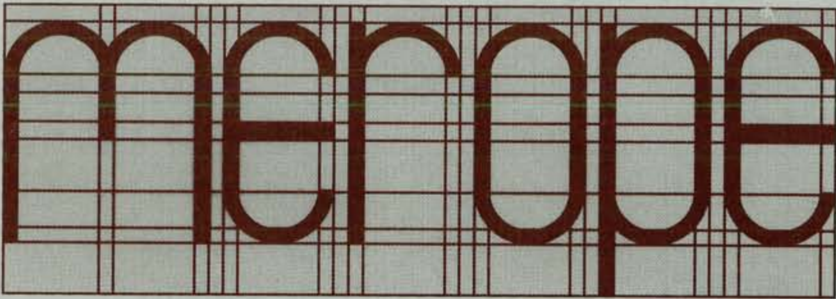
ISBN 978-88-7433-427-8



ANNO XVII - N. 46-47 Set. 2005 - Gen. 2006 — Euro 26,00

SHAKESPEARE STUDIES IN ITALY TODAY

Guest Editors:
Michael Hattaway and Clara Mucci

Roberta Mullini - Mariangela Tempera
Renato Rizzoli - Claudia Corti
Michael Hattaway - Clara Mucci
Michele Stanco - Massimo Verzella
Laura Tommaso - Raffaella Teofili

MEROPE

Rivista quadrimestrale del Dipartimento di Scienze Linguistiche e Letterarie dell'Università "G. D'Annunzio" di Chieti-Pescara
Volume stampato con contributo del Dipartimento di Scienze Linguistiche e Letterarie dell'Università degli Studi "G. D'Annunzio" di Chieti.

Direttore
Francesco Marroni

Condirettori
Andrea Mariani, Mariaconcetta Costantini

Comitato Scientifico
Francesco Marroni, Elisabetta Fazzini, Rosalba Gasparro, Annalisa Goldoni, Leo Marchetti

Segreteria di Redazione
Wendy Columbo, Valentina Polcini, Eleonora Sasso, Tania Zulli

Dipartimento di Scienze Linguistiche e Letterarie
Università "G. D'Annunzio"
Viale Pindaro n. 42 - 65127 Pescara
Tel. (085) 4537823

Direttore responsabile
Domenico Cara

Abbonamenti e Amministrazione
Edizioni Tracce
Via E. Ravasco, 54
65123 Pescara
Tel. (085) 76658
www.tracce.org

Abbonamento annuo
Italia, Euro 31,00; estero, Euro 47,00; sostenitore, Euro 77,50.
Versamento da effettuare su c.c. postale n. 12621652 intestato a:
Coop. Tracce s.r.l. - E. Ravasco, 54 - 65123 Pescara

Supplemento a "Tracce" n. 52-53
Giugno 1998
Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Pescara n. 5/84 del 10/03/1984.
Stampato presso la Litografia Brandolini snc - Sambuceto (Ch)

ISBN 978-88-7433-427-8

MEROPE Anno XVII — N. 46-47 Set. 2005 - Gen. 2006

SHAKESPEARE STUDIES IN ITALY TODAY

Guest Editors: Michael Hattaway and Clara Mucci

Table of Contents

Editorial Note — Pag. 5

Roberta Mullini, *Representing Power and Communication in Time of War: Ambassadors, Messengers and Heralds in* Henry V — " 7

Mariangela Tempera, *Slaughterhouse Kitchen: Horror and Fun in Julie Taymor's* Titus — " 21

Renato Rizzoli, *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen: Grigori Kozintsev's and Peter Brook's* King Lear — " 39

Claudia Corti, *Folly and Fools* — " 69

Michael Hattaway, *Baffling: Sports of Honour and Dignity in* Henry IV — " 91

Clara Mucci, *London's Theatres, the Market, and the Subject of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* — " 111

Michele Stanco, *Prospero's 'airy charm'. Neoplatonic Magic and Colonial Technology in* The Tempest — " 137

Massimo Verzella, *Petrarchism and anti-Petrarchism in* The Winter's Tale — " 161

Laura Tommaso, *Polluting Beauty and Unadulterated Virtue: Images of Femininity in* Pericles — " 181

Raffaella Teofili, *Conveying 'Shakespeare' Across Art Borders: a Formalist Approach to Visual Representations of* Hamlet — " 197

Editorial Note

We are pleased to offer a collection of pieces by both emerging and established scholars. Essays demonstrate how firmly 'theory' is grounded in the field of Italian Shakespeare studies as it is across the globe, but we also hope that the volume reveals its 'local habitation' as its contributors celebrate 'Shakespeare nostro contemporaneo'.

Roberta Mullini anatomises the differences between Renaissance ambassadors, messengers, and heralds in the fields of play defined within the text of *Henry V*. Jumping over times to the contemporary, Mariangela Tempera relates Julie Taymor's *Titus* (1999) to American genre movies and to the tradition of fantastic realism in the films of Fellini, while Renato Rizzoli maps directions from Shakespeare's *King Lear* to Shakespeare films from the 1970s by Kosintsev and Brook. Claudia Corti re-explores the complex paths that led from the *Encomium Moriae* of Erasmus into *King Lear* and *As You Like It*. Michael Hattaway draws attention to an almost forgotten ritual of 'baffling', situating *Henry IV* within a perceived decline from an honour culture into a society obsessed by dignity, while Clara Mucci situates the Shakespearean subject within the material practices of the marketplace and the playhouse, noting how the marginal is in fact central to a full critical reading of certain texts. Michele Stanco follows the indirect 'crook'd' ways that lead from Neo-Platonism to Post-Colonialism through thickets of magic. Massimo Verzella explores a different sort of magic, the resurrection of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, while basing his analysis in a strongly 'against the grain' feminist analysis of Petrarchan and Shakespearean tropes. Laura Tommaso continues this critical journey into a later play, *Pericles*, demonstrating how women are the key to both political and family structures. Raffaella Teofili explores a different

dimension, the translation of temporal sequences from *Hamlet* into the spatial dimensions of paintings of the last three hundred years.

Essays demonstrate semiological, new historicist, gender-oriented, and performance based approaches alongside historical and interpretive work and essays analysing the translation of Shakespearean playtexts into the sister arts of painting and film.

The spelling and punctuation in all quotations have been silently modernised. Shakespearean citations are taken from the *Norton Shakespeare*. The editors gratefully appreciate the work done by our sub-editors Raffaella Teofili, Laura Tommaso and Massimo Verzella. As guest editors we are particularly pleased to welcome the work of younger scholars, and the visiting editor wishes to express his gratitude for the hospitality of both the journal *Merope* and his colleagues at the Dipartimento di Scienze Linguistiche e Letterarie.

Michael Hattaway and *Clara Mucci*

Michele Stanco

Prospero's 'airy charm'. Neoplatonic Magic and Colonial Technology in The Tempest*

Introductory

> A long history of the assumption that literature is divinely inspired could be written. Such a history might begin with the Hebrew prophets and Greek poets and rhapsodes. That history would then go down through all those medieval Christian mystics who claimed direct access to visionary knowledge. They were often burned as heretics, if they were not canonized as saints. After that, came multitudinous Protestant claims to visionary authority, for example John Bunyan's. Then came secularizations of that in the Romantic doctrine of supernatural inspiration. An example is Percy Bisshe Shelley's claim in the 'Defence of Poetry' ...that 'the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some *invisible influence, like an incostant wind,* awakens to transitory brightness'.[1]

One of the chapters of the book hypothesised by Hillis Miller about the historically changing notions of inspiration might well be concerned with *The Tempest* and its (Neo-)Platonic background. Inspiration, in fact, seems to be a major drive throughout the action: the events of the action come into being in Prospero's imagination

* I wish to heartily thank Dr Philip Sands for his precious linguistic suggestions.

[1] J. Hillis Miller, *On Literature*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, pp. 87-88 (emphasis added).

and it is thanks to Ariel's 'airy charm' that they are fashioned according to Prospero's will.

Of course, a Neoplatonic interpretation cannot — or, at least, should not — lose sight of the play's overall political meaning. In fact, as has been argued by many critics,[2] *The Tempest* reflects England's early colonial experience and, more generally, shows the rise of Western imperialism. The very setting of the play may be said to mirror the ambivalent European constructions of the New World both as a New Eden and as hellish wilderness.

This said, a 'Neoplatonic' reading may conveniently harmonise with a 'post-colonial' one as far as it does not limit itself to trace the presence of older sources and cultural models but also attempts to explore the political significance of their treatment within the text.

No doubt, the treatment of inspiration, magic and art in *The Tempest* is part of a more general imperialistic perspective, and epitomises several elements of imperialist ideology. Quite understandably, the inspired artist and the inspiring magician enjoy a hegemonic status, since they are held to be in touch with a higher world whose knowledge they can transmit to the members of their own community. They thus have the

[2] Cf., for instance, P. Brockbank, '*The Tempest*: Conventions of Art and Empire' in J. Brown and B. Harris (eds.), *Later Shakespeare*, London, St Martin's, 1966, pp. 183-202; S. Greenblatt, '*The Tempest*: Martial Law in the Land of Cockaigne' (1988) in K. Ryan (ed. and Intro.), *Shakespeare: The Last Plays*, London and New York, Longman, 1999, pp. 206-44, and 'Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century' in *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*, New York and London, Routledge, 1990, pp. 16-39; A. Loomba, 'Seizing the Book' in *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1989, pp. 142-58; P. Brown, '"This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine": *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism' in J. Dollimore and A. Sinfield (eds.), *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, 2nd edn, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1994, pp. 48-71; C. Mucci, *Tempeste: Narrazioni di esilio in Shakespeare e Karen Blixen*, Pescara, Campus, 1998. On the structure of the play, see S. de Filippis, 'Figure nello specchio di Prospero', *AION*, XXV, 2-3 (1982), pp. 147-201. Greenblatt's 'Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*' in Dollimore and Sinfield (eds.), *Political Shakespeare*, pp. 18-47, although it is mostly concerned with Shakespeare's histories, has provided me several clues on the analysis of colonial narratives (especially of Harriot's *Report of Virginia*).

acknowledged power to influence and fashion other fellow beings.[3] In *The Tempest*, the double role of inspired artist and inspiring magician (or theurgist) is significantly attributed to the white, male European colonist. It is thanks to this inspirational power, which he draws from his books, that Prospero subdues the native Caliban. Inspiration thus becomes the principal means of colonisation. It does not seem hazardous to hypothesise that, within a colonial context, inspiration and charm symbolically stand for the colonist's *technology*, which — if we are to believe narratives of New World travel — was both presented and received as a kind of *magic*.

The success of Prospero's colonial enterprise may thus be regarded as a consequence of the hegemony of his books and the classical European cultural background to which they refer. In fact, Prospero's studies and his ability to conjure up spirits clearly pertain to the world of 'art' (in all the vast Renaissance meanings of the term), and thus imply the 'natural' inferiority of the native, whose original speech only consists of brutish gabblings.[4]

The parallel association of the Old world with 'art' and of the New world with 'nature' was a common one in the Renaissance, and it was clearly meant to show that the white man's burden was to civilise the non-white man's 'naturalness'. One could thus easily assume that Shakespeare's *Tempest* was no exception to the rule, and that it unequivocally supported a similar ideology.

[3] On the theme of Renaissance 'fashioning' cf. S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980.

[4] Cf. Miranda's (or, according to some editors, Prospero's) words to Caliban: 'I pitied thee, / Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour / One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage, / Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like / A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes / With words that made them known.' (*The Tempest*, ed. by S. Greenblatt, *The Norton Shakespeare*, Gen. Ed. S. Greenblatt, New York, London, W.W. Norton & Co., 1997. Subsequent references will be to this edition.)

Yet, the general Renaissance picture was more complicated — and far more interesting — than that. For instance, although he juxtaposed the 'natural Poesie' of 'the wild and savage people' to the artificial poetry of the Greeks and Latins, George Puttenham went as far as to acknowledge — from an almost pre-Vichian and pre-Shelleyan standpoint — that the 'naturalness' of primitive poetry did not lack a beauty of its own:

> The natural Poesie therefore being aided and amended by Art, and not utterly altered or obscured, but some sign left of it, (as the Greeks and Latins have left none) is no less to be allowed and commended then theirs.[5]

In other words, Puttenham's aesthetic ideal, which he proposed to the English courtly poet, was a kind of poetry that was at an almost equal distance from the naturalness of primitive poetry and the artificiality of classical poetry.

Puttenham's however cautious appreciation of primitivism and primitive poetry was not an isolated position. Indeed, it finds an aesthetico-political equivalent in some lines of *The Tempest* that seem to suggest a parallel appreciation of 'natural' poetry. Those lines, as we shall be attempting to show, delineate a sort of 'primitive' canon that contributes to at least partially undermine the play's imperialistic perspective.

Inspiration, Pneumophantasmology, and Neoplatonic Magic

One of the central ideas in *The Tempest* is that Prospero's masque and illusionist performances are made possible by the intervention of 'an airy spirit',[6] and that the play itself is as insubstantial as an airy 'vision' or a dream:

[5] G. Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), G.D. Willcock and Alice Walker (eds.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1936, I.v, p. 10. Cf. P.B. Shelley's words on the 'savage' and the child in *A Defence of Poetry* (1821, published 1840).

[6] Cf. Ariel's description in the List of Roles, which opens the play.

> Our revels are now ended. These our actors
> ...were all spirits and
> Are melted into *air*, into *thin air*;
> And — like the baseless fabric of this vision —
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.
> (4.1.148-58, emphasis added)

The very name of Prospero's assistant spirit, Ariel, is clearly associated with the *aerial* quality of the fantasies that he 'enacts'.[7] Both Ariel's role as the inspiring agent of visions and dreams and his aerial evanescence evoke the inspirational processes characterising classical views of the poet, as well as the larger physiology of spirits and doctrines of the *pneûma* (breath, wind, spirit).

In its Greek and Latin etymology inspiration means 'blowing, air or wind into someone or something'. In fact, *empnéo, epipnéo* (from *pnéo*) and their Latin calques or near equivalents *inspirare, afflare* indicate the altered psychic state of one who has been *breathed into* by a god or a supernatural agent. They, thus, denote 'the respiratory cadence of breath... as well as a quality of animation and infused life that mimics divine engenderment'.[8] Closely connected — and even identified — with inspiration is *enthousiasmós*, which

[7] Ariel and the other airy spirits are explicitly said to 'enact' Prospero's 'fancies' (4.1.120-22).

[8] The definition is by Glyn P. Norton, 'Improvisation and Inspiration in Quintilian: The Extemporalising of Technique in the *Institutio Oratoria*' in J. Roe and M. Stanco (eds.), *Inspiration and Technique: Ancient/Modern Views on Beauty and Art*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2007.

metonymically indicates the frenzied condition caused by divine possession (*éntheos* means having 'a god within oneself' or 'being filled with a god').[9] Inspiration and enthusiasm have therefore to do with madness or divine folly (*theía manía*). In other words, they are concerned with that particular condition when an individual is possessed by a god and is not quite himself.[10]

In *Timaeus* Plato located the processes of inspiration/possession/enthusiasm within the lower part of the soul — that is, the 'part of the soul that has appetites for food and drink' and is far away 'from the part that takes counsel' (70e).[11] In order to counterbalance the beastly aspects characterising that part of the soul, the god gave man a liver that could both mirror fearful thoughts and receive the pictures of 'gentle inspiration' (71c). Therefore, inspiration is a divine gift and has a phantasmatic character: it generates dreams, visions and voices. However, an inspired man is unable to analyse his visions (*phantásmata*) or determine their meaning; it is only when he recovers his sense that he may be able to render judgement on them.

This implies that inspiration is not a rational process (since it does not take place when a man is in his right mind), but one that occurs when man's 'power of understanding is bound in sleep or by sickness'. On the other hand, though, inspiration

[9] Cf. E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, The University of California Press, 1951; Roberto Velardi, *Enthousiasmós: Possessione rituale e teoria della comunicazione poetica in Platone*, Roma, Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1989. On the modern developments of 'enthusiasm', from the Enlightenment onwards, cf. A. Faudemay, 'Philosophie, littérature, psychanalyse: quelques remarques sur la notion d'*enthousiasme*', *Institut de Philosophie de l'Académie des Sciences de Prague*, 1999, pp. 319-47.

[10] In dealing with Plato's theories about the inspired poet I shall use masculine personal pronouns. This choice does not originate from any sexist attitude of mine, but from philological reasons.

[11] Plato, *Timaeus* in *Complete Works*, J. M. Cooper (ed.), Indianapolis and Cambridge, Hackett, 1997, p. 1272ff.

redeems the base part of our soul so that it may 'have some grasp of truth' (71e). The quality of inspiration is thus intrinsically ambivalent: it takes place in the lower part of our soul, but connects it to god; it is an irrational process, but is capable of producing some glimpse of truth.

Inspiration is not only concerned with poetic creation and divination, but is connected with a larger pneumatology that harmonically blends together such apparently far off cultural fields as demonology, psychology, medicine, cosmology and soteriology.[12] The origins of the pneumatic doctrine are very ancient, and probably derive from the simple observation of the resemblance of man's respiration to the blowing of the wind. As Plato observes in *Timaeus:*

> Since there is no void into which anything that is moving could enter, and since the air we breathe out does move out, away from us, it clearly follows that this air doesn't move into a void, but pushes the air next to it out of its place. As this air is pushed out, it drives out the air next to it, and so on, and so inevitably the air, displaced all around, enters the place from which the original air was breathed out and refills that place, following hard on the breath (79b).

[12] On the doctrines of the pneuma and the *spiritus phantasticus*, see R. Klein, 'Spirito Peregrino' (1965) in *Form and Meaning: Essays on the Renaissance and Modern Art*, trans. by M. Jay and Leon Wieseltier, Foreword by H. Zerner, New York (NY), The Viking Press, 1979, pp. 62-85; G. Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture* (1977), trans. by R. L. Martinez, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1993; A. Gargano, *Fonti, miti, topoi: Cinque studi su Garcilaso*, Napoli, Liguori, 1988. I myself have dealt with Shakespeare's pneumophantasmology in '"Talking of dreams": Illusione fantasmatica e malinconia in Shakespeare' in C. Locatelli (ed.), *Co(n)texts: Implicazioni testuali*, Trento, Università di Trento-Dipartimento di Scienze Filologiche e Storiche, 2000, pp. 307-41. In describing the pneuma as 'l'organe de perception des rêves et des inspirations divines' and as constituting 'la substance des démons' Robert Klein explicitly refers to Prospero's comments on the 'stuff' making up dreams. 'L'imagination comme vêtement de l'âme chez Marsile Ficin et Giordano Bruno' in *La forme et l'intelligible*, A. Chastel (ed.), Paris, Gallimard, 1983, pp. 65-88, p. 70.

Moreover, respiration is closely linked with arterial circulation, and the element of air with the element of fire (*Timaeus*, 79d, ff.).

The subsequent medical and philosophical tradition would inherit most of those doctrines, and further build them up. The pneuma would thus be alternatively conceived of as a principle identical to fire, or an 'artisanal (*technikón*) fire' (by the Stoics) or as a hot breath emanating from the air that we breathe (by the medical thinkers of the second century AD).[13]

This breath or fire is the instrument of the imagination: in fact, it is through a pneumatic circulation that visions are impressed on some internal organ — the liver or the heart — and, thence, transmitted to the higher parts of the soul. In Neoplatonic and Stoic pneumatology, pneuma and phantasy are generally associated, and will be completely fused in Synesius' idea, in *De insomniis*, of a 'phantastic spirit' (*phantastikón pneûma*).[14]

According to Giorgio Agamben, the 'European culture' of the eleventh to the thirteenth century 'might justly be defined as a pneumophantasmology'. In its compass,

> the breath that animates the universe, circulates in the arteries, and fertilizes the sperm is the same one that, in the brain and in the heart, receives and forms the phantasms of the things we see, imagine, dream, and love.[15]

Understandably enough, within such a vast and multilayered body of doctrines, the distinction between the different spirits — or the different parts of the soul — and their

[13] Cf. Agamben, '*Spiritus phantasticus*' in *Stanzas*, pp. 91-92.

[14] Cf. Klein, 'Spirito Peregrino', p. 65, and Agamben, '*Spiritus phantasticus*' in *Stanzas*, p. 93.

[15] Agamben, '*Spiritus phantasticus*' in *Stanzas*, p. 94.

association with a given internal organ were not homogeneous.

Another much discussed and rather ambivalent point was the very nature of phantasmatic visions. These might be attributed either to a departure of the imaginative spirit temporarily leaving the body (that is, to an 'ecstatic' process),[16] or to the influence of an aerial daemon who became the agent of man's phantasms and ravings. In fact, demons and ghosts were considered to be 'similar to the spirit of the imagination in its vagabond state'.[17]

A detailed definition of the phantasmatic action of aerial demons may be found in the *De daemonibus* by Psellus (an eleventh-century treatise, which was to be translated by Marsilio Ficino). According to Psellus, the aerial demon, simply referred to as 'aerial', acts

> as air in the presence of light, assuming form and colour, transmits these [images] to those bodies that are by nature disposed to receive them (as in the case of mirrors), so too the bodies of the demons, taking from the interior phantastic essence the shapes, colours, and the forms they wish, transmit them to our spirit, suggesting to us actions and thoughts and exciting in us forms and memories. They thus evoke images of pleasures and of passions in both the sleeping and the waking.[18]

A more precise description of Shakespeare's Ariel and his aerial-visionary performance can hardly be imagined: Psellus' and Shakespeare's spirits even share the same name. Yet,

[16] 'Ecstasis' (which derives from the verb *exístemi*) literally indicates the action of 'going (or putting) out', and has thus come to mean the departure of the imaginative spirit.

[17] Klein, 'Spirito Peregrino', p. 65.

[18] Psellus, *De daemonibus*, Latin translation by Marsilio Ficino, in aedibus Aldi, Venice, 1516, 51 (quoted in Agamben, 'Between Narcissus and Pygmalion' in *Stanzas*, p. 119).

Shakespeare did not have to go back so far as Psellus to find his own 'inspiration'. Many traits characterising Shakespeare's daemon and his action can be found in contemporary medical or demonological treatises, such as King James's *Demonology* (1597).

In fact, according to King James, spirits 'can raise storms and tempests in the air'.[19] This conviction was also shared by R. Hutchins who, in his *Tractatus de spectris*, similarly observed that 'evil demons agitate the very bowels of the earth and arouse resounding tempests in the air', and that 'demons form various phantoms and portents like meteors in the air'.[20] In synthesis, tempests were caused by demons and had an aerial and a phantasmatic character.

In *The Tempest* one cannot be sure whether the very event of the tempest really occurs or is a mere effect of Prospero's spell on the wrecks. The use of the verb 'to perform', of course, increases all possible doubts about the authenticity of the tempest:

> Hast thou, spirit,
> *Performed* to point the tempest that I bade thee?
> (1.2.194-95, emphasis added)

More than that, the fact that '[n]ot a hair perished' and that on the wrecks' 'sustaining garments not a blemish, / But fresher than before' (1.2.219-20) reinforces the idea that the tempest has been merely imagined by the crew, whose reason has been 'infected' by Prospero's airy enchantments.[21]

[19] James I, *Daemonologie*, G. Silvani (ed.), Trento, Università degli Studi di Trento-Dipartimento di Scienze Filologiche e Storiche, 1997, Book II, ch. V, p. 56.

[20] R. Hutchins, *Tractatus de spectris*, quoted in W. Stacy Johnson, 'The Genesis of Ariel', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 2-3 (1951), pp. 205-10, p. 208.

[21] Cf. Prospero's question ('My brave spirit, / Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil / Would not infect his reason?') and Ariel's answer ('Not a soul / But felt a fever of the mad and played / Some tricks of desperation', 1.2.206-10).

Ariel's connection with pneumophantasmology is, first and foremost, made evident by his very corporeal-incorporeal nature. Like the ancient pneuma, he is not only made of breath but also of fire:

> I *flamed* amazement. Sometimes I'd divide,
> And *burn* in many places — on the topmast,
> The yards and bowsprit, would I *flame* distinctly,
> (1.2.198-200, emphasis added)

Moreover, like King James' demons (or Psellus' or Dante's),[22] he can take any form he pleases — or, rather, any form Prospero pleases. For instance, he can make himself 'like a nymph o' th' sea' (1.2.302), and yet be invisible to all the other characters, except Prospero and himself:

> Be subject to no sight but thine and mine, *invisible*
> To every eyeball else.
> (1.2.303-4, emphasis added)[23]

Of course, it is by means of his aerial action that visions and phantasms are impressed on the other characters' imagination. Phantastical visions — as we are also told in several other Shakespearean plays — are evanescent: they thus leave no trace when the ecstatic process comes to an end, and the subject recovers his true self:

[22] Cf. the teaching of Statius' soul in Dante's *Purgatorio* (XXV, 106-07): 'Secondo che ci affliggono i disiri / e li altri affetti, l'ombra si figura' ('According as the desires and the other affections prick us, / the shade takes its form'). The observation (and the English translation of Dante) is in Klein, 'Spirito Peregrino' (1965), p. 67.

[23] Cf. also one of Prospero's last commands: 'Thy shape invisible retain thou still' (4.1.185).

all of us [found] ourselves,
When no man was his own.
(5.1.212-13)

It is in those two senses (aerial quality and phantasmatic evanescence) that poetry itself, which is in its turn the result of a similar inspirational process, can be defined as an 'airy nothing'.[24]

The close relation between 'the complex of myths concerning the "migratory spirit"' and magic becomes clear enough when one considers that 'to demonology and the metaphysics of the soul was added a theory of fascination — understood as the workings of a spiritual force, or spirit, on another spirit'.[25] Miracles of natural magic were thus explained in terms of the action of an alien spirit. Love, in its turn, was considered as the effect of fascination on man's (or woman's) vital spirits — and it is in those terms that the love that springs between Ferdinand and Miranda is to be understood (1.2.375ff).

This 'psychology of ecstasy and fascination, and the entire range, from sorcery to poetic grace' is commonly covered by the word 'charm'[26] — a word which is, incidentally, used by Prospero with reference to the magical effects (the 'airy charm': 5.1.54) of the heavenly music produced by his spirits.

Inspiration and Colonial Technology

Most of the above recalled elements, although deriving from classical and Renaissance pneumophantasmology, demonology and magic, take on further meanings as a consequence of their insertion within a colonial context. For instance, the very event

[24] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.17. References are to the edition ed. by S. Greenblatt in *The Norton Shakespeare*, Gen. Ed. S. Greenblatt, New York and London, W. W. Norton & Co., 1997.

[25] Klein, 'Spirito Peregrino', p. 68.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

of the tempest, beside suggesting some kind of blowing by an aerial demon, also evokes contemporary reports about shipwrecked fleets sailing towards the New World. As most critics have observed, in William Strachey's *True Repertory of the Wrack* (1610) striking parallels can be found for many of the events represented in *The Tempest* — most notably, Strachey's description of a hurricane scattering the English fleet while it was trying to reach Bermuda.[27]

Moreover, several traits characterising Ariel (his aerial/ igneous essence, his invisibility, his power of inducing visions and thus of suggesting actions: in short, his very demonological attributes), beside very closely corresponding to Neoplatonic descriptions of aerial demons, also evoke what we may call a 'colonial demonology'. In *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588), Thomas Harriot tells how the Algonquian Indians thought of the English as gods or as newly embodied spirits of the dead — especially since they belonged to an all male community, and thus could not have been born of women.[28] This belief of the natives' is possibly echoed by Miranda's personal comedy of errors, when she mistakes Ferdinand for a spirit or a 'thing divine' — and consequently refers to him as 'it':

[27] For a useful synthesis of critical perspectives on this topic, cf. V. Mason Vaughan and A. T. Vaughan, 'Introduction' to the *Tempest*, Walton-on-Thames, Nelson, The Arden Shakespeare, 1999, p. 41ff. Cf. also Frank Kermode's 'Introduction' to the previous Arden edition (London, Methuen, 1958), pp. XXVI-XXXIV.

[28] T. Harriot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia: of the commodities there found and to be raised, as well merchantable as others* (1588) in R. Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (London, 1589), a photo-lithographic facsimile with an Introduction by David Beers Quinn and Raleigh Ashlin Skelton, 2 vols., Cambridge, Published for the Hakluyt Society at the University Press, 1965, p. 762. The lack of women within the European community must have been all the more astonishing for the natives, since they believed that '[F]or mankind... a woman was made first' (p. 760). On this, as well as several other points concerning Harriot's *Report of Virginia*, which will be discussed in the following pages, cf. S. Greenblatt's 'Invisible Bullets'.

What is't, a spirit?
Lord, how it looks about. Believe me, sir,
It carries a brave form. But 'tis a spirit.
...
I might call him
a thing divine, for nothing natural
I ever saw so noble.
(1.2.410-12; 418-20)

As is further clarified by her final encounter with the rest of the crew, and as it is at least implicitly suggested by Prospero's subsequent comments, in several respects Miranda's point of view is very near the natives' perspective: the Old world is (almost) as 'new' to her as it was to them.[29] This sense of an almost native 'wonder' which Miranda feels in the presence of the European colonists is also suggested by her very name, deriving from the gerundive form of the Latin verb *miror* ('I wonder').[30]

Seen in this colonial light, Ariel's supernatural traits can be also considered as a personification or a symbol of the natives' awe when faced with the European colonists or, vice versa, of the divine features by which the Europeans represented themselves to the natives. According to Harriot's *Report of Virginia*, the Algonquians conceived 'strange opinions' about the colonists. Some natives thought that there were generations of them 'yet to come' and imagined them 'to be *in the air*, yet *invisible and without bodies*, and that they by our entreaty and for the love of us, did make the people to die... by shooting invisible bullets into them' (p. 762, emphasis added).

[29] Cf. Miranda's impassioned words and Prospero's laconic, disillusioned answer: 'O wonder! / How many goodly creatures are there here! / How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world / That has such people in't' — 'Tis new to thee' (5.1.181-84).

[30] V. Mason Vaughan and A. T. Vaughan, 'Introduction' to the *Tempest*, pp. 26-27.

As can be easily noticed, all or most of Ariel's features very nearly correspond to those of the (perspective) English colonists as imagined by the Algonquians: Ariel belongs to — or, indeed, *is* — the air, he is invisible and incorporeal. He and his fellow spirits even shoot something like 'invisible bullets' at the native(s).

In other words, Ariel's Neoplatonic traits happen to be quite compatible with the Indians' physiology of spirits as narrated by Harriot. One might wonder whether this is because of some universal elements which are shared by all cultures, or because Harriot's report interprets Indian demonology in the light of his own cultural background — thus failing to account for its alterity — or because Shakespeare's blending of 'Neoplatonic' and 'colonial' sources makes the former flow into the latter, or vice versa. (Needless to say, those hypotheses are complementary, rather than mutually exclusive).

This 'compatibility' between Neoplatonic and colonial views of magic further emerges if we compare Giordano Bruno's well-known notion of the magus as a sage who is attributed miraculous powers by ignorant people with Harriot's description of the psychological effects of the colonists' technology on the natives:

> Most things they saw with us... were so strange unto them, and so far exceeded their capacities to comprehend the reason and means how they should be made and done, that they thought they were rather the works of gods then of men (pp. 760-61).

Thus, the representation of Prospero's *technological* means as a kind of *magic* was possibly suggested by the natives' own views of the colonists — or by the way the colonists understood the natives' views about them. The association of Prospero's 'airy charm' with the (mostly invisible) power of the colonists' technology is strengthened by the fact that most of the means

to which he resorts — books, wildfire works, and possibly explosives — correspond to those described by contemporary travel narratives (Harriot, for instance, mentions 'burning glasses, wild fireworks, guns, books, writing and reading', p. 760).

In *The Tempest*, Caliban is perfectly aware of Prospero's use of his books as an instrument of coercion:

> Remember
> First to possess his books, for without them
> He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
> One spirit to command (3.2.91-4)

The fact that Caliban attributes a magical power to the book as a physical object — that is, to its very possession — rather than to its cultural contents[31] is very close to what Harriot says about the natives' notion of the colonists' Book (the Bible):

> although I told them the book materially and of it self was not of any such [miraculous] virtue, as I thought they did conceive, but only the doctrine therein contained: yet would many be glad to touch it, to embrace it, to kiss it, to hold it to their breasts and heads, and stroke over all their body with it, to show their hungry desire of that knowledge which was spoken of.
>
> (p. 761)

We could thus conclude that Prospero's books are not only evocative of the Renaissance book of nature, and of the occult books of the Neoplatonic magician,[32] but also of the colonists'

[31] Kermode rightly points out that 'Caliban insists that the object of the attempt is to burn, not to steal, Prospero's books', 'Introduction', p. XXI.

[32] Cornelius Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy* has generally been considered as one of the main sources for Prospero's magical books (Cf. Kermode's 'Introduction' to *The Tempest*, p. XL).

Bible and the miracles which it was deemed to operate on their behalf.

Books (whatever they are) are shown to acquire an added value within a 'primitive' or an illiterate world. In fact, Prospero's books did not have any political expediency in the Milanese context recalled by him in his protatic flashback;[33] yet, within the new colonial context, they have conversely become the principal means of his success.

As to the 'burning glasses' and 'wild fireworks' referred to by Harriot as another marker of cultural alterity — and implicitly of political subjugation — they are likewise evoked by Ariel's igneous elements, and especially by his setting fire to the ship (cf. the above quoted lines: 1.2.198-200). Thus, Ariel's association with fire is not only in line with Stoic and Neoplatonic representations of the pneuma, but also evokes the colonists' use of fire as a means of aggression.

Within such a coercive context, even the 'strange', hitherto unknown disease which was decimating the native population was interpreted — apparently by both the natives and the colonists — as the effect of the colonists' *magical-technological* power. In Harriot's own words:

> There could at no time happen any strange sickness, losses, hurts, or any other cross onto them, but that they would impute to us the cause or means thereof, for offending or not pleasing us... There was no town where we had any subtle device practised against us, we leaving it unpunished or not revenged (because we sought by all means possible to win them by gentleness) but that within a few days after our departure from every such town, the people began to die very fast, and many in short space... The disease also so strange, that they neither knew what it was, nor how to cure it, the like by report

[33] Indeed, it was mostly because of his excessive love of study and the 'liberal arts' that Prospero lost his dukedom: 1.2.66-116.

of the oldest men in the Country never happened before,
time out of mind. A thing specially observed by us, as
also by the natural inhabitants themselves (p. 761).

It would be impossible to determine whether the colonists were really convinced that the disease exterminating the natives might be theologically explained, or were merely using the natives' panic as a further means of subjugation. In any case, in Harriot's *Report of Virginia* the colonists' and the natives' interpretations of the epidemic as a kind of divine punishment finally appear to 'symptomatically' converge ('A thing specially observed by us, as also by the natural inhabitants themselves', p. 761).

The situation, in all its ideological complexity, finds a parallel in Caliban's fear — and in Prospero's threat — that insubordination might have dramatic consequences on the native's health:

PROSPERO Hag-seed, hence:
Fetch us in fuel, and be quick — thou'rt best —
To answer other business. Shrug'st thou, malice?
If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly
What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,
Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar,
That beasts shall tremble at thy din
(1.2.366-72)

CALIBAN [Let's] do the murder first. If he awake,
From toe to crown he'll fill our skins with pinches,
Make us strange stuff
(4.1.233-35)

Like Harriot's Indians, also Caliban lets himself be convinced that the demigod colonist (Prospero) can magically and invisibly act on his body. Caliban's fears eventually materialise into Prospero's final request to his spirits:

PROSPERO Go, charge my goblins that they grind their joints
With dry convulsions, shorten up their sinews
With aged cramps, and more pinch-spotted make them
Than pard or cat o'mountain
(4.1.258-61)

On prophetically describing the future animal metamorphosis of his opponents (both native and Europeans) into pards and wildcats, Prospero presents himself as the supernatural agent of all forms of disease. The spots to which he refers are no celebration of pied beauty, but evoke the effect of measles, smallpox or other kinds of contagious disease on people having no immunity to them. Once more, the colonist is shooting 'invisible bullets' at his enemies by means of his airy adjuncts.

Unlike fourteenth-century thaumaturge kings, who were credited with the ability of miraculously healing scrofula and cramps,[34] Prospero maintains his authority by means of a sickening rite where, along with bruised spots, 'dry convulsions' and 'aged cramps' represent a main form of punishment. An easy explanation of this paradoxical side of Prospero's authority is that the divine monarch who rewards the deserving sick can also conversely punish the undeserving healthy. Yet Prospero's performance of an overturned, latently

[34] Cf. M. Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges: Étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale, particulièrement en France et en Angleterre*, Strasbourg, Istra, 1924 (English trans. by J. E. Anderson, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973). In 14th-century England the so-called 'cramp rings', blessed by the King on Good Friday (or on Maundy Thursday), were thought to be able to cure convulsions, cramps, and particularly epilepsy. Such a conviction and cultural habit was revived by Henry VII and continued at least till James I (Queen Elizabeth 'refused to bless cramp rings, but touched for scrofula': C. McManus, 'Queen Elizabeth, Dol Common, and the Performance of the Royal Maundy', *English Literary Renaissance*, 32: 2 (2002), pp. 189-213.

blasphemous ritual suggests more problematic views on the use of health and disease as strategies of persuasion and (colonial) legitimation.

Cannibal Poets, Primitivism and the Canon

One of the elements which contribute to insinuate an anti-colonial perspective is Caliban's 'natural' poetic ability, also because Caliban's poetic language seems to be part of a context which, as we shall see, was — however timidly — trying to re-evaluate 'natural' forms of poetry, and include or re-instate them within the canon. The poeticalness of Caliban's language has been duly acknowledged by some critics,[35] and can clearly be observed in several sequences of his speech — as for instance when, in placing himself at Stephano's service, he also indirectly celebrates the beauty of his island:

> I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries;
> I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough
> ...
> I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow,
> And I with my long nails will dig thee pignuts,
> Show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how
> To snare the nimble marmoset. I'll bring thee
> To clust'ring filberts, and sometimes I'll get thee
> Young scamels from the rock. Wilt thou go with me?
> (2.2.157-69)[36]

[35] V. Amoruso, 'Calibano o il soggetto della poesia', *Studi inglesi*, 1 (1974), pp. 11-49; a hint at Caliban's 'poetic language' is also in the Vaughans' 'Introduction' to *The Tempest*, pp. 32-33.

[36] Incidentally, Caliban's description of the products of his island evokes Harriot's 'merchantable' commodities (or similar descriptions in other travel narratives). Harriot describes springs, many kinds of wood, 'beasts' (among which several types of 'foule' and 'fish', including crabs), 'fruites' (among which 'a kinde of fruit or berry in forme of Acornes'), and so on.

Caliban's 'Freedom high-day' song is undoubtedly ambivalent if seen as a vindication song (indeed, the native is simply trying to replace the old with 'a new master'). Nevertheless, its importance as an at least implicit recording and canonisation of a 'primitive' poetical voice can hardly be exaggerated, especially if we set it next to a passage of Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*, where the critic defends the aesthetics of rhyme by observing that rhyme was a common poetic device in those 'nations of the world..., whom the Latins and Greeks in special called for barbarous'.[37]

According to Puttenham, the fact that rhyme is 'the first and most ancient Poesie, and the most universal' ('two points' which 'give to all human affairs no small credit') is

> proved by certificate of merchants & travellers, who by late navigations have surveyed the whole world, and discovered large countries and strange peoples wild and savage, affirming that the American, the Perusine & the very *Cannibal*, do sing and also say, their highest and holiest matters *in certain riming versicles* and not in prose, which proves that our manner of vulgar Poesie is more ancient then the artificial of the Greeks and Latins, ours coming by instinct of nature, which was before Art or observation, and used with the savage and uncivil, who were before science or civility, even as the naked by priority of time is before the clothed, and the ignorant before the learned.[38]

Puttenham's passage definitely appears as a more obvious and a closer source than Montaigne as a model for Caliban,[39]

[37] Puttenham, I.v, p. 10.

[38] *Ibid.*, I.v, p. 10 (emphasis added).

[39] As is well known, Montaigne's 'Of the Caniballes' (1578-80) ('done into English By... John Florio' in his 1603 translation of *The Essayes*) has generally been proposed as a main source for Shakespeare's Caliban (cf. V. Mason Vaughan and A. T. Vaughan, 'Introduction' to *The Tempest*, and 'Appendix 1', pp. 303-14).

especially since Shakespeare's cannibal poet shows the same predilection for songs and 'riming versicles' as Puttenham's:

> Ban' ban' Ca-Caliban,
> Has a new master, get a new man
>
> (2.2.179-80)

However, Puttenham's hint at autochthonous poetry and his — albeit oblique — praise of its 'naturalness' is not only important for source hunters (after all, Shakespeare might have read one of the travel narratives to which Puttenham himself alludes), but also because of its 'romantic qualities'.[40] As observed by G. G. Smith, in spite of its 'marked classical tendency', Elizabethan criticism also showed 'a contrary movement in the direction of romantic taste'.[41] Indeed, 'the two apparently opposite moods of Classicism and Romanticism are always found co-existing in the greatest periods and greatest writers.' Smith also conveniently reminds us about Harvey's plea 'that custom, common usage, or "natural instinct" must rule in the shaping of style', which 'is in one sense the romantic claim for freedom'.[42]

In Puttenham's passage — as has also been observed — one can not only find 'the notion of a universal popular poetry from which Greek and Roman poetry is merely a deviation', but also 'something like the dualism between primitive national poetry and the art of Greece and Rome which ultimately led to the distinction between Romantic and Classic'.[43]

[40] The definition is by G.G. Smith ('Introduction' to *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, 2 vols., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1904, vol. I, p. LX) and concerns Renaissance criticism as a whole.

[41] Smith, p. LX.

[42] *Ibid.*, pp. LX-LXI.

[43] R. Wellek, *The Rise of English Literary History*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1941, p. 9. On this topic, see also H.S. Wilson, 'Some Meanings of "Nature" in Renaissance Literary Theory', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 2: 4 (1941), pp. 430-38.

No doubt, in Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* the classical taste decidedly prevails over the romantic. However, the author's very project of founding an 'arte' of national poetry, whose models should be looked for both in the elegant artificiality of classical poetry and in the rough naturalness of primitive poetry, contributes to set a modern canon where the supposedly 'barbarous' roots of the English past are in a sense revived by their contiguity to modern forms of 'barbarism'. It is as if the English should acknowledge as their own the things of darkness (including the poetic forms and the 'riming versicles') disclosed by contemporary narratives of New World travel.

This said, one could perhaps legitimately conclude that in *The Tempest* Caliban's poetic speeches likewise make up something like a primitive, 'natural' canon which opposes itself to the classical, 'artificial' one (essentially made up by Prospero's speeches). Understandably enough, the acknowledgment of a however imperfect aesthetic dignity to *other* kinds of poetry — and thus of cultures — is a first, essential step towards decolonisation.

Epilogue: The Colonist's Withdrawal

Along with Caliban's song and poetic speech, it is the very conclusion of the play that symbolically points to a prospective revaluation and redemption of autochthonous culture. Prospero's abjuration of magic (that is, of his technological rule) can be seen as the beginning of a new era of freedom for his subjects (in the first place of Ariel, but then of Caliban, too):

> Shortly shall my labours end, and thou
> Shalt have the air *at freedom*
>
> (4.1.264-65, emphasis added)

The words and the syntactic forms ('I have' / 'Have I') by which Prospero recalls his past actions in the island evoke the ending

('break', 'bury', 'drown') of a warlike authority ('war', 'fire', 'shake', 'pluck up', 'command', and so on), which had been exercised in an innocent, almost edenic space ('the green sea', 'the azured vault') by means of artificial-technological devices ('art', 'rough magic', 'airy charm', 'staff', 'book'):

> Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,
> ...by whose aid...
> ...I have bedimmed
> The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
> And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
> Set roaring war; to the dread-rattling thunder
> Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak
> With his own bolt: the strong-based promontory
> Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
> The pine and cedar; graves at my command
> Have waked their sleepers, ope'd and let 'm forth
> By my so potent art. But this rough magic
> I here abjure; and when I have required
> Some heavenly music (which even now I do)
> To work my end upon their senses that
> This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book
>
> (5.1.33-57)

In this light, it is almost impossible to resist the interpretation of Prospero's account of his, by now, spent power and his decision to leave the island as a symbolic narrative of a colonial past and the foretelling of a decolonised future: 'Let me not, / ... dwell / In this bare island by your spell; / But release me from my bands / ... As from crimes would pardoned be, / Let your indulgence set me free' (Epilogue: 5-20).