eating, but in a thick flick of an eye, the banquet vanishes. Prospero's "(last) supper" could have brought the miracle of transubstantiation only to good and faithful servants. Instead, the shipwrecked king, chooses to withdraw the miracle from his old courtiers, postponing the promise of abundance until Antonio recognizes him. Once again, as Demaray indicates, the episode relies entirely on the logic of sovereign magic, this is to say on Prospero's meta-narrative positioning:

In the second vision ... the tempting banquet is again on stage before the conspirators, luring them onward, but in this episode they are mocked, stunned and completely overcome. "*Thunder and Lighting*" open the second magical vision, and again would have been rendered on the Whitehall stage with special effects. (Demaray 79)

Lastly, realizing that an invisible intruder is behind them, the conspirators unsheathe their swords. But Ariel's long arm disarms them all: he can change shapes at will, manifesting as a Harpy or clapping "*his wings upon the table.*" All are prepared for a wedding, but the wedding hour has not yet come. Ariel's voice performs one last task, that of carrying out Prospero's verdict, a *role* for which the Duke congratulates him, like one would flatter an actor. Once Ariel has "*vanished in thunder,*" Demaray observes, the servant spirits, Prospero's ghostly police corps, come in again to remove the banquet table with sardonic "*mocks and mowes*". During this extended interval, Prospero has remained visible on his loggia suspended above the stage, speechless, yet watchful:

The stage directions are silent in this episode on whether Prospero remains "on the top" in his weeds of invisibility; as a magus whose fury is manifest in the creation of the interlude and its figures, he possibly stayed in the summit position. (Demaray 79)

The magic theatre removes its crafts and traces slowly. Ariel's disappearance is accompanied by a "masquerade" of opulent Greek deities, a tribute paid to the golden ages, and a reminder that the young couple is blessed by Juno. A last interdiction coming from Prospero reminds the young couple that the significance of their love lies in the coming nuptial contract. Although Miranda has never seen another man except for Ferdinand (IV.i.), he is not to "break her virgin-knot / [until] all sanctimonious ceremonies may / With full and holy rite be ministered" (IV.i. 15-17). How else could Prospero gain immortality through Miranda's marriage other than by passing Ferdinand his own prerogatives as a sovereign, and provoking at the same time an eternal debt of gratitude from his daughter? To make clearer who



the author of their union is, Prospero stages the masquerade, “bestowing upon the eyes” of the young couple “some vanity” of his art (IV.i. 40-42). After contaminating the elemental domains of the island with his presence, Prospero’s deserted spirit attempts the transubstantiation with Ferdinand. Miranda has never seen any man except for her father; so, naturally, for her, the young prince represents the duke’s meliorated version. On the exotic atoll, Prospero and Miranda recreate the story of the Fall, *as the fall into Eden*, where paradise becomes equivalent to an initiatory exile. Not accidentally, all the intimate discussions between Miranda and Ferdinand<sup>362</sup> grow around a common obsession of royalty and entitlement. Their fear of irritating Prospero with their whispers is illusory: eavesdropping like a peeping house-keeper, Prospero hears and enjoys words of love that are not meant for him, after he purposefully humiliated Ferdinand by ordering him to chop logs (a menial task that traditionally belonged to Caliban). The young aristocrat was hence persuaded to propose to Miranda his entitlements as the heir of the Neapolitan throne. The hopelessness of their love was ascribed to the impossible dream of reigning as king and queen, a fiction that opened the virtual space for their princely embryo. Finally, Prospero’s absolution of the young couple presupposed Ferdinand as a usurper, although Ferdinand never attempted to dethrone his father, Alonso, whom he believed dead in the shipwreck. Therefore, the father’s forgiveness was accompanied by the feeling of being revenged by his daughter and rewarded by the young captive. Finally, when Prospero’s desire for immortality has been fulfilled, the Duke abandons the magician’s cloak and returns to Christian humbleness. From then on, Prospero’s legitimacy is not only restored, but redoubled by Ferdinand’s dowry: a second domain for his nephew, and a higher entitlement for the wise dynasties.

Significantly, Prospero’s shipwreck and revenge over his metaphysical and political enemies affirms the double legitimacy of the entitled monarch: a transcendental power historically bounded at home and magically imposed at the adoption of new territories. Historically, the play accounts for Albion’s dream of an universal monarchy ready to re-instate its legitimacy in the manner of the Baroque

*Deus ex Machina*: providential authority becoming visible as if by miracle and assuming a higher civilizing mission. Having magic at his disposal to re-arrange the whole world around his figure, being a center in himself, Prospero's strategy consists of making the whole world gravitate in his bewitched vortex. But here rests the paradoxical essence of this unprecedented drama: physically, Prospero does not live in his Milan. Morally, the prince does not reside within the confines of his inherited power. The transcendental and the earthly domains of his political power no longer superimpose one upon the other.

#### **V. 4. The planet on stage**

The problem that the Shakespearean show-case poses reopens the question of the seventeenth-century statesman as analyzed by cultural anthropologists: what are the legitimizing sources of political power, and what is the protocol by which power displays its entitlements? I find the following comparison conducive to an answer: the one made between Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Pascal's *Three Discourses on the Conditions of the Greats*,<sup>363</sup> as analyzed by Louis Marin in his final chapter of his *Portrait of the King*. The chapter, entitled "The Legitimate Usurper, or The Shipwrecked Man as King," inaugurates a new semiotic perspective for my own inquiry. In spite of the historical distance between the two texts, Shakespeare and a Pascal bring on display a common theme: Marin targets Pascal's *Treatise* for approaching the discussion of the Prince's political wisdom "not from the field of spiritual ethics but from a political and metaphysical anthropology" (1988, 216), or in other words, from an iconoclast, disenchanted perspective. I will review briefly both Pascal's statements and Marin's related critical assumptions. Pascal attempts to correct the three defects constitutive of the noble condition.

First, princes are allowed the vanity of thinking that they dispose of their property as if by a divine right. This self-complacency makes them imagine they are the center of all things, and encumbers the possibility of any self-knowledge based on comparison with other men, to whom the prince is naturally equal.

Second, this self-illusory narcissism drives them into the dangers of tyranny, defined by Pascal as “the desire for domination universal and outside of its order” (qtd. by Marin, 1981, 215) and the yearning to “have by one avenue what can only be had by another”, in other words, to abuse from an amoral viewpoint a secularized privilege which traditionally implied the prince’s submission to religious and ethical commandments. The third moral principle invoked by Pascal is the logical consequence of the previous enunciation: instead of making themselves disposable, princes dispose, dispossessing themselves of the auras that preceded their apparitions on the social stage. Not dominating their hateful selves, abusing their dominant position, they become the origin of all social injustice and disorder. (Marin also points at a significant breakup of cultural mentality between Pascal and Nicole: unlike the reviewer, who describes in his preface the aristocratic vices as moral defects susceptible to improvement, the logician’s text analyzes tyranny “as a mechanism of fact, the functioning of a framework, and the manner alone of addressing the discourse to a determined interlocutor”). Not only does Pascal denounce a taboo subject, that of the prince’s frailty in the epoch of Louis XIV’s absolutism, but the logician of Port-Royal never considers the ethical problems of royal entitlements in any other manner than from an epistemological position. Kings are subjected to the social rules they embody like any other mortal, because kings are themselves perishable and all their grandeur comes “not from nature, but from human establishment” (Pascal, *Three Discourses*, qtd. in Marin, 1981, 216). Thus, tyranny is a constitutive evil of the human creature, inborn ignorance, specific to all human nature, but predominantly manifesting itself in the great. Injustice is described as an essential process of the self, rooted in the egotistic propensity of the subject to subjugate others by placing itself at the center of all things. No political philosophy could have ever analyzed absolutism in clearer terms. Great men are great because they are born rich. There is no difference between kings and beggars except for the difference concerning wealth. Had it been formulated sixty years before, this equivalence would not have interested Shakespeare at all. In his time, English political ethics was dominated for the need of harmony, a harmony that reaffirmed Elizabeth’s prerogatives over the Old and

New World. Elizabethan playwrights constructed the Mannerist revenge tragedy around the topic of dynastic rivalries, presenting kings as tragic victims of their extraordinary fates, but never questioning the metaphysical grounds of their entitlements (put bluntly, the king was always a king).

By 1600, the year Shakespeare finished *Hamlet*, the Mannerist tragedy was a genre already exhausted. *Hamlet* was its swan song, the last major text delivered along the traditional esthetic confines. Hamlet's antiquated plot strives for dramatic invention, thus bringing on stage an unprecedented sort of madness:

the hidden struggle between an imaginary dramatist, compelled to move along the plot along, and a star performer, dissatisfied with his assignment, who reluctantly consents to participate in the action, but only on his own terms. Shakespeare not only provides a superlative example of the frugal interplay between illusion and elusion, but he widens almost to the breaking point the gap between the two, so much so that the plot perversely appears to unravel at the slightest provocation (Hubbert 89).

Hamlet seems to possess the genius of procrastination, for his ambiguousness, interspersed with moral soliloquies and Oedipian outbursts, can be understood as a roundabout search for truth behind the dramatic curtains. Upon negotiating his dilemmas in erudite stanzas that review Renaissance culture, the bookish Prince of Denmark leaves off scholarly postures and trifles with his audience on stage, trying "to catch the conscience" of the king, that is to say writing the close caption for his private conversation with the ghost. Throughout "the play within the play," the Prince makes clear that he would have acted more sophisticated than the First Player, an attitude which informs the audience about his real esteem for theater, seen as the proper medium for justice. Hamlet's revenge is thus articulated along a mediatic strategy, meant to disclose the crime in the absence of any proof: an event prior to the play whose confirmation summons all the demons of representation, because, if Hamlet hears the truth about Claudius whispered in his ear by his father,

it is by one and the same token that the usurper had presumably killed his father – by pouring a deadly poison in his ear.

At this moment, we are invited to re-assess justice by means of meta-theatricality: either Claudius' crowning originated in a private play not meant for public eyes, an unwritten "text capable of blasting his career and his kingdom" (Hubbert 104), or Hamlet has simply intoxicated himself by his private fiction, nurtured in oedipal jealousy. Moreover, in attempting to confirm the private course of events, the Prince empowers a stage and a script to bear out his moral quandary, as he chooses to avenge his father within the appendage of a "book and volume," "We can surmise," says Hubbert, "that his book of memory coincides with a script, performable only if he should consent to push aside the type of role and style of acting in which he normally excels" (100), and that Hamlet strongly believes in the power of performance to restore harmony in Denmark. At any rate, Hamlet as a character cannot embody the ideal of a classical prince: the subject's inner split betrays the stylistic problems of the Elizabethan drama as genre. If his father's ghost cannot restore justice in Denmark, then the second coming of the king's spirit cannot counterbalance any regicide: politics has already complicated Elsinore's architecture beyond the symbolic productiveness of transcendental justice. The ineffectiveness of the phantasm's appeal implies a split in the representative edifice of power. Thus comes Hamlet's fatal dilemma and the lament that "the center cannot hold" together the metaphysical symbolism of monarchic power and its earthly play of entitlements. If Hamlet needs a public reconstitution of his father's murder, it is merely because transcendental justice needs to be *represented* by its ghostly victims, and that its mere invocation has already betrayed its proper spirit. Similarly, Prospero's ghostliness and all-mightiness as a character announces a new esthetical play between the transcendental and the inherited prerogatives of the statesman.

What is never shown on the Globe's stage is that Prospero's magic is buried precisely the belief in a kingdom of glory. Prospero's deceptive magic is sustained by an "uninhabited" allegory: that of the *Princeps* having at hand the keys

of the transcendental justice - that of the king masked as God. Should one venture so far as to take Prospero as the fictional ancestor of Pascal's tyrannical subject? The comparison, I think, strengthens the logic of my argument. Following Pascal's text, we find that the prince's science of efficient government consists in the art of (theatrical) dissimulation. And what should the prince of *Civitas Terrena* dissimulate besides his own disappointment at ruling over corrupted creatures? Pascal uses the illustrative example of the king-shipwrecked man:

A man is thrown by a storm onto an unknown island, whose inhabitants were at pains to find their king, who was lost: and bearing a strong resemblance in body and face to this king, he was taken for him and recognized as such by the whole population. At first he did not know what part to take; but he resolved himself finally to lend himself to his good fortune. He received all the respects they offered him and let himself be treated as king (Marin 218).

The tale of the shipwrecked king divulges the king's secret. What makes him different from other men is not his birth, which is a conjectural accident, nor his inherited wealth, but the image of a glorious king, deeply carved in the collective subconscious. Thus, Pascal's story reverses the symbolic play of the dogmatic narrative of the Resurrection: after Christ revealed his body of glory for his disciples, writes John (21:4), he appeared for the last time to the Apostles on the shores of the Tiberian sea. Neither the first time, near the tomb, when Mary mistook him for the gardener, nor the second time, in the Apostles' shelter, when Thomas touched His wounds, was the resurrected Lord immediately recognized. Christ's third appearance on the Tiberian shore where the fishing boat piloted by Peter came in, is validated by the repetition of an older wonder: the miraculous catch, immediately followed by the repetition of the Last Supper, where He leaves the Christian Church in Peter's custody, a church whose mediation is based on Peter's faithful love for Christ and guaranteed throughout the Christian history by the *real presence* of the Lord in the Seven Sacraments.

In contrast, Pascal's example turns the king into a symbolic usurper, whose task it is to cover up God's absence from the state. Offering the departed God an alibi in his presence as a sovereign, the illegitimate king becomes the guarantor of desirable order. The example of a man, who, unwilling to be taken for the absent monarch, is, however, *recognized* as the missing ruler of the islanders and seated on the empty throne, threatens the reversed hierarchy's belief – assurance – the reality on which the absolutist king founds his power. If the Apostles' guilt was that of not having been able to recognize the resurrected king, conversely, the unfaithful servants' fault was to expect from a beautiful beggar the treacherous confirmation of resurrection, a desirable wonder that would bring a meaning into their lives. In this strict sense, the absolutist king is an Anti-Christ, one that has to know that the innermost human nostalgia of Paradise lost hides nothing but forgetfulness, and that forgetfulness can be ruled only through its deep-seated hope of redemption. Because amnesia attempts to excuse its own self from millenary blame by offering itself a second chance, that of remaking its forgetful cupidity into forgetful ineptitude, thus, the "legitimate usurper" takes his own gestures as "necessary diversions." In other words, he knows that playing God is part of his role.

The legitimate usurper discerns that his presence on the throne has to simulate the order of paradise: those faithful to the king are faithful to a protecting image that took over each corner of their house, whereas the undutiful betray themselves because of their unbearable feeling of being watched by each stone of the domain they abhorred. "The man is a king who has lost his kingdom, and the king is a man who has become his subjects faithful to his portrait," (Marin 219) yet, when the unfaithful are to be blamed, exclusion takes place in the name of Judas's leading unfaithfulness in the remote garden of Gethsemane. The image of the absolutist king stands for another legend. What is essential for the new king is to tailor new covers for the old narrative, to re-signify it along the time of his own reign. The absolutist king's image has to embody the figure of the Awaited One: he, the shipwrecked man, is compelled to write more than a narrative gloss of the

Other's first coming; he has to convince his own generation of being contemporary to the long expected miracle that he attempts (so desperately) to subvert.

The absolutist king shown as Messiah absorbs and redistributes all the dialectical play of values around his providential figure. Consequently, a chiasmatic display of images is empowered to annul a transcendental play of morality: when referring to King Henry IV, Marin writes that to institute the prince's glory is to constitute a memory just for himself. Still, the semiotic problem of the absolute state is not whose image is to incarnate the absolutist king, but how the King's portrait is to be incarnated by the shipwrecked sailor, how collective memory is to be imprinted with the Prince's designated stamp? Here lies the seed of any cynicism in politics: after having been taken for the legitimate king, the absolute Prince thinks that God does not exist and that it is only the collective forgetfulness which asks for redemption. If he were to ignore this reality, the prince would automatically abandon his state to anarchy, because the constitutive principle of the state was founded on the postlapsary submission to a higher authority than individual consciousness.

Notably, the language of manipulation originates in an overruled metaphor: all possible politics of paradise have in common their secret use meta-languages, secret regimes of connotation hidden under ideological positive phrasing. The specific semiotic operation of any ideological play consists in a subversion of the transcendental in its metaphysical bounds as confined by tradition, a deliberate absorption of transcendental entitlements beyond the "analogy of proportion" of the correspondences politics build their future on: the magician king is a skeptical semiotician *avant la lettre*, he does not give credence to the ontological conformity of sign and meaning, since any figure can be proposed for the desirable meaning, yet he knows that knowledge of the world depends on the reciprocity of the discourse and the representative space it opens. Yet, being a cynical optimist—engineering better futures than those inherited from the metaphysical tradition—he knows that in the universe of all possibility images bear their magic magnetism, being the *figurative* source of all knowledge. Consequently,



his symbolic labor is to carve a metafictional frame for the fantasies of desire, to offer a legitimate ground and a cause for all possible economical exchange. The “legitimate usurper” (219) knows to administrate passions, and since human mind is ashamed of the amorality of its fictions, he knows that intellectual endeavors do not explain, but justify irrational desires through rationalized ends. Nevertheless, the prince’s advent as an icon infers a definite socio-psychological responsibility: the Prince’s “real absence” has to impede any possibility of philosophical dualism in the constitution of the subject, because the wickedness of human nature consists in taking its own ignorance as the unique measure of its justice and knowledge (along its ontological solipsism). Thus, what links the prince’s subjects is neither a common aspiration, nor a common sense, but their very lack: the allotment of metaphors is the sole ground of community; only the work of parables subjects human bodies to common histories.

#### **V. 5. The creative denouement**

The renewed rule of legitimacy has become equivalent with the concealment of a secret. The illegitimate king knows that passing into his own image means to empty Christ’s icon, yet his subjects’ absolute misery compels him to act on the only possible stage of their expectations. If Marin is right when referring to Pascal’s *Discourses*, he writes that “the prince’s subjects are loyal to him because of the institution (*thesei*) while God’s creatures are unfaithful to Him by nature (*phusei*),” then the inference is that the institution of the absolute state is meant to impede the Revolution (read rebellion), which is innate to (the unfaithfulness of) human nature. Obedience to authority is institutional and political, while rebellion is natural. When invoked in this context, Caliban’s betrayals and perjuries achieve a unprecedented importance on stage, that of zero degree of universal (savage) ingratitude. For Caliban, a subhuman creature with no hope of betterment, is the real winner of Prospero’s duchy. For the sake of Caliban and his fellow drunkards, Prospero had to re-adjust his inherited prerogatives as a ruler to the form of a magic performance.

Caliban embodies the subverted hypostasis of the universal citizen, a living failure of all enlightening prospects, an example of unsuccessful uprooting of the subject from its natural ignorance. All civilizing political strategies have to take Caliban into account. He has to represent the Duke's power as a bewildering work of magic, he forces the Duke to prepare and perform in the form of diversion his implicit prerogatives, he pushes the prince to expose and "to risk ritually and gratuitously the order of his place" (Marin 197) through the masquerades of fertility and the magic spectacles of omnipotence his invisible guards mount for him at a sign. For neither the natural order, nor the dynastic authority could have kept the throne for Prospero: his usurpers' poisoned consciousness grew in the split of the two orders, namely the gap between the divine right of the monarch and the symbolized universal harmony. Prospero lost his duchy because he dedicated all his time to his alchemical labor and left the political affairs on his brother's shoulders. Prospero attempts to resolve with representative means the Bruneian manipulator's dilemma, a prince whose nightmares sweep his court onto a remote orbit of an infinite, heliocentric universe: moreover, because "the center cannot hold," the Duke's symbolic proposal brings on display the allegorical injunctions that renew his aristocratic prerogatives in accord with the Neo-Platonic paradigm of magic contiguity. The Bruneian art of manipulation extrapolates the principle of magic contiguity from its traditional chain of being, and likely, Shakespeare's Prospero empowers the magic to restore the central position of the monarch on a revolving planet that has dared to think along Copernican and Galilean orbits.

The result is a mere show, yet the representational modalities of this spectacle pertain to a different logic of catharsis, one, whose sense of an imminent ending is rebalanced by a different proposal, whose essence resides in its proactive designation of narrative frames between "play," "world," and "public." In my attempt to refine the anterior considerations appended to the field of theoretical and philosophical observation, my own view, at this juncture, owes much of its coherence to Hart's in-depth analysis of representational devices in Shakespeare's Tetralogies. Thus, in *Theater and World*, a study that has allowed me to engage in

a more applied discussion of dramatic agencies, Hart produced an in-depth analysis of the semantic tensions between the assertions of truth in historical narratives and the ways specific of historical drama. His extensive discussion of time in Shakespeare's historical plays is too broad to be warped here: one of the scholar's chief affirmations In *Theater and World* is that the collation of episodes, time, and temporality in conjunction with the conventions of theatrical representation can bring to the fore different aspects of historical experience. Hart sees the "generative" vision of history as

a story, a narrative act, an emplotted discourse. ... The shape of history, the genre it adopts and the effectiveness of its tropes govern its meaning and success. The virtuoso analogical and anecdotal performance gives its new history its narrative drive. Its pleasure becomes its instruction. If there can be no truth, or if truth remains so refractory as to seem darkness invisible, then the delight of the myth seduces the reader into further delights. (Hart 257)

The message expressed by the aging Shakespeare in his last play, performed on the stages of Whitehall and of the New Globe, seems to inaugurate a new philosophy of outcomes, entirely ascribable to political agency. Now, speaking of cataphatic politics as visual propaganda, one could call into question the different functions of representation on a stage where the symbolic functions of objects, gestures, and words experiment the persuasive potential of a new esthetic idiom, in other words, where reality undergoes an intentional altering: in this unique context, I have to emphasize, to show does not denote a mere illustration of a commonly accepted truth.<sup>364</sup> The showing of an instance appended to the logic of the miraculous has the power to stop or to reassert the mythical flow of narration, or, when applied to the logic of historical persuasion, to simply change the course of outcomes. From the perspective of political agency, to show in this way equates to strive for a final transposition, a transposition that makes possible a new beginning under the spell of a rennovative symbolism, the metaphor of the beginning as the beginning of a historical construct of meaning.

This proposal, corresponding to Bruno's idea of operative magic, reveals the limits of his philosophy, based on lack of esteem for the genuine truths of "the ontic." Thus, what is frozen is the subject's existence is precisely his personal, genuine memory as a deliberative moral instance of historical participation. Hence, the odd cynicism of Prospero - as a symbolic desecrator of metaphysical paradigms—belongs to a "gerundial modality," where the reversal does not open a space of authentic moral epiphany: mysteries should never be performed; philosophically, the dramatization of mysteries has the power to annihilate their transcendental prestige. Likewise, the theatre of absolution: its power to provoke tears asks for the abolition of the sacrificial, the representation of magic strives for a historical reward in the form of the "living tomb,"<sup>365</sup> public memory confiscated for encomiastic designs. But shouldn't this be qualified as an idolatrous construct? Being a *placebo* suitable for the corrupted creature's solipsisms, idolatry presents itself as an infinite promise of possessing *the* truth, as if one would possess a sword. In the work of idolatry, the past looks forward to its own fulfillment by dreaming of the future. As Caliban's ingratitude is always at work, so is his search for a new master. After the Fall, "idolatry" stands for the brute's work of self-absolution. Thus, in the echo of the Virgilian theme, the new emperor's work is to replace the old idols with his own bust, to arrest the idolatrous alternatives for his own cult and play.

The cult of the emperor is supposed to reward individual amnesia in the form of collective hallucination. Therefore, the loss of individual perspectives can be also regarded as a gain of the hermetically reformed group's *anticipative* memory: beyond the forbidden access to individual experience, the thought of existence has to fulfill its amnesiac symmetry, which is to recognize itself beyond the impossibility of community. If it cannot place itself under the spell of existence (unrepresentable), the thought of existence gives itself the following task: to reinvent community at the point where its implicit abstraction can overwhelm its reality, that of being in common: in a metaphorical note, Prospero's "year zero" reveals the ultimate reformation of representative conventions, revealing the play of

discourse as the form of the stage, as the constitutional frame of any political reformation of history. The Duke's narrative ego carries within himself the following indication: common sense can be represented, (the lack of) intuition can be re-directed towards the prospect of social harmony.

And how could Prospero bring under the same shelter so many incompatible destinies, in any other way than through the mastery of time? Antonio's shipwrecked boat is repaired for Prospero's nuptial *cortège*: following Sebastian's repentance, the corrupt group is restored to a clear vision of their ethical failure, and, for the dramatist, their atonement provides for Shakespeare a way to account for the former injustice of time. Concurrently, Prospero's miraculous rehabilitation of the boat—*oikos* (seen as the arch of salvation) reviews two Biblical episodes at once: the first is the building of the Noahite arch, a typical motif of the earlier moralities; the second is Christ's reappearance from the dead, considering that Prospero reveals to his old companions an unchanged face. As an originator of magic reversals, Prospero masters his autocratic retribution with the full consciousness of his absolute entitlement: ignoring Caliban's first right upon the land, on the empty island, father and daughter recast the Adamic presence in the garden of Eden. Their return *ab initio*, in the prelapsarian time of eternal youth, renders visible the "fons origen," the transcendental spring of knowledge and power, become invisible after the Fall. Instead of imitating the sacrificial monarch, Christ, Prospero embodies a concurrent figure, a Nestorian ruler of a Fortunate Island, one whose Adamic guilt has been withdrawn through the sliding doors of the representative stage. Like Christ (but the apocryphal one, associated here with a pro-Gnostic parade of attributes), the Duke of Milan is without sin, and so will remain his blessed offspring, Miranda, whose pre-nuptial arrangements signify Prospero's will to abide in a new era. As an omniscient narrator, the magician-king can convert the imaginary stage of desires into the "real" tempo of a meaningful story as he is seen producing the representative spatial and temporal framework of *his* original ascent to power.

Absorbing the transcendental prerogatives of Christliness, Prospero has to place himself beyond his own “time-span” as a character: here, Shakespeare might have revived a dramatic technique used in mystery plays. Prospero’s spells synchronize the imaginary time of his intentions and the narrative duration of the collateral episodes. Shakespeare shows the Duke of Milan as both the main character and the narrative agency of his stage: like a playwright, Prospero has the ability to generate unrelated events, which only he can direct to a meaningful end. His meta-language is “magic,” to the extent that it can bring disparate happenings under the same sky. Prospero’s occult art is thus a reparatory technique of stability and self-preservation, ready to reinvent the unity of his kingdom beyond the scary agents of chaos, namely space, time, and forgetfulness. *The Tempest*’s happy ending addresses then a new technology of power, whose ideal is to eliminate distances between the king’s subjects onto a common history by reshaping the space of representation around new symbolical premises: or, to put this in Marin’s terms, this is the representative effect of “the portrait deferred, which brings a resolution to an initial lack” (*Portrait*). Its operational logic equates magic sympathy with a representative art of contamination. Shakespeare’s *Tempest* does not represent the renewed portrait of the absolutist king, it only prescribes the representative technology of its renewal, which can be called *framing* in a “Heideggerian” note- namely, discourse that inscribes Being in its ontological horizon: “for it is only language that makes possible our standing within openness to what is” (Heidegger 35). Prospero is a poet who “speaks Being” since each of his interventions changes the temporal horizon of the collateral events. Sycorax’s natural magic had known meddling only between natural powers; “her rule” could not have changed the fate of her subservient spirits, other than enslaving them in hollows- in other words, abusing the constitution of nature. Neither Gonzalo’s Program of Leisure, nor Sebastian’s usurpation, could have found the pathways to a universal harmony. Sebastian’s mockery attempted to lift the moon out of her sphere” and then “go a bat fowling” – “un-framing,” that is unraveling stars, cognitive perspectives and their connoted temporality. Alternatively, Shakespeare seems to indicate, it is only the “legitimate” ruler’s wisdom that can spell properly

the metaphor of Being. Prospero's order alone could have restored the cosmic solidarity, in a representative ritual empowered to keep stars on their orbits and offer a second chance to his ingrate subjects, whom he released from chaos. Given the rule of the game, the play strives for its universality.

Émile Benveniste held that "myth articulates history, the ritual reproduces it; in play only the ritual survives and all that is preserved is the form of the sacred drama" (Deucalion 2) in which time is re-enacted. Yet, the representation of the myth cannot conserve the meaningfully worded fabulation that endows the acts with their sense and their purpose." This task falls upon the play, a space of approximation and interpretation of the forgotten words in the myth:

Play has its source in the sacred, of which it supplies a broken topsy-turvy image. If the sacred can be defined as the consubstantial unity of myth and ritual, we can say that play exists only when one half of the sacred enactment is fulfilled, translating myth alone into words and ritual alone into actions. (Deucalion 2)

The Christian king fuels the narrative of history by opening the space of the play, and by translating the forgotten sequence of the myth into words and ritual gestures into actions; his crown signifies the uninterrupted presence of the divine in the temporal kingdom. The absolutist king absorbs the prerogatives of the first, minus one: the general assumption of God's transcendent presence in history. This reparatory task falls upon the propagandist's arms: he is the court poet spreading the allegories that indicate the king as the ultimate referent of any possible gesture or exchange: he replaces icons for idols, innocent prayers for burnt offerings. Through the absolute king's image an old signified is transformed into a signifier: this new leader *incarnates* the absolute signifier of the forgotten revelation. In view of his role, he has to play on the stage of history an unconditional game: that of mediating a resemblance whose original portrait was lost; to paraphrase Marin, he has to embody the expected one, whom he does not know either. The absolutist leader needs a meta-linguistic frame for his image and an ideal reference for his

empty pronouncements. Both the Utopian text and the magic theatre welcome his image. Utopia needs a living icon at its unoccupied center, because this is how its faked symmetry (knowledge administered and prescriptive experience) becomes effective: a structure that needs a real king in order to produce events.

The magic theatre simulates the ideal jointure between myth and history, between the synchronic duration opened by myth and the diachronicity of history: *The Tempest* is both ritual and play, in the sense that Prospero's absence from the history of Milan is ritualized in the Duke's re-appearance on the magic island. In fact, the magic theatre does not perform old rituals, but institutes new ones, in which both the meaningful "fabulation" of the sacred drama and its prescriptive performance in history are shown: a dramatic structure that can produce events in history within its narrative agency, truth that find its new measure in representation. Thus, if I am to take the Utopia and the magic theatre as the two ideal poles of (representative) modern politics, I will venture to assert that the theatre of absolutism is the dynamic indication of the utopian take-over, while the absolutist king, a symbolic engineer of alternative futures, needs the magic scene of meta-theatricality to show his dominion as the promised land. The representative game initiated by the theatrical voices of omniscience, from Shakespeare's Prospero to Marlowe's, then Goethe's Mephisto(s), empowers a broader assessment of representation from an ethical perspective, namely representation in relation with its "ontological" framework. (The emergent Faustianism of these heroes could and should be further discussed by recourse to Bruno's "manipulator," a politician as much as an illusionist of a new kind.)

The game as such opens the first epistemic parallels between assertive politics and its subsequent nihilism, for its essence is in the very representation of ritual origins, inventing narrative frames to the events of individual experience. Both Prospero and his funambulesque Romantic mask, namely Goethe's Spirit of Darkness, are heroes of a new relativity, a relativity, which, under the spells of hypnotism, makes us question the meaning, if not the very possibility of genuine experiencing. Under their charms, the object of experience is denounced as empty



temptation and the possibility of accomplishment of singularized identity prospects as mere illusion. Prospero's surfacing narrative agency introduces the new riddle of modern semantics, where image and language are seen as the ground and portent of subjectivity. In this sense, both symbolic characters of the magician-philosopher and of a devil playing political correctness anticipate the discussion of phenomenological excess in Husserl's thought, alluding to a being whose cognitive faculties and spiritual aspirations surpass and detour the foundations of biological needs and their subsequent survival instinct, producing a psychological *degringolade* between the symbolic cravings of imagination and the real situation of her experiential participation to life.

#### **V. 6. A closing word. Magic time as proper *instans***

Northrop Frye reads *The Tempest* as a late romance, in which Shakespeare creates amenities for a different theatrical space. First, Frye says, the play can be read as Shakespeare's exit from the world of theater, a play where Prospero's magic should be read as Shakespeare's metaphorical farewell to a stage of invention.

Uncommonly short and displaying a strict unity of times, the folio could be read as an unconventional mystery-play, where the language of magic celebrates peculiar religious rites. *The Tempest's* alleged strangeness, Frye seems to imply, might have seemed a common thing to the seventeenth century audience, who lived "in a more intellectually tidied up world than ours" (8), a psychological climate that still took the earth as "the center of the whole cosmos" and nature as "intimately related to man" (8). In this atmosphere of speculative enthusiasm, invention and imitation are the two balancing forces of an imaginative zest, which, on stage, finds its proper expression in the new coherence of fictional worlds. *The Tempest* is such a heteroclite experiment, a stage play where "the illusion of reality and the reality of illusion" (Frye 182) are generated within the same rhetorical figure.

*The Tempest*, Frye writes, “is more haunted” (178) with the passage of time than any other play. As a meta-theatrical magician, illustrating the playwright’s condition, Prospero has to watch time intimately. Tragic, evil, and comic actions, all bound to their own pulses are all subdued to this greater meaning of temporality, which regulates its pace in accord with Prospero’s occult work of re-establishment. If I were to expand on Frye’s argument here, I would say that the Duke of Milan holds the keys of morality and foreknowledge, acting as an art director on stage. He punishes, cures, and dismantles narrative potentials that can be without approximation defined as “the alternate futures.” In addition, Ariel represses all those virtual outcomes that are not substantial with Prospero’s enlightened vision of order. This is what, I assume, inspired Frye to write that *The Tempest* is a play replenished with “stopped action” (179) and temporal switches in a text where the logic of reconciliation has to do away with the potentials of rebellion. In fact, the wavering essence of Neoplatonic nature can partake of metaphorical logic of spatial and temporal transformations on stage—an assumption, which in this case, proves productive for the inventive logic of denouement:

The total effort of Prospero’s magic, then, is to transform the Court Party from the lower to the higher aspect of nature, reversing the tragic movement that we found in *King Lear*. (Frye 180)

In this stage play, reality and illusion are vacillating, sometimes interchangeable, notions. Illusions as such are not void of formative aspects and, in this contextual exchange, reality “seems to be merely an illusion of greed” (Frye 182). Given the reversible course of raw energy and spiritual elevation, nature itself becomes a material in the hands of the wizard-politician, who binds nature in its low potential and releases the island’s guardian-spirits only after the shifting course of events on stage has found its resolution. This is what also makes Frye affirm that “the action of the play is the transformation within nature” (180).

I have to add my own coda here: the reconciliation of government and naturalness are the dream of Hermetic renovation, and this hope corresponds to the aim of

occult philosophy, namely the return to a prelapsarian harmony by means of enlightening politics. Thus, if the true action of the play displays such magic alteration within nature, one has to take into account the effects of statesmanship in conjunction with the knowledge of the occult. Aristocratic weddings are such turning points in the economy of “the natural,” marking events in which the world of autocracy can take benefit of the powers of generation. The betrothal Masque in Act IV—presented by the island’s spirits led by the three goddesses of the earth, the sky and the rainbow—is a crowning symbol of the plasticity of nature (when) subjected to Prospero’s magic power. Ferdinand’s mention of “paradise” is also suggestive for the language of Hermetic reformation, which dreams at a renewal of Creation through spiritual elevation, a new earth adorned with the attributes of heavenly order.

Now, my critical undertaking has come to a close. My effort was to produce a credible reading of *The Tempest* as a “preemptive” text, both persuasive and prophetic, which can be understood as a provocative design for a “state religion,” itself predicated upon dramatic alternatives to the recession of “the divine” from seventeenth century Western societies. In choosing those most significant mythical, historical and cultural instances that articulated the imaginary background of Shakespeare’s last play, my interpretation revisited the traditional curriculum of alchemy from the point of view of an epistemic discussion of Shakespeare’s last play: accordingly, my question is not if *The Tempest* should be read as a work of magic, but if the magic embedded in the words of the play can work out its epiphanic representational effect and in what particular conditions. In harmony with the contemporary critical complex, I rely on a rationale that attempts to track down the major cultural events and sources for Shakespeare’s late theatre and also aims to bring into focus some of *The Tempest*’s long-term effects upon the emerging science of modern politics. New historicist approaches to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* are part of a common horizon of reading that takes cultural discourse as the bridge that enables intermediation between political power and its (inherently modern) subjects; anti-new historicist arguments, such as Felperin’s re-assertion of

Frye's discussion of values can be beneficial only for a "dedogmatization" of critical assumptions, in opposition with the obsessive cultural materialism of recent criticisms. In this note, both the Jamesonian rendering of "a collective political unconscious" and the more persistent allusion to Freudian "psychological energies" are ways to settle the proceedings of an analytical methodology that looks at the formerly inimical traditions of thought, idealist-formalist and materialist-historicist, from the lucid stand of liminality. Having paid its tribute in full to Foucaultian and Jamesonian perspectives, contemporary Shakespearean scholarship struggles to escape the deterministic zest of post-Marxian interpretations that saw artistic expression as a mere emanation of political discourse.

My present reading has sketched an interpretational scheme explicitly distant from Marxian tribulations in its search for a proper power embedded in the play's concert. This is where, in my effort to crystallize some of Frye's anti-determinist critical proposals, I have insisted upon *The Tempest's* symbolic ambiguousness as the inscription of old maxims of magic within an original meta-theatrical zone of wonder. Yet, if I were to grant credence to a neohistoricist idea, *as a potential ideology-maker*, *The Tempest* should be read and invoked *as a deliberately liminal text*: in a neohistoricist climate, Prospero's atoll has to remain at equal distance from any explicit political standpoint. Or, if I am to paraphrase Greenblatt, if this text indeed "holds up a mirror to the empire," we should at least be able to discuss its said "imperialism" in such ways that Shakespeare is given the benefit of doubt with respect to his alleged intention to present colonialism and theatricality as consubstantial. In this note, the reference to "magic" as a portent of alternative semantic worlds, a vision originating in Lubomir Doležel's monumental work, has helped me to transcend the neohistoricist no-exit routines and articulate a philosophical reading that searched for ways to anchor the play in its proper imaginary continent. Still, deliberative Greenblattians of the anti-materialist vein are not entirely mistaken: certainly, the *The Tempest's* metaphorical island is not a park of Neoclassical muses, considering that to us, the late post-moderns, the play still fathoms a realm of mischievous spirits, fairylike entities whose favorite

occupation seems to be that of inventing for themselves new appearances that keep the play alive over centuries. In this note, I take Prospero's renunciation of Act V, not as a sign of humbleness to the gods of poetic justice, but as a prophetic sign of the play's relentless mercurial potential.

A critical and corrosive note at the end of this analytical journey: on Prospero's planet, knowledge no longer searches for origins, but for effects of illusion towards unequivocal political targets. As Hart points out in his Conclusion to *Theater and World*, "Shakespeare's English history plays have become suggestive political works beyond the small kingdom in the 1590s. Like *The Tempest*, they engage us in a political debate in which our concerns and those of Renaissance England interact" (216). My own analysis has suggested that the absolutist designs can be taken as alternative "emplacements" displayed for a world that needs to know its political authorities by the "magic" attributes of sovereignty, this is to say through the typical superlatives of sacredness manifest in the process of historical understanding. *The Tempest* brings resolution as reparation of an initial lack makes reparation depend on the prince's *passe-partout* keys. Moreover, this resolution collapses the two narratives of myth and history into a single dramatic figure: the leader's omnipresent body, *un roi machine*, a terrifying, autonomous semiotic machine with demiurgic traits. In Shakespeare's second Globe, the seizure between conflict and its metaphysical background announced the theatrical age of politics and the modern ascendancy of the media, a modernity whose esthetic and proactive rearrangement of reality into pre-definite semantic nichés aims for the fashioning of social imagination in agreement with the agency of power. Thus, Prospero's command of magic as knowledge of inter-subjective bonding, proclaims the advancement of political aesthetics towards what I would call the absolutist culture of universal remoteness, or, put differently, a dramatized manual of imperial politics: in this play, the emperor's absence becomes virtually present through the mono-logical play of religious allegory, where margins, as limits of the symbolic state, are defined through the semiotic relation with an absent center of the symbolic authority.

In consequence, the Duke's provisional tyranny disposes the absolute answers of representative knowledge, his enlightening work of magic reduces knowledge itself to an act of efficient representation, nonetheless an *empty* epiphany. Prospero's glance "frames and freezes" (*mets en abîme*), reifies without being able to create; Prospero's Globe shows the planet as an anamorphic display, after having absorbed the living world in an ebullient, stormy glass. Now, employing the principles of generative anthropologies, *The Tempest's* ambiguousness should be considered for its unclassified and maybe unclassifiable semantic potential, as it should be seen as a portal initiating the spectator into the paradoxes, potentials, and limitations of rhetorical and psychological persuasion. Accordingly, the play could be discussed as a text with a key, a drama whose untold mission could be the internalization of contradictions within an original allegorical framework: to review the main idea running through my thesis, *The Tempest* can be seen as a text that, for the first time in modern Western culture, provides a conscious dramatization of the ritual operations of emplacement, providing the dramatic "technology" of an original play between poetic and factual truth.

In an innovative note, my interpretation assumes that the play, one of the strangest dramatic works of its epoch, might be better deciphered when analyzed in relation to its exceptional festive destiny. Elizabeth Stuart's engagement to Frederick V Elector Palatine, the inheritor of the Bohemian crown, was such a unique occasion where the language of the occult philosophy was employable within the rhetorical figures of a political allegory, one that would be read by a contemporary anthropologist as a lesson in charismatic leadership. Given the encomiastic context, Shakespeare's scenic "demonstration" needs to operate with symbolic paradoxes, considering that the said engagement branded a political alliance between royal houses with common interests, but different "metaphysical agendas". Thus, *The Tempest's* unique styling can be understood a result of a series of hazardous circumstances that can make the first productions of this play part of a theory of "rare events," where none of the traditional hermeneutic branches can give a satisfactory account of the play's hybridness. Here, the dependence upon

former rhetorical and esthetic contexts becomes scanty, and originality needs to be defined as part of an innovative axiology, which places this play in an original hermeneutical framework, based on the quasi-absence of historical truth and on the subsequent replenishment of the social need for meaning in the substitutive presence of the Crown's restorative glamour.

But my true fascination with Shakespeare's last play is that of a contemporary reader, raised in a climate of postmodern cultural relativism and, during the last years, living to witness the new idiom of quantum speculative idealism emerging from Berkeley or Princeton. Indeed, we find ourselves again at the crossroads of epochs and cognitive mentalities. The contributions of Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg and Schrödinger have re-configured once more, after Newton's revolution, the cognitive paradigms of the West. Universal Law, as defined by rational idealism in the echo of iconoclast and mechanistic reasoning, no longer gives an account of the unity of the Universe, which has been recently re-evaluated as a place of bedazzlement and multiplicity defying our established protocols of comprehension. Trapped between incompatibles, such as the need for ontological reassurance on the one hand, and the absolute cognitive promise inaugurated by the Quantum wave equations on the other, the spirit of the new millennium has to live with the frustrations of a deeper epistemic irresolution, one that is threatening to taking over the foundations of reality, moral philosophy and language at once.

"Consciousness creates reality," we have heard for more than once from the eccentric *philosophés* of the emerging Quantum age: indeed, the refurbished obsession for magic in its updated relativistic idiomatic format impregnates the foundations of philosophical discourse, with the major difference that it now encodes the theories of a regressive transcendence, supported by the props of additional dimensions and an abundance of logical paradoxes. Shockingly, Prospero – taken here as an epitomic figure of hesitation between paradigms – remains with us in the new century, to be looked at again and again from the odd angles of our latest fashions in thought. As Bruno prophetically inferred, in a universe able to respond our deepest need for outcomes, the final stage of bonding employs the

deliberate release of bonds, an operation labeled as “exsolvere” – corresponding to the operator’s withdrawal from the stage of action once the bond has been established as an autonomous, self-generative structure (Coulano 97). Once more, *The Tempest* has been able to carry forth its mercurial seeds on the new world’s shores, foreshadowing another epistemic revolution, one that, in assuming non-causal phenomena together with the presence of a co-participatory intelligence of the divine as *possible*—thus revalidating the half-forgotten tenets of Hermetic philosophy—aims for placing “reality” in a new sequence with the quality of intentional thought.



## Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> In his study, *The Return of The Golden Age*,... John Mebane challenged Frances Yates' assumptions.

<sup>2</sup> These emerged in Bacon's optimism with regard to the powers of mind, which were described as omnipotent. On a different note, Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* is often discussed as the first study to engage in a quasi-cynical investigation of human nature based upon a psychological investigation of citizenship. Written 26 years after James' death, Hobbes' opus portrays sovereigns as actors on the stage of history whose performance consists of being able to provide stable, credible models to order their societies.

<sup>3</sup> Kantorowitz's employment of "political theology" in the intricate legal and symbolical contexts of pre-modern theory of the monarchy is not original either, relying upon a reassessment of the original term: Carl Schmitt, a Catholic German jurist published in 1922 a short book entitled *Political Theology: Four Essays on Sovereignty*, which adapted a notion from Spinoza's *Theological Political Tractatus*. Before Kantorowitz, Walter Benjamin (*Origins of the German Baroque Drama*, 1927) discovered the symbolic prerogatives of kingship as related to the condition of the tyrant in the Baroque drama and employed "political theology" against its original conservative prejudice in Schmitt. Unlike Benjamin, who took the notion positively, fathoming a Messianic materialism, Kantorowitz's theory saw the king's two bodies doctrine as the border between absolutism and constitutionalism. (see Julia Reinhardt Lupton's *Shakespeare and Political Theology*, University of Chicago Press, 2005), online introduction at the author's website: <http://www.designwritingresearch.org/Shakespeare/ShakeLupton.htm>

<sup>4</sup> See Dan Philpott's article "Sovereignty" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2003 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2003/entries/sovereignty/>

<sup>5</sup> The metaphor belongs to David M. Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642*. The words were inspired by Elizabeth's 1592 Portrait.

<sup>6</sup> The term, which has already become a common-place in Renaissance studies, belongs to Frances Yates.

<sup>7</sup> The period between 1633, the year of Galileo's condemnation by the Catholic Church and 1637, the publication of Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, are particularly important for the alleged transformation of cognitive mentalities.

<sup>8</sup> The term is original.

<sup>9</sup> I am influenced here by Ioan P. Couliano's theory in *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, who identifies Bruno's grand manipulator theory in *De Vinculis in Genere* with an early methodology of psychological mass-control. First, in a move typical of Rosicrucianism, which looks at religions as a social artifact in the attempt to discover the true spiritual foundations of the world, Bruno sees everybody and everything as interconnected. This is what makes the occult philosopher see theology and all other beliefs a result of magic processes, the knowledge of which grants the magician-statesman an unparalleled power to control the psychology of his subjects. "Everything is manipulable, and there is absolutely no one who can escape intersubjective relationships," says Couliano in a move of thought which identifies points of transfer between Bruno's theory with Gustave Le Bon's nineteenth century's mass psychology, Sigmund Freud's 1921 *Mass Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. The same questions had been posed by earlier political scientists, such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who saw religions as "opium for the masses" and took ideology as a formative tool in the formation of mass-consciousness. Ultimately - Couliano thinks - Bruno's "classical" principles of manipulation can be rediscovered particularly, in propagandistic texts, such as Adolph Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and are also present in the ideologies of the new orders established

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in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. (For an expanded treatment of the topic, see Couliano 89-91.)

<sup>10</sup> I am applying here the already classical concepts of structuralist breed originated in Jakobsonian terminology, yet my use of structuralist notions is not and cannot possibly be a dogmatic one, since I empower new historicist perspectives in my methodology. Jakobson designates six communication “functions” each associated with a different “dimension” of the communication process. The *dimensions* consist of 1. context; 2. message; 3 sender; 4. receiver; 5. channel; 6. code; while the functions are classified as: *referential* (= contextual information); 2 *aesthetic* (= auto-reflection); 3 *emotive* (= self-expression); 4 *conative* (= vocative or imperative addressing of receiver); 5 *phatic* (= checking channel working); 6 *metalingual* (= checking code-working). See Roman Jakobson, M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*, 1956; and *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, (Ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> Since Roman Jakobson’s functions are not and do not need be placed in a dialectical relation, I think that the only possible analysis of *meaning* in relation with *function* with respect to *The Tempest*’s unequal rhetorical agencies can be made through the reinsertion of voices in their alleged fictional universes- an operation which takes into account Lubomir Doležel’s theories of hybridization and heterogeneity. (Doležel, *Heterocosmica, passim*)

<sup>12</sup> ...this is to say for its proper hour, place and guardian angel.

<sup>13</sup> Sir Philip Sidney’s *The Defense of Poesy*, (Boston: ed. A.S. Cook, 1890)

<sup>14</sup> The full idea is described in conjunction with the III-rd paragraph. “All philosophers (natural and moral) follow nature, but only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, does grow in effect into another nature, in making things either better than nature brings forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature...Nature never set forth the earth in so rich a tapestry as different poets have done, neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees.”

<sup>15</sup> For a critical analysis of the Elizabethan historical milieu, also see Carson 83.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Wood 4.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Wood 4.

<sup>18</sup> See Maus and Wikander. “Arcadia Lost: Politics and Revision in the Restoration *Tempest*.” *Renaissance Drama* 13 (1982)

<sup>19</sup> Sir Philip Sidney’s *The Defense of Poesy*, (Boston: ed. A.S. Cook, 1890)

<sup>20</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy*, (Boston: ed. A.S. Cook, 1890)

<sup>21</sup> Warton cited in Wood 5 and *The Adventurer*, no 93 (1753), also discussed in Vickers 2:197.

<sup>22</sup> Discussed in Wood, for the original citation see Jonathan Kramnick. *Making the English Canon: Print Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700-1770*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Wood’s citation, original note in Alden and Vaughan 1991: 177-179. The pleonastic expression is an archaism.

<sup>24</sup> See Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* (U.S.: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Original note to I.ii. 396; Bronson and O’Meara 61, 64-5.

<sup>26</sup> *Critical Review* of November 1765, see Vickers 5: 214; also cited in Nuttall 61.

<sup>27</sup> Dryden and Davenant’s 1670s adaptation transformed *The Tempest* into a comedy; the 1674 subsequent version changed the play into an opera; this favors simplified representations of *The Tempest*, which supported pantomimic productions throughout the 1730s. (Also see Wood 5.)

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<sup>28</sup> John Boydell entry in The Shakespeare Gallery (1789). published in *The Boydell Shakespeare Prints*(US: Arco Press, 1979)

<sup>29</sup> Original quote in Hazlitt, *The Complete Works* (Ed. P.P. Howe (21 vols, London, 1930-1934), 19: 207.

<sup>30</sup> Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* Chapter I, passim.

<sup>31</sup> See Richard C. McCoy. *Alterations of State: Sacred Kingship in the English Reformation*. (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), 156.

<sup>32</sup> Coleridge, from "Lecture XIX: *The Tempest*." R. a. Foakes, Ed., *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare*, (Continuum International Publishing Group, 1989), 169.

<sup>33</sup> In nineteenth-century Canada, Shakespeare's plays became a major motivator for cultural gatherings and often acted as an intellectual tool for community building. During the 1830s and 1840s Shakespeare clubs thrived not only in large cities, such as Toronto, Hamilton, and Vancouver, but also in mid-sized and new townships, such as Napanee, Ingersoll, Owen Sound, and Cape Breton. Their purpose was not as much to produce Shakespearean plays, but to encourage dialogue and rhetorical skills. A more profound assimilation of Shakespeare came in the mid-nineteenth century together with its integration into the newly-established provincial education system.

<sup>34</sup> Coleridge, "Ninth Lecture on Shakespeare and Milton" (1811), *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare*, R. a. Foakes, Ed., (Continuum International Publishing Group, 1989), 169.

<sup>35</sup> Coleridge, "Ninth Lecture on Shakespeare and Milton" (1811), original note in *Literary Remains* (1836), reprinted in *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare*, R. a. Foakes, Ed., (Continuum International Publishing Group, 1989), 169.

<sup>36</sup> The term was invented by Coleridge and rediscovered by Tzvetan Todorov.

<sup>37</sup> Samuel Coleridge, "Ninth Lecture on Shakespeare and Milton" (1811), reprinted in *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare*, R. a. Foakes, Ed., (Continuum International Publishing Group, 1989), 169.

<sup>38</sup> Mid-nineteenth century interpretations are centered on the ethical and semantic questions generated by Caliban's monstrosity, whose unfinished shape and irresolute fate took center-stage. In 1848, W. J. Birch (*Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakespeare*), rediscovered Caliban's words of revolt against Prospero (V.i.) as a marker of Shakespeare's atheism, "done in ridicule of religion." Other critics of the Victorian era, counter-reacting to Romantic excessive idealism, start to ponder on the play's naturalistic undertones. Some of these unexploited semantic resources are indeed inspiring for later post-colonial interpretative perspectives, which can be traced back to Hazlitt's famous original analysis, who saw Caliban as the legitimate heir of the isle. Such is Thomas De Quincey's opinion, who considered Caliban as a noble savage, a creature "not meant for scorn, but for abomination mixed with fear and partial respect. He is purposely brought into contrast with the drunken Trinculo and Stephano, with an advantageous result. He is much more intellectual than either, uses a more elevated language not disfigured by vulgarisms, and is not liable to the low passion for plunder, as they are." Having inherited from Sycorax the power of magic, which made him prevail over inimical third parties, Caliban's battle with Duke Milan was gained from "the moral superiority of Prospero in Christian wisdom."

In a comparable manner, Victor Hugo (1865) praised Shakespeare for giving life to invisible spiritual entities, where others kneeled down in front of James' despotic Puritanism. James Lowell Russel insisted upon the play's universality, a said masterpiece of "allegorical" art, whose uniqueness consisted "not of embodying metaphysical abstractions, but giving us ideals abstracted from life itself, suggesting an under, meaning everywhere, forcing it upon us nowhere." In this

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newly fashioned symbolist manner, he saw the characters of the play not as typical, but as allegorical-symbolical “they do not illustrate a class of persons, they belong to universal Nature,” thus opening the paths to a purely allegorical reading.

In his 1875 study, written at Trinity College in Dublin, Edward Dowden’s analysis of the play consecrated the conservative reading consistent with Prospero’s said right to educate Caliban, granted by “the higher levels of moral attainment.” Spectacles produced during the same period rediscover the taste for licentious extrapolations, taking the liberty of ‘filling in the blanks’ around Caliban’s uncertain condition and destiny in eccentric fashions: in 1871, John Riden’s Queen’s Theatre production closed the play with a sunbathing liberated Caliban; F. R. Benson’s 1891 Stratford representation places Sycorax’s progeny amongst raging apes. From the same period, belonged Post-Darwinist readings of the play that also discovered Caliban’s primordial humanity form a paradoxical recuperative perspective: Sir Daniel Wilson’s *Caliban, the Missing Link* (1873) is prominent for claiming that Shakespeare anticipated the evolutionary theory by almost three centuries. Shakespeare’s rendering of the malformed Caliban offered Wilson an unmistakable indication of the creature’s significance within the play; Caliban represented the “missing link”; thus any exaggerated contempt for the pre-human character’s behavior had to be in disagreement with Shakespeare’s intentions.

Robert Browning feels inspired by the character’s bawdiness when, in his poem, *Caliban upon Setebos*, the Victorian poet takes the dramatic monologue to its peak. Browning’s Post-Romantic adaptation can be viewed as a restitution of Caliban’s symbolic rights, deliberately distorted, Browning suggests, by Coleridgean critical tradition. Yet, the new era not only plays the representations of Caliban against the grain of preconception, but this new age, already tired of monological, totalizing, and didacticist readings, discovers the taste for irresolution, building around Caliban’s ambiguous voice, inarticulate and eloquent and the same time. However, the pro-Caliban critical sympathy takes place within a new cultural climate (no less Calibanesque) ignited by Darwin’s evolutionary theory, a theory that calls into question the status of the theological assertions with respect to our said paradisiacal origins. In a movement that attempts to disambiguate the original character’s irresolute destiny, Browning’s Caliban is put to work to illustrate an original doctrine of innocence, typical of the Victorian dilemma around the status of faith in modern society. If the new theory of evolution and the traditional theology of miracle find themselves at loggerheads, this is not because the Bible and Darwinism would not be reconcilable in principle, but for the reason that (British) civilization has not apprehended yet “an evolutionary theology,” able to integrate apparently disjunctive perspectives. Typical of this period, T.H. Huxley’s 1860 remark illustrates the mature age of Victorian (and pre-modern in general) criticism, which indirectly empowers a more speculative reading of *The Tempest* in a theological key:

If I am asked whether I would choose to be descended from the poor animal of low intelligence and stooping gait who grins and chatters as we pass, or from a man endowed with great ability and a splendid position who should use these gifts to discredit and crush humble seekers after truth, I hesitate what answer to make.

(Thomas Henry Huxley, *A Character Sketch*, posted on Project Gutenberg, Alex Catalogue of Electronic Texts)

Like Browning and many other intellectuals of the same period, T. H. Huxley hopes to reconcile evolutionary theory with the theology of the miracle, thus discovering the core-question of the Post-Darwinistic era: namely, if civilization is truly preferable over the age of innocent savagery. If, indeed, Browning’s Caliban represents our common ancestor, then the symbolic character of Prospero is the provider of the miracle that could bestow upon primitive humanity a touch of bliss. As a result, the reinstatement of Caliban’s humanity has the power to reinforce a pro-Prospero reading. Both Browning and Huxley seem to excuse Caliban, in order to justify the double-fold quest of Victorian epoch, culture elevating nature, progress summoned by majesty. Spirituality and nature could be reconciled, Huxley reflects in a line of neo-Gnostic breed, for “souls secrete their bodies, as snails do shells.” The civilization’s new splendor will integrate into its unfinished symphony the echoes of Caliban’s wavering steps. In this cultural context, Browning’s Caliban,

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who unveils an original doctrine of “natural theology,” dramatizing a broad interpretative dilemma, can be understood as a fictional advocate of the told harmonization of natural religion, providential theology, and evolution.

<sup>39</sup> The personages comprise many types: king, noble, sage, low-born sailor, boisterous vagabond, youth, and maiden in the heyday of their innocent love. To them are superadded beings of the earth and air, Caliban and Ariel, creations of the purest imagination. All these reveal their natures by speech and action, with a realism impossible to the tamer method of a narrative poem. Consider the poetic thought and diction: what can excel Prospero’s vision of the world’s dissolution that shall leave “not a rack behind” or his stately abjuration of the magic art? Listen, here and there, to the songs of his tricky spirit, his brave chick, Ariel: “Come unto these yellow sands,” “Full fathom five thy father lies,” “Where the bee sucks, there suck I.” Then we have a play within a play, lightening and decorating it, the masque of Iris, Ceres, and Juno. I recapitulate these details to give a perfectly familiar illustration of the scope of the drama. True, this was Shakespeare, but the ideal should be studied in a masterpiece; and such a play as *The Tempest* shows the possibilities of invention and imagination in the most synthetic poetic form over which genius has extended its domain. (Stedman, *The Nature and Elements of Poetry*, 1892).

<sup>40</sup> Schelling wrote in his *The English Masque* (93-138) that “*The Tempest* is a betrothal masque in which the familiar classical goddesses figure, besides an antimasque of “strange shapes.”

<sup>41</sup> Charles Wells Moulton, Ed., *The Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors* (The Moulton publishing company, 1902), 535.

<sup>42</sup> William Auden’s speculative recreation of *The Tempest* in his superb poem *The Sea and the Mirror* (1944) blends elements from all other Shakespearean plays and can be read as a reconstruction of the bard’s lyrical manner and imagistic repository. Not only did Auden know of Freud’s investigative techniques, but his tendency to rewind the play as a game around dialectical psychological binaries, seems more Manichean than Christian. The newly immigrated poet (otherwise a devout of Christian philosophical themes) thinks of pigeonholing the Shakespearean characters in a text that replays *The Tempest*’s symbolic agencies within a re-creative topology of the spiritual. Indeed, Auden reads the voices in musical key: that is, associating individual tonalities with thematic oppositions. In Auden’s reading, the ethereal Prospero becomes dependent upon the vile Antonio, while the airy Ariel and muddy Caliban are shown as poles of the same cosmic alchemy. As Jeremy Noel Tod points out, Auden’s poem “is more than a commentary on Shakespeare; it is a lecture that deduces from its text an existential moral never stated therein.” *The Tempest*, in fact, “is a marvel of ambiguity about cosmological questions.”

“Review article to William Auden’s *The Sea and the Mirror*,” Arthur Kirsch, ed., 2003, published in *The Guardian*, Saturday, September 27, 2003, online version at: <http://books.guardian.co.uk/reviews/poetry/0,6121,1050291,00.html>

<sup>43</sup> Discussing the alleged quality of verisimilitude in the Elizabethan era, Nuttall writes:

A historical survey of the literary practice of verisimilitude will quickly show that realism is a freely movable feast. In the seventh century BC Archilochus, tiring of heroic convention, wrote his shocking poem about throwing his shield away in flight and became the model for various docile imitations. Sidney’s “look in thy heart and write” had a similar fate. The tough realism of Donne’s new voice became the artificial fustian despised by the mature Dryden, whose forensic plainness became in its turn the artificial Augustan diction rejected as artificial by Wordsworth – whose Romantic truth became in its turn a ‘manner’, to be austere eschewed by twentieth-century poets. It is as though the hope of reference to reality is endlessly renewed but endlessly defeated – or found out (Nuttall, 56-57).

<sup>44</sup> Roland Barthes. “L’effet de réel” (1968) republished in *Le Bruissement de la langue: Essais critiques IV*.

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<sup>45</sup> Barthes cites from the French translation by Richelet (1698). The original version of the *Treatise on True and False Beauty* appeared in "Epigrammatum Dilectus ex omnibus tum veteribus tum recentioribus poetis accurate decerptus, cum dissertatione de vera pulchritudine et adumbrada, in wua, ex certis principiis, rejectionis ac selectionis Epigrammatum causae reddentur."

"This work," Nuttall comments, "was well received in Protestant England and was for many years used as a textbook at Eton College." (see Nuttall, 58)

<sup>46</sup> Nuttall takes a step ahead in defining convention against "reality", when, commenting on Barthes' notion of "unreality" he states that: ... "the mere availability of a rule providing the writer with a "short cut" renders the passage suspect. In these circumstances it becomes the specifying mark of the real to divagate from the rule. Thus 'quirkiness' becomes a paradigm of realism. Then, later still, since all linguistic operations [...] have a conventional aspect, this shift also, to the aberrant as typically realistic, can be reduced to the increasingly perceptible convention and –if you are that way inclined – relegated to the category of the unreal by the way of ubiquitous fallacy, 'whatever is conventional is unreal'." For the whole argument see Nuttall 61, 62.

<sup>47</sup> Rapin quoted in Nuttall, 63.

<sup>48</sup> Montaigne's *On Cannibals*, cited in Frank Kermode, Introduction to *The Tempest*. *The Tempest Casebook*. (London: Macmillan, 1958), XXXV.

<sup>49</sup> To sustain the theory of Montaigne's "naturalism", Kermode chooses the following (famous) quote from the French philosopher's essay *On Cannibals*: "They [the Indians] are even savage, as we call those fruits wilde, which nature of her selfe (3.7.5, 114) hath produced: whereas indeed... those which ourselves have altered by our artificial devices, and diverted from their common order, we should rather terme savage. In those are the true and most profitable virtues, and naturall properties most lively and vigorous, which in these we have bastardized, applying them to the pleasure of our corrupted taste. And if notwithstanding, in divers fruits of those countries that were never tilled, we shall finde, that in respect of ours they are most excellent, and as delicate to our taste; there is no reason, art should gain the point of honor of our great and puissant mother Nature." Montaigne cited in Frank Kermode's Introduction to *The Tempest*. *The Tempest Casebook*. (London: Macmillan, 1958), XXXV.

<sup>50</sup> The description belongs to Shakespeare in the Folio "Names of the Actors," cited in Kermode's *Introduction...*, XXXIV.

<sup>51</sup> Also discussed in my course notes in Prof. Lubomír Doležel's course, "Possible Worlds of Fiction," University of Toronto, Graduate Centre for Comparative Literature, 1998.

<sup>52</sup> For the full quote, See Frank Kermode, *The sense of an ending: Studies in the theory of fiction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967), 117.

<sup>53</sup> Kermode's idea is also analyzed in Richard Webster's review article New Ends for Old: Frank Kermode *The Sense of an Ending*, in *The Critical Quarterly*, Winter 1974, online presence: <http://www.richardwebster.net/print/xkermode.htm>

<sup>54</sup> Lubomír Doležel, *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1998), 117.

<sup>55</sup> See Richard Webster, New Ends for Old: Frank Kermode *The Sense of an Ending*, in *The Critical Quarterly*, Winter 1974, online presence: <http://www.richardwebster.net/print/xkermode.htm>

<sup>56</sup> See Richard Webster, New Ends for Old: Frank Kermode *The Sense of an Ending*, in *The Critical Quarterly*, Winter 1974, online presence: <http://www.richardwebster.net/print/xkermode.htm>

<sup>57</sup> To distance himself from Levi Strauss, Derrida emphasizes the limits of structural method discussed by Levi Strauss in *Elementary Structures* where Levi-Strauss postulates the universality of structures belonging to nature, independent of cultural particularities or determined norms. In

contrast, Derrida relativizes the notion of center in systems of signs as a fiction of thought founded upon the subject's desire of coherence and hierarchical totality. We are citing here the epochal paragraph from *Writing and Difference*: "Thus it has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which governs the structure, while escaping structurality. This is why classical thought concerning structure could say that the center is, paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside* it. The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its center elsewhere*. The center is not the center. The concept of centered structure—although it represents coherence itself, the condition of the *episteme* as philosophy or science—is contradictorily coherent. And, as always, coherence in contradiction expresses the force of a desire. See Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" in *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1978), 278-294.

<sup>58</sup> Derrida, 1978, quoted in Lodge, 1988, 108.

<sup>59</sup> This particular insight – one that takes subjectivity as produced by social hierarchies and their embedded discursive mannerisms (a theory whose complexity does not leave us the space of a detailed discussion here) – marks Derrida's unequivocal dissociation not only from Levi-Straussian reliance upon universal structures, but also from the initial Saussurian logocentric semiotics, in which the rational speaking subject relies on the denomination of signs as stable, a reflection of his own self-consciousness.

<sup>60</sup> Bronwin Davies and Rom Harre, *A Body of Writing*, 1990-1999, (AltaMira Press, 2000), 103.

<sup>61</sup> *Translatio imperii* (in Latin, "transfer of rule") is a political notion discovered during the medieval era: history itself is seen as a linear succession of power from ruler to ruler, in a logic that neglects the possibility of unpredictable mutations, or that of parallel developments. Jacques Le Goff, one of the co-founders of New Historicism, took the notion as a typical teleological symptom in medieval thought, since the medieval jourists did not understand the mundane power as separate from divine history. For an comprehensive, extended description of "translation of the empire" in the first colonial texts, see Hart, *Comparing Empires* 2-3, 8-9, 11, 67-68, 71, 73, 75-76, 96, 109, 125, 143, 145, 149, 163-165, n. 208.

<sup>62</sup> Conferences offered by Julia Kristeva at the Centre of Theory and Criticism in the Speaker Series Cycle: "Proust: Issues of Identity". 1997, October 9, 16, 23. From my course notes, University of Western Ontario, 1997.

<sup>63</sup> Louis Althusser, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, on Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, *La Pensée*, 1970.

<sup>64</sup> Althusser divorces form the traditional Marxist renderings of ideology as relegated to the real world. Non-reflective of reality, the ideological persuasion addresses the imaginary order, a term originally found In Lacan's psychology. Accordingly, human subjectivity is essentially narcissistic, following the vagaries of the mirror stage, characterized by the subject's misrecognition of the self in reflection. Lacan's major assumption relates the definition of the subject to the persistence of the mirror stage throughout the subject's adult life. Lacan identifies here a tension between the modes of imagination and the cognitive shocks of experience. The ideological interpellation in Lacan ascribes the subject's formation to the already-made ideological frame, one that in hiding its persuasive agenda, manages to "interpellate concrete individuals as concrete subjects." Hence, the ideology is told to have a concrete existence, given in the power of performatives and ritual behavior upon civilized subjectivity.

<sup>65</sup> The expression belongs to French theoretician Etienne Balibar.

<sup>66</sup> "...language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique, deconstructive criticism aims to show that any text inevitably undermines its own claims to have a determinate meaning, and

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licences the reader to produce his own meanings out of it by a n activity of semantic *freeplay*" Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976), XVIII.

<sup>67</sup> The respect for structurality shown by Levi-Strauss is shown by Derrida as a logo-centric pattern, one that compels "the neutralization of time and history," in spite of the fact that Levi-Strauss has shown, in many instances, awareness of the historicist methodological clusters in relation with his own structuralism. One can therefore describe what is peculiar to the structural organization only by not taking into account, in the very moment of this description, its past conditions: by failing to pose the problem of the passage from one structure to another, by putting history into parentheses. Such is the algebraic formality of the problem as I see it. More concretely, in the work of Levi-Strauss it must be recognized that the respect for structurality, for the internal originality of the structure, compels a neutralization of time and history. In this "structuralist" moment, the concepts of chance and discontinuity are indispensable. Moreover, Levi-Strauss often appeals to them as, for instance, for that structure of structures, language, of which he says in the *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* that it "could only have been born in one fell swoop."

Whatever may have been the moment and the circumstances of its appearance in the scale of animal life, language could only have been born in one fell swoop. Things could not have set about signifying progressively. Following a transformation the study of which is not the concern of the social sciences, but rather of biology and psychology, a crossing over came about from a stage where nothing had a meaning to another where everything possessed it. This standpoint does not prevent Levi-Strauss from recognizing the slowness, the process of maturing, the continuous toil of factual transformations, history (for example, in *Race and History*). But, in accordance with an act which was also Rousseau's and Husserl's, he must "brush aside all the facts" at the moment when he wishes to recapture the specificity of a structure. Like Rousseau, he must always conceive of the origin of a new structure on the model of catastrophe—an overturning of nature in nature, a natural interruption of the natural sequence, a brushing aside of nature.

<sup>68</sup> Indirect quotation from Derrida, *Structure, Sign, Play, passim*.

<sup>69</sup> In Wittgenstein's work, the fallacies of thought are appended to the forms of intellectual confusions enticed by language itself, and denounces the need for universal referents as "illusions", "bewitchments," or "conjuring tricks" (in *Philosophical Investigations*).

<sup>70</sup> For an expanded discussion of "pharmakon" in Derrida's thought, see his text "Plato's Pharmacy" in two consecutive issues of the French journal *Tel Quel*. Here, I have limited myself to the reproduction of the introductory passage, where Derrida acknowledges the ambiguousness of the Platonic notion of "pharmakon," taken here as an ambivalent term (Derrida discusses its aggramatical status in Plato's dialogue, an idea that originated in Saussure's remark with regard to the persistence and occurrence of certain words in contexts that defy the possibility of denotative translation. Derrida starts with the discussion of a mythical goddess named "Pharmacia," and continues by acknowledging a different use of the word "pharmakeus" (wizard, magician, healer, doctor) in Plato's vocabulary. Reading Plato and counting the occurrences of "pharmakon" in his writings, Derrida notes the absence of a third derivative, given in the semantic root of "Pharmakos," which translates "scapegoat". This remark generates an original train of thought in Derrida's text: accordingly, these are truths of discourse that cannot be entirely ascribed to linguistic denotation, and which need to be acknowledged as perpetually transgressive to their transcription. The value of these terms depends entirely on the quality of undecipherable contexts, such as the symbolic themes of public memory. They also emphasize the speaker's positioning within the communicational settings, being reflective of the association between individual discourse and language itself. The discussion of "logos" in Phaedrus is shown as entirely dependent upon the agency of utterance. This is a paradoxical trend in Plato's metaphysics where truth



is introduced in relation with the position of the speaking subject. According to Derrida's analysis, King Thamos assumes a non-deliberative sovereignty in relation with the newly discovered authority of the written word. The allegedly semi-divine Teuth, who identifies himself within the mythical lineage of Ammon, listens to Teuth's presentation of writing with undisclosed suspicion. Writing is presented as a *pharmakon*, or, better said, as a provisional remedy to the problem of postlapsary oblivion, yet the semi-divine king sees this bequest as a product—ergon brought to him from a lower realm of determinism and historical experience. To Thamos, this is a gift whose future functions within his kingdom depend entirely on his patronizing sentence. Derrida writes that the episode mentioned above speaks of the problem of translation between cultures, one that expresses "a violent difficulty of the transference of a non-philosopheme into a philosopheme." The essay was reprinted in *La Dissemination*, 1972, and translated from French by Barbara Johnson (63-171).

<sup>71</sup> This is my own term, which I am using to avoid the improper use of "dialectics" in the context.

<sup>72</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976), 18.

<sup>73</sup> Levi-Strauss, better than any other, has brought to light the freeplay of repetition and the repetition of freeplay. One no less perceives in his work a sort of ethic presence, an ethic of nostalgia for origins, an ethic of archaic and natural innocence, of a purity of presence and self-presence in speech—an ethic, nostalgia, and even remorse, which he often presents as the motivation of the ethnological project when he moves toward archaic societies-exemplary societies in his eyes. Derrida takes the opposite route, denouncing structuralist stanzas: "As a turning toward the presence, lost or impossible, of the absent origin, this structuralist thematic of broken immediateness is thus the sad, *negative*, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseau-ist facet of the thinking of freeplay of which the Nietzschean *affirmation*—the joyous affirmation of the freeplay of the world and without truth, without origin, offered to an active interpretation—would be the other side. *This affirmation then determines the non-center otherwise than as loss of the center.* And it plays the game without security. For there is a *sure* freeplay: that which is limited to the *substitution of given and existing, present, pieces.* In absolute chance, affirmation also surrenders itself to *genetic* indetermination, to the *seminal* adventure of the trace." In Derrida, *Structure, Sign, Play* 278-294.

<sup>74</sup> "There are thus two ways to look at notions such as *interpretation, structure, sign, freeplay.* The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering, a truth or an origin which is free from freeplay and from the order of the sign, and lives like an exile the necessity of interpretation. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms freeplay and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of onto-theology—in other words, through the history of all of his history - has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of the game. The second interpretation of interpretation, to which Nietzsche showed us the way, does not seek in ethnography, as Levi-Strauss wished, the "inspiration of a new humanism" (again from the "Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss"). There are more than enough indications today to suggest we might perceive that these two interpretations of interpretation—which are absolutely irreconcilable even if we live them simultaneously and reconcile them in an obscure economy—together share the field which we call, in such a problematic fashion, the human sciences." See Derrida's famous paragraph 29 on "Deconstruction" in *Structure, Sign, and Play*.

<sup>75</sup> I retain here another Derridian idea in *Structure, Sign, Play* (247-265): "Successively, and in a regulated fashion, the center receives different forms or names. The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix—if you will pardon me for demonstrating so little and for being so elliptical in order to bring me more quickly to my principal theme—is the determination of being as

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*presence* in all the senses of this word. It would be possible to show that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the I center have always designated the constant of a presence- *eidos*, *arche*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *aletheia* [truth], transcendentality, consciousness, or conscience, God, man, and so forth.”

<sup>76</sup> One should not miss from sight a fact, maybe more obscured in the history of linguistics, namely Derrida’s reliance upon Austin’s theory of speech acts, in which the performative aspect of communication determines meaning in relation with context and intonation, as innate features of lived communication. Performance allows meaning to spring in a world of otherwise indeterminate textual locutions.

<sup>77</sup> For the original place and context of these notions, see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*; for quotes and paraphrases see Kluchohn 4-5.

<sup>78</sup> Coherence in interpretation is doubtlessly important, yet this cannot be taken as the only denomination of value in cultural interpretation, since analysis needs to take into account the empirical factors of historicity and locality, “the informal logic of actual life.” (“Introduction,” Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*)

<sup>79</sup> Geertz acknowledges here his source of inspiration in Northrop Frye’s reading of Aristotle’s *Poetics*.

<sup>80</sup> First, any reference to ideal constructs in the poststructuralist era can be read differently, as an attempt to “re-cosmicize” criticism from the scaffolds of an integrative panorama. If there are rules to the psychology of collectivities, they should be acknowledged as universal and their validity should be tested across cultural and historical borders. This is the “structuralist” anchor of Geertz’s method, otherwise attempting to transcend the fashion of deconstruction. Yet, for Geertz, a thinker also aware of the limitations of classical structuralism, the alleged “typology” of events entices a protean vision of drama. The “deep play” concept –inspired by his accidental participation to a Balinese cockfight– finds itself partially absolved of its traditional theoretical confinement and can be seen anew as an enactment of symbolic, “paradigmatic” situations in communication acts. Being engaged in rituals as an accidental participant represents the chance of becoming assimilated to the social psychology of the group. Hence, the possibility of empathizing and coherence expands across confined psychological borders, in a play of sympathies that expands on the common memory of the ritual as a lived event.

<sup>81</sup> “To set forth symmetrical crystals of significance, purified of the material complexity in which they are located, and then attribute their existence to autogenous principles of power, universal principles of human mind, or vast, a priori *weltanschauungen*, is to pretend a science that does not exist and imagine a reality that cannot be found. Cultural analysis is (or should be guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, not discovering the Continent of meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape.” (Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* 20)

<sup>82</sup> Such an extension of the notion of the text beyond written material, and even beyond verbal, is, though metaphorical, not, of course, all that novel. The *interpretatio naturae* tradition of the middle ages, which, culminating in Spinoza, attempted to read nature as Scripture, the Nietzschean effort to treat value systems as glosses of the will to power (or the Marxian one to treat them as glosses on property relations), and the Freudian replacement of the enigmatic text of the manifest dream with the plain one of the latent, all offer precedents, if not equally recommendable ones. But the idea remains theoretically undeveloped; and the more profound corollary, so far as anthropology is concerned, that cultural forms can be treated as texts, as imaginative works built out of social materials, has yet to be systematically exploited. Ibid. 1, 448-449. For a clearer explanation of the poetical imaginative description of cultures, the quotation in the conclusion paragraphs of *Interpretation of Cultures* is relevant.

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<sup>83</sup> On a Baconian note, one could assert the infinity of knowledge as a function of the boundless openness of the experiential universe. In such rendering, the definition of imagination has to be broadened as to integrate the original outcomes of meaning in situations that cannot be related to the common-sense of historical experience.

<sup>84</sup> For the full version of this discussion on the perceptive and cultural phenomenologies in relation with the foundations of the new ethnography, see Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* 6-14. Geertz introduces one of the elements reiterated in Greenblatt's new historicism, namely culture as "shaped behavior."

<sup>85</sup> Yet, the process of recognition by community does not entice an *a priori* identification with already determined meanings: in spite of its predetermined understanding of linguistic expression, public memory reacts differently to the same gestures, since utterance takes place within singular settings. Geertz's ambiguous formula, "thick description," suggests that cultural anthropology deals not only with classifiable ways of behavior, but also takes into account their contexts as well, so that the special instance when the meaning of specific gestures performed within a closed community become legible for an outsider. This insight restores Geertz's epistemic optimism. In a formulation that informs the logic of our own analysis, he re-asserts the possibility of intelligibility in inter-cultural analytical endeavoring:

Culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly, described. (Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* 1: 6-14)

<sup>86</sup> Geertz places his analysis in the neo-historicist camp, attempting at supplementing the classical structuralist analysis with a more insightful understanding of living contexts. Levi Strauss "structuralism", writes Geertz in the context, lacks historical and social application, rejecting the textual interpretation of cultural acts: "He does not seek to understand symbolic forms in terms of how they function in concrete situations to organize perceptions (meanings, emotions, concepts, attitudes); he seeks to understand the entirely in terms of their internal structure, *independent de tout sujet, de tout objet, et de toute contexte*" ("Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* 412-453).

<sup>87</sup> I have summarized Csordas' interdisciplinary method below, as some of the notions discussed here, such as the theory of metaphor able to generate culture bears its special relevance to my own analytical endeavor:

[...] The performer gains a measure of prestige and control over the audience—prestige because of the demonstrated competence he had displayed, control because the flow of interaction is in his hands. When the performer gains control in this way, the potential for transformation in the social structure may become available to him as well. (Bauman 1975: 305) In this formulation what is created by performance, understood as a marked form of communicative behavior, is "social structure," understood by Bauman as the structure of relations between performer and audience. However, if our theory of ritual performance is not to revert to the idea of the individual performer as "charismatic leader," performance must also be understood to structure relations *among* members of the audience, some of whom may also at times have performative access to ritual genres. In other words, the conditions and processes of creativity must be identified in performance understood as a form of charismatic interaction among participants. The third component of our theory of performance shifts analytic focus from the more general domains of event and genre to the specificity of the performative act. This approach originates with John L. Austin's (1975) and John Searle's (1969, 1979) notion of performative utterance. For Austin, not all utterances are "constative," or descriptive of states of affairs. Some are actually ways of *doing* things, so that in certain cases "saying something is doing something," and there is no simple distinction between spoken word and

physical act. Austin also distinguishes the *force* of an utterance from its meaning. "I will come to the party" has a clear sense and reference but may have either the force of a promise or only that of a vague intention. In Austin's formulation, illocutionary force is effected in the act of saying itself, as in "I promise." In contrast, perlocutionary acts "produce certain consequential effects on the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons" (Austin 1975: 101). For example, saying something can perform the perlocutionary act of "persuading" someone of something, but one cannot say, as with illocutionary acts, "I persuade you that . . ." Anthropologists have applied the concept of performative acts cross-culturally to conventional forms of ordinary speech as well as to forms of ritual language, and have reinforced the theory's implicit blurring of the line between word and deed by including nonlinguistic ritual acts in their analyses. Tambiah (1979/1985) has proposed for the analysis of ritual language a distinction between the illocutionary frame, roughly that which establishes the force of an utterance, and the predicative frame, that in which qualities are attributed and transferred among persons and entities. This distinction can serve us as long as we recognize that the illocutionary act bears an aura of predication and that the performance of metaphors carries illocutionary force. It expands the notion of performative act to explicitly include the performance of metaphor. The power of metaphor to create form and movement in expressive culture has been decisively shown in the work of Fernandez (1986). Our adaptation of the notion of performative act incorporates both the Austinian emphasis on illocution and perlocution and a concern with the predicative force of metaphor.

See Csordas 158-159.

<sup>88</sup> Eric Gans is an UCLA professor who has promoted these new theoretical notions in *Anthropoetics*, subtitled *The Journal of Generative Anthropology*. Gans acknowledges his debt of gratitude to Rene Girard, whose thoughts have become landmarks of the new discipline.

<sup>89</sup> In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), Emile Durkheim asserted the importance of religion in traditional societies, whose manner of organization, the author assumes, subsumes individuality to collective consciousness. The various functions of religion in the formation of social behavior are analyzed in relation with their functions in social existence: *disciplinary* - proposing, imposing and reinforcing social discipline and hierarchy, *cohesive*- creating social solidarity around common tenets of value, *vitalizing*- offering groups occasions for cohesion around energies and *euphoric*- which alludes to the culture of joy and celebrations, such as religious festivals and carnivals. Durkheim placed totemic-related practices at the core of religious psychology, discussing *totemism* as the original manifestation of devotional life. The totemic animal gains its ritual value in archaic societies because of its emblematic-magic significance in the articulation of common survival strategies. The investment of such sacrificial entities with ritual significance counts on a pantheistic vision of the world, in which the social world, the natural world and the supernatural obeyed the same principles of organization. Durkheim's positivistic take on the formation of the Church discusses its utility in relation with the rise of institutionalized societies, a moment when coexistent systems of beliefs are unified into monotheistic communities of action, organized around the central hierarchy of ecclesiastic authorities.

<sup>90</sup> According to Eric Gans, "Judeo-Christian tradition conveys the sharpest vision of the anthropological function of the mimetic violence that all religions seek to expel into the realm of the sacred. The prophetic denunciations of sacrificial violence that culminate in the Gospels display more awareness of its anthropological function than the turning away from all violence characteristic of Buddhism or Jainism." The main difference, thus, between Dharmic and Judaic faiths resides in the ways in which they deal with the core psychological issue of violence and the specific technologies of sublimation, either by ritualizing violence

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in sacrifice- the Christian way to avoid the violence of traditional Judaism, or in Buddhism/Jainism, by its complete abandonment in practices that deny the reality of the body and of the world. But what happens in the Western World, where the function of ritual violence has been gradually replaced by modern rationalization? Gans makes his point by comparing the focus and the quality of desire in modern Western and Eastern worlds: "It is easy to make the argument that the West's greater awareness of culture's function in deferring violence has oriented it toward developing secular alternatives to the sacrificial mode rather than merely turning sacrificial violence inward against one's own desire. When the Western tradition renounces worldly desire, it is in the service of the individual soul's *spiritual* desire--a desire that can still arguably enter into an inter-human dialogue--rather than the search for Nirvana."

See Gans, "Chronicles of Love and Resentment: We Are All Buddhists Now," *Anthropoetics: The Journal of Generative Anthropology* 242: Saturday, August 25, 2001.

<sup>91</sup> The term has been a cornerstone of Mircea Eliade's terminology in *The Sacred and the Profane*.

<sup>92</sup> Again, I cannot ignore the Darwinistic resonance of this term for my discussion context. In the realm of animal life, Darwin suggested, any possible form of solidarity is developed as a common strategy of survival in common, directed against the group's common enemies. In the realm of human life, Freud, has suggested, civilizations are made possible by the sublimation of the "flock-instinct" in strategies of cooperation that denote common interests, and the possibility of sublimation by discovery of common mythologies.

<sup>93</sup> Girard's text refers to the re-symbolization of Crucifixion in Paul's theology, where the apparent failure of Christ is reasserted as a model-narrative of spiritual victory.

<sup>94</sup> Dostoevsky's classical character, "The Grand Inquisitor" in the Fifth Chapter of *Karamazov Brothers*, should maybe be invoked in this context, as a symbolic figure of desecration.

<sup>95</sup> Gans also rediscovers classical Geertzian perspectives as part of a refined analytical method and of an entirely convincing, original terminology. Speaking about differential satisfaction as the basis of cultural resentment, Gans integrates within his research one of the technical notions of Heideggerian descent, namely the play between the foreground and the background between representation and understanding in cultural production. On the one hand, the background itself generates the possibility of cognitive accents, and this supports (or "harbors forth" to use the rather unusual English rendering of a technical Heideggerian term) a foreground of meaning, for new symbolic occurrences can gain significance in contrast with pre-given semantic textures. On the other hand, the object of attention captures attention in a game of cognitive priorities, whose further "ontologization" follows the object's sublimation, that is to say its detachment from its original contextual background.

<sup>96</sup> "The originary hypothesis of Generative Anthropology is that human language begins as an aborted gesture of appropriation representing – and thereby renouncing as sacred – an object of potential mimetic rivalry. The strength of our mimetic intelligence makes us the only creatures for whom intraspecific violence is a greater threat to survival than the external forces of nature. Human language defers potential conflict by permitting each to possess the sign of the unpossessable object of desire – the deferral of violence through representation. Generative Anthropology seeks to transcend the impasse between the humanities, imprisoned in the "always ready" of our cultural systems, and the empirical social sciences, which cannot model the paradoxical generativity of these systems. The originary hypothesis provides the basis for rethinking every aspect of the human, from language to art, from religion to political organization."

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See Gans, "Introductory Remarks."

<sup>97</sup> Indirect quotes from Gans, *The End of Culture*; for the original argument on Greek and Judaic cultural assumptions, see *The End of Culture* 3-9.

<sup>98</sup> Should the cultural proposal of the Late Renaissance, namely that of a late synthesis between the Greek and the Judaic mythology be itself qualified as an aborted project? Certainly so, since the epistemic proposal of the Late Renaissance has succumbed to the new spells of cogitative reason.

<sup>99</sup> Common place notion and expression in Girard's work, *passim*.

<sup>100</sup> ...once again, this entails that, on the "theatrical" stage objects are taken out of their real context, where they stand for mere signs and re-idealized, represented within esthetic economies. If the experimental economies of drama are recognized as consubstantial with the needs of imagination, than substitution takes place and the new metaphors are inserted into the common language of value.

<sup>101</sup> Girard himself saw Shakespeare as a poet of mimetic desire, one who took envy as the norm of conflict and transformation in cultural attitudes. Yet, Girard's discussion of skepticism in the cultural history of Reformation is rather one-dimensional and illustrative, gravitating around the anthropological poles of longing and frustration. Here, as usual, theory can take only glimpses of the world of experiential history.

<sup>102</sup> In the next section, we will discuss Prospero as a hybrid character, who borrows elements from both heroes.

<sup>103</sup> Here, "Generative Anthropology" attempts mainly at finding the proper rules of the psychology of representation, first by discussing the rules of participation in the process of symbolic narration and, second, by explaining the motivational clustering of deliberative imagination as need for identification with the ideal.

<sup>104</sup> This is to define the esthetic economies, as compositions of objects of desire and value.

<sup>105</sup> At this point, Berthram elaborates around Mary Douglas' investigation of classical skepticism, whose theory-associated a priorilly skepticism with social marginality and its connoted disillusionment with official value systems is denounced as incomplete.

<sup>106</sup> Douglas claims that "skepticism is a feasible stand for those who do not expect to command or unify society, but stand apart from it. Belief/skepticism patterns have much to do with the claims of power and revolt against its claims."

<sup>107</sup> Berthram speaks here of the investigation by the government Comission of Cerne Abbas in 1594.

<sup>108</sup> The term belongs to Sartre, in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

<sup>109</sup> In *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, Hans Blumenberg re-discusses Karl Löwith's classical theory of the notion of progress as a secularized version of Christian apocalyptic doctrine, which develops around the belief in an external intervention that will bring the end of human history from above. Blumenberg's take internalizes the logic of progress to the idea of self-assertion, as the linguistic and ethical background of human emancipation, a process that is essentially sensitive to the quality and employment of language and its imaginary crystallizations into myths and metaphors.

<sup>110</sup> See Paul Sinfield, *Literature in Protestant England*, (Croom Helm: Barnes and Noble Books, 1983), Chapter "Theoretical Perspectives".

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<sup>111</sup> Thomas Cromwell's part as a chief minister in the English Reformation (serving between 1532-1540) had to be associated with the annulment of papal anachronistic revenue and the transfer of the ecclesiastical control into the king's authority. Part of the foundations of Elizabethan politics had been erected during Cromwell's era, when the emancipation of England from 'the authority of foreign potentates,' led to the proclamation of its sovereignty as a "nation." The 1533 Act in Restraint of Appeals, followed by the 1534 Act of Supremacy and the Dissolution of Monasteries (1538-1541), signified decisions of irrevocable importance for the legal identity of the Protestant kingdom. By the subsequent interdiction of Catholic rites, these measures also triggered the need for alternative forms of expression in church, which, as discussed in the following pages, will led to a quick development of the Moral Interludes, as a revolutionary manner to approach the Biblical parables.

The 1538 discussion between English and German Reformers of Catholic Abuses, which brought to the attention of English Reformers ethical notions such as the validity of private Masses, the celibacy of the Clergy, and the invocation of Saintly figures, led Henry VIII to the rejection of Lutheran positions. Representing the tie with the German Reformation, the same items were brought again into discussion and authorized during the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth I. The Thirty-Nine Articles, ratified by Elizabeth, settled the dispute between continental and insular Reformers. Cranmer's radical contributions, converging in 1549, to the compilation of a new Prayer Book were preserved in the Elizabethan version. So were the liturgical innovations regarding the Denial of the Sacrifice of the Mass, which led to the inclusion of the XXIX-th article, whose stipulation denies the body of Christ to the wicked. In spite of the notable readjustments during the 1662 anti-Puritan Convocation and Parliamentary revision, which reasserted the offices of the priest and of the bishop, the modifications of doctrinal significance were irrelevant.

The final outlook of the English Reformation, the main assumptions of which originated in the texts of Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, and Zwingli and were being transferred into Britain by Englishmen who lived or were forced into exile on the old continent, legitimized Anglicanism as a doctrinal derivation of the Continental Reformation, certainly less radical in aspects concerning worship, but similar in its effectiveness in rebuilding religious institutions. To the early motifs of Henry's era, such as the rejection of the papacy and the Church's infallibility, new doctrines were attached. The following doctrinal postulations, which formed the core of the Reformation in Europe, have found a local articulation in Anglican theology.

The well-known doctrines introduced in the Anglican Church are enumerated here because of their particular relevance for our research-topic: these are the justification by Faith only, including the sole authority of the Scripture in matters of Faith, the futility of auricular Confession; the denial of the prayers of the Virgin and the Saints and the exclusion of prayers for the dead supported by the corresponding dismissal of the Purgatory as a theological notion. The aforementioned aspects are analyzed in relation to the discovery of modern drama and of political cultic representations, often described in recent cultural analyses as substitutes for religious images. To these interdictions, the Reformers found a new justification in the triple Eucharistic postulation: first, the Mass or the Sacrifice was replaced by the acceptance of the Eucharist as a Communion or Sacrament; second, the rejection of worship of the Host supported the negation of Transubstantiation; third, the Mass and the sacrificial office of the priest were also denied their traditional expiatory character. The repudiation of devotions, such as the veneration of relics and images, was done in conjunction with the interdiction of indulgences, the offering of which had been associated in the Late Middle Ages with religious festivals.

<sup>112</sup> The Act in Restraint of Appeals (1533) commenced with the following words: "...that this England is an empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head and King . . .'. By employing the word "empire", Cromwell indicated England as a

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sovereign state and designated the monarch's status as independent from any foreign ruler or potentate.

<sup>113</sup> Considering that the following represents Sinfield's leading thesis, I chose to reproduce the quote in full: "My claim that the 'Christian Humanism' often identified in the period must be reconsidered in the light of historians' accounts of contemporary doctrine does not mean that everyone is supposed to have held Calvinist beliefs. We do not have much idea in principle of what it means to 'hold a belief'." For the extended treatment of the theme, see Sinfield 2-3.

<sup>114</sup> At this juncture, Sinfield employs the ideas of John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts, "Subcultures, Cultures and Class," in *Resistance Through Rituals*, ed. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (Hutchinson and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1976), quoted in Sinfield 3.

<sup>115</sup> The idea originates in Conrad Russell's *The Crisis of Parliaments* (Oxford University Press, 1971); direct quote in Sinfield 4.

<sup>116</sup> See Sinfield's discussion of Catholic vs. Protestant visions of grace, *Literature in Protestant England* 9.

<sup>117</sup> See Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, (Anchor Books, 1990), 89.

<sup>118</sup> See the extended discussion and citation in Sinfield, 10; the original quotation can be found in Lawne 224.

<sup>119</sup> Sinfield ponders that the dialogue "stands at a watershed in modern ethical development," given that both Calvin and Lawne... "recognize the possibility of the objection, but they dismiss it. For them the need for authority and punishment overrides the claims of equity and generosity. The objector quotes St. Paul's statement, 'God will have all to be saved' (1 Timothy, 2:40; the reply is from Exodus: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (33:19; 230). The objector holds, with some Biblical support, that God means to save everyone, but most protestants could not envisage divine mercy without divine judgment. The objector's argument only gradually undermined Calvinist orthodoxy. (10). Sinfield continues his analysis in explaining how the assumptions of both Objection and the Answer have become symptomatic of a "universe of strife and tension, 'insisting' on the need of grace whilst denying any means to obtain it. It claimed that God is aware of every moment of the individual spirit whilst emphasizing the inevitability of sin. And it posited a good and just divinity who damns the larger proportion of his people without their being able to affect the issue. Theologians shuffled their texts and arguments to make it appear gracious and logically consistent; creative writers wrestled, with more and less conviction, to accommodate it to their intuitions about humanity. Finally, Hobbes was right and most people rejected it. (Sinfield 10-11)

<sup>120</sup> "...For who can denie but it is repugneth to nature, that the blind shall be appointed to leade and conduct such as do see? That the weake, the sicke and impotent persons shall norishe and kepe the hole and strong? And finallie, that the foolishe, madde and phrenetike shal governe the discrete and give counsel to such as be sober of mind. And such be al women, compared unto man in bearing of authoritie. For their sight in civile regiment is but blindness; their strength, weaknes; their counsel, foolishnes; and judgment, phrensie, if it be rightlie considered." *The First Blast of The Trumpet against the Monstruous Regiment of Women* is a short work written by Knox in 1558, while aiding Calvin in exile at Geneva, to deny Mary, Queen of Scots' right to the crown of England. The book was known by Elizabeth, who, fearing Knox's already notorious intolerance, rejected his involvement to the Protestant Reformation of England after 1559.



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<sup>121</sup> These un-answerable interrogations presumably made the core of Elizabethan dilemma and marked the entire lives of two generations of Shakespearean exegesis, new biographers assert, crediting the hypothesis of the Stratfordian family's concealed Catholicism.

<sup>122</sup> The symbolism of the Queen's image will be discussed in the following subchapters.

<sup>123</sup> Also discussed in Lowith's and Blumenberg's epistemologies.

<sup>124</sup> I am paraphrasing Löwith here.

<sup>125</sup> My take is based on Wallace, "Progress, Secularization and Modernity: The Lowith-Blumenberg Debate." Both Löwith and Blumenberg discuss the validity of Hegel's dialectic of history, particularly Hegel's idea of *Aufhebung*, namely that "the modern spiritual world (which he claimed to bring to full comprehension in his political philosophy) arose through a suspension and carrying forward" of the Christian- Reformation phase of World history. (see Part I, "Contemporary Attitudes Toward Progress," 65)

<sup>126</sup> Clifford Geertz uses the same notion - although applying it to a different context - in his suggestion that subjectivity follows the tripartite process evolving from unbridled individuality to the formation of political subject and the subsequent rediscovery of individuality within the more complex obligations of modern citizenship, arisen in the wake of secular politics.

<sup>127</sup> Thomas Gibson, William Marshall, Richard Morison, John Rastell, Thomas Starkey, Richard Taverner and John Uvedale - to invoke just the most important names - were remembered as intellectuals whose assumed mission consisted of adapting the vast curriculum of Biblical scholarship to the theological and cultural needs of English Reformation.

<sup>128</sup> Paine and Gordon discuss the historical beginnings of liturgical dramas in England in association with two recorded events dating from the 1170's, namely the play of Saint Catharine produced at Dunstable and a fragment of Fitzstephn's *Life of Becket*. The first religious plays were most likely performed in Latin, or brought from France in their original vernacular renderings. English historians agree that the first "Miracle" in English dates from the thirteenth century: *The Harrowing of Hell*. The play deals with a subject inspired from the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, which discussed Christ's descent into the Hell in the interval between Crucifixion and Resurrection in order to release the old souls trapped there since the first days of the World.

<sup>129</sup> See *Towneley Plays*, Introduction, Ed. by Paine and Gordon (London, 1836, Coventry). Reedited by Halliwell, London, 1841.

<sup>130</sup> See Pollard and Rastell, *English Miracle Plays, Moralities and Interludes*.

<sup>131</sup> The *mysteries* preserved in England can be found in the Towneley family archives (Wakefield), in the Chester, York and Coventry cycles and in the Digby codex at Oxford. For a more detailed technical exegesis of these liturgical-dramatic cycles, see Axton.

<sup>132</sup> In Christian Orthodox Churches, the ritual space of the altar is a "forbidden" zone, visually separated from the Nave; in Catholic churches, the altar is entirely open, yet designated as an area of symbolic restrictions.

<sup>133</sup> Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*.

<sup>134</sup> One such case was documented in the archives of St Victor's Church in Metz and mentioned ever since in the field studies:

The role of God (Christ) was played by a priest, seigneur Nicolle de Neufchastel en Lorraine who was then the vicar of St Victor's Church in Metz. And this priest was in great danger of his life and nearly died during the Crucifixion, for he fainted and had he not been rescued would have died. And another priest had

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to take his place and finish playing the part of God, which priest was one of the executioners and sentinels in the said play. Nonetheless they gave his role to another and he played out the Crucifixion for that day. And the following day, the said priest from St Victor was restored to health and played out the Resurrection and performed his part very virtuously. And this play lasted four days. And in this performance was yet another priest called lord Jehan de Missey who was Chaplain of Mairange, who took the role of Judas; and because he was left hanging for too long, he also lost consciousness and seemed dead, given that he had fainted; therefore he was promptly taken down and carried to a place nearby where he was rubbed with vinegar and other things to get him back into shape.

Runnalls, *Cycle de mystères des premiers martyrs*; my translation.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Houle.

<sup>136</sup> Pollard, *English Miracle Plays, Moralities and Interludes*.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*.

<sup>138</sup> In a prominent study published in the opening years of the twentieth century, Alfred Bates discusses the causes of secularization in a stunningly contemporary fashion:

For some time past the popularity of the Mysteries and Miracles had been steadily declining. They had been spun out until the representation of the shortest occupied days, and the most pious spectator must have found them wearisome. They had ceased to be in harmony with the temper of the age. The dawn of latter-day civilization had broadened into what seemed almost as the perfect day. The intellectual agitation induced by the events of the last hundred years--the revival of ancient literature, the overthrow of the Ptolemaic system, the downfall of the Moors in Spain, the discoveries of Iberian navigators, political changes and the partial liberation of the Church--had lifted the human mind out of the narrow ruts in which it had so long been content to move. New ideas began to hold sway; an ardent and restless spirit of inquiry was abroad in the land; opinions which seemed to be bound up with life itself were rejected or essentially altered. Unlike other medieval institutions, chivalry not excepted, religion emerged with added strength from the ordeal; for while a vague skepticism may have found expression in the pages of Rabelais and Montaigne, among the nation at large the old child-like simplicity of faith gave way to a higher sense of the dignity and grandeur of Christianity. The Renaissance also served to raise the standard of literary taste, inasmuch as, aided by the invention of printing, it was bringing imperishable monuments of ancient poetry and prose within the reach of all who could read. Under these circumstances the sacred drama, with its odd intermixture of the sublime and the grotesque, its crudeness of form and substance, rapidly lost the charm it had once possessed. Catholics and Huguenots united in denouncing it as likely to bring religion into contempt, and its defects in the way of style were glaring enough to evoke a flood of ridicule. (11-13)

<sup>139</sup> My discussion takes into account White's thoughts in *Theatre and Reformation* (Cambridge UP, 1993.)

<sup>140</sup> This is my own assumption.

<sup>141</sup> My discussion takes into account White's reflections in *Theatre and Reformation*.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas Cromwell (1485-1540), first Earl of Essex, was Henry VIII's state minister between 1532-1540.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. White, *Theatre and Reformation*.

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<sup>144</sup> To free the Englishmen from the influence of papacy, Morison proposes, the state had to do more than to impose the laws of the new Parliament and to gain public support through proselytizing. The Crown's success depended upon its ability to adopt similar methods to those that traditionally ensured the accomplishments of the Vatican:

In place of processions, feasts, bonfires, and prayers offered to the Pope there should be ones celebrating his defeat in England; and, in place of the pagan and superstitious theatre now practiced, there should be plays denigrating the pope and advancing the Reformation cause.

(At this juncture, I am citing, then reproducing indirectly from White, whose analysis points at the political roots of Protestant theatre. See White 14-15.)

<sup>145</sup> Foxe's quote originates in his theological work, *Christus Triumphans*, ed. and trans. John Hazel Smith, in *Two Latin Comedies by John Foxe the Martyrologist* ("Prologue" 229, see endnote in White, *Theatre and Reformation* 189.)

<sup>146</sup> A more elaborate discussion of Bale's biography can be found in the Literary Encyclopedia, written by one of his classical biographers, Nicoletta Caputo from the University of Florence (article on John Bale). <http://www.litencyc.com/>

<sup>147</sup> *The Dramatic Writings of John Bale, Bishop of Ossory*, John Stephen Farmer, Ed., (The Early English Drama Society, 1907).

<sup>148</sup> White discusses the pondering of theological tenets in the history of English Reformation, in a methodological cluster that attempts at settling the apparently contradictory logic of Reformation- often viewed as a strictly iconoclastic movement, in relation with theatre, which is promoted by English Protestants for its persuasive force. White's conclusions, elaborating on Chambers' ideas, take into account another fallacy by late Victorian historians, who are accused to

rely on questionable historiographical assumptions about the Reformation, many of which persist in more recent scholarship. For example it is now impossible to sustain the view of a Lutheran-oriented English Protestantism generally supportive of the stage up to the 1560's and a Calvinist-oriented Protestantism generally antagonistic towards it afterwards. Such generalizations tend to ascribe too much significance to specifically "Lutheran" and "Calvinist" ideas and not enough to particular historical conditions in shaping religious views of the drama. Moreover, whatever sense of doctrinal unity English Protestantism had prior to Elizabeth's reign, it was only marginally influenced by Lutheran teachings, with several leading Reformers adapting an anti-Lutheran stance on some point of doctrine. In fact, one already discerns Swiss-Reformed theology in Bale's plays for the 1530's and during Edward VI's reign, Calvinism itself leaves a heavy imprint on the Protestant Drama. Chambers acknowledges that Genevan protestants tolerated playing under strict regulation, but he believed that "Puritanism," the main conduit for Calvinist habits of thinking and lifestyle in Elizabethan England, was the chief ideological force behind the Elizabethan anti-stage movement. This last contention, too, is open to serious question. It rests on a notion of a monolithic "Puritanism" integrated ethically, theologically and politically in opposition to "official churchmanship" across the Entire Elizabethan era. Chambers' division of attitudes towards drama into "Humanist" and "Puritan" shows affinities with the dichotomy of "Anglican" and "Puritan" popular of its own day and many since. (5)

More significantly for our purpose, White ponders that "those Elizabethan Protestants whose religion and lifestyle earned them the name Puritan were not united in opposition to playing." (See White 5.)

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<sup>149</sup> As White suggests, they helped the camaraderie of gentry around Reformation ideals and finally isolated the Catholics who lost ground after the short period of Mary's reign, when Protestants were inefficiently repressed. Such an example is provided by St. Martin's Church, Leicester

a strong Protestant congregation dating back at least to Edward's reign when the city magistrates hired "Master Turner the Preacher" to deliver regular lectures to parishioners. He and other reformers must have had an impact, for twenty-eight people at the parish were indicted for "displaying scorn toward the sacrament of the altar, during Queen Mary's reign, and the regular lecturing resumed shortly after Elizabeth's ascension, under the patronage of the Puritan earl of Huntingdon. Thomas North, in his *Chronicle of The Church of Saint Martin*, observes several occasions when plays, some evidently Protestant and anti-papal in character, were performed in the church during the Reformation. (White 140)

<sup>150</sup> Ironically, on such performances, the limited budget of organizers determines them to bring to new uses the old priestly vestments and cultic articles kept in storage after the abolition of the Catholic Mass.

<sup>151</sup> O'Connell's fine remark sheds light upon the new era's outlook:

In addressing the issue of Protestantism and drama, one must begin by acknowledging a larger sense of "drama," that there is something inherently dramatic in the very character of Reformation itself. Conversion from the traditional form of Christianity to its purified successor, that every member of the first generation of the Reformation underwent, was itself a powerfully dramatic psychological turn. Behind it lay the conversion narratives of St. Paul and St. Augustine, and every Christian who newly found himself a Protestant from the 1520s onward must have been aware that his life had changed course in a way that recapitulated those earlier narratives. The sense of drama, or at least its potential, would continue in the convert's need, imposed or sought, to confront the authority of the old order. (89-90)

<sup>152</sup> Bryan Crockett, *The Play of Paradox* 8-9.

<sup>153</sup> The Thirty-Nine Articles were published in the closing section of the Anglican Prayer Book.

<sup>154</sup> From Article 17, "The Thirty-Nine Articles of The English Church." "Of Predestination and Election":

Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, He hath constantly decreed by His counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation as vessels made to honour. Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works; and at length by God's mercy they attain to everlasting felicity. As the godly consideration of Predestination and our Election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: so for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have

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continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation or into wretchedness of most unclean living no less perilous than desperation. Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise as they be generally set forth in Holy Scripture; and in our doings that will of God is to be followed which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God.

<sup>155</sup> Sinfield reproduces the whole history of the Anglican theological dispute of the 1590s, where the Queen's intervention shows the monarch as a fine theologian, preoccupied to balance the most radical statements by contemporary English Reformers:

In the 1590's William Barrett and Peter Baro questioned predestination at Cambridge; to still the controversy Archbishop Whitgift (no puritan) promulgated the *Lambeth Articles* (1595), stating unequivocally that 'God from eternity predestined certain men to life and condemned others to death.' Lancelot Andrews disagreed and the Queen objected, but Whitgift declared that the articles "must be so taken and used as our private judgments, thinking them to be true and correspondent to the doctrine professed in this church of England, and established by the laws of the land. He told the vice-chancellor at Cambridge 'to take care that nothing he publicly taught to the contrary' (Whitgift, Works III, 612). Richard Hooker was commissioned by the bishops to defend episcopacy and in the process argued back towards the papist view of human capacity to contribute towards salvation. But publication of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity was held up, probably because he went too far in that direction, and the 1593 edition was not sold out until 1606, whereas William Perkins' *Golden Chain* was reprinted twelve times between 1591 and 1600. The centrality in Elizabethan thought which modern Anglicans have accorded to Hooker's work is quite unjustified. (13-14)

<sup>156</sup> Goldman re-asserts here one of the classical Greenblattian theses.

<sup>157</sup> Ethnographer, astronomer, linguist, and Cabalistic mathematician, Harriot accentuated the urgency of English civilizing policies upon American Indians, as part of his own Reformation project, meant to reconcile the logic of heavens with the motivations of human existence:

Whereby it may be hoped, if means of good government be used, that they may in short time be brought to civility and the embracing of true religion.

The English appeared to be endowed with the genius of discovery, which was only matched by their higher call to instaurate a New Golden Age of Justice in the newly found paradises. Meanwhile, Elizabeth was determined for more. Bartolome de Las Casas, who had died in 1566, was already a classic moral writer in England, whose reports made a useful lesson for the British governors. His translation of the *Brief Report on the Destruction of the Indians* (or *Tears of the Indians*), a hyperbolic account of the slaughters of the Spanish *conquistadores* against the aboriginals, was used to fire up English reaction against the Spanish as a vindictive nation for whom England should watch out, and whose settlements in the Americas would be better governed by the English. Columbus' classical travel logs, translated into English in 1577, were on the lips of English courtiers. In the *Joyfull Newes Out of the Newe Found World*, Nicolas Monardes, a Spanish physician who traveled to the New World assured his readers that "under the sun there can be no better lands." In 1584, the young and courageous Walter Raleigh had already received the Queen's patent to explore and conquer for the British crown the North American Atlantic territories. Only months later, on June the 4<sup>th</sup>, Raleigh, followed by a hundred and eight men, established Virginia colony on Roanoke Island. Thomas Harriot's written first-hand testimonial of the expedition, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, followed shortly, a book which described the inhabitants of the New World as ready to adopt the values of civility and "the imbracing of true religion" if "means of good government bee used."

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<sup>159</sup> Dee's text originally cited in Sherman, *Terrae Incognitae* x (1978), 25-43, endnotes 107, and 47.

<sup>160</sup> Webster points out that:

the religious element in *this* emergent mercantilist philosophy [that of Hakluyt and Purchas – n.m.] was important not only in respect of justifying English Protestant imperialism as a moral counterweight to its Catholic rivals, but also in lending moral authority to the dispossession of the indigenous peoples. Imperial conquest, it was argued, took the cross to heathen barbarians, in itself sufficient justification for their subordination to the will of Christians. This religious argument was supplemented later by John Locke's assertion that those better equipped to make it productive enjoyed a greater moral right to the land. (21)

<sup>161</sup> Bevington, ed., *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* 2nd ed.

<sup>162</sup> Christiane Gillham, "Single Natures Double Name: Some Comments on *The Phoenix and Turtle*," *Connotations* 2.2 (1992), 126-36.

<sup>163</sup> Gillham's original source are in J. Poeschke, "Paradies," *Lexikon für christliche Ikonographie*--later referred to as *LCI*--vol. 3 (Freiburg: Herder, 1971) 375-82, and in Edward Payson Evans, *Animal Symbolism in Ecclesiastical Architecture* (London: Heinemann, 1896) 127.

<sup>164</sup> Shakespeare's Sonnet cited and discussed in James H. Simms, "Shakespeare's *The Phoenix and the Turtle*: A Reconsideration of "Single Natures Double Name." *Connotations* 3.1 (1993), 64-71

<sup>165</sup> Focused on those details relevant for Shakespeare's life, my study follows the classical chronological division: the interval between 1558 and 1569 is taken into account as a time of revival and strengthening, endeavoring and change of strategies in royal policies; the following period of three years, between 1569 and 1572 are described as the time of crisis, in which the great internal and external challenges emerge; the great war with Spain, or better said a succession of naval battles and failed political *coups d'état*, mark a distinct period of Elizabethan triumphs, a total of eighteen years, between 1585 and 1603.

<sup>166</sup> Thomas Harmann, a magistrate of the epoch, wrote a *Caveat for Common Cursitors*, intended to raise civic awareness on the offenders' jargon and faithless practices, largely for the use of judges. His "Dictionary of Thieves," as the *Caveat* was nicknamed later, became popular in the days of Shakespeare, who used the slang in *Henry V*, in one of those unique lines that reveal the singular psychological and linguistic environment of London's suburbia:

As young as I am, I have observed these three swashers. I am boy to them all three, but all they three, though they would serve me, could not be man to me; for, indeed three such antiques do not amount to a man. For Bardolph, he is white-livered and red-faced; by the means whereof, a' faces it out, but fights not. For Pistol, he hath a killing tongue and a quiet sword; by the means whereof a' breaks words, and keeps whole weapons. For Nym, he hath heard that men of few words are the best men; and therefore he scorns to say his prayers, lest a' should be thought a coward: but his few bad words are matched with as few good deeds; for a' never broke any man's head but his own, and that was against a post when he was drunk. They will steal any thing and call it purchase. (III.ii. 28-42)

Pistol's boy, I assume, was to be recognized as one of the typical London scoundrels of the epoch. And so are Stephano and Trinculo, who could be easily identified with Hramann's rufflers or whipjacks. Such are the theatrical portraits of prostitutes like Doll Tearsheet and Hostess Quickly, Falstaff's favorites in *Henry IV*, when, (in II.iv.), they find themselves cursing in front of the young prince in the Boar's Head Tavern. Her inexhaustible repertoire of insults as well as her intuition at cunning the law officers around Eastcheap become the threats of a new class of marginals, whose *raisons d'être* match the toughest and most ingrate games of day-to-day survival. Modern historians often use this to count the crimes of those days, where new types of rogues and hardly imaginable offenses found the capital as their stage of predilection, and playwrights used their slang in classical

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comedies, yet all these cultural memoirs stand for the same reality: the broadening commerce of the capital attracted the rogues, the prostitutes, and the dispossessed, and together with them, the existential ingredients of life in modern metropolis, such as the sex-trade and violence. For additional information on Elizabethan social history, see Rowse 217-222.

<sup>167</sup> Some of them hoped to find work on boats, others on the large docks; the less lucky were just trying to make a living as beggars or wandering performers, hiding from the long hand of the city commissioners in the suburbs, once part of established rural aristocratic domains. During the first Elizabethan decades, the economy grew and many hand-laborers found labor on the docks. "Masterless men," in some periods reaching four fifths of the active population, were seen as a threat to society, and London authorities shunted them from parish to parish until they found work. Old soldiers and sailors, in particular, were looking for employment in the harbor areas, where the entry level requirements were lax and the old scars from the colonial adventures seemed unnoticed.

<sup>168</sup> Stephen Greenblatt's *Will of the World* shapes a vibrant illustration of Shakespeare's era extreme Southwark:

The spectacles were part of the structure of life and were accepted as such; the trick was to know when to look and when to look away, when to punish and when to dance. In close proximity of the sites of pain and death were sites of pleasure- the punishment scaffolds of the Bankside were close to the brothels- and these two seized Shakespeare's imagination. Whorehouses ("stews") figure frequently in his plays: Doll Tearsheet, Mistress Overdone, and their fellow workers in the sex industry are quickly but indelibly sketched, along with assorted panders, doorkeepers, tapsters and servants. He depicted brothels as places of disease, vice, and disorder, but also as places that satisfy ineradicable human needs, bringing together men and women, gentlemen and common people, old and young, the educated and the illiterate, in a camaraderie rarely found elsewhere in the highly stratified society. Above all, he depicted them as small businesses that struggle against high odds- stiff competition, rowdy or indifferent clients, hostile civic authorities - to make a modest profit. These qualities closely linked whorehouses in Shakespeare's imagination, and probably in that of most his contemporaries, with another suburban institution, one that had only recently come into its own and that was the center of his professional life. The theater, which did not exist as a freestanding structure anywhere in England when Shakespeare was born, at once conjoined and played with almost everything that the "entertainment zone" had to offer: dancing, music, games of skill, blood sports, punishment, sex. Indeed, the boundaries between theatrical imitation and reality, between one form of amusement and another, were often blurred. Whores worked the playhouse crowd and, at least in the fantasies of the theater's enemies, conducted their trade in small rooms on-site. (163)

<sup>169</sup> These periods correspond to the historical denominations of the Elizabethan epochs in three epochs, where, according to Rowse,

the first twelve years are a period of recovery and consolidation, experiment and new enterprise. They are followed by three years of crisis and tension, 1569-1572, in which the various strains and conflicts internal and external come to a head: Elizabeth's government surmounts them successfully, and is allowed to take a more independent road in the world: the patterns of our external relations changes, and a new course is set. There follows the high tide of Elizabethan prosperity, 1574-85, in which the Crown's debts are reduced, the burden of taxation is very light, enterprise of every kind leaps ahead. Then comes the great war with Spain, 1585-1604: the heroic age, followed like all such by disillusionment, doubt and difficulties, the familiar symptoms of overstrain, debt and impoverishment, too great an expenditure for the country's resources. But ours was then an expanding economy and, once the war was over, the country went ahead again. (151)

<sup>170</sup> Bellinger, *A Short History of the Theatre*.

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<sup>171</sup> Cf. Samuel Pepys' records, cited in *Elizabethan Storytelling*.

[http://vasa.communitypoint.org/articles/elizabethan\\_storytelling/renaissance\\_storytelling.html](http://vasa.communitypoint.org/articles/elizabethan_storytelling/renaissance_storytelling.html)

<sup>172</sup> The mystery dramas also provided plots for the playwrights, as plays became a favored upper-class art form during Elizabeth's reign. In Shakespeare's time, they had become popular among all classes of society. Samuel Pepys records frequent visits to the theater and jokes told to him by fellows, but rarely mentions the stories of London urban folklore and passes no comment on urban storytellers. Was the English storytelling tradition less developed than the Scottish or the Irish equivalent? London's urban folklore was certainly rich, but the Londoners' addiction to theatre seemed to take over in every social class. Paradoxically, this might be a cause for the poor records of professional storytelling in the city: in a fast-paced social environment like Elizabethan London, the City's many new tales were absorbed almost instantly into the language of drama, being performed on the wooden grades of the theatre-inns. Theatrical "jam-sessions," which allowed the new players to test their skills in front of the audience, might have indeed prevailed over elaborate spectacles, but the higher-end dramatic market was growing too, enjoying elaboration and inventive scenery and empowering a new quality of word and action on stage.

<sup>173</sup> One such successful reinforcement of the old laws, produced in the early 1580s, was initiated by a moderate Churchman and widely approved by moderate Londoners who considered the many dangers elicited by the licentious gatherings of theatergoers, amongst which the most urgent reasons were occasions for anarchy and violent behavior, opportunities for lawlessness and violence, congestion of traffic, support of disgraceful customs and immoral environments, and, above everything, the menace of the infection with plague. (Bellinger, *A Short History of the Theatre*).

<sup>174</sup> In spite of the Crown's ideological censorship, in a period when any vocal criticism of the institutions of monarchy was not left unpunished, aristocrat Londoners were hosting private performances in their own houses. The business was neither riskier nor more relaxed than usual, for even an anonymous denunciation could have brought the police to the front door. Wandering companies used to offer their art in pageants in the suburb's many squares on wooden grades, in the halls of noblemen and other gentry, or in the inns' square yards surrounded by galleries. The stages were raised and projected half-way into the theater, while the central area was open to the sky, which made the fate of theatrical performances depend upon weather. Sometimes, the places of entertainment were so close to the scaffoldings of the executioners that the smell of death contaminated the theatre arenas. The horrifying, omnipresent smell of rot, mixing the odor of human remnants hanging at the crossroads with those of animal carcasses and rejections flowing into the Thames, might have inspired Shakespeare's famous line in *The Life and Death of King John*:

Trust not those cunning waters of his eyes, / For villanie is not without such rheume, /  
And he, long traded in it, makes it seeme / Like Riuers of remorse and innocencie. /  
Away with me, all you whose soules abhorre / Th' vncleanly sauours of a Slaughter-  
house, / For I am stifled with this smell of sinne. (I.i.)

To differentiate themselves from street comedians, both Catholic and Protestant playwrights would use the performance "as a sort of forum to disseminate their opinions," Martha Fletcher Bellinger writes. No surprise that sixteenth century playhouses looked more like gladiators' arenas than like community chapels. They were suitable for all types of entertainment, from bear baiting to wrestling, from ribald comedy to elevated tragedy. Around the circular shaped stage with a roof built atop of the rounded galleries, protected from the sun, rain, and eavesdroppers, the licentious, bitter, and, at times, visionary attitudes of these revelers in the unaccustomed leisure of unprompted disputation glued the metaphors of modern drama. (Bellinger, *A Short History of the Theatre*, passim).

<sup>175</sup> After 1580, when an earthquake occurred in London, the recrudescence of plague manifested particularly around the crowded areas of the city, and playhouses became known as specific environments of contamination. To avoid being taken for homeless beggars, professional companies praised the Queen to try to elicit the Crown's sympathy for their craft. In parallel, the tolerance of



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authorities became more inventive than ever in empowering the states of exception. The first royal patent was granted to James Burbage and to his company in 1574. The foundation of the Servants of The Earl of Leicester was followed during the next four years by the Children of the Chapel Royal, Children of Saint Paul's, the Servants of the Lord Chamberlain, Servants of Lords Warwick, and Essex. Subsequent to the Queen's order of 1576, players were not allowed to reside inside the city and new playhouses were being erected outside the city limits. See Bellinger 207-213.

<sup>176</sup> A short look at Neilson's and Thorndike's *Facts about Shakespeare* through Bellinger's perspective is edifying in this context:

This populace that watched with joy the cruel torment of a bear or the execution of a Catholic, also delighted in the romantic comedies of Shakespeare. These people, so appallingly credulous and ignorant, so brutal, childish, so mercurial compared with Englishmen of today, yet set the standard of national greatness. This absurdly decorated gallant could stab a rival in the back, or write a penitential lyric. Each man presented strange, almost inexplicable, contrasts in character, as Bacon or Raleigh, or Elizabeth herself. The drama mingles its sentiment and fancy with horrors and bloodshed; and no wonder, for poetry was no occupation of the cloister. Read the lives of the poets-- Surrey, Wyatt, Sidney, Spenser, Raleigh, Marlowe, Jonson- and of these, only Spenser and Jonson died in their beds, and Ben had killed his man in a duel. . . . Crime, meanness, and sexual depravity often appear in the closest juxtaposition with imaginative idealism, intellectual freedom, and moral grandeur. (Bellinger 207-213)

<sup>177</sup> Quoted in Martin Holmes, *Elizabethan London*, (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1969), 16.

<sup>178</sup> The information on the locations and original features of Elizabethan theatres is documented at TheatreHistory.com, a public scholarly website specialized in the history of Western Theatre. <http://www.theatrehistory.com/british/bellinger001.html>

<sup>179</sup> Southwark was also the location of the first printing presses. Only a few yards away from the theatrical stages, the other factories of modern culture were developing at a fast pace. The printing mills were located in the Northeastern corner of Southwark, close to the tavern area, which was going to become so familiar to Shakespeare and Marlowe during the 1590's. In 1500, Caxton's famous presses imported from Holland were moved from Westminster to Fleet Street in St. Bride's parish, and by the time of his death in 1535, some printers established their quarters in the area. After 1525, the year of publication of William Tyndale's Bible translation into English, the printers developed regular business with the congregations that ordered the book for the regular service, and, as parishioners apprehended the skill of reading, for private use.

This fast-paced work of instruction became possible mainly as a result of Myles Coverdale's 1539 edition, which elaborated on Tyndale's work. Another such turning point in the life of London parishes came in 1549, when the publication of Thomas Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* in English standardized the language of clerical services. Tottel's *Miscellany* published in 1557, which collected sonnets by Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey, elevated the transforming language to the subtle flow and metrical conventions of lyrical poetry. The publishing business survived on account of the increasing number of readers, that reportedly reached one third of the kingdom's male population by the 1600's. In contrast, the swift transformation of English into a modern language was possible as a result of the commerce with books, which flourished on account of the intense social traffic around the new theatres. In this context, *The Passionate Pilgrim*, a collection of twenty-five sonnets published in 1599, with several texts identifiable as belonging to Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Raleigh was a strong catalyst. Translations of French, Italian and Spanish works were almost as much enjoyed as the works of religious Reformers, yet the all-powerful curiosity of Londoners often dismayed the traditional spirit of devotion. Nine decades after the discovery of the New World, John Florio's 1580 translation of Montaigne's essays gained readers' attention for the core assumptions of civilization and tolerance.

Two years earlier, in 1578, Florio had come up with a revolutionary type of book: *The First Fruits* was one of the first manuals for the apprehension of Italian, composed of a grammar

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section and forty-two dialogues arranged in bilingual columns, with examples of Elizabethan daily life and social rituals. In the final section Florio sets up rules of pronunciation and orthography for beginners in Italian. Yet, Florio's preoccupation for morphology was not isolate. The Puritans' activity in grammar schools was equally beneficial for English culture. The progression of English from a late-medieval into a modern homogenous language with a broader vocabulary and a strict syntax is visible in these decades, corresponding with the establishment of modern national literature, an event that summons the flamboyant guardian angels of Southwark's theatrical district.

Original documentation and calendar can be found in "Printing in England from William Caxton to Christopher Barker: An Exhibition."

<sup>180</sup> Marlowe's plays were also performed at the Swan, a stage built in 1594 by Philip Langley, and at Newington Butts, a theater located a mile away from the Thames, in Surrey, which is thought to have functioned since the early 1580's. In spite of its inconvenient location at the heart of a dangerous suburban slum, Newington Butts had the premieres of *The Jew of Malta*, the first *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Tamburlaine*.

<sup>181</sup> The statement belongs to William Lambarde, author of *Preambulations of Kent*, published in 1596; see Rowse, *Elizabethan England* 36, footnote 4 and 38, citation.

<sup>182</sup> I find the foundation of my demonstration in Rowse's text. In his *Elizabethan England* (London: Macmillan, 1961), Rowse insists on the importance of trade in the building of the new nation:

Economic historians have accustomed us to the abstract phrase "commercialization of agriculture" to describe what was happening in these areas (London and the most developed counties) at the time: the mercurial influence of trade and money and urban markets, above all, the proximity of London and the ports, in disturbing the old settled customary system of rents largely in kind and labor services, of an agriculture dominantly for subsistence rather than geared to the market: the transition to new methods at once more specialized, more economical – for the land can thereby be devoted to the crop it grows best – and more efficient. Naturally these influences and trends can be seen at work best in the counties round London. The necessity –and the profit– in feeding London, which was growing at a rapid rate, exerted a pull over a large radius. Some historians, such as N.S.B. Gras, Norden, think that the evolution of a metropolitan market may be regarded as a distinct way to a national economy. (71-72)

<sup>183</sup> Significantly, John Norden, the Elizabethan topographer describes Middlesex (*Speculum Britanniae* 1593) as a land of milk and honey. Those living on the banks of the Thames "live either by the barge, by the wherry or ferry, or by the sculler or by fishing, all of which live well and plentifully, and in decent and honest sort relieve their families." Inland from the river, the farmers live wealthily, for "these commonly are so furnished with kine that the wife twice or thrice a week conveyeth to London milk, butter, cheese, apples, pears, frumenty, hens, chickens, eggs, bacon and a thousand other country drugs, which good house-wives can frame and find to get a penny. And this yieldeth them a large comfort and relief" (Rowse 72).

<sup>184</sup> Martin Holmes, the careful chronographer of Tudor London, noted that after 1586, the Tudor style of architecture became predominant, changing the face of the city with revolutionary building techniques, such as the timber framework, its gables visible above the street level. Accordingly, the structure of urban planning visible in the late Middle Ages was not devised to support the massive afflux of traffic specific of the new era. The new architectural designs attempted to respond to the need for new housing, while London was becoming a community of spontaneous social alluvia. (Holmes 17, 19).

<sup>185</sup> In places exempted from the mayor's jurisdiction, such as Bankside with its famous Southwark over the water (cf. Martin Holmes, *Elizabethan London, passim*) newcomers to London could find shelter and space to settle. Because most of the honorable districts of the city were already expensive to live in, the more liberal suburbs absorbed the floating population. But the unbridled

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demographic growth had negative effects, too, the most notable being the fast deprecation of social security in the city, followed by reversed migration into the countryside. Many aristocrats chose to leave the crowded capital and live on their country domains over life in the city, while "great urban families" with an established financial situation, migrated to the countryside or at least attempted to expand their range of commercial activities.

<sup>186</sup> Again, Rowse stresses the importance of a transformational process in the class-structure of English population, as a result of the 1559 Elizabethan Religious Settlement, followed by the broad reformation of property, customs, and social hierarchies. In Protestant England, the historian estimates, the strengthening of the gentry followed the gradual dispersal of the Church lands, now in need of new masters.

<sup>187</sup> Rowse's comment is, again, edifying:

The rise of the gentry was a dominant feature of Elizabethan society. It was they essentially who changed things, who launched out along new paths whether at home or overseas, who achieved what was achieved, who gave what all societies need—leadership. One may fairly say that most of the leading spirits of the age, those who gave it its character and its work were of this class. Many of them belonged to it, or were recruited from it; some of them passed on, like the Cecils and the Bacons, the Russells, Cavendishes and Sackvilles, into the new nobility; others—a more numerous regiment—were recruited into it from the ranks of merchants and yeomen, successful sailors, or Churchmen who had done well out of, perhaps even by, the Church. In every field one is struck by the rich and dynamic contribution they had to make, their pullulating activity, their insatiable enterprise—whether it is a Cecil, a Bacon or a Walsingham at the centre of the affairs, a Throckmorton or a Killigrew in diplomacy, a Norris, a Mountjoy or a Roger Williams in the field, a Levenons or a Hawkins at sea, a Cavendish or a Drake (a new recruit this) voyaging round the globe, a Haklyut or a Lambarde in the work of scholarship, a Gresham, Smythe or Offley in finance or commerce, Carews, Grenvilles, Raleighs everywhere. (263)

<sup>188</sup> The ultimate achievement of the Elizabethan age, writes Rowse, is represented by the English colonization:

It is a popular legend, and dangerously misleading, to suppose that the English expansion overseas came about in "a fit of absence of mind". It is usually presented as a series of brilliant, adventurous episodes. There was plenty of adventure in it, infinite endurance, high courage and enterprise; but it was in fact a reasoned unity, a national venture. All the leading spirits of the age were concerned and interested and took part in it. The Queen herself was closely connected with the great Voyages, put money into a number of them, kept in touch with their plans and results, apparently knew more of what Drake intended on his Voyage round the World than was vouchsafed to her Lord Treasurer, giving him her support. Most of the leading men at Court were concerned, financially and intellectually. Burghley, Walsingham, Leicester, Sir Philip Sidney wanted to go to America, but was prevented, as was Essex later. We all know the cardinal importance of Raleigh, in planning the Virginia colony and an empire in Guiana. He was brought up in Grenville, but before him was his half-brother, Humphrey Gilbert. The leading scientific minds of the time were engaged; Dee, the Hakluyts, Hariot, who wrote the Brief and True Report of the new-found land of Virginia, the first scientific report of the New World. And of course there were the capitalists, the merchants, the gentry and the sailors. In one way or another, the entire nation was involved, certainly men of all classes and conditions. It is not surprising that the emergence of the New World is by far the greatest thing since the history of the Old. It mattered infinitely to the whole future course of history who took the opportunities the newly discovered world offered, and what they made of them. The English entered late, but in the end most effectively of all— and that was the work of the Elizabethans. (29)

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Cf. J.A. Williamson (Introduction G.B. Parkes), *Richard Hakluyt and the English Voyages*, XV.

<sup>189</sup> I have documented my mention of Hakluyt in Anthony Webster's *The Debate on the Rise of The British Empire* Webster sees Hakluyt's *Discourse on Western Planting* (1584), *The Principal navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of English Nation* (1598-1600) as influential works "that drove English colonialism. Employing the Aristotelian principles of self-reliance in imperial politics, Hakluyt demonstrated that "the successful societies were those which were materially self-sufficient. This was not merely a source of strength, but also of moral virtue, since only the truly self-sufficient kingdom could be free of external pressures to abandon its beliefs. It followed that if Elizabeth's Protestant kingdom was to survive in the face of Europe's hostile Catholic monarchies, it had to be economically strong and self-reliant. In an age where land was the major producer of wealth, and the prospects for raising its productivity seemed extremely limited, the only way to secure for the kingdom increased supplies of food and other commodities was by external colonization, by acquiring new lands for the kingdom. The discovery of the New World offered just such an opportunity, and Hakluyt saw other potential economic advantages from the acquisition of colonies. They could act as a vent for surplus population, thereby ensuring that the domestic resources would remain sufficient for the needs of the kingdom, while the migrant peoples would in turn form a market of exports, further diminishing dependence on potentially hostile foreigners" (20).

<sup>190</sup> In the preface to *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, Hakluyt popularized the terrestrial globe, an innovation of Emery Molyneux. The second and expanded edition of the tome, published in 1599, urged Robert Cecil, Elizabeth's Secretary of State and his patron, to colonize Virginia. A few bibliophile copies of this treatise reveal a map and a cartographic representation of great value for the Elizabethan Navigational science, namely the Mercator projection laid down by Edward Wright.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Prof. W.A. Neilson, *Voyages and Travels. Elizabethan Adventurers*, online at: <http://www.bartleby.com/60/213.html>

<sup>192</sup> For the location of original Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis* V.8.46. Notably, centuries later Raleigh preserves the confusion in his *Discoverie of Guyana*; see the new edition from Hakluyt Society Series 3. Volume 15. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 157.

<sup>193</sup> Giles Milton, *The Riddle and the Knight: In Search of Sir John Mandeville*.

<sup>194</sup> This topic is also discussed as well in W.A. Neilson's *Harvard Classics Lectures*.

<sup>195</sup> Hawkins cited in Hakluyt's *Second Voyage* (1598), for the location of this citation see By H. W. Seager, *Natural History in Shakespeare, Being Extracts Illustrative of the Subject as He Knew It*, (Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 76.

<sup>196</sup> Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan. *Shakespeare's Caliban*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), front matter, also see 126.

<sup>197</sup> Original article at the Folger Shakespeare Library at the University of Victoria, online at <http://ise.uvic.ca/Library/SLT/ideas/monsters.html>

<sup>198</sup> The episode originates in John Stow's *Chronicles* and is re-told by Holmes.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Piggot.

<sup>200</sup> Chute, *Shakespeare of London*. (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1949).

<sup>201</sup> Noble German and Italian Renaissance families, such as the Medicis and the Habsburgs, initiated the fashion by the mid-fifteenth century. Early seventeenth-century collectors such as Dane Ole Wurm added his extensive philosophical reflections on philosophy, science, and nature into the catalogue of Worm's collection, known as *Museum Wormianum*; the Jesuit Athanasius Kirchner had a major contribution to the development of this occupation; eighteenth-century scientists like

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Elias Ashmole and Levinas Vincent transformed the art of collecting into the modern Science of Museum.

<sup>202</sup> The original source of these terms, present in Mauries's book, is in Adalgisa Lugli's *Naturalia et mirabilia: collezionismo enciclopedico nelle Wunderkammern d'Europa*; for the discussion of these terms in the original context of Michel Foucault's discussion of mathesis vs. taxonomies, see *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (passim).

<sup>203</sup> Sir Walter Cope, a famous antiquary in Elizabeth's era, had an active role in British politics of the late years of the Elizabethan era and the first decade of the Jacobean reign, sitting in the 1589, 1601, 1604 and 1614 Parliaments. He served as secretary to Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, in 1609, and in 1613 as Master of the Wards. He died in 1615.

<sup>204</sup> Thomas Platter (a medical student from Switzerland) visited England in 1599. He described the collection of Sir Walter Cope.

<sup>205</sup> Italian collector from Ravenna, who hosted many forgeries in his cabinet, hoping to prove the existence of fantastic creatures to his contemporaries.

<sup>206</sup> The discontinuation of Cabinets of Wonders in the eighteenth century anticipating the triumph of Encyclopedic taxonomizations, corresponded to the paradigmatic inclusion of the "artefacts" into Museums of Natural Sciences, as a consequence of the "great disenchantment" as an echo of Baconian, Cartesian and Newtonian ideas. Yet, more important for us, their early influence upon the modern episteme dealt positively with a deliberate ambiguity, one that identified the world of the unknown as stimulating for the new motivations of rationality, expressing a project of dominance best illustrated by allegory. The relative lack of historical proofs and images of the New World in the sixteenth century was slowly compensated by printed accounts and material exhibitions that empowered a more comprehensive view of the British imperial domains in the following hundred years and also tailored a professional interest in the formation of new disciplines, such as ethnography, dialectology, and also comparative religions and cultural anthropology. Mauriés writes that cabinets, as legitimate ancestors of modern museography, were arranged in relation to decorative priorities, such as elaborate furnishings built in spaces with strong scenographic qualities. The Baroque museographers were masters of illusion, generating the *trompe-l'oeil*, taken here as a sum of effects that supported the highest dream of collectors, that of revealing the sympathetic chain of

affinities that existed between things, to reveal the fundamental unity that lay between this welter of multiplicity. Cabinets were perpetually susceptible to the passion for finding analogies, a theme that belonged as much to the realm of magic as to that of esthetics, and which haunted the history of the cult of curiosities from the very beginnings.

A contemporary Italian scholar, Adalgisa Lugli, is remembered for the remarkable merit of re-discovering the cabinet of wonders as a space of special worth for the Renaissance culture, revealing Nicholas Cusanus' *vis assimilativa*—assimilative force, as distinct from the *vis entificativa*—signifying the powers of the divine. Mauriés elaborates on Lugli's reflections and rediscovers the formative function of the Renaissance Cabinets as a pre-modern science of secret sympathies, acting through the display of invisible associations between the world of natural objects far-flung from each other in origin and in character, yet united by an unbiased string of similarities, an ultimate proof that "reality is all one and that within it everything has its allotted place, answering to everything else in an unbroken chain." Until the last years of the seventeenth century, the period of Elias Ashmole, the cabinets of wonders continued to symbolize a mysterious and hierarchical view of society, one that paid its debt to the heritage of Scholasticism and its allegorizing view of existence. The European cabinets of the 1560 defined an invisible community of eccentrics and visionaries, writes Mauriés, indirectly citing from a sixteenth century Belgian scholar, a "republic of collectors, who shared the single aim

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of pinning down the universe in order to *obtain rapidly, easily and safely a true and unique understanding of the world combined with an admirable wisdom.* “ (in *Cabinets...*, 2002)

<sup>207</sup> Some of the ancient customs were strictly banned by ancient laws and probably forgotten in the urban environment, such as the one teaching priests to

extinguish heathendom, and forbid *wilweorthunga* (*fountain worship*), and *licwirlunga* (incantations of the dead), and *hwata* (omens), and *galdra* (magic), and man worship, and the abominations that men exercise in various sorts of witchcraft, and in *frithspottum*, and with elms and other trees, and with stones, and with many phantoms.

Original quotation in *Anglo-Saxon Heathenism* page, at *English Folk Customs*:  
<http://www.homestead.com/englishheathenism/folkcustoms.html>

<sup>208</sup> The groat was a traditional coin in Elizabethan England; its value was worth four English pennies. The name was typically applied to any thick or large coin, as the *grosso*, a currency issued by the Venice treasury in the thirteenth century, which was the first of this size to circulate in Europe.

<sup>209</sup> The following description of English customs is based upon Alford 27.

<sup>210</sup> French theologian, bishop, administrator (470-543), remembered for his juridical contribution to the Council of Agde (506), where, in association with Roman clergy, published the adaptation of the Roman Law, finally mentioned as the civil code of Gaul.

<sup>211</sup> Stephanie Hughes stresses the importance of psychotropically induced trances in English transitional rituals:

They were referred to in documents of the time by their Christian names, such as the Feast of the Innocents, the Feast of St. Stephen, etc., but behind the gentle names of pious saints lurked potent remnants of strange and fearful tribal rituals that, despite the diligent researches of cultural anthropologists, continue to stand outside the firelight of collective memory or imagination. The prehistoric rites of the great goddess and her earthly lovers included the induction of altered mental and emotional states by means of drumming, dancing and chanting, the retelling or reenactment of communal myths, the invocation of gods and animal totems, the ingestion of mind-altering substances, of fermented spirits and hallucinogenic mushrooms, of various forms and degrees of sexual license and blood sacrifice. These early events, which we now regard as mere forms of entertainment, certainly could not be considered entertainment during those times, though some of the same elements of psychological release were present. Their chief purpose was the seasonal reinforcement of a potent sense of communal unity, the cohesion of the group mind, a necessity for a people armed only with stone and wood in a world fraught with danger from outside forces of nature, beasts and tribes of other men.

Stephanie Hughes, “Of Standings, Pseudonyms, Mummings and Disguisings Exploring the influence of the ancient revels on Elizabethan Court masques” In *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*. (Winter 1997).

<sup>212</sup> ... a tradition that has survived today in places like Hereford and Worcester.

<sup>213</sup> All Fool’s Day, which was celebrated on the first day of April, represented a unique occasion for tricks, puns, jokes, and was famous for its jesters, whose looks likely remind our English contemporaries of Falstaff’s belly and laughter. It was followed shortly by the Maypole dancing. Originating in the ancient Celtic celebration of trees, Maypoling was performed all around England on the first day of May. Youth celebrated the spring in a night-time party, after which they danced around a decorated trunk, sometimes over 100 feet high. On this occasion, age-old memories came to light. Little girls made small shrines and decorated them with garlands. As suggested above, these shady shelters hosted rag-dolls representing the pagan goddess Flora, identified by

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Shakespeare with Titania, the Ovidian daughter of the Titans. The live May Queen, dancing in the meadows with the young men of the village, was her human double. Often, the May Queen was followed by a King. "Into this position stepped Robin Hood and his apocryphal Maid Marian," writes Alford. The Boy-Kings embodied the pagan Summer Lord, or on occasions, they impersonated Jack-in-the-Green, a man completely covered in leaves reminiscent of the Northern deity of the woods. *The Midsummer Night Dream's* Oberon - whose name originally designated a Merovingian legend hero - must have been inspired from this custom: as the prince of Elves, he blended attributes of a ruler of the Shadows and a divinity of the Woods, given his sovereignty over the world of elves and fairies.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun, A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 228.

<sup>215</sup> Stephanie Hughes, "Of Standings, ..." 1997.

<sup>216</sup> The Shakespearean scholar cannot overlook the contextual relevance of these traditions that are associated with the magic qualities and powers of elfish creatures; Ronald Hutton's account offers us an indication with regard to the thaumaturgical and theurgic functions of these rituals, which append human condition to the quality of supernatural powers:

Humans jump the fires and cattle used to be driven through them for protection and for purification. On no night is magic so powerful, witches and fairies at the zenith of their powers. Various "St John's herbs" must be picked at midnight for healing; St John's Wort or a rose picked at midnight are good for marriage divination, as is the secret sowing of hempseed in the dark. On this night you may gather fern seed which will render you invisible, a very useful thing when so many strange powers are about.

Cf. Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun, A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 229.

<sup>217</sup> Shakespearean characters, such as *A Midsummer Night Dream's* Robin Goodfellow, embody all the symbolic traits of popular English imagination:

Either I mistake your shape and making quite,  
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite  
Call'd Robin Goodfellow: are not you he  
That frights the maidens of the villagery;  
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern  
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;  
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;  
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?  
Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck,  
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:  
Are not you he? (*MND* II.i. 32-42)

<sup>218</sup> *Baron Munchhausen's Mishaps on the Moon*, collected and published in 1785 in London by Rudolph Erich Raspe, seem directly inspired from this legend.

<sup>219</sup> Speaking of the proper relation between cosmic cycles and the magic moments of life, the researcher cannot miss from sight the importance of the old abiding customs of the agricultural calendar, such as the Harvest rites, which are amongst the lasting traditions. The first Harvest Festival of the year was held at the beginning of August, on the *Lammas Day*, when countrymen adorned their front gates with garlands, and marched with candles. The old image, now forgotten, was either that of the Kern baby or of the Harvest queen, a puppet made of corn kennels and wild flowers:

It stands about three feet high, possesses arms, and must always be decorated with yellow flowers, usually marigolds. Sometimes, in the form of a miniature sheaf, they are actually dressed in girls' clothes. These figures were made of the last (occasionally

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the first) corn reaped, and were seized by a harvester, who ran with one as hard as he could to the farmhouse. Everyone tried to drench it with water as it was borne past. If wetted, the next harvest would be poor— but it was really a rain charm. The farmer's wife received it and hung it over the kitchen mantelpiece until the new one arrived the following year. (Alford 62)

<sup>220</sup> The following information on Halloween customs in British islands is from Alford, *passim*.

<sup>221</sup> ... a beet with a large, yellow root, grown as cattle feed. (Cf. Farlex Dictionary).

<sup>222</sup> Both the Council of Basel (1431) and the University of Paris (1444) condemned this particular custom, which was seen as a seed of anarchy. In Catholic France, the feast of Fools was denounced by the Council of Trent (1545 and 1563). Its last occurrences in Sothern Europe are of the late-sixteenth century.

<sup>223</sup> Based on Ronald Hutton's *The Stations of the Sun*. Similarly, Stephanie Hughes unveils the same aspect in her article: "The longest revels took place at the winter equinox, and lasted from the beginning of December until the second week in January, a time when mariners and country folk slept late, relaxed and enjoyed themselves during the darkest and coldest part of the year. A bit like animals in hibernation, they fattened themselves with food, drink and excitement against the effortful months to come, of wresting a living from the ocean or the soil." (*Of Standings*,... 1997)

<sup>224</sup> Cf. *Stephanie Hughes*, "Of Standings, Pseudonyms, Mummings and Disguisings Exploring the influence of the ancient revels on Elizabethan Court masques" In *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*. (Winter 1997).

<sup>225</sup> The Christmas pudding, Alford writes, "which must be stirred in the making by every member of the family [is] to be lit up by setting alight the brandy poured over it. It used to be borne into the darkened room in triumph. Now the lady of the house, besides making it, fetches it herself." (137, 24).

<sup>226</sup> Indirectly quoted from Alford. Original citation is from George Dumézil's "Le Problème des Centaures," *Annales du Musée Guimet*, vol. 41, 1929.)

<sup>227</sup> ...Name of a town in Central Italy, in the province of Rome.

<sup>228</sup> In France, the Kings of Bean were symbolized by human-shaped sugar beans that could be bought from the local grocers: "...first a bean, secondly a bean with a baby face, peering out of a split in the sheath, thirdly, having shed the bean, a tiny sugar baby in swaddling clothes. It is an euphemism indeed to call this baby the Christchild" (Alford 27-28).

<sup>229</sup> "Thirty years ago, before gender history had entered the arena, an influential, if largely monochromatic, interpretation of Elizabeth I's reign was in vogue. This traditional model, rooted in seventeenth-century vignettes of Tudor politics which had been summarily rejected by J. A. Froude in the nineteenth century, had been reaffirmed by Conyers Read and Sir John Neale in the three decades before 1960.<sup>2</sup> Read and Neale had evolved similar, if separately derived, arguments that stressed the monarchy and independent judgment of Elizabeth I, the indispensable but inescapably secondary roles played by her leading privy counsellors such as Sir William Cecil and Sir Francis Walsingham, and the pervasive nature and extent of court factionalism. Both Read and Neale saw Elizabeth as supreme in policy-making and unrivalled in power, even if her influence was most often exercised negatively through the veto rather than constructively through decision-making. As to factionalism, this was held to be endemic on the basis of the alleged rivalries first between Cecil, later lord Burghley, and Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, the queen's first favorite, and then after Leicester's death between Burghley and his son, Robert Cecil, and Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex. This schematic and seemingly definitive interpretation commanded wide, if uncritical, assent, to the point where vestiges of it have recently reappeared in Susan Doran's survey of Elizabeth's matrimonial diplomacy, where it is argued that the queen took her decisions independently, and yet her courtship negotiations foundered because of the political and religious shibboleths which divided her privy council."



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Cited from *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, CUP, 1995. Internet title: Elizabeth I and Politics: The Views of Historians, 2007,. Section cited by the author at his home page: <http://www.johnguy.co.uk/history.php?&content=elizpol.html>, accessed on Monday May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007.

<sup>230</sup> The evidence of the opposite did not seem to be noted until the last decades of the nineteenth century, when John Froude portrayed the Queen as willful, self indulgent and uncontrolled. Susan Doran's study of the Elizabethan era (2000) is structured around similar assumptions, stating that "for most of the late medieval Tudor England, Elizabethan policy rested upon twin pillars: hostility towards the kings of France and friendship with the rulers of Burgundy." Doran further emphasized Elizabeth's stubbornness and lack of diplomacy in dealing with state matters. See Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Foreign Policy*, Introduction, *passim*.

<sup>231</sup> John Guy's discussion of the polemic between Knox and Ailmer is a valuable source for the identification of the Elizabethan cult origins:

He [Ailmer, 1557] invoked Deborah and Judith as regal prototypes, but his slant was closer generically to Knox's polemic than is conventionally acknowledged, and closer still to the stance Knox took in his defence of the First Blast to Burghley in which he held that Elizabeth might be queen, but only if she 'shall confess' that it was the 'extraordinary dispensation' of God's mercy that legitimized her rule. Both Aylmer and Knox indexed their positions on Elizabeth's accession against Calvin's opinion that female monarchy was ordained by the 'peculiar providence' of God. Women's rule deviated from the 'proper order of nature', but exceptionally there were special women who were 'raised up by divine authority' to rule in order to become the 'nursing mothers' of the church.

Excerpt from *The Reign of Elizabeth I*.

<sup>232</sup> *The Reign of Elizabeth I; Elizabeth I and Politics: The Views of Historians*. The quotes from Thomas Norton are taken from the same text. My introductory statements in this section follow John Guy's analysis. *Elizabeth I and Politics: The Views of Historians*. 2007. Internet presence: <http://www.johnguy.co.uk/history.php?&content=elizpol.html>

<sup>233</sup> See Susan Doran, "Elizabeth I: Gender, Power & Politics". in *Elizabeth I and Foreign Policy*. (Lancaster: Lancaster Pamphlets, 2000.) *passim*.

<sup>234</sup> In contrast, the enemies of the Tudors were neither few, nor easy to silence, since most of them were seduced by the Apocalyptic metaphors of the day. After the proclamation of the Church of England, English Catholics were left without the legal right and practical possibility to practice their faith. They were first of all to be found amongst Catholic gentry, a powerful social category that did not excuse Elizabeth for having imprisoned and later executed Mary. Second, her most dangerous foes, to be found in her closest circles, were not easily detectable, and they benefited from the aid of foreign intelligence. Such was the famous betrayal by Robert Dudley, found guilty and executed in 1588, in relation to the failed attack of the Spanish Armada. The same pronouncement was uttered in 1601 against Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, charged with high treason on account of his inconclusive campaign against Irish rebels followed by a plot against royal authority.

<sup>235</sup> Eugen Weber re-emphasized the same motif in his study, *Apocalypses*:

Reformers wanted to correct what the church of Rome taught as right opinions with righter opinions of their own. In the process, they opened the door to heterodoxy: a host of different and differing opinions based on particular interpretations of the Scriptures, personal visions, and private revelations. Just as religious beliefs bind communities together, they also set them apart, justifying social, political, and tribal conflicts. The wars that tore through modern early Europe are reflective of this divisiveness. After the Edict of Nantes pacified France, nowhere was religious enthusiasm more in evidence

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than in England. The list of those who claimed to be Christ or witnesses to his coming is a long one. In 1586, Ralph Durden, imprisoned for identifying the kingdom with the Beast of Revelation, predicted the downfall of Gloriana's monarchy for 1589. In 1591, an illiterate ex-soldier, William Hackett, proclaimed himself the Messiah to come to judge the world. He threatened dire plagues upon the kingdom if its people did not repent and if the queen did not give up her crown to him. His arrest and execution did not discourage other messengers of God. The last Englishman burnt for heresy (in 1612) would be an Anabaptist, Edward Wightman, who claimed to be Elijah, the prophet. (Weber 71-72)

Weber's list continues with famous cases expanding the obsession for an imminent doom throughout the next seven or eight decades following the last 1612 execution.

<sup>236</sup> After all, Cromwell's army of millenarian saints with its plan of action to the instauration of the New Jerusalem in England against Charles I crypto-papist rule succeeded grace to the same millenarist psychosis escaped from control; cf. Weber 72.

<sup>237</sup> Dee was already in his fifty-third year of life in 1582, when the thirty-four year old Bruno arrived in London, while Robert Fludd, the occultist who was going to develop the theories of both in a synthetic Art of Memory was only eight. Although the three philosophers differed in style and voice, the core of their epistemic assumptions was nearly identical, gravitating around the seductive possibility of a programmable Cosmos, in which human intelligence could cooperate actively with angelic entities.

The mature William Shakespeare, no doubt, would have met Dee many times at the court before choosing the white-bearded astronomer as source of inspiration for the character Prospero. For Dee was indeed seen as "The White Magus" at the time of Shakespeare's rise at the Court. John Dee became famous in 1555, when his reading of princely horoscopes forecasted the ascension to the throne of Princess Elizabeth, while correctly predicting Queen Mary's decline. Accused initially of high treason by Mary's supporters, Dee's star rose again when Elizabeth, counting on Dee's theoretical knowledge of navigation and astronomy, called him to the court as the permanent advisor to the Crown's expeditions of discovery.

For an extended treatment of John Dee's contribution to the formation of the English Naval Empire, an excellent source is Lesley B. Cormack's article "Britannia Rules The Waves?: Images of Empire in Elizabethan England."

<sup>238</sup> In 1583, John Dee left England and was abroad for six years, returning in 1589. During these years on the continent Dee appears to have been engaged in some kind of missionary venture which took him to Cracow, in Poland, and eventually to Prague where the occultist emperor Rudolf II, held his court. It is possible, though there is no evidence for this, that when in Prague, Dee was in contact with the Rabbi Loewe, famous Cabalist and magician, who once had an interview with Rudolph (see Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* 228). Dee stayed for several years in Bohemia with a noble family the members of which were interested in alchemy and other occult sciences. His associate, Edward Kelley, was with him, and together they were fervently pursuing their alchemical experiments and their attempts at angel-summoning with practical Cabala.

<sup>239</sup> *Steganographia* can be translated as a Book of Codes, or of Secret Messages. My source here does not originate solely in Frances Yates' writings, but takes into account the recent research of Dee's contemporary biographer, Benjamin Woolley, author of *The Queen's Conjurer* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2002)

<sup>240</sup> The episode in Genesis that deal with Enoch's rapture is summarized below:

Gen 5:23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

Gen 5:24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

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Significantly, Enoch, the only man who has been elevated to immortality, is the first voice in the Old Testament to testify of the Second Coming:

Jude 1:14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

Jude 1:15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

*The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha* (USA: Oxford UP, 1998)

<sup>241</sup> Lesley B. Cormack, "Britannia Rules The Waves?: Images of Empire in Elizabethan England." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 4.2 / Special Issue 3 (September, 1998) 10.1-20. Internet presence: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/04-2/cormbrit.htm>

<sup>242</sup> Peter J. French, *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus* (Dorset Press, 1989) 181.

<sup>243</sup> Cormack, "Britannia Rules the Waves?"

<sup>244</sup> The original mention of John Dee's 1577 work can be found in Yates' 1979 study, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*:

Dee's views on the British-imperial destiny of Queen Elizabeth I are set out in his *General and rare memorials pertaining to the Perfect art of Navigation* (1577). Expansion of the navy and Elizabeth expansion at sea were connected in his mind with vast ideas concerning the lands to which (in his view) Elizabeth might lay claim through her mythical descent or King Arthur. Dee's 'British imperialism' is bound up with the 'British History' recounted by Geoffrey of Monmouth, based on the myth of the hypothetical descent of British monarchs from Brut, supposedly of Trojan origin and therefore connecting with Virgil and the Roman imperial myth. Arthur was the supposed descendant of Brut, and was the chief religious and mystical exemplar of sacred British imperial Christianity. In the *General and rare memorials* there is a complicated print, based on a drawing in Dee's own hand, of Elizabeth sailing in a ship labeled 'Europa', with the moral that Britain is to grow strong at sea, so that through her 'Imperial Monarchy' she may perhaps become the pilot of all Christendom. This 'British Hieroglyphick', as Dee calls the design, should be held in mind at the same time as the *Monas hieroglyphica*, as representing a politico-religious expression of the *monas* in the direction of a 'British imperial' idea. (85)

<sup>245</sup> Such was Walter Raleigh's short imprisonment following his defiant marriage with the Queen's attendant, Elizabeth Throckmorton.

<sup>246</sup> According to Susan Doran, Elizabeth's opponents, the Catholic supporters of Mary' Queen of Scots "presumably did not think to use Knoxian-style arguments to challenge Elizabeth's right to the throne, because their claimant, Mary, Queen of Scots, was also a woman. In general, the prevailing sentiment within England in mid-November 1558 was not concern at the accession of another queen of England, but rather relief that Mary Tudor's reign – marked by harvest failure, epidemics and military humiliation – was now over, and that Elizabeth's succession was smooth and for all practical purposes undisputed without military intervention from France, Scotland or Spain." ("Elizabeth I: Gender, Power & Politics")

<sup>247</sup> W. Camden remains (London, 1674) 466, quoted in Frances Yates, *The Imperial Themes in the Sixteenth Century* 59. The attribute, originating in Vergil's Eclogues can be interpreted as a prophecy of fortunate times "*iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna*" translates as "the fortunate times are returning soon." The Virgo (not to be taken for the Christian virgin) is the Roman Goddess who, disappointed with the quality of human acts, left the Earth, and was expected to return in the era of Saturn, corresponding with the reign of Octavian Augustus. The verse is a forerunner of the new genre of encomiastic literature at the Augustan court.

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<sup>248</sup> Cf. Gackle; and Wharton, who suggests that the play might have been acted, alternatively, at the Inns of Court.

<sup>249</sup> Here, Strong reveals the thread that brought to life his study, recalling the significant realignment of English propagandist to the political priorities of Elizabeth's funerals; "When, at the close of Elizabeth's reign, an Oxford scholar, Richard Haydocke, found it politic to drop any discussion of religious images from his translation of the Italian Paolo Lomazzo's treatise on art, he transferred the argument to a defense of the sacred images of Elizabeth the Queen."

<sup>250</sup> Strong (*The Cult of Elizabeth*) describes this occasion in a colorful palette of adjectives:

Bells rang, bonfires blazed, guns were fired, open house was kept, festival mirth reigned and to the parish churches of England, the faithful came to thank God for the reign of their Queen. At court, there was a solemn tournament, to which the public had access, where everyone could see Gloriana receive the homage of her knights. And on that day from the government-controlled presses fell prayer books, books of devotion, poems and ballads extolling her virtues. By the middle of her reign, the rejoicings began to spread over to Elizabeth's birthday, 7 September, and after 1588 to 19 November, once the feast day of St Elizabeth of Hungary but now annexed to mark in perpetuity the defeat of the mighty Armada of Spain. More than her legendary progresses, these annual events which spanned virtually the whole reign must have been a powerful influence in creating the sense of uniqueness of the age. Every single subject once a year was reminded that 17 November 1588 was a turning point in time, and for nearly half a century they were able to express what they felt about this to its living embodiment. What started as propaganda, became in time, reality. (117)

<sup>251</sup> I have consulted the scholarly pages of Elizabethan History, hosted by the National Maritime Museum of Great Britain website:  
<http://www.nmm.ac.uk/server/show/conWebDoc.6126/setPagate/No>

<sup>252</sup> Nonetheless, these persuasive strategies will reach their full elaboration only in the Jacobean era, when James, aided by his advisor Robert Cecil (the younger son of Elizabeth I's favored minister, Lord Burghley) will use the already existing propagandistic machine in the opposite direction, to impose his paternalist absolutist rule.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Pnina Nave Levinson, "Deborah, A Political Mother Myth," original citation from the Torah in Midrash Eliyah Rabba, Ch. 9. The original article by Levinson discussed here is posted on Bet Deborah 2003, website of the "Power and Responsibility", Third European Jewish Women's Conference of Rabbis, Jewish Politicians, Activists and Scholars held in Berlin, May 2003, Internet presence: <http://www.bet-debora.de/2001/jewish-family/levinson.htm>

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Levinson's "Deborah, ...," *ibid*.

<sup>255</sup> The original argument discusses the tension of tradition and innovation in traditional Hebrew politics when it comes to the discussion of the election motif. Can women be appointed by God as leaders of Israel? Pnina Nave Levinson's analysis gives us a clear insight into the traditional rabbinical discussions of the subject:

Male fears led to the statement that Deborah's gift of prophecy was taken from her temporarily because she praised herself in song: (all this evil prevailed) "until I, Deborah, arose, arose, a mother in Israel!" The reprimand appears in the Talmud tract Pessakhim (66b), which proves that the common interpretation of "until you arose" does not correspond to conventional Jewish understanding. Is this a bourgeois effort intended to save the honour of the Jewish prophet from the accusation of a self-confidence found so undesirable in women? There is a whole series of such disarming phrases, among others in the translation of the Song of Solomon and in the "wife of noble character" at the end of the book of Proverbs where a strong woman peer is made into a "virtuous wife". In the song, Deborah is called "a mother in Israel". We also hear

incidental reference to her husband, Lapidot, but no children are named. What does the Jewish interpretation of the Bible have to say about this unusual circumstance? One interpretative method used by rabbis is philological comparison. The question here is whether we use the term "mother in Israel" in a non-biological sense. There is such a text in 2 Samuel 20, which tells of bloody deeds during an uprising against King David. A general orders the destruction of a town. During the siege a wise woman negotiates with him, reminding him of the significance of the town's role. She calls to him (19), "You want to kill the town and the mother in Israel". "Mother in Israel" has an integrative meaning here. It is also a sign of Deborah's political office. The paraphrase from the Aramaic Bible corresponds as follows: "The unfortified towns of the land of Israel were empty, the residents captured and carted away, until I was sent, I, Deborah was sent to prophesise about the House of Israel. (Ibid.)

<sup>256</sup> Cf. Hughes, "Of Standings, ...," 1997. The notions in the following lines are inspired from the same source.

<sup>257</sup> Cf. Hughes, "Of Standings, ...," 1997.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Hughes, "Of Standings, ...," 1997.

<sup>259</sup> In the introductory Scene of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Act, Gonzalo ponders what he would do if he had his own domain on the island, and pictures an utopian commonwealth: "I' the commonwealth I would by contraries / Execute all things; for no kind of traffic / Would I admit; no name of magistrate; / Letters should not be known; riches, poverty, / And use of service, none; contract, succession, / Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none; / No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil; / No occupation; all men idle, all; / And women too, but innocent and pure; / No sovereignty ... /... / All things in common nature should produce / Without sweat or endeavour" (II.i. 148-157; 160-161).

<sup>260</sup> "The one aspect for which there is no precedent in the work of Alberti is the erotic architectural body. In order to be understood, it must be seen in a broad context of the history of the body metaphor in architecture, extending from the period preceding the early Renaissance to the time then the Hypnerotomachia was being composed, one where the dominant mentality of *contemptus mundi* is being turned upside down, in favor of a generalized *amor mundi* and *libido aedificandi*, that is when the representations of buildings are reconfigured from dangerous bodies to marvelous bodies, divine bodies and, finally, humanist bodies. This process of re-cognition of the architectural body is crucial to the rise of humanist architecture and culture." (Lefaivre 185)

<sup>261</sup> "Polia, infatti, è il nome più antico di Atena, la Divina Sapienza: Atena Polias. L'Autore è innamorato della Sapienza divina; è un filosofo, Poliae-Philos; ed anche un teologo, giacché si tratta di "Divina Sapienza". Il romanzo è la narrazione d'un *itinerario spirituale* fra le rovine del passato. Il libro poi sembra essere una specie di criptografico manifesto. Si è voluto indicare un principe come "amante della Divina Sapienza", come lo erano i più insigni umanisti del Quattrocento; e così coprire la vera identità dell'Autore. Alberti, cited in Emanuela Kretzulesco Quaranta "E' Leon Battista Alberti...?", *Politica Romana*, (Quaderni dell'Associazione di Studi Tradizionali "Senatus", Roma, N. 3, 1996) 178.

<sup>262</sup> According to Mexican scholar E. A. Cruz, each procession reveals the sacred spaces of architecture: "A Pyramid, A Hippodromus, An Elephant bearing an Obelisk, A Monument to the Un-Happy Horse, the Grand Arch, The Palace and Gardens of Queen Eleutrillide (Freedom), The Temple to Venus Physizoa, and the Polyandrion (Graveyard of Lost Loves)" (Cruz, 2006).

<sup>263</sup> In 1535, Pizarro identified the fertile lands of Jauja in the modern-day Junin region of Peru, with the medieval paradise of Cockaigne, where, grace to the mildness of the climate and natural fertility of the land, inhabitants can enjoy a long life of idleness and pagan joy. As accepted, the original cognitive accents of this reoccurring themes, present in Montaigne's "On Cannibals," in Thomas

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More's *Utopia* emphasized the genuine moral potential of community cooperation in societies where the principles of Christian civilization were not heard of.

<sup>264</sup> Wessex Parallel WebTexts, <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~wpwt/>, ed. Bella Millett, English, School of Humanities, University of Southampton.

<sup>265</sup> In a Medieval English poem (c. 1315-1400), the anonymous poet adapted the traditional themes to the rhyming couplet form. The verses have been read ever since as a jewel of Middle-English poetry: Far out to sea and west of Spain: There is a country named Cockayne / No place on earth compares to this/ For sheer delightfulness and bliss. The text and the notes are from London, British Library, MS Harley 913, ff. 3r-6v., in Godwin, *The Pagan Dream*.

<sup>266</sup> The term was introduced in Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. (Chicago: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987).

<sup>267</sup> Yates believed strongly in Shakespeare's sympathy for the world of the occult philosophy. In *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, she wrote

Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is seen as belonging to the reaction, to the atmosphere of the witch crazes and the attacks on Agrippa. With the assault on occult philosophy in *Faustus* was associated the anti-Semitism of *The Jew of Malta*. Chapman's *Shadow of Night*, on the contrary, defends the occult philosophy, and, by implication, the Dee-Spenser point of view, through its subtle exposition of the 'Saturnian' inspired melancholy. Within this framework of the occult philosophy in the Elizabethan age and the controversies it aroused, new approaches are made to Shakespeare. *The Merchant of Venice* is believed to allude to the contemporary issue of the conversion of the Jews by Christian Cabala, and to echo the work on universal harmony by the Cabalist Friar of Vernice, Francesco Giorgi. Hamlet's melancholy is the inspired melancholy with its prophetic visions. Shakespeare's preoccupation with the occult, with ghosts, witches, fairies, is understood as deriving less from popular tradition than from deep-rooted affinity with the learned occult philosophy and its religious implications. *King Lear*, written during Dee's third period, the time of his disgrace and poverty, is seen as reflecting Dee himself as an old and broken man, ill-rewarded for having devoted his life to the interests of 'British Monarchy', his occultism alluded to through Tom o' Bedlam's supposed possession by devils. In *The Tempest*, written after Dee's death and during the period of 'the Elizabethan revival within the Jacobean age', Dee is shadowed through Prospero in this most daring play which presents a good conjuror at a time when conjuring was a dreaded accusation of the propaganda of the reaction. (77)

<sup>268</sup> See Whitney, *Early Responses to Renaissance Drama*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

<sup>269</sup> See Marcus Otto. *Theatrum Mundi—A Mediterranean imaginary of modern 'cosmopolitan'*. *Revolutions: Transforma online*. (4th Transdisciplinary Forum Magdeburg: Concepts, Discourses, Practices of Revolutionary Action of Our Time. 2003.) Internet presence:

<http://www.transforma-online.de/deutsch/transforma2003/papers/otto.html>

This also offers the opportunity to undermine the conventional micro/macro-dichotomy by theorizing the not at least mimetic relationship (Gabriel Tarde) - which often enough results in melancholy - between the imaginary self-institution of society (Castoriadis) and its en-acting subjectivities on the "global stage". Only from such a transgressive or liminal 'micro-theoretical' perspective does it make sense to speak of the world as a stage...

...the world is a stage, and a stage is a structure for putting on temporary displays, so there is no storage space.

Here theatricality signifies the irreversible passing away of presence as the very condition of the modern world. Yet, despite this fundamental experience of temporality or even just because this experience modernity seems to be ever more obsessed by the artificial (medial) evocation of

immediate presence. Thus the modern theatrical life style is intrinsically paradox. It mimetically 'displays' its very own lack of permanence. If such a diagnosis should have a historical reference at all than the early modern Baroque would be of course the first candidate. Here theater was regarded as a rather universal cultural and artistic model - in the aristocratic masquerades as well as in the popular and religious spectacles. In the corresponding allegorical tableaux the genuine aesthetic and therefore fragile dimension of the social became manifest. Yet at the same time as a consequence of such a theatricalization of the world "art fully becomes *socius*, a public and social space occupied by baroque dancers" as Deleuze pointed out.

<sup>270</sup> For the discussion of representational modes in the West, see Otto, *Theatrum...*, 2003.

<sup>271</sup> Simon Sheikh, "In the Place of the Public Sphere? Or, the World in Fragments," *RepublicArt*. (EIPCP Transversal E-Journal, 2004). Internet presence: [http://www.republicart.net/disc/publicum/sheikh03\\_en.htm](http://www.republicart.net/disc/publicum/sheikh03_en.htm)

<sup>272</sup> To sustain the theory of Montaigne's "naturalism," Kermode chooses the following (famous) quote from the French philosopher's essay *On Cannibals*: 'They [the Indians] are even savage, as we call those fruits wilde, which nature of her selfe... hath produced: whereas indeed... those which ourselves have altered by our artificial devices, and diverted from their common order, we should rather terme savage. In those are the true and most profitable virtues, and naturall properties most lively and vigorous, which in these we have bastardized, applying them to the pleasure of our corrupted taste. And if notwithstanding, in divers fruits of those countries that were never tilled, we shall finde, that in respect of ours they are most excellent, and as delicate to our taste; there is no reason, art should gain the point of honor of our great and puissant mother Nature', (Kermode 176).

<sup>273</sup> The description belongs to Shakespeare in the Folio "Names of the Actors."

<sup>274</sup> Entry in Columbus' Journal of 12 October 1492. The fragments preserved from Columbus's journal appear in Julius Olson, *The Northmen, Columbus and Cabot*, (1926) 985-1503

<sup>275</sup> Antonio de Nebrija, Introduction, *Gramática de la lengua castellana*, 1492.

<sup>276</sup> Amongst other virtues required from a statesman, rhetorical skill is preeminent: a good politician, a "community maker," has to act as a perfectly inspired orator. Not even the alleged superhuman quality of aristocratic blood can replace the rhetorical skill required from the leader on the stage of politics. As an illustration of this cultural belief in the power of discourse, Renaissance cultures, Greenblatt writes, preserved the medieval figure of the Wild Man, a gentle-blooded individual, who lost the power of speech, after having been abandoned in the wood.

<sup>277</sup> Hayden White, original source in *An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, Eds. Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1972); quoted in Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse* 21.

<sup>278</sup> "Thei vse no lawful coniunction of marriage, but everyone hath as many women as him listeth, and leaueth them again at his pleasure," in Sebastian Munster, *A Treatise of the Newe India*, trans. Richard Eden, quoted in Greenblatt, 1990, 36, note 27.

<sup>279</sup> Original quote in Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare's Talking Animals* (London: Edward Arnold, 1973) 211.

<sup>280</sup> Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, cited in Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse* 26; also see footnotes: 23 on 36; 56 on 39.

<sup>281</sup> The text, invoked by Greenblatt as a culmination of political abuse, also provides explicit warnings for those who do not conform to the new commandments:

We shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as their Highnesses may command; and we shall take away your goods, and shall do you all the mischief and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey, and refuse to receive their lord, and resist and contradict him; and we protest that the deaths and losses which shall accrue from this are your fault, and

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not that of their Highnesses, or ours, nor of these cavaliers who come with us. And that we have said this to you and made this Requisition, we request the notary here present to give us his testimony in writing, and we ask the rest who are present that they should be witnesses of this Requisition.

Cited in Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse* 29.

<sup>282</sup> Loomba and Orkin.

<sup>283</sup> William M. Hamlin "Men of Inde: Renaissance Ethnography and *The Tempest*", *Shakespeare Studies*, XXII, (1994)15-44.

<sup>284</sup> Nicholas, Dirks "Introduction, Colonialism and Culture", in Nicholas Dirks (ed.) *Colonialism and Culture*, (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1992.)

<sup>285</sup> Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who speaks for "Indian" Pasts? *Representations* 57 (1992): 1-24, cited in Loomba, D. 18.

<sup>286</sup> Shapiro, James (1996), *Shakespeare and the Jews*, cited in Loomba and Orkin, J. 13, 14.

<sup>287</sup> Bartels, Bartels (1997), "Othello and Africa: Postcolonialism Reconsidered", *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, Vol. LIV, No. 1 (January 1997) 45-64, cited by Loomba in "The Post-Colonial Tempest".

<sup>288</sup> For the origin of this idea, see Hedges and Fishkin.

<sup>289</sup> Jonathan Burton ponders that historians have disregarded the "anthropological" stereotypes of early English culture, ignoring the ways in which misperceptions of other cultures, especially of Islam, motivated the early modern assumptions of identity, race and culture. See *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* 9, 12.

<sup>290</sup> Dirlik, *After the Revolution* 332, 335; and "The Post-Colonial Aura", cited in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* A.11, 147, 226-7, 228.

<sup>291</sup> Cited in Brotton's chapter in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*.

<sup>292</sup> In this context, the mention of Jonathan Hart's thesis in "Redeeming *The Tempest*: Romance and Politics" brings credible arguments to shed light upon the issue of duality in Shakespeare's thematic sources and intentions. In summarizing the simultaneous cultural dependencies of the play upon Renaissance travel literature, moral essays and New World accounts, Hart suggested that the inter-twining of Virgilian and New World motifs in Shakespeare's last play were not originally displayed within an "anti-colonial" proposal. Hence, *The Tempest*'s political allegorical aspect, downplayed by conservative criticism and overplayed by post-colonial and new historicist assertions, could be rebalanced by a more careful epistemic analysis of the English imagination during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras and of its esthetic representations. Finding the "middle ground" between the "esthetic" and the "political" dimensions of the play would likely reveal a pre-colonial set of mentalities associated with the Age of Discovery as much as it would dismiss as historically premature any thematized underpinning of *The Tempest* within the ethics of colonial domination. Even though the unavoidable acknowledgment of the American dimension of the play raises the question of hybridization between cultural geographies and the connoted issues of identity, this dilemma should be related to the "proleptic" potential of Shakespeare's ambiguities. In other words, its discussion relates explicitly to a modern history of critical interpretations, not to the original intentions of Shakespeare, whose reliance upon sources such as Mandeville, Raleigh, Strachey or Montaigne connoted the earlier, still naïve perplexities of Europeans with encounters of alterness, significantly different from the colonial cultural politics of the following decades. However, the modern history of debates between European and post-



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colonial humanities grew around the issues of privilege and frustration generated by the historical productions of the play within alternative colonial environments of nineteenth and twentieth century, which determined the new historicist deliberate reinsertion of the play into the New World's historical, political and anthropological contexts:

There is other evidence of the 'American' dimension of this play. If at one time, too little emphasis was placed on the New World in *The Tempest*, in recent years this dimension has eclipsed all other aspects. What I have been suggesting is a balance between the aesthetic and political elements. As the traditional aesthetic allegory of this play has been synthesized into the history of Shakespearean criticism, I want briefly to outline the shift to political allegory, particularly in light of post colonialism, before proceeding to my own analysis. Between about ninety and a hundred and twenty years ago, a shift seems to have happened in interpretations of *The Tempest*. Whereas in 1873 Daniel Wilson thought that *The Tempest* was a social Darwinist work, in 1904 W. T. Stead objected to the imperialism and sided with indigenous cultures. In this century a central debate over the use of canons as a means of promoting tradition and empire has occurred in English-speaking countries. Shakespeare has been at the heart of that debate as in those countries he occupies the centre of literature and education in the humanities. In traditional criticism, Prospero's art and power were sometimes identified with Shakespeare's and Europe's while Caliban was sometimes associated with the physical, moral and political dependency of non-European peoples. As an understandable reaction to this European position, some writers in Africa and the Caribbean set out to use *The Tempest* for their own literary and political purposes. Between 1957 and 1973, most African and large Caribbean colonies won their independence. Dissenting intellectuals and writers from these regions decided to appropriate *The Tempest* as a means of supporting decolonization and creating an alternative literary tradition. In *The Tempest* African and Caribbean writers saw hints of pre-European traditions and European colonization. These "proleptic" signs suggested raw material for retrieving repressed traditions and inventing new ones. In Europe itself, as I have suggested, there was already opposition to the imperial view, so that, as usual, there were not two monolithic sides to this debate, Europe on the one hand and Africa and the Caribbean on the other. For forty years or more—in Spanish, French and English—African and Caribbean writers and critics have, directly and indirectly, appropriated or discussed the appropriation of Shakespeare's play. For instance, in 1961 Aimé Césaire's "*Une Tempête*": d'après "*La Tempête*" de Shakespeare—Adaption pour un théâtre nègre is published in Paris. During the 1970s, *The Tempest* is not used as much as a tool of opposition in decolonizing cultures. From the mid-1970s, the interest in colonization in the Renaissance, and in *The Tempest*, begins among scholars later known as new historicists. This tradition of dissent from within continues among scholars of European descent and seems to have culminated with the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus' arrival in America. In this most recent manifestation white North American scholars, like the white American-born élite of the Spanish colonies, or criollos, of the late eighteenth century, find themselves in the position of identifying with Amerindians as a means of vindicating the wrongs done to, and prejudices against, those peoples in the past and as a declaration of independence from their own European past. While this position is understandable and even laudable, it is difficult to avoid contradiction and to erase the European contact with the first Americans so readily and with an exercise of conscience.

<sup>293</sup> The complex history of this interesting polemic between critical positions is summarized by Peter Hulme in his "Stormy Weather: Misreading the Postcolonial Tempest."

<sup>294</sup> Original quote in Jameson 1981:10.

<sup>295</sup> In Wood.

<sup>296</sup> Jameson 1981: 74.

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<sup>297</sup> Quoting Cassirer's classical idea, Cusanus (*De Visione Dei*), founded intelligibility on the Neoplatonic concept of enlightenment by Ideas, asserting that

the truth of the universal and the particularity of the individual interpenetrate each other, so that the Divine Being can be grasped and seen from the infinitely and multiple individual points of view. (*The Individual and the Cosmos* 36-37)

<sup>298</sup> "The absolute remains as the super-finite, the super-one, and the super-being, pure in itself. Nevertheless because of the super-abundance it produces the multiformity of the universe, down to formless matter as the extreme limit of non-being. A look at the Pseudo-Dionysian writings has shown us that the Christian Middle Ages adopted this premise and re-shaped it to suit its own ends. It gained thereby the fundamental category of graduated mediation, which on the one hand allowed the integral existence of divine transcendence, and on the other hand mastered it, both theoretically and practically, with a hierarchy of concepts and of spiritual forces. Through the miracle of the ecclesiastical order of life and salvation, transcendence was now both recognized and conquered. In this miracle, the invisible had become visible, the inconceivable had become conceivable to man." (Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos* 18).

<sup>299</sup> The Aristotelian tradition postulated the primacy of image over the word in the typical process of thought formation. According to the Aristotelian tradition, the analytical reason reads the images synthesized by the *hegemonikon*, seen as the individual perceptive apparatus. Stored in the individual's memory, the received image cannot "hold" either names, or concepts. How, then, is the image recognized, this is to say "imprinted" as a notion in the subject's memory? To Middle Ages philosophers, the answer was the same, inspired by Aristotelian explanation: accordingly, the mediator between the subject's world of sensorial inputs (the outer reality) and its inner images was *pneuma*, the subtle spirit of living entities. A long series of philosophical efforts, which touch on the debate of Universals, arose in connection with the prospected definitions of common sense, taken as a proof of the intelligible design of the world. Before the days of Nominalism, the proper (inter)mediation between the outer world of objects and the inner world of experience was given in adequacy with the image of Christ, meaning that the norm and the ratio of identification was ensured by the dogma of Trinity. From Augustine to Aquinas this tendency remained unchanged. Described in the philosophical exhortations of the *Summa*, this initial step in the formation of thought was the object of the so-called common sense, whose measure delivered the empirical subjectivity (of individual impression /experience) to the attributes of the Divine (*res, aliquis, unum, bonum, verum*). Once the edifice of medieval fate is shattered by the sixteenth century epistemological assumptions, the image of thought had to be conformed to a new measure, matching either Ockhamian and Abelardesque Scholastic Nominalisms, or the non-orthodox Neoplatonic conceptualisms.

<sup>300</sup> I have quoted below what I think as one of the most important ideas in Pico's *Oratio*...:

Imagine! The great generosity of God! The happiness of man! To man it is allowed to be whatever he chooses to be! As soon as an animal is born, it brings out of its mother's womb all that it will ever possess. Spiritual beings from the beginning become what they are to be for all eternity. Man, when he entered life, the Father gave the seeds of every kind and every way of life possible. Whatever seeds each man sows and cultivates will grow and bear him their proper fruit. If these seeds are vegetative, he will be like a plant. If these seeds are sensitive, he will be like an animal. If these seeds are intellectual, he will be an angel and the son of God. And if, satisfied with no created thing, he removes himself to the center of his own unity, his spiritual soul, united with God, alone in the darkness of God, who is above all things, he will surpass every

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created thing. Who could not help but admire this great shape-shifter? In fact, how could one admire anything else?

<sup>301</sup> The following Notes on Heliocentric utopianism in Campanella's *Civitas Solis*, represent a revised version of my 1998 text, published in my MA dissertation:

Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in Rome, the centre of the old world. His spiritual successor, Tommaso Campanella, took the next step: the Dominican advocated the human cloning as a goal of civilisation in a text that anticipates both the rhetoric of the Red Square of the Kremlin and the sperm banks. On the long way to Enlightenment, Love was gradually transformed, from a divine bond to a social psychosis and a ground for manipulation. *The City of the Sun* accommodates a plan of the State fashioned after Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia*, where citizens, who live in harmony with nature, establish an egalitarian society controlled by philosophers. Apparently paradoxical, *The City of the Sun* was written after *Monarchia Messiae*, an apology for the divine monarchy expected to come during his lifetime. Yet, this contradiction is telling if we take into account that Campanella wrote a defence of the Copernican cosmology, while imprisoned for heresy. He believed that the Copernican system followed a cohesive pattern, built on *reason and experience*.

A heliocentric pattern is called to undermine the transcendental legitimacy of a divine monarchy that originated in a Ptolemaic world. The new prince is not the natural inheritor of the throne, but the wisest inhabitant of the Citadel.

*Astrology* was the new magical lens polished to reflect the celestial order upon the earthly disorder, a discipline that Campanella, like many scholars of the Renaissance, empowered to bring rationality to the general confusion. The Sun or the Metaphysician, the supreme ruler of Campanella's Utopia uses the sacred art of astrology for the sake of his people. The Metaphysician is a master of every occupation and teaching; moreover, governing like a sun a city divided by round walls to concentric districts, he is the focal point of information and authority. None of his chief magistrates, Power, Wisdom, and Love could eventually replace him, because they administer inferior levels of knowledge. Power is the minister of defence; he manages military affairs and external relations, but has no idea of either culture or agriculture. Wisdom is the minister of science, culture, and education, in other words head of the official propaganda, but he supposedly lacks international copyrights, as his attributions exclude the external connections. Love is the utopian ancestor of the modern zoo-technical engineer. Its main tasks are to channel love toward a betterment of reproduction and to feed scientifically an improved humankind: a humanity that does not strive for private property, but shares everything in a pre-Orwellian phalanstery. Meals, living and sex are equally communal, as the private family disappeared, like in the case of the Maoist Chinese metropolis, where the administration places midwives and supervisors in the communal houses where they act as God, controlling the offspring through eugenic and astrological methods, and informing the master about "the needs of the most troubled by Venus."

The inhabitants of this city are physically perfect. Their beauty-in-uniformity might be regarded as the utopian seed of the Nazi pro-Aryan political madness. After all, the myth of the perfect soldier knows great popularity in the Renaissance dream to duplicate humanity in a test tube. Yet this helpless, ameliorated humanity cannot live outside the city and is deaf-mute to any other forms of expression, except for the institutionalized truth of the local authority. The citadel is structured of seven concentric circles, each of them bordered by a wall, to coincide with the seven planets. Each wall is painted on the inside with murals representing all necessary knowledge. Walking along these walls is to acquire the permitted quintessence of knowledge and to hope for the invisible, undeserved revelation of the next wall.

Administered knowledge is always discriminative and double-sided, as related to an external, ideological goal. The knowledge administers *orbits* around social goals, and is always busy closing the paths of expression in an official rhetoric, which plays the role of universal

mediation. The citizens of *The City of the Sun* are required to walk in circles to depict the senses of the painted allegories. The sense of reading also highlights the beginning and the fulfilment of a cycle; not only space and truth are to be administered, but also time, as the cosmic cycles are intended to meet the cycles of indoctrination. This rhetoric of positive allegories is still extremely ambiguous as it stratifies and programmes its own revelations. A didactic aesthetics highlighted by parables of civic heroism regulates any speculative and individual attempt of unmediated expression with the aid of the authorised portraits. However, the citizens “continue to look into the customs of all nations and they are always making improvements; and when they come to know the living truths of Christianity, proven by miracles, they will accept them, for they are a very gentle people” (*The City of the Sun*, 1982, 24). Their multicultural gentleness (Heidegger might have thought), is the “standing reserve” of their mono-dimensional time. Because their belief in progress equates their capacity to translate everything into the official idiom of civic benefit, and because they suffer from a perpetually lacking of fantasy, they have to store foreign ideas on their empty bookshelves. However, this kind of devotion needs miracles from time to time to confirm its eagerness.

The remuneration for their silence is a healthy longevity protected by the Prince’s omniscience. Campanella’s *Civitas Solis* liquidates the fictional distance that consecrated More’s *Utopia* as a moral genre. Campanella’s preoccupation for the immediate reform of Catholicism makes the fictional distance between the impossible utopia and the prescriptive ideology vanish. Because Campanella’s image of the leader is no longer an icon, but an idol- in Marion’s understanding - namely an object that freezes (hypnotizes) the gaze in a dazzling return (Jean-Luc Marion, *L’idole et la distance*, 12). Idols are objects carved around signs: idols are built to capture souls and are always expected to speak. Idols signify in themselves; they never intimate in the name of an archetype, but always mirror the worshiper’s expectation, so that they can embody any ideal. The idol is never beautiful, because idols never incarnate universal essences (in the manner a statue embodies them). Thus, they cannot be confused with the works of art. Idols employ a principle of individualization; works of art deploy a principle of localization. The viewer’s amazement blows the breath of life onto the idols that individualizes them. Idolatry attempts to immobilize time and the signs of love (*amor fati*): it misunderstands essence while it relegates it to the signified. (Like a restless Faust, the idolatrous lover projects his desire for immortality in the time of a frozen instant.)

The Citadel of the Sun, suggests Campanella to his Inquisitors, embodies the catholic City of God, *Civitas Dei* on Earth. As a prelude to “the Age of Reason,” Campanella deals with a disenchanted platform, where the will to power is concentrically hierarchized, and knowledge is distributed only in its theologized version, its words relating a remote centre (the administrative towered palace) as belonging to an absolute image of omniscient authority. Mirroring nothing, expressing nothing, this icon can only inspire blind devotion, or its synonym –terror. This image is necessarily holographic; it has to smile and shine to all the cardinal points, because it is to be worshipped and venerated from every angle of each district.

<sup>302</sup>“and brought to a close by the 1648 Peace of Westfalia.”

<sup>303</sup> Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Jose Sachs.

<sup>304</sup> Here and elsewhere, I have used quotations and standard numbers from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington.

<sup>305</sup> In advanced semantics, the key of standard constructs upon which a map (taken as a visual depiction of complex representations) is built.

<sup>306</sup> For a broad discussion of cynicism in modern politics, see Sloterdijk’s *A Critique of Cynical Reason*.

<sup>307</sup> Drawing on celebrated themes of contemporary Political Science, Claes G. Ryn, Professor of Politics at the Catholic University of America, produced excellent thoughts on utopian thought as characteristic of modern mentalities:

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A dream of radical change has often sought expression in a belief in social engineering. The inspiring vision is obviously marked by utopian imagination, and the latter subtly affects also the understanding of reason itself, producing a faith in Science as the solution to the problems of mankind. True, some rationalists scoff at the gullibility of utopianism. For them, real intellect is quick to unmask unrealistic vision. But are not rationalists of that kind often romantics themselves, only romantics of the disillusioned, defeated kind? Is not their intellect permeated by the cynicism of an imagination that is increasingly stuck in the depressive mode? Hiding behind this type of intellectualism is a romantic whose experience of life has made him expect only the worst from human beings. Who has not encountered the sarcastic, deprecating critic who relies on what he considers the cold intellect. To this kind of person, efforts to improve life appear futile. No less than the utopian rationalist does the cynical rationalist feel himself excused from the kind of personal moral effort that begins with making the best of self and one's own circumstances. Considering the huge challenge of the bigger picture, what could be more beside the point? Both types of rationalists are unwilling to recognize the real limits and opportunities of man's historical existence. The cynic exaggerates the limits and discounts the opportunities; the utopian does the reverse. In the end, they are, again, much the same person.

Accordingly, in contemporary cultural studies, the quality of social projects has been shown as intrinsically dependent upon the elaborations and commitments of imaginary life. Ryn's commentary can be read as a pledge for an interdisciplinary science of Imagination, where the themes of social psychology are related to their cultural-anthropological roots:

Conceptual formulations presuppose acts of imagination or, to use a term that can be used synonymously, of intuition—moments of concrete vision. The imagination does not, as once believed, passively receive sense impressions that are combined into images. It is an active, visionary power, giving a fundamental, if non-ideational, coherence to life. Most generally, the imagination constitutes an overall sense, concrete and experiential, of what life is like. Such intuition precedes thought in the sense of systematic reflection, ideas and definitions. Before we can reflect, there must be imaginative wholes upon which to reflect. Whenever we set forth an idea or a definition, to say nothing of an entire ideology, intuitively integrated experience of life steers the effort, giving us a sense of proportion, structure and possibility. Our most fundamental perception of life is coherent not primarily by virtue of intellectual concentration, although systematic critical reflection is also a way of laying hold of existence. Our view of life hangs together—"makes sense"—first of all through the continuous work of the imagination. The latter creatively integrates experience, turning it into a whole. Our overall sense of reality, of what life is like, is at bottom imaginative vision, the imagination continually synthesizing our past with our present. Imaginative states may be more or less consonant with the "real" world—the world in which we act—but, whatever their quality, pre-conceptual, intuitive, concrete vision orients and colors our thinking, no less so in philosophy than in ordinary life. It is on the basis of intuition that we formulate ideas. Whether those ideas can be said to be valid, "true to life" in some sense, has everything to do with the kind of imagination that informs them.

Part of the modern discussion of secularization has emphasized the Post-Renaissance hesitation between the incompatible ideas of Greco-Roman paganism and Christian-Medieval monotheistic climate. As Ryn shows, the ongoing hesitation is due to its deeper roots in the psychological attributes of imagination. At this point, simplifications are unavoidable, as the vastness of the theoretical field does not allow me to proceed to broader elaborations.

<sup>308</sup> Mebane, *Renaissance Magic* 3.

<sup>309</sup> After the Succession scandal, Elizabeth herself turned into a staunch enemy of the Catholics, a monarch who happily chose to avoid the Holy Communion and did her best to repress the traditional sympathies of those aristocrats faithful to Mary, the beheaded "Swan" queen. In opposition to the traditionalist camp, where the half-pagan cult of Queen was perceived as an

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exercise in heresy, the glorious monarch acted as a skillful Maecenas, raising and offering protection to a generation of intellectuals who would be ready to challenge the preconceptions of the establishment. Almost everybody was welcomed, for as long as they were allegiant to the Queen.

<sup>310</sup> He was the father of Richard Burbage, most famous tragedian of the Shakespearean stage.

<sup>311</sup> Giordano Bruno traveled to London under the auspices of Henry III, the King of France. Bruno, consequently, benefited from the protection of the French ambassador in London. This was Michel de Castelnau, Marquis de Mauvissiere, himself a key-figure in Elizabethan politics and in the shade of his immunity, a hospitable host for the non-orthodox thinkers of the day.

<sup>312</sup> For the parallel between Bruno and Shakespeare, I have founded my insights upon Ron Heisler's scholarly article "Two Worlds that Converged: Shakespeare and the Ethos of the Rosicrucians."

<sup>313</sup> The following study notes have been documented with historical and textual evidence originating in the article *The School of Night* by Frederick Turner, Founders Professor of Arts and Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas, published in *Corona Literary Review*, volume IV. This is my own summary of the most daring associations found in Turner's work, and its insertion here is a reflection of my need to elucidate one of the most intriguing historical riddles of Elizabethan culture:

According to Turner, Giordano Bruno's visit in London might have acted as a catalyst for the legendary School of Night. Often qualified as a cabala, because of its clandestine meetings and its exclusive metaphorical idiom, the School was a hybrid between a secret society and literary club. At its core, the School brought together poets and scientists such as Christopher Marlowe, Walter Raleigh, Thomas Harriot and Robert Sidney, Philip Sidney's brother, nephew of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. The dramatist, poet George Chapman, translator of Homer, and the disreputable Richard Baines, the testifier against Marlowe in his inconclusive trial for atheism, were also notable members. Often labeled as "atheistic" and as a society of black magic by inimical Puritans, The School of Night evolved as a speculative intellectual club, which kept its meetings in secrecy in fear of potential exposure to the accusations of non-belief. The society grew in the early nineties in London, but early meetings of its intellectual motivators could have taken place as early as 1583-1584, in Marquis de Mauvissiere's London diplomatic residence and in the Ireland of late 1580's, during William Raleigh's Irish travel at the other notable scientist-member's manor in Country Cork, the Abbey of Molana.

In the early years of the club, Turner believes, the mentors were William Raleigh and Thomas Harriot, two navigators whose travel logs, scientific observations, astronomical calculi, and expedition memories became the primer of the revolutionary scientific and philosophical ideas of pre-modern England. Raleigh's 1584-1585 expedition to America was planned and organized minutely by Harriot, who dedicated the whole interval to the study of the Native Indians' customs, idioms and spiritual beliefs. At home, Harriot's contribution to the club seems to have been determinant, and its proper value can be only judged in relation with his greater intellectual and political plan that combined speculative logic, Cabbalistic occultism, with mathematical and navigational calculus envisioned a Golden Era for Elizabethan England. Here, Cristopher Marlowe himself is said to have learned a great deal of occult philosophy from Harriot and Giordano Bruno who shared many philosophical views with the navigator. (Years later, the same ideas brought the Nolan in front of the Italian Inquisition, under the accusation of heresy.) Marlowe's godless character Doctor Faustus seems to embody the dark fascination with the infinite, the center-less, and the mysterious outlook of the Universe, which ignited the intellectual energies of this late Renaissance society. The alleged Rosicrucianism of the late courtly bard of *The Tempest*, also the younger Bacon's preoccupation for a unifying vision of knowledge through the fusion of scientific and magic languages, and ultimately the Cartesian episteme are discussed in relation with Thomas Harriot's half-lost contribution to the development of logic and algebra.

Significantly, the name "The School of Night" was not the original designation of the club but arose as a late contraption in William Shakespeare's *Love's Labor's Lost*, Act IV, Scene 3,

in which the King of Navarre utters “*Black is the badge of hell / The hue of dungeons and the school of night.*” Could this satirical mark reveal Shakespeare’s already existing disappointment with a well-known group? The phrase, which generated centuries of hermeneutical disputes, is indeed strange, for it acquaints us with a different portrait of Shakespeare, a man entirely knowledgeable of the underground societies in Elizabethan London. Besides, the aging Shakespeare of the early 1600’s was remembered for its discontented reaction with the School of Night, Turner wrote, which made him join another literary group, the Friday Street club of the Mermaid Tavern, founded on the Thames’ Northern bank (accidentally or not) by the same Walter Raleigh. Ben Jonson, Francis Beaumont, John Donne, John Fletcher, John Selden, Robert Herrick were also among the notable members. The mature Shakespeare had indeed had some good friends among the alleged founders of the School of Night, since he continued meeting some of the same figures in the Friday Club. Nonetheless, his syntagm “black badge of Hell,” used to describe the clandestine society, brings into play a deprecatory criterion of value. Such a radical assumption could have only been supported by a first-hand knowledge of the metropolitan key-figures, their thoughts and places of encounter. In the aftermath of Marlowe’s 1592 arrest, it is entirely possible that the adult William wanted to do away with an old ghost in the closet, namely his own initial appurtenance to the circle of ill fame, accused of immoral behavior and demoniac magic. Thus, *Love’s Labor’s Lost*, a play written and shown on stage between 1595-1596, could be the text in which the young Shakespeare dissociated from any suspicion of association with personalities like Marlowe.

<sup>314</sup> Dorothea Waley Singer’s study reveals another meaningful aspect of Shakespeare’s friendship with Florio, associated with the name of Michel de Montaigne. Certainly, although published no earlier than 1603 in England, Montaigne’s *Essays* made many fans amongst the progressive London intellectuals and, in no time, crystallized a public of avant-garde readers. According to Singer, Bruno may well have been introduced to Montaigne’s work by Florio. Like Florio, Montaigne had Jewish ancestry. Michel de Montaigne had the advantage of travel in Italy and a leisured life on his estates in southern France. John Florio’s translation (1603) of Montaigne’s *Essays* inaugurated a new fashion in English the works of an original and stimulating mind. His introductory maxim “*Je suis moy-mesmes la matiere de mon livre*”: “I am myself the matter of my book,” sounded strange, if not entirely scandalous, for a culture not accustomed to the stylistic vagaries of French philosophical skepticism.

Turning the mind inwardly in deliberate contempt for the world of theology in the attempt to discover a more crystalline reflection of the outside world was a new and provocative idea for an intellectual era accustomed with opposing the worlds and motivations of action with those of social withdrawal and philosophical meditation. The lesson taught by Montaigne was consistent with the modern mind’s attitude to reflection, which blends inquisitive skepticism with a new perception of the paradoxical, baffling nature of reality and truth. Enthusiasm for inventive literary expression, disabuse with human condition and bedazzlement at the infinite texture of the other world, these were ideas that certainly left a deep influence on the young William, who later illustrated the classical skeptical motifs in plays, such as *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* – where the bard is said to have illustrated the lessons learned from Montaigne’s *Cannibals*. Florio, as Michel de Montaigne’s translator, would have acted as a catalyst, reading to his many friends fragments from the book, long time before Montaigne’s work came into print. Furthermore, Florio’s acquaintance with the members of the School of Night, would have made possible an ideal environment for the dissemination of Montaigne’s ideas. Harriot’s 1588 *Report on Virginia* displays interesting similarities with Montaigne’s *Cannibals*, presenting the aboriginals of Virginia, as “ingenious” and showing much “excellency of wit”.

<sup>315</sup> My source for this information is Dorothea Waley Singer’s *Giordano Bruno*, Chapter 2, *passim*. Also see footnotes 9, 10.

<sup>316</sup> Original quote in *Spenser Studies* 2 (1981): 193-215; my citation is from James H. Simms, *Connotations* 3.1 (1993): “Shakespeare’s “The Phoenix and the Turtle”: A Reconsideration of “Single Natures Double Name”.

<sup>317</sup> “As Antony’s tragedy reaches its climax, for the painful loss of personal meaning that is implied by the play to occur within the context of historical memory is substituted, albeit just as painfully, a more archaic and more mysterious level of meaning, through the ‘ancestral’ and mythic system of anamnesis which Antony associates with Hercules. At certain moments in the play, these two levels of memory cohere; more often, however, they are implied to be fundamentally incompatible. At the level of historical recollection, Shakespeare’s play uses Antony and Cleopatra to identify a crucial episode in Western cultural memory - albeit one that was the immediate future for their contemporaries. The tragedy reminds us repeatedly that their fall coincides with the emergence of a decisive historical epoch, and hence of a new temporal paradigm: ‘the time of universal peace’ (4.6.4). This new time, proclaimed by Octavius just before Antony’s suicide, was to have a double aspect of both political and religious change: ‘universal peace’ alludes explicitly to the *pax Romanus* established by Octavius as Augustus Caesar (hence it denotes the effective beginning of the Roman Empire), but the phrase also anticipates the contemporary birth of Christianity. Shakespeare’s play clearly suggests that the fall of the lovers who ruled much of the known world has a particular mnemonic function in relation to the impending historical fusion of a new vision of love (Christianity) with Roman political power. The play offers proleptic anticipations of the nativity (in Cleopatra’s death), the last supper (in Antony’s feasting of his men), the crucifixion and the deposition from the cross (in Antony’s ascent into the monument and death surrounded by Cleopatra and her women), and the repentance of Judas (in the death of Enobabuz). But the more significant consequence of this association of Antony and Cleopatra’s ends with an emergent epoch—or with historical beginnings—is that the play also invites us to see the lovers themselves as the last mnemonic traces of an earlier and significantly different age: one in which, just before the somewhat strange hybridisation of Christianity with Roman culture, an individual yet exemplary Roman was transformed by love. The play implies that in this soon-to-be-extinct age, when a plurality of pagan gods and of pagan religious beliefs was still preeminent, the gap between the human and the divine sphere could still be bridged, by an erotic joy or bliss that assisted more subtle forms of remembrance: mythological and initiatory rather than historical.” (Berry)

<sup>318</sup> “In Act I, Cleopatra tells Antony that ‘When you sued staying,/ Eternity was in our lips and eyes, / Bliss in our brows bent; none our parts so poor,/ But was a race of heaven’ (I.ii. 33-37). And after his death she laments that ‘This world did equal theirs [the gods] / Till they had stol’n our jewel’ (IV.xvi.78-9). Using a similar device to that recommended by Giordano Bruno, the play accords the two lovers a mnemonic function like that of Bruno’s statues of the gods or images of planetary powers, as it compares Cleopatra and Antony to Venus and Mars.” See Berry 70.

<sup>319</sup> Raised in the Queen’s sight, Sidney chose as his wife the teenage daughter of Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth’s spymaster.

<sup>320</sup> Charles W. Eliot, Ed., *English Essays from Sir Philip Sidney to Macaulay: Part 27* Harvard Classics, (Kessinger Publishing, 2004) 353.

<sup>321</sup> Plato’s discussions of rhetoric and poetry are presented in four dialogues: the *Ion*, the *Republic*, the *Gorgias*, and the *Phaedrus*.

<sup>322</sup> Significantly, Coleridge’s patriotic romanticism revived this idea for its formative appeal and made it part of the Victorian ideological milieu.

<sup>323</sup> In Philip Sidney’s *Defense of Poesie* 353-354.

<sup>324</sup> Bruno’s philosophy is recuperated by Couliano as a science of imagination, that in its attempt to theorize the “personal and collective erotic impulses” anticipates a chain of related disciplines from mass psychology to applied psychology and psycho-analysis. The Bruneian magician is a distant ancestor of the contemporary propagandist, or his avatars in the roles of the advertising guru, producer, spy, or politician. In this view, eroticism is the fundamental drive of the subject that can be taken advantage of by the magician operator, and magic is nothing more than a science of human



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imagination in action, a proto-psychology useful for its effects in the field of political manipulation. Given the effectiveness of this knowledge, magic is reserved for an aristocratic elite. As an instrument of government whose strings and tunes are symbolically granted to the magician-king, defined as an awakened consciousness able to bond without being trapped within its bonding, Bruno's *De Vinculis in genere* (*A General Account on Bonding*) may be the first text of practical magic suited for the economy of politics, becoming, in Couliano's view, a political treatise matched in importance only by Machiavelli's *Prince*.

<sup>325</sup> I have cited below Couliano's original definition of "bonding," given in the broader context of his analysis of inter-subjective magic:

The assumption is that no one can escape the magic circle: everyone is either manipulated or a manipulator. Having attained extraordinary domination over his own phantasy, and having also got rid of the ballast of vanity that made him praise or blame of others, the manipulator, in order to use these techniques, applies himself to knowing and fathoming through intuition the characteristics, reactions, and emotions of the subject to be bound to him. Like a spy wanting to procure material for future erotic blackmail, the magician must collect all the indices that permit him to file his subject under some classification or other. A difficult task which, once accomplished sets off to motions of the vinculum, four in number: the first is fastening the bond or chain (*infectio seu invectio*), the second is the actual bond itself (*ligatio seu vinculum*), the third is the attraction resulting from it (*tractio*), and the fourth is the enjoyment of the object that gave rise to the whole process (*copulatio quae fruitio dicitur*) at issue. Of course, is an erotic bond, which wastes away "through all the senses by means of which the attachment was created... This is why the lover wishes to transform himself entirely into the beloved: through tongue, mouth, eyes, etc." The chain reaches the subject "through knowledge, binds through affection, and acts through enjoyment, generally speaking.

(Couliano 95-96).

<sup>326</sup> Giordano Bruno in *Cause, Principle and The One*, central quotation and paragraph in Frances Amelia Yates, *Renaissance and Reform: The Italian Contribution*, (Taylor & Francis, 1999) 107.

<sup>327</sup> Lesley B. Cormack, "Britannia Rules The Waves? Images of Empire in Elizabethan England."

<sup>328</sup> Bruno's theories seem to have inspired the unique intellectual contribution of the nineteenth-century pioneer in Sociology, Gabriel Tarde, whose age-turning view of social development was entirely ascribed to the original potential of individual imagination and action:

But, no matter how intimate, how harmonious a social group is, never do we see emerging *ex abrupto*, in the midst of its astonished associates, a *collective self*, which would be real and not only metaphoric, a sort of marvellous result, of which the associates would be the mere conditions. To be sure, there is always an associate that represents and personifies the group in its entirety, or else a small number of associates (the ministers in a State) who, each under a particular aspect, individualise in themselves the group in its entirety. [...] Everything in it finds its origin in individual action, not only the raw material, but also the overall views, the detailed floor plans as well as the master plans; every thing, even what is now spread in all the cultivated brains and taught in primary schools, has begun in the secret of a solitary brain.

Bruno Latour, *Gabriel Tarde and the End of the Social*, in Patrick Joyce, ed. *The Social in Question. New Bearings in History and the Social Sciences*, (London: Routledge), 117-132. Original quote in *Monadologie et sociologie*. Published as an article in 1893 in *Revue internationale de sociologie* and recently republished as a volume (Tarde, 1999 réédition), Bruno Latour uses passages of Tarde, 1999 re-edition. For writings in English, see Tarde (1969) and *The laws of imitation* which has never often republished. Endnote IV in Latour's article.

<sup>329</sup> Kraye.

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<sup>330</sup> In *Medicina*, a treatise composed of eight volumes and published in Lyons in 1635, Campanella exposed his mystical physiology doctrine.

<sup>331</sup> The following notes represent a revised version of my 1998 text, published in my MA dissertation:

In her study on the hermetic tradition, Frances Yates retells the history of a few letters exchanged between Mersenne and Descartes. Earlier in his life, Mersenne had met Campanella and expressed his disappointment with regard to this encounter, writing that during the three hours that he spent with him, he learned that the reverend could teach him nothing in the sciences. However, Mersenne sent a letter to Descartes to inquire if the philosopher would like Campanella to come to Holland to meet him, but Descartes' answer was that he knew enough about the reverend not to want to see any more of him. "*Les temps sont révolus*," wrote Lenoble, and Campanella's attempt to create a universal religion that interpreted science as "natural magic" and religion as "divine magic" was condemned to fail. Had the reverend been born twenty years earlier, his gnostic teaching would eventually have attained its assertive purposes. In Mersenne's Paris, Campanella seems "like a mammoth survivor of a nearly extinct race, the race of the Renaissance magi" (Yates 1964, 397). The essential Renaissance philosophies which he invoked, the foundation and the rhetoric of his discourse, were the reasons for his excommunication. Science and dogma allied themselves against natural theology and its inherited patrimony, the hermeneutics of signatures.

Sixteenth-century knowledge sentenced itself to "never knowing any thing, but the same thing," wrote Foucault, adding that the criterion of resemblance overloaded the relation between signs and their denominations. Because resemblance, he thought, never prevails upon itself, drawing back and forth an infinite chain of analogies unto an initial and final correspondence, the exploration of the world would be limited to a chart of similarities. When Western cartographers began to draw the meridians of the new world, Campanella proposed that a royal effigy should be placed at the intersection of each new longitude and latitude. Novelty had to be exorcized and human discovery had to be relegated to the symbolic domains, because God left signs in the World's things and human endeavor was to read them. Nature, accordingly, had to total the Cosmos *in nuce*, becoming Microcosm. Knowledge is essentially expressed through hermeneutics, the task of which is to make the signs speak. Semiology lies immediately behind hermeneutics, because it inquires into the laws of signification (Foucault). The resemblance brought into the empty space between hermeneutics and signification is said to reveal the nature of things. Language itself becomes a living thing: after Babel, God is "glossolalian," He is a coin with innumerable names and facets; its value of exchange is due to the human effigy, authenticating the likeness through the repetition of an embedded similitude. Naming the white lands is similar to their recreation: where the world of Genesis gives life, the human names grant their cohesion in an anthropomorphized Cosmos, unto Redemption, the final, revelatory resemblance.

Ancient man grouped the stars together, using them as grounding for the characters of myth. Yet the sky grows together with astronomical knowledge and each new constellation changes the celestial kaleidoscope. Moreover, the new apparitions modify the astrological "plot." Since the fourteenth century, the upgraded versions of the celestial maps also corrected the relations between the anthropomorphic and zoomorphous symbols. The early cartographer's preoccupation with allegorical chains overloaded the cartographic draft, obstructing the reading of the mathematical intersections. Manuscript translations of Ptolemy's *Almagest* stars catalogue were still being drawn 1,500 years after the original had taken shape, and the Renaissance maps took over the astrological symbols. Here, graphic depictions of the Constellation Gemini are symmetrical, because Castor and Pollux were believed to be twins. Early cartographers expressed irreconcilable points of view when they drew the same constellation: during the fifteenth century, the constellation Virgo was consecutively labeled as the Virgin Mary, as Tyche - the goddess of fortune, as Demeter - the corn protector, or as Dike - the patroness of justice. From Ptolemy's *Almagest* to the Copernican maps of the sixteenth century no new configuration was depicted. Additional constellations appeared in the sky as soon as the Copernican

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heliocentricity and astronomical mechanics had restored the interest in celestial infinity. In the beginnings of the seventeenth century, the astronomer's tools - compass and astrolabe - corrected the distances and angulations. The symmetry of the compass began to produce dissimilarities: Draco, the dragon, had to be depicted as a snake as the distance between its stars was condensed. As the navigation maps became more exact, new angles modified the mythical symbols. Moreover, a whole bestiary of exotic animals perfected the paradisiacal sky.

Galileo was among the first astronomers to use the telescope, in 1609. His work confirmed the Copernican theory and completed it with explanations concerning movement and speed: neither pushed by angels, nor flying like a bird, a planet revolved due to abstract forces. Yet abstraction and quantitative infinity are two heretic charges upon the Christian sky, whose stars had represented the image of Eden. The telescope revealed imperfections: sunspots and moon-craters. Moreover, it focused tridimensional images upside down, bringing depth to the heart of its convex mirror. The Ptolemaic maps were isles of fantasy, tabulated according to the games of coincidence and having in common the anthropocentric horror for vacuity. In the world of inductive logic, *resemblance* as such, before it can be conceptualized, slides into its next object of resemblance, Foucault wrote in *The Order of Things*. Still, difference emerges again in the new-sprung landscapes of knowledge as the essential silence of any *terra incognita*, as the weakness of dogma to incorporate accidents of novelty. The map of the world grows in its own circle. Without new allegorical chains, the landscape of the Old World looks like a building demolished from inside out. Once the need for new analogies overwhelmed the old impositions, the concept insinuated the premises of heresy, while willing to revise the domains of its own certitude.

Yet, decades before the invention of the telescope, space became a frightening reality: in an infinite Universe, a central position was no longer possible. A new kind of millenarian panic began to terrify the Ptolemaic Europe: the panic of an accidental collision. Philosophers such as Bruno and Campanella held that the State had to reform itself to resist the imminent "entropy." Had he been able to persuade the pope of the Sun's curb approaching, the Catholic would have been reformed to meet the *millennium* in the concentric City of the Sun. Nevertheless, the novelty that Campanella proposed in addition to his political Utopia - when he performed his anti-eclipse magic for Pope Urban VIII in 1628 - could be called a *reversed model of causality*, created and entrusted to confirm the leader's potency to transform each cosmic happening into a political victory over chaos. The universalist mediation proposed by Campanella turned the skies upside down, before the mirror of the telescope was to be polished. Just like Bruno, Campanella needs an updated source of legitimacy for his global order: therefore, the new distribution of roles indicated that the divine monarch, temporal and spiritual head of the world theocracy, held and sustained the seven skies on his shoulders. Ironically, Campanella's spell "the world as a living statue of God" was accomplished in the gradual loss of the transcendence that followed after the French revolutionaries beheaded Louis XVI in the name of liberty. In less than three centuries the world became the living statue of an unprecedented idolatry dedicated to the empty subject, impersonator of empty analogies caught in the act of their sightless repetition.

The physical Universe expelled the celestial domains; discontinuous, the space formed itself as empty space between incongruous concepts. Its pantheism discarded, with physical laws instead of its vital animations, Bruno's and Campanella's universe would look enough like Newton's mechanical planetarium. The magical contiguity as it was assumed by the Baroque culture of fantasy disappeared abruptly in the mathematical infinity of reason.

<sup>332</sup> See Agamben, *Infancy and History, The Destruction of Experience*, Trans. Liz Heron, (New York: Verso Books, 1993) 75.

<sup>333</sup> The book was originally published in France, in 1952, by Editions Gallimard under the title *Images et Symboles*; the English translation by Philip Mairet was published by Harvill Press and republished, in 1991, by Princeton University Press. The following citations are taken from the

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Princeton edition. The following quotes from Eliade, as well as our derived discussion of the sacred, can be found in his Foreword to the Princeton edition of *Images and Symbols* 12, 13.

<sup>334</sup> Bryan S. Rennie. See Chapter 7: "Myths and Mythology", passim.

<sup>335</sup> Bryan S. Rennie: *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion*. Albany, (NY: State U of New York P, 1996) Ch. 7.

<sup>336</sup> Bryan S. Rennie: *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion*. Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1996. 83. Rennie's terms have their source in Kirk's *Greek Myths*.

<sup>337</sup> Original quote from Eliade's "Myth and Reality" 5, 6. Cited in Rennie.

<sup>338</sup> Amongst the basic characteristics of the myth, Rennie enumerates G.S. Kirk's distinguishing features of the myth, as per his enumeration in the classical study *Greek Myths*: coming from a scholar sharing similar ideas with Eliade, the following enumeration summarizes the functions of myth discussed at large by the Romanian historian of religions. A myth, as opposed to an anecdotal narrative, can be identified by the following constants: "1. Narrative force, power or character 2. Offering an explanation for some important phenomenon or custom. 4. Recording and establishing a useful institution. 5. Expressing an emotion in some way that satisfies some need in the individual. 6. Reinforcing a religious feeling. 7. Acting as a powerful support or precedent for an established ritual or cult practice" (Kirk, cited in Rennie. Original quote is from G.S. Kirk's *Greek Myths*)

<sup>339</sup> Eliade takes into account the continuation of mythical thought in the monotheistic culture of Christianity, while emphasizing the specific mythical features present in the world of modern secularization. Here, Rennie's short comment summarizes in a concise statement Eliade's discussion of the Modern Era: "The obsession with *the return to the origins* in modern society is related to the etiological function of myth."

<sup>340</sup> Cited in Rennie. The following paragraph takes into account elements of the same discussion of the myth in Eliade's writing by Rennie.

<sup>341</sup> According to the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (Resse, 1980: 425), perspectivism is a term used to facilitate the presumption that "every point of view is in some sense true and offers a valuable and unique perspective of the universe." In other words, "judgments of truth and value depend on one's perspective" (Saint-Andre 2002). Eliade, whose philosophy of religions is influenced by the Vedic doctrine of *syadvada* - translated as "maybe so," or "up to a point" shows his own system as derived from classical Hindu philosophy. (cf. Archie C. Dick, in *Epistemology and Philosophy of Science for Information Scientists*.) Fritjof Schuon's concept in the *Transcendental Unity of Religions* is another study built around the assumptions of perspectivism.

<sup>342</sup> The world of comparative anthropology reveals itself as a sieve governed by the holonic principle, where each part has the knowledge and ability to realize the whole from its own perspective.

<sup>343</sup> The discussion of mythical sovereignty can be found on 92-95.

<sup>344</sup> To enumerate Varana's whole list of attributes, Eliade begins with their list in *Rig Vedas*. Couliano's theory of bonding was, likely inspired by the following paragraph in Eliade's *Images and Symbols* 94:

He is *visva-darsata*, "everywhere visible", he "separated the two worlds", the wind is his breath; Mitra and he are worshipped as "the two potent and sublime masters of Heaven", who in the various-coloured clouds show themselves at the first rumble of thunder and make Heaven rain by a divine miracle." This cosmic structure soon enabled him to acquire such lunar and watery characteristics that he became, in time, a God of The Ocean. The same cosmic and ouranian structure explains other functions and magical powers of Varuna; his omniscience, for instance, and his infallibility. He is *shasrākṣa*, the "thousand eyed", a mythic formula which refers to the stars – and originally, at least, could have been used of none but an Ouranian divinity. The magic powers of sovereignty accrued later and multiplied the celestial attributes: Varuna *sees*

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and *knows* everything, for he rules the world from his starry dwelling; and, at the same time he can *do* anything, for he rules the world from his starry dwelling; and, at the same time, he can do anything, since he is the cosmocrat, and he punishes by “*bondage* [e.m.]” (that is, by illness and impotence) anyone who infringes the laws, and is guardian of the universal order. There is, thus, a remarkable symmetry between what might be called “the celestial stratum” and the “royal stratum” of Varuna, which correspond with and complement one another: Heaven is transcendent and unique, exactly as the Universal sovereign is; the tendency to be passive, manifested by all supreme gods of Heaven goes very well with the magical prestige of the sovereign gods who “act without action”, who work directly by the “power of the spirit”.

<sup>345</sup> See Eliade’s discussion of sacred spaces: the comparative symbolism of lower and higher regions in Babylon, Judaic and Roman traditions is described in *Images and Symbols* 41.

<sup>346</sup> From human perspective, the labors of initiation correspond to “...the act of climbing and ascending’ This hypostasis, Eliade writes, “symbolizes the way *towards the absolute reality*; and to the profane consciousness, the approach towards that reality arouses an ambivalent feeling, of fear and joy, of attraction and repulsion. The ideas of sanctification, of death, love, and deliverance are all involved in the symbolism of stairs. Indeed, each of these modes of being represents a cessation of the profane human condition; that is, a breaking of the ontological plane. Through love and death, sanctity and metaphysical knowledge, as it is said in Bhrihadāranyaka Upanishad, from the “unreal to the reality” (*Images and Symbols* 51).

<sup>347</sup> For the genealogy of this motif, consult Lasky, *Utopia and Revolution*.

<sup>348</sup> Among contemporary Shakespeare scholars, Demaray was chiefly preoccupied with the play’s historical and genealogical circumstances, in the attempt to demount with credible historical arguments the cultural materialist readings of Hawkes and Greenblatt, qualified as qualified as “fallacious” and “lacking full regard for contexts.’ (26).

<sup>349</sup> The syntagm belongs to Richard C. McCoy, used frequently in *Alterations of State*.

<sup>350</sup> In his Introduction to *Henry IV*, Irving Ribner comments that “the Elizabethans made much of the distinction between private and public virtues and the public virtues which enable Henry to remedy the insufficiencies of Richard’s reign are evident from his first appearance”; accordingly, the test of a good king is his ability to maintain civil order. At this point, Shakespeare’s realism still stayed far away from any cynical determination. The moral insights of Henry IV indicated the ethical stand proper to the true monarch: this royal virtue can be described as a private knowledge of history making, a secret code of morality known only by princely blood and bound to its paradoxical cast on history’s stage (namely the embodiment of immortality provided through the Christian mandate). Predictably enough, Hal’s reformation to the suit of kinship equaled his capacity for self-mastery. Unpredictably, however, the prince’s political wisdom occurred as a reversal of the frail self into the supra-personal body of his lineage (unlike Ferdinand’s evolution, carefully mastered by Prospero).

Hal’s gesture of seizing the crown from the dying father’s pillow showed that his royal role had been voluntarily assumed and secretly rehearsed in the fiction of regicide. In Hal’s case, the true royalty equaled *the repression of this fiction*, the cured heritage of his father’s body politic. Nonetheless, the public miracle of Hal’s lawfulness required a personal sacrifice: the prince’s genuine affections. Instead, the art of survival on England’s throne challenged the public expectation, voiding the specter of any future conspiracy against the kingdom’s body. Consequently, Hal’s repudiation of Falstaff and his rehabilitation of Lord Justice granted the new king a different symbolic ancestry. From then on, he would be fathered by Justice, replacing his ‘real’ genealogy with an allegorical tree of symbolic ancestry.

For quotations, see Ribner.

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<sup>351</sup> The new morality of statesmanship, as revealed by the English Cycle, brought forth a “realpolitik” *avant la lettre*, that is to say, the monarch’s ability to calculate his strengths and weaknesses on cynical grounds. A typical example used in Shakespeare contemporary studies is that of Henry V’s ascension to the crown. Oscillating between the tragic posture and the vile grimace, Hal’s reformation as a future king involved straightening his individual shape in order to adapt a symbolic body of shattered lawfulness. Henry IV appeared as a king embarrassed by the historicity he had to fight against, once having admitted his own part in the initial act of retaliation. “The revolution of times” rendered uncertain the meaning of justice, and eventually foreordained crime in the name of political cohesion: with Richard alive, surrounded by factionalists, Bolingbroke might not have fulfilled his own symbolic mandate; or, better said, might not have met his symbolic body, the nation undivided. As Hart notes in *Theater and World*, “the kings of the Second Tetralogy all wrestle with their consciences” (242).

<sup>352</sup> See Jennifer Waldron’s review article on Richard C. McCoy’s *Alterations of State: Sacred Kingship in the English Reformation*.

<sup>353</sup> This “generative” tendency is discussed largely by Jonathan Hart in *Theater and World*. Hart shows that between 1580 and 1590, Elizabethan drama adjusted its plots for a new “urban” audience, one that, in choosing theater as its favorite form of entertainment, discovered a new quality of self-awareness in the act of social participation. This determined, in exchange, an adequate response from theatrical companies, found in the situation of designing plays, plots, and situations adequate for the needs of an increasingly refined public. In this context, Hart writes that

In 1580 and 1590, playgoers began to pay money to hear poetry and, as Gurr and as I [Hart, e.m.] have argued in my study, the plays composed between about 1590 and 1610 largely explore this new and direct relation between playwright and playgoer. The metatheatrical aspects, those that highlight the *theatrum mundi*, would be more apparent in the daylight, where the Elizabethan actors could see the audience, which observed itself. (*Theater and World* 233)

<sup>354</sup> Typologically, Ariel comes from the oriental family of *djinns*, spirits with the temporary jobs of potentates - who liberated them from the mastery of an evil wizard.

<sup>355</sup> Bruno, in *De Magia* (III, 649). For full quotation, see note on “Magic Sovereignty” in Eliade, *Images and Symbols* 94.

<sup>357</sup> I am also following Hubbert’s suggestion, who writes:

In requesting the audience not to impute to the gap a crime, Time appears to hint that the stage need not always abide by mimesis and referentiality, a suggestion that he confirms in boldly asserting the idea of autonomy, either his own or that of theater, including *The Winter’s Tale* itself, which owes much of its impact to the overthrow of law and the overwhelming of custom. Finally, ‘the one self-born hour’ can refer to theatrical time- self generated and self-generating -as opposed to the sixteen-years interval, henceforth relegated with fiction (108).

<sup>358</sup> Cf. Aristotle’s *Poetics*, IV. 25.

<sup>359</sup> I have employed the idea of poetic justice, as discussed in Jonathan Hart’s *Theater and World*: for the full treatment of this theme, see *Theater and World* 15, 18, 19.

<sup>360</sup> “The name Sycorax, Demaray holds, has been etymologized as from the Greek Korax, (raven), an apparent epithet in the metamorphosis of Medea, the Scythian raven” (Demaray 32).

<sup>361</sup> For the full quotation, see Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols*.

<sup>362</sup> ...during the “kamasutric” games of sensuous procrastination on her threshold.

<sup>363</sup> Pascal, *Pensées and Other Writings*.

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<sup>364</sup> I am following here an idea found in Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*.

<sup>365</sup> I am using a term from Marin's *Portrait of the King*, *passim*.

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