

**Freie Universität Berlin  
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Institut für Philosophie**

**Theatre and Magic in the Elizabethan Renaissance**

**Gabriela Dragnea Horvath**

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## **GUTACHTER-LISTE**

Gutachter 1	<b>Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann</b>
Gutachter 2	<b>Prof. Dr. Anne Eusterschulte</b>

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Figure 11: Figure 11: Image produced by **Proquest** as part of **Early English Books Online**, excerpted from *John Dee, A letter, containing a most briefe discourse apologeticall with a plaine demonstration, and feruent protestation, for the lawfull, sincere, very faithfull and Christian course, of the philosophical studies and exercises, of a certaine studious gentleman: an ancient seruant to her most excellent Maiesty royall*, 1599, **Huntington Library, San Marino, California**, call number RB 53902, p. C3r. Published with permission of Huntington Library, San Marino, California, and of ProQuest, 789 E. Eisenhower Parkway, Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346USA; <http://www.proquest.com>



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Motivation of the Conceptual Choice

Half a century ago, in his essay *Was ist das, die Philosophie?* Heidegger pleaded for the centrality of philosophy in Western culture, acknowledging its seminal role in the advent of modern science as the actual guardian of reason, die eigentliche Verwalterin der Ratio<sup>1</sup>. Modern science, with its unprecedented capacity to explore the remote outer space as well as the smallest unit of man's inner space, can prove today how often philosophers have exercised reason on imaginary worlds they created themselves or took for granted as a matter of belief. In the chapter *A Short History of Imagination, of Philosophia perennis*, W. Schmidt Biggemann discloses the substantial share of fantastical knowledge in the process of cognition and the history of philosophy<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, it is an established fact that the rise of modern science passed through the imaginative and experimental phase of natural magic, understood by its Renaissance promoters either as a necessary part of philosophy, or even as Pico della Mirandola called it “la filosofia più alta e più divina.”<sup>3</sup>

To the parentage of science with magic, dealt with in the past decades<sup>4</sup>, the encounter of theatrical devices with experiment, nature exploration and epistemology has been added in recent studies<sup>5</sup>, by focusing on perception, movement and language as main cognition factors:

The skilfully stylised interplay between perception, movement and language is integral to no other traditional phenomenon as it is to the theatre. Some very revealing relations are to be found between the positioning of the observer in the

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<sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger, *Was ist das – die Philosophie*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 2003, p.7: English edition *What is Philosophy*, transl. with an Introduction by J. T. Wilde, W. Kluback, College and University Press, New Haven, 1956.

<sup>2</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis*, Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2004, *A Short History of Imagination*, pp. 9-21.

<sup>3</sup> The *Apologia*, in P. Zambelli, *L'ambigua natura della magia*, Il saggiatore, Milano, 1991, p.182.

<sup>4</sup> Boas, Marie Hall, *The Scientific Renaissance, 1450-1630 (The Rise of Modern Science II)*, Dover Publications, New York, 1994; Paolo Rossi, *Francesco Bacone. Dalla magia alla scienza*, Einaudi, Torino, 1974; *I filosofi e le macchine (1400-1700)*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1976.

<sup>5</sup> Schramm, H., Schwarte L., Lazardzig, *Kunstammer, Laboratorium, Bühne: Schauplätze des Wissens im 17. Jahrhundert*, Walter De Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 2003.

representational space of science and the spatio-temporal organisation of seeing, speaking, and acting in the canon of European theatre forms.”<sup>6</sup>

If modern science and phenomenology of cognition have embedded approaches, forms of representation, procedures and rituals one can trace back both to early modern theatre and to early modern magic, their convergence and common features appear as an interesting research area. The first step is to decide which theatre and which magic to address, as their parallel or intersecting developments over roughly two centuries, from the outset of the Italian Renaissance till the Scientific Revolution, resulted in an unprecedented proliferation of cultural forms and semantic extensions<sup>7</sup>.

## 1.2 Semantic Survey: Magic

At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century for Marsilio Ficino there were two kinds of magic: “the first is practiced by those who unite themselves to daemons by a specific religious rite, and, relying on their help, often contrive portents” and the second “practiced by those who seasonably subject natural materials to natural causes to be formed in a wondrous way.”<sup>8</sup> He rejected the former, but supported the latter, as an attempt “to join medicine with priesthood.”<sup>9</sup>

A century later, Giordano Bruno identified ten meanings in use of *magus* and *magia*, each of them grouping various subclasses. Magician meant wise man with a priestly function<sup>10</sup>, but also diviners who could predict distant or future

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p..XIV.

<sup>7</sup> This is a phenomenon specific to Western Europe. In Eastern European Orthodox countries, theatre as a modern institution in the national language appeared only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in an effort of synchronization with the West; as for magic, these countries preserved till recently a sort of archaic popular magic, of the type described by Carlo Ginzburg in *The Night Battles. Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland 1992. They did not experience the witch hunts, nor did they have a philosophy that encompassed magic and the successive impulse to develop science and technology. It is telling that Greece has delivered to the West great part of the philosophical thought fusing into magic, not to mention the theatre, but neither of the two flourished in this country after antiquity.

<sup>8</sup> Ficino, Marsilio, *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda. Libri Tres*, engl. *Three Books on Life*, The Renaissance Society of America, Tempe, Arizona, 1998, Apology, p. 399.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 397.

<sup>10</sup> G.Bruno, *Essays on magic*, in *Cause, principle and unity. Essays on Magic*, transl. and ed. Robert De Lucca and Richard J. Blackwell, Cambridge, UK, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998 p.105 “First, the term 'magician' means a wise man; for example, the trismegistes

events<sup>11</sup>; someone practising natural magic, by manipulating “active and passive powers, as occurs in chemistry, medicine and such fields”; yet natural magic could also mean the “powers of attraction and repulsion between things” like those of two magnets, “when all these actions are due not to active and passive qualities but rather to the spirit or soul existing in things.”<sup>12</sup> A different class was *mathematical magic* or even more accurately *occult philosophy* intermediating between the natural and the supernatural by “the use of words, chants, calculations of numbers and times, images, figures, symbols, characters of letters”.<sup>13</sup> Other magicians added to these techniques “the exhortation or invocation of the intelligences and external or higher forces by means of prayers, dedications, incensings, sacrifices, resolutions and ceremonies to the gods, demons and heroes”.<sup>14</sup> The invocations of spirits could branch out into other subclasses, from the hopeless type of those who become “vessels of evil demons” to the “transnatural or metaphysical magic, properly called theurgy”.<sup>15</sup>

The invocation of the souls of the dead with the purpose of divination, or *necromancy* can also be of various types: direct or indirect, using a spirit as intermediary; with or without the use of the corpse; the latter type, of ancient memory, was “properly called Pythian, for, if I may say so, this was the usual meaning of 'inspired' at the temple of the Pythian Apollo”.<sup>16</sup> Bruno also mentions a theatrical type of magic, *prestidigitation*, based on appearances that *excite wonderment*; and a very common form of popular magic based on incantations “associated with a person's physical parts... and anything which is believed to

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among the Egyptians, the druids among the Gauls, the gymnosophists among the Indians, the cabalists among the Hebrews, the magi among the Greeks and the wise men among the Latins.”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pp. 106-7. These are generally called 'diviners' because of their purpose. The primary group of such magicians use either the four material principles, fire, air, water and earth, and they are thus called 'pyromancers', 'hydromancers', and 'geomancers', or they use the three objects of knowledge, the natural, mathematical and divine. There are also various other types of prophecy. For augurers, soothsayers and other such people make predictions from an inspection of natural or physical things. Geomancers make predictions in their own way by inspecting mathematical objects like numbers, letters and certain lines and figures, and also from the appearance, light and location of the planets and similar objects. Still others make predictions by using divine things, like sacred names, coincidental locations, brief calculations and preserving circumstances. In our day these latter people are not called magicians, since, for us, the word 'magic' sounds bad and has an unworthy connotation. So this is not called magic but 'prophecy'.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.105.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp.105-6.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.106.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

have made some contact with the person.” This one has other subdivisions: *the good one*, a type of medical practice, *the wicked one*, “if it leads to evil” and *the poisonous* “if it leads to final destruction and death”.<sup>17</sup> In the end he adds the pejorative connotation associated to magic by “comments and beliefs of ignorant and foolish priests” for whom the magician is “any foolish evil-doer who is endowed with the power of helping or harming someone by means of a communication with, or even a pact with, a foul devil” and mentions *De malleo maleficarum* without naming its authors<sup>18</sup>. Bruno concludes that the word magician “when unqualified, means whatever is signified by common usage” and warns that “still other meanings are to be found in common usages of different peoples and believers”<sup>19</sup>. Indeed, if one should take into account the names corresponding in each vernacular to all these practices, the already difficult task of a conceptual analysis would really become an arduous enterprise. To render the material governable, the research will focus on the meanings and values attached to magic by the personalities representative of a period and a cultural context.

### 1.3 Semantic Survey: Theatre

Derived from *theatrum*, the latinized form of the Greek *theatron*, it denoted, in alternation with vernacular words meaning *play* and *playhouse*<sup>20</sup>, the literary genre, the place or building where it used to be staged and the activity of performing in general; yet in the learned circles it also meant a playground of experiment and knowledge as *theatrum anatomicum*, *chimicum*, *scientiarum*<sup>21</sup>, preparing the appearance of the modern laboratory. It denoted mental space in the art of memory, but also external space in books of geography and urbanism<sup>22</sup>. The

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<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.107.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> Schauspiel, Schauspielhaus.

<sup>21</sup> Gerardus Dorneus *Theatrum Chimicum*, 1602.

<sup>22</sup> Adrichem, Christiaan van (1533-1585), *Theatrum Terrae Sanctae et biblicarvm historiarvm, cum tabulis geographicis aere expressis*, 1628; Blaeu, Guiljelmus: *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum sive Atlas Novus*.Amsterdam, c.1645, Saur, Abraham, (1545-1593), *Theatrum urbium. Warhafftige Contrafeytung und summarische Beschreibung, vast aller vornehmen und namhafftigen Stätten, Schlössern und Klöster, wann dieselbige entweder anfenglich erbauwet, oder hernacher bekriegeret, erweitert, und bevestiget worden.* Weiland durch Abraham Saur von

display of natural phenomena was *Theatrum naturae*<sup>23</sup>, whereas the garden as place of curiosity and scenographic effects used to be conceived as the green theatre. An early modern book of literary criticism and creative writing bears the title *Theatrum artis scribendi*<sup>24</sup>, and even the description of technological progress sounded like: *Theatrum instrumentorum et machinarum*<sup>25</sup>.

Theatre in its original meaning, as poetic and performing art has a transhistorical value; the learned connotations of the word *theatrum* are specific to early modernity. Theatre as staged drama is focused on general human issues, treated in a unitary vision by a poet; converted into live spoken words and performed actions by a stage director and actors; the performance is completed by movement, gesture, scenography, music or dance. This synthesis of arts is not accomplished without the audience, whose mental and emotional participation in the show is *sine qua non*. The event aims at fusing the plurality of minds and emotions into oneness, turning what starts as an act of communication between the deliverers of the message on the stage and the receivers, the public, into a unity of conscience, an act of communion.<sup>26</sup>

The other meanings of theatre derive from the original one, but represent a reduction of it. The participants in the event are either a very restricted group, or reduced to the single subject who is spectator of phenomena, or actor and spectator in his own theatre of memory or his cabinet of wonders; the world on the show is reified: it becomes nature, the city, a corpse to be dissected, a combination of substances, machines, the images of memory, language and writing procedures. Theatre will be examined in this essay in its original meaning as performative and poetic art for several reasons: it is the archetype of every derived variety of theatre or theatricality; it engenders a live, non-reified modality of human communion; in early modernity it engaged a complex dialogue with

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Franckenberg, zusammen getragen, mit vielen Stätten gemehret und gebessert. Franckfort am Mayn, N. Basseum, 1595.

<sup>23</sup> Jean Bodin, *Universae Naturae Theatrum Naturae*, I. Rovssin (Lugduni), 1596.

<sup>24</sup> Hondius, Jodocus, 1563-1612: *Theatrum artis scribendi varia summorum nostri seculi, artificiam exemplaria complectens*, novem diversis linguis exarata. Amsterdam, 1594.

<sup>25</sup> Besson, Jacques, *Theatrum instrumentorum et machinarum*, Lyon, 1582.

<sup>26</sup> Analysis of theatre as performing art in Erika, Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual, Exploring Forms of Political Theatre*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, Part I, Reconceptualizing Theatre and Ritual. By the same author *The Transformative Power of Performance, A new aesthetics*, Transl. by Saskya Iris Jain, Routledge, London and New York, 2008.

magic. The next step is focusing on the culture where the encounter of theatre with magic became prominent in the early modern era.

#### 1.4 Circumscribing the Study Area

Niccolò Machiavelli, a contemporary of Ficino and Pico, is probably one of the first early modern writers to treat magic in a theatre play. In his *Mandragola*<sup>27</sup> magic is just a pretext for social satire, but it will become relevant in the Protestant propaganda enacted on the English stages after the publication of the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* by Johann Spies in 1587. Thus Roberte Greene revisited a figure like Roger Bacon in his comedy *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (most likely 1589), reconfirming the old suspicion of his 'necromancy'. Christopher Marlowe wrote *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, succesfully performed twenty-five times by the Admiral's Men between 1594 and 1597. Ben Jonson ridiculed magic in *The Alchemist*, performed by the King's Men at the Globe in 1610.

Fifteen years before, in 1595, it had been reported that Sir Edward Kelly, knighted by Rudolf II in Prague for alchemical merits, had died in unclear circumstances. For several years (1582-7) he had acted as trusted medium in conjuring séances for Dr. John Dee, the most significant scholar of the Elizabethan age. By a coincidence, the culminating point of their encounters with spirits, sealed in a written pact, was reached in 1587, the year of the publication of the *Faustbuch*. Their conversations with spirits were put to paper and document one of the most intriguing and less highlighted aspects of magic. Lonely and destitute, Dee died sometime between 1608-9.<sup>28</sup> Most probably in 1610 or 1611, William Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*, his only play which has a magus as a protagonist.

Critics have associated Prospero's figure with Dee, James I or Shakespeare himself. A literary work resists readings in a one to one correspondence to reality.

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<sup>27</sup> 1518, published in 1524.

<sup>28</sup> Edward Fenton gives 26 February 1609 as Dee's death date in his edition of *The Diaries of John Dee*, DayBooks, Oxfordshire, 1998, p.326.

Elements in the play hint undoubtedly at Dee's figure, but the point of interest goes beyond speculations on this parentage: comparing and contrasting the representation of magic in Shakespeare's theatre with its theory and practice as conveyed by Dee's writings is a very tempting challenge. The counterpart of this is seeing how many theatre-bound elements are part of Dee's legacy and compare them to Shakespeare's views on theatre. This is the object of the present research. Dr. John Dee was born in 1527, Shakespeare in 1564. So far no published document attests that the two of them met. Taking into account the 37 years of difference and the occasionally contiguous, but essentially distinct worlds they belonged to, it is reasonable to surmise that whereas Dee may have ignored Shakespeare, the latter couldn't have done so, considering Dee's fame and cultural influence<sup>29</sup>. Their real encounter is not relevant for this study, as the choice of their works in a debate on theatre and magic has other motivations. Shakespeare is the most prolific and accomplished playwright of the Elizabethan age, but also the one who expressed the most unbiased and culturally dense opinions on magic. Shakespeare's treatment of magic encompasses popular beliefs and Hermetic ideas, allusions to the natural magic Roger Bacon had been interested in and the natural philosophy of the type Francis Bacon proposed, to the medicine of Paracelsus, but also to spirit raising sessions. His Prospero is a prince and a priest, his Franciscans try to bring balance in the world using magical remedies. There is white magic and black magic in *Macbeth*, erotic magic in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and magic as substitution and deceit in the comedies<sup>30</sup>.

Greene's comedy on Friar Bacon remains on the brink of irony, Marlowe's *Faust* uses common places of religious propaganda like the pact with the devil to condemn magic as a way of losing one's soul. In spite of the ideologically aligned conclusion of the play<sup>31</sup>, Marlowe shares the magus' aspiration of knowledge and

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<sup>29</sup> F.A. Yates in *The Art of Memory*, it. L'Arte della memoria p.296, quotes of E.K.Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1930. II., p.250 on the connection between Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and an interesting Elizabethan character and patron of the arts, Fulke Greville, a friend of Sidney's, mentioned by Bruno in his writings, who could have eased the young dramatist's access to the intellectual life in London.

<sup>30</sup> G. Dragnea Horvath, *Shakespeare Ermetismo, mistica, magia*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Roma, 2003, passim.

<sup>31</sup> The existence of two texts *Text A* published in 1604 and *Text B*, published in 1616 and the not unfounded suspicion that Marlowe's text had been manipulated to make it sound officially acceptable, complicates the case. R.Camerlingo, *L'Impazienza di Faust, Poesia e filosofia nel Doctor Faustus di Christopher Marlowe*, in *Teatro e Palcoscenico dall'Inghilterra all'Italia, 1540-1640*, Roma : Bulzoni, 2001, p.46.

power and his imaginative side; Ben Jonson doesn't, and in fact he turns it into ridicule. His direct hints at Dr Dee's *Monas hieroglyphica* in the *Alchemist*<sup>32</sup> and his "hostile references to Robert Fludd, who succeeded Dee as the representative of the Hermetic-Cabalist tradition in England"<sup>33</sup> betray his reluctance towards the fantasy and ambiguities of an entire cultural model.

Dr. John Dee was the polymath of the period, who combined an interest in occultism with his commitment to educate his nation and turn it into an empire builder. He was an astrologer, alchemist and mathematician, interested in Neoplatonic philosophy and the Cabala, but also in applied sciences and navigation, in geographical discoveries and in collecting books and manuscripts. According to F. A. Yates, Dee inspired the building of the first theatre in London; and we also owe her the information about his participation in 1547 in the production of Aristophanes's *Pax* at Trinity College, Cambridge<sup>34</sup> with a theatrical machine, a flying *Scarabaeus*, which must have produced quite a sensation and may have owed him already at the age 20 the fame of a wonder-worker<sup>35</sup>. Yates also underlines that Dee's personal library, opened to avid readers, was well furnished in ancient Latin and Greek dramatists like Plautus, Seneca, Aristophanes, Sophocles and Euripides<sup>36</sup>.

These hints are significant for his many-sided interests, but after his student years, his connection with theatre does not seem to go either in the direction of participating in staging or of attending performances. In his diaries and writings published so far, there is no mention of any of the popular theatre performances of his time, nor does he appear to have ever been invited at court on the occasion of plays or masques, an event he wouldn't have let pass unnoticed in

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<sup>32</sup> Face. He's busy with his spirits, but we'll upon him.(II.VI. 1); Subtle:... No, I will have his name/ Formed in some mystic character, whose radii./ Striking the senses of the passers-by,/ Shall, by a virtual influence, breed affections, /That may result upon the party owns it, (II.VI. 14-18). Subtle. He first shall have a bell, that's Abel;/ And, by it standing one, whose name is Dee,/ In a rug gown; there's D and Rug, that's Drug:/ And, right anenst him, a Dog snarling Er:/ There's Drugger, Abel Drugger. That's his sign./ And here's now mystery, and hieroglyphic! (II. VI. 19-24). in Jonson, Ben, *The Alchemist and Other Plays*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1995.

<sup>33</sup> F.A. Yates, *A Great Magus*, in *Ideas and Ideals in the North European Renaissance*, Collected Essays, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Boston, Henley, 1984, vol.3, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> F. A. Yates, *Theatre of the World*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1969, p.11.

<sup>35</sup> F. A. Yates, *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2: "Hereupon I did sett forth (and it was seene of the University) a Greeke comedy of Aristophanes, named in Greeke ' Ειρήνη, in Latin Pax; with the performance of the *Scarabaeus*, his flying up to Jupiter's pallace, with a man and his basket of victuales on her back; wherat was great wondring, and many vaine reportes spread abroad of the meanes how that was effected."

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.



his diaries. In the Halliwell edition of his *Private diaries*, there is a note on the dramatic fall of the stage at Paris Garden, during a performance of *bearbayting*, with the comments of *the godly* on the tragedy: “1583. Jan.13<sup>th</sup>, on Sunday the stage at Paris Garden fell down all at ones, being full of people, beholding the bearbayting. Many being killed thereby, more hart [hurt], and all amased. The godly expownd it as a due plague of God for the wickedness ther usid, and the Sabath day so profanely spent.”<sup>37</sup> The way he formulates the note is far from revealing him as a fan of such popular events.

On the other hand, in the period of the theatre boom in London, when Shakespeare was there too, more or less from 1585-90 till 1610, Dee was mostly away. In 1583 he left England for the continent and turned back to his residence in Mortlake in 1589. Seven years later, in 1596 he left for Manchester, as warden of the fractious fellows of the Collegiate Chapter, a virtual exile which kept him away from the court, with an interstice between March 1598 and June 1600, till 1605 when he came back to London only to die.

Dee's behaviour and ideas on magic convey his being rooted in the same cultural tendencies which made theatre a flourishing literary genre and public institution in England. Some of his approaches are theatrical, while his and Kelly's dialogues with angels, transcribed as dramatic dialogues, suggest proximity to Shakespeare's plays where fairies, spirits or mythological characters appear on the stage. A sustainable comparative analysis of theatre and magic in the legacy of these two personalities will focus on Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* and *John Dee's Five Books of Mystery*<sup>38</sup> and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. The *Monas* is a theoretical work of magic, whereas the *Books of Mystery* complete Dee's exploration of the occult delivering the experience of conjuring spirits. In the three mentioned plays by Shakespeare, theatre and magic interlace and spiritual entities interfere with the human world. References will be made occasionally to other plays or sonnets by Shakespeare and to Dee's *Mathematicall Preface* to Henry Billingsley's translation of Euclid's *Elements of*

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<sup>37</sup> *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee and The Catalogue of his Library of Manuscripts*, edited by James Orchard Halliwell, Esq. F.R.S, printed for the Camden Society by John Bowyer Nichols and Son, London, 1842, rpt. New York, 1968, p.18.

<sup>38</sup> *John Dee's Five Books of Mystery*, edited by Joseph H. Peterson, Weiser Books, Boston, MA/York Beach, ME, 2003.

*Geometry* (1570), the collection of aphorisms *Propaedeumata Aphoristica* (1558), his letters and diaries.

## 1.5 The Elizabethan Renaissance

An inquiry into the Elizabethan Renaissance claims clarifications of chronological and conceptual order. As a cultural period, the Elizabethan age conventionally includes the reign of James I. In spite of significant differences between the cultural policies of the two sovereigns the issues of interest were largely the same and there is a natural continuity granted by the personalities who asserted themselves during the reign of Elizabeth and went on being creative under James I.

Calling this period the Elizabethan Renaissance implies specifying the meaning of the term in a moment when the very concept of *Renaissance* is being rediscussed or delegitimated, as J. Le Goff for example, tried to do<sup>39</sup>. The term *Renaissance* was applied for the first time to historical periodization by the French historian Jules Michelet in 1855 in the subtitle of the seventh volume of his *Histoire de France*<sup>40</sup>. What the anticlerical Michelet found as typical of the period he applied this name to, was the 'rediscovery' of man and the revival of the secular spirit. "Five years later Jakob Burckhardt adopted the term in *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (Basel, 1860), which by 1919 had gone through twelve editions"<sup>41</sup> and had imposed the concept, as revival of classical culture in visual arts.

This concept has been revisited even in the Italian context: what appeared to be a revival of classical culture in visual arts, turned out to be a Christian re-elaboration of classical, Hellenistic and medieval sources in philosophy, extending from Plato and Aristotle to Neoplatonism, the Hermetica, Greek versions of Zoroastrism, Aquinas, Albert the Great, Roger Bacon, Arab thinkers and Jewish Cabalists. More recently, historians have started highlighting the

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<sup>39</sup> J. Le Goff, *L'immaginario medievale*, Bari, Laterza, 1988, p. xxi.

<sup>40</sup> C. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1985, p.2.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem.

phenomena that contrasted the emancipation of the intellects from traditional thought, of which persecution and the witch hunts are an important part. This is now conventionally called the 'dark' Renaissance.

In England the issue becomes more complicated: if Italians could claim the revival of Roman and therefore Greek culture, the English had no 'classical age' in their ancient history, though parts of Britain were under Roman rule for four centuries. What could be symbolically called a 'rebirth' was actually the first culturally sustained assertion of national identity, with a past glory grounded in the myth that offered the ideological justification of building an empire. The defeat of the Spanish Armada meant restoring to pride an island that had been conquered in the past by Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, Normans and had experienced in times of more recent memory the vicissitudes of the Hundred Years' War, the War of the Roses, and the post-Reformation instability and violence.

Applying the term Renaissance to England does not correspond to a traditionally understood structured cultural paradigm, but to various cultural models in competition which make up its rich profile: the medieval one, still surviving after the separation from Rome, the Renaissance inspired by continental, mainly Italian ideas, but also by German sources, and the Reformation<sup>42</sup>. Taking all this into account one could probably use the term Renaissance in this case with the meaning of 'cultural bloom', pointing out that its outstanding thrive was not deprived of dark sides and that just when it was at its peak, it was being undermined by the Puritans on one hand, and on the other, deprived of its 'fantastical' coordinates by the beginning of scientific discoveries and Francis Bacon's empiricism. The factors that led to the unique and simultaneous rise of theatre and of magic in Elizabethan England will be treated in detail in the chapter *Historical Premises*.

## **1.6 Dr. John Dee and Sir Edward Kelly**

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<sup>42</sup> G.Dragnea Horvath, *Shakespeare, ermetismo, mistica, magia*, Chs. I, II, IV.

A discussion of Dee's and Kelly's conversations with angels needs an introduction to the character Edward Kelly (1555-1595?). It was not until 1652 when Elias Ashmole published his *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* that the names of Dr. John Dee and Sir Edward Kelly entered public debate accompanied by written evidence. Previously they had been part of an oral legend, in which Dee was either a damnable magician, or a powerful Merlin who caused the defeat of the Spanish Armada by simply pointing his *Sigillum Dei Aemeth* at its ships; while Kelly was invariably a despicable necromancer. Ashmole granted them the prestige of alchemical authorities as part of the Restoration efforts to recuperate the values of the British past, and in their case, their manuscripts too.

In 1659 Meric Casaubon reacted to Ashmole's veneration by publishing "A True & Faithful Relation ... between Dr. John Dee...and Some Spirits" with a preface in which Dee is presented "as both deluded and pious, sincere but mistaken"<sup>43</sup>, a perfect example for Casaubon in his attacks against the Anabaptists<sup>44</sup>, the Atheists (or Sadducees)<sup>45</sup> and the learned readership with a curiosity for the occult<sup>46</sup>. Casaubon's harsh attitude to Kelly, the Diabolical Man, extends over his evaluation of Dr. Dee: "Which indeed doth make Doctor Dee's case altogether inexcusable, that believing and knowing the man [i.e. Kelly] to be such a one, he would have to do with him, and expected good by his Ministeries; but that the Doctor his Faith, and his intellectuals...were so much in the power and government of his Spirits, that they might perswade him to do any thing, under colour of doing service unto God ..."<sup>47</sup>

In the same vein, successive commentators have reduced Edward Kelly, or Kelley as his name is alternately spellt, to his bad fame, even if the 'diabolical' traits of his character were replaced by ordinary fraudulence. When he presented himself at Dee's house in Mortlake on 8 March 1582, under the name of Edward Talbot, Kelly was 27 and Dee 55. Neither Dee's diaries, nor present research can

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<sup>43</sup> S. Clucas, *Enthusiasm and 'damnable curiosity': Meric Casaubon and John Dee*, in *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Ashgate, Aldershot, England, 2006. p. 143.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133. Anabaptists were representatives of an "Enthusiastic and inspired" sect convinced of being directly inspired by God in 'private revelations'.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.134: those who like 'the *Saduces of old* (that is, Jewish Epicures) believe no Spirit, or Angel, or Resurrection.'

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>47</sup> Clulee, Nicholas, H. *John Dee's natural philosophy: between science and religion*, Routledge, London, New York, 1988, p.131.

give incontrovertible details about his former biography. There is even the hypothesis that Talbot and Kelly are not the same person, while inquiries into his presumed presence in Oxford as undergraduate have searched both for Talbot and for Kelly without any final result. In A. E. Waite's *Biographical Preface to the Alchemical Writings of Edward Kelly*, he appears, according to various narratives, as a dismissed Oxford undergraduate, “a fraudulent notary”, pilloried in Lancaster for forgery, the son of an apothecary who must have picked up the art of making elixirs from his father, a “proscribed and law hunted fugitive” who had sought refuge in Wales, where “he would seem to have embraced a nomadic life, staying at obscure inns”, and where he came to possess an alchemical manuscript and two powders (a red and a white one) discovered in the profanated tomb of a bishop. Another narrative presents him as a practising notary in London, a neighbour and friend of John Dee.<sup>48</sup> A figure with such a volatile curriculum has inspired works of fiction and will continue to do so.<sup>49</sup>

According to Dee's notes, nothing of the kind was known to him, when Edward Kelly, alias Talbot, visited him for the first time, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, 1582, a Saturday, “hora 11 ¼. “:

Δ<sup>50</sup>: One Mr. Edward Talbot cam to my howse, and he being willing and desyrus to see or shew some thing in spirituall practise, wold haue had me to haue done some thing therein. And I truly excused myself therein as not in the vulgarly accountd Magik, neyther studied or exercised: But confessed my self, long tyme to haue byn desirous to haue help in my philosophicall studies through the Cumpany and information of the blessed Angels of God.<sup>51</sup>

To this he added a note later: “he had two dayes before made the like demaunde and request unto me: but he went away unsatisfiyed for his comming was to entrap me, yf I had had any dealing with wicked spirits as he confessed often tymes after: and that he was set on, & c.”<sup>52</sup> Dee shows him his stone in the frame and stresses again, “that to it (after a sort) were answerable *Aliqui Angeli boni*.” He asked Kelly to call (yf he wold) Anachor and Anilos and after prayers to God

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<sup>48</sup> A. E. Waite, *Biographical Preface to The Alchemical Writings of Edward Kelly*, Tr. from the Hamburg edition of 1676, London, J. Elliot and co., 1893, passim.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Wilding, “Edward Kelly: A Life. Cauda Pavonis 18, (1-2, spring and fall), 1999. *Raising Spirits, Making Gold and Swapping Wives: The Adventures of Dr John Dee and Sir Edward Kelly*, Sidney: Abbott Bentley, Nottingham: Shoestring Press, 1999

<sup>50</sup> Dee introduces his own reflections or questions with the Greek symbol of his names' letter.

<sup>51</sup> MLP, p. 66.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem.

the so-called Action starts by the appearance of Uriel, who announces his being in company of Michael and Raphael. Dee's readiness to specify he was conjuring only *angeli boni* is explainable: during Queen Mary's reign he had been arrested and kept in prison for conjuring spirits. What is probably less understandable is the easy way he accepts this absolute stranger as a medium. Before Kelly knocked on his door, Dee had prayed God to disclose him his "radicall truthes": he indicated the method through which he was going to establish the contact, "the Shew-stone, which the high priests did use" and as he was dissatisfied with his medium, he also prayed the heavenly father to "send me some apter man or means thereto."<sup>53</sup> The appearance of Kelly and his capacities to see in the crystal more than any other scryer tested before, must have convinced Dee he was the providential man he had prayed for. Whatever reasons Kelly may have had for coming to Dee's house, whether in search of knowledge or money, or both, or even as a sort of spy that could inform about the angels' visitations the crown circles believed in, he stayed on with some interruptions for several years and proved the best medium Dee had ever had. In spite of occasional tensions, Dee esteemed him till the end an important partner as his private diary attests.

Posterity has generally ascribed the angels' deficiencies to Kelly, their 'occasional sublimities' to Dee<sup>54</sup>. Neither Dee nor Kelly have complete critical editions of their legacy so far, and other manuscripts wait to be published and studied. Yet, with the reserve of our limited knowledge, our thesis is that *John Dee's Five Books of Mystery*, though attributed only to Dee, are the fruit of their collaboration. Neither of the two produced anything of this intensity and style either before or after their scrying sessions. Kelly cannot be compared to Dr. John Dee in erudition, moral principles or cultural relevance, but he represents in his own way the imaginative side of the Elizabethan age. He entered a game he was not prepared for, but to which he adapted creatively. In spite of pragmatic aspirations, he knew how to take advantage of Dee's vast learning and unique library.

Considering Dee a victim of Kelly's fraudulent behaviour is also to be debated. Dee was not the only one to be caught by Kelly's versatile intelligence

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<sup>53</sup> *Five Books of Mystery*, pp.58-59.

<sup>54</sup> Laycock, Donald C., *The Complete Enochian Dictionary*, Weiser Books, Boston, MA/York Beach, ME, 2001, pp.63-64.

and charismatic touch: Bohemian and Polish noblemen and Rudolf II trusted him, and various attempts were made by the English court to bring him back, when the news about his wonderful alchemical results started spreading. He created a legend around him and even his death is object of confabulation, or rather his 'disappearing' into nothing, like the spirits he gave voice to. Dr. Dee's diary's entry on Nov, 25<sup>th</sup> 1595 says: "the news that Sir Edward Kelly was slayne"<sup>55</sup>. Yet, "the last reported sighting of Edward Kelly was in 1598 by the Czech physician and alchemist Matthias Borbonius"<sup>56</sup>. The legend wants him falling from a tower in an attempt to escape from prison, a final image of a man dabbling in the occult tellingly close to that of Simon the Magician.

Dee's and Kelly's conversations with angels give an insight into the cultural background and aspirations of an Elizabethan magus and are meant to document the practice of ceremonial magic. The dialogues are not deprived of poetic virtues and dramatic tension, which facilitates a comparison with Shakespeare's theatre.

### 1.7 The State of Art

In the tradition of early modern studies Shakespeare and Dee have been associated by F. A. Yates in *The Art of Memory Theatre of the World, Shakespeare's Last Plays, The Rosicrucian Enlightenment Astrea. The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* and the review of Peter French's monograph on John Dee, published in her collection of essays<sup>57</sup>. According to this scholar, Dee contributed to the coming into being of the Elizabethan theatre as an institution and devised a Hermetic-Cabalistical reform, made manifest by playwrights in their works and popularized by theatrical troupes. The ideal nature of their encounter has

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<sup>55</sup> *The Private Diary of John Dee*, Halliwell edition, p. 54.

<sup>56</sup> B. Woolley, *The Queen's Conjurer, The Science and Magic of Dr. John Dee, Adviser to Queen Elizabeth I*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2001, p. 272.

<sup>57</sup> F. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966. *Theatre of the World*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1969. *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, Boston, 1972. *Shakespeare's Last Plays: a new approach*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1975. *Astraea: the Imperial theme in the sixteenth century*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Boston, 1975. *Ideas and Ideals in the North European Renaissance*, Collected Essays, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Boston, Henley, 1984. *The Art Of Memory, The Art of Memory*. London, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.

stimulated literary invention and intrigued scholars like William H. Sherman who ironically remarks that “in Umberto Eco's novel *Foucault's Pendulum*, Dee makes several cameo appearances alongside none other than William Shakespeare.”<sup>58</sup>

The present cross-investigation on theatre and magic focused on Shakespeare and John Dee touches on ancient and Renaissance philosophy, history of European magic and history of European theatre, English cultural history, anthropology of the performance, early modern religious ideas, semantics, the hermeneutics of the literary text. Its interdisciplinary character makes it impossible to define the art other than as an effort to highlight the magic in Renaissance theatre and the theatre in Renaissance magic drawing on their philosophical and religious foundations.

The study is the first interface of texts by Shakespeare and John Dee and the first attempt to regard Dee's and Kelly's conversations with angels as a co-authored compilation of theo-philosophically inspired dramatic episodes. It is also the first investigation on Dee from the perspective of the *philosophia perennis* which tries to harmonize his faith with his magic, his scientific mind with his outstanding imagination. New is also the examination of the creative principles at the base of the Enochian language.

The parts dedicated to Shakespeare include and develop ideas expressed in our previous research, published by Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma, 2003 under the title *Shakespeare, ermetismo, mistica, magia*. The respective passages will be marked in footnotes. The impossibility to cover the entire bibliography on Shakespeare makes it difficult to understand if the contributions of this research are of absolute novelty. However, the investigation may contribute to the analysis of the theo-philosophical dimension of his plays, of his meta-theatrical discourse, to the contextual examination of concepts like miracle, wonder, amazement, nature, the power of the words and the nature of spirits. It also launches a hypothesis on a Shakespearean character possibly inspired by John Dee. The comparative perspective has imposed the necessity to privilege text analysis of primary sources over surveys of scholarly contributions in every field.

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<sup>58</sup> William H. Sherman, *John Dee, The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1995, p. 13.



## 1.8 Interdisciplinarity and Method

Deciding for the method is the first challenging step in an interdisciplinary inquiry. In the present study it is preceded by a dilemma regarding the disciplines involved: if theatre is object of the history of drama and can be approached as a literary text or as a performing art, what is the discipline that studies magic? So far magic has been examined by anthropologists, historians of ideas, historians of science or historians *tout court*. However in the Renaissance, high magic was part of philosophy which was actually theo-philosophy. The centrality of the evocative and creative power of words brings magic close to poetry. As an art of persuasion it implies rhetorical devices and psychology, while its rituals, aimed at operating changes in reality, allow classifying it as a performing art as well. From a modern perspective magic appears as a borderline domain, touching on religion, experimentation, history of medicine, philosophy, poetic discourse, psychology, performance, it is 'interdisciplinary' in itself. Our research essays to highlight these multiple aspects from a theo-philosophical perspective.

Considering the complexity of the topic, the question arises whether the interface of disciplines requires a method that stands outside themselves, but applies to them with equal efficacy or whether the integration of methods specific to each domain should be the path to follow. The present study is trying to reconcile the two approaches. In order to provide an organizing pattern, a theoretical frame was devised, based on the inherent structural commonalities of theatre and magic, deduced from their mutual origins in archaic religious rituals and from successive stages of acceptance or delegitimation by religion and philosophy. Structuralism, applied to delineate the research segments and therefore the chapter divisions and subdivisions, tends to be schematic and restrictive in the specific Shakespeare-Dee interface. Keeping the performative finality in mind, the investigation focuses actually on a poetic and on a philosophical discourse. This implies a dilemma of principle: can a literary text, - by definition an *opera aperta*, liable to a multitude of interpretations -, overlap with a philosophical one, that tends to converge in modernity with the structured scientific thought, and is therefore expected to be based on well-defined axioms and lead to clearly articulated conclusions ?

First of all the traditional philosophical discourse is intimately connected to language, it has its literariness and its rhetoric. The definition of concepts cannot neglect semasiology, therefore the constitution of meaning occurs in language and through language. Specifically, the theoretical postulates of Dee's thought derive from the inception of St John's Gospel which conceives God's Word as existential foundation and instrument of creation, a conception equally present in the *Hermetica*<sup>59</sup>. Both the *Monas hieroglyphica* and the *Five Books of Mystery* are seminally connected to the creative potential of language, therefore are susceptible of multiple readings. The philosopher believed in revealed wisdom. In spite of his aspirations to clarity, he was convinced of its occult, therefore mysterious, veiled quality, which turns the text automatically into an *opera aperta*. This attitude is perfectly compatible with the long tradition of biblical hermeneutics that preceded the Renaissance, particularly in the Augustinian-Thomistic line<sup>60</sup>, with the poetics pervading Renaissance philosophy and the individual reading of the Bible introduced by the Reformation. The *opera aperta* characteristic of Dee's and Kelly's conversations with angels is also given by its dramatic form, familiar to the dialogic philosophical discourses of the time, and shared with theatrical texts, where the confrontation of ideas is literally incarnated by actors on stage. Setting out from the premise that the philosophical text has literary qualities and the literary text conveys ideas, one can attempt a cross-investigation applying both literary and philosophical hermeneutics to Shakespeare's and to Dee's works, wherever this is possible.

As ideas and the rhetorical strategies that sustain them are fully comprehensible only in their historical context, the investigation has a historical perspective, intrinsic to the text interpretation, displayed in the introduction to every new topic and exhibited in a more detailed manner in the chapter *Historical Premises*. In this sense the interface of theatre and magic illustrated by Shakespeare's and Dee's works is pertinent to the interdisciplinary research

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<sup>59</sup> *Hermetica, The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius* in a new English translation with notes and introduction by Brian P. Copenhaver, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK 1992, p.1: “[5] But from the light...a holy word mounted upon the (watery) nature, and untempered fire leapt up from the watery nature to the height above.”(p.1) “Holy are you, who by the word have constituted all things that are;” (p. 7)

<sup>60</sup> The interpretation of the Scriptures in St. Augustine's *City of God* and the theorization of the use of metaphors and the multiple senses of the holy writings in Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, Part One, Q.I. Art.9-10.

proposed by new historicism<sup>61</sup>, but also independent. The conspicuous interest of this trend in the politics of culture and the culture of politics is only collateral to this study and concerns the involvement of the British monarchs with theatre and with magic. The two domains under focus can be regarded as expressions of power, but a power that, in the Elizabethan context, was believed to disclose transcendental designs or have a transcendental investiture, which makes the Marxist approach to “the touch of the real”<sup>62</sup>, prevailing in new historicism, difficult to apply. Equally arguable in the context of the present research is the idea advanced by this orientation that “autonomous self and text are mere holograms, effects that intersecting institutions produce”.<sup>63</sup> Indubitably Shakespeare's plays and Dee's works, including his conversations with angels, reflect the Elizabethan institutions, as new historicism understands the term. However, the cross-analysis of theatre and magic illustrated by their contributions develops along a general-particular dialectic which demands a reinstatement of the author profile and his natural connection with his work. Shakespeare's and Dee's views on theatre and on magic are the outcome of distinct interpretations of institutionalized ideas and values, so the analysis of their works needs to be proportionally predicated on a specific mindset and creative potential, a distinct temperament and way of being in the world, in other words on a personal *Weltanschauung*.

Dee has left behind enough biographical data, diaries and letters to allow the critic an insight into his own character and style, which helps to identify his intellectual property and delineate it from Kelly's in the *Five Books of Mystery*. The issue is more complex with Shakespeare. It is an ascertained fact that, in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre, authorship could not be measured with modern standards of copyright and the actor-playwrights often collaborated in writing a play. Not only has this issue been matter of dispute, but the reception of Shakespeare's works includes the denial of his authorship. His plays have been attributed in turns to Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, Edward de Vere 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of

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<sup>61</sup> Harold Aram Veenser (ed.), *The New Historicism*, Routledge, London, New York, 1989; Gallagher Catherine, Greenblatt, Stephen, *Practicing New Historicism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000.

<sup>62</sup> Gallagher C., Greenblatt, S. *Practicing New Historicism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000, p. 31: “... we wanted the touch of the real in the way that in earlier period people wanted the touch of the transcendent”.

<sup>63</sup> H.A. Veenser, op.cit., p. xiii.

Oxford, Queen Elizabeth<sup>64</sup> and more recently John Florio<sup>65</sup> or Amelia Bassanio Lanier, the daughter of a Venetian musician who played at the court<sup>66</sup>.

None of these hypotheses is sufficiently documented or unequivocally tenable to question Shakespeare's authorship. To the scrutiny of the meticulous text examiner or translator<sup>67</sup>, the work that bears this name conveys, in spite of variables and probable interpolations, a conceptual unity unfolded in perfectly recognizable patterns of significance<sup>68</sup>, which makes it convincingly enough the product of one mind, different from Bacon's, Jonson's or Florio's, etc. Even if there may have been collaborations in some plays, as David Young has recently proposed<sup>69</sup>, it looks like one pen was in charge of the final draft and that was Shakespeare's.

The postmodern tendency to alienate the work, technically defined as text, from its creator has given rise to questions like: to what extent is the critic entitled to attribute ideas voiced by various characters in the plays to Shakespeare himself. The polyphony theorized by Bakhtin in the novel<sup>70</sup> is natural in theatre, the plurivocal and plurifocal space *par excellence*, where perspective is decentralized and the world representation functions as a sophisticated system of epistemological approaches echoing or contradicting each other in a never resolved confrontation<sup>71</sup>. If metatheatrical or metapoetical reflections can be attributed to Shakespeare directly, as commonly practiced *mises en abîmes*, every other position expressed by various *personae* in monologues, every debate or event in the play leads indirectly to the intellectual dilemmas and tensions of a conscience deeply engaged with the problems of the time and openly interrogating them. In spite of the monumental variety of viewpoints in Shakespeare's theatre, it is possible to delineate a line of consistency on topics like nature, wonder, the power of names, vision and spirits, imagination, poetry and theatre. This serves to

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<sup>64</sup> Shapiro, James, *Contested Will: who wrote Shakespeare?*, Faber and Faber, London, 2010.

<sup>65</sup> Tassinari, Lamberto, *John Florio – The Man who was Shakespeare*, Giano Books, Varese, 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Hudson, John, *Amelia Bassano Lanier. A New Paradigm*, The Oxfordian, Volume XI, 2008.

<sup>67</sup> Serpieri, Alessandro, Professor Emeritus, *Translating Shakespeare*, Shakespeare Graduate Conference, British Institute, Florence, 2009.

<sup>68</sup> sound effects, rhythm, syntactical articulations, vocabulary choice, trains of images, dramatic effects, character building etc). It may very well be that in certain cases he was the one th

<sup>69</sup> Young, David, *Imagining Shakespeare's Pericles: A Story About the Creative Process*, Xlibris, USA, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> M. Bakhtin, *Estetica e romanzo*, Einaudi, Torino, 1979.

<sup>71</sup> A. Serpieri, *Polifonia shakespeariana*, Bulzoni Editore, Roma, 2002, pp. 11-28.

optimize the interface between Shakespeare's decentralized perspective in the world representation and Dee's strongly focalized one. The difference in perspective does not contradict the multiple-meaning coordinate underlined before, which actualizes in the capillary layers of the verbal and symbolic discourse in Shakespeare's plays and in Dee's *Monas* and the *Five Books of Mystery*.

In the end, a comparative interdisciplinary study derives its problems and their solutions from the parties involved. This inquiry would have been different if Dee's figure had been set against that of another Renaissance philosopher or of Christopher Marlowe instead of Shakespeare, or if Shakespeare would have been compared to another dramatist or a different philosopher. But even in those hypotheses, the final outcome of the interface would have gone beyond its immediacy as a compare-contrast study, into contributing to a sharper understanding of theatre, magic and the cultural paradigm under focus.

### 1.6 Note

Reference edition: *Shakespeare Complete Works*, Edited with a Glossary by W.J. Craig, London, Oxford University Press, 1969.

The bibliography lists other editions of Shakespeare's works consulted, including an internet resource: <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/>.

*John Dee's Five Books of Mystery* were edited by Joseph H. Peterson from the original manuscript of Dee's spiritual diaries ( Sloane 3188) completed with comparative information extracted from *De Heptarchia Mystica* (Sloane 3191) and the *Mysteriorum Libri Quinque* (Sloane 3189).

The instances of text emphasis in *John Dee's Five Books of Mystery* and the orthography are true to the original manuscript, except for a few improvements necessary to make the language accessible today, Peterson gives an account of in his Notes on the edition, pp.36-7.

In rare cases, when the original spelling was difficult to understand we added in square brackets today's spelling of the word.

The spelling of the Jewish mystical trend assimilated to Christian thought varies according to the sources quoted: cabala, caballa or kabbala.

## 1.7 Abbreviations

<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	MSND
<i>Monas Hieroglyphica</i>	Monas
<i>John Dee's Five Books of Mystery</i>	<i>Five Books of Mystery</i>
Mysteriorum Liber Primus	MLP
Mysteriorum Liber Secundus	MLS
Mysteriorum Liber Tertius	MLT
Quartus Liber Mysteriorum	QLM
Liber Mysteriorum Quintus	LMQ
Quinti Libri Mysteriorum: Appendix	QLMA
The Complete Enochian Dictionary	CED

## 2. HISTORICAL PREMISES

### 2.1. Theatre

*The English as a race are partial to drama; they prefer to symbolize and to dress the part. They set a real crown on the head of their king; their mayors are still distinguished with gilt chains; and their professors and schoolmasters teach in medieval gowns. Their greatest poetry is drama.*<sup>72</sup>

#### 2.1.1 The Medieval Tradition

It is hard to say whether the outstanding development of drama in Shakespeare's time has mainly to do with a national bent to 'dress the part'. In a European perspective Italians share this bent, attested by their essential contributions to the history of theatre and cinema. The documented theatrical manifestations in the Middle Ages<sup>73</sup> prove that on one hand England was synchronized to continental countries and on the other witnessed already specific tendencies, that were to bring about the later original drama. France, Italy, Germany and Spain had at the time analogous village festivals where archaic pagan rituals of fertility were cyclically performed<sup>74</sup>; Christian celebrations with biblical plays presented by the various town guilds<sup>75</sup>; pantomimes, jugglery and comic recitation produced by itinerant performers, whose improvisatory comic art, well accepted at the secular

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<sup>72</sup> G. B. Harrison, *Elizabethan Plays and Players*, Ann Arbor Books, The University of Michigan Press, 1956, p. 3

<sup>73</sup> The history of medieval theatre is measured by a scholar like William Tydeman from the coronation of Charlemagne in Rome (800) to the building of the Theatre in London 1576 in *The Theatre in the Middle Ages*, Western European Stage Conditions c.800-1576, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978. pp.247-249.

<sup>74</sup> J. Gassner, *Medieval and Tudor Drama*, Applause, New York, London, 1987, p. ix, mentions as specifically English pagan performances the sword dances acted by plow boys as late as the 18th century in England the Shetland sword dance, or the Revesby Sword Play, or the rituals of the resurrection of the vegetation incorporated in St. George Plays, still performed at the beginning of the 20th century and hinted at by Thomas Hardy in *The Return of the Native*.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, in places like Wakefield, Norwich, York, Chester, Coventry, Newcastle, Beverley, Lincoln, which "lost much of their wealth and population or dwindled into relative unimportance, while new cities began to overshadow them centuries ago", p. x. The most enduring passion play performances are in Oberammergau, Bavaria.

courts but frowned upon by some representatives of the Church, had survived from the debris of the Western Roman Empire<sup>4</sup>.

What probably distinguished England in the Middle Ages from continental countries in the field of drama, was the intensity and extension of religious plays during the great summer festivals, with the participation of the middle-class and the local clergy<sup>76</sup>. The festivals consisted in dramatized biblical episodes, derived from the earlier liturgical dramas performed in church on special occasions like Christmas or Easter. They were generically called mystery<sup>77</sup> or passion plays. The York Passion Play, “the most extensive of the extant English cycles”<sup>78</sup> contains 48 pageants which go from the Creation and the Fall of Lucifer to the Day of Judgement. Each episode was staged by a different craft or trade guild in town and the distribution of the various plays to specific guilds suggests practical sense and irony: the guild of Fishers and Mariners staged the *Flood* and *Noah and his Wife*, the *Conspiracy* against Christ was performed by the Cutlers, the Bakers were in charge of the *Last Supper* and the Butchers of the *Mortification of Christ and Burial*.<sup>79</sup>

Rethinking the Bible in theatrical terms established theatre as a form of religious devotion and implied a series of consequences, as the actors impersonated not only Adam and Eve, Abraham and Isaac, Christ or the Apostles, but also angels, devils and God himself. In the above mentioned York cycle, the *Creation* opens with God, “addressing himself to the Angels” in a monologue that starts by “I am Alpha and Omega, the Life,/ The Way, the Truth, the first and the last”<sup>80</sup>, but this synthesis of theological thought was recited by a tanner the spectators knew in his everyday identity. Giving God a well-known human voice and stature must have rendered him much more familiar and accessible, than the God sung or preached about in the solemn atmosphere of the Church. The same is valid about Lucifer, presented as a cosmic villain with ridiculous touches of human arrogance. The mystery plays were edifying but also entertaining. The

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<sup>76</sup> The involvement of the English clergy with theatre is very old. It is significant that as early as 679 the Council of Rome “warned the English clergy not to maintain the services of musicians or to permit revels or plays (*iocos vel ludos*)”, cf. W. Tydemann, *The Theatre in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978, p.25.

<sup>77</sup> Probably from the Latin *ministerium*. In Italy the plays analogous to mysteries were called *funzioni*, whereas in Spain they were known as *autos sacramentales*.

<sup>78</sup> J. Gassner, *Medieval and Tudor Drama*, op.cit., p.45.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, pp. 44-6;

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. pp. 46-7.



humorous vein, ranging from domestic comedy in Noah's story to the grotesque in presenting the devils, was part of a creativity that included rewriting the biblical texts in versified vernacular and introducing characters or entire episodes of pure invention like, for example the *Death of Pilate* in the Cornish cycles, where Pilate's dead body is rejected by earth and water until the devils take it to hell, and the conclusion is sung by the devil Tulfric "with devilish obscenity".<sup>81</sup> The popularity of these performances reveals a need to approach the sacred stories by direct participation, enlarging the range of human feelings with tones that differed from those of the sermons and *exempla* given by the Church. It was only natural that some religious figures started criticizing them<sup>82</sup>.

The 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries witness an impressive popularity of the miracle plays, staging the lives of various saints, with a focus on their wonders. One could speculate on the factors that may have brought this change of perspective: was it the criticism expressed towards interpreting biblical characters, the necessity to 'see' incarnated on stage the protagonists of the extraordinary biographies building up the cult of saints propagated by the Church and popular writings like the Golden Legend by Jacobus de Voragine, or a need to compensate for the frustration of a period of war and plague<sup>83</sup> by reinforcing the belief in miracles?

As a matter of fact the deep-going consequences of the Black Plague could be identified in the history of theatre too. It was a phenomenon of such incredible dimensions, that every pattern of normality was broken. The perception of mass pestilence and death as divine punishment stimulated thoughts about salvation through penance and intensified religious fervour.<sup>84</sup> The appearance of the morality play throughout Europe in the second half of the fourteenth century cannot be a mere coincidence. It presented the ordinary man's values and choices in a life marked by sin and placed under the sign of divine judgement, discussing the issue of salvation in a severe tone. In England the atmosphere of religious unrest was intensified by John Wycliffe's claims and the Lollardy<sup>85</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pp-188-203.

<sup>82</sup> M. Domenichelli, *Il limite dell'ombra, Le figure della soglia nel teatro inglese fra Cinque e Seicento*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 1994, pp.60-71.

<sup>83</sup> Hundred Years' War and the War of Roses, the Black Plague, ravishing in 1348-9 returned in several devastating waves.

<sup>84</sup> Herlihy, David, Cohn, Samuel K Jr. *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*, Cambridge: Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997.

<sup>85</sup> John Wycliffe 1324-1384: Lollardy end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> c.

The ethical tension which pervades the few moralities extant and the treatment of the subject displays a way of thinking that is remarkably different from the mystery plays. Whereas the former made religious figures familiar, endowing them with character, the latter were interested in the “moral man” abstracted to his essential humanity. Thus *Everyman*, the protagonist of the homonymous play, faces on stage personified concepts - Fellowship, Kindred, Goods, Good-Deeds, Strength, Discretion, Five-Wits, Beauty, Knowledge and Confession, - and the 'plot' is the externalization of his torments in front of Death. As J. Gassner pointed out, “standing between the vital mystery plays and the vigorous folk farces, the morality plays represented the conscience, the learning, and the moralizing inclinations of the Middle Ages. Developing out of a medieval matrix of homilies and allegories, this form of drama ... had an especially strong vogue in England and played an important part in the transition from medieval to Elizabethan drama”<sup>86</sup>.

The exercise of allegory passed thus from the pulpit to the stage and it remained there for the coming two centuries, when it was still present in the dumb shows introduced in the tragedies, in Elizabethan and Jacobean masques. A famous Elizabethan tragedy like Marlowe's *Faust* is a morality in the substance<sup>87</sup> and at the core of every Shakespearean play there is also a debate on concepts like Mercy, Justice, Truth, Will, Reason, Virtue, Death. In the morality the edifying and emulating role of theatre prevailed over its entertaining function. At the same time it was a discursive type of drama, which transformed the plot into dialectic and refined the language. *Everyman* is written in an elevated style, with a beautifully articulated syntax and a careful choice of vocabulary.

Henry VIII' s decision to separate from Rome brought about changes that affected theatre too. In particular the miracle plays appeared as serving Catholic propaganda and were thus suspended and their texts destroyed, sharing the destiny of church paintings and statues. The end of medieval religious drama meant neither the interruption of the theatrical tradition, nor the demise of religious debate on stage, which continued in new forms. Acutally the early reformers embraced theatre as an instrument of religious propaganda and, as J.Knapp

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<sup>86</sup> J. Gassner., *Medieval and Tudor Drama*, op. cit., p. 204.

<sup>87</sup> This aspect becomes controversial if one takes into account the two versions of the text: text A, published in 1604 and text B in 1616, a discussion launched by William Empson and continued by Rosanna Camerlingo in *Teatro e teologia. Marlowe, Bruno e i puritani*, Napoli, 1999.

informs, “perhaps the most influential figure among these early Reformers, and a playwright himself, John Foxe, had gone so far to assert that “players, printers, [and] preachers” were “set up of God, as a triple bulwark against the triple crown of the pope, to bring him down” (1563); [quoting from *The Acts and Monuments* (1563-83)]”. With a very interesting turn of mind, “only a few years after the construction of the first permanent playhouses, the Theater and the Curtain (1576), the compiler of *A Second and Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies and Theaters* (1580) called upon “every true soldier of Jesus Christ” to join him in his assault upon “the chapel of Satan, I mean the Theater”, “to the suppressing of those which fight against [God's] word.”<sup>88</sup>

If theatre reached such high levels in Shakespeare’s time this is particularly due to the complex elaboration of classical models intermediated by the Italian Renaissance.

### 2.1.2 The Italian models

Over the past decades, the sustained inquiry into the Italian-English cultural exchanges in the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>89</sup> has added a lot of knowledge to the traditional acceptance that the English School Plays, written and staged by scholars and teachers imitated Latin authors like Terence, Plautus and Seneca<sup>90</sup> in the Italian fashion. In the new research light the impact of the Italian Renaissance appears

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<sup>88</sup> J. Knapp, *Preachers and Players in Shakespeare's England* pp. 91-121. in Orgel, S. and Keilen S. (ed.), *Shakespeare in the Theater*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York&London, 1999, p.91.

<sup>89</sup> Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989; Clubb, Louise George, Black Robert, *Romance and Aretine Humanism in Sienese Comedy*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze, 1993; Siro Ferrone, *Attori mercanti corsari: la commedia dell'arte in Europa tra cinque e seicento*, Turin, Einaudi, 1993. Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Renaissance England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Robert Henke, Eric Nicholson, *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008. Richard Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios, The performance of comedy in Renaissance Italy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Henke, Robert, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia Dell'Arte*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Henke, Robert, *Pastoral Transformations, Italian Tragicomedy and Shakespeare's Last Plays*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997; Marrapodi, Michele, Hoenselaars, A.J., *The Italian World of English Renaissance Drama, Cultural Exchange and Intertextuality*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, London: Associated University Press, 1998.

<sup>90</sup> Seneca could be read in Latin but five of his plays “were separately translated as well as possibly performed between 1559 and 1566 before the famous complete translation, the *Ten Tragedies*, was published in 1581.” in J.Gassner, op.cit., p.405.

much more powerful and diversified. It concerns the imitation of the various theatrical genres experimented by the Italians: the historical tragedies<sup>91</sup>, various comedy genres<sup>92</sup>, the pastoral<sup>93</sup> or the tragicomedy. It includes the debate opened by Italian writers on the necessity to set norms for every genre elaborating on Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars poetica*, as well as the performing art. Actually Italian actors of the *commedia dell'arte* crossed the Channel occasionally, inspiring the English audience, but also giving rise to criticisms, because of the “supposedly lascivious female performers of the commedia.”<sup>94</sup>

As scholarly ascertained, the masques at the English court were inspired by pageants and ceremonies in Italy, in particular by the public celebrations of famous weddings like that of Francesco de' Medici and Joanna of Austria (1565), Francesco and Bianca (1579), Cesare d'Este and Virginia de' Medici (Francesco's half-sister) (1586), Ferdinand de' Medici (the cardinal) and Christine of Lorraine (1589).<sup>95</sup>

Comparative studies have shown that Italian sources provided Elizabethan and Jacobean authors with typified drama characters and situations - called by Louise George Clubb theatergrams-, that could be reposed in new compounds, Shakespeare being the greatest master in recombining these units. Another source of inspiration for the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama were the Italian *novellas*. As Michele Marrapodi pointed out, “from Boccaccio, Bandello, Cinthio, and others, the *novella* passed on, directly or through French adaptations, to Painter's

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<sup>91</sup> Gian Giorgio Trissino, *Sofonisba* (1514); Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio, *Orbecche* (1541).

<sup>92</sup> *Commedia villanesca* played by the Congrega dei Rozzi in Siena; the plays of the Accademia degli Intronati, especially *Gl'ingannati*, Bibbiena's *Calandria* (1513); Machiavelli's *Mandragola* (circa 1518); and three plays of the Accademia degli Intronati, Alessandro Piccolomini's *Amor costante* (1536) and *Alessandro* (1544).

<sup>93</sup> Angelo Poliziano, *Orfeo*, (1480); Torquato Tasso, *Aminta* (1573); Isabella Andreini, *Mirtilla*, (1588); Giovanni Battista Guarini, *Il pastor fido* (1590).

<sup>94</sup> Nicholson, Eric, Ophelia Sings like a Prima Donna Innamorata: Ophelia's Mad Scene and the Italian Female Performer, in Robert Henke, Eric Nicholson, *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008, p. 82.; Also Frances Barasch, *Italian Actresses in Shakespeare's World: Flaminia and Vincenza*, Shakespeare Bulletin 18, no.4 (2000) and *Italian Actresses in Shakespeare's World: Vittoria and Isabella*, Shakespeare Bulletin 19, no.3 (2001); Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin, eds, *Women Players in England, 1500-1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

<sup>95</sup> Mulryne, J.R., Thomas Middleton, Women Beware Women, and the Myth of Florence, in Marrapodi, Michele, Hoenselaars, A.J., eds, *The Italian World of English Renaissance Drama, Cultural Exchange and Intertextuality*, p. pp.141-164.

*Palace of Pleasure* and his English successors, whose «tragic histories and tales» constituted the basic plots for many Elizabethan tragedies.»<sup>96</sup>

Last but not least, theatre developed in a context with a keen interest in rhetoric and the cultivation of oral forms, a phenomenon started in Italy, but extended to the entire continent, so much so, that “by the early sixteenth century several million Europeans would have been endowed with a “working knowledge of rhetoric.”<sup>97</sup> According to Peter Henke “the highly theatrical and dialogic quality to Petrarch's poetry”, so much in vogue, or of “Castiglione's highly oral society” with reference to *Il libro del Cortigiano*, contributed in Italy and elsewhere in Europe to develop a sense of drama and an awareness of the power of constructed speech. Even a humanist like Erasmus who “championed Latin as a spoken as well as a written language” advocated for Latin composition “genres modeled on oral situations: the oration, the dialogue, the colloquium, and the adage.”<sup>98</sup>

Inspired by Quintilian's *Institutio oratio* and Cicero's *De oratore* the rhetorical forms circulated in the Italian academies “ became highly codified and elaborated in ways that were appropriated by the commedia dell'arte”<sup>99</sup>. An analogous phenomenon took place in England in a cultural awareness that “disputational rhetoric was well suited to drama, because of both its dialogic structure and its serio-comic frame.”<sup>100</sup>

The connection of the new theatrical forms with the bloom of rhetoric is illustrated by the interludes, a discursive type of drama which appeared at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a private entertainment. Written for a small, educated public who appreciated social irony and fine word play, the interlude was essentially a farcical disputation of a subject, approached through logical and

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<sup>96</sup> Marrapodi, Michele, Hoenselaars, A.J., eds *The Italian World of English Renaissance Drama, Cultural Exchange and Intertextuality*, London: Associated University Presses, 1998, p.11. Also on the topic Melissa Walter, *Dramatic Bodies and Novellesque Spaces in Jacobean Tragedy and Tragicomedy*, in Henke R., Nicholson Eric, *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater* pp. 63-77.

<sup>97</sup> Brian Vickers, *In Defense of Rhetoric*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, quoted in Henke, Robert, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia Dell'Arte*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 41.

<sup>98</sup> P. Henke, op.cit., p.41.

<sup>99</sup> Henke, Robert, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia Dell'Arte*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.40.

<sup>100</sup> Joel B. Altman, *Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, cited in Henke, Robert, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia Dell'Arte*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 43.

linguistic paradoxes, which allegedly contributed to the creation of the tradition of wit.

Another phenomenon one can correlate with the cultural tendencies in Italy is the rise of the playwright as a distinct figure with a biography and a style. If the late fifteenth-century *Everyman* had reached posterity as an anonymous play, in the sixteenth century names like John Skelton and John Rastell were known to have produced moralities like *Magnificence* and *The Nature of the Four Elements*<sup>101</sup> respectively, while John Heywood (ca 1497-1578) was retained the master of the interlude.

### 2.1.3 National Comedy and Tragedy

Anticipated by the Senese Accademia degli Intronati, which produced comedies and the Accademia degli Inflammati in Padua, that proposed the first Renaissance tragedies, the School Plays operated a significant shift of cultural perspective: following classical and Italian models their authors discovered their own resourceful English background. With *Ralph Roister Doister*, written between 1550 and 1553 by the schoolmaster Nicholas Udall (1505-1556) and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, written between 1552 and 1563 by a “Mr. S., Master of Art”<sup>102</sup>, the national comedy came into being; in the same period, the law students of the Inns of Court in London lay the basis of the national tragedy.

An important outcome of these new plays was the secularization of theatre. In the field of comedy *Ralph Roister Doister* still echoes the morality in the subject – the attempt at corrupting a virtuous widow, whose name is Dame Christian Custance, but *Gammer Gurton's Needle*“, a lively farce, close to the folk spirit of the Elizabethan country life”<sup>103</sup> produces its comical effects by turning an absolutely trivial event – a needle lost in a pair of breeches is looked for and found- into an enormous issue. The vitality and realism of simple people had filtered through certain biblical characters already in the mystery plays, but this

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<sup>101</sup> J. Gassner, op.cit., p.205.

<sup>102</sup> Ibidem: “Probably William Stevenson, a Fellow of Christ's College at Cambridge University, where the play is believed to have been first performed”

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p.264.

time they stood for themselves, involved in their own stories and they would keep their place in drama through the great Elizabethan moment.

An analogous process of secularization is manifest in the tragedy, which keeps the divine judgement in the equation, but focuses on man as creator and subject of history. The first famous historical tragedy is *Gordobuc* (1561-1562) written by Thomas Sackville (1536-1608), “a barrister of Inner Temple, later the Earl of Dorset and Lord High Treasurer of England, and Thomas Norton (1532-1584), who became a distinguished lawyer.<sup>104</sup> The tragedy presents the story of the legendary British King Gordobuc who divides his realm to his sons in his lifetime. The king's decision to ignore the traditional right of the first born in the name of fatherly love and of his own sense of justice, causes dissension, crime and finally civil war.

*Gordobuc* has quite a number of merits. It initiated the tradition of the great historical plays, continued by Kyd, Marlowe and Shakespeare, where topical issues and deep concerns of the English political life were exposed to public judgement in a transfigured form or in a defamiliarizing context. The necessity of national cohesion and the dangers of civil war displayed in *Gordobuc* were actually imperatives and worries of the English society at that time. Elizabeth had only recently succeeded to the throne, after the troubled years following Henry VIII's death and she was single and too young to inspire faith in a stable future.

*Gordobuc* contributed to introduce a realistic approach to history, in which political leaders, deprived of the mythical aura medieval romance had endowed them with, were faced on one hand with their public responsibilities and on the other with their personal passions and vanities. The idea that history is the human theatre watched by God in which the king plays the protagonist role would become central to the great Elizabethan historical plays. The necessity to display human history on stage became imperative, even if the modality of treating it was not deprived of religious undertones. In this sense it is worth mentioning that even the Jesuits at the English College in Rome, interested in edifying plays on

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 403.

Catholic martyrs, wrote historical tragedies in Latin on characters like Thomas a Becket or Sir Thomas More.<sup>105</sup>

Other important contributions of *Gordobuc* regard the dramatic structure and the poetic form. If the mystery and the miracle plays were mostly epic and the moralities discursive, the type of tragedy inaugurated by *Gordobuc* is highly dramatic, with a plot built around action and character tensions, embedding elements of the English and Italian traditions in the basic Senecan model<sup>106</sup> and it is the mould for the great drama to come. At the stylistic level the solemnity of discourse benefits from the introduction of the blank verse, which frees expression from the constraints of rhyme. All these creative contributions to the playwriting paved the way for the unique developments of the Elizabethan drama, but they are not the only factors that led to them.

#### 2.1.4 Stable Theatres, Playwrights, Actors and the Crown

In 1486 Vitruvius' *De Architectura* was published and this meant offering the Renaissance cultures the ancient theatre models they needed. In the 5<sup>th</sup> book he described a Latin and a Greek theatre in comparative perspective, providing geometrical details. In 1556 a comment of Barbaro on Vitruvius was published, which displayed the manner of assimilating the model in Italy.<sup>107</sup> In 1563 John Shute mentioned Vitruvius in his book of architecture<sup>108</sup>. and a few years later John Dee insisted on emulating *the Roman Vitruvius* and the *Florentine Leon Battista Alberti* in the preface to the English version of Euclid's *Geometry*, done by H. Billingsley (1570). Taking as evidence Dee's assertion on the link between the architect's mental project and the carpenter's concrete realization, F.A. Yates reminds her readers that James Burbage was a carpenter and surmises a direct involvement of Dee in the planning of the first theatre, built in wood by Burbage

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<sup>105</sup> <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/thomcant/intro.html>- 29.05 2006 mentioned in a research on the extant anonymous tragedy *Thomas Cantauriensis*, a play on Thomas a Becket, played in Rome in 1613 on the Monday of the carnival week.

<sup>106</sup> Seneca could be read in Latin but five of his plays "were separately translated as well as possibly performed between 1559 and 1566 before the famous complete translation, the *Ten Tragedies*, was published in 1581." J. Gassner, op.cit., p.405.

<sup>107</sup> Frances A. Yates, *L'arte della memoria*, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1972, Torino, p.330.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p.334.



in 1576 at Shoreditch, under the simple and essential name of *Theater*.<sup>109</sup> Its structure, copied in the following decades by other Elizabethan theatres and reconstructed in today's *Shakespeare's Globe* in London, brings together, as scholarship has remarked, a classical model and a symbolic representation of the Christian levels of the world in a typically Renaissance elaboration.

As a microcosm the theatre encompassed and evoked the macrocosm. The direct connection between human action on stage and the 'universal theatre' in which history and divine eternity faced each other, was hinted at by every architectural detail, from the open-air pit to the various levels of the stage structure. With the creation of the first stable building destined for performances, theatre placed itself at the centre of London's cultural life as art producer and mass-medium. Germany, Italy, France, Spain or the Low Countries had analogous vivid performances or great dramatists<sup>110</sup>, but England, more specifically London, cumulated a series of factors which gave it the primacy in the field: at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century a generation of exceptionally gifted playwrights and actors, benefiting from an already consistent theatrical tradition in their language, displayed their talents in a stimulating atmosphere of competition and appreciation for their profession. It was for the first time since antiquity that both the actor and the playwright became public figures in a metropolis and enjoyed a more respectable social and economic status as they became shareholders in their theatres. A significant advantage of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre companies was their remarkable versatility: they could play just as well on their stages, in inn yards or at court, and when theatres closed because of the plague, they left London and toured the countryside<sup>111</sup>.

Last, but not least, this public cultural and economic enterprise was implicitly or explicitly patronized by the crown<sup>112</sup>. This meant granting a unifying

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p.334-6.

<sup>110</sup> The *commedia dell'arte* had already developed genres like comedy and the pastoral, the *Bardi Camerata* in Florence made the first attempts at creating the melodrama around 1580; Hans Sachs was writing his main *Fastnachtspiele* (1550-60) when the Tudor comedy and tragedy were coming into being. Lope de Vega was born two years before Shakespeare and Marlowe.

<sup>111</sup> For example, from July through December 1608 the King's Men were on a tour; at the end of October they performed in Coventry.

<sup>112</sup> Harry Levin, *Playboys and Killjoys, An Essay on the Theory and Practice of Comedy*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1987, p. 156. reminds the coincidence of great capitals of theatre linked to a direct participation of "epochs in the history of drama have been marked by cultural capitals: Sophocles' Athens, Shakespeare's London, Lope de Vega's Madrid. Courts, both royal and ducal, have also functioned as dramatic matrices; but, as Erich Auerbach has

center to the creative tendencies of the time and continuity. It was a great advantage over the Italian playwrights and theatrical troupes, who were part of a rich tradition, but “remained unanchored in the cinquecento by any stable unifying political force...”.<sup>113</sup> Queen Elizabeth encouraged and supported performing arts, putting the actors and playwrights under protection against the ever stronger demands of rising Puritans to suppress theatre, but she also censored authors when they tended to become ideologically dangerous<sup>114</sup>. Historians have mentioned her own theatrical talent, displayed in politics, and made comments on the public pageants organized to promote her image. King James I followed Elizabeth's illustrious example in protecting and controlling theatre. He became the patron of The King's Men, known as The Lord Chamberlain's Men before he was crowned and contributed financially to the reconstruction of the Globe, destroyed by fire in 1613<sup>115</sup>. Both sovereigns encouraged the production of masques. As Stephen Orgel has pointed out, the court spectacles “were expressions of the age's most profound assumptions about the monarchy. They included strong elements of ritual and communion, often explicitly religious...”<sup>116</sup>, and had the figure of the sovereign at the centre of their profoundly symbolical discourse. This corresponded to the two monarchs' perception of their political role: “We princes, I tell you,” said Queen Elizabeth, “are set on stages, in the sight and view of all the world duly observed.”<sup>117</sup> James I made this a precept for his heir in his handbook of kingship, *Basilikon Doron*: “A King is as one set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly does behold”.<sup>118</sup>

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convincingly shown, the ideal public for Molière and the French classics was drawn conjointly from “*la cour et la ville*”, from the courtiers of Versailles and the grande *bourgeoisie* of Paris.

<sup>113</sup> M. Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England*, op.cit., p. 7.

<sup>114</sup> The story of the two Faust versions is also connected to the figure of Sir Edmund Tilney, who acted as a censor, named by the Queen herself, in Rosanna Camerlingo, *L'impazienza di Faust, Poesia e filosofia nel Doctor Faustus di Christopher Marlowe*, in *Teatro e Palcoscenico dall'Inghilterra all'Italia, 1540-1640*, another mention of Nashe and Jonson who are imprisoned because of the Isle of Dogs, p.46.

<sup>115</sup> F. A. Yates, *L'arte della memoria*, op. cit., p. 317.

<sup>116</sup> Orgel, Stephen, *The Illusion of Power, Political Theater in the English Renaissance*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1975, p.8.

<sup>117</sup> J.E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments* (New York, 1958) 2:119, in Orgel, Stephen, *The Illusion of Power, Political Theater in the English Renaissance*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1975, p.42.

<sup>118</sup> C.H. Mc Ilwain, ed., *Political Works of James I* (Cambridge, Mass., 1918), in Orgel, Stephen, *The Illusion of Power, Political Theater in the English Renaissance*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1975, p.43.

### 2.1.5 Drama and Elizabethan Life

Apart from the factors directly connected to the progress of theatre, the historical context in which Shakespeare and his colleagues lived and worked, was particularly stimulating for drama: “The London of Queen Elizabeth, by its size, wealth, and power, was the most formidable unit in the Kingdom”<sup>119</sup>: the dynamism of its economic, banking and commercial system produced novelty and continuous change, but also refined the capacities of establishing relationships, observing the others and engaging dialogues. London was open to the world, its sailors and merchants travelled from China and the isle of Java to the Caspian Sea, and from Peru to the Cape of Bona Speranza<sup>120</sup>, tracing already the routes of an international way of thinking. The encounter of the English with other cultures was experienced in remote countries and in London, which was literally a world in a nutshell, with representatives of trading companies, diplomats, scholars and a conspicuous number of integrated Protestant refugees from the Continent<sup>121</sup>. Calling a London theatre “The Globe” implied not only geographical awareness, but also an experience of the world both absorbed by a centre and irradiating from it. Cultural diversity enlarged the vision of human typology, including the recent one of the 'savage', the prototype of Shakespeare's Caliban; it turned the English more aware of their own national traits and induced them to compete with other cultures. As known, facing the others was not smooth and peaceful. In the religious and political spheres it resulted in plots, conflicts and war, like the one with Spain, accompanied by growing suspicion, spying and playing double, all first-hand inspiration for drama.

The English society witnessed conflict and tension between various cultural paradigms as Shakespeare's works prove. The medieval mentality traditionally connected to Catholicism and the pre-Christian folklore absorbed by it was confronted with Protestantism both in the balanced formula decided for the Anglican Church during Queen Elizabeth's reign, and in the extremist Puritan version. At the same time a secular tendency, which was greatly an English

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<sup>119</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, *English Social History, A Survey of Six Centuries to Queen Victoria*, Penguin Books, 1982, p.157

<sup>120</sup> According to Hakluyt 1589, quoted in G.M. Trevelyan, op.cit., pp. 213-4.

<sup>121</sup> M. Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England*, op.cit.,

elaboration of natural philosophy, paved the way for empiricism and a scientific approach to reality.

The richness of ideas circulated in Shakespeare's England derived from a diversity of sources. The Bible in its English printed versions became directly accessible as a text to every believer, fixing thus stories and parables heard from the pulpit and divulged by literature, in particular by theatre through the Middle Ages. "By the agency of the grammar schools, classicism filtered through from the study into the theatre and the street, from the folio to the popular ballad which familiarized the commonest auditories with *The Tyranny of Judge Appius* and *The Miserable State of King Midas* and the other tales of Greece and Rome"<sup>122</sup>.

It has often been remarked that Shakespeare's contemporaries did not treat classical stories "as dead archaeological matter, but as new spheres of imagination and spiritual power, to be freely converted to modern use"<sup>123</sup>, which is exactly what theatre, as well as philosophy did. If the classical and the biblical stories could be harmonized in the Elizabethan imagination, the philosophical ideas were often religiously biased and polarized: the free-willed man of the Italian Renaissance clashed with the doctrine of predestination, Erasmus contrasted with Calvin, German authors like Cornelius Agrippa, Trithemius or Weyer were models for some intellectuals and 'devils incarnate' for others<sup>124</sup>, Italy was to be emulated in the field of ideas, literature, fashion and manners, but rejected as the seat of papacy; the atheism of some collided with the fanaticism of others; the simplified Aristotelianism of the universities was intolerant versus the Neoplatonism of independent writers and thinkers, as the case of Giordano Bruno, a temporary visitor during the queen's reign, confirms<sup>125</sup>. A singular personality like John Dee was a natural philosopher and mathematician, but also an occultist who conversed with the angels. Rationality and imagination coexisted, both in theatre and in philosophy and this multitude of approaches created a sort of natural environment for debating essential issues, but it could also result in an anticipation of modern relativism, well-captured by Shakespeare's plays and

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<sup>122</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, op. cit., p.155.

<sup>123</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>124</sup> W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, II, 3.

<sup>125</sup> F.A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, University of Chicago Press, London, Chicago, 1964, rpt. Routledge, London 2002.

concisely formulated by Hamlet: “for there is/ nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.”<sup>126</sup>

To conclude, as in an emblematic correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm, the Elizabethan age proved to be an ideal context for the progress of drama, as it had in itself all the features of its theatre: dynamism, an urge of individual and national power, strong characters working often in the shade to produce changes, conflicting ideas defended with pathos and even paid with the price of life, an extension of knowledge through fantasy, a melancholic awareness of the distance between the greatness of its ideals and the limits of human potential.

## 2.2 MAGIC

### 2.2.1 Magical Practices and Religion

Before magic encountered theatre in the Elizabethan Renaissance, its tradition ran parallel connecting analogously to religion, popular culture, classical and Renaissance ideas and royalty. Yet if the progress of theatre presents a certain linearity, in the case of magic the diversity of documents and terminology, as well as the biased attitudes make the scholar's attempt more difficult.

The simple enumeration of the various names used in English to denote levels and branches of magic<sup>127</sup> evokes a historical stratification and a converging multitude of influences. On the other hand, whereas the revival of theatre in the Middle Ages took place with the liturgical drama, being thus from the very beginning legitimated as a cultural form, magic existed as an underground current, adversed by the Church and secular authorities. It was only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that the main books of magic, freed from “the learned obscurity of Latin”<sup>128</sup> and published in English translation, ceased to be looked upon with hostility and fear. According to Keith Thomas, “the democratization of this magical tradition came during the

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<sup>126</sup> Hamlet, II. II. 259-60.

<sup>127</sup> sorcery, wizardry, witchcraft, necromancy, devilry, occultism, theurgy, conjuring, maleficium, soothsaying, legerdemain, trickery, enchantment, divination, augury, jugglery, etc.

<sup>128</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op. cit., p. 227.

Civil War and Interregnum, a period which saw the fall of so many other aristocratic citadels”<sup>129</sup>, but that span of time is beyond the scope of our study.

In this context a simple question arises: what were actually the practices classified by Elizabethans as magic? A preliminary remark is necessary: just as in the field of drama “England did not subside into a strictly circumscribed non-medieval theatre until about half a century after Shakespeare's death”<sup>130</sup>, so were medieval practices and ideas on magic perpetrated or reinforced till the half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The most wide-spread was popular magic, which encompassed pre-Christian practices and beliefs surviving from the Celtic or Germanic substratum, but also from the Roman period, like the cult of Diana, mentioned in some witch trials<sup>131</sup>. This brings evidence that in England, like anywhere else in Europe, Christianity imposed itself without completely cancelling pre-existing rituals, whose efficiency had simply been validated by tradition. It also shows a paradigmatic shift of evaluation: what is religion in a cultural context can become magic in another and it explains the uninterrupted contrast to these phenomena; when a corpus of officially dismissed rituals and beliefs continue to be practised or adopted, they are feared as potentially destabilizing and drastically contested from the centre. In England “the classification of the Celtic and early Germanic culture as demon-worship, inseparably linked to magic persisted till beyond the Renaissance”<sup>132</sup> conveying an attitude in line with St. Augustine and other Fathers of the Church for whom the pagan divinities of their time, Greek, Roman, Egyptian and others were demons<sup>133</sup>.

The coexistence of Celtic, Germanic or Roman ritual relics along with Christianity was also enabled by the shared belief in supernatural entities that could determine events in human life. Establishing distinctions between invisible beings like fairies, spirits, angels or demons, whose existence was proved only by verbal assertion, was not easy and deep down in the believers' mind there must have been the simple recognition that they belonged to the same order of imagined things. On the other hand, the Christian campaign against magic confirmed the assumptions about its efficiency and the representatives of the

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<sup>129</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>130</sup> J. Gassner, op. cit., p. XVII.

<sup>131</sup> R. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p.43.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., pp.45-46

<sup>133</sup> St Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, a new translation by Henry Bettenson with an introduction by John O'Meara, Penguin Books, London, 1984, Book IX.

Church “took seriously the belief that people can steal milk, honey, and other substances by magic, and kill animals with mere glances and words“.<sup>134</sup>

The wise men and cunning women of the country village who perpetrated Celtic and Germanic divination or healing practices, and those who celebrated “auguries, omens from birds, or dreams”<sup>135</sup> in the Roman fashion did not need to be literate to prove their mastery. Documents show that through the Middle Ages there was another category involved in magic, consisting in secular people or clergy who had continued the practice of conjuring spirits, already common in antiquity, by using manuals circulating in manuscript like “Liber Spirituum, Constitution of Honorius, the Key of Solomon- and others”, all this “in great secrecy as the conjuration was a capital offence”<sup>136</sup>. Albeit evidence about this practice is scarce, it hints at a continuity of high magic with antiquity that prepares the Hermetic magic of the Renaissance, justifying the esoteric tradition, based on the conviction that Adam's knowledge of natural things, lost at the fall, had been transmitted through biblical characters and select adepts.

To the commonality of belief and imagination, shared by religion and magic, one can add that “even though the medieval Church prohibited popular magic and made sorcery a disqualification for the priesthood, the roles of priest and magician were by no means clearly distinguished in the popular mind”<sup>137</sup>, which was partly motivated by the literacy they both possessed. Associating access to books to the possibility of conjuring spirits went on during the Renaissance and is present in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* too, when Marcellus asks Horatio to address the ghost, because he is a scholar<sup>138</sup>.

An attempt to clear up the overlapping of magic and religion was proposed by John Wycliffe and the Lollardy, who classified as magic all the Catholic practices which required imagination to uphold their efficiency. The Lollards denied the doctrine of transubstantiation and relegated Catholic rituals to the devil, anticipating the Reformation both in tone and argumentation. For example, as early as 1395, in their *Twelve Conclusions*, they stated: “That exorcisms and hallowings, made in the Church, of wine, bread and wax, water, salt, oil and

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<sup>134</sup> Kieckhefer, R., *Magic in the Middle Ages*, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, pp.45-6.

<sup>136</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op. cit., pp. 229.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>138</sup> Marcellus. “Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio” (*Hamlet*, I. I. 42).

incense, the stone of the altar, upon vestments, mitre, cross, and pilgrims' staves, be the very practice of necromancy, rather than of the holy theology. This conclusion is proved thus. For by such exorcisms creatures be charged to be of higher virtue than their own kind, and we see nothing of change in no such creature that is so charmed, but by false belief, the which is the principle of the devil's craft."<sup>139</sup> Wycliffe and his followers attacked the scenography of the ritual and its fascinating effect on the believers by remaining within the same equation. Their efforts to rationalize Catholic procedures turned into simply moving them to the other pole of the same imaginative system of thought: the demonization of Catholicism stressed the difficulty to distinguish between magic and religion.

### 2.2.2 Renaissance Magic and Reformation

This homologizing of fields was reinforced at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the English friends of Erasmus, the so-called Oxford group: John Colet, William Grocyn and Thomas More manifested interest in the works of Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. What was interpreted as Christian Platonism, included Hermetic ideas and promoted high magic as *prisca theologia*. In the following decades of the same century the enthusiasm of the English intellectuals for magic increased in parallel with the intensification of religious conflicts. Protestantism was against magic as much as the contemporary Catholic authorities, but the adepts of Hermetic Renaissance magic were convinced that the rituals aimed at reaching various levels of divinity were a holy quest, pertinent to the Christian tradition. Practising magic was imitating the holy men of antiquity, Moses, Elisha, Solomon, or following in the path of the medieval mystics:

Spiritual magic or theurgy was based on the idea that one could reach God in an ascent up the scale of creation made possible by a rigorous course of prayer, fasting and devotional preparation. For many, this was no mechanical

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<sup>139</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op. cit., p. 51.



manipulation of set formulae, but a humble supplication that God should extend to them the privilege of a unique view of his mysteries<sup>140</sup>.

As stated in a previous work<sup>141</sup> the English culture of the early 16<sup>th</sup> c. imported models and ideas from Renaissance Italy without experiencing an analogous phase of critical analysis of their own past. In other words it had no personalities like Valla, Pomponazzi or Leonardo da Vinci, who took a distance from mythical thought or rationalized knowledge bringing it down to experience and the visible world of nature. The Elizabethan Renaissance was still imbued with reverence for the national past and its myths and a sense of religious devotion which eased the acceptance of magic and its interpretation as a mystical quest. The critical spirit was exercised in England by the Reformation towards the Catholic Church that is it was applied on religion from a religious point of view. The Reformation pointed to a return of the primitive Christianity and Luther's idea that each Christian could be his own priest might have been used to justify the priestly role of the magician. In fact this is amply illustrated by Prospero in Shakespeare's *Tempest*; and it will be reconfirmed 50 years after the Elizabethan age by Thomas Vaughan (1622-1644) in his *Magia Adamica* (1650).<sup>142</sup>

In spite of the official rejection of magic as demonic and the success of a play like Marlowe's *Dr. Faust*, high magic fascinated scholars and students alike. K. Thomas reports that “at the universities many Jacobean students were interested in magic; both in the natural variety, and in the conjuration of spirits, which seems to have been the equivalent of drug-taking today as the fashionable temptation for undergraduates<sup>143</sup>. Consequently, if throughout the Middle Ages scholars could be rarely deemed potential magicians and blamed for their

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p.268. “The notion that purity of life was an essential preliminary to scientific discovery ran through the long history of alchemy and shaped the Rosicrucianism of the seventeenth century”.

<sup>141</sup> G. Dragnea Horvath, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>142</sup> Th. Vaughan, *Magia Adamica*, Early English Books Online: “Magic is nothing else but the Wisdom of the Creator revealed and planted in the Creature. It is a Name (as Agrippa saith) ipsi Evangelio non ingratum, not Distastefull to the very Gospel it self. Magicians were the first Attendants our Saviour met withall in this world, and the onely Philosophers, who acknowledged Him in the Flesh before that hee himself discovered it. I find God Conversant with Them, as Hee was formerly with the Patriarchs; He directs Them in their Travails with a Star, as hee did the Israelites with a Pillar of Fire; Hee informes Them of future Dangers in their Dreams, that having first seen his Son, they might in the next place see his Salvation. In T. Vaughan, *Magia adamica* or the antiquitie of magic, and the descent thereof from Adam” Doc .images 18-9, pp.2-3.

<sup>143</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 226.

'necromancy', as was the case of Roger Bacon, around 1600, at a popular level, magic became a standard of scholarship evaluation, as we find out from W. Vaughan's *Golden Grove*: "Nowadays among the common people... he is not adjudged any scholar at all, unless he can tell men's horoscopes, cast out devils, or hath some skill in soothsaying"<sup>144</sup>. The fascination of magic was so widely spread that even a Puritan like Sir Thomas Myddelton 'could commission the manufacture of astrologically-based magic sigils, but felt it necessary to pronounce a special prayer before putting them on.'<sup>145</sup>

After the Elizabethan age, the scholarly interest in the occult qualities of natural elements, the power of incantations, or the efficiency of spells and love philtres resulted in public debates, whose efforts of rationalizing long established popular procedures would eventually disqualify magic and impose the prestige of science, certified with the foundation of the Royal Society.<sup>146</sup> A remarkable aspect of these debates is the lack of distinction between the popular or low magic and the Hermetic magic; indeed many intellectuals indulged in the same magical practices as the common wizards<sup>147</sup>.

### 2.2.3 English Contributions

In England high magic took its inspiration mainly from two traditions: the Italian one inaugurated by Ficino and Pico della Mirandola<sup>148</sup> and built up by Francesco de Giorgi, Giovanni Battista Della Porta, Bernardino Tellesio and Giordano Bruno, and the German one, represented by Johannes Trithemius, Johann Weyer,

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 269.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.323.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 273. "From time to time, however, the arcana were rudely exposed in print, most notably in the expanded third edition of Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1665) where much of Book XV was devoted to an exposition of such formulae, but also in Robert Turner's translations of the spurious *Fourth Book of Agrippa* (1655) and the *Notory Art of Solomon* (1656). These works opened up to the reader the possibility of invoking the whole hierarchy of angels and demons, each with their own names and attributes."

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., pp.264-274.

<sup>148</sup> Thomas More was one of the first who introduced Pico's work in England, in fact one of his first works was an English translation of a Latin biography of Pico della Mirandola, printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1510.

Cornelius Agrippa, and the German Swiss Paracelsus<sup>149</sup>. Yet, scholars like John Dee found also in the Franciscan Roger Bacon an English magus to emulate and took his inspiration from the Jewish Cabala, delivered to Christian readers by Guillaume Postel.

It is generally assumed that “in England esoteric magical speculation was largely a derivative affair, stimulated by continental writings, but adding little of its own.”<sup>150</sup> The typical example given in this respect is Robert Fludd (1574-1637), an 'out of trend' esoteric thinker, who continued to take Hermetism as a theoretical foundation, after Isaac Casaubon had denied the Hermetic books their pre-Christian character in 1614<sup>151</sup>. If the English did not contribute much to the theory of magic, they were definitely very active at putting its ideas to practice. A good example is Sir Walter Raleigh (or Raleigh), who valued magic as “the art of worshipping God”<sup>152</sup>, earned himself a reputation for alchemy and medicine, founded "The School of Night", a secret society attended by élite intellectuals, which presumably paved the way for the Rosicrucian movement, and applied his ideas of alchemy and natural magic to historical reflection in his *History of the World*<sup>153</sup>. His contemporary John Dee conveyed a synthesis of Neoplatonic and Hermetic ideas in the *Propaedeumata Aphoristica* (1558), the *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564) and the *Mathematicall Preface* to Euclid's *Elementes of Geometrie* (1570) translated by Sir Henry Billingsley, but his concise enunciations were meant to stimulate practical achievements, briefly summarized as increase of individual and national power. Frances A. Yates values him as the inspirer of the 'Rosicrucian Enlightenment' and of the first theatre built in London, as mentioned before; he was definitely the artificer of England's imperial ideology, supported both with mythological claims and with what would be called today *Realpolitik*. For example, in 1580 he “presented a map of part of the Northern hemisphere to Queen Elizabeth I, endorsed with arguments setting

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<sup>149</sup> Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus Von Hohenheim as a German-Swiss physician and alchemist who wrote part of his works in German *Der grossen Wundartzney* (“Great Surgery Book”) in 1536.

<sup>150</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 267.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271 Fludd published abroad and in Latin.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p.320

<sup>153</sup> Rattansi, P.M., *Alchemy and Natural Magic in Raleigh's History of the World* in *Alchemy and Chemistry in the XVI and XVII centuries*, Kluwer Academic Publishers Group, 1994.

out the legitimacy of England's rights in North America.”<sup>154</sup> He further “drew up a plan to carry out the colonization, conversion, and general exploitation of 'Atlantis', Dee's term for America”<sup>155</sup>. His interest in turning his country 'invincible' concretized in the *General and Rare Memorials Pertaining to the Perfect Art of Navigation* (1577), where he “urges the creation of a Petty Navy Royal”<sup>156</sup>. A manuscript of Abbot Trithemius's *Steganographia* he purchased in Antwerp for a huge sum of money, appears to have been both an input for philosophy, and a manual for cipher writing. The use of spirit incantations to convey messages described in *Books I and II* may have appealed to his genuine belief in angels and may have stimulated his experiments in conjuring spirits. But the fact that he presented his discovery to the Queen's chief minister, Sir William Cecil with a missive<sup>157</sup>, in a period when the latter “was just beginning to put in place the espionage network”<sup>158</sup>, impressively efficient under Francis Walsingham thanks to the versatile use of codes, is difficult to be taken for a coincidence. Besides, Dr. Dee owned several copies of Trithemius's *Polygraphia*, as well as Jacques Gohorry's *De usu & mysteriis notarum* and Jacopo Silvestri's *Opus novum*, and actually the Book III of the *Steganographia*, as recently stated by research, was “primarily a work of cryptography, not magic”<sup>159</sup>. All this pleads for Dee's interest in cipher writing and cipher decoding and his involvement in the practical application of Renaissance magic. Yet it also points to his conviction that spirits delivered messages in an occult manner, and the magician needed secret codes expertise to comprehend them, as his and Kelly's conversations with angels prove. In his oftenly mentioned *Preface to Euclid*, the mystique of numbers, mostly derived from Proclus<sup>160</sup>, counts also as a superior justification

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<sup>154</sup> J. Dee, *Essential Readings*, selected and introduced by Gerald Suster, Berkeley, California, 2003, p.47.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.47-8.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>157</sup> in which he pleads for the “the advancement of good Letters and wonderful, divine and secret Sciences”, *Ibid.*, p.29.

<sup>158</sup> B. Woolley, *The Queen's Conjurer, The Science and Magic of Dr. John Dee, Adviser to Queen Elizabeth I*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2001, p. 71.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69-71. Two scholars who worked independently Thomas Ernst, “Schwarzweisse Magie. Der Schlüssel zum dritten Buch der Steganographia des Trithemius,” *Daphnis* 25, no.1 (1996) and Jim Reeds, “Solved: The Ciphers in Book III of Trithemius 's Steganographia,” *Cryptologia* 22:4 (1998).

<sup>160</sup> Bert Hansen, *Isis*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Jun., 1977), pp. 321-323, Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of The History of Science Society, in JSTOR., p. 322., a review of J. Dee, *The Mathematicall Praeface to the Elements of Geometrie of Euclid of Megara* (1570), A facsimile with Introduction by Allen Debus, Science History Publications, New York, 1975.

for the necessity of applying mathematics in every important practical field, from *statics*, *geodesy*, map making, optics, mechanics, mining, architecture, navigation, astrology, up to the *Thaumaturgike* aimed at giving “certain order to make strange works of the sense to be perceived and of men greatly to be wondered at”.<sup>161</sup> Making good use of his mathematical knowledge, Dee corrected the Julian Calendar in 1582 “to a greater degree of accuracy than any other contemporary mathematician”<sup>162</sup> but his project was turned down by the council of Archbishops as it “smacked of Popishness”<sup>163</sup>.

Whereas Dee's applications of magic informed both the political field<sup>164</sup> and the exploration of the supernatural or rather imagined world of spirits, other personalities like William Gilbert (1544-1603) and Francis Bacon marked the passage from natural magic to science. The former's doctrine of the magnet grounded in the Neoplatonic assumption that the world is alive and “seemed to open the possibility of telepathy, magical healing and action at a distance”<sup>165</sup>. Working on the causes of sympathy or attraction, a basic presupposition of magic, Gilbert came to explain them through magnetism and electricity<sup>166</sup>. He concluded that the Earth itself is a magnet, introduced the idea of a magnetic pole, and replaced terms like *occult sympathy* and *occult powers* by *electric attraction* and *electric force*.

Francis Bacon, on the other hand, elaborated the postulates of high magic in his own way. The centrality of the equation 'knowledge is power' and his aim at reorganizing sciences in order to restore man to the mastery over nature he had lost by Adam's fall, is definitely of Hermetic inspiration<sup>167</sup>. Yet Bacon rejected the Neoplatonic doctrines of sympathy and antipathy as 'idle and most slothful conjectures'<sup>168</sup> favouring accurate and patient inquiry into causes and effects. In line with ideas expressed more than a century before him by Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, Bacon granted natural magic a role in producing effects for

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<sup>161</sup> J. Dee, *Essential Readings*, op.cit., p. 41.

<sup>162</sup> S. Skinner, *Preface to The Complete Enochian Dictionary*, op.cit., p.14.

<sup>163</sup> Ibidem. As a consequence the “English calendar reform put off by several centuries”.

<sup>164</sup> More on the subject in W. H. Sherman, *John Dee. The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1995.

<sup>165</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op.cit., p.224.

<sup>166</sup> His works: *De Magnete, Magneticisque Corporibus, et de Magno Magnete Tellure*, 1600 and *De Mundo Nostro Sublunari Philosophia Nova*, published posthumously in 1651.

<sup>167</sup> *Novum Organum*, 1620 and *Instauratio Magna*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, online, Kathleen Marguerite Lea, Anthony M. Quinton, Baron Quinton.

<sup>168</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op.cit., p. 225.

“the relief of man's estate”. In his taxonomy of cognition he placed natural magic under natural philosophy, as the applied correlative of metaphysics, the theoretical science aimed at inquiring into causes of observable regularities or patterns, according to his system of thought.

An interesting aspect of Bacon's approach to magic is his reluctance to imagination and the efficiency of words. In *Book II* of the *Advancement of Learning* he divided human faculties into memory, imagination and reason. While memory produces history and reason philosophy, imagination is responsible for 'Poesy' that is 'feigned history', devoid of any relevant cognitive role. He even went a step further and operated a long-lasting distinction between science and art, with the implicit superiority of the first. In *Sylva Sylvarum or A Natural History in Ten Centuries*<sup>169</sup> Bacon made a number of reflections on the role of imagination in the 'superstitious and magical arts'<sup>170</sup> and discussed 'experiments' meant to prove the force of imagination in psychological manipulation. Albeit he does not mention Bruno, his examples are surprisingly similar to the techniques of manipulation described by the Italian scholar in *Theses de magia* (1589-90). In addressing the fallacies of thought produced by the 'idols' of the mind in *Novum Organum*, Bacon placed words under the *idols of the market*, signalling the inadequacy of language to convey clear concepts and clear-cut distinctions. His disenchanted attitude to imagination and his distrust of words distinguishes him clearly from personalities of the preceding generation like Raleigh and John Dee, even if he shared with them an interest in the practical effects of magic, a familiarity with esoterism and the ideals of the Rosicrucian movement, he may have belonged to.

#### 2.2.4 The Sovereign Magician

An interesting way to legitimate magic in England had to do with the perpetration of archaic beliefs, typical “of all the Aryan races from India to Ireland”<sup>171</sup>, in the effects of the sovereign's behaviour on the well-being of the community and in his

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<sup>169</sup> F. Bacon, *Philosophical Works*, Baldwin, London, 1826.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43

<sup>171</sup> J.G. Frazer, *The Illustrated Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion*, BT Batsford, London, 1996, p.61.

miraculous healing gifts<sup>172</sup>, in particular with reference to scrofula, a disease known actually in English as the King's Evil. Shakespeare refers to this conviction in *Macbeth*, where the English King can cure a disease *call'd the evil* (4.3.147) of *strangely-visited people* (4.3.150). As only the legitimate King was granted this divine gift, “the ability to cure the Evil ... became a touchstone for any claimant to the English throne”<sup>173</sup>.

Before James I, Queen Elizabeth had often exercised her healing powers too. Actually “Elizabeth I's healings were cited as proof that the Papal Bull of Excommunication had failed to take effect; and were even claimed as a justification for giving her ambassadors diplomatic precedence over those of Spain”<sup>174</sup>. Spenser's *Fairie Queene* was thus both a metaphorical homage paid to Elizabeth, and a literary confirmation of her powers. It is interesting to note that while Henry Tudor's religious reform resulted in the violent destruction of holy images, during Elizabeth's reign her miniature portraits were worn as personal talismans<sup>175</sup>. The Queen had the 'propitious date of her coronation' calculated by John Dee. Later on, as John Dee's Diaries assert, she consulted his horoscopes before taking important decisions and gave him permission to continue his studies of philosophy and alchemy undisturbed<sup>176</sup>.

As the Elizabethans lived in the tension of a dual system of thought, the royal thaumaturgy had its counterpart in black magic, which was considered equally efficient. To counteract it, the Parliament passed an Act for the punishment of black magic with death penalty in 1563 and in 1580, a character named Nicholas Johnson was accused of having made a wax statue of the queen for violent purposes<sup>177</sup>.

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid. In the Ch. *The Sovereign Magician*, pp.61-2: “It was the belief of the ancient Irish that when their kings observed the customs of their ancestors, the seasons were mild, the crops plentiful, the cattle fruitful, the waters abounded with fish, and the fruit trees had to be propped up on account of the weight they produce. A canon attributed to St. Patrick enumerates among the blessings that attend the reign of a just king “fine weather, calm seas, crops abundant, and trees laden with fruit. On the other hand, dearth, dryness of cows, blight of fruit, and scarcity of corn were regarded as infallible proofs that the reigning king was bad.”

<sup>173</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op. cit., p. 231.

<sup>174</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>175</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>176</sup> J. Dee, *Essential Readings*, op.cit., p. 101.

<sup>177</sup> A. Serpieri, *Introduction to the Italian version of Macbeth*, *Macbeth*, Giunti, Florence, 1996, p. XII.

### 2.2.5 James I and Black Magic

James I not only believed in the power of witchcraft, but also used it as propaganda in favour of his divine gifts. In *Newes from Scotland, Declaring the Damnable life and death of Doctor Fian, a notable Sorcerer, who was burned at Edenbrough in Ianuary last. 1591* the reader finds out about the examinations of cases of witchcraft “taken in the presence of the Kinges Maiestie”<sup>178</sup>, which involved not only women, but also Doctor Fian, a man reputed a dangerous sorcerer. The report of these cases has all the macabre ingredients of witch trials all over Europe, including torture and the discovery of the Devil's mark on the suspects' bodies. The witches 'confessed' the devil's hatred against the King and his attempt to destroy him. Their execution “for example sake, to remayne a terrour to all others hereafter, that shall attempt to deale in the lyke wicked and ungodlye actions”<sup>179</sup> was meant to underline the fact that “the King is the child&servant of God”, “he is a true Christian, and trusteth in God, “ and consequently “God is with him”<sup>180</sup>. The author of *Newes from Scotland* is unknown. *Daemonologie* (1597) is King James' authored treatise about the danger of witchcraft against the sceptics who had tried to bring logical and commonsensical arguments against it. The King mentions with anger “one called SCOT an Englishman” who “is not ashamed in publike print to deny, that ther can be such a thing as Witch-craft;”<sup>181</sup> and VVIERUS, “a German Phisition” who “sets out a publick apologie for al these craftesfolkes, whereby, procuring for their impunitie, he plainely bewrayes himselfe to have bene one of that profession”<sup>182</sup>. The treatise in 3 books is actually a dialogue between Philomates and Epistemon, who reason on witchcraft and the devil's power in theological terms with the underlying idea that the Devil is allowed by God to corrupt people and convert them to the black art, acting as “God's hang-man”. It is interesting how the author considers “unnecessarie and perilous” for the reader to inquire into the practices labelled as sorcery, yet still quotes possible sources like Bodinus' *Demonomanie*,

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<sup>178</sup> King James I of England, *Daemonologie*, edited by G.B. Harrison, The Book Three, San Diego, California, 2002, p. 1

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.

<sup>181</sup> *The Preface to the Reader*, pp. xi-xii

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii.



two German writers Hyperius and Hemmingius and unwillingly mentions Cornelius Agrippa and Vvierus<sup>183</sup>.

The books James I put under attack were Johann Weyer's *De Praestigiis Daemonum* (1563 and republished several times by 1583) and Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584). When he became King of England he ordered the public burning of Scot's book. It is difficult to imagine someone like Francis Bacon being the Lord Chancellor of a sovereign with such a mentality, but this actually illustrates the tension experienced in England between the effort to rationalize culture by putting it on a natural basis, the enduring mythical dimension of historical and political thought and the religious fervour which put in conflict discording orientations: the Catholicism of the *recusants*<sup>184</sup> and the Jesuits, expelled by James I after the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, the balanced Protestantism of Queen Elizabeth ratified at Ratisbonne in 1541 and the Calvinism that was conquering intellectuals like those of Cambridge<sup>185</sup> and influenced cultural decisions of the King.

### 2.2.6 The Discoverie of Witchcraft

It is apparently from a Calvinist point of view that the Kentish Esquire Reginald Scot (aprox 1538-1599) took a critical stance towards “witchmongers, papists and poets”<sup>186</sup>, in the volume *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Central to his debate is a statement expressed by Calvin in *Institutions*, (book IV, Ch 19, § 18) against the proliferation of the miraculous in the Catholic tradition<sup>187</sup>. By denying the persistence of grace after the age of the apostles, Calvin insisted that the miracles were no longer possible. Scot's first chapter of Book VIII is actually entitled “That

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., pp. xiv-v.

<sup>184</sup> *Recusant* – initially denoting non-conformist or disident, the word referred to those who remained true to the Catholic Church.

<sup>185</sup> William Perkins (1558-1602) was for example in the Queen's time one of the most drastic Protestant preachers. The Calvinists tried to impose the Articles of Lambeth, promoted by the archbishop Whitgift, but the Queen refused to sign them. In Delumeau, Jean, *Le Péché et la peur. La culpabilisation en Occident (XIII-XVIII siècles)*, Paris, Librairie Fayard, 1983, chs 19, 20, 21.

<sup>186</sup> R. Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, New York, Dover Publications, 1972, p.5.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., pp.89-90.

miracles are ceased”, a formula repeated by the archbishop of Canterbury in Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1599, I, I, 67-69) and by Lafeu in *All's Well that Ends Well* (1602-3)<sup>188</sup>.

Setting out from Calvin's statement, Scot argues that ascribing the capacity to produce disease by casting the evil eye, change weather or people's fortune to witches - he considered like Weyer 'ignorant raving old women'<sup>189</sup> -, when the apostolic gift of grace was no longer working, meant lacking faith and logical consistency. His main targets are *Malleus maleficarum* by the Dominicans H. Kramer and J. Sprenger and Jean Bodin's *Demonomanie des sorciers*; two tragically influential books, which “agree in unconstantie, fables, and impossibilities”<sup>190</sup>. He contrasts them with the reasonable arguments of Agrippa and Weyer and denounces “the tyrannical crueltie of witchmongers and inquisitors” in Ch. IX and the improper use of excerpts from ancient poets like Ovid, Virgil or Lucan (Book XII, Ch.Viii) as evidence for the power of witches.

In writing this book, Scot used more than logic and readings: he attended trials and questioned magistrates and divines, confronting his direct observations with the written sources. In 1581 he appears to have been involved in examining witnesses in the trial of Margaret Symons of Brencheley<sup>191</sup>, found not guilty. From his position as participant in the inquiry, Scot must have realized how easily the poor and ignorant could be intimidated and sentenced to death. In an analogous way Weyer had learned from his personal experience as a doctor that many witches were just emarginated, mentally deranged women.

Scot's confutation of witchcraft extends to other understandings of the concept of magic. The only agent able to produce wonderful things, according to him is nature itself.<sup>192</sup> Any other type of magic performed by humans, from theurgy to the art of common jugglers, can be exposed to criticism and stripped of its 'mystery'. In order to do so, he completes his treatise with instructions and drawings regarding magical operations of various types, from enclosing a spirit in a crystal stone (XV, XII), and learning how “To know of treasure hidden in the

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<sup>188</sup> A debate on the topic in G. Dragnea Horvath, op. cit., ch. *I miracoli e la filosofia*, pp.101-110.

<sup>189</sup> J. Weyer, *On Witchcraft*, an abridged translation of Johann Weyer's *De Praetigiis daemonum*, Pegasus Press, University of North Carolina, Asheville, 1998, p. 263.

<sup>190</sup> R. Scot, op. cit., p.273.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

<sup>192</sup> For example in Ch. V, Book XIII he makes a brief note on “The incredible operation of waters, both standing and running; of wels, lakes, rivers, and their wonderfull effects”, which may evoke to a contemporary reader Leonardo da Vinci's studies and experiments in the field.

earth”(XV, X), to the “inventarie of the names, shapes, powers, government, and effects of divels and spirits” (XV, II), up to tricks to be performed in public, like putting a ring through your cheek and eating a knife. (XIII, XXXIV).

### 2.2.7 Magical Agencies

Scot's book raises a problem that is seminal in understanding the various evaluations of magic in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. As all types of magic were perceived as marvel producers, the difference was given by the assumed agency. The Queen's or the King's healing capacities were obviously interpreted as divine grace; Raleigh and Dr. Dee placed their operations of magic under the same category; yet King James needed the counterpart of black magic, inspired by the Devil to underline his gifts, and like him many radical adepts of Protestantism believed in the conspiracy of the Devil enacted by Catholic priests, magicians and witches, whose 'wonders' were illusions created by demons. The denial of miracles by the Reformers undermined the foundation of Renaissance magic with various consequences: phenomena that could not be accounted for were attributed to the devil and every type of magical activity demonized; those who assumed that the only producer of miracles was nature paved the way for the incorporation of natural magic into empirical science; the attitude of total distrust in any kind of external agency or imaginary worlds reduced the magician to a deplorable juggler who took advantage of others' credulitie. This latter tendency was taken to an extreme by Marlowe, who seems to have asserted that “Moses was but a juggler”<sup>193</sup> and is present in Ben Jonson's disenchanted approach to magic in *The Alchemist*.

### 2.2.8 The Popularity of Magic

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<sup>193</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op. cit., p. 271.

The popularity of magic under Elizabeth and James I can be explained by other factors too. The rise of a capitalist mentality, social mobility and the beginning of the colonial empire arose “appetite, a universal wolf,/So doubly seconded with will and power”<sup>194</sup>. Thus every citizen felt justified to strive for the welfare and happiness on earth religion denied him, while magic promised to accomplish, responding to the urgency of desire.

The Reformation of the church ceremony in England occurred in 1547 with the Edwardian Injunctions which “forbade the Christian to observe such practices as casting holy water upon his bed, ... bearing about him holy bread, or St. John's Gospel, ... ringing of holy bells; or blessing with the holy candle, to the intent thereby to be discharged of the burden of sin, or to drive away devils, or to put away dreams and fantasies; or...putting trust and confidence of health and salvation in the same ceremonies.”<sup>195</sup> This drastic change in a centuries-old ritual was attacking exactly the reassuring connection between spirit and matter, every common believer was hoping to find in religion. The essential, word-based Protestant ceremony must have had a degree of abstraction that was difficult to cope with, so no wonder that the interest in magic was reinforced: after all it was a domain where dreams and fantasies were free and were promised to be achieved by the simple manipulation of substances. Besides, while the priest was being deprived of his powers<sup>196</sup>, the magician remained a figure of mystery and fascination.

The censorship of imagination in religion seems to have had a counterbalancing effect not only in the proliferation of magic, but also in the extraordinary development of poetry and drama. Actually the playwrights, put by the Puritans in the same category as the masters of illusion, willingly equated their art to the art of magic, as we are going to prove in a following chapter, and brought magic and magicians on the stage.

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<sup>194</sup> W. Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, I. III. 121-2.

<sup>195</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op. cit., p.60.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, p. 327: “The Reformation by contrast is justly commemorated for having robbed the priest of most of his magical functions. His powers of exorcism were taken away, and his formulae of benediction and consecration much reduced. The end of the belief in transubstantiation, the discarding of Catholic vestments, and the abolition of clerical celibacy, cumulatively diminished the mystique of the clergyman within his parish.”

## 2.2.9 Magic and Literature

Magic had been present in the English literary tradition since immemorial times. Both the oral lore and the written sagas abounded in phantastic events produced by magicians. The figure of the ancient druid was vivid in the collective memory.<sup>197</sup> In the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Merlin appears in the chivalry tradition as an interesting elaboration of archaic saga figures. The fact that it was Geoffrey of Monmouth, the author of the national epic who makes the Trojan Brut the mythical ancestor of the British, to launch this character in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, (aprox. 1135) in *Prophetia Merlini*, 1134 ca and *Vita Merlini* 1150<sup>198</sup> surrounded Merlin from the very beginning with the aura of a redeeming hero. Initially Merlin was just a druid turning mad after his brothers had been killed, in a symbolic disintegration of the pre-Christian forms of wisdom. Successively he developed into a key figure of national mythology by tutoring Arthur and playing a part in the Round Table stories. Merlin is a protagonist in the *Dame du lac* (13<sup>th</sup> c.) and in Thomas Malory's *Mort d'Arthur* (1485) with a feminine counterpart in the clever, malignant and powerful Morgana. Shakespeare's contemporaries had thus an imaginary world that was framed not only by the Bible, the classical culture and the archaic superstition, but also by the erotic magic of the Tristan and Isolde story, the half human, half demonic Melusine, the charmed castles, woods and the magical transformations which abounded in the adventures of Arthur's Knights. The interest in magic in Queen Elizabeth's time can also be illustrated by the choice of Italian works to be translated into English: the most successful had male and female magicians as characters, and included magical objects and phantastic animals: Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* had two translators- Richard Carew (1591) and Edward Fairfax (1600); while "Sir John Harington, at

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<sup>197</sup> R. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000

<sup>198</sup> M. Domenichelli, La storia obliata e la magia delle rappresentazioni. Il romanzo storico, il neostoricismo: infrastoria, posthistoria e controstoria, in "Moderna", VIII, 1-2, 2006. Merlin becomes a popular European figure. In a few years he is taken over by the French author Wace de Caen in his *Roman de Brut* in 1155; in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Layamon introduces the character in *Brut* and Robert de Baron in his *Le Roman de l'Histoire du Graal e Merlin*, 1200-1210; in Venice an anonymous author writes between 1274-79, *Les Prophécies de Merlin*; in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Paolino Pieri writes the *Storia di Merlino*; an anonymous contemporary of Pieri authors the *Historia di Merlino*; in Spain, in the 1400s and the first half of the 1500s there are two anonymous epics focused on Merlin: *El baladro del sabio Merlin* and *El baladro*.

the command of Queen Elizabeth, made a version of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1591) in eight-lined stanzas".<sup>199</sup>

Summing up, magic was intimately connected to the formation and rise of the English nation to a greater extent than theatre. It pervaded the mentality of every social level, the sovereign included. It stood in an ambiguous relationship to religion, due to the survival and revival of the pre-Christian mythology, to the overlapping of the priest's and the magician's roles in the figure of the ancient druid, in the clergy dabbling in magic, but also in the Magus of the Neoplatonic tradition. By depriving the priest of his charismatic power and reducing the ritual to the sermon, the Reformation indirectly helped to increase the attractiveness of magic.

Magic was object of religious battles in England, from Wycliffe's attempt to reform Christianity, down to the Post Reformation Puritan militancy; opposing it caused social and cultural tension, persecution and crime. It informed legislation and political power and was at the centre of the battle of books, involving Reginald Scot and indirectly Weyer on one hand, and King James I and Bodin, he agreed with, on the other. Magic contributed to the beginning of modern science with John Dee's pioneer work in applied mathematics, Gilbert's research on the magnet, Bacon's assets of a new epistemology and the early research of the Royal Society. After the Civil War it was embraced by various Protestant sects and learned readers of the occult and contrasted in the sermons of Anglican ministers, focusing debates till the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

From the first runes inscriptions and the oldest narrative poem, Beowulf, through the centuries, magic continued to inspire English poetry, fiction and theatre. The medieval romances, Elizabethan drama and Romanticism are highpoints of creativity and as many examples of remarkable literary elaboration of magic. Adding to this consistent tradition contemporary successes like *The Magus* by John Fowles, J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* books by J. K. Rowling, one can say that magic has never ceased to interest the English minds.

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<sup>199</sup> G. Sampson, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p.149.

### 3.THEORETICAL PREMISES

#### 3.1 Difficulties of Approach

In his inquiry into the essence of philosophy Martin Heidegger sets out from the Greek origins of the concept: „Wenn wir aber das Wort „Philosophie“ jetzt nicht mehr wie einen abgebrauchten Titel verwenden, wenn wir statt dessen das Wort „Philosophie“ aus seinem Ursprung hören, dann lautet es: φιλοσοφία. Das Wort „Philosophie“ spricht jetzt griechisch. Das griechische Wort ist als *griechisches* Wort ein Weg<sup>200</sup>. *Theatre* and *magic* sounded originally *theatron* and *mageia*, they also spoke Greek, now the question arises if 'hearing' them at their origins is a path, ein Weg, to circumscribe the concepts. Defined by Heidegger on the traces of Heraclitus's ἀνήρ φιλόσοφος<sup>201</sup>, Φιλοσοφία is a term that covered from the very beginning a specific relation of reason to existence and a domain of human application, which has remained basically unchanged through more than two millennia and half of culture, with all variations due to the impact of theology or science. The Greek thinkers themselves specified their occupation and established its professional idiom in texts which are essential for the coming into being of Φιλοσοφία.

Unlike the case of philosophy, theatre and magic illustrate the history of discontinuity, transformation of cultural forms, linguistic difference and variations of word meaning. In treating theatre and magic in their originally documented manifestations in the Greek world, one has to face the disparity of sources. In the case of theatre, archeological discoveries, the texts of tragedies and comedies and Aristotle's *Poetics* have enabled a plausible reconstruction of its origins and its cultural significance to the *polis*. As far as magic is concerned the only direct sources are the so-called *defixiones*<sup>202</sup>, found in abundance in Athen's archaeological sites, while all the other written references are reflections on magic belonging to a historian, an anonymous physician, philosophers and poets.

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<sup>200</sup> M.Heidegger, *Was ist das – die Philosophie*, op.cit., p.6.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., pp. 12- 13

<sup>202</sup> Technical term used by scholars to denote inscriptions with magical formulas, containing names and maledictions, from the Latin *defigo*, to cast a malediction.

### 3.2 Theatre. Conceptual Analysis

In classical Greece, *theatron*, derived from *theaomai*, (I look at, gaze at, ) denoted initially an area in the open-air theatre where spectators could sit and watch the show.<sup>203</sup> It was also used to indicate a place of assembly or the theatre audience<sup>204</sup>. One can speculate on the meanings of *theatron* as place of public contemplation, implying commonality of approach to a cultural issue, and then it is clear that the *theatrum* of early modernity as space of cognition can be related to it. The terminology pertinent to performances included other semantic areas like that of *agôn*, which has to do with games, contests, thus the sense of competition<sup>205</sup>, *dràma*, action, set of circumstances and only later theatrical show; last, but not least, *tragôdia* and *komodïa* with reference to the genres staged. Interesting enough, if the structure of modern theatre is perfectly retraceable in the Greek antiquity, names denoting its parts, like *skene* or *orchestra* have undergone mutation of meaning: the former indicated the curtain behind which the actors changed masques or costumes, the latter was the place where the chorus used to perform its choreography<sup>206</sup>.

Etymology is not a direct way to circumscribe the concept of theatre, however the Ur-phänomen, the classical theatre, allows several understandings: in ancient Greece theatre was a public institution, a mass-medium for religious, moral and political ideas, a common form of entertainment, an art of poetry with an accomplished text and an elaborate performing art, involving music, dance, costumes, scenery and special effects. This corresponds to what theatre turned out to be in Elizabethan England after a long process which involved its extension to *ludi* and *spectaculi* at the time of the Roman Empire, its complete decay under the attacks of the rising Christian culture, and its rebirth from the liturgy in the Middle Ages.

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<sup>203</sup> Baldry, H.C., *The Greek Tragic Theatre*, Chatto & Windus, London 1971, it. *I Greci a teatro, Spettacolo e forme della tragedia*, Laterza. Roma-Bari, ch.V. pp.53-5.

<sup>204</sup> Liddell, H.G. & Scott R., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Clarendon Press, New York, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, p.664.

<sup>205</sup> Hence *protagonist* and *antagonist*, but also *agony*.

<sup>206</sup> H. C. Baldry, op. cit., p. 55.



In a more restricted sense, for Aristotle, the art of theatre, implying both the poetic text and the performance of tragedies and comedies, represents a mode of imitation (*mimesis*) (1447a). Pertinent to his own ethical and aesthetic assets, the philosopher ranks tragedy higher than comedy. Tragedy is “the mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished by distinct forms in its sections; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions” (1450 a); while comedy is an imitation 'of men worse than the average', based on the ridiculous, that “may be defined as a mistake or deformity not productive of pain or harm to others...” (1449 a).<sup>207</sup>

### 3.2.1 Aristotelean Mimesis in Shakespeare

In Shakespeare's time the theatrical genres were more numerous and their distinction was not hierarchical. In *Hamlet*, Polonius enumerates, “tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral” (II. II. 424-5). The imitation was not only of life, but also of the literary models of antiquity and Renaissance Italy. However, the performing art is understood by Shakespeare in line with Aristotle as a form of *mimesis*. To interpret a text on a stage is to give it life in the spirit of verisimilitude, so the actors, as Hamlet instructs them, have to “suit the action to the word, the word to action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature” (III. II. 17-19). The end of the art of theatre “both at the first, and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure” (III. II. 21-24). This means that for Shakespeare the imitation of nature substantiated on stage aims at presenting the spectator with a reified image of his virtues and vices and of the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of his time. This induced process of self-awareness,

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<sup>207</sup> Aristotle *The Poetics*, Edited and Translated by Stephen Halliwell in *Aristotle Poetics, Longinus On the Sublime, Demetrius on Style*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1995, pp.48-49

of objectifying one's innermost drives and secret acts was expected to culminate, as in Aristotle, in a cathartic self-disclosure, as Hamlet states:

I have heard  
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,  
Have by the very cunning of the scene  
Been struck so to the soul that presently  
They have proclaim'd their malefactions;

(II. II. 528-534)

In the *Poetics* Aristotle grounds imitation in the human nature. In Book 4 he states: “It is clear that the general origin of poetry was due to two causes, each of them part of human nature. Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation.” A delight originated by man's inner necessity to know, to learn, to gather the meanings of things, which is not specific only to the philosopher, 'but also to the rest of mankind'.<sup>208</sup> Imitation regards thus both the process of creation, as 'the poet should even act his story with the very gestures of his personages. Given the natural qualifications, he who feels the emotions to be described will be the most convincing’ (1445 a)<sup>209</sup>; and the process of reception of the play. Contemporary science has confirmed Aristotle: the spectators of a performance 'imitate', or rather simulate mentally whatever they see on a stage, from movement to emotion<sup>210</sup>, as we are biologically equipped for mirroring, as the mirror neurons demonstrate.

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<sup>208</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, In *The Complete Works of Aristotle, The Revised Oxford Translation*, Edited by Jonathan Barnes, Bollingen Series LXXI, 2, Princeton University Press, 1995., pp. 2316-2340.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p.2329.

<sup>210</sup> Gilbert Lelord, a biologist of Université de Tours (C. H. U. Bretonneau) mentions the “induction posturomotrice” experiments in the field, La participation à l’action s’exprime par l’imitation du mouvement. Si enregistre l’électroencéphalogramme du spectateur et qu’on lui présente sur l’écran un acteur effectuant des mouvements simples de flexion-extension, on voit sur le tracé des ondes qui réagissent, qui accompagnent, qui suivent le rythme du mouvement proposé par l’acteur. P.3 Gilbert Cohen-Seat a appelé «induction posturomotrice» le fait que le mouvement de l’acteur induit chez le spectateur des réactions préparatoires à l’exécution du même mouvement. Les mouvements inducteurs sont non seulement les mouvements exécutés sur l’écran, mais aussi les mouvements de caméra qui se substituent en quelque sorte aux déplacements de l’œil du spectateur.” In *Spectacle & Image in Renaissance Europe*, Selected Papers of the XXXII nd Conference at the Centre d’Études Supérieures de la Renaissance de Tours 29 June – 8 July 1989. Edited by André Lascombes, E. J. Brill, Leiden, New York, Köln, 1993.

### 3.2.2. Nature in Shakespeare

An inquiry into Shakespeare's conception of theatre setting out from Aristotle, brings forth two questions: what does Shakespeare understand by 'nature' and in what way is the poetic creation the result of imitation. Amply debated in the plays, the concept of nature has many contextual meanings that can be abstracted to *human nature* and *Nature*. Human nature manifests itself in the unique composition of body and soul, will, reason and emotional capacity, typical of each personality. So Lady Macbeth fears her husband's *nature* as "It is too full o' the milk of human kindness/ To catch the nearest way" (I. V. 17-8). *Nature* can also mean a human's life on earth, as a mortal creature. The ghost of Hamlet's father confesses his having to purge "the foul crimes done in my days of nature" (I. V. 12); while the Queen tries to make him accept his father's death as "All that lives must die,/ Passing through nature to eternity" (I. II. 72-3). The passage through the natural, that is physical and mortal stage, to eternity, is marked by choices that put to test man's will and reason, in their conflict with the destabilizing effects of passion, that oft, under heaven, 'does afflict our natures' as Polonius teaches his daughter (II. I. 101-5). In the Elizabethan drama, as in the baroque literature in general, "Die Affekte spielen so eine besondere Rolle: Sie sind die natürlichen Triebkräfte der menschlichen Geschichte. Sie bestimmen die Dynamik der gefallenen Natur, sie charakterisieren den Schauplatz, an dem sich die Geschichte des Menschen ereignet."<sup>211</sup> For Shakespeare passions must be distinguished from "imperial love, that god most high (II. III. 74-5), a hypostasis of the Christian God. Passions are selfish affections that could go by self-love and are inspired by the devil and his ministers.

Thus the battle between good and evil takes place in the human soul. In the comedies, love is victorious and wins over selfish passions; there is confidence in man's fundamentally good nature and capacity to use reason in order to avoid

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<sup>211</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Welche Natur wird nachgeahmt? Beobachtungen zur Erscheinung der Natur in der barocken Literatur*. In: *Künste und Natur in Diskursen der Frühen Neuzeit*, hrsg. von Hartmut Laufhütte, Band 1, Wiesbaden 2000, S. 133-156. (=Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung 35), p.126.

evil, a vision that can be summarized by Page's words in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*:

No man means evil but the devil,/ and we shall know him by his horns

(V. II. 14-16)

In the tragedies, “love cools” under the action of selfish passions and all the love bonds disintegrate: “friendship falls off, brothers divide. In cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack'd twixt son and father”<sup>212</sup>. Men cause devastating effects with their passions, either due to the ‘ignorant fumes that mantle/ Their clearer reason’, as Prospero suggests in *The Tempest* (V. I. 67-8) or to the explicit siding with the devil, as in *Macbeth*. Man's obedience to the demons is a bond that seals the two falls: Lucifer's fall and Adam's fall. Macdonwald's betrayal of his lord and king in *Macbeth* is a reiteration in the Scottish microcosm of Lucifer's cosmic rebellion, which makes the Sergeant say he is: “Worthy to be a rebel, for to that/ The multiplying villainies of nature/ Do swarm upon him” (I. II.10-12).<sup>213</sup> This corresponds to the ideas of natural theology, in which “der Engelsturz, in dem die Heiligen Boten Gottes sich in Dämonen und Teufel wandelten, ist ganz parallel zum adamitischen Sündenfall imaginiert. Seine Folgen bestehen in der Doppeldeutigkeit der Natur, die auch gegen ihren ursprünglichen Sinn gebraucht werden kann; und dazu haben die Dämonen die Macht.”<sup>214</sup> The “Doppeldeutigkeit der Natur” runs through *Macbeth* from the beginning to the end. In conjuring the spirits, Lady Macbeth uses the term *nature* twice. At first, she asks the spirits 'that tend on mortal thoughts' to unsex her, and “Stop up the access and passage to remorse,/ That no compunctious visitings of nature/ Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between/ Th' effect and it!” (I. V. 39-46). Then she expects the 'murdering ministers' to 'wait on nature's mischief' in their 'sightless substances' (I. V. 47-9). Lady Macbeth is aware of her being naturally endowed with a sense of justice and

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<sup>212</sup> *King Lear*, I. II. 119-122.

<sup>213</sup> Analogously, Richard II's deposition, announced by the gardener, is for his queen a second fall: Thou, old Adam's likeness, set to dress this garden,/ How dares thy harsh rude tongue sound this displeasing news?/ What Eve, what serpent, hath suggested thee/ To make a second fall of cursed man?/ Why dost thou say King Richard is deposed? (Richard II, III. IV. 73-7)

<sup>214</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Welche Natur wird nachgeahmt? Beobachtungen zur Erscheinung der Natur in der barocken Literatur* op. cit., p.124.

compassion as a human being and a woman, yet she freely decides to un-nature herself and cause mischief, passing on the side of the devil.

The goodness of nature, a reiteration of the goodness of God's primordial creation, is ultimately perverted by man, the only creature endowed with free will, who he can be a keeper and guardian of nature's integrity, or the cause of its ruin. When Macbeth tells the others how he 'discovered' Duncan dead he adds: "And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature/ For ruin's wasteful entrance" (II. III. 120-1), voicing indirectly an awareness of the consequences of his own deeds. His wild act affects immediately the visible Nature. Even the animals, companions of man since his creation and sharing Nature with him, rebel against his destructive acts. So Duncan's horses turn 'wild in nature' and "they would make war with mankind". (II. IV. ).

Lady Macbeth suggests Banquo's and his son's murder by pointing out that *in them Nature's copy's not eterne* (III. II. 38). To murder means to destroy Nature's copy or rather the materialization of the divine archetypes. The Scottish medieval King knows that Nature's capacity of regeneration is based on the treasure of germens, the *Keimgründe der Schöpfung*, and also that "Dämonen stören die Entwicklung der Seminalgründe der Schöpfung"<sup>215</sup>. In the fourth act, when he conjures the weird sisters, Macbeth states this awareness:

Though you untie the winds and let them fight  
Against the churches ...  
...though the treasure  
Of nature's germens tumble all together,  
Even till destruction sicken, answer me  
To what I ask you

(IV. I. 52-3...58-61)

In the confusing duplicity of postlapsarian nature, which "hath meal and bran, contempt and grace" (Cymbeline, IV. 2) man plays double as Macbeth does, only because he fails to realize that he is part of Nature and working for *nature's mischief* is self-destructive. In other words one cannot ruin Nature without ruining the nature in oneself. Deprived of sleep, as he had deprived Duncan of his life in sleep, Macbeth finds out that he had disrupted "great nature's second course",

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<sup>215</sup> W.Schmidt-Biggemann, *Welche Natur wird nachgeahmt? Beobachtungen zur Erscheinung der Natur in der barocken Literatur*, op.cit., p.125.

“innocent sleep”, “the death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,/ Balm of hurt minds,... Chief nourisher in life's feast (II. II. 38-43)”, interrupting the sequence of consuming days and restoring nights, wonderfully planned since the creation of the world. The doctor who visits Lady Macbeth notices in her “A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching!” (V. I. 10-13). The unnatural behaviour of the Macbeth couple has a destructive effect on nature's germens. At the end, there are fathers without sons (Macduff and Siward; and sons without fathers, Malcolm, Donalbain and Fleance), but no father with a son, or husband with a wife<sup>216</sup>.

A breach in nature for ruin's wasteful entrance is ultimately an offence to God, for Nature is the perpetual explication of God's creative forces<sup>217</sup> and the medium through which he manifests his grace as Celia points out in *As You Like It*:

Therefore heaven Nature charge'd  
That one body should be fill'd  
With all graces wide enlarg'd

(III. II. 138-140)

### 3.2.3 Nature, Art and Platonism

The Renaissance culture had introduced the argument of man's art as competitor to nature. Whereas 'Nature shows art' as Lysander declares when he discovers Helena's beauty (MSND, II. II. 104), Shakespeare doubts man's capacity to change things in nature by his own knowledge and ability. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, the skill and knowledge of Gerard de Narbon, Helena's father, could not make 'nature immortal' (I. I. 23-4) as “labouring art can never ransom nature/ From her inaidible estate” (II. I. 119-120). In *The Winter's Tale*, Perdita mentions an art which can improve flowers 'in their piedness', an art that shares “with great creating nature” (IV. III. 88), but according to Polixenes:

<sup>216</sup> Blits, Jan H., *The Insufficiency of Nature, Macbeth and the Natural Order*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, London, 1996, p. 201.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123: “Schöpfung ist ein Prozess, der in der Welt-Zeit nicht aufhört”.

Yet nature is made better by no mean  
But nature makes that mean: so, over that art,  
Which you say adds to nature, is an art  
That nature makes.

(IV. III. 89-92)

Human art is limited to the clever use of natural principles. And even Prospero's art, which troubles the minds of the shipwrecked and makes Alonso acknowledge "there is in this business more than nature/ Was ever conduct of" (V. I. 243-4), is just a cunning mastery of psychological control, rejected by its performer in the end as 'rough magic'.

Shakespeare's ideas on poetic creation are informed by Christian Platonism. In *MSND*, Theseus says that "The lunatic, the lover and the poet,/ Are of imagination all compact" (V. I. 7-8) and describes the poet's process of creation as follows:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

(V. I. 7-17)

The immediate association is "the Bacchic frenzy of songs and poetry" in Plato's *Phaedrus* (245a) and the Platonic theology of the Renaissance, particularly Ficino's references to art, creativity and God as an artist in his commentary to Plato's *Symposium* (1468). The poet's role is thus one of translating forms into shapes. This process implies a perception of the divine forms, archetypes or seminal reasons, an insight into God's plan of creation, a "Hypostase seiner Weisheit"<sup>218</sup>, which encompasses whatever has come and is to come into being. Shakespeare is consistent in considering God's *archetypal forms* as an inspiration for the poet. For example in the Prologue to *Henry V*, the Chorus invokes "a Muse of fire, that would ascend/The brightest heaven of invention,/ A kingdom for a stage, princes to act/ And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!"(1-4), whereby

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., p.123.

the classical Muse fuses with the Holy Spirit, represented by fire and accounting in Christianity for the gift of grace, without which poetic inspiration was not conceivable.

The poet needs also 'earthly' models to turn the spiritual perception, the 'airy nothing' into something 'bodied forth', a new piece of existence to be localized in space and named, just as God needed earth to create the first man. Turning a spiritual project into a *shape* occurs through the poet's pen, that is through the written word. In the *Genesis* and the beginning of St. John's Gospel<sup>219</sup> God's word is both ontological foundation and instrument of creation. By grounding the *shapes* in words, the poetic invention presents itself as *imitatio dei* and the poet, placed midway between heaven and earth, as Pico's Adam and the Renaissance magus.

In the frequently quoted third book of the *Republic*, Plato discards the dramatic poets, as imitators of copies, but in *The Sophist* (265) the discussion of imitation sounds more detailed. First *mimesis* divides into acquisitive and productive<sup>220</sup>. The production is "any capacity that causes things to come to be that previously were not" ( 219 b; 265b). To the question if nature produces things by some spontaneous cause that generates them without any thought, or by a cause that works by reason and divine knowledge derived from a god (265 c) the Visitor replies: "I'll assume divine expertise produces the things that come about by the so-called nature, and that human expertise produces the things that humans compound those things into. According to this account there are two kinds of production, human and divine." (265 e). Shakespeare's poet partakes equally in the plan of the divine production, and in the divine production manifest in Nature, which makes God's creativity accessible to man on earth. In the end, the poetic composition is *literally a con-position*, a way of positioning or placing together elements that are divinely projected and produced, while the real invention takes place in the *brightest heaven*.

Along with the divine archetypes and the shapes of Nature, the poet has to take into account the pre-existent tradition. In sonnet 59 he wonders "If there be

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<sup>219</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

<sup>220</sup> Plato, *Complete Works*, Edited with Introduction and Notes, by John M.Cooper, Associate Editor D.S.Hutchinson, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis./Cambridge, 1997, p. 289.



nothing new, but that which is/ Hath been before, how are our brains beguiled,/ Which, labouring for invention, bear amiss/ The second burden of a former child!". He would like to trace the lover's image "in some antique book", "Since mind at first in character was done!" This implies that for the writer, the *logos* was initially actualized in the written records of the ancient authors, the ones who were historically closer to the divine creation. In this declared challenge of ancient models, he asks himself "Whether we are mended, or whether better they,/ Or whether revolution be the same", in a sort of prefiguration of Vico's *corsi e ricorsi* theory. Yet, while human creativity is relative to human appreciation, his lover's beauty, an actualization of God's power to create, is superior to the literary subjects of former days. In *Sonnet 53* the poet inquires into the substance of God:

What is your substance, whereof are you made,  
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?  
Since every one hath, every one, one shade,  
And you, but one, can every shadow lend.

The interplay of *shadow* and *shade* points subtly to the lack of substance of natural things, which have *shades*, but are just *shadows* of the divine archetypes:

Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit  
Is poorly imitated after you;  
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,  
And you in Grecian tires are painted new:

Spring and the rich harvest of summer (*foison*), as well as every visible *blessed shape* are manifestations of God's beauty and bounty, hypostatizations of divine creation, which Shakespeare explicitly calls *external grace*.

Speak of the spring and foison of the year;  
The one doth shadow of your beauty show,  
The other as your bounty doth appear;  
And you in every blessed shape we know.  
In all external grace you have some part,  
But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

The shapes the poet creates, that *airy nothing* that is given a *local habitation and a name*, has to be passed through the test of veracity by its incarnation on stage. In Shakespeare's time the actors were called *shadows*, as Puck acknowledges at the end of *MSND*, when he invites the audience to take the performance for *visions*, "no more yielding but a dream":

If we shadows have offended,  
Think but this, and all is mended -  
That you have but slumbered here  
While these visions did appear.  
And this weak and idle theme,  
No more yielding but a dream,  
Gentles, do not reprehend.

(Epilogue, MSND, V.1)

*Shadows* is a significant name for humans who depersonalize themselves in order to give a voice and a body to a dramatic character. The intermediation between the supernatural and nature, achieved by the poet in his creative process, is completed by the actors, the 'spirits' through which the poet's verse takes on a material shape.

Shakespeare's understanding of theatre as imitation of God's creation by the power of the word and of the visible Nature in its *mimesis* on stage is paradoxically highlighted by the word *shadow*, which refers to the *blessed shapes* in nature as *shadows* of the One, (Sonnet 53) and to the actor, the human who literally incarnates the poet's *shapes*. The poet participates in God's communication through the *shapes* that are actually copies, counterfeits, *shadows* of the divine plan, while the *actor-shadow*, who identifies himself with the *shapes*, completes the disclosure of divine archetypes, making them accessible to human perception. In this system of thought where the light of divine knowledge is platonically delivered through shadows, it sounds natural to semantically seal the bond between the *forms* captured in words and the humans who embody and voice them, as the theatre is simultaneously incarnated *logos*, and communication, that is *dialogos*.

In conclusion, theatre as a *mirror held up to nature* allows an Aristotelean approach to the performing art in Shakespeare, while his conception of nature and poetic creation is informed by Platonic theology. If the divine archetypes hold together the "wide and universal theatre"<sup>221</sup>, the performance as double reflection – of God's seminal reasons and of his word instantiated in Nature, becomes the small world. This pertains to the symmetrical interpretation of the correspondence

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<sup>221</sup> *As You Like It*, II.VII. 136.

between the whole and the part typical of the Renaissance: the part is not a fragment of the whole but its rounded off miniature, its perfectly structured copy, its mirror, its icon, and vice-versa every structured microcosm offers a model of understanding the whole.

### 3.2.4 The World as Theatre. The Theatre as World

Shakespeare conceives actual existence, man's life, the visible and the invisible as belonging to the same universal theatre, whose divine author creates the characters and ascribes them various roles in the play. Human action is pertinent to God's design, if the actor sticks to the part, comprehending the potential and limits of his role<sup>222</sup>. If he acts blindly, ignoring his real attributes and position, man becomes the author of his own script, but an author of tragedy who strips his life of meaning. Changing part, as Macbeth does, or not respecting the requisites of the role, like Lear, who is an unjust father, will turn the world into “this great stage of fools” (King Lear, IV, VI) and life “a walking shadow, a poor player”, “a tale /Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, /Signifying nothing” (Macbeth V. V. 23-7). All tragedies imply that “the heavens, as troubled with man's act,/ Threaten his bloody stage”, as Ross states in *Macbeth* (II. IV. 5-6). Envisaging the world as a stage watched by an eternal, allmighty and all-seeing Playwright, Stage director and Spectator, reduces men and women to their passing mortality: hence “they have their exits and their entrances;” and in front of inexorable time what they perform is just the predetermined course of nature. Thus “one man in his time plays many parts“ but this “strange eventful history” is merely acting his seven ages, which take him in a circle from the nurse's arms, to the second 'childishness' of his old age, the 'last scene of all' (*As You Like It*, II. VII. 139-165).

The view of the world as a stage and of man as an actor seems to be rooted in *Policraticus* (1159) by John of Salisbury who, in his turn, was inspired by “some lines from the *Satyricon* in which the activity of the multitude is seen as a mime-

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<sup>222</sup> A postulate of natural theology, whereby “es muss theologisch klargestellt sein, dass die Vernunft der Menschen und der göttliche Heilsplan letztenendlich übereinstimmen” in W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Welche Natur*, op.cit., p.129.

play on a stage, which is over when the page closes on their ridiculous parts.”<sup>223</sup> Ernst Robert Curtius in his *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* mentions the various printed editions of *Policraticus* (1476, 1513, 1595, 1622, 1639, 1664, 1677), suggesting that the popularity of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor has to do with it.<sup>224</sup> According to Erika Fischer-Lichte the use of this *topos* in the field of drama emerged in the English culture around the 1560s, together with the rise of the school plays. Thus she quotes four lines from a drama by the Oxford scholar Richard Edward<sup>225</sup> as one of its first usages:

Pithagoras said, that this world was like a Stage,  
Whereon many play their partes: the lookers on, the sage  
Phylosophers are. saith he, whose parte is to learne,  
The maners of all Nations, and the good from the bad to discerne.<sup>226</sup>

This equation of the world with the theatre may have become popular as it translated a way of being of the Elizabethans, both in its metaphysical and in its historical dimension: the English felt principal performers on a stage, watched by the divine eye and by their continental contemporaries, they were acutely aware of their actions and interested in the effects of their performance. The motto reported to have hung over the entrance to the Globe: ”Totus mundus agit histrionem”<sup>227</sup>. is just another expression of this way of perceiving existence. Among the factors that allegedly concurred to this attitude two appear more prominent: an increased and lucidly actualized desire of self-fashioning, as S. Greenblatt remarked,<sup>228</sup> and the mutations brought about by the Reformation: by annulling the intermediation between God and man enacted ritually by the priest, Protestantism leaves the individual by himself with his own decisions and acts exposed to the judging eye of God. An awareness even Lady Macbeth, the *fiend-like queen* (V. VII. 98) shares, when she does not want heaven to 'peep through the blanket of the dark/  
To cry 'Hold, hold!' (I. V. 54-5).

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<sup>223</sup> Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Ideas and Forms of tragedy from Aristotle to the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.79.

<sup>224</sup> Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Princeton University Press, 1991, p. 140.

<sup>225</sup> *The Excellent Comedie of the two most faithfullest Freendes, Damon and Pithias*, 1565.

<sup>226</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *History of European Drama and Theatre*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, ch. *Theatrum Vitae Humanae*, p. 53.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>228</sup> S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance self-fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005

### 3.3 MAGIC. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

#### 3.3.1 Ancient Sources

As a cultural concept, magic originated in ancient Greece and it sounded *mageia*. Initially *mageia* meant the art of the μάγος, the Ionian transcription of the Accadian *magushu* and the Elamic *makuis*, which stood for Zoroastrian priest. The word, together with the reality it denoted, entered Greek culture at the time of King Darius<sup>229</sup>. According to Herodotus, the first Greek who mentions them, the μάγοι were a Persian tribe or secret society in charge of royal sacrifices, funeral rites, divination and interpretation of dreams<sup>230</sup>. Quite soon this Greek transcription of an Iranian concept acquired double meaning: according to the book Μαγικός, attributed to Aristotle (Diogene Laerzio): the authentic *mageia*-the expertise of the Zoroastrian priests<sup>231</sup>, was contrasted to γοητευτική μάγεία (<the enchanting magic>), the ordinary magic aimed at producing wonderful effects<sup>232</sup>.

Inquiry into the impact of Zoroastrian ideas on Greek culture led to the circle of Diogenes of Apollonia and the pre-Socratic philosophers, and revealed the integration of Iranian doctrines on good and bad spirits, daimons, *éidola*, as well as the belief in a celestial afterlife residence for good souls. Yet historians have no translation of an Iranian text of the μάγοι, but only traces of their knowledge transposed into the Greek mindset and language<sup>233</sup>. The itinerant μάγοι

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<sup>229</sup> W. Burkert, *Da Omero ai Magi, la tradizione orientale nella cultura greca*, Marsilio, Venezia, 1999, pp.94-5. The oldest written document is the inscription of Behistun, where the King himself denounces “a man called Gaumata, a magus, who lied and said: I am Bardia” Together with the name, a specific perception of the competence of people like Gaumata entered Greek mentality, as W. Burkert points out: curiosity and reverence for a remarkable oppositor of a king who was a foreign oppressor, doubled by the suspicion of delusion left behind by this inscription and many other similar ones sent to every corner of the territories under Darius’s power.

<sup>230</sup> Fritz Graf, *La magia nel mondo antico*, Editori Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1995. Senofonte li qualifica come <esperti> in <tutto ciò che concerne gli dei>.p.21. Euripide parla delle *mágon téchnai*; nella monodia di Frigio dell’Oreste, evoca la scomparsa di Elena, “la quale, attaccata da Ermione e Oreste, <disparve attraverso la dimora [...] forse sotto l’effetto di droghe e degli artifici di un mágos, forse rapita dagli dei.”Euripide Oreste, 1495 sg. p. 24

<sup>231</sup> W. Burkert, op. cit., p.95 stresses the fact that even later, in the religion of the Sassanide state the main Zoroastrian priests were called μάγοι.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., p.93.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., p.111.

Heraclitus mentioned distrustfully together with other characters of the night<sup>234</sup>, must have been followers of the Zoroastrian priests who immigrated to Greece and, in spite of their influence, continued to remain outsiders to the main cultural trend.

Whereas the authentic μάγεία is an imported phenomenon, the γοητευτική μάγεία hints at a Greek reality, namely the *gōes*, derived from *gōos*, (*ritual weeping/lament*) a prehistoric figure, still active in the classical period, that has been associated to the Asian shaman<sup>235</sup>. In fact, the *gōes* acted as a priest, psychopomp, healer and diviner, combining word spells, ecstatic trance and ritual weeping<sup>236</sup>.

When Greek written culture started asserting itself, the *gōes* was delegitimated by the intellectuals of the polis according to various lines of thought. For Eschilus in *The Persians* (687), the *gōes* is not just an enchanter, but the one who calls the dead out of their tombs, which represents an inversion of his original role and competence as psycho-pomp<sup>237</sup>, but can also suggest the practice of *nekromanteía*, νεκρομαντεία, a form of divination performed by conversing with the spirits of the dead. In Gorgias of Leontini's *Encomium of Helen*, *goeteía* καὶ *magheía* are two deceptive arts of persuasion and inducing illusions by the power of the word. Thus Helen is a victim of Paris's versatile rhetoric<sup>238</sup>.

For the anonymous author of the medical treatise *Perì hierês nousou*, *On the Sacred Disease* (end of 5<sup>th</sup> c.) the *mágoi*, the experts in purifying rites (*kathartaí*) and the begging priests *agýrtai*, [αγύρται] are all charlatans (*alazónes*) who speculate on people's weakness and ignorance, misusing the belief in gods and the power of rituals<sup>239</sup>. The rituals hinted at implied the use of *epoidaí* (charms, spells), but also, in some cases, the ingestion of *phármaka*. Yet even a term like *phármakon* (hence *pharmáttein*), had already in Homer double meaning, for it could refer both to a medicine and to a potion with terrifying effects. Thus

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<sup>234</sup> Heraclitus, 14. μαντεύεται Ἡράκλειτος ὁ Εφέσιος νυκτιπόλοις μαγοῖς βάρχοις λήναις μύσταις, τὰ γὰρ νομιζόμενα κατ' ἀνθρώπους μυστήρια ανιερωστί μνεῦνται. “ a chi vaga la notte a maghi a menadi a baccanti a iniziati, Eraclito Efesino profetizza i misteri in onore fra uomini non iniziano a nulla di sacro.”

<sup>235</sup> W. Burkert, *Gōes*, *Zum Griechischen Schamanismus*, in <Rheinisches Museum für Philologie>105, 1962, pp.36-55.

<sup>236</sup> F.Graf, op.cit., p.24.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>238</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>239</sup> F.Graf, op.cit., pp.28-31. The author belonged most probably to the Hippocratic school.

Helen used an Egyptian *phármakon* to cure Menelaus's melancholy (Odyssey, IV, 221), while Circe turned Ulysses's sailors into pigs by the help of a *phármakon* (Odyssey, X, 388 sg.)<sup>240</sup>.

Plato gives the most complex explanations of these practices and beliefs and uses the terminology pertinent to them both literally and metaphorically. In a discussion on justice and injustice in the second book of the Republic (364), the latter is exemplified by the „begging priests and prophets (*agyrtaí kaì manteis*)<sup>241</sup> - *agýrtes* /begging priest and *mántis*- *diviner*“ - who „frequent the doors of the rich and persuade them that they possess a god-given power founded on sacrifices and incantations. If the rich person or any of his ancestors has committed an injustice, they can fix it with pleasant rituals. Moreover if he wishes to injure some enemy, then, at little expense, he'll be able to harm just and unjust alike, for by means of spells and enchantments they can persuade the gods to serve them.“(Rep., 364 c).

We have thus to do with alternative private religious practices, which became quite successful, as they speculated on the centrality of *hybris* in Greek mentality. „And they persuade not only individuals but whole cities that the unjust deeds of the living or the dead can be absolved or purified through ritual sacrifices and pleasant games. These initiations, as they call them, free people from punishment hereafter, while a terrible fate awaits those who have not performed these rituals.“(364 e) Contrary to the philosopher's attempt to make a valid distinction between justice and injustice, this category of people served society by relativizing guilt and offering an immediate, easy to buy absolution.

These alternative rituals, aimed at coping with afterlife anxiety, were performed in a world that did not have a leading priestly cast and appreciated written knowledge. So, Plato, criticizing the *agyrtaí kaì manteis* as well as the *Orpheotelestái*, says that they „present a noisy throng of books by Musaeus and Orpheus, offspring as they say of Selene and the Muses, in accordance with which they perform their rituals“ (Rep., 364 e). If already two centuries before, Heraclitus had expressed his dissension to the magoi and the other itinerant ritual performers, at the time of Plato, they had not only diversified and proliferated, but there was no legislation in Athens regulating these phenomena. When Meno calls Socrates metaphorically an expert in the charming art, the *goeteía*, (Meno, 80), he

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>241</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 364 b; *Phedrus*, 244.

also tells him he is wise to stay in Athens, „for if you were to behave like this as a stranger in another city, you would be driven away for practising sorcery“ (80 b). It is to this necessity that Plato seems to respond in Laws 909 b and more detailed in 933, where he treats these practices as a form of poisoning that needs to be punished:

84.(a) If a diviner or soothsayer is deemed to be in effect injuring someone, by spells and incantations or charms or any other poison of that kind whatsoever, *he must die*.

84.(b) If someone with no knowledge of divination is found guilty of this kind of poisoning the *same* procedure is to be followed as with the other laymen [83.(b)] – that is the court is to decide what it thinks is the appropriate penalty or fine for him to pay.

The legislator refers to 'spells and charms and enchantments' (*epoidaí*) aimed at harming people, as well as the use of waxen figures in the doorway, at a junction of three roads or on graves. The problem is one of belief: „not only are the victims persuaded that they are being seriously injured by the people with magic influence, but even the perpetrators themselves are convinced that it really is in their power to inflict injury by these methods“ (933 a). As these practises are based on fear and belief the legislator must take into account that „it is not easy to know the truth about these and similar practices, and even if one were to find out, it would be difficult to convince others; and it is not just worth the effort to try to persuade people whose heads are full of mutual suspicion“... „But first, by entreaty, exhortation and advice, we'll explain that no such thing should ever be attempted, that one should not alarm and terrify the common man, like an impressionable child, and that legislators and judges should not be put to the necessity of curing men of such fears.“(933 c).

Psychological manipulation is thus clearly present in these practices: the experts first induced fear and then offered the solution to cure it. Plato's analysis reveals the role of magic as persuasion art, which controls anxieties and emotions. It is obvious that these practices were efficient with impressionable people whose reason was not very firm. From this point of view, even Socrates' dialectic could



act as *goeteía*, as Meno admits (80 b) when he says that Socrates is putting him under a spell, drugging him, turning his mind and tongue numb<sup>242</sup> .

### 3.3.2 Tentative Definition

What do the art of persuasion, necromancy and *manteia*, alternative rituals of purification have in common, apart from appearing illegitimate, yet nonetheless powerful and popular in the polis? The Greek intellectuals regarded their domain as pseudo-science, pseudo-religion and manipulative use of language, but in historical perspective their practices appear as an amalgam of relics of the proto-religion and proto-science of the tribal shaman or cunning man<sup>243</sup> , as well as later local and foreign rituals decayed from their status of legitimacy, like those of the Bakhoi and the magoi. These arts were based since the beginning on the belief in the efficiency of the spoken word; however, in the classical context, their practitioners may have had to promote themselves by an astute art of persuasion, to make up for their lack of legitimacy.

These practitioners pretended they could control natural and supernatural phenomena, as well as time. This makes their art an expression of the individual's imaginative power and confidence in his acting capacities. By considering themselves able to 'persuade gods to serve them' these experts place themselves beyond the distinction between good and evil, they infringe commonly accepted limits and taboos and some of their procedures could become alarmingly dangerous: it is interesting that Plato considers the limitation of freedom induced by the seducing art of persuasion as unethical as the intoxication by *pharmaka*. This is actually a piece of evidence for the ancestry of these practices: it was only with the coming into being of organized religion and of philosophy that a higher level of conscience imposed life preserving ethics. These arts, that we can join

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<sup>242</sup> *goeteúeis me kai pharmátteis kai atéchnos katepáideis*

<sup>243</sup> M. Eliade, *Shamanism, Archaic techniques of ecstasy*, Arkana, Penguin Books, 1989, p.4 : “For, of course, the shaman is also a magician and medicine man; he is believed to cure, like all doctors, and to perform miracles of the fakir type, like all magicians, whether primitive or modern. But beyond this, he is a psychopomp , and he may also be priest, mystic, and poet. In the dim “confusionistic” mass of the religious life of archaic societies considered as a whole, shamanism- taken in its strict and exact sense- already shows a structure of its own and implies a “history” that there is every reason to clarify.”

today under the term *magic*, were based on the belief in dead souls and other invisible entities that could be manipulated: this sends directly to archaic animism, but also to its elaboration into an accomplished religious dogma by Zoroaster.

Concluding, an attempt to conceptualize magic results into defining it as the expression of man's belief in his intrinsic power over the visible, the invisible and time, explicated in rituals and practices that involve the use of word, number, images and substances. This definition encounters the evaluation of magic by modern anthropology<sup>244</sup> and Bruno's essential concept of it: after the detailed survey of the various meanings of 'magic' in his time<sup>245</sup>, he abstracts them to: „So as it is used by and among philosophers, 'magician' then means a wise man who has the power to act.“<sup>246</sup> Even when it has a coherent theoretical foundation, the approach of magic to existence is dynamic, its scope is operating in the world. The magician's power to act and produce effects in the visible and invisible world is based on a knowledge he keeps secret and on his capacity to be persuasive. Thus magic has an experimental side and an imaginative one. Some of its effects are based on the real properties of substances, others on psychological manipulation, thus merely imagined.

Every magician, from the primitive wise man to the sophisticated Renaissance magus, operated within a system of correspondences between elements of the visible and the invisible, which represent as many criteria of ordering physical and virtual reality. These correspondences could be based on minimal analogies (yellow, gold, sun) or on a combination of natural, astrological and metaphysical knowledge, often justified by the explanatory fiction of a myth.

In contrast to religion, which tends to be exclusive, delimiting with rigour its dogmas and taboos, magic is inclusive, tending to absorb whatever could increase man's power to act. This accounts for its eclectic character and adaptability to various theories. Magic precedes organized religion in cultural history, runs parallel or intersects it, preserving till its final decline at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century two pre-religious features: a tendency to situate itself outside a system of ethics and justice and a basic animism, expressed in two postulates: the

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<sup>244</sup> B. Malinowski's definition, in Tambiah, S.J., *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, CUP, 1990, pp. 1-83. Also G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1985. it. *Il magico nella cultura antica*, Mursia, Milano, 1994. p.9.

<sup>245</sup> See *Introduction*.

<sup>246</sup> G. Bruno, *On Magic*, op. cit., p.107.

world as a whole is alive and it is populated by a multitude of invisible living entities, called spirits, demons, angels, fairies, intelligences, etc. Natural magic transferred its assets into modern science, replacing 'the spirits' and the 'soul of the world' by concepts like energy and gravity, but preserving the autonomy versus ethics: the discovery comes first, the ethical rules to control its possible negative effects arrive later.

### 3.3.3 Magic and Religion

As religion developed in more sophisticated societies, it placed man under the power of gods (God), inducing in him a sense of responsibility towards the divine and his peers, actualized in obeying to rules, respecting taboos and placing his life in an ethical perspective. However, religion continued to share with magic its foundation in imaginary worlds and beings, its conviction that the ritual establishes the connection with the invisible dimension, its assumption that the word and the image can be operative, its attempt to annul duration and win eternity. This part of shared identity had various consequences: for the common man with a dilemma, it often meant he could indistinctly appeal to one or the other. For religion this was a challenge to impose its superiority. In the Old Testament references to magic go from exalting God's power in the ten plagues<sup>247</sup>, in contrast with the confined abilities of the pharaoh's wise men and magicians, up to the drastic prohibition to consult soothsayers and sorcerers in Deuteronomy (18.10)<sup>248</sup> or Leviticus (20.6)<sup>249</sup>. Divine commandments include instigations to kill practitioners of magic: „You shall not permit a female sorcerer to live“ (Exodus, 22.18); „A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be

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<sup>247</sup> Exodus, 7-13.

<sup>248</sup> “No one shall be found among you who makes a son or a daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the dead. For whoever does these things is abhorrent to the Lord;” in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Third edition, with the Apocryphal Deuterocanonical Books, editor Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, Pheme Perkins, associate editors, New Revised Standard Edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1989

<sup>249</sup> If any turn to mediums and wizards, prostituting themselves to them, I will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people. Lev. 20.6

put to death; they shall be stoned to death, their blood is upon them” (Lev.27)<sup>250</sup>. In the New Testament, the Magi paying homage to the infant Christ symbolically submit magic to religion. Christ's and the Apostles' capacity to perform miracles, a gift of grace, is contrasted to the art of magic, like that of Simon the magician (Acts, 8). The competition between religion and magic became very harsh in the late Middle Ages and in particular during the Renaissance, when the latter was stigmatized as devil worship and became object of persecution<sup>251</sup>.

### 3.2.4 *Philosophia Perennis* and Magic

In the Renaissance the intrinsic common attributes of magic and religion enabled the reevaluation of the former as part of the *prisca theologia* by Marsilio Ficino. According to him, magic had biblical validation, the magician's name is “nomen Evangelii gratiosum, quod non maleficum et venificum, sed sapientem sonat et sacerdotem”<sup>252</sup>. The *mageia* was thus returning to its original meaning, as art of the Zoroastrian priests and with Giovanni Pico, even the ancient distinction between *mageia* and *goeteia* was reposed, with the difference that the *goeteia* acquired meanings colored by the Christian tradition; he was thus careful to stress that it consisted “wholly in the operations and powers of demons, and this consequently appears to me, as God is my witness, an execrable and monstrous thing”. Whereas *mageia* “proves, when thoroughly investigated, to be nothing else but the highest realization of natural philosophy”<sup>253</sup>. Their distinction is also of agency and power. Mentioning Plotinus, Pico says, that “the magician is the minister of nature and not merely its artful imitator”<sup>254</sup>; and while the *goeteia* “makes man a slave and pawn of evil powers”, the *mageia* “makes him their lord and master”<sup>255</sup>.

<sup>250</sup> Other references: Num.22:7, 23:23, I Sam 28:8-25(Saul and the witch of Endor), The Book of Tobit; Isa. 8.19; 21, 22. Ezek, 21.21

<sup>251</sup> The publication of Sprenger and Kramer's *Malleus maleficarum* in 1484 and the intensification of the witchhunts in parallel with the rebirth of high magic is significant.

<sup>252</sup> In P. Zambelli, op.cit., p.175.

<sup>253</sup> Pico, Giovanni della Mirandola, *Oration on the dignity of man*, translated by A. Robert Caponigri, A Gateway Edition, Regnery Publishing, INC. Washington, D.C. 1996, p. 53.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., p.56.

<sup>255</sup> Ibidem.

The connection of wisdom, power and action in magic places the discourse of will and reason, that was central to the theology of the fall, on a different basis. By postulating man's free will to shape his own destiny and his partaking in the divine intellect, Pico was giving magic a philosophical and theological legitimation, supporting it by the tradition of the *philosophia perennis*.<sup>256</sup> Rooted in the „theological and philosophical traditions of the Greek and Latin Church fathers, who combined Judeo-Christian revelation with philosophical patterns deriving from Platonism“<sup>257</sup>, this tradition presupposes that all human wisdom derives from God's original Edenic revelation.“ In Renaissance philosophy, this patristic idea of the unity of theology and philosophy was renewed as ‘*philosophia perennis*’. The first to describe it comprehensively was the Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa. More or less independently from him, Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico tried to reestablish a new *philosophia pia*. In their footsteps the Vatican librarian Agostino Steuco wrote his “*De perenni philosophia*”(1540), which provided a name for the whole theologico-philosophical movement. From its beginnings with Nicholas of Cusa, but especially since Giovanni Pico, Johannes Reuchlin, and Paulus Ricius, the tradition of Jewish cabala was incorporated into the framework of this theo-philosophy, and thereby came to play an important role in the Christian philosophical tradition.”<sup>258</sup>

As a Christian translator and interpreter of Plato, the *Corpus Hermeticum* and Neoplatonism, Ficino could establish correspondences between these various lines of thought<sup>259</sup>. According to him, the Edenic revelation became through Adam a human tradition with philosophy and religion as its forms of manifestation. In fact he identified philosophy with the 'original wisdom of Moses'<sup>260</sup>. Assuming that all wisdom had one source, *philosophia perennis* opened naturally to any branch of knowledge and form of praxis, including

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<sup>256</sup> In the *Oratio*, Pico establishes a filiation that goes back to Homer's “poetic theology”, whose doctrine was symbolically concealed in the wanderings of Ulysses, and includes Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato and Democritus, Zamolxis, Abaris the Hyperborean, Zoroaster, the son of Oromasius, down to the Arabian Al-Kindi, Roger Bacon and William of Paris, op.cit., p. 55.

<sup>257</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, Preface, p. XIV-XV.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., p. XV.

<sup>259</sup> P. Zambelli, *L'ambigua natura della magia*, Il saggiaiore, Mondadori, Milano, 1991, gives the tradition established by Ficino in the *Convito*: Asclepius, Lactantius, Latin Fathers, the Timaeus, Somnum Scipionis commented by Macrobio, Virgilio, Claudiano. School of Chartres and Aquinas to Roger Bacon, al-Kindi, Albumasar, Avicenna, to the Neoplatonist Plotinus, Prophyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, Psello, Dionigi.

<sup>260</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op.cit., *Elements of Perennial Philosophy*, p.35.

magical operations or disciplines a magician adopted to increase his operative capacities. By recuperating the priestly role of the magus, Ficino and Pico not only legitimated magic, but made it the coronation of a tradition of wisdom, an experimental wisdom which could redeem humanity and nature. In a letter to a friend, Ficino placed his contribution in the lineage of Pseudo-Dionysius, St. Augustine, Boethius, Chalcidius, Macrobius, Avicbron, Duns Scotus, Bessarion and Nicholas Cusanus, which he classified as the platonic tradition.<sup>261</sup> His familiarity with the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the Neoplatonists Plotinus, Proclus, Porphyry and Iamblichus of Chalcis, delivered him the arguments in favor of incorporating theurgy within his theo-philosophical conception.

An important part of the myth sustaining the *philosophia perennis* was Adam's language, that looked into the essence of things or, platonically, made him participate in the divine ideas<sup>262</sup>, according to the philosophical theology of Philo of Alexandria. Ficino's focus on the beginning of St. John's Gospel contributed to ground ontology and wisdom in the *Verbum/Logos*, which allowed a harmonization of different written traditions<sup>263</sup> and emphasized the creative power of the word:

„In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.“<sup>264</sup> Granting the original language the status of key to the ultimate wisdom and viewing it as a possible instrument to operate changes in reality, corresponds to magic's basic belief in the power of the word to control or create realities.

The focus of *perennial philosophy* on the creation of the world, therefore on a process, which presupposes (1) the creator, (2) the plan of the world, (3) the act of creation, its aim and its end<sup>265</sup>, produced analogies to human art, for example for Ficino God is an artist, and viceversa opened in magic the channels of human creativity in an act of emulation.

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<sup>261</sup> R. Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages*, London, 1939, in F. A. Yates, *Ideas and Ideals in the North European Renaissance*, vol. II., pp.241-2.

<sup>262</sup> W.Schmidt-Biggemann, p.XIV.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., p. 34: the Bible, Plato, Philo, Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Proclus.

<sup>264</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

This „pious and edifying theory accepts as its condition the theological interpretation of the created world as a system of divine signs“<sup>266</sup>. The signs required theo-philosophical interpretation, as they offered insights into God's creation plan, his archetypal forms or seminal reasons. In any type of magic the interpretation and the use of signs is instrumental to the ritual and believed to produce effects. Finally the introduction of the Cabala in the Renaissance theo-philosophy by Pico, and its successive developments by Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522) and Paulus Riccius (d.1541)<sup>267</sup>, offered magic another instrument of action, the combinations of letters and numbers applied to the Divine names, with the addition of Hebrew to Latin and Greek as languages of power.

The *philosophia perennis* gave its own reading to the Edenic experience. The Adam who detained and transmitted divine wisdom is different from the Adam who committed the original sin, causing the alteration of mankind's primeval status. The former is the expression of a luminous, optimistic epistemology, founded on „the serenity of faith“, which explains the lack of tension and critical attitude of Renaissance Christian Platonism<sup>268</sup> and matches the figure of the magus, as knowledgeable and powerful, acting beyond ethical distinctions and taboos. The latter will be again, with the Reformation ideology, a weak creature, eternally marked by the original sin, the pawn of the devil and his demons who try to confuse him, as they did with Macbeth. In England the Puritans take this anthropology to extreme consequences. The former is the model of the philosophers, the latter is object of sermons and theological writings and source of inspiration for poets and theatre makers.

### 3.3.5 Dee and Perennial Philosophy

Dr. Dee's intellectual interests and frame of mind place him rightfully in the tradition of the *philosophia perennis*. His enormous personal library<sup>269</sup> and his

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., p.33.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid. Ch. *Christian Cabala I*, pp. 93- 116.

<sup>268</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op.cit., Ch.2, p. 35.

<sup>269</sup> *John Dee's Library Catalogue*, was edited by Julian Roberts and Andrew G.Watson, The Bibliographical Society, 1990. In 1583 he compiled a list of his collection of manuscripts

works speak about the desire to achieve universal knowledge, both by incorporating into his studies a written tradition that includes Greek philosophy, Neoplatonism, Christian theology, Jewish studies, Medieval natural and mathematical studies, Renaissance thought, and by experimenting in a large variety of fields, from astrology, alchemy and Cabalistical speculation, to applied mathematics, the art of navigation, optics, mechanics, mineralogy, geography and others.

Following mainly the tradition of Ficino, Pico, Trithemius, Agrippa and Paracelsus<sup>270</sup>, Dr. John Dee viewed magic as the possibility given to man to renew himself and the world, and the necessary end of the wisdom he was endowed with. His compatriot Thomas Vaughan (1622-1644) defined magic half a century later as „nothing else but the Wisdom of the Creator revealed and planted in the Creature”<sup>271</sup> an efficient definition, that could be very well referred to Dee, who pursued 'honest and true knowledge' with a unique zeal all his life<sup>272</sup>. As a 'modest Christian philosopher'<sup>273</sup> Dee believed that knowledge was not acquired by individual experience and thinking, but came from God. This is the cardinal premise in the tradition of the *philosophia perennis* where, „because of man's contingency as a created being, the spirituality of the individual derives from his

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which illustrates his efforts to reconstruct the tradition of wisdom. His manuscripts covered domains like mathematics, cosmography [geography], alchemy and chemistry, astrology and astronomy, philosophy, theology, Britain's history, physiology of animals, optics, mineralogy, history, music, logic, Hebraicé [Jewish studies], and others. The best represented authors are Aristotle, Plato, Euclid, Boetius, Ptolemy, Porphyry, Isidor of Seville, Lull, Albertus Magnus, Aquinas, Geber, Avicenna, Alkindi, Albumazar, William of Conches, John Of Salisbury, Roger Bacon and Robert Grosseteste [Grosched]. In the Halliwell edition of *John Dee The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee: And the Catalogue of His Library of Manuscripts*, from the Original Manuscripts in the Ashmolean Museum At Oxford, And Trinity College, Cambridge, London, printed for the Camden Society, M.DCCC. XLII.

<sup>270</sup> Scholarship has insisted on these filiations; main contributors Clulee, Harkness, Clucas, Szönyi.(see bibliography)

<sup>271</sup> Th. Vaughan, *Magia Adamica* (1650) : “Magic is nothing else but the Wisdom of the Creator revealed and planted in the Creature. It is a Name (as Agrippa saith) ipsi Evangelio non ingratum,[Ficino had said that before Agrippa] not Distastefull to the very Gospel it self. Magicians were the first Attendants our Saviour met withall in this world, and the onely Philosophers, who acknowledged Him in the Flesh before that hee himself discovered it. I find God Conversant with Them, as Hee was formerly with the Patriarchs; He directs Them in their Travails with a Star, as hee did the Israelites with a Pillar of Fire; Hee informes Them of future Dangers in their Dreams, that having first seen his Son, they might in the next place see his Salvation. In T.Vaughan, *Magia adamica* or the antiquitie of magic, and the descent thereof from Adam downwards, proved, eebo, View document image [19] containing page [2]

<sup>272</sup> In the letter to Sir William Cecil (1564), where he adds „my own flesh, blood and bones would be the merchandise if the case so required” in *John Dee: Essential Readings*, Selected and Introduced by Gerald Suster, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, California, p. 29.

<sup>273</sup> J. Dee, Essential readings, *A Refutation of Slander*, p.43.



divinely granted existence and is hence due to God's grace".<sup>274</sup> Dee definitely shared the conception of *perennial philosophy* and spirituality as 'philosophia adepta', donated philosophy, taking part in God's grace and truth".<sup>275</sup>

In the dedicatory preface of his *Monas Hieroglyphica*<sup>276</sup>, published in 1564, Dee expressed his conviction that he was divinely inspired: "I say the Spirit writes these things rapidly through me; I hope, and I believe, I am merely the quill which traces these characters."<sup>277</sup> Later on, he resorted to scrying séances, following the same principle that the only source of wisdom was God and he had to contact his messengers for it. In a letter he wrote to Sir William Cecil to ask for support in his scholarly endeavour, Dee writes: „the Infinite Wisdom of Our Creator is branched into manifold more sorts of wonderful Sciences, greatly aiding divine insights into a better view of His Power and Goodness"<sup>278</sup>. This circularity of wisdom, coming from God and aimed at knowing him, encompassed a stage of transforming matter and conscience, that was man's own active contribution. *Aphorism I* in his *Propaedeumata aphoristica*<sup>279</sup> reads:

As God created all things from nothing against the laws of reason and nature, so anything created can never be reduced to nothing unless this is done through the supernatural power of God and against the laws of reason and nature.

This assumption which sounds both pious and already scientific by the primacy given to the laws of reason and nature in the evaluation, is followed by *Aphorism II*, where Dee states:

In actual truth, wonderful changes may be produced by us in natural things if we force nature artfully by means of the principles of pyronomia [alchemy]. I call Nature whatever has been created.<sup>280</sup>

Besides forcing nature artfully by alchemy, the wise men [magi] can work on the virtual level of existence, by calling into being all those things that are 'seminally present, as it were, in the hidden corners of nature and which, wise men can

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<sup>274</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op.cit., p.29.

<sup>275</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>276</sup> Analyzed in the chapter *Dr. Dee as Wonder Master*.

<sup>277</sup> *Monas*, p. 41.

<sup>278</sup> J. Dee, *Essential Readings*, op.cit., p. 27.

<sup>279</sup> dedicated 'to the very distinguished Gentleman, Master Gerardus Mercator of Rupelmonde, Renowned Philosopher and Mathematician', John Dee: *Essential Readings*, p. 21.

<sup>280</sup> Ibidem, pp. 21-2.

demonstrate to exist<sup>281</sup>. The creativity of magic exerted on the invisible side includes the knowledgeable use of rays emitted in a system of universal correspondences in the tradition of Al-Kindi and Ficino in the *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* (Aphorisms III, VII).

His global understanding of magic as medicine of the soul and music in the *Propaedeumata aphoristica* resonates both Ficino and Francesco Giorgio's „De harmonia mundi“<sup>282</sup> and could be regarded as illustrating the Pythagorean line of thought in the Renaissance. Thus *Aphorism IX* reads: „Whatever is in the Universe possesses order, agreement and similar form with something else“, and as Peter French points out: „Therefore, Dee concludes, the world is like a lyre. he explains that the overall structure of the universe, its harmonies and dissonances, sympathies and antipathies, determines the sweet and infinite variety of the marvellous music drawn from the individual strings.“<sup>283</sup> Dee's interest in the number is just another aspect of his Pythagorean orientation.

Six years after the publication of the *Monas*, in 1570, Dee signed the *Mathematicall Preface* to the English edition of Euclid's *Elementes of Geometrie*, translated by Sir Henry Billingsley. His enthusiasm for the potential of mathematics makes him compile a long-term plan of cultural advancement, with a list of skilled arts and crafts where they can be applied, from Geodesie, Hydrography, Perspective, Astronomy, Music, Cosmography, Astrology, Architecture and Navigation to disciplines whose names and utility sound unusual now, like Anthrography<sup>284</sup>, Trochelike<sup>285</sup>, Pneumatithme<sup>286</sup>, Menandy<sup>287</sup>, Hypogeidy<sup>288</sup>, a.s.o. The scale of arts and crafts where arithmetic and geometry could be applied culminates with Thaumaturgike, “which gives certain order to

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<sup>281</sup> Ibidem, p. 22.

<sup>282</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op. cit., Giorgio Veneto's (1460-1540) *Harmonia Mundi*, pp.305- 315.

<sup>283</sup> John Dee, *Essential Readings*, op.cit., p.23.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., p.40: “which demonstrates the number, measure, weight, figure, situation and colour of every divers thing contained in the perfect body of man”.

<sup>285</sup> Ibidem, “which demonstrates the properties of all circular motions; simple and compound”.

<sup>286</sup> Ibidem, “which demonstrates by close, hollow geometrical figures (regular and irregular) the strange properties (in motion or stay) of the Water, Air, Smoke and Fire, in their Continuity and as they are joined to the Elements next to them.”

<sup>287</sup> Ibidem, “which demonstrates how above Nature's virtue and power simple, virtue and force may be multiplied in order to direct, to lift or to pull to; and to put or cast from any multiplied or simple determined virtue, weight or force naturally not so directable or moveable.”

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., pp.40-1;”which demonstrates how under the spherical superficies of the Earth, at any depth to any perpendicular line assigned (whose distance from the perpendicular of entrance and the Azimuth likewise, in respect of the said entrance, is known with certainty) may be prescribed.”

make strange works of the sense to be perceived and of men greatly to be wondered at” and “Archimastry, which teaches to bring to actual experience sensible, all worthy conclusions, by all the Arts mathematical purposed; and by true natural Philosophy concluded: and both adds to them a farther scope in terms of the same arts: and also by this proper method and in peculiar terms proceeds, with help of the aforesaid arts, to the performances of complete Experiences, which of no particular Art, are able (formally) to be challenged”.<sup>289</sup>

In spite of its veiled definition, archimastry placed at the top of the scale, must have been the epitome of the cognitive experience, as it was imagined by the representatives of perennial philosophy, a progression setting out in the elementary world, passing by the celestial magic, which joyed the Celestial virtues “according to the rules of Astrologers, and the doctrines of Mathematicians” as Agrippa put it, and rising to the powers of diverse intelligencies, “through the sacred ceremonies of Religions”.<sup>290</sup> For Dee the key to this progression are the *things mathematical* which bind the *things eternal and divine*, to *things natural, both substantial and accidental, visible and invisible*<sup>291</sup>. The *things mathematical*, by which he understood arithmetic and geometry, but also the Cabalistical use of numbers, predicate the universal laws and encipher God's messages, whose confirmation he seems to have found also in Trithemius' *Steganographia* and *Polygraphia*. Dee applied number to alchemical and

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid, p.41.

<sup>290</sup> C. Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, Book I, Ch. I: “Seeing there is a three-fold World, Elementary, Celestiall, and Intellectual, and every inferior is governed by its superior, and receiveth the influence of the vertues thereof, so that the very original, and chief Worker of all doth by Angels, the Heavens, Stars, Elements, Animals, Plants, Metals, and Stones convey from himself the vertues of his Omnipotency upon us, for whose service he made, and created all these things: Wise men conceive it no way irrationall that it should be possible for us to ascend by the same degrees through each World, to the same very originall World it self, the Maker of all things, and first Cause, from whence all things are, and proceed; and also to enjoy not only these vertues, which are already in the more excellent kind of things, but also besides these, to draw new vertues from above. Hence it is that they seek after the vertues of the Elementary world, through the help of Physick [=medicine], and Naturall Philosophy in the various mixtions of Naturall things, then of the Celestiall world in the Rayes, and influences thereof, according to the rules of Astrologers, and the doctrines of Mathematicians, joyning the Celestiall vertues to the former: Moreover, they ratifie and confirm all these with the powers of divers Intelligencies, through the sacred Ceremonies of Religions.”

<sup>291</sup> *The Ground-Plan of the mathematical preface of Mr John Dee*, schematizes the uses according to a tradition that goes back to Ficino, Pico and Agrippa. as follows:

II – In things supernatural, eternal and divine, by application ascending.

III – In things mathematical, without further application.

IIII – In things natural, both substantial and accidental, visible and invisible &c., by application descending. *J. Dee Essential readings*, op.cit., p.38

cabalistical speculation in the *Monas Hieroglyphica* and to astro-magic in the *Propaedeumata aphoristica*. In the *Five Books of Mystery* number is involved at many levels: from the construction of the *Sigillum Aemeth* and of the ritual table, to the formation of the angelic names and the use of numerical combinations as language processing system, which the angels, via Kelly, proposed and which he accepted as granted. Like Ficino and Pico, Dee identified the Adamic idiom with God's primordial wisdom, but since in the Cabala names and numbers were tightly connected and he was essentially a mathematician, this system of encoding language was unquestionable for him.

In the Elizabethan age his expertise „in the Science De Numeris formalibus, the *Science de Ponderibus mysticis* and the *Science De Mensuris divinis*“ was uncommon, as he states without false modesty in the above mentioned letter to Sir William Cecil<sup>292</sup>, but it is exactly this unique mastery that turned him into a target of attack. What to him was a universal key to govern nature and penetrate God's mysterious mind, to many other Elizabethans was an instrument of the devil. His singularity comes out clearer, if we read, for example, the recollections of Francis Osborn about the state of the English education at the turn of the seventeenth century:

My Memory reacheth the time, when the Generality of People thought her [Mathematics] most useful *Branches, Spels* and her Professors, Limbs of the Devil; converting the Honour of Oxford, due for her (though at that time slender) Proficiency in *this study*, to her shame: Not a few of our then foolish *Gentry*, refusing to send their Sons thither, lest they should be smutted with the *Black-Art*.<sup>293</sup>

This explains why Dee inserted in his *Preface to Euclid, A Refutation of Slander*, where he defends his reputation from “the brutishness of the multitude” and the “raging slander of the malicious ignorant”(45). As he announces in the Preface to the *Propaedeumata* (1558) and the *Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury* (1599), in 1557 he had written “The Mirror of Unity, or Apology for the English Friar Roger Bacon; in which it is taught that he did nothing by the aid of demons but

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<sup>292</sup> Op.cit., p.27.

<sup>293</sup> F.Osborn, “Advice to a Son”, *Miscellaneous Works* (London, 1722), I, 5. in Mordechai Feingold, *Occult tradition at English universities*, p. 79, in *Occult and scientific mentalities in the Renaissance*, Edited by Brian Vickers, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

was a great philosopher and accomplished naturally and by ways permitted to a Christian man the great works which the unlearned crowd usually ascribes to the acts of demons”<sup>294</sup>. Only 13 years later he had to write a defense for himself. This hostile reception of his ideas give the real dimension of his efforts and the dangers associated with them.

In a period when art, science, philosophy, magic overlapped, were practiced by few and equated by the practitioners themselves with revealed wisdom, he wanted to excel both in penetrating the divine mysteries and in their practical application. Dee understood magic as an individual pursuit, - culminating by establishing a contact with the angels, which meant for him, entering the presence of God through the angelic intellects, as prefigured by Pico - , and in the same measure as an instrument to lead his nation to progress. The imperial theme that occupied his mind, the mythical justification of England's rights over territories in the New World, the insistence on creating a navy able to contribute to the conquest of new lands, his plan to reform the calendar and his dedication to educate his countrymen belong to the same process of God-inspired emancipation he strongly believed in. Dee's repeated appeals to politicians to support his ideas, animated by a patriotism which made him refuse important offers abroad<sup>295</sup>, make him the most publicly committed magus of early modern times, who understood his destiny as intimately connected to that of his community. „The advancement of good Letters and wonderful, divine and secret Sciences“<sup>296</sup> he contributed to and pleaded for, appears now as his idea of an *apokatastasis* involving all the levels of being, that was to be reformulated on a less imaginative, more empirical basis by Francis Bacon.

### 3.4. Common Features of Theatre and Magic

The attempt to circumscribe the common features of theatre and magic leads back to classical Greece. As known the *tragôdia*<sup>297</sup> owes its name to the tragodós

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<sup>294</sup> J. Dee, *Essential readings*, op.cit., p. 21;

<sup>295</sup> Henri II of France offers him to become the King's Mathematical Reader in Paris in 1551; analogous offers were made to him by Charles V and Tsar Ivan the Terrible.

<sup>296</sup> *Letter to Sir William Cecil*, in J. Dee, *Essential Readings*, op.cit., p. 29.

<sup>297</sup> Baldry, op.cit., p.40 Aristophanes, *Acharnenses*, 241-79. Aristotle *The Poetics*

(τραγωδός), a literary form included in the Dionysian celebrations. The *komodīa*, accepted later in the theatre festivals, had most probably its origins in the phallic songs, sung during the ritual processions carrying phallic icons, from which the satyr play derived. Aristotle's definition of tragedy implies elevation and purification of the soul<sup>298</sup>. The *catharsis* seen as end of tragedy, works actually in the comedy too, even if the 'expiation' procedures are satirical lampooning or simply purifying laughter.

Setting out from the origins, a first obvious connection between theatre and magic is the relationship with the religious ritual. As pointed out in a previous section, magic originated in the archaic proto-culture, in which religion, science and art built up a unity, persisted as an alternative to the official religion up to the Scientific Revolution. Incorporated into philosophical thought during Hellenism,<sup>299</sup> high magic had its moment of triumph largely between 1450 and 1650, when it was validated by the tradition of the *philosophia perennis* as the *telos* of the divine wisdom transmitted by Adam to human kind. The justification of its importance was thus found within the Christian mythology itself, which offered the frame and arguments of a historically achievable *instauratio magna* by bringing together the entire patrimony of cultural inheritance. Beside Moses, Ficino granted the status of prophets of Christianity to the Magi, Hermes Trismegistus and Plato and expressed his confidence in man's capacity to shape the future, that was to be powerfully expressed by Pico too.

An analogous situation is present in the history of European theatre: after being fiercely condemned by the Fathers of the Church and eliminated from the main culture for centuries, it was brought back to life within the Christian liturgy, in a process that reiterated in another epoch and conceptual context, its initial birth from religious ritual. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century a theatre man like Grotowski

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Edited and Translated by Stephen Halliwell in Aristotle Poetics, Longinus On the Sublime, Demetrius on Style, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1995, p.42. Reproducing in his Poetics (3) the Dorians' claim that comedy comes from *kōmai*, -villages, Aristotle gives also the Athenians' conviction that it derived from *komoe* revels, which is definitely more consistent with its religious origins.

<sup>298</sup> Being the "mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished by distinct forms in its sections; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions", In Aristotle, *Poetics*, Edited and Translated by Stephen Halliwell in Aristotle Poetics, Longinus On the Sublime, Demetrius on Style, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1995, pp.48-49.

<sup>299</sup> An analysis of *Neoplatonism and Classical Theurgy* as sources of Renaissance Magic in

still perceived the lineage of theatre with the sacred ritual and spoke about the secular sacrality of theatre and actors<sup>300</sup>. Even a theorist of the performance like Victor Turner, who anchored theatre in social drama, had to admit its structural elements inherited from the religious ritual, the sacrifice included<sup>301</sup>.

The foundation of theatre and magic in the religious ritual and their tight connection with the Christian religion in the Elizabethan age hints at shared traits that can build up tracks of comparison between Shakespeare and Dee. The ritual background delivers the dynamism theatre and magic share: the former is a kinetic art by definition, the latter is a manifestation of 'man's power to act'. Another consequence of their common origin in the religious ritual is that both theatre and magic have an ontological mutation as their objective. Theatre presents changes in human destiny and human nature on the stage in order to induce a shift in the spectator's conscience, magic aims at modifying the course of events and the status of man.

In carrying out these objectives both domains reveal man as an entire being, displaying his reason, spiritual aspirations, memory, imagination and sense of beauty, but also his emotions<sup>302</sup>, failings, irrational drives. This distinguishes theatre and magic from philosophy as the exclusive field of reason. Besides, philosophy aims at a coherent, logically sustainable significance, while the very nature of magic is ambiguous or willingly obscure, and theatre's poetic text and its performance work with suggestion and multiple simultaneous meanings. Vagueness, rejected by *Ratio*, is part of the ground and success of both theatre and magic.

Taken as arts in the Renaissance context, theatre and magic imitate at the human level the divine process of creation: this type of *mimesis* gets its inspiration from God's plan of creation, that is the 'forms' Shakespeare mentions in *MSND* or the things 'seminally present, wise men can demonstrate to exist' according to Dee. Both the poet and the magus work also on Nature, that is on God's visible creation. This divinely inspired human creativity, places the theatre maker and the

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<sup>300</sup> Jerzy Grotowski, *Per un teatro povero*, Roma, Bulzoni Editore, 1970

<sup>301</sup> V. Turner, *Dal rito al teatro*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1986. (Original: *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play*, New York, Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982.).

<sup>302</sup> Heidegger's clear exclusion of emotions from the domain of philosophy is significant: "Gefühle, auch die schönsten, gehören nicht in die Philosophie. Gefühle, sagt man, sind etwas Irrationales. Die Philosophie dagegen ist nicht nur etwas Rationales, sondern die eigentliche Verwalterin der Ratio". *Was ist das die Philosophie?* op.cit., p. 3.

magus between heaven and earth, eternity and temporality, the aethereal and the material, in the position of a *copula mundi*, just as Ficino's and Pico's Adam was meant to be.

Theatre and magic as *imitatio Dei* add something to existence that grounds on the sense of wonder. The theatre maker (poet, actor, stage director) and the magus are wonder producers who look at the world with an enchanted eye. The sense of wonder is tightly connected to imagination, regarded by Shakespeare and Dee as the faculty that explores the possible. The Renaissance ontology included intermediary agents between the human and the divine status, assimilated in time from different cultures, like spirits, ghosts, demons, fairies and angels disclosed by Shakespeare's theatre and Dee's experiments in distinct manners.

Theatre and magic are based on the power of the words, which accounts for their poetic dimension. This general assumption takes on specific meanings in the Elizabethan context where the religious images had been destroyed as idols and replaced by the book and the word, which controlled religious ritual and the art of memory<sup>303</sup>. This effected also a *Reformation of the eye*,<sup>304</sup> so inquiring into Dee's and Shakespeare's approach to vision can be as illuminating as looking into their conception of the word potential.

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<sup>303</sup> Yates, Frances A., *The Art of Memory*, London, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.

<sup>304</sup> S.Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, Oxford, OUP, 2007, pp.3-4.



## 4. WONDER IN THEATRE AND MAGIC

### 4.1 The Sense of Wonder

Religious ritual, to which theatre and magic are historically connected, is the reiteration of an epiphany, occurred in the immemorial past, when gods revealed themselves to humans, disclosing their powerful otherness and binding humanity to them. This extraordinary event is assumed to have made a breach in time and caused an ontological mutation in its original witnesses. The amazement produced by the manifestation of the divine is kept alive through generations in myth and revived with every religious celebration, so the believers remain within the emotional halo of astonishment and awe in front of the divine power.

Already in antiquity Plato and Aristotle had connected philosophy to the sense of wonder. Relying on two quotes from Plato's *Theatetus* (155d) and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (A 2, 982 b 12 sq) Heidegger acknowledges that *das Erstaunen* is the beginning and principle of philosophy „Das Erstaunen ist als πάδος die ἀρχή der Philosophie“, namely, „Das Erstaunen trägt und durchherrscht die Philosophie.“<sup>305</sup> In Plato's and Aristotle's texts *das Erstaunen* is expressed by „thaumazein“. *Thaumazein* belongs to the same family as *to thauma*, an object regarded with wonder; the feeling of wonder and astonishment, but also, in the plural, the jugglers' tricks (Plato, *Rep.*, 514 b, *Laws* 658 B, *Tim.* 80C). Close to it is *théa-omai*, to look on, to look at, as a spectator, but also, in Plato's *Phaedo* (84b) to look at with the mind. And obviously quite close is the family that has to do with theatre, like *thèama*, *théama* – spectacle, show (that is the thing you look

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<sup>305</sup> M. Heidegger, *Was ist das – die Philosophie*, op.cit., pp.24-5: “Schon die griechischen Denker, Platon und Aristoteles, haben darauf aufmerksam gemacht, daß die Philosophie und das Philosophieren in die Dimension des Menschen gehören, die wir die Stimmung (im Sinne der Ge-stimmtheit und Be-stimmtheit) nennen. Platon sagt (*Theätet* 155 d): μάλα γάρ φιλοσόφον τοῦτο τό πάδος, τό θαυμάζειν. οὐ γάρ ἄλλη ἀρχή φιλοσοφίας ἢ αὕτη. “Gar sehr nämlich ist eines Philosophen dieses das πάδος – das Erstaunen; nicht nämlich ein anderes beherrschendes Woher der Philosophie gibt es als dieses.... Aristoteles sagt dasselbe (*Met.* A 2, 982 b 12 sq): διὰ γάρ τό θαυμάζειν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καί νῦν καί τό πρότον ἤρξαντο φιλοσοφεῖν. Durch das Erstaunen hindurch nämlich gelangten die Menschen jetzt sowohl als auch zuerst in den beherrschenden Ausgang des Philosophierens (zu dem, von woher das Philosophieren ausgeht und was den Gang des Philosophierens durchgängig bestimmt).

at, and *théates* spectator<sup>306</sup>. To *thauma* has created other concepts: *thaumatopoia* and *thaumaturgia* (Plat. Laws 675 A), from *thaymateyrgòs*, made of *thaymata* (plural of prodigy, miracle, wonderful thing, worth being seen), from the same root as *théama*, spectacle, and *oyrgòs* derived from the root of *ergéô* (opero) *Thayma*, admiration, wonder, *thaymàxô* I admire, I look at something with a sense of wonder, and *thaymastos* – admirable belong to the same family.

Wonder places religion, philosophy, theatre and magic in relation to each other, pertaining to each field specifically. The religious man ascribes every wonderful effect to the divine cause and reveres this inexhaustible, often terrifying source of miracles; the philosopher faces *das Erstaunlichste, das Seiende im Sein*, so Heidegger, and tries to comprehend its enormous complexity protecting it from easy explanations<sup>307</sup>, the dramatist and the magician feed human curiosity and impelling demand for mystery, by producing wonders.

In *Theatetus*, after stating that 'wonder is the only beginning of philosophy' Socrates connects *thaumazein* with the mythological Thaumatas and adds: "he who said that Iris was the child of Thaumatas, made a good genealogy"<sup>308</sup>. Thaumatas, born as son to Pontos and Gaia, was one of the sea divinities. In *The Theogony* (ll. 265-269) Hesiod tells about him:

And Thaumatas wedded Electra the daughter of deep-flowing Ocean, and she bare him swift Iris and the long-haired Harpies, Aello (Storm-swift) and Ocypetes (Swift-flier) who on their swift wings keep pace with the blasts of the winds and the birds; for quick as time they dart along<sup>309</sup>.

Leaving aside any linguistic discussion of this myth-bound etymology, the choice of Iris, from all the children generated by Thaumatas and the daughter of the deep Ocean, defines the field of wonder in philosophy. It stays on the glorious

<sup>306</sup> Liddell H.G., & Scott, R, A Greek-English lexicon, based on the German work of Francis Passow, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1867. Ottorino Pianigiani, *Vocabolario etimologico della lingua italiana*, Edizioni Polaris, Genova, 1993, p. 1413

<sup>307</sup> M. Heidegger, op.cit., p. 14: „Indessen mußten sogar die Griechen die Erstaunlichkeit dieses Erstaunlichsten retten und schützen – gegen den Zugriff des sophistischen Verstandes, der für alles eine für jedermann sogleich verständliche Erklärung Bereit hatte und sie auf den Markt brachte. Die Rettung des Erstaunlichsten – Seiendes im Sein – geschah dadurch, daß sich einige auf den Weg machten in der Richtung auf dieses Erstaunlichste, d.h. das σοφόν.“

<sup>308</sup> Plato, *Theatetus*, with an English translation by H.N.Fowler, London, William Heinemann New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons 1921, p.55.

<sup>309</sup> *The Theogony*, <http://omacl.org/Hesiod/theogony.html>. The Online Medieval and Classical Library.

side of the rainbow, rejecting the monstrous (harpies), the uncontrollable natural phenomena and the voracity of time. Religion too stands on the side of the rainbow, but interprets the monstrous and the naturally destructive as divine warning or punishment and relegates the ugly and the grotesque to the forces of the evil, in Christianity to the devil.

Magic is based on man's belief in his power to produce wonders: thus magicians think they can keep time and weather under control and cause life and death. The magicians' experimentation with substances and their persuasion art had both positive and negative effects. Part of the mythology around black magic may be a product of imagination, but the experts in drugs and poisoning committed real crime. Magic stands ambiguously between Iris and the harpies, but its promoters in the Renaissance decided to look only at its luminous part. In *Oratio de hominis dignitate* Pico recognizes the two faces of magic, discerning carefully the *mageia*, 'the more divine and salutary' from the *goeteia*, which "presents a monstrous and destructive visage."<sup>310</sup> Rejecting the 'harpies', in his *Conclusiones Magicae numero XVII, secundum opinionem propriam*<sup>311</sup> he grants natural magic, "nobilissima pars scientiae naturalis" (4<sup>th</sup> thesis) a role in elevating humanity to perfection (14<sup>th</sup> thesis) by unifying things extant in nature "seminaliter et separate" (11<sup>th</sup> thesis). Magic produces 'mirabilia', (thesis 11), and though he cautiously leads these wonderful effects to the "Deum gloriosum et benedictum" (6<sup>th</sup> thesis) it is to the producing of artificial wonders that magic owes its value. The enthusiasm for the wonder producing capacities of magic translates for Cornelius Agrippa into an accumulation of superlatives: "Magick is a faculty of wonderfull vertue, full of most high mysteries, containing the most profound Contemplation of most secret things,...and it doth instruct us concerning the differing, and agreement of things amongst themselves, whence it produceth its wonderfull effects."<sup>312</sup> Because of this, the art of magic is "the most perfect and

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<sup>310</sup> G. Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, A Gateway Edition, Regnery Publishing, Washington, D.C., 1960, p.57.

<sup>311</sup> G. Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones nongentae. Le novecento Tesi dell'anno 1486*, a cura di Albano Biondi, Leo S.Olschki, 1995, pp. 117-121.

<sup>312</sup> H. C. Agrippa, *Of Occult Philosophy*, Book I, Part 1, Chap. ii. What Magick is, What are the Parts thereof, and how the Professors thereof must be Qualified, digital version by Joseph H.Peterson, 2000, [www.esotericarchives.com](http://www.esotericarchives.com).

chief Science, that sacred and sublimer kind of Phylosophy [philosophy], and lastly the most absolute perfection of all most excellent Philosophy”<sup>313</sup>.

Theatre simulates every imaginable wonder in the virtual space of the stage performance, granting both Iris and the harpies an aesthetic status. Its marvels are illusory, they occur in play, in the *as if* perspective, but are no less efficient or powerful than reality, as they induce an increase of self-awareness and world-awareness in the audience, and this is one of the wonders it effects. If the wonders of magic have been long superseded by modern science and the divine capacity to produce wonders can consume itself to disbelief in religion, the marvels of theatre can be revived with every new staging, centuries or even millenia after their original performance. Therefore theatre shares with philosophy the self-regenerating sense of wonder in front of the inexhaustible possibilities of existence.

Shakespeare's and Dee's treatment of sources and effects of wonder is the topic of the following sections.

## 4.2 The Marvelous in Theatre

In explaining in his *Poetics* that tragedy is “an imitation not only of a complete action, but also of incidents arousing pity and fear” Aristotle adds: “Such incidents have the very greatest effect on the mind when they occur unexpectedly and at the same time in consequence of one another; there is more of the marvellous in them than if they happened of themselves or by mere chance. Even matters of chance seem most marvellous if there is an appearance of design as it were in them“(9).<sup>314</sup> In conclusion: “The marvellous is certainly required in tragedy.”(24)<sup>315</sup>

The Renaissance and baroque aesthetic theories extended the necessity of the marvelous to every artistic branch and Shakespeare amply illustrates it. Actually he is the Elizabethan dramatist who used the most daring and sophisticated means to surprise his public in every genre: tragedy, comedy, romance. He turned visible the populous realm of invisible ghosts, spirits, fairies,

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<sup>313</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>314</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *Complete Works*, Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 2323.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., p. 2336.

divinities of antiquity like Hecate, gave the audience the opportunity to peep behind the heroic scenes of the Trojan war in *Troilus and Cressida*, or witness the vicissitudes of characters of the British past, rewriting history, as in the case of Macbeth. He transformed Bottom in a *Midsummer Night's Dream* into an ass and made him the lover of Titania, took his spectators on wonder tours to Paris, Denmark, Verona, Venice, Sicily, Florence, to name just a few. In *The Merchant of Venice* dignity and confrontation of two religions is played around a pound of human flesh; there are cases of 'death and resurrection' in *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Winter Tale* and *Pericles* and many other 'wonders' can be added.

Shakespeare's discourse on the marvelous is not only implicit in the topic and structure of the plays, but also explicit. His characters debate the sense of wonder, reflecting its centrality in the Elizabethan apprehension of the world<sup>316</sup>. Out of the impressive semantic richness of the marvelous in his theatre, the following analysis will treat miracle, wonder and amazement principally in *MSND*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*.

#### 4.2.1 Shakespeare on Miracles

The miracle, from *miraculum* (see *mirari*, *ammirare*) is the Latin translation of the Greek *thaumasion*. According to Georg Luck, the word originated in the late Latin period and is not used in the Vulgata<sup>317</sup>. In the Jewish-Christian tradition the miracle is man's place of encounter with God's radical diversity, an insight into his *Mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, to use Rudolf Otto's formulation. Christianity has its foundation in God's miraculous capacities of creation, manifested originally in the Genesis and reasserted through Moses in Exodus. The story of Christ moves between his miraculous birth from a Virgin, his prodigies and resurrection and the expectation of his no less miraculous second coming, when the dead humans would be brought back to life, not only in the spirit but also in

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<sup>316</sup> With the participation of England in the exploration and conquest of unknown lands, the marvellous appeared accessible, ready to be possessed, as S. Greenblatt has demonstrated in *Marvellous Possessions, The wonder of the New World*, The University of Chicago Press, 1991.

<sup>317</sup> G. Luck, *Il magico nella cultura antica*, Mursia, Milano, 1994 (original version *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*), p.160.

the body. The capacity to act beyond any accepted natural limits was transmitted by Jesus to the Apostles and the sense of wonder that accompanied his story was permanently fed by the Church, with its emphasis on the saints' miracles. The belief in God's power extended to objects and images that evoked him and so the Catholic churches exhibited icons, crucifixes, statues, relics of saints, as well as naturalistic or exotic *mirabilia*, like the 'unicorn' horns preserved in the San Marco sanctuary in Venice and shown to believers during religious ceremonies as a proof of God's immeasurable capacity to surprise.<sup>318</sup>

In Shakespeare's time, after the Reformation had deprived churches of these touchable signs of the divine mystery and Calvin had asserted that 'miracles are ceased', philosophy took over and developed in its own manner the belief in miracles and the Elizabethans appeased their thirst of wonder in other ways: by appealing to magic, going to the theatre, travelling to the corners of the world or reading books of fantastical adventures. Embraced by many as a modern idea, a form of emancipation from the Catholic past, Calvin's denial of the *opus operatum* had epistemological consequences Shakespeare preannounced with impressive clarity. In *All's Well that Ends Well*, Helena's plea for her healing capacities against the King's decision to obey the "congregated college" of his "most learned doctors", is actually a theological discourse on the miracle:

He that of greatest works is finisher  
Oft does them by the weakest minister:  
So holy writ in babes hath judgment shown,  
When judges have been babes; great floods have flown  
From simple sources, and great seas have dried  
When miracles have by the greatest been denied.  
Oft expectation fails and most oft there  
Where most it promises, and oft it hits  
Where hope is coldest and despair most fits.

(II. 1. 139-147)

Denying miracles, implies annulling the credibility of the Gospels, where Christ the child amazed the judging priests with his wisdom and the credibility of the Old Testament, where 'greatest works' like the Deluge (great flood), or the crossing of the Red Sea (great seas have dried) were 'finished' by God. It means invalidating the paradoxical manifestation of God's power, which can work in

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

'weak ministers' and does not comply with human expectation, but appears where 'hope is coldest' and 'despair most fits'. Helena's monologue concludes:

Inspired merit so by breath is barred.  
It is not so with him that all things knows  
As 'tis with us that square our guess by shows:  
But most it is presumption in us, when  
The help of heaven we count the act of men.

(II. I. 151-5)

Ruling out divine inspiration, man presumptuously ascribes marvels to human action, reducing cognition to squaring 'our guess by shows'; the statement alludes at 'squaring the circle', the ancient geometrical dilemma and symbol of man's impossibility to circumscribe divine perfection; from today's perspective it preannounces the dominion of natural philosophy, of cognition by hypotheses and simulations, (guess by shows), of relativism. Helena's words are reinforced by Lafeu<sup>319</sup> (Lafew in other editions) in the next scene:

They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence is it that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.

(II. III. 1-6)

The task of explaining the unexplainable was being taken over by the 'philosophical persons', but their knowledge is 'seeming', an equivalent to Helena's 'guess by shows'. Displacing cognition from theology, which keeps fear of God and God's mystery intact, to philosophy, actually natural philosophy, was "the rarest argument of wonder that hath shot out in our latter times" (II. III. 7-8) as Parolles ironically comments. According to Lafeu, this mutation resulted in the contrary of its expectations: the epistemological gain, obtainable by the empirical mapping of the unknown with cause-effect sequences, is actually an epistemological loss: abandoning the horizon of mystery, and the 'unknown fear' man tries to turn modern what stays eternally out of any temporal classification, and familiar, what is radically alien and terrifying. Bringing awesome greatness

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<sup>319</sup> G.Dragnea Horvath, *Shakespeare, ermetismo, mistica, magia*, op.cit., Ch. I miracoli e la filosofia, pp. 101-110.

down to trifles is an act of misunderstanding: man ignores the fearful disproportion between “him that all things knows” as Helena refers to God, and himself.

The reduction of the causeless to causation, of God the Stranger to natural phenomena that could be explained and dominated, a first step towards modern science, did not eliminate in Shakespeare's time the supernatural motivation of many unaccountable events: if strange things happened, the devil had to be the agent, so, the denial of the *opus operatum* resulted also in empowering the figure of the Devil. The 'unknown fear' found an outlet in the witchhunts. This reality is denounced by another female character, Joan la Pucelle who defends the belief of God working through humans and unmask her judges in *Henry VI, Part I*:

First, let me tell you whom you have condemn'd:  
Not me begotten of a shepherd swain,  
But issued from the progeny of kings;  
Virtuous and holy; chosen from above,  
By inspiration of celestial grace,  
To work exceeding miracles on earth.  
I never had to do with wicked spirits:  
But you, that are polluted with your lusts,  
Stain'd with the guiltless blood of innocents,  
Corrupt and tainted with a thousand vices,  
Because you want the grace that others have,  
You judge it straight a thing impossible  
To compass wonders but by help of devils.

(V. IV. 36-48)

In stating that she was “issued from the progeny of kings;/ Virtuous and holy” Joan proclaims her being a vessel of God's grace, but also informs about the only officially legitimated worker of miracles in post-Reformation England: the sovereign. In *Macbeth* there is a contrast between the tyrant, assisted by black magic and implicitly the devil, who turns the time sick, and the English king<sup>320</sup>, who “solicits heaven” (IV. III. 149) curing “strangely-visited people” (IV. III. 150), by simply “hanging a golden stamp about their necks,/ Put on with holy prayers”(IV. III. 153-4). This proves “A most miraculous work in this good king”, who is said to have “heavenly gift of prophecy” (IV. III. 157) and transmit his “healing benediction” to the “succeeding royalty” (IV. III. 155-6), a hint at Jesus’

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<sup>320</sup> James I could have interpreted it as an allusion to himself.



healing powers left to the apostles. Love, a human affection and a theological principle, is also a source of miracles in Shakespeare. “Love wrought these miracles” says Lucentio in the *Taming of the Shrew*, (V. I. 127), love has therefore the capacity to transform the individual and the world: “Things base and vile, folding no quantity,/ Love can transpose to form and dignity” as Helena says in *MSND* (I. I. 232-3). In *The Tempest*, Ferdinand and Miranda experience their first encounter as an epiphany:

Miranda: I might call him  
A thing divine; for nothing natural  
I ever saw so noble.

.....  
Ferdinand: Most sure, the goddess  
On whom these airs attend!

(I. II. 417-20; 422-3)

Art inspired by love can miraculously survive in time, an idea formulated very clearly in the sonnets. For example, in sonnet 65, no remedy exists to prevent or heal “the wreckful siege of battering days” and “sad mortality”, “Unless this miracle have might/ That in black ink my love may still shine bright.” In *The Tempest*, Prospero's magical art can create effects interpreted by some as 'miracles'. As the supreme miracle is the defeat of death, Prospero simulates extreme danger and destruction in the tempest, which makes life preservation appear supernatural. Thus the survival of the shipwrecked after the terrifying tempest is a miracle for Gonzalo<sup>321</sup> and so is the unexpected discovery of Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess for Sebastian, who exclaims: “A most high miracle!” (V. I. 177).

What Sebastian perceives as a divine miracle (most high) Prospero qualifies as 'wonder'. Though he never forgets 'providence divine' (I. I. 159) and at the end of the play turns back to prayers, he reveals that the tempest and the extraordinary events the shipwrecked experienced were made possible by his knowledge and power to control the elements and spirits. Miracle and wonder may be confused in the perception, but they diverge in sources and aims: miracle

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<sup>321</sup> Gon. Beseech you, sir, be merry; you have cause,/ So have we all, of joy; for our escape/ Is much beyond our loss. Our hint of woe/ Is common; every day some sailor's wife,/ The masters of some merchant and the merchant/ Have just our theme of woe; but for the miracle,/ I mean our preservation, few in millions/ Can speak like us: then wisely, good sir, weigh/ Our sorrow with our comfort. (II. I. 1-8)

has a divine source and appears as an objective manifestation of God's grace. Even when it works through humans, it is not for their individual benefit: they are just a medium, serving the transcendent intervention into human history, as in the case of Joan La Pucelle.

#### 4.2.2 Shakespeare on Wonder

Celia. O wonderful, wonderful, and most wonderful wonderful,  
and yet again wonderful, and after that, out of all hooping!

(*As You Like It*, III. II. 187-8)

Wonder forms itself in the field of human subjectivity, as semantics suggests: the *wonder*, from the Anglo-Saxon *wundor* is older than 'miracle' in the English context and richer in connotations. It can refer to whatever causes surprise or astonishment, it implies the emotion excited by novelty, or by something strange or not well understood. The corresponding verb, *to wonder* can be both transitive denoting an active, inquisitive approach to novelty; and intransitive, meaning to be affected with astonishment, be object of something that is beyond your power of control. It relates in a more complex manner to the family of the Greek *thaumasion* than *miracle*.

In Shakespeare's theatre the domain of wonder extends from the "white wonder of dear Juliet's hand" as Romeo asserts (III. III. 36) to Richard III, the monster born with teeth, who came into the world with his legs forward and behaves with a crook'd mind to be in 'harmony' with his crooked body<sup>322</sup>. The comedies, tragedies and romances display all the degrees of wonder encompassed between these extremes, and it may not be a simple coincidence that in *The Tempest*, which condensates his stage works, the progeny of Thaumias, the harpies and Iris, are both present, in immediate succession: in scene 3, act III, Ariel

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<sup>322</sup> Gloucester. For I have often heard my mother say/ I came into the world with my legs forward:/... The midwife wonder'd and the women cried/ 'O, Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth!'/... Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so,/ Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it./ I have no brother, I am like no brother;/ And this word 'love,' which graybeards call divine,/ Be resident in men like one another/ And not in me: I am myself alone. (*The Third Part of King Henry VI*, V. VI. 70-82).

transforms himself into a harpy and ruins the King's and his suite's banquet and in the immediately following scene, (IV. I) Iris comes on the stage with Ceres and Juno in the pageant offered by Prospero to the young couple.

The duplicity of wonder has the most powerful consequences when it manifests itself in the sovereign. Queen Elizabeth is like “the bird of wonder”, the “maiden phoenix”, whose ashes “new create another heir;/ As great in admiration as herself” as Archbishop Cranmer states<sup>323</sup> turning her personal magnificent resources into a principle of world regeneration.

### 4.2.3 Wonder in *Macbeth*

By contrast, in *Macbeth* the sense of wonder is destructive. At the beginning of the play, King Duncan finds out from the Captain's report how “brave Macbeth”, “Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel, /Which smoked with bloody execution” “unseamed” the rebel Macdonwald “from the nave to th'chaps” and “fixed his head upon our battlements.” (I. II. 16-23) This theatre of horror, giving rise to “strange images of death” as Ross calls them (I. III. 97), is an object of wonder for King Duncan:

The king hath happily received, Macbeth,  
The news of thy success; and when he reads  
Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,  
His wonders and his praises do contend  
Which should be thine or his: silenced with that,  
In viewing o'er the rest o' the selfsame day,  
He finds thee in the stout Norweyan ranks,  
Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make,  
Strange images of death. As thick as hail  
Came post with post; and every one did bear  
Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence,  
And pour'd them down before him.

(I. 3. 89-100)

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<sup>323</sup> *The Life of King Henry VIII*, (V. V. 41-3).

Duncan is seduced by Macbeth's natural cruelty and interprets it as an extreme token of love and devotion for himself, which enchants him beyond sensible limits. When he visits Macbeth, on the fatal night he will be killed, the King displays, according to Banquo's report 'unusual pleasure' and is 'shut up in measureless content" (II. I. 13-7). Unusual pleasure is what Macbeth secretly experiences too when the weird sisters predict him a future beyond "the prospect of belief" (I. III. 74). He is 'rapt in wonder', as Banquo repeatedly remarks<sup>324</sup> and he confirms in the letter to his wife (I. V. 6). By avoiding to emit a judgement on the apparition and the prophecy: - "This supernatural soliciting/ Cannot be ill, cannot be good" (III. III. 130-1) - he prefers to stay on the side of the stupefaction, without realizing he will become its prisoner. In a magical succession, the sense of wonder produces wonders: killing Duncan and his guards with his wife and the 'metaphysical aid' of the 'murd'ring ministers' she invokes (I. V. 49) is the first in a series of deeds with appalling effects on nature and his subjects' lives<sup>325</sup>. Thus Macbeth's story illustrates a reflection pronounced by Richard II in the solitude of prison: "Thoughts tending to ambition, they do plot/ Unlikely wonders" (V. V. 18-9).

Resonating recent events like the Gunpowder Plot, King James's statute against witches (1604) and his belief in the agents of the devil plotting against the sovereign, the play polarizes the awesome and the ghastly according to their two accepted inspiration sources: God, in the case of the English King's healing capacities, and the devil for Macbeth and his wife. Yet the discourse becomes subtler when it explores man's necessity to inquire into his own mystery. Macbeth infringes the law of obedience to the king and the law of kinship by killing him, he takes the life of Banquo, his comrade in arms, but he is more than a dull killer, following blindly dubious prophecies and his wife's cold-blooded ambition, because of his self-awareness, which makes him discover, for example, he has a conscience:

The times have been,  
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,

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<sup>324</sup> Ban. Are ye fantastical, or that indeed/ Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner/ You greet with present grace and great prediction/ Of noble having and of royal hope,/ That he seems rapt withal (I. III. 53-7); Look how our partner's rapt (I. III. 142).

<sup>325</sup> where "all is the fear and nothing is the love"(IV. II. 12) as Lady Macduff desperately remarks, and according to Ross "violent sorrow seems/A modern ecstasy"(IV. III. 169-70).

And there an end; but now they rise again,  
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,  
And push us from our stools: this is more strange  
Than such a murder is.

(III. IV. 78-83)

The field of the wonderful includes thus the effects of one's deeds on his conscience. In this sense, Macbeth makes other discoveries: he wants to destroy bonds for his selfish aims, but finds out terrified that existence is compact: killing a man means only making him pass on the invisible side, which is unmeasurable and uncontrollable. Murder does not effect a mathematical minus, but a change in ontological status, both for the victim and the killer. That is why he wants "seeling night" with its "bloody and invisible hand"(III.II.46-8) to "Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond/ Which keeps me pale" (III. II. 49-50). In the end, as the repetition of the unusual gradually wears away stupefaction, the terrifying deeds, which bring him and his wife "the torture of the mind" and "restless ecstasy" (III. II. 21-2) become trivial and burn down to habit. Before the final battle he confesses:

I have almost forgot the taste of fears.  
The time has been my senses would have cooled  
To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair  
Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir  
As life were in't. I have supped full with horrors.  
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,  
Cannot once start me.

(V. V. 9-15)

The familiarity with murder does not annul Macbeth's belief in wonders. Till the very last moment he thinks himself special, protected, instructed by the weird sisters, invulnerable. In the final duel with Macduff he challenges his adversary in perfect self-confidence:

let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests.  
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield  
To one of woman born.

(V. VIII. 41-43)

One of the frightful things that happen to Macbeth is that Banquo's ghost visits him, without being perceived by the others. At this point he asks himself:

Can such things be,  
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  
Without our special wonder?

(III. IV. 110-2)

The special wonder refers to his capacity to produce 'fantastical' images, as he did before Duncan's murder (I. III. 134-9), but may open to the significance of wonder as suspension of reason and meaning expectation. The tragedy is also an arduous search for meaning, continuously obscured or confused, as the weird sisters had warned at the beginning of the play, deciding that "fair is foul, and foul is fair" (I. I. 12). Normal categories of thought are crossed and bewildering: Banquo ponders in front of the witches: "you should be women,/ And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ That you are so"(I. III. 39-47). Lady Macbeth is crueller and more determined than her husband, a man 'professionally murderous', as Harold Bloom calls him<sup>326</sup>.

Telling is also the recurrence of 'strange', present 19 times in all contexts, from the description of the battle and the witches, to the *strange* healing *virtue* of the English king. *Strange* goes between disrupting comprehension and insinuating meaning and colours the world perception in Macbeth. Macbeth's contamination with the strange is magical: after nourishing his hopes from the witches' 'strange intelligence' (I. III. 76), he starts having 'strange things' in his head 'that will to hand' (III. IV. 138), his murder causes '*strange* screams of death' (II. III. 62), 'Hours dreadful and things *strange*' (II. IV. 3). When he sees the ghost he pretends in front of his guests to have a '*strange* infirmity' (III. IV. 86) and at one point he realizes its impact on himself as an abuse. To Lady Macbeth's remark: "You lack the season of all natures, sleep" (III. V. 142), Macbeth replies:

Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse  
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use.  
We are yet but young in deed.

(III. IV. 143-5)

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<sup>326</sup> Bloom, Harold, *Shakespeare, The Invention of the Human*, Fourth Estate, London, 1998, p.530.

This mental contamination with the strange is possible because he does not filter it by reason and does not resist it by an ethical choice. The confusion promised by the weird sisters *fair is foul, and foul is fair* (I. I. 12) finds a perfect receptacle in Macbeth, whose first reply is “So fair and so foul a day I have not seen” (I. III. 38). The potion Hecate<sup>327</sup> will prepare for Macbeth, contains 'artificial sprites', which, “by the strength of their illusion/ Shall draw him on to his confusion” (III. IV. 28-9). But this magical substance actually reinforces Macbeth's natural incapacity to discern. Only in the end does Macbeth “begin/ To doubt th'equivocation of the fiend/ That lies like truth” (V. V. 42-4), a discovery that was a postulate for Banquo, who knows already that “oftentimes, to win us to our harm,/ The instruments of darkness tell us truths,/ Win us with honest trifles, to betray's/ In deepest conscience” (I.III.123-126).

Ravished by wonder, Macbeth becomes an object of demonic manipulation and behaves exactly as Hecate had predicted:

He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear/  
His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace, and fear

(III. IV. 30-31)

The result is damaging a country, but also self-destruction: his wife is insane, he will be killed and leave no heir and no good memory behind. Macbeth's total submitting to the sense of wonder results in a perpetual suspension of reason and discernment. The consequence is a form of tragic alienation, a disgregating loss of existential meaning. Life is then just “a tale/ Told by an idiot/ Full of sound and fury/ Signifying nothing.”(V. IV. 26-8).

#### 4.2.4 Wonder in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (MSND)

Quite contrary to the terrifying aspects of wonder in *Macbeth*, MSND can be seen as a play about the pleasant and funny 'unlikely', the virtual space of benign

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<sup>327</sup> Upon the corner of the moon/There hangs a vap'rous drop profound;/I'll catch it ere it come to ground;/And that, distilled by magic sleights,/ Shall raise such arificial sprites/as by the strength of their illusion/Shall draw him to his confusion. (III. V. 23-29)

wonder that discloses its absolute freedom and its power to charm humans. It is a dream and in a dream everything is possible: there is no temporal or spatial limit, Puck circles the globe in forty minutes, mythological characters of ancient Greece like Theseus and Hyppolita or the Ovidian Titania interact with figures inspired by the Germanic lore. A young Greek called Helena, whose name evoked to the Elizabethans a beauty so irresistible that it provoked a war, runs desperately after a lover who rebukes her, Titania's fairies are strange even to the “clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders /At our quaint spirits. “(II. II. 6-7)”. Yet the most surprising are the wonders of Eros, the great binder, the magician who can transform feelings and behaviour. Behind Oberon and Puck one perceives Diotima's Δαίμων μέγας which is “By nature neither immortal nor mortal. But now he springs to life when he gets his way, now he dies”<sup>328</sup>, standing “between wisdom and ignorance”.<sup>329</sup> Demetrius and Lysander give up abruptly their love for Hermia and fall in love with Helena; the rude Bottom, called 'a monster' by Puck (III. II. 6) becomes the lover of the fairy queen, thus the mortal and carnal mingles with the eternal and aetherial.

All these fantastic events are actually created by human imagination, which brings together love, art and lunacy, gods, humans and spirits, as Theseus clarifies at the end of the play, when he declares he “never may believe/ These antique fables nor these fairy toys” (V. I. 2-3), a paradoxical statement, as he is a character of the antique fables himself. Bottom's extraordinary dream, “I am to discourse wonders” (V. I. 28) may thus be just one of those tricks 'strong imagination' plays, according to Theseus. Yet this attempt at rationalizing the marvelous does not neutralize the implicit discourse on theatre as producer of artificial wonders, whose 'charm', or what is called in modern theory of drama the acceptance of the 'theatrical illusion', is founded on a bond of imagination, established between the poet, the actors who translate his intentions and the audience. In the comically incoherent prologue to the play performed by the artisans for Theseus' wedding, Quince debates wonder in his own manner:

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<sup>328</sup> Symposium, 203-e; 204-a.

<sup>329</sup> Analysis of love and magic in P.I.Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1987; Maria-Christine Leitgeb, *Amore e Magia, La nascita di Eros and il De Amore di Ficino*, Cahiers Accademia of the Société Marsile Ficin, ed. Stéphane Toussaint, Lucca, 2006.



Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;  
 But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.  
 This man is Pyramus, if you would know;  
 This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.  
 This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present  
 Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder;  
 And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content  
 To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.

(V. I. 129-136)

However, his spectators cannot help wondering. For Theseus says: 'I wonder if the lion be to speak' (V. I. 154) and Demetrius replies: 'No wonder, my lord: one lion may,/ when many asses do' (V. I. 155-6). What Quince does not know in his simplicity, is that the man of theatre is actually a magician, who has to surprise his spectators and keep them enchanted, which excludes "making all things plain".

#### 4. 2. 5 Theatre and Magic in *The Tempest*

In his lifetime Shakespeare was a most complete theatre man: he wrote the text, acted, plausibly directed the staging or participated in it, was an administrator and part owner of a theatre. In the well-known introductory lines to the *First Folio*, Ben Jonson calls him: "Soul of the Age!/The applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage!". Addressing ideally Shakespeare himself, Jonson says he would call *Aeschilus*, *Euripiedes* and *Sophocles* "to heare thy Buskin tread, /And shake a stage." This playwright "to whom all Scenes of Europe homage owe"... "like Apollo he came forth to warme/ Our eares, or like a Mercury to charme".<sup>330</sup> As wonder of the stage and Mercury who charms, Shakespeare incarnated his fellow dramatists' idea that there was magic in theatre<sup>331</sup>: the playwright and the actors had to know how to bind the public, to control their emotions and imagination, yet this occurred in a mutual acceptance of the wonderment: the spectators of a show willfully yielded to the seduction of the world representation on the stage. *The Tempest* makes the convergence of theatre and magic explicit: Prospero is a

<sup>330</sup> Pelican Edition of Shakespeare's Works, The Opening Pages of the Folio of 1623.

<sup>331</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century this became a topos, for example Corneille's *Illusion comique*.

Renaissance magus, expert in 'liberal arts' and 'secret studies' (I. II. 73; 77), but also “the stage manager and master of the revels”<sup>332</sup> on the island, which can be a stage, as well as a magical circle.

Criticism has detailed the allusions to the theatrical convention present in the play. Prospero's behaviour and vocabulary hint at the theatricality of magic: he 'dresses the part', putting on his *magic robes* and staff, refers to the effects of the tempest as “the direful spectacle of the wrack” (I. II. 26) and asks Ariel if he has “Performed to point the tempest that I bade thee?” (I. II. 193-4). In act V in conjuring the 'elves'<sup>333</sup> he calls them *demipuppets*, an allusion to the stage hands in charge of special effects, the *weak masters*, by whose aid the theatrical illusion was created. His double quality is stressed again in act V. I, when he sums up his prodigious wonders:

I have bedimmed  
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous wind,  
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, oped and let 'em forth  
By my so potent art.

(V. 1. 41-50)

As a magician Prospero controls weather, as a theatre maker he is able to simulate natural phenomena that impress Miranda and 'jultle the senses' of the shipwrecked. *The strong-based promontory/ Have I made shake* is a transparent allusion to the Elizabethan stage, raised on a robust wooden base and protruding like a promontory and to Shakespeare the dramatist and actor, whose plays and acting art *shaked the stage* as Ben Jonson wrote. Opening the graves at command and waking their sleepers evokes the power to restore life, a holy attribute high magicians aspired at, while necromancers pretended to be able to perform, but

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<sup>332</sup> P. Holland in the *Introduction to The Tempest*, Pelican Edition of Shakespeare's Works, p.734.

<sup>333</sup> Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves,/ And ye that on the sands with printless foot/ Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him/ When he comes back; you demipuppets that/ By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,/ Whereof the ewe not bites, and you whose pastime/ Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice/ To hear the solemn curfew; ... (V. I. 33-40).

also Shakespeare's capacity as a dramatist to revive on the stage dead figures like Caesar, Cleopatra, Ulysses, Cymbeline, Richard III, Henry VIII, etc.

The interpretation of *The Tempest* as magic in theatre and theatre in magic needs a series of distinctions. A real magus like Dr. Dee aspired to determine the course of history with his future projects for the English nation, Prospero uses magic as an instrument to repair the damage produced by his brother, he changes history by restoring the principle of justice. Thus Prospero's *renovatio* consists in unmasking and pardoning the deceivers after attempting a purging ritual of their minds in act V. I, which complies with the priestly role of the magus, but is more pertinent to the 'trial' of the unjust and the *catharsis* traditionally attributed to theatre. Besides, Prospero does not share Dee's belief in the progress of humanity, in other words, he does not behave like an enthusiastic supporter of the role Renaissance magic could play in history. In presenting to the shipwrecked “a wonder to content ye/ As much as me my dukedom” (V. I. 170-1) he reveals Miranda and Ferdinand 'playing at chess'. The love of the young couple destined to rule in Naples has already the germs of power games in it. The brave new world<sup>334</sup> Miranda hails is politic. The young couple's exchange of replies leaves no doubts about it:

Miranda.Sweet lord, you play me false.

Ferdinand.No, my dearest love,

I would not for the world.

Miranda. Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle,

And I would call it fair play.

(V. I. 172-5).

Prospero's tempest is also aimed at putting his enemy's intellects to a test<sup>335</sup>. Their behaviour on the island betrays their 'unsettled fancy' which makes their brains appear 'useless, boiled' within their skull! (V. I. 59-60). By charming them, Prospero wants to “chase the ignorant fumes that mantle/Their clearer reason” (V. I. 67-8). Dissipating ignorance was a goal of Dr. Dee, but also the commitment of Shakespeare the dramatist, as Ben Jonson confirms: “the race/ Of Shakespeare's

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<sup>334</sup> O, wonder!

How many goodly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world

That has such people in't! (V.I. 182-5)

<sup>335</sup> G.Dragnea Horvath, op.cit., ch.IX. *Il discorso sulla ragione*, pp.83-92.

minde, and manners brightly shines/ In his well torned, and true filed lines:/ In each of which he seemes to shake a Lance,/ As brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance". The paradox of both theatre and of magic is that dissipating the ignorant fumes in order to bring forth the 'clearer reason' was done by working with visions, systems of encoding or figures of speech and imagery that formed a continuous interplay of hiding and disclosure, of rendering meanings occult, vague or multiple and alternately exposing them to plain judgement.

As stated in a previous section, according to Shakespeare, the poet gives 'the airy nothing a local habitation and a name', but Dee also worked with the 'airy nothing', as his future projects, his speculations on letters and numbers in the *Monas* and his conversations with angels attest. In act IV, Prospero reassures the dismayed Ferdinand that the betrothal masque, with Juno's chariot, Iris and Ceres 'played by Ariel', as the text requires, was only 'the baseless fabric' of a vision, an 'insubstantial pageant', a series of *simulacra*, in other words a theatrical and magical illusion; and that "These our actors,/ As I foretold you, were all spirits and/ are melted into air, into thin air" (IV. I. 148-150). Prospero acts indirectly, commanding Ariel, an unaccomplished aspiration of Dr. Dee who hoped that the revelation of the spirits' names and formulas to conjure them would increase his capacity to act. Ariel is present in Agrippa's book as one of the Four Rulers of the Elements, in *The Scale of the Number Four*<sup>336</sup>, aligned with the element earth and the astrological signs representing it: Taurus, Virgo, Capricornus. Shakespeare transforms him into an 'airy spirit', following the logic of poetry, as the English pronunciation of his name is consonant with 'air'. This choice is consistent with the poet's airy vision, his giving the 'airy nothing a local habitation and a name' and with placing theatre in the category of 'insubstantial' dreams.

In the context of the performance, there are real actors playing spirits, who play in their turn, various characters. In Shakespeare's time the actors were also called *shadows*, as Puck acknowledges at the end of *MSND*:

If we shadows have offended,  
Think but this, and all is mended -  
That you have but slumbered here  
While these visions did appear.  
And this weak and idle theme,

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<sup>336</sup> *Ibidem*.

No more yielding but a dream,  
Gentles, do not reprehend.

(Epilogue, MSND, V. 1)

The performer as *shadow* and *actor* comes close to the magician as an occult agent producing effects. In Shakespeare's time the word *actor* meant both a player on the stage and the author of an action, like, for instance, in *Measure for Measure*, where Angelo asks: "Condemn the fault and not the actor of it?"(II. II. 37). Prospero prolongs his sight and capacity to act through the spirits at his command, like Oberon, the King of the Fairies. His role as Duke of Milan and lord of the island translates in political terms the position of power the magician and the 'master of revels' shared by acting invisibly on the others, which also illuminates the occult aspect of power and vice-versa the power of the occult. Contrary to the legend woven around his power due to conjuring demons, Dr. Dee, the real magus, believed the voices instructing him through Kelly were angels, messengers of God and he respected them and obeyed to their commands. Shakespeare's idea to make Prospero the absolute master of the spirits, corresponds to the stage manager role who instructed actors, (shadows) and to the commonly accepted pretense of the magician to control the visible and the invisible. As arts of imagination, theatre and magic explore the possible and try to make it manifest. In his *Conclusiones* Pico explains: *Mirabilia artis magicae non sunt nisi per unionem et actuacionem eorum, quae seminaliter et separate sunt in natura*<sup>337</sup> A definition that applies to the dramatic art as well.

In Shakespeare's time theatre and magic responded better than the pulpit to the unprecedented urgency of the English to fathom the unknown. The Puritans vehemently contrasted both, classifying them as arts of the devil, but the Elizabethans were experiencing a growing awareness that the Christian imaginary world, the Reformation had prohibited to represent, was just a part of a yet unexplored ocean of possibilities. Evaluating Caliban, Trinculo significantly ponders:

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<sup>337</sup> "Le meraviglie dell'arte magica non avvengono che per unione ed attuazione di cose che in natura esistono allo stato di potenza e di separatezza." in G.Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones*, op.cit., pp.118-9

Were I in England now, as once I was, and had but this fish [Caliban] painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man: any strange beast there makes a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian.

(II. II. 27-32)

## 4.2.6 WONDER AND AMAZEMENT IN *THE TEMPEST*.

### 4.2.6.1 Wonder, Worship and the Advancement of Learning

For Plato and Aristotle the sense of wonder is the origin and principle of philosophy, *The Tempest* explains it first as the psychological ground for worshipping, giving an insight into the phenomenology of the sacred. The storm, which caused “a fever of the mad” (I. II. 209) in the people on the ship and made them play “some tricks of desperation”(I. II. 209-10) appears as the *mysterium tremendum* hidden in the powerful, life-threatening natural hazards. They reduce human hierarchies to nothing and keep only self-preservation will, as the Boatswain's plain statement proves: “What cares these roarers for the name of king?” (I. I. 16-7). During the storm, the horrified Ferdinand “with hair upstaring (then like reeds, not hair)” (I. II. 213) imagines “Hell is empty,/ And all the devils are here!” (I. II. 214-5). After his fear of death is appeased, Ferdinand, isolated from the rest and left alone to cope with the peculiar atmosphere and music of the island<sup>338</sup> is object to a different kind of wonderment. The charm of Ariel's song, heard indistinctly in the air above him, giving the false, but highly plausible oracle about his drowned father, opens his mind to the possibility of facing the supernatural. “This is no mortal business” (I. II. 407), he exclaims and immediately after this sort of presentment, he meets Miranda. Their encounter is an example of the *mysterium fascinans*, attributed to the Numinous by Rudolf Otto, the unaccountable, fulminant fascination of love, which appears as a

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<sup>338</sup> Where should this music be? i' the air or the earth?/ It sounds no more: and sure, it waits upon/  
Some god o' the island. Sitting on a bank,/ Weeping again the king my father's wreck,/ This  
music crept by me upon the waters,/ Allaying both their fury and my passion/ With its sweet  
air: thence I have follow'd it, /Or it hath drawn me rather. But 'tis gone./ No, it begins again. (I.  
II. 387-396).

manifestation of the sacred. Miranda is to Ferdinand: “Most sure, the goddess/ On whom these airs attend! (I. II. 422-3)”. She lives the same experience:

I might call him  
A thing divine; for nothing natural  
I ever saw so noble.

(I. II. 417-20)

The *mysterium fascinans* sets in when the subject is so overwhelmed by the pleasant perception of something transcending natural limits and expectations that he feels transformed into an object. Under Miranda's spell and caught by surprise to hear his own language spoken on a waste island, Ferdinand declares himself “A single thing, as I am now, that wonders...” (I.II.433). The love between the two young people appears as a reiteration of man's original experience of divine love. After going through the hell of the tempest, Ferdinand reaches a sort of Eden:

Let me live here ever;  
So rare a wonder'd father and a wife  
Makes this place Paradise.

(IV. I.122-4)

Religious attitudes are more likely to occur in ingenious souls, with a capacity to wonder, like Ferdinand and Miranda, but also in simple characters like Caliban<sup>339</sup>, whose experience illuminates a chapter in the history of religions: the passage from tribal forms of worship, through idolatry, towards a complex religion, like Christianity. A representative of the natives in the newly discovered territories, Caliban goes through a cultural shock: he is dominated by a stranger, Prospero and has to obey him, because: “his art is of such pow'r/ It would control my dam's god, Setebos,/ And make a vassal of him”(I. II. 372-4)<sup>340</sup>. Caliban's distress in realizing the lack of power of his divinity and his extremely reduced system of reference, induces him to idolize Stephano and Trinculo, after he had tasted their wine:

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<sup>339</sup> Caliban's fascination with Stephano and Trinculo encounters Miranda's fascination with the 'beauteous mankind' she discovers in the end, some of which are just a pack of criminals.

<sup>340</sup> Shakespeare had taken the name of this Patagonian divinity from Robert Eden's *Historie of Travaile* (1577), but he did not adopt Eden's biased qualification of Setebos as 'a great devil': for him Setebos is just a god of a primitive world.

These be fine things, as if they be not sprites.  
That's a brave god and bears celestial liquor.  
I will kneel to him

(II. II. 114-6)

Caliban expects gods to come from heaven, so he asks:

Caliban. Hast thou not dropped from heaven?  
Stephano. Out o'th'moon, I do assure thee. I was the Man i'th' Moon when time was.  
Caliban. I have seen thee in her, and I do adore thee.  
My mistress showed me thee, and thy dog, and thy bush.

(II. II. 134-6)

Beyond the tragi-comical incongruence of register between Caliban's expectations and the deriding answers of his 'divinities', one realizes that he experiences the *mysterium fascinans* of what he thinks is his god's actualization in history. As his mother Sycorax “could control the moon, make flows and ebbs,/ And deal in her command without her power” (V. 1. 270-1) Caliban was brought up in the tradition of a lunar cult<sup>341</sup>, probably connected to earth fertility, as his mother's commands are defined *earthy* (I. II. 273) by Prospero, who also addresses Caliban once: “Thou *earth*, thou!” This suggests that, when radically different cultures encounter<sup>342</sup>, the immediate mental associations on either side reflect the religious background or rather that the visible presence of the *other* evokes the invisible powerful *Other*. Prospero's way of addressing Caliban or talking about him confirms it. He tells Caliban he had been “got by the devil himself/Upon thy wicked dam” (I. II. 319-20), and again, in the end, defines him in front of the others as “this demi-devil”, “this thing of darkness” (V.I. 272; 275) which was not just a figure of speech for the Elizabethan public who believed that witches could procreate with demons.

Taking the capacity to develop a religious attitude under the impact of wonderment as a criterion, one can divide the characters in *The Tempest* into three

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<sup>341</sup> This is exactly what some of the trialed witches declared to practice, more specifically the Diana cult.

<sup>342</sup> Cultural difference disclosed in sudden encounters could produce new religious cults. The lack of instruments of judgement is compensated by fascination, which can turn a phenomenon, that belongs to normality in a system of reference, into a religious one in another paradigm.



groups: Ferdinand, Miranda and Caliban who open to the possibility of the sacred, Gonzalo who is a believer and will stay so throughout the events of the play, and the gang of villains who desacralize everything. Stephano performs a caricature ritual of acceptance into 'his religion', by asking Caliban to swear on the bottle and kiss it, while Antonio, who betrayed his brother Prospero and instigates Sebastian to kill his own brother and king, cynically denies having a conscience: "I feel not/This deity in my bosom" (II.I. 276-7). As the individual conscience was central to the Protestant understanding of the relationship to God, Shakespeare denounces the fact that it depended on individual will, sensibility and level of understanding.

Caliban worships Stephano, willingly becomes his servant, plans Prospero's murder, but in the end, realizes his error. He has learned to compare and contrast and so, he finally sees 'how fine' Prospero is and voices his error: "What a thrice-double ass/Was I to take this drunkard for a god/ And worship this dull fool!" (V. I. 296-8). Caliban's promise: "I'll be wise hereafter,/ And seek for grace" (V. 1. 295-6) informs about his final discovery of two basic Christian concepts - wisdom and grace; yet this comes after a significant progress, the only one experienced by a character in *The Tempest*. Prospero does not burn this demidevil at the stake, but tries to civilize him, alternating verbal intimidation and physical penalty, with his efforts to teach him 'one thing or other'(I. II. 335) and language, in order to endow his purposes "With words that made them known" (I. II. 358). Prospero seems to suggest that 'the thing of darkness', as reified obscurity of purpose and understanding, can be subdued by cultivating language and reason: even if the first use Caliban made of language was to curse, in the end he was able to distinguish right from wrong and express it.

Prospero's efforts to instruct Caliban and get him used to work, are contrary to Gonzalo's 'solution' of a commonwealth, where 'letters should not be known', there would be "No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;/ No occupation', all men idle, all;/ And women too, but innocent and pure" (II. I. 147- 154). This model of society, taken 'almost word for word from John Florio's 1603 translation of Michel de Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals" (Book I, Chapter 30, of his *Essays*)<sup>343</sup> is contrasted to the reality of Caliban (whose name is an anagram of

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<sup>343</sup> P. Holland, *Introduction to The Tempest*, in the Pelican Shakespeare, p.731.

Cannibal), the true natural man, living in the immediacy of his needs. On the other hand, the Renaissance idea of a 'natural society' is a double paradox: far from being natural, it is a mental construct worked up "by contraries" as Gonzalo declares, and in equating the golden age<sup>344</sup> with ignorant bliss, his supporters searched perfection in the denial of their own learning.

As a magus, Prospero is the counter-example to Marlowe's Faust. This counter-position is made more efficient by his name: in Latin the semantic field of *faustus* partially overlaps that of *prosperus*. There is no pact with the devil behind Prospero's unusual skills: his power over Ariel, turned into his invisible instrument to act on others, his symbolic victory over the 'damned witch Sycorax' (I. II. 263) and her 'more potent ministers' (I. II. 275) are the outcome of his 'secret studies' (I. II. 77), his efforts for 'the bettering' of his mind (I. II. 90) and the expert use of the books he prizes above his kingdom (I. II. 166-8). Nor is his thirst of knowledge mere *Wille zur Macht* as with Faust. Prospero does not exercise his power on the others for his own sake, but to defend a principle of justice, control Caliban's unruly instincts, restore the throne to his daughter. His thirst of knowledge is not an end in itself, but becomes applied knowledge to try and better the world, an instrument at the service of the principle of love<sup>345</sup>, central to traditional Christianity. His very name is a key to this interpretation, as one can read in *The Winter's Tale*, written in the same period of creation as *The Tempest*, where Camillo tells Florizel and Perdita: "Prosperity's the very bond of love" (IV. III. 586)

#### 4.2.6.2 The Monster in the Labyrinth

Prospero's first words in the play are addressed to Miranda and are aimed at appeasing her deep compassion for the victims of the shipwreck: Be collected./ No more *amazement* (I. II. 13-4). Later on, Ariel reassures Prospero of having 'performed' the tempest 'to every article', by "*flaming amazement*". As there was

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<sup>344</sup> Terrestrial paradise and Ovid's Golden Age.

<sup>345</sup> He explains Miranda his motivations: I have done nothing but in care of thee,/ Of thee my dear one, thee my daughter...(I. II. 17-8). G.Dragnea Horvath, *Shakespeare, ermetismo, mistica, magia*, discussion of name and the concept of prosperitie pp.76-81.

“not so much perdition as an hair/ Betid to any creature in the vessel” (I. II. 30-1) and their garments, were 'rather new-dyed than stained with salt water” (II. I. 64-5) the tempest was a very successful simulation, a magico-theatrical wonder. Shakespeare plays on the double meaning of *amazement*<sup>346</sup>: the mental stupefaction or bewilderment and the trapping of others in a *maze*, an intricate structure, a *labyrinth*. A plausible reference for an association of *maze* and *amaze* to the *labyrinth* as human artefact is the story of the Minotaur in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book VIII), most probably in Arthur Golding's translation (1567), a very popular reading in Shakespeare's time and a likely source of inspiration for himself.<sup>347</sup>

Shakespeare uses *labyrinth* with direct reference to the Minotaur in Henry VI, Part I. where Suffolk strives to be loyal to King Henry: “- but Suffolk, stay./ Thou mayst not wander in that labyrinth;/ There Minotaurs and ugly treasons lurk”(V. V. 186-8) and in a metaphorical sense in *Venus and Adonis*<sup>348</sup>, defining the hare's disorderly run, 'a labyrinth to amaze his foes'. In *Troilius and Cressida* (II. III. 1-2) Thersites reproaches himself: “How now, Thersites! What, lost in the labyrinth of thy fury?”

The term appears in *Macbeth* as well, after the protagonist is shown by the demons the dynasty of 8 kings descending from Banquo. The apparitions paralyze the tyrant and so the First Witch asks:

But why  
Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?

(IV. I. 125-6)

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<sup>346</sup> *Amazement*, from the Anglo-Saxon *āmasian*, where from the archaic to *maze*, and the later to *amaze* means thus “to make dizzy; daze; to bewilder”, Webster, p.619. Labyrinth “emphasizes the idea of structural intricacy: maze, which often applies to what is shifting, heightens the implication of bewilderment.” Webster, p. 560.

<sup>347</sup> G. Sampson, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, p.148 mentions the various translations from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and in particular Arthur Golding's *The XV Books of P. Ovidius Naso entyled Metamorphosis* (1567), “His work has a special interest; for when we read such lines as Ye Ayres and windes; ye Elves of Hills, of Brookes, of Woods alone, /Of standing Lakes, and of the Night, approche ye everyone, we know we are reading something that Shakespeare had probably read. (Note: ref. to Prospero's invocation of the elves, V. I. 34-50).

<sup>348</sup> 'And when thou hast on foot the purblind hare,/ Mark the poor wretch, to overshoot his troubles/ How he outruns the wind and with what care/ He cranks and crosses with a thousand doubles:/ The many musets through the which he goes/ Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes (678-684).

To be *a-mazed* is to be prisoner of a vision. In *Macbeth* the amazement is produced by the witches/demons, in MSND by the juice of a flower with the contribution of Oberon and Puck. *The Tempest* proves that the artifices of a magus can have the same effect on the imagination of those predisposed to a 'special wonder'; moreover, the play brings together the various meanings Shakespeare had previously given to *amazement* and the *labyrinth*. Thus Prospero's artificial wonders create *a labyrinth to amaze his foes* and overpower them. His techniques of enchantment correspond to Bruno's ideas on "the enticements of the bonding agent"<sup>349</sup>, systematically described in *De vinculis, in genere* (A general account of bonding). *The Tempest* as a whole seems to illustrate Bruno's assumptions about bonding agents, which are, *taken universally*, "God, demons, souls, animals, nature, chance, luck, and, finally fate"<sup>350</sup>. As a bonding agent, Prospero knows that "there are three gates through which the hunter of souls ventures to bind: vision, hearing, and mind or imagination."<sup>351</sup> He uses all of them, confirming Bruno again, for if someone "passes through all three of these gates, he binds most powerfully and ties down most tightly."<sup>352</sup> The shipwrecked and Caliban hear voices and songs, see insubstantial visions, feel their imagination stimulated. By giving contradictory messages to the objects of his bonding, Prospero also achieves what modern psychology calls 'double bind': thus he alternates charming paradisiacal visual and sound effects with "strange and several noises/ Of roaring, shrieking, howling, jingling chains,/ And more diversity of sounds, all horrible"(V. I. 232-3) evocative of hell.

The conflicting emotional reactions disrupt logical patterns and annul familiar distinctions. All the charmed characters realize their alienation and lack of self-control. At the language level this is marked by the use of *strange* and its compounds (*stranger, strangeness*) 26 times during the play. At the lowest end of the scale, Caliban, 'the earth', perceives the strangeness physically; thus he warns Stephano and Trinculo that, if Prospero is awake "From toe to crown he'll fill our skins with pinches,/ Make us strange stuff" (IV. I. 232- 4). King Alonso realizes that "This is as strange a maze as e'er men trod/ And there is in this business more than nature/ Was ever conduct of." (V. I. 242-4) and appeals to "some oracle" that

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<sup>349</sup> G. Bruno, *Essays on Magic*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 154.

<sup>350</sup> G. Bruno, *A General Account of bonding*, in *Essays on Magic*, op. cit., p.145.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, p.155.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibidem.*

“must rectify our knowledge” (V. I. 244-5). In conformity with his well-meaning pious nature, Gonzalo perceives being trapped in wonder as fearful and prays for divine help:

All torment, trouble, wonder and amazement  
Inhabits here: some heavenly power guide us  
Out of this fearful country!

(V. I. 104-6)

By keeping the others amazed, Prospero submits them to the labyrinth trial<sup>353</sup>, the quest for the authentic self after a journey of alienating torment. For Ferdinand and Miranda this means finding love, for Caliban repenting for his murderous plan and learning to appreciate his master; yet Antonio, Sebastian and Alonso, the “three men of sin”, as Ariel calls them, do not show any capacity to “hang and drown their proper selves” (IV. I. 53-60). The labyrinth trial forces the shipwrecked into the world of the possible, stimulating them to reveal their own potential scenarios: Gonzalo's well-meaning but impossible vision of the commonwealth is innocuous, while Antonio's, Sebastian's and Caliban's murdering plots exemplify the *Minotaurs* and *ugly treason that lurks* in their mental labyrinth. It is not casual that the word *monster* is used 38 times in the play. It refers mostly to Caliban, conveying the Elizabethan perception of the other as monstrous, yet it also indirectly reveals the monsters that humans without conscience release in the world. On the other hand, Prospero himself risks being caught in the *labyrinth of his fury* and it is his 'airy spirit'<sup>354</sup>, that helps him put an end to his revenge, by realizing that:

Though with their high wrongs  
I am struck to the quick,  
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury  
Do I take part: the rarer action is  
In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,  
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend  
Not a frown further.

(V. I. 25-30).

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<sup>353</sup> M.Eliade, *L'épreuve du labyrinthe: Entretiens avec Claude-Henri Rocquet*, Paris, Belfond, 1978.

<sup>354</sup> Your charm so strongly works 'em,/That if you now beheld them, your affections/Would become tender. (V. I. 17-19).

Prospero is the author of the labyrinth trial, but participates in it too: he controls the others' emotions, but in the process learns to control his own, by discovering virtue in his nobler reason.

#### 4.2.6.3 The Nobler Reason

As a guide in the labyrinth trial, Prospero accomplishes both a priestly and a Socratic role, explicated in the ritual of purging his enemies' reason and absolution of their sins in the fifth act, but also in his efforts to bring his enemies on the way to virtue, by chasing their ignorant fumes and bring them closer to their “clearer reason”. The underlying debate on reason and imagination in the face of wonder in *The Tempest* continues and concludes the discourse already present in *Macbeth* and in *MSND*, where in the end, Theseus considers the four lovers' night adventure, “more strange than true”, for:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.

(V. I. 2-6)

In *The Tempest*, the frequency of vocabulary referring to *mind* and *reason*, including their seat: *skull*, *brain*, *head*, builds up a consistent line of interpretation, resonating with Prospero's intentions to use his magic as a test of his enemies' judgement. At the beginning of the play, after finding out that Ariel had performed the tempest “to point” (I. II. 194) or rather “to every article”(I. II. 195) Prospero asks:

My brave spirit!  
Who was so firm so constant, that this coil  
Would not infect his reason?

(I. II. 206-8).

A coil is a spiral, a twist, another possible synonym for labyrinth. Hamlet calls life's ensnaring events 'this mortal coil' (III. I. 67)<sup>355</sup>. Prospero wants to test their cool reason, their firmness of judgement, and see if they are able to go beyond the mental stupefaction induced by his artifices<sup>356</sup>. From the beginning till the end of the play, when he tries to cure their brains, "Now useless, boil'd within thy skull!" (V. I. 60 ) he does not find any of them able to go beyond "unsettled fancy"(V. I. 59). Shakespeare's point here is very clear: wonderment can be produced by unaccountable events, natural, divine or artificial, but unsurpassed mental stupefaction suspends the functions of reason: Prospero remarks that his enemies 'do so much admire/ That they devour their reason...' (V. I. 154-5). The wonder producer's power is based on the others' admiration and this places the discussion of *thaumazein* or *Erstaunen* in a specific context. If the philosopher proceeds in his inquiry from his consternation in front of existence, but strives at solving the enigma rationally, in theatre and in magic there is always an interaction between real characters, a deliverer and a receiver of wonders, based fundamentally as Bruno said, 'on the communion and interaction of things'<sup>357</sup> and on self-love<sup>358</sup>: as long as human nature relies on desire and imagination and continues to perpetually flee from reality into the wonderful world of the possible, there is no certainty that virtue is going to be pursued.

Prospero's final aim is not to leave the objects of his bonding amazed, but to turn them more virtuous and to increase their self-awareness. The trial of the labyrinth in his case becomes a trial of resistance to wonder. He admits that he intentionally entices them to 'infect their reason' (I. II. 208). Later on he acknowledges that strangeness infests the mind.<sup>359</sup> Infecting their reason with wonderment in order to see if they are immune to fascination and have a firm judgement, is using magic as a vaccination against magic itself. Quite remarkably, the method works for Prospero himself. After accomplishing his mission, he abjures magic with the famous words:

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<sup>355</sup> G. Dragnea Horvath, *Shakespeare, ermetismo, mistica, magia*, op.cit., ch. II discorso sulla ragione [in *The Tempest*]

<sup>356</sup> Ariel: not a soul/ But felt a fever of the mad and played/ Some tricks of desperation" (I. II. 208-210).

<sup>357</sup> G. Bruno, *Essays on magic*, op. cit., p.115.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., p.159.

<sup>359</sup> Sir, my liege,/ Do not infest your mind with beating on/ The strangeness of this business. (V.I.245-7)

But this rough magic I here abjure, and, when I have required  
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,  
To work mine 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. [Solemn music]

(V.1. 52-7)

Why would a man of such extraordinary capacities renounce magic and turn powerless?

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,  
And what strength I have's mine own,  
Which is most faint.

(Epilogue 1-3)

The final of *The Tempest* has been interpreted as Shakespeare's literary will and farewell to the world of theatre, but it can also be read as the epitome of Prospero's own experience in the labyrinth trial. His game of exciting wonderment is a display of theatre and magic as *imitatio dei*: he controls the elements, spirits, other humans, time and love. He frightens, punishes and forgives. His wonders are perceived by some of the characters as miracles<sup>360</sup>. Yet he is aware that his art is 'rough', that is a crude, unskilled, approximate imitation of the genuine *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. In the end he has a sense of guilt for his audacious behaviour and delivers himself to the others with the plea:

And my ending is despair  
Unless I be relieved by prayer,  
Which pierces so that it assaults  
Mercy itself and frees all faults,  
As you from crimes would pardoned be,  
Let your indulgence set me free.

(Epilogue, 15-20)

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<sup>360</sup> Gonzalo: Beseech you, sir, be merry; you have cause,/ So have we all, of joy; for our escape  
Is much beyond our loss./ Our hint of woe Is common; every day some sailor's wife,/ The  
masters of some merchant and the merchant/ Have just our theme of woe; but for the miracle,/ I  
mean our preservation, few in millions/ Can speak like us: then wisely, good sir, weigh/  
Our sorrow with our comfort. (II. I. 1-7): Sebastian in discovering Miranda and Ferdinand  
together: A most high miracle! (V. I.177).



Prospero's final realization is that his genuine self does not coincide with his temporary role as a powerful magus and master of revels. After enjoying his dominion on others, by abjuring magic through his nobler reason, Prospero takes a step further, into wisdom. Human art as the exaltation of knowledgeable power over others extrapolates the practitioner to his peers and illudes him of surpassing his mortality. Wisdom reintegrates him as a humble part of the wholeness of being, bound to the community of humans and to God.

### 4.3 DR. DEE AS WONDER MASTER

#### 4.3.1 Monas Hieroglyphica as Instrument of Wonder

*The Monas Hieroglyphica*, published in 1564 (Fig.1) and explained “Mathematically, Magically, Cabalistically, and Anagogically” to “the most wise Maximilian, King of the Romans, of Bohemia, and of Hungary”<sup>361</sup> is presented by its author as a speculative and operative marvel. In the dedicatory letter “he states that his book will re-organize the science of the grammarians, reveal a new notion of number, revolutionize geometry and logic, make obsolete the present practice of music, optics and astronomy, and broaden for both the cabbalist and the philosopher the understanding of his art.”<sup>362</sup> The extraordinary impact of the *Monas* was meant to encompass practically every human art, from alchemy and optics (understood mostly as use of mirrors to capture energy) to mechanical and technical disciplines. According to the author, the coronation of the Monad's powerful effects was supposed to be the “philosophical transformation”<sup>363</sup>, namely the transfiguration of the magus-philosopher, his self-willed passage into the realm of the invisible:

There is present, hidden in the most central point of our Hierplyphic Monad, a terrestrial [i.e., physical] body. How this body may be activated by Divine force,

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<sup>361</sup> Dr. John Dee, *The Hieroglyphic Monad*, Weiser Books, Boston, translated by J.W.Hamilton-Jones, 2000.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface, pp. IX-X.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

the monad teaches without words. When activated, it copulates (in a perpetual marriage) with the sun and the moon- even if before this, whether in heaven or elsewhere, the sun and moon were completely separate from this body. When this marriage has been performed...the Monad can receive no further nourishment on its native soil, and no drink, until the fourth, and truly great, metaphysical Revolution is completed. When this is done, the nourisher [of the Monad, i.e., the Magus] will first be metamorphosed, and afterwards will rarely be seen by mortal eye. This, O Great King, is the true, often discussed, and blameless, invisibility of the Magus.<sup>364</sup>

Albeit deprived of its magical aura today, his *Monas* continues to intrigue as a remarkable attempt to demonstrate the unity of philosophical truth in a context where culture was so richly informed by various traditions. Starting from the point, the basic generating unit in geometry, his symbolic figure builds up an emblem which develops like a cosmogony and encompasses the Ptolemaic system of the world, with the predominance of the Sun, the Moon and the astrological sign of the Ram, fundamental in alchemical operations<sup>365</sup>(Fig.2). On the other hand, this can be viewed as a geometrical expression of Proclus' doctrine about the coming into being of space from a single point<sup>366</sup>. (Fig. 3-4)

The Cross which stands for the four Elements is a gold mine of speculations for Dee, the Christian Cabalist. In Theorems XVI and XVII he makes a captivating analysis of the symbology of the Equilateral Cross: deconstructed into two right angles, it reveals twice the Latin number five, thus the quinary and the 21<sup>st</sup> letter of the Latin alphabet. Letters indicate numbers in Latin as in Hebrew and Greek<sup>367</sup>, the two quinaries make up the Decad, “therefore, enclosed within the quinary force is the power of the Decad, out of which comes the number fifty as its own product.”<sup>368</sup> This incredible concentration of symbols gives the name E L and Dee exclaims.”Oh, My God, how profound are these mysteries!”<sup>369</sup>

Ingenuously applying what he calls 'the best kabbalistic computation' to the cross, the philosopher reaches this conclusion:

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid., Preface, p. X.

<sup>365</sup> The Great Work of the alchemists started under this sign, which was a sign of natural and spiritual regeneration.

<sup>366</sup> W.Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis*, op.cit., p.Steucheiosis Theologike § 129. On the context see ch.6: *Spiritual spaces*, esp.6.1 and 6.2.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid., Ch 5: the Archetypes, The Book Yezirah and the Archetypes of the Alphabet. p.221.

<sup>368</sup> *Monas*, p.22

<sup>369</sup> Ibidem.

From all these facts we see that we may safely conclude, by the best kabbalistic computation, that our Cross, by a marvellous metamorphosis, may signify for the Initiates two hundred and fifty-two. We can extract this number by two other methods as we have already shown: we recommend to the Kabbalists who have not yet made experiments to produce it, not only to study it in its conciseness, but also to form a judgement worthy of philosophers in regard to the various permutations and ingenious productions which arise from the magistry of this number.<sup>370</sup>

The ultimate demonstration of the verbal force of the cross, the 'final word of the magistry', is LUX, (he surely means the Roman spelling LVX), obtained by the "union and conjunction of the ternary within the unity of the Word".<sup>371</sup>

After this skilled interpretation of the Cross using the Kabbalists' method, Dee challenges "the miserable alchemists" in *Theorem XVIII*, working on the figure of the cosmic egg, with the seven planets aligned on its vertical axis (Fig. 5). For Dee "this is the same Eagle's Egg which the scarab formerly broke because of the injury which the cruelty and violence of this bird caused to timid and primitive man".<sup>372</sup> The process of dissolving "the eagle's egg and its shell with pure albumen" is represented geometrically by the metamorphosis of the egg-shape into a spiral, the figure of the "ceaseless circulation just as the scarabs roll their balls of earth"<sup>373</sup>. The contemporary reader cannot follow Dee's suggestions in the alchemical field, but is equally stimulated by the passage from the latent *dynamis* of the egg, cosmic seed and archetype, to the process of circular motion and wave propagation visualized geometrically by the spiral (Fig.6).

In *Theorem XXII*, Dee extends his analysis to the Greek alphabet, demonstrating that  $\alpha$  and  $\omega$  are graphically encapsulated in the figure of the Monad too. As a synthesis of these discourses, he draws a table, which implies the alchemical transmutation, but extends its field of application and its speculative background beyond that.

Symmetrically framed by *alpha*, the cross and *omega*, symbols of the Cristian theo-philosophy, this table could be divided into segments to allow a minimal interpretation: a first cycle includes the existence of alpha, God, before creation, followed by the Old Testament creation of the mortal Adam, male and

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>371</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>372</sup> Monas, p. 26.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., p.27.

female, the original sin which led to the mortifying self and wrapped humanity in shadows, depriving it of the light of Paradise. A new cycle begins with the birth of Christ in a Stable, his martyrdom and sacrifice on the Cross. This biblical sequence is interlaced with the coming into being of the Elements, and the Creation of Hyle, crucial in alchemy and in a cosmic regeneration that was meant to start from the purification of the prime matter.<sup>374</sup> The resurrected Christ and the IMMORTAL ADAM converge into the Vivifying Self, the Manifestation as King of All ubiquitous. This is actually, what Dee calls in *Theorem XIII*: “the Mercury of the Philosophers [read alchemists], the greatly celebrated microcosm and ADAM“, “the Sun of philosophers itself”<sup>375</sup>. It can be related to the gnostic Anthropos, the cosmic man of Philo<sup>376</sup> or the Adam Kadmon of Hereira<sup>377</sup>.

α	Existing before the Elements	Mortal Adam, male & female	The Mortifying Self	Wrapped in Shadows	Born in a Stable
+	The Elements (Chaos)	Consummation of the Genalogy of Elements	CROSS	CROSS	Sacrificed on the Cross
ω	After the Formation of the Elements	IMMORTAL ADAM	The Vivifying Self	Manifestation	King of All ubiquitous
Self-conceived by its own Influence	Power in the Seed	Creation of HYLE	Earthly Marriage	Beginning	A
Death and Burial	קקק Decadal Virtue	Purification of Elements	Martyrdom on the CROSS	Middle	+
Reborn from its own	Triumph in Glory	Transformation	Divine Marriage	End	Ω

<sup>374</sup> M.Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979, pp.128-163.

<sup>375</sup> Monas, op.cit., p.17.

<sup>376</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis*, op.cit., pp.138-142.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., pp.192-202.

The next cycle seems to be situated under the 'heaven of the Moon', where everything, following Aristotelean concepts, “contains the principle of its own generation within itself and is formed from the coagulation of the four Elements.”<sup>378</sup> The beginning is marked this time by the earthly marriage of the elements, according to the gendered conception of substances in alchemy. As “in the practice of this Monad the use of fire is required,” according to *Theorem X*,<sup>379</sup> the decomposition of the substances is followed by their transformation into a new chemical entity. This process is expressed allegorically by the martyrdom on the Cross, the death and burial and the rebirth of its own. The final act is the divine marriage, the spiritualized matter, the epitome of a mystagogy which seems to have the elements as protagonists, but actually is staged and performed by the philosopher, who is subject and object of this wondrous experience: the purification of matter implies his own matter and the transformation his own passage into a higher ontological status, which suggests a process analogous to Prospero's emancipation from the power of magic and growth into wisdom. The exposition of alchemical principles is reinforced by tables like those of the *Canon of Transposition* (Metathesis), in *Theorem XXIII* which illustrate numerical objects like “The Artificial Quaternary” and “The Enigma of the Tenfold Progression”<sup>380</sup> (Fig.7), with the phases of the alchemical magistry: Preparation, Putrefaction, Separation, Conjunction, Coagulation, Contrition, Imbibition, Fermentation of the Philosopher's Stone. They indicate that he was competent in the field of alchemy, and possibly had experimented it<sup>381</sup>.

The regeneration prefigured by the Monas did not address only the individual philosopher, but seems to have aimed at a renewal of vast proportions. This pertains to the rest of Dee's ideas and contributions and explains why he dedicated it to King Maximilian and later on, seems to have initiated Queen Elizabeth into its mysteries. Alluding to analogous applications in the Jewish tradition, he actually instructs Maximilian:

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<sup>378</sup> Monas, p.41.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>380</sup> He reinforced the necessity to respect proportions by statements like: “Our Numbers possess such dignity that to violate thier Laws is a Sin against the wisdom of Nature” p. 48.

<sup>381</sup> Monas, pp.48-9.

I tell thee, O King, this operation will be useful unto thee in many circumstances, whether in the study of Nature or in the affairs of the government of men; for it is that which I am accustomed to use with the greatest of pleasure in the Tziruph or Themura of the Hebrews.<sup>382</sup>

Like many of his contemporaries, Dee believed in the advent of a New Age, and he may have been convinced that his Monad could be an instrument to enact this *renovatio*, a magical talisman to be used by kings, who had the political power and the divine right to set the reform on<sup>383</sup>.

#### 4.3.2 Interpretations of the *Monas Hieroglyphica*

In her impressive survey of the western alchemical tradition, Michela Pereira mentions Dee in the section *Alchimia cabalistica* (Ch. La Scienza occulta 1)<sup>384</sup>, as one of those who drew their inspiration from *Voarchadumia* by the Venetian Pantheus (1530) without dedicating any comment to him. In the dedication to the *Monas*, Dee uses the term *voarchadumia* and research has brought to light a copy of the 1530 edition of the *Voarchadumia*, with Dee's notes. On the other hand Clulee considers Pliny, Trithemius and Pico as possible sources for Dee's *Monas*.<sup>385</sup> Successive Dee scholarship has inquired into other plausible sources of Dee's ingenious symbol and has notably enriched its interpretations.

For G.Szőnyi it “was to function as a revelatory mandala in order to propel the soul's flight, that is, to bring the viewer into the state of *exaltatio*, an intuitive understanding of the cosmos and a unification with the wisdom of God.”<sup>386</sup> A very interesting contribution of this author is detecting Dee's possible sources for the *Monas* in the Chapter 4 of Ficino's Latin version of the *Corpus hermeticum*,

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<sup>382</sup> *Monas*, p. 50.

<sup>383</sup> According to F.A. Yates he was concretely involved in the enacting of this reform during his travels on the Continent, in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, London: Routledge&Kegan Paul, 1972.

<sup>384</sup> M. Pereira, *Alchimia, I testi della tradizione occidentale*, Mondadori, Milano, 2006, in the Ch. La scienza occulta-1, *Alchimia cabalistica*, p. 778 and in *Notes*, p.1417.

<sup>385</sup> Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy, Between Science and Religion*, Routledge, London and New York, 1988.

<sup>386</sup> Szőnyi, György E, *John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation Through Powerful Signs*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, p.162.

entitled “Mercurii ad Tatium Crater, sive Monas”<sup>387</sup> and in the magical program drawn up by Ficino in *De vita coelitus comparanda*, that was to be actualized in images able to capture life from heavens. Following his Neoplatonic way of reasoning, Ficino prospected a universal image that could capture the essence of the One:

But why, then should we neglect a universal image, an image of the very universe itself? Through it, they seem to hope for a benefit from the universe. The adherent of these things, if he can do it, should sculpt an archetypal form of the whole world.<sup>388</sup>

In *John Dee and the Kabbalah*,<sup>389</sup> K. De León-Jones analyzes the way Dee applies the hermeneutic techniques of the Jewish Kabbalah – *gematria*, *notarikon* and *temurah* – to his *Monas*. According to this scholar “Dee is the first thinker to attempt the construction, mathematically proven in 24 theorems, of a symbol of Creation, and is unique in suggesting it as a “scientific” hypothesis and arguing its proof based on the Kabbalah.”<sup>390</sup> The conclusions are that “Dee considers the *sefirot* truly numerations, and has subsumed them in the anatomy of his *Monas*, under the all powerful Names El and Tetragrammaton... by dealing with numbers, Dee has eliminated the need for contemplating the numerations of the Deity in the form of the *sefirot*, for the theories and numerical ratios are encompassed in the actual anatomy of the glyph. He has replaced the cosmological system with a cosmological symbol.”<sup>391</sup> After pointing out Dee's “creative and innovative use of the Kabbalah”<sup>392</sup> De León-Jones draws a very interesting conclusion:

In the *Monas Hieroglyphica* Dee is concerned with a different sort of revelation, that of a new form of numerical revelation that is closer to Cartesian than traditional Jewish Kabbalistic Thought; indeed, it anticipates somewhat the later interest of mathematicians like Leibniz.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid., p. 166, quoting from the Copenhagen edition of the *Corpus hermeticum*, 1992, 15.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., p.167, quoting from Ficino, *De Vita*, 1989, 343-45.

<sup>389</sup> In Clucas, S. ed., *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies in English Renaissance Thought*, Springer, The Netherlands, 2006, pp.143-158.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., pp. 150-1.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid., p.156.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., p. 157, with ref. to Allison Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995).

In the same volume of interdisciplinary studies on John Dee, edited by S.Clucas, F. Cavallaro examines the *Monas* as an original syncretism of alchemical transmutation with the Pythagorean theory on numbers and music:

The musician, he says, will be “struck with wonder” by the “inexplicable celestial harmonies” which are represented in the alchemical work, a reference to the idea of alchemy as an “art of music”, in so far as it involves an understanding of the harmonic proportions between the weights of materials and duration of processes. The “music” also refers to certain sounds said to be heard during the final stages of heating. The astronomer, he says, will be able to observe the motions of the planets without getting cold. He refers here to the various stages of the matter as it is heated, stages that derived their names from the seven planets.<sup>394</sup>

Cavallaro's analysis of the alchemical theory in the *Monas*, leads him to remark Dee's focus on general principles, rather than 'concrete details of the process'<sup>395</sup> and to conclude:

While Dee's alchemical observations might seem far too abstract and “literary” to be considered a “theory”, and while he fails to follow a consistent line in his presentation of the opus, we should remember that these tendencies are present both in the ancient alchemical tradition and in the more recent alchemical literature with which Dee was intimately acquainted. How much he may actually have practised alchemy in the laboratory is difficult to estimate (he mentions), but his deep familiarity with the fundamental principles of alchemy, and his desire to theorise on the process of the alchemical opus speak for themselves.<sup>396</sup>

That Dee was a library man rather than a laboratory one is obvious from his entire legacy and the success Edward Kelly, much less read, but more pragmatic had in Bohemia with the practice of alchemy. A quandary impossible to solve is the list of sources that inspired Dee's alchemical speculation in the *Monas*.<sup>397</sup> Many are implicit, for instance Agrippa's structure of the world as field of magical action (natural earth, celestial, supercelestial).<sup>398</sup> Undoubtedly Roger Bacon figured among his inspirers. As regards Pico's influence, Dee's understanding of magic as informed by the Cabala is close to Pico's, but also strikingly different. For

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<sup>394</sup> F. Cavallaro, The Alchemical Significance of John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica*, in Clucas, S. ed., *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies in English Renaissance Thought*, Springer, The Netherlands, 2006, p. 161

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., p.174.

<sup>397</sup> Roberts, Julian & Watson, Andrew.G, John Dee's Library Catalogue, The Bibliographical Society, London, 1990.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., p.49.



example, in his 23<sup>rd</sup> magical thesis, Pico makes a statement like: “Quilibet numerus praeter ternarium et denarium sunt materiales in magia, isti formales sunt, et in magica arithmetica sunt numeri numerorum.”<sup>399</sup> The speculation on numbers is much more complex in Dee, as the *Monas* proves, and they are integrated with letters, cosmology and geometrical proportion. Further, in his *Conclusiones de mathematicis secundum opinionem propriam, numero LXXXV*, Pico makes remarkable statements as:

- 1.Mathematicae non sunt vere scientiae.
- 2.Si felicitas sit in speculatiua perfectione, mathematicae non faciunt ad felicitatem.
- 3.Mathematicae scientiae non sunt propter se, sed ut via ad alias sciencias quaerendae.
- 6.Nichil magis nociuum theologo, quam frequens et assidua in mathematicis Euclidis exercitatio.<sup>400</sup>

The *Monas* proves that Euclidian geometry could be very well included both in the cabalistical speculation and in theogony. Actually the use of geometrical figures in the *Monas* situates Dee close to Nicholas Cusanus's *De docta ignorantia* (Book I, Chs. XII-XVIII).

Restoring Dee's legacy to dignity, after centuries of oblivion or suspicion of sorcery, started by trying to prove his scientific contribution. From the branches of magic, only natural philosophy has been acknowledged as ancestor of science. In this perspective, no wonder the disappointment of a scholar like Clulee, who remarks: “After all of this it is difficult to assess the *Monas* as natural philosophy. It does not make any new contribution to the sciences, as Dee attempted to do in the *Propaedeumata*, and it seems to be merely a very clever blend of kabbalah, numerology, astronomy, alchemy, and gnostic magic. The alchemy and the magic are ordinary and what happens to astronomy and mathematics is far from an advance”<sup>401</sup>. Yet the same author points out the novelty of the *Monas* as “a

<sup>399</sup> G.Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones*, op.cit., pp. 120-1: “Qualsiasi numero in magia è materiale, tranne il ternario ed il denario: codesti sono formali e nella magia aritmetica valgono come numeri dei numeri.”

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., *Ottantacinque tesi sulla Matematica secondo un punto di vista personale*, pp. 106-7: 1.Le matematiche non sono vere scienze. 2.Se la felicità risiede nella perfezione speculativa, le matematiche non conferiscono la felicità.3. Le scienze matematiche non sono da ricercare per sé, ma come via alle altre scienze. 6. Nulla è più distruttivo per un teologo della frequente ed assidua esercitazione nelle matematiche di Euclide.

<sup>401</sup> N. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy, Between Science and Religion*, Routledge, London and New York, 1988, p.115.

powerful symbol of cosmic unity of natural and divine knowledge”, therefore “as writing, a writing that reduces astronomy, alchemy, magic and mysticism to the same discourse and in one breath speaks a knowledge of each.”<sup>402</sup>

Trying to view the *Monas* as a work of science in the modern sense is displacing it from its scope. In the dedicatory letter Dee defines the *Monas* a 'magical parable' and there is no reason why one should not take him seriously. First of all for him astrology, alchemy and geometry, the written and the spoken word, the symbol, number and proportion, are all 'magical', that is they conceal mysteries and the potential to effect wonders, if the magician knows how to interpret and bind them. Secondly, the *Monas* is a parable, a way of speaking *in quantum*, of presenting things in a key that is not accessible to the 'vulgar eye'<sup>403</sup>. A parable (from *para* beside+*ballein* to throw), used in connection with the *parables* of Christ, is “a short fictitious narrative from which a moral or spiritual truth is drawn”<sup>404</sup>. In spite of discussing arithmetic, geometry and what may appear as chemistry, the *Monas* does not display a scientific way of thinking, but a theo-magical one: in conformity with the promise of the title, Dee builds up a hieroglyph, by finding graphical 'correspondencies' between letters, numbers, astrological symbols and endows their connections with meanings. The Magus is a reader of signs traced by God's finger in the world. The etymology of hiero-glyph reveals its 'sacred character' and so Dee was absolutely convinced that he was teaching “Truth, the daughter of time”, by divine inspiration<sup>405</sup>. The synthetic character of the symbol can be also regarded as a contribution to the art of memory, in the tradition of Giulio Camillo and Giordano Bruno. The *Monas* does not convey Dee as a precursor of natural sciences in the way Gilbert or Bacon are, but may be considered an anticipation of modern scientific formulas, which concentrate the complex processuality of the natural world in letter-number combinations. Through this work, Dee represents the tradition of the *perennial philosophy* in Elizabethan England, leading it towards divine semiotics, an interpretation of Creation through language and as language. At the end of *Theorem XXII* he states that 'the medicine of the soul, the liberator from all suffering ... is to be sought for

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<sup>402</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>403</sup> He warns: 'these mysteries must not be revealed to any but the Initiates'. p.37.

<sup>404</sup> Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, G.& C.Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass., 1939, p.718.

<sup>405</sup> “I say the Spirit writes these things rapidly through me; I hope, and I believe, I am merely the quill which traces these characters.”, *Monas*, p. 41.

in the Voice of the Creator of the Universe, so that men, inspired by God, and engendered anew, learn through the perfect disquisition of the mystical languages.”<sup>406</sup> This belief will be rewarded years later with the revelation of the Enochian language, that will be discussed in a different chapter.

### 4.3.3 Angels and Wonders

In his analysis of the *Monas*, Clulee cannot help inserting an ironical comment: “at times Dee can barely contain his astonishment at the wonders and mysteries that emerge from the analysis of his *Monas* and bursts forth in praise of the wisdom of the 'Almighty and Divine Majesty’<sup>407</sup>. The sense of wonder sustained Dee till the end of his life, in a manner that renders him unique among the Elizabethan intellectuals. His youthful enthusiasm for the marvel-producing potential of his *Monas* is replaced in mature age by his interest in scrying sessions. Years later, in front of Rudolf II, in Prague, he motivated his attempts to contact spiritual beings with the following words:

Hereupon I began to declare that All my life time I had spent in learning: but for this forty years continually, and in divers countries, with great pain, care, and cost, I had from degree to degree sought to come by the best knowledge that man might attain unto the world: and I found (at length) that neither any man living, nor any Book I could yet meet withal, was able to teach me those truths I desired and longed for: And therefore I concluded with my self, to make intercession and prayer to the giver of wisdom and all good things, to send me such wisdom, as I might know the natures of his creatures; and also enjoy means to use them to his honour and glory.<sup>408</sup>

Viewed in their cultural context, his motivations resonate partly with Agrippa's disappointment in front of the vanity of science and partly with Dr. Faust's

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<sup>406</sup> *Monas*, p.41.

<sup>407</sup> N. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy, Between Science and Religion*, op.cit., p. 111.

<sup>408</sup> Casaubon, *True and Faithful Relation* (1659), 231, in G.E.Szönyi, *John Dee as Cultural, Scientific, Apocalyptic Go-Between*, in *Renaissance Go-Betweens, Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Andreas Höfele, Werner von Koppenfels, Water de Gruyter, Berlin, 2005, p.92.

dramatic crave for knowledge. What is specific only to Dee is his irreducible trust in God's response to his demands.<sup>409</sup>

As reported in a previous chapter, in the *Refutation of Slander* included in the *Mathematicall Preface* to Euclid, Dr. Dee angrily rejected the accusations of being “a companion of hell-hounds and a caller and Conjurer of wicked and damned spirits”<sup>410</sup>. The statement was published in 1570 and it makes no reference to the good spirits or angels, that he will start calling nine years later, as he confesses in the *Mysteriorum Liber Primus*. The *Five Books of Mystery* in Peterson's edition open in fact with Dee's mentioning frequent “extemporaneous prayers and more ardent exhortations to God,” to give him wisdom. He then puts down his “Oratio mea Matutina, Vespertinaque: pro Sapientia”. As shown by S.Clucas, the *ars notoria*, the art of conjuring angels, was a complex ritual that started by prayers.<sup>411</sup> After invoking the three persons of the Divine Trinity, he asks God:

Teach me to perceive and understand properly (O Creator of all things), for your wisdom is all I desire. Fix your word in my ear (O Creator of all things), and fix your wisdom in my heart. O Lord Jesus Christ (you who are the true wisdom of your eternal and omnipotent Father) I most humbly beg your Divine Majesty that you consider it proper to send me the speedy help of some pious wise man and experienced philosopher for realizing and perfecting above all fully those things which will be of greatest value for increasing your praise and glory. And if no such mortal man now lives upon the earth who is fitting for this work, or who may have been assigned by your eternal providence to the performing of that service for me, then truly I most humbly, most ardently, and most faithfully ask from your divine majesty that you grant to send me down from heaven your good spiritual ministers and angels, namely Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and also Uriel: and (from your divine favor) any other true and faithful angels of yours, who may completely and perfectly train and teach me in the true and accurate knowledge and understanding of your secrets and wonders (concerning all your creatures, and their nature, properties, and best use) and necessary knowledge for us mortals, to the praise, honor, and glory of your name, to my firm solace and otherwise (through me) the solace of the greatest number of your faithful, and to the confusion and ruin of the wicked. Amen. Let it be O Jehovah Zebaoth; let it be O Adonay; let it be O Elohim. O blessed and omnipotent Trinity, praised above all

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<sup>409</sup> The change of focus can be also explained by contextual and biographical events, from failed or unsupported projects to material anguish and frustration.

<sup>410</sup> J. Dee, *Essential readings*, op.cit., p. 44.

<sup>411</sup> S. Clucas has provided a comparative analysis of medieval prayers and insisted on the importance of prayers in the *ars notoria*, the art of conjuring angels, in *John Dee's Angelic Conversations and the Ars Notoria, Renaissance Magic and Medieval Theurgy. Part 3. "The Key of Prayer": John dee and the Pseudo-Solomonic Oration.*, in particular pp. 245-252.

things, grant me (John Dee) this petition, in such a manner that will be most pleasing to you.”<sup>412</sup>

D.C.Laycock quotes another prayer, that completes in a way the previous one:

I have often read in thy [God's] books and records, how Enoch enjoyed thy favour and conversation; with Moses thou was familiar; And also that to Abraham, Isaack and Jacob, Joshua, Gideon, Esdras, Daniel Tobias and sundry others thy good angels were sent by thy disposition, to Instruct them, informe them, helpe them, yea in worldly and domestic affaires, yea and sometymes to satisfie their desires, doubtles, and questions of thy Secrete: And furdernore, the Shewstone, which the High Prieste did use, by thy owne ordering... that this wisdom could not be come by at mans hand or by humaine power, but only from thee (ô, God)<sup>413</sup>.

The two prayers confirm Dee's belief that the source of wisdom is God who delivers his mysteries to elect adepts by revelation. His religious devotion has not been doubted by his commentators. During the séances with Kelly his obedience to the angels was absolute, he prayed, repented if the spirits reprimanded him; at the end of each encounter he praised the glory of God and sealed it with 'Amen'. Yet there are intriguing aspects of the two prayers worth mentioning: there is a contradiction between Dee's verbal and ritual humility and his expectations: not only does he place himself at the same level of biblical figures, but he is impatient and summons God to give him *speedy help*; besides he pretends to be given “true and accurate knowledge and understanding” of these secrets, a claim of a scientific mind and not of a religious one, who had to accept that “now we see through a glass darkly; but then shall we see face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known”<sup>414</sup>, as Saint Paul stated in the *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (XIII. 12), a sentence often referred to in the sermons of the time.

The first quoted prayer hints at a role Dee thought he had to play, after acquiring the 'necessary knowledge for us mortals': a mission, religious or politic, in a conflict against the wicked (who could have been his own personal enemies or

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<sup>412</sup> MLP, p. 55.

<sup>413</sup> D.C. Laycock, op. cit., pp.10-11.

<sup>414</sup> <http://www.genevabible.org/files/Geneva Bible/New Testament/1 Corinthians.pdf>, Geneva Bible, 1599, online edition,

England's enemies)<sup>415</sup>. He wanted to act not only to their ruin, but most significantly, to their confusion: a hint at using the ultimate knowledge to control his enemies' minds, pertinent to Prospero's efficient action on the others' intellect and emotions by amazement. Both in the first and in the second prayer he alludes to the use of the scrying stone: in the latter he mentions it directly, as a method used by the High Priests, in the former by asking God in a veiled manner to send him the help of some *pious wise man and experienced philosopher*. In the *Monas* the young Dee believed himself possessed by the Holy Spirit. Now he solicits 'spiritual ministers' and a medium. Was he deprived of inspiration and deceived by his own cognitive capacities? Was he already modernly oriented, so that he needed 'technology' to capture messages from the invisible? Deborah Harkness mentions the conviction shared by some medieval and Renaissance thinkers, that prayer and “the concentration of occult rays through a medium” could result in the manifestation of spiritual entities.<sup>416</sup> As examples she brings Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon who “advocated the study of light as a means of understanding the creation of the cosmos, using the first passage in Genesis as their source. This passage relates how the supernatural and the natural worlds proceeded from an emanation of divine light created through the force of God's word. In addition, Grosseteste emphasized the connection between divine light and the angels which were God's first creatures.”<sup>417</sup> The same scholar points out that “Bacon and Grosseteste feature prominently in Dee's library catalogue, and Dee's frequent annotations in their works indicate a high level of intellectual engagement with their theories.”<sup>418</sup>

Dee's necessity to communicate with 'spiritual ministers', setting out from theories that involve natural phenomena, place him next to other representatives of the *perennial philosophy* in a midway position between science and revelation.

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<sup>415</sup> In QLM he asks a creature marked H, “Yf I wold haue the King of Spayne his hart to be enclined to the purpose I haue in hand, what shall I do?” (p.213)

<sup>416</sup> D. Harkness, *Shows in the Showstone: A Theater of Alchemy and Apocalypse in the Angel Conversations of John Dee*, Renaissance Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Winter, 1996), The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Renaissance Society of America, pp.715-6.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, p.716.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibidem.*

#### 4.3.4 Mysteries

In Dee's and Kelly's reported conversations with angels, the concept of mystery is central and is the equivalent to revealed, secret knowledge, divulged only in codified form, so that much of the information looks today like rebus puzzles. This being the specific of 'occult philosophy' Dee not only feels comfortable with the 'mysteries', but never seems to have had enough: as a genuine mathematician, he is stimulated by the perpetual challenge of new enigmas.

A survey of the *Five Books of Mystery* conveys a certain initiation design: in the *Mysteriorum Liber Primus* (1581-1582) Dee finds out that prayers, a good medium and a *show-stone* are not enough to call spiritual creatures. Other ritual objects are necessary: Uriel instructs him on a “fowre square Table, two cubits square: Where uppon must be set Sigillum Dei”; the table is to be made 'of swete wood’<sup>419</sup>, whereas the Seal is “to be made of perfect wax”<sup>420</sup>, and its dimensions are rigorously specified in English measure units<sup>421</sup>. Michael shows Kelly the model of Salomon's ring, that Dee was commanded to make. The ring had the four letters P E L E in it and the angel insists: “Without this, thow shalt do nothing. Blessed be his name, that cumpasseth all things: Wonders are in him, and his Name is WONDERFVLL: His Name worketh wonders from generation, to generation”<sup>422</sup>.

The instructions regarding the conjuring utensils continue in the *Mysteriorum Liber Secundus* (1582) with the Sigillum Dei Aemeth hebraice, assumed to be a powerful talisman: an image based on the circle, the pentagon, the hexagon and the heptagon in which single letters, numbers and divine names are arranged in an intricate structure, strikingly similar in its geometrical coordinates to the Sigillum Dei from the Pseudo-Solomonic Liber Juratus<sup>423</sup>. (Fig. 8)

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<sup>419</sup> MLP, p.71

<sup>420</sup> Uriel specifies: “I mean, wax, which is clean purified: we haue no respect of cullours.” MLP, p.71.

<sup>421</sup> Ibidem. “This seal must be 9 ynches in diameter: The rowndnes must be 27 ynches, and somewhat more. The Thickness of it, must be of an ynche and half a quarter....”

<sup>422</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>423</sup> S.Clucas, *Angelic Conversations and the Ars Notoria*, p. 247, where Dee's sigillum is placed next to the one present in the Pseudo-Solomonic Liber Juratus. [R&W, DM 70], Department of Manuscripts, British Library, Sloane MS 313: f.4.r.

The *Mysteriorum Liber Tertius* (1582) begins the presentation of the “49 Angels glorious and excellent, appointed for the government of all earthly actions;”<sup>424</sup> and includes encrypted reference to alchemical reactions. The *Quartus Liber Mysteriorum* (1582)<sup>425</sup> details the presentation of various spiritual kings and princes that rule among the 49 angels, whereas the *Liber Mysteriorum Quintus* (1583) is mainly focused on the Enochian language. There is a scale of mysteries: from the known to the unknown, from information that sounds familiar to Dee towards the obscurity of the Enochian language. Indeed Dee carefully adnotates the sources when he recognizes them.

The *Five Books of Mystery* also provide a passage from unity to plurality. In contrast to the *Monas Unitissima*, which aimed at bringing plurality to oneness, Dee's conversations with angels, place him in division and numeric progression of entities. At one point Michael tells them “Omnia unum est”<sup>426</sup>, which sounds like an alchemical precept, but also like the Neoplatonic reduction of the world's multiplicity to Uno opifex. Later on, the same Michael sentences: “Multiplex est Deus Noster”, when he starts explaining the power of seven<sup>427</sup>, which seems to hint both at God's unfolding in the intellectual, celestial and natural world and at the Cabalistical progressions<sup>428</sup>.

Dee's and Kelly's conversations with angels could be classified as ceremonial magic or theurgy, which represented in Neoplatonism the highest form of magic and the closest to the One. Yet, as in Goethe's *Zauberlehrling*, the *Five Books of Mystery* abound in magical proliferations of things, which seem to be indirectly provoked by Dee's insatiable thirst of divine secrets. For example, to the original agents of the invisible world Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel, - the “4 Angeli praesidentes 4 Cardinibus Caeli: ut Agrippa notat in scala Quaternarij”<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> MLT, p.170.

<sup>425</sup> Starts on November, 15, 1582, with a note in Latin under the title: *Post reconciliationem Kellianam. Miserere nostri Deus/Dimitte nobis, sicut et nos dimittimus.* (p. 181), a conflict with Kelly and a separation can be deduced.

<sup>426</sup> MLS, p.116.

<sup>427</sup> MLS, P. 126.

<sup>428</sup> G. Bruno, in *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, transl. and edited by Arthur D.Imerti, with an Introduction and notes, University of Nebraska, Lincoln and London, p. 240, explains them concisely: “First, that Cabala attributes an ineffable name to the first principle from which, second, there proceed four names, which afterward are converted into twelve, in a straight line change into seventy-two, and obliquely and in a straight line into one hundred forty-four, and farther on are unfolded by fours and by twelves into names as innumerable as species.”

<sup>429</sup> MLP., p.56.



as Dee adnotates on the manuscript,- the 49 being listed in the *Tabula Collecta angelorum bonorum*<sup>430</sup>, are added. Further on, Uriel gives them 7 unspeakable Names of God and adds:

These Names, bring furth 7 Angels”... “Euery letter of the Angels names, bringeth furth 7 dowghters,[daughters]. Euery dowghter bringeth furth her dowghter, which is 7. Euery dowghter-her-dowghter bringeth furth a sonne. Euery sonne in him self, is 7. Euery sonne hath his sonne, and his sonne is 7<sup>431</sup>

The multiplication of spiritual creatures continues in Enochian, which contains names of good angels and cacodemons, elemental kings and seniors - of fire, air, water, earth-, governors of the various divisions of Aethyr, dukes and princes associated with the seven planets. Dee's and Kelly's spirits suggest in Cabalistical manner that mysteries are encyphered in the relations between numbers and letters, but privilege the number seven and turn it into a sort of *clavis universalis*.<sup>432</sup> According to Uriel, the seven letters delivered to them are:

the 7 Seats of the One and everlasting GOD. His 7 secret Angels proceeding from euery letter and Cross so formed: referring in substance to the FATHER: in forme, to the SONNE; and Inwardly to the HOLI GHOSTE. Loke upon it: it is one of the Names, which thou hast Before: euery **letter** conteyning an Angel of brightness: comprehending the 7 inward powres of God: known to none, but him self: a Sufficient BOND to urge all Creatures to life or Death, or anything els conteyned in this world. Yt banisheth the wicked, expelleth euyl spirits: qualifieth the Waters, strengtheneth the Just, exalteth the righteous and destroyeth the Wicked<sup>433</sup>.

Michael confirms that “Seuen comprehendeth the Secrets of Heven and erth. seuen knitteth mans sowle and body together (3, in sowle, and 4 in body)” . As “In 7, God wrowght all things.” so should they remember: “In 7, and by 7 must you work all things”<sup>434</sup>. As a Christian, a mathematician, an astrologer working with the symbology of the seven planets and an alchemist interested in the transmutation of the seven metals, Dee could only find confirmations in these statements. Kelly applies the principle of the 7 in the preliminary operations for

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<sup>430</sup> MLT, p. 172.

<sup>431</sup> MLS, p.140-1.

<sup>432</sup> In fact Dee wrote *De Heptarchia Mistica*.

<sup>433</sup> MLS, p. 122.

<sup>434</sup> MLS, p.126.

the 'transmission' of Enochian, that is a table of 49x49 squares and the alphabet consisting of 21 letters. Yet, in-depth studies of this idiom, have not revealed any logical-mathematical model reducible to 7.

#### 4.3.5 Magic and Theatre in the *Five Books of Mystery*

The revelations in the *Five Books of Mystery* were meant to be instrumental for the wonders Dee and Kelly may have wanted to perform. It is obvious that Dee did not perform any wonder using the mysteries: after these séances nothing outstanding changed in his life, neither materially, nor in the field of professional or social satisfaction; while Kelly seems to have trained so well in the art of persuasion that he charmed the court in Prague and earned himself the knight title. Peterson analyzed Dee's questions and the spirits' answers and concluded that questions were evaded and none of the prophecies about the future was accurate. Dee's desire to call only good angels was not respected either, for evil spirits often 'under cover' of good names appeared in the stone. Actually, if we apply the figure of the *labyrinth* as archetype of cognition to this initiation into mysteries, throughout the sessions Dee seems to be ever more *a-mazed* in obscure sentences, commands, philosophical and biblical references. His brilliant mind strives to make sense of contradictory messages and sometimes he gets so entangled that he has to admit: "We understand not, this dark lesson".<sup>435</sup>

If the angels did not convey him "perfect knowledge and understanding"<sup>436</sup> as he had desired<sup>437</sup>, why did Dee pursue in this enterprise? The modern cliché of the philosopher and scientist as skeptical and cautious, limits our understanding of Dee's enthusiasm. A vision like the following, we can produce today with digital film-making tools, must have been for Dee a fascinating alchemical enigma and the privilege to 'see' what nobody else could:

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<sup>435</sup> QLMA, p. 380.

<sup>436</sup> MLS, p.122

<sup>437</sup> Object of conjectures is an enigmatic entry in his private diary (May, 10, 1588) which reads: "E.K. did open the great secret to me, God be thanked", in J.Deer, *The Private Diary and the Catalogue of his Library of Manuscripts*, London, printed for the Camden Society, 1842. p. 27.

After a long tyme there cam a woman: and flung up a ball like a glass: and a voice was hard saying, Fiat. The ball went into the darkness, and browght with it a great white Globe hollow transparent. Then she had a Table about her neck, square of 12 places. The woman seamed to daunce and swyng the Table: Then cam a hand oute of the dark: and stroke her and she stode still, and becam fayrer: She sayd, Ecce signum Incomprehensibilitatis.

A table with numbers and letters follows and the sentence: “The woman is transformed into a water, and flyeth up into the Globe of Light”<sup>438</sup>.

The events that 'take place in the crystal' and are communicated to Dee by Kelly's suggestive interpretation are challenges to natural laws, a form of *theatrum scientiarum*, where various experiments in the field of the possible are proposed. To contemporary eyes, Dee's secret theatre appears as an anticipation of technology by hundreds of years. The showstone and the visions conveyed to him by Kelly look like a personal computer *ante literam* inviting him to a daily immersion into a virtual space, enticing him to play games, decipher puzzles and watch fantasy pictures.

This laboratory is unique as it is grounded in virtuality and substantiated in words: the wonders shaped by Kelly's fantasy were communicated verbally to Dee, who shared them and put them down for future eyes to read. The reader reconverts the text into mental simulations of the marvelous happenings. It is a laboratory that works with *simulacra* created by the power of the words, in the common tradition of magic, yet simulation is one of the fields where magic and the theatrical performances encounter. As seen in the section on *Theatre and Magic in The Tempest*, Shakespeare places both domains in the category of baseless fabrics, visions, insubstantial dreams. Unlike Dee, who was convinced of their actuality, Kelly would have convened that the experiments in theurgy fall under the same category; he would have also confirmed the equivalency of theatre and magic.

The conversations with angels can be read both as a singular *theatrum scientiarum* and as drama. Their theatrical dimension has drawn the attention of other scholars. S.Clucas pointed out the “ritual performativity” of prayer involved in the sessions, interpreting it as “a spiritual drama, in which Dee acts out his penitential remorse”<sup>439</sup>, while Deborah Harkness remarked suggestive lines of

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<sup>438</sup> MLT, pp.158-9.

<sup>439</sup> S.Clucas, *Dee's dialogue with God Angelic Conversations and the Ars Notoria*, op.cit., p.253.

contiguity between the Elizabethan context and the conversations with angels, viewed first “as a type of private theater and second as a dramatization of Dee's interest in the power of alchemy to materially and spiritually transform the world.”<sup>440</sup> Harkness acknowledges Kelly's acting contribution<sup>441</sup> and surmises his previous exposure to religious dramas<sup>442</sup>, but avoids a conclusion on the nature of the angelic revelations. They are estimated as “cultural artifacts deeply immersed in their own time”<sup>443</sup>, which would imply a human author, but a doubt is insinuated: “Whether or not the angels were “real”, will never, of course, be absolutely determined”<sup>444</sup>. The possible divine source of the conversations resurfaces in a statement like: “the superficial similarities of cast, settings, and special effects shared by the angel conversations and the theater are no coincidence, for Elizabethan theatrical techniques marked the imaginative boundaries that confined Dee's scryers.”<sup>445</sup>

Some clarifications are necessary. In any epoch, conjuring séances implied the performance of specific rituals and were envisaged as dialogues with spirits, so they are a theatrical form in themselves. In the case under study, both the text analysis and the contextual factors lead to the conclusion that the conversations with angels were not dictated or inspired by a supernatural agency, as Dee assumed, but were simply the product of human imagination fed by a written tradition of wisdom. Dee was not a mere spectator, but the one who gave the input, either directly by questioning the angels, or indirectly through his books which provided the knowledge. He was spectator and actor, no less than co-author of these theatrical episodes, together with Kelly who formulated the answers and performed them. A quandary arises: can the reports of the scrying sessions build up a theo-philosophical drama?

Debating theo-philosophical and scientific ideas drawing on characters who voice different opinions, on the Platonic model, was not uncommon in early

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<sup>440</sup> D. Harkness, *Shows in the Showstone: A Theater of Alchemy and Apocalypse in the Angel Conversations of John Dee*, Renaissance Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 4, The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 709. pp. 707-737.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., p.718: “Like an actor on the stage who gives voice to a variety of characters and personalities, Kelly was responsible for giving voice to the angels' messages.”

<sup>442</sup> Ibid., p.723.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., p.711.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., p.720.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid., p. 725.

modernity. Two illustrious examples are Giordano Bruno<sup>446</sup> and Galileo Galilei<sup>447</sup>. Taking the angels or the various other creatures as personified concepts could open the possibility of such an evaluation. Yet, the pretense of these dialogues to be revealed knowledge, epiphanies of the *numinous*, results in their lack of theoretical debate. They do not pursue clarity of argumentation either, but the display of various encrypting enigmas and dogmatical statements in a dynamic and highly suggestive form. A survey of the content notifies a free combination of ideas present in the tradition of the *perennial philosophy*, in particular in books of magic, with literary inventions and popular religious culture.

The tension of these dramatic episodes is not conceptual, but psychological and the real drama resides in the confrontation of the two protagonists, a philosopher and a trickster, challenging each other in a game of enclosure and disclosure, of insight and creativity, a contest of ascendancy and control. Their interaction went far beyond the sessions: Kelly lived under Dee's roof, he shared his meals, his ideas, his books, he was in the position to capture day by day the philosopher's intellectual and emotional dilemmas. Gradually he rose from the status of a simple medium to that of Dee's partner. The text is captivating as theatre precisely because of its introspection and allusiveness, of Kelly's double-play and Dee's absorbed participation.

The prominence of character confrontation, the psychological insight, the interplay of the visible and the invisible bring the reports of the scrying sessions close to Shakespeare's plays and to Elizabethan performances in general. The spirits 'appear' in the stone with specific costumes and significant objects of the staging paraphernalia: a table, a chair, a book, a curtain that is pulled every now and then. Some emerge in fire, in clouds, in smoke, effects that could be simulated or produced on a stage in Shakespeare's time. Certain 'creatures' perform dumb shows, others address Kelly and Dee, as actors interacting with the public. A description given by Kelly to a character seen in the stone: "This creature seemeth to be a Woman by his face; his apparel seemeth to be like a Vice in a play"<sup>448</sup>, evocative of the morality plays, sounds both like a reproduction of the gender

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<sup>446</sup> *Cantus Circeus* (1582), *De umbris idearum* (1582); *Sigillus sigillorum* (1583); *De l'infinito, universo e mondi* (1584) *La Cena de le Ceneri* (1584); *De la causa, principio et uno* (1584); *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* (1584); *De gli Eroici furori* (1585); *De monade numero et figura* (1591) *De immenso et innumerabilibus* (1591).

<sup>447</sup> G. Galilei, *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo* (1632).

<sup>448</sup> LMQ, pp. 355-6.

ambiguity in Elizabethan performances where male actors played female parts, and calls to mind the weird sisters in *Macbeth* whose gender identification is difficult for Banquo: “You should be women,/ And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ That you are so”(I. III. 46-8). The similarities to the Elizabethan theatre can also be evaluated in the field of language creativity, a topic that will be investigated in a separate section.

Irrespective whether we regard the conversations with angels as drama or as a *theatrum scientiarum*, where the language-based virtuality is displayed in innumerable artifices, as in the *Monas hieroglyphica*, the immediate concept that brings Dee's and Kelly's dramatical episodes close to Shakespeare's theatre is that of play. From the various understandings of the concept of play, thoroughly examined in the 20th century<sup>449</sup> we will adopt Freud's definition of play in *Der Dichter und das Phantasieren*, whereby “Der Gegensatz zu Spiel ist nicht Ernst, sondern- Wirklichkeit”.<sup>450</sup> *The Five Books of Mystery* are play insofar as they create a possible space populated by invented characters, where the imaginary egos of the two protagonists can manifest themselves: Dee as God chosen, enjoying transcendental recognition of his greatness, as restitution for his intellectual and social frustrations; Kelly, initially a medium, a mere instrument, as a sharer of wisdom, partner and manipulator of the greatest Elizabethan philosopher. The virtual space of play is also the space of hypotheses in science, in other words, the space of creativity, artistic, philosophical or scientific, the space of spiritual entities, the source of miracles and wonders, where whatever human mind conceives can be given 'a local habitation and a name'. If one equates the virtual space of play with the space of creativity, Dee and Kelly emerge as the complementary typologies identified by Nietzsche: Dee who trusted the Light of

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<sup>449</sup> J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (1938); R. Caillois, *Les Jeux et les hommes: le masque et le vertige* (1958), E. Fink, *Spiel als Weltsymbol* (1960); M. Spariosu, *Literature, mimesis and play* (1982), *Cultura ludens: imitation and play in western culture* (1986).

<sup>450</sup> S. Freud, Studienausgabe, Band 10, *Bildende Kunst und Literatur*, Frankfurt am Main, S. Fischer Verlag, 1977, *Der Dichter und das Phantasieren*, p.171: “Sollten wir die ersten Spuren dichterischer Betätigung nicht schon beim Kinde suchen? Die liebste und intensivste Beschäftigung des Kindes ist das Spiel: Vielleicht dürfen wir sagen: Jedes spielende Kind benimmt sich wie ein Dichter, indem es sich eine eigene Welt erschafft, oder, richtiger gesagt, die Dinge seiner Welt in eine neue, ihm gefällige Ordnung versetzt. Es wäre dann unrecht zu meinen, es nähme diese Welt nicht ernst; im Gegenteil, es nimmt sein Spiel sehr ernst, es verwendet große Affektbeträge darauf. Der Gegensatz zu Spiel ist nicht Ernst, sondern – Wirklichkeit.”

Philosophers, generated in the first day of creation<sup>451</sup>, belongs to the rational space of play, the Apollinian space of Reason, Ideal Form and Eternal Order<sup>452</sup>; Kelly with his provocative, irrational, sometimes malicious improvisations and his trespassing of moral and rational order, illustrates the Dionysian dimension of play.

#### 4.4 Continuum and Becoming

The possibility to perform wonders was intrinsic in the perception of the world inherited by theatre and magic from the archaic culture of their origins. As anthropology has pointed out, the childhood of humanity conceived the world as a dynamic unity, a *continuum*, in which humans, animals, plants, the living and the dead, spirits and various divinities had the same ontological status, which enabled them to change roles and form. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, inquiring into the origins of the *tragôdia* from the Dionysian celebrations, Nietzsche expresses his perplexity in front of “jene Synthesis von Gott und Bock im Satyr” and asks: “Aus welchem Selbsterlebniss, auf welchem Drang hin musste sich der Grieche den dyonisischen Schwärmer und Urmenschen als Satyr denken?”<sup>453</sup> As it appears the *Urmensch* felt himself naturally bound to every form of life, so the satyr does not seem to be the rational synthesis of two concepts, but a metamorphose within the *continuum* that enabled any order of being to combine with any other or translate into any other.

In this pre-categorical, poetical thought, horses can fly, a god can procreate with a woman in the shape of a swan or as a golden shower. All these possibilites

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<sup>451</sup> Theorem V, *Monas*, op.cit., p. 11.

<sup>452</sup> M. Spariosu, *God of Many Names: Play, Poetry, and Power in Hellenic Thought from Homer to Aristotle*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1991, p.21: “Through play, this power principle conceives of itself first as spontaneous, free, arbitrary, natural movement, and then as Reason, Ideal Form and Eternal Order. This process works itself out in Western thought as a slow transition from “literature” and “myth” to “philosophy” and “science” as the main authority of knowledge and truth. Kant and German idealism in general begin the long, uneven, reverse process of restoring literature/ play to its pre-Platonic privileged position; this process will culminate in the middle of the twentieth century in the work of Heidegger and Fink. From a suppressed epistemological prop of philosophy, play becomes in our age, an indispensable cognitive tool, indeed a fundamental way of understanding Being which is again seen as disclosing itself only as and in play.”

<sup>453</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. GmbH&Co., 1993, p.10.

were legitimated by a shared imagination and a shared language that transmitted them. Shakespeare proves that theatre preserves this capacity to represent any part of reality as well as the transformations of a being into another. Some of his characters are dead historical figures returned to life on stage. His spirits can appear in human or animal shapes, or in shapes delivered to posterity by a lettered tradition, like the harpy or Iris. His Prospero is a human able to become invisible through magic, Bottom is turned by the fairies into a hybrid, a human with an ass's head. The poet can give shape to any thinkable possibility and theatre is equipped to represent or simulate it. In *MSND* the two poles of human becoming shine through the encounter between the gross, animal-like Bottom and Titania, who defines herself as “a spirit of no common rate” (III. I. 148) and promises: “I will purge thy mortal grossness so/ That thou shalt like an airy spirit go” (III. I. 154-5). The rude mechanicals' basic theatre in *MSND* does not need scenography or special effects, as the human actors can represent or simulate any part of reality: Bottom plays Pyramus and is “translated”; Francis Flute, plays a young girl, even if he has “a beard coming” (I. II. 45-51); Snout 'interprets' the Wall, Starveling plays the Moonshine and Snug the Lion. This is possible because by definition, the actor is “a living creature of varied, multiform and ever-changing nature”<sup>454</sup>, which is how Pico della Mirandola understood man. His Adam, endowed by God from his creation with “seeds pregnant with all possibilities, the germs of every form of life”<sup>455</sup> and the freedom to cultivate whichever he wishes, is a chameleon, a Proteus<sup>456</sup>, therefore an actor.

*Perennial philosophy* claims intellectual continuity with prelapsarian wisdom. It takes as a premise God's plan of creation, a beginning before the beginning of time and space, and the pure vibration of God's voice as the creative principle. Its representatives in the Renaissance assumed the unity of truth was maintained in time and space: an intellectual *continuum* the philosopher could access, in spite of historical change and linguistic difference. To the idea of intellectual continuity corresponded a dynamic world vision that enabled the communication of the material and the spiritual, ignoring the dogmatic divisions of the world based on Christian theology - hell, purgatory, paradise-, or the

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<sup>454</sup> G.P. della Mirandola, *Oratio*, op.cit., p.11.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.



Aristotelean distinctions between the sublunary world and the ethereal one. Dee felt connected with the sages of the past, with God himself and his angelic messengers. He conceived the universe as a *continuum* actualized in musical vibration, perceivable in the voyce of the angels *that filleth every place*<sup>457</sup>, in number and in rays as the Aphorisms of the *Propaedeumata* account. In the *Monas*, this continuity was instantiated in the symbolic unity of geometrical, arithmetical and linguistic elements, which encapsulated the Creation of the Cosmos and of man, human history and the germens of future transformations the pious philosopher was called to enact. The belief that purifying matter by alchemical procedures would spiritualize the world and the philosopher himself, belongs to the same assumption of a continuity between the material and the immaterial, the visible and the invisible, the corporeal and the incorporeal, illustrated in a detailed manner by the conversations with angels. Dee's belief in the mission of the pious philosopher or *magus* to disclose the things seminally present is rooted in the postulate of a continuity between the real and the possible.

In Plato's *Theaetetus*, an essential guide for the Renaissance philosopher, “nothing is one and invariable”, “nothing ever is, but is always becoming”, and “it is out of movement and motion and mixture with one another that all those things become”<sup>458</sup> (152 D). In obvious contrast to the rising Calvinists, who distrusted any attempt to transform nature, as influenced by the Devil,<sup>459</sup> Dee situated himself in the becoming and was interested in being an agent, an actor of this becoming. The processuality of this becoming could be enacted by controlling spiritual beings through language and this was conceived as residing in man's capacities.

## **4.5 Man is the Measure of All Things**

### **4.5.1 What a piece of work is man!**

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<sup>457</sup> LMQ, p.352.

<sup>458</sup> Plato, with an English translation by H.N.Fowler, London, William Heinemann New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons MCMXXI, p.43.

<sup>459</sup> K.Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op.cit., p. 321.

Commentators of various epochs have interpreted Dee's absolute confidence in being chosen, as “spiritual sin of pride”<sup>460</sup> or “sin of impatient pride”<sup>461</sup>. Is this ethico-religious explanation sufficient in trying to understand him? First of all as a representative of a trend of thought that was based on “the serenity of faith” Dee was not trained in critical thinking. He is a pre-, not a post-descartian. Secondly, the Renaissance culture which inspired him, grants man a special status and stature. Dee definitely subscribed to Pico's praise of man, placed at the beginning of *Oratio de hominis dignitate* 'on this stage, so to say, of the world', as the absolute protagonist, the most marvelous thing in the world, 'a great miracle'<sup>462</sup>. He could find this optimistic anthropology of Hermetic extraction confirmed in various writings of his time, including Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia*:

Now the fourth kind of Phrensie proceeds from *Venus*, and it doth by a fervent love convert, and transmute the mind to God, and makes it altogether like to God, as it were the proper image of God; whence *Hermes* saith, O *Asclepius!* Man is a great miracle, an animal to be honoured and adored: for he passeth into the nature of God, whereby he becomes God: He knows the rise of Demons, and he knows himself to have his originall with them, despising the part of his humane nature in himself, having a sure confidence of the divinity of the other;<sup>463</sup>

A trend of thought based on the new Adam, endowed by God with free will and the capacity to rise to the angelic intellects could not produce humble adepts. The admiration for man in the Renaissance philosophy of Neoplatonic and Hermetic extraction, causes automatically in the adept exalted self-love and self-confidence. Dee's enthusiasm for his Monas and his assumption that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, is actually a sense of wonder versus his own speculative capacities.

Dee's anthropology, as far as it can be deduced from the publications at hand, and in particular his great projects for the English nation, confirm his being personally engaged in bringing evidence to man's unbounded possibilities. His high opinion on man is explained in his *Mathematicall Preface* to the English translation of Euclid, where he includes the discipline of *Anthropographie*, “the Arte of Artes” as “the description of the Number, Measure, Waight, figure,

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<sup>460</sup> Shumaker, Wayne, *Renaissance curiosa: John Dee's conversations with angels, Girolamo Cardano's horoscope of Christ, Johannes Trithemius and cryptography, George Dalgarno's Universal language*, Binghamton, N.Y. : Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982, p.24 quoting Meric Casaubon.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid., p. 43, quoting Luigi Firpo.

<sup>462</sup> G.Pico della Mirandola, op.cit. p.3.

<sup>463</sup> C.Agrippa, op. cit. Book III, ch. XLIX, *Of the fourth kinde of Phrensie from Venus*.

Situation, and colour o euey diuerse thing, conteyned *in the perfect body of Man:*” As the 'heavenly part of the world' has its discipline: Astronomie, and the earthly Globe Geographie, ... “Why should not the description of him, who is the Lesse world: and, from the beginning, called *Microcosmus* (that is, The Lesse World). And for whose sake, and seruice, all bodily creatures els, were created: Who, also, participateth with Spirites, and Angels: and is made to the Image and similitude of God.”<sup>464</sup>

The Renaissance intellectuals' remarkable trust in their capacities, was not grounded only in philosophical optimism, but also in reality: in a time when the majority of their contemporaries were illiterate, prejudiced against unorthodox knowledge, or attributed any mechanical, mathematical or optical invention to the devil, they were aware of the distance that separated their unique preparation and sophisticated knowledge, from the 'vulgar eye' as Dee calls the non-initiated in his *Monas*. A few years later, Dee's conviction of his being elect is reinforced by his efforts to keep his good name, against the accusation of being a conjuror. In *A Refutation of Slander* he sharply contrasts his person, an “honest student and modest Christian philosopher ... who seeks no worldly gain or glory ... but only of God the treasure of heavenly wisdom and knowledge of pure hands”<sup>465</sup> to the *idiots* and *scornful* who try to rob and spoil him “of his honest name and fame”.<sup>466</sup>

Another possible reason for Dee's trust in being chosen has to do with his religious experience. When he was born in 1527 England was not yet Protestant. Calvin published his *Institutio Christianae Religionis* in 1536. In 1552 the *Forty-Two Articles* which conveyed the Anglican doctrine had already incorporated tenets like the justification by faith, the predestination and the unconditional election. The *Thirty-Nine Articles* issued under Elizabeth in 1563 bring some changes, but preserve these tenets. It is not difficult to imagine how these religious ideas fit in a mindset formed at Pico's school. Besides, the denial of the *opus operatum* in Protestantism left the space for miracles to man.

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<sup>464</sup> F.A.Yates, *Theatre of the World*, op.cit., p. 190.

<sup>465</sup> The Preface to Euclid, in J.Deer *Essential Readings*, op.cit., p.43.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

#### 4.5.2 And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust?

As a dramatist intent “to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure”,<sup>467</sup>, Shakespeare provides the widest range of human typology ever present in drama and an articulate meditation on the nature and the capacities of man. As a mirror of human nature, his work does not delimit an ideal, as Renaissance philosophers did, but grants equal rights of being to men and women, true friends and deceivers, wise and fool, candid and monstrous, funny and tragical characters. Overall, one can say that Shakespeare's skeptical realism contrasts with Dee's admiration for human greatness. Hamlet, for example, disproves the Renaissance apology of man:

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust?

(II. II. 322-330)

This radical equation- on one side man as admirable paragon of animals, angel, god, beauty of the world, on the other the quintessence of dust, - reminds philosophers that the *quinta essentia*, the antidote to mortality they were pursuing, cannot change man's biblical condition: he reflects God's image, but is made of dust and aimed to return to its nothingness. Already Isabella's words in *Measure for Measure*, had appeared as a trenchant comment on the postulates of Renaissance anthropology:

Man, proud man,  
Drest in a little brief Authority,  
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,  
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven  
As makes the angels weep.

(II. II. 117-122)

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<sup>467</sup> *Hamlet*, (III. II. 21-24).

Man's pride ascribes him Authority, but this does not naturally belong to the created man, it is just a small dress put on for a short period of time. His authority places him in counterposition to his own essence, his *glassy essence*- his being an image, a reflection of God - and turns him into an angry ape, an animal-bound, clumsy imitator, a player of tricks. But his tricks - mere imaginings, false prerogatives-, appear so fantastical, that they do not accomplish even the normal function of tricks- to provoke laughter. On the contrary, the angels, reflections of God's mind and protectors of humans, shed tears. Dee's belief in man's participation with 'Spirites' and Angels, appears just as fantastical in this perspective.

The Renaissance confidence in man's grandious stature, that had induced Michelangelo to interpret the Bible freely by transforming David into a giant, is repeatedly contradicted by Shakespeare, for whom the man is not only mortal, but 'little'. King Lear in his agony, “Strives in his little world of man to outscorn/  
The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain”. (III. I. 10-1) as is described by a Gentleman, while Prospero defines man's condition as illusion:

We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.

(IV. I. 156-8)

In various other occasions, man is reduced to the lowest status on the scale of animality: Bottom's initiation experience in the wood of Athens reveals to him that *man is but an ass...a patched fool* (IV. I. 213... 216-7), while the Earl of Gloucester confesses in *King Lear*:

I' th' last night's storm I such a fellow saw,  
Which made me think a man a worm.  
As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods.  
They kill us for their sport.

(IV. I. 32-7 )

The reduction of man to *a worm* or *a fly* whose insubstantial, dream-like little life and whose death depend on the gods' entertainment, builds up a formidable contrast with Agrippa's assumption that man is “an animal to be honoured and adored: for he passeth into the nature of God, whereby he becomes God”; also it

reinforces the idea that man misunderstands proportions and illudes himself of being a subject, while in the universal order of things, he is an object and a very insignificant one. In Isabella's view the proud man is 'most ignorant of what he's most assured.' The issue of ignorance at the core of a book-centered culture, like the Renaissance, was mostly addressed as accumulation of knowledge. If Dee judged ignorance in terms of unread books and incapacity to apply the science of numbers, both practically (navigation, measuring, etc) and speculatively (Cabala), for Shakespeare real knowledge is the right evaluation of one's role in the universal theatre. Tragedy erupts in personal life and history when man fails to acknowledge the limitations of his being, misusing his will and reason.

In Pico's *Oratio*, Adam was endowed by God with free will and the possibility to fashion himself, but for Shakespeare "the will of man is by his reason sway'd"<sup>468</sup>, and the reason of actual men is in its turn subject to an 'unsettled fancy', impulse, desire, ambition, which mantle the *clearer reason* in *ignorant fumes*. Shakespeare questions men's capacity of using their intellect properly. In *The Tempest* Prospero tries to cure his enemies' *useless brain, boiled within their skull* (V. I. 60). His power over them had impeded two murders to take place: Alonso's and his own. Yet Shakespeare also denounces the damage produced on an entire nation when someone with a *dull brain* (I. III. 149-150) like Macbeth, or someone with a perverted reason like Richard III take the power. The dramatist also points out that man is very agile in building up justifications for his lack of rationality. One of them is astrological determinism. In *King Lear*, Edmund makes a sarcastic confutation of the principle of necessity, pertinent to Dee's belief in the astrological pronostications, that he himself practised:

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, - often the surfeit of our own behaviour, - we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical pre-dominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on: an admirable evasion of whore-master man,

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<sup>468</sup> MSND, Lysander, (II. II. 115).

to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star!

(I. II. 31-43)

In the same spirit, in *The Winter's Tale* Florizel explains the guilt strategically laid on chance:

...as the unthought-on accident is guilty  
To what we wildly do, so we profess  
Ourselves to be the slaves of chance and flies  
Of every wind that blows.

(IV. III. 551-4)

Renaissance culture seems to have accomplished Protagoras's claim that "Man is the measure of all things: of things which are, that they are, and of things which are not, that they are not". Philosophically speaking, man decides to delimit his concepts and understanding of being and non-being. Albeit a firm believer, Dee behaved and thought in agreement with this precept, convinced he could grasp and order not only the present and the visible, but also the future and the invisible. The conjuring experiments confirm the precept, with the reserve that it was Kelly who actually decided of things which are and things which are not, making Dee participate not with spirits and angels, but with Kelly's own imagination.

In Shakespeare's theatre, which presents real men and women committed to their historical destiny, Protagoras's assertion applies differently: on stage, as in life, men are in continuous interaction. Their attempt to define or delimit being versus non-being touches on their blood and flesh as much as on their mind. Hamlet ponders on suicide, applying the choice between being and not-being to his own self, but in many situations in Shakespeare's plays the characters' tendency to calibrate their existential domain on their desires, can transform deciding for the *being* or *non-being* of things into murder. Murder as an attempt to erase a person from existence is an act of will founded on defective reasoning: excluding a person from life, does not erase him or her from being, to which it belongs by the act of creation, and even less does it enlarge one's own portion of being, as the story of Macbeth shows.

One can conclude that Dee, the scholar, astrologer, cabalist, political thinker, mathematician, looked at the world with an enchanted eye, which corresponds to his firm religious inclination, his powerful fantasy and his

philosophical background, whereas Shakespeare the poet scrutinizes the world disenchantedly. Dee, the philosopher, grounds his thought and experiments with angels in readings and belief, Shakespeare, the poet, as much as his characters, exercise critical thinking on man, life, the universal theatre.

#### 4.6 The Charmed Magician

In her review on Peter French's book *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus*, F.A.Yates calls Dee “the Prospero who touches the Elizabethan age at almost every point, whose version of the Hermetic tradition is a current that runs through the age.”<sup>469</sup> In *Shakespeare's Last Plays* Yates reinforces the idea, by stating that “Prospero might be a vindication of Dee, a reply to the censure of James”<sup>470</sup>. F. A. Yates' figures of speech and suggestions have been taken by successive scholars or editors as indisputable statements and so *The Tempest* figures as the most significant literary reference to Dee. Equating a literary figure to a real person is misleading, as fiction's relationship to life is intricate and poly-semantic. Nevertheless, comparing and contrasting Prospero and Dee might bring clarifications.

Admitting that Prospero's magic can be associated with Dee's in a general way, there are noteworthy distinctions between the literary character and the philosopher. In *The Tempest* Prospero communicates directly with Ariel and he is in perfect command of the world of the spirits. Dee is, on the contrary, under the spirits' command and dependent on Kelly. Prospero's magic is instrumental to the principle of love. He causes the tempest, as he declares, for his daughter's sake. After unmasking the monster in his enemies' brain, restoring justice and forgiving the deceivers, he sets the spirits in his power free. Dee loves knowledge above all and though being a lover of harmony among human beings and a reasonably careful husband and father, he sacrifices his wife's dignity in his steadfast pursuit of absolute knowledge. Besides, in spite of the various letters and memorials in

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<sup>469</sup> F. A. Yates, *Ideas and Ideals in the North European Renaissance*, Collected Essays, vol. III, *A Great Magus*, p.52:

<sup>470</sup> F. A. Yates, *Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975, p.96.



which he tries to defend his name from the accusation of being a conjurer, he actually believed in spirits and in the validity of his experiments with Kelly. Even late in his life he found another *medium* and tried to question the angels on his future.

At the end of *The Tempest*, Prospero declares:

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,  
And what strength I have's mine own,  
Which is most faint: now, 'tis true,  
I must be here confined by you,  
Or sent to Naples. Let me not,  
Since I have my dukedom got  
And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell  
In this bare island by your spell;  
But release me from my bands  
With the help of your good hands:

(Epilogue, 1-10)

As a theatre maker Prospero wishes to be released from the imaginary place he had created and returned to his real life by the help of his public, that is by the applause which marks the end of the *sortie du temps* achieved by the play. He knows that theatre exists as inter-subjective communication and dependency. As a magician, Prospero is aware that magic is also a binary relation between a bonding agent and a bonding object and that the roles are interchangeable, if the bonding agent renounces to control the process. That is why, after abjuring magic he delivers himself to those he had kept under his charms, with the plea to be released from his bands and not kept “in this bare island by your spell”.

In the conversations with spirits and angels, Dee, the flesh and blood magus, seems to be unaware of the fact that he is the recipient of *phantasms* produced by Kelly. Their experiments illustrate point by point Bruno's ideas about magic as manipulation, amply discussed by Ioan P. Couliano in the chapter on the *Great Manipulator* in his *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*<sup>471</sup>, whereby Kelly is the charmer and Dee the charmed. Not only does Kelly produce vivid impressions on Dee's senses and imagination by a dramatic description and often performance,

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<sup>471</sup> I. P. Couliano, *Eros et magie à la Renaissance*, 1484, Paris : Flammarion, 1984, Engl. *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.

where his own body is engaged<sup>472</sup>, but he knows he can operate safely, because of Dee's absolute faith, confirming Bruno again: “There is no operator – magician, doctor, or prophet – who can accomplish anything without the subject's having faith beforehand” (*De Magia*, III, p.452).<sup>473</sup>

In contrast to his position in the *Monas*, as omniscient instructor of sovereigns, in *The Five Books of Mystery*, Dee behaves like an obedient disciple who asks questions to the spiritual entities and carefully writes down answers and sometimes his own notes or brief comments. In one of their first sessions, Michael communicates him that he is chosen:

The Angels under my powre, shall be at thy commaundement.  
Lo, I will do thus much for thee.  
Lo, God will do thus much for thee.  
Thow shalt see me: and I will be seen of thee.  
And I will direct thy liuing and conversation.  
Those that sowght thy life<sup>474</sup> are vanished away.  
Put up thy pen.

As the séances go on, one realizes Dee's addiction to the visions in the *shew-stone*. Every now and then, when Kelly's inventive vein is drained, as for example on April 18<sup>th</sup> 1583 and he 'saw nothing but a blak clowde seven-cornered'<sup>475</sup>, Dee notes down this “did greatly disquiet our myndes, and browght [brought] us in feare of some offence lately committed.”<sup>476</sup> He reports then: “I prayed in the hearing of EK [Edward Kelly], (by my desk, on my knees) in great agony of mynde”.<sup>477</sup> One can imagine the scene and Kelly's decision to produce another spirit in order to put an end to Dee's agony. At first this spirit rebuked Dee's impatience and warned him: “Appoint God no time.”<sup>478</sup> But then he reassured him:

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<sup>472</sup> B. Woolley, *The Queen's Conjurer, The Science and Magic of Dr. John Dee*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 2001, p. 261: Some encounters even left marks, such as the occasion when Dee discovered “two circles as broad as groats very red” imprinted on Kelly's arms where a demon had “nipped” him”.

<sup>473</sup> I.P.Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, op.cit., p.93.

<sup>474</sup> An evil spirit that had appeared previously, called Lundrumguffa. MLP, p.75 in note.

<sup>475</sup> LMQ, p. 349.

<sup>476</sup> LMQ, p.350.

<sup>477</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid., p.351.

You are chosen by God his mercy to an ende [the end of our election, in note] and purpose; Which ende shall be made manifest by the first begynning in knowledge in these Mysteries. God shall make clere whan it pleaseth him: & open all the secrets of wisdom whan he unlocketh. Therefore Seke not to know the mysteries of this boke, tyll the very howre [till the very hour] that he shall call thee.<sup>479</sup>

As an expert bonding agent, Kelly encounters Dee's expectations but also, using apocalyptic imagery and language, knows how to arouse his fear and Christian sense of guilt. Sometimes, evil spirits appear to threaten Dee. The moments of tension and danger could be seen as Kelly's strategy to keep Dee obedient and alert; deviate his attention from impelling questions and gain time. They are always appeased by the spirits' reassuring statements, or common places like "Prayer is the key of all good things."<sup>480</sup> Dee's questions to the spirits regard not only explanations of theo-philosophical or mathematical order, but also his own problems, insecurities, frustrations about the lack of response in the court circles to his projects. For example he confesses the spirit signed as Me (Medicina Dei/Raphael):

As concerning the Kalendar to be reformed, I am grieved that her Maiestie will not reforme it in the best terms of veritie. And as for the priuilege for Mr Adrian Gilbert his voyage, I think not well of it, that Royalties should not be graunted. Therefore both these points, respecting her Maiestie, I would gladly have cownsayle [council], such as in the Judgement of the highest might be most for my behofe, to follow<sup>481</sup>.

To the modern reader certain episodes are clear evidence that Kelly prepared his sessions and was careful afterwards to clear away suspicion. In a note Dee describes how

EK [Edward Kelly] rose up from the table and went to the west window, to reade a letter which was, euen then, browght him from his wife: which being done, he toke a little prayer boke (in english meter made by one William Hunnis which Mr Adrian Gilbert had here: and it lay on the Table by us all the while of the last action) and with this boke, he went into his bed chamber, intending to pray on it, a certayn prayer, which he liked: and as he opened the boke, his ey espied strange

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<sup>479</sup> LMQ, p.351.

<sup>480</sup> QLMA, p. 375.

<sup>481</sup> LMQ, p. 282.

writing in the spare white paper at the bokes ende: and beholding it, iudged it verily to be his own letters and the thing of his own doing...<sup>482</sup>

This could be very well Kelly's attempt to cover notes he may have made on the book as support when he 'transmitted' elaborate puzzles. Yet Dee is convinced in the end that this was written down by some wicked spirit to confound them.<sup>483</sup> In various circumstances Kelly gives him oblique messages about the falsity of the experiment. On April 20, 1583 Dee notes down:

This satterday had byn great and eger pangs betwene EK and me: while he wold utterly discredit the whole process of our actions: as, to be done by evill and illuding spirites: seking his destruction: saying that he hath often here to fore byn told things true, but of illuding diuells: and Now, how can this be other, than a mockery, to haue a cornerd dark clowd to be shewed hi in steade of playn writing, which hitherto he had written out of?<sup>484</sup>

The spirits ordered Dee not to doubt their information and keep it secret, as “He is secret that liueth for euer.”<sup>485</sup> Apart from Kelly, he had nobody to confer with on the nature of these revelations. As in Shakespeare's theatre, magic reaches its goal: though apparently he seems to be as self-confident as ever, Dee succumbs to the disorienting succession of enigmas, characters, contradictory messages, prophecies, becoming more and more a-mazed and bewildered. Like Hecate in

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<sup>482</sup> W. Shumaker, (*Renaissance curiosa*, op.cit., p. 32) reports an episode occurred in Prague : “Besides fulminations, prophecies, and allegorical visions we learn, once, of a miracle. On April 30, 1586, Dee persuaded himself that he witnessed a part of it. Briefly, an angel in the guise of a gardener who had been pruning trees spoke in Latin to Kelly, pruned some more, and finally disappeared in a pillar of fire. When Dee heard what had happened, he went into the garden and found there three books, entitled Enoch his Book, The 48 Claves Angelicae (Angelic Keys) and Liber Scientiae terrestris auxilii & victoriae (Book of the Knowledge of Earthly Help and Victory - “my gathering of the thirty Aires”), all of which had been burned the preceding April 10 in a furnace. The specter then reappeared and led Kelly, but not Dee, to the furnace, indoors, walking a foot above the ground and casing doors to open before him, reached into the furnace, and handed Kelly “all the rest of the standing Books, excepting the Book out of which the last Action was cut, and Fr.Pucci his Recantation...One assumes that the books had not in fact been burned, and that Kelly either pretended the burning in order to stop the actions or else contrived the events to produce a startling impression. Dee's account of the incident permits the interpretation that his sensory participation involved only the receiving of the books. “p. 32

<sup>483</sup> “To conclude, we fownd, that with an incredible spede this Diuilish figure was written down by some Wicked spirit, to bring our perfect doings in dowt with us: thereby eyther to provoke us to utter undue speeches of gods good creatures, or to wavering myndes of the Worthynes and goodnes of the same things receuying, and so eyther to leue of, or with fayntharted wavering to procede., QML, Appenadix, pp.386-7.

<sup>484</sup> QLMA, p. 363.

<sup>485</sup> MLS, p.124.

Macbeth, Kelly raises “such artificial sprites/as by the strength of their illusion/ Shall draw him to his confusion”. (III.V. 23-29)

The border between faith and credulity is blurred, and later on yet another border will be trespassed. Albeit the episode is not included in *The Five Books of Mystery*, it is worth mentioning for its significance. The cross-matching episode is the final act of Dee's submission to Kelly's will and the indisputable evidence that Kelly was a manipulator. Retold with fine psychological insight and ironical understatement by Benjamin Woolley in the Part Nine of his biography of John Dee<sup>486</sup>, this episode took place in Bohemia. Kelly seems to have strongly desired to be set free from being a medium and start alchemical operations on his own, and on the other hand, possibly desired an heir by Dee's wife, as his marriage was sterile. Either way, the she-spirit Madimi comes up with “a vision of four heads upon a pillar: the heads of Dee and Kelly and their wives, Jane and Joanna.” Like a magician, “Madimi produced a half moon from the heavens, bearing an inscription: Nothing is unlawful which is lawful unto God.”<sup>487</sup> The spirit commands Dee and Kelly to 'share' their wives. To Dee's shocked response: “I by no means consent to like of that doctrine.” the spirit replies:

If I told a man to go and strangle his brother, and he did not do it, he would be the son of sin and death. For all things are possible and permitted to be godly. Nor are sexual organs more hateful to them than the faces of every mortal. Thus it will be: the illegitimate will be joined to the true son. And the east will be united with the west, and the south with the north.<sup>488</sup>

Supposing Dee had deeply pondered on this statement, it sounded in accord with the aspiration of Renaissance magic: join the contraries, go beyond the good and evil polarity into the freedom of absolute knowledge, attain that divine status which is *coincidentia oppositorum*. As a scientist and a philosopher he must have agreed that for an immortal instance any part of man's mortal flesh had the same value. And even if at the end of the action he was in a state of “great amazement and grief” in front of “so unpure a doctrine”<sup>489</sup> he agreed and convinced his wife to accept the cross-matching “in the fear of God”. The four actors of this surprising script, signed a pact (Full text and Kelly's disclaimer in Appendix 1):

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<sup>486</sup> B. Woolley, *The Queen's Conjuror*, op.cit.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>488</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

We four... do most humbly and heartily thank thee, O Almighty God (our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier) for all thy mercies and benefits hitherto received, in our persons, and in them that appertain unto us: And at this present, do faithfully and sincerely confess, and acknowledge, that thy profound wisdom in this most new and strange doctrine (among Christians) propounded, commended, and enjoined unto us four only, is above human reason.<sup>490</sup>

As the first beneficiaries of a new revelation, they hesitated. To clear away hesitations, Madimi promises Dee in biblical style: “Behold, I have prepared a banquet for you, and have brought you even unto the doors; but because you smell not the feast you disdain to enter.”<sup>491</sup> “The following day, Dee wrote two words in his diary: *Pactum factum*”, pact fulfilled”<sup>492</sup>. With this episode, Dee's story illustrates another crucial component of magic: eros, which is central to Bruno's theory and amply developed in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. As a great demon and binder, eros annuls distinctions of time, culture and nature, reverts taboos and ethical rules. In the ambiguity that lies at the basis of magic, the limit between freedom and promiscuity is blurred too.

Analogically to Macbeth's story, but having a completely different kind of protagonist, this episode marking the culmination of the experiments, accomplishes the final aim of manipulative magic: the transformation of one's imaginary self into devouring reality. This episode took place in 1587, the year when Johannes Spies published his *The History of Dr Faustus, the Notorius Magician and Master of Black Art*. The fact that a pact in the flesh was signed and Dee accepted it because of his unrestrained desire to know, made Benjamin Woolley associate Dr. Dee to Dr. Faust. The association is highly suggestive, yet Dee's drama is also different, not only because he sacrifices his wife, but because in his mind he does not sign a pact with the devil, but a new covenant with God. In this adventure he is till the end a victim of his own irremovable faith and a candid object of Kelly's play. Aproximately nine months after the episode, in February 1588, a son was born in Dee's family, who got the name Theodore [gift of God] and in 1590 his wife gave birth to a daughter that was named Madimia.

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<sup>490</sup> Ibid., pp. 263-4.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

As for Kelly, the author of this elaborate deception, he looks more like a versatile farce character than a consummate Mephisto, a mercurial mind, learning quickly, taking advantage of situations and other characters' weaknesses, a real Brunian magician at work, who deserves attention. After all, he had measured himself with the brightest scholar of the Elizabethan age, a man whose dialogue partners were philosophers and monarchs; for an allegedly dismissed Oxford undergraduate it must have been quite a challenge. His career after leaving Dee confirms he had won, just as the overt provocation addressed to the 'fain philosophers' in his own alchemical poem, included by Ashmole in the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*:

All you that faine philosophers would be,  
And night and day in Geber's kitchen broyle,  
Wasting the chipps of ancient Hermes' Tree,  
Weening to turn them to a precious oyle,  
The more you worke the more you loose and spoile;  
To you I say, how learned soever you be,  
Goe burne your bookes and come and learne of me.  
Although to my one Booke you have red tenn,  
That's not enough, for I have heard it said  
The greatest clarkes are not the wisest men:  
A lion once a silly mouse obey'd.  
In my good will so hold yourselves appaid,  
And though I write not halfe so sweete as Tully,  
Yet shall you finde I trace the stepps of Lully.<sup>493</sup>

#### 4.7 Good Old Lord Gonzalo

When Shakespeare's *Tempest* was performed for the first time by the King's Men in 1611, Dr. Dee had already passed away. Born in 1527 and deceased between 1608-9 or rather on 26 February 1609 as Fenton writes, he had lived an unusually long life for the standards of the time and so the majority of the spectators must have remembered him only as an old man with a long white beard. Nothing was known yet about the scrying séances and the 'new covenant', even though the

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<sup>493</sup> A.E.Waite, ed., *The Alchemical Works of Sir Edward Kelly*, James Elliott&Co 1893, reprint Stuart&Watkins, Bath, 1970.

suspicion that he was a conjurer had never abandoned him, inspite of his various written protests.

In a period when witches were burnt at the stake, it was better to prevent accusations. The last petition, addressed to King James I, dated 1604, June 5, is another attempt to have justice for his bad name. So he alludes at “some impudent and malicious foreign enemy or English traitor” who had affirmed *in print* “your Majesty's said suppliant to be the Conjurer belonging to the most honourable Privy Council of your Majesty's most illustrious predecessor, Queen Elizabeth”<sup>494</sup>, which implied that he was suspected of having given councils to the Queen inspired by devils. He requires to be tried on these charges, and “offers himself willingly to the punishment of Death (yea, either to be stoned to Death: or to be buried alive or to be burned unmercifully) if by any due, true and just means the said name of *Conjurer* or *Caller* or *Invocator* of devils or damned spirits can be proved to have been or to be duly and justly reported of or attributed to him”<sup>495</sup>. As the editor remarks, “the petition was ignored”<sup>496</sup>. The lack of response to this and his former memorials, some of which regarding the calendar reform or the colonization of the New World, reveal that the court circles did not take him seriously. They probably looked at him with the complacent irony one has for an extravagant thinker.

If today's admirers of Dr. Dee like to see him in Prospero, it is highly plausible that the public of the King's Men recognized him rather in Gonzalo, starting from his physical aspect: in act V, scene I (15-17) Ariel mentions Gonzalo's beard, a physical detail that was a mark of Dr. Dee. In the characters' list Gonzalo is defined as *an honest old councillor*. Dee considered himself all his life a *councillor* to monarchs and never ceased to declare publicly his honesty. On the other hand, being a *councillor* to monarchs meant cherishing the secret ambition to determine the course of events. Gonzalo actually dreams of being the master of an island and reform society.

Dee was always loyal to his nation and to the English monarchy, as he stressed in a letter to Queen Elizabeth, where he reminds her of his “dutifull”

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<sup>494</sup> J. Dee, Essential Readings, p. 126.

<sup>495</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid., p. 125.



service, and his "faithfull diligence and earnest labour"<sup>497</sup>. His loyalty was sustained by a generous heart. Though being appointed by the plotters to deliver Prospero and his daughter to the powers of the sea (I. II. 162-3), the 'noble Neapolitan Gonzalo', proved loyal and contributed to their survival, by providing them with 'necessaries' and furnishing Prospero with books,<sup>498</sup> a detail that could have reminded the public of Dee's being a great lover and collector of books and manuscripts.

In the character's list, below Gonzalo's name, one reads: *Adrian* and *Francisco*, lords. This association of names cannot be casual: Adrian Gilbert, half brother to Sir Walter Raleigh was involved in Dee's colonization projects, visited Dee at home on various occasions and is mentioned even to the angels.<sup>499</sup> Also, when the shipwrecked start looking around on the island, Antonio and Sebastian make a bet: they expect Gonzalo and Adrian to start presenting the *advantages* of the place, in view of its colonization, in spite of down-to-earth uninviting evidence, but don't know yet who is going to start:

Ant. Which of he and Adrian, for a good wager, first begins to crow?

Seb. The old cock.

Ant. The cock'rel.

Seb. Done! The wager?

Ant. A laughter.

Seb. A match!

Adr. Though this island seem to be desert-

Ant. Ha, ha, ha!

(II. I. 29-36).

Gonzalo's exalted vision of 'his island' is object of fun for the others<sup>500</sup> and cause of irritation for King Alonso who reproofs him: "Prithee no more. Thou dost talk

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<sup>497</sup> Ibid., pp.106-7. where he adds: "God best knoweth how I was very ungodly dealt withall, when I meant all truth, sincerety, fidelity, and piety towardes God, and my Queene and country."

<sup>498</sup> Prospero. Some food we had, and some fresh water, that/ A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo,/ Out of his charity, who being then appointed/ Master of this design, did give us, with/ Rich garments, linens, stuffs and necessaries/ Which since have steaded much. So, of his gentleness,/ Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me/ From mine own library with volumes that/ I prize above my dukedom (I. II. 160-8).

<sup>499</sup> LMQ, p.280.

<sup>500</sup> Seb. No marrying 'mong his subjects?

Ant. None, man, all idle- whores and knaves.

Gonzalo.I would with such perfection govern, sir,

T'excel the golden age.

Seb. Save his majesty!

Ant. Long live Gonzalo!(II. I. 172-6)

nothing to me” (II. I. 177-8). The old councillor does not realize he is being laughed at and his response is of a bitter wit:

Ant. 'Twas you we laughed at.  
Gon. Who in this kind of merry fooling am  
    nothing to you: so you may continue, and laugh  
    at nothing still.

(II. I. 183-6)

Gonzalo's seriousness and honesty are complemented by his lack of self-irony, emphasized in an exchange of replies with Sebastian by his mistaking *dollar* for *dolor*. This is another feature Gonzalo is likely to share with Dr. Dee, whose absolute faith ruled out the sense of humour, with the consequence that he trusted Kelly and the latter could take advantage exactly of what was the foundation of his honesty. Following the hypothesis that Dee could have inspired Gonzalo's figure, one can also point out the contrast between the pragmatic approach of the court politicians and Gonzalo's highly imaginative designs:

Ant. His word is more than the miraculous harp;  
Seb. He hath raised the wall, and houses too.  
Ant. What impossible matter will he make easy next?  
Seb. I think he will carry this island home in his  
    pocket and give it his son for an apple.  
Ant. And, sowing the kernels of it in the sea, bring forth more islands.

(II. I. 90-6)

Antonio comments on the golden age vision by: “The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning” (II. I. 157-8), while Sebastian says about Gonzalo: “He doth but mistake the truth totally”(II. I. 58). The criticism to Gonzalo's opinions could have conveyed the contrariety of the Elizabethan politicians to Dee's projects and indirectly provide the explanation for his frustrations. Dee was by far more cultured than other councillors or Elizabethan prominent figures: analogously Gonzalo is the most lettered of his group. An example is his specifying that Tunis is Carthage, the country of the 'widow Dido', when King Alonso has no classical culture and Adrian no geography.

Adr. 'Widow Dido' said you? you make me

study of that: she was of Carthage, not of Tunis.  
Gon. This Tunis, sir, was Carthage.  
Adr. Carthage?  
Gon. I assure you, Carthage.

(II. I. 85-89)

Gonzalo is a believer and will stay firm in his belief throughout the tempest and the successive events on the island. The issue of faith is central to Dee's personality and cultural contributions. One of Dee's mannerisms, as it comes out from the *Five Books of Mystery* is the repeated *Amen*, after prayers, at the conclusion of each séance or when he wanted to reinforce his good faith to the spirits. The courtiers tease Gonzalo exactly on this mannerism:

Gon. I have inly wept, Or should have spoke ere this. Look down, you god, And on this couple drop a blessed crown! For it is you that have chalk'd forth the way Which brought us hither.

**Alon. I say, Amen, Gonzalo!**<sup>501</sup>

Gon. ... 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

When no man was his own.

Alonso. [To FERDINAND and MIRANDA] Give me your hands: Let grief and sorrow still embrace his heart That doth not wish you joy!

**Gonzalo. Be it so! Amen!**<sup>502</sup>

(V. I. 205-215)

Though highly respectful, Gonzalo is somehow abrupt in his statements. Dee's address to Maximilian in the *Monas* and a reported episode in Prague, when he almost threatened Emperor Rudolph II in the name of the spirits, may hint at his sometimes tactless attitudes. To round up Dee's possible portrait as Gonzalo, *The Tempest* seems to completely dismantle the legend of his being a powerful, devil-assisted sorcerer. This is evident throughout the play, where Gonzalo is not only innocuous, but as a-mazed by Prospero as anybody else, yet it is hinted at already in the beginning, when he tries to bring order and respect of hierarchies on the ship in the storm, and the Boatswain provokes him:

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<sup>501</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>502</sup> Emphasis added.

Boatswain:...You are a councilor: if you can command these elements to silence and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more; use your authority. If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap.-

(I. I. 21-7)

Dee was acknowledgedly a worker of peace, trying to make people avoid confrontation, but could not command the elements as his *Five Books of Mystery* plainly confirm.

The courtiers turn Gonzalo into a laughing stock, but Ariel is moved by the sight of the “good old lord Gonzalo”, whose “tears run down his beard, like winter's drops/ From eaves of reeds”(V. I. 15-17), while he is trapped in Prospero's labyrinth. In a context that definitely could not favour Dee's memory, - Ben Jonson's *Alchemist* which attacks him directly was written in 1610 -, Shakespeare had the courage to pay a moving homage to Dee through Gonzalo, by contrasting the latter's idealism and honesty to the ignorant plotters around him. If Prospero is taken as Shakespeare's alter-ego, his feeling on Dee's side in his efforts to fight ignorance, is relevant:

Holy Gonzalo, honourable man,  
Mine eyes, even sociable to the show of thine,  
Fall fellowly drops.

(V. I. 62-4)

Comparing and contrasting Dee to Prospero or Gonzalo points out in the end that he was a much more fascinating character, than a writer, - even one of genius like Shakespeare-, could fashion taking him as a model. Dee is the author of political, scientific, astrological or cabalistical designs, but also appears as the actualization of his cultural ideal, an actor of his own scenarios and the centre of his enigmas. One cannot focus on his work ignoring his biography. His intellectual adventure cannot be distilled from his contacts with monarchs, scholars, poets, spies, adventurers; from his genuine faith, his frustrations and hopes, his wife and children, the relationship with Kelly, the love for his books. The tension he experienced between public and private, published and occulted, the contrast in his posterity between the admiration for his creative mind and the accusations of

sorcery, the audacity of his ideas and the 'new covenant' lived in the flesh makes him an inexhaustible source of literary inspiration.

## 5. THE POWER OF WORDS

### 5.1. Word Dynamis

The conviction that words are a manifestation of divine power extended to the human sphere is probably one of the most enduring and widely spread.<sup>503</sup> According to the various traditions words were instrumental for the world creation or its control by gods. In the phenomenology of the sacred, gods are assumed to communicate themselves in language, an experience of substantiation translated into invocations, prayers, myths, while the participation of humans in divinity appears as the capacity to reason, create or control reality through words.

In ancient Greece, long before philosophy acknowledged the function of the *logos* in understanding the cosmos and accounting for its principles and structure, magic, poetry and drama gave substance to the power of words. The *Theoretical Premises* refer to the *dynamis* of words in the persuasive and imaginary dimension of magic, actualized in verbal formulas, recited with or without musical support, in charms, incantations (*epoidai*) or in the written *defixiones*. It is plausible that the very concept of *poiēsis* (ποίησις from ποιέω = I do, I make) was originally interpreted as ritual action, as doing things with words replicating the divine and so may have been *drama* (δράμα from δράω = I make, I do), which fused together word, movement and gesture.”<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> S. J. Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action, An Anthropological Perspective*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England 1985, p.27: “The Vedic hymns speculated on *vāc* (“the word”) and asserted that the gods ruled the world through magical formulas; the Parsi religion states that in the battle between good and evil it was through the spoken word that chaos was transformed into cosmos; ancient Egypt believed in a God of the Word; the Semites and the Sumerians have held that the world and its objects were created by the word of God; and the Greek doctrine of *logos* postulated that the soul or essence of things resided in their names.”

<sup>504</sup> Anita, Seppilli, *Poesia e Magia*, Einaudi, Torino, 1971, p. 10.

In philosophy words are both the instrument and the substance of thought. In performative cultural forms like theatre and magic they are essential ingredients, but are functional to action. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle pointed out that in the *mimesis* “The objects the imitator represents are actions, with agents who are necessarily either good men or bad”(1448 a), stressing further that “Tragedy is essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life”(1450a l), to which both characters and “the power of saying whatever can be said” (1450 b) appear as instrumental. Indeed, in theatre the power of the words is crucial both in the written text and in the staging, but it is relegated to the simulation of life, and it is not the exclusive instrument of expression: gesture and mimic, costumes and scenery, dumb shows, music and dance may complete, as in Shakespeare's time, the range of devices meant to produce 'the action'. Although in the cultured tradition theatre is based on a written text, the spoken word is prevalent over the written one. Shakespeare did not publish his plays during his lifetime, as they had been already made public by the performance, a mentality confirmed by his contemporary John Marston, who stated in the introduction to *The Fawn*, “Comedies are writ to be spoken, not read. Remember the life of these things consists in action.”<sup>505</sup> Even the name *actor* for player or performer in English, as in all Romance languages, hints at the priority of action in theatre, as it stems from the Greek *aginèô* - I move, I lead, I do. Theatre is not only action, but also change: irrespective of its profile, - tragedy, comedy, musical drama - the performance displays a happening, therefore a change in the state of being, with the aim of edifying and entertaining the public, which means inducing a mutation in their conscience or emotional state.

Magic is primarily an action aimed at producing a change in reality; the agent is the magician and the words are instrumental to his goals: to ensure the efficiency of a remedy, a poison, or an erotic potion spells and charms had to be recited, while in divination and conjuring the word is central. Renaissance high magic sticks basically to the same instrumental use of words as popular magic, but its approach to language has theo-philosophical implications. Conceived as *imitatio dei*, it drew on the creative power of God's word and the assumption that the original Adamic idiom was a deposit of divine wisdom and therefore an

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<sup>505</sup> M. Domenichelli, *Il limite nell'ombra*, op. cit., p. 36.

instrument of power. In this trend based on an ample written tradition, the book itself was perceived as a magical object. The transmission of knowledge through language was essential to Dr. Dee's conception of magic, as was his dependence on books. Significantly, he called the scrying sessions *actions* and the action at their core was capturing the divine presence in words.

Philosophy exalts language as matrix of thought, focusing on its intrinsic capacity to organize reality in patterns and articulate them in a system. Theatre and magic, following religion, explore the creative and commanding hypostases of language, explicated in its poetical virtues: its musical dimensions- vibration, sound, rhythm,- its capacity to suggest and evoke, to construct coherent imaginary worlds and involve the recipients of their performances emotionally. In the Elizabethan Renaissance, theatre philosophized, while magic and philosophy intersected the poetical-performative sphere. The power of the words was a seminal argument both for Dee and for Shakespeare. The previous chapter has made various references to the role of words in their respective theatrical and magical wonders, singling out shared aspects rather than difference. This chapter aims at investigating Dee's and Shakespeare's specific approaches to the power of words, but an in-depth comprehension needs to set out from the complexity of language issues in the Elizabethan culture.

## 5.2 Renaissance, Reformation and Languages of Power

The linguistic emancipation of the English had started a few generations back, under the inspiring influence of Erasmus, with the contribution of Oxford and Cambridge scholars who had absorbed the classical Renaissance almost simultaneously with the Reformation. Thus the Oxford group represented mainly by John Colet (1467-1519), William Grocyn (c.1446-1519), Thomas Linacre (c.1460-1524) and Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) promoted a revival of classical studies in their original languages, Greek and Latin, and “directed it into religious channels”<sup>506</sup>, while Cambridge became the irradiating center of the English

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<sup>506</sup> G. Sampson, *The Cambridge Concise History of English Literature*, CUP, Cambridge, 1970, p. 101. pp.97-104.

Reformation, promoting translations of religious texts into the vernacular and compiling accessible books of private devotion, like *The Book of Common Prayer*, through the efforts of personalities like Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), William Tindale (d.1536) and Miles Coverdale (1488-1568). Tindale and Coverdale belong to the list of the industrious translators who produced eight English versions of the Bible<sup>507</sup> in eight decades. The translating impetus had various consequences: while it denied Latin its ineffable status and contributed enormously to develop the poetic and conceptual potential of the English language, it impacted the religious discourse. For example, the inevitable translation of *Logos/ Verbum* by the English *word* brought about a conceptual simplification, a tendency to disambiguate the *numinous* by equating it with the familiar. The co-existence of different translations undid in a way the very idea of revelation, thus King James's authorized version (1611) appears as an attempt to save the univocity of the divine message from the moving sands of too many circulated versions.

The increased authority of the printed text and the priority of the written word over images and ritual imposed by the Reformation had immediate effects in education and the art of memory. As F. A. Yates showed, the artificial memory based on the creative use of images was replaced by the mechanical memorization of printed pages<sup>508</sup>. In this atmosphere every printed text with a religious message tended to become a weapon in the battle for cultural hegemony. The Puritan faction had a cult of the written text and fashioned it with the criteria of war assault: the bulkier and more violent the charge, the better. A significant example is the most aggressive of all Puritan accusers of theatre in England, “the indomitable, intolerant, moral fanatic William Prynne (1600-69)” who displayed his ideas in *Histrionomastix*, that “contains eleven hundred pages with a title longer than most prefaces.”<sup>509</sup>

The incompatibility between theatre and magic on one side, and the rising Puritan mentality on the other, has to do with the latter's terror of transformation and

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<sup>507</sup> W. Tyndale's New Testament (1526); M. Coverdale's first complete Bible in English (1535); The Tyndale-Matthews Bible (1537); The Great Bible (1539); The Geneva Bible (1560); The Bishops Bible (1568), The First English Catholic Bible (1609); The King James Bible (1611).

<sup>508</sup> F. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, ch.10. *Ramism as Art of Memory*, pp.228-238; ch.12 *Conflict between Brunian and Ramist Memory*, pp.260-278, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966, edition consulted Pimlico, London, 2001.

<sup>509</sup> G. Sampson, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, op.cit., p. 287.



change, rejection of images as idols, but also with its attitude towards the spoken word, used successfully on stage and in magical formulas. The Puritans wanted its power to emanate only from the pulpit, but were also convinced that the written text had a better authority on the minds than speeches. Quite diversely, the individual reading of the Scriptures encouraged by the printed Bible, proved the freedom of text interpretation and resulted in the proliferation of sectarianism.

As a scriptural medium, English competed with the classical languages and Hebrew, incorporated by Pico and his followers into philosophical speculation and adopted by scholars, Dee included, as an idiom pervaded with primeval wisdom. As a rising language of culture, English had to face the challenge of continental vernaculars like French, Spanish, Italian, German. Actually the Elizabethans experienced an unprecedented exposure to foreign idioms, due to England's intense diplomatic and commercial contacts, the presence of continental Protestant refugees in London and the encounter with New World natives. To conquer the most significant of these uncharted realities, as the Queen herself was attempting to do, language manuals, dictionaries and expert guides were needed, so the translator, lexicographer and language teacher became a socially significant figure: John Florio provides a cogent example in this respect.

Through translations and encounters with other idioms, the English vernacular enriched its vocabulary. The study of rhetoric in the learned circles on the models of Isocrates and Cicero had already made the syntax more sophisticated and resulted in an increased awareness of the necessity to employ words in order to be persuasive and attain one's goals. Elizabethan historical dramas show the commanding potency of political speech: a telling example from Shakespeare is Mark Anthony's discourse in the Forum (*Julius Caesar*, III.II). The context favoured the emergence of *wit*, a specifically English treatment of language, in which words are forced to divorce their commonly accepted meanings and recombine in new ones. *Wit* can be regarded as a side effect of rhetorical exercise and an attempt to surpass the limits of the vernacular in search for new meanings, but is definitely also a consequence of the proliferation of the

paradox intrinsic to Martin Luther's theology<sup>510</sup>. Though contrasted on doctrinal and logical bases before the Elizabethan age by Thomas More and Erasmus<sup>511</sup>, the paradox had become in Shakespeare's time a mark of elegant conversation and literary style.

The advancement of English under the impulse of Reformation ideas was in tune with the European trend of promoting vernaculars as languages of knowledge, creativity and power. It was in Italy, a country Elizabethan England looked with interest at, that Alessandro Citolini codified the distinction between *dead* languages and *living* ones, evaluating the former as obsolete and limited and the latter as fertile and thriving in a *Lettera in difesa della lingua volgare*.<sup>512</sup> He illustrated his thesis in the *Tipocosmia*, an encyclopedia of knowledge, a philosophical narrative and a reconstruction of the world in the vernacular, in an admirable comprehension of linguistic patterns and the natural order of things.<sup>513</sup> After adhering to the Reformation, Citolini took refuge in Geneva by Johannes Sturm and later emigrated to London<sup>514</sup>. John Florio took inspiration from his ideas for the title of his Italian-English dictionary *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598)<sup>515</sup> and the *Epistle Dedicatorie*. In attempting an explanation of the creative potential of vernaculars, Florio proceeds from a playful distinction between deeds and words, by introducing the Italian saying: “Le parole sono femine & i fatti sono

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<sup>510</sup> Schwindt John, *Luther's Paradoxes and Shakespeare's God: The Emergence of the Absurd in Sixteenth-Century Literature*, Modern Language Studies, Vol. 15, No. 4, Autumn, 1985 in JSTOR

<sup>511</sup> Sir Thomas More touched on Luther's paradoxes in his contribution to Henry VIII's *Defense of The Seven Sacraments* (1521) and in *Responsio ad Luterum* (1523); D. Erasmus in *De libero arbitrio* (1524); Schwindt, John, *Luther's Paradoxes and Shakespeare's God: The Emergence of the Absurd in Sixteenth Century Literature*, in JSTOR Modern Language Studies, Vol. 15, No. 4, Fifteenth Anniversary Issue (Autumn, 1985), pp. 4-12.

<sup>512</sup> Faithfull, R. Glynn, *The Concept of Living Language in Cinquecento Vernacular Philology* in JSTOR, Modern Language Review, Vol.48., No.3, pp. 278-292.

<sup>513</sup> A. Antonini, *La Tipocosmia di Alessandro Citolini: un repertorio linguistico* and L. Bolzoni, *Memoria letteraria e iconografia nei repertori cinquecenteschi* in *Repertori di parole e immagini, Esperienze cinquecentesche e moderni data bases*, a cura di Paola Barocchi e Lina Bolzoni, Strumenti e testi, 3 Scuola Normale Superiore Pisa, 1997; G. Dragnea Horvath, *Philosophie, magie de la parole, encyclopédie: la Tipocosmia d'Alessandro Citolini*; A. Serrai, *Storia della bibliografia*, Vol.I, Bibliografia e Cabala. Le Enciclopedie rinascimentali, Bulzoni, Roma, 1988, p. 243.

J. Tedeschi, *Italian Reformers and the Diffusion of Renaissance Culture*, Sixteenth Century Journal, (V, 2, October 1974) in JSTOR. M. Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England, A Cultural Politics of Translation*, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

<sup>514</sup> In the first edition of *La Cena de le ceneri* (1584) (Ash Wednesday) G. Bruno mentions “un povero Messer Alessandro Citolini” he came across in London, while in the second edition his reference becomes “un povero gentiluomo italiano” cf. L. Bolzoni, L. Bolzoni, *Memoria letteraria e iconografica*, dans *Repertori di parole e immagini*, op. cit., p.31.

<sup>515</sup> J. Florio, *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598), Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, New York, 1972.

maschi, Wordes they are women, and deeds they are men”, only to stress that “Detti and fatti, wordes and deeds with me are all of one gender. And though they were commonly Feminine why might not I by strong imagination (which Phisicians give so much power unto) alter their sexe?”<sup>516</sup> Along with gender ideology sensed in the text by a scholar like Michael Wyatt<sup>517</sup>, the fragment hints at Florio's conviction that words are not just passive/feminine reflections of reality, but can take on an active/masculine role, which, according to the still prevailing Aristotelean theory, was the only engendering one.

In the same *Epistle*, Florio explains the decision of his Mistressse Muse to entitle the dictionary *A World of Words*: “since as the Univers contains all things, digested in best equipaged order, embellisht with innumerable ornaments by the universall creator. And as Tipocosmia imaged by Alessandro Cittolini, and Fabrica del mondo, framed by Francesco Alunno, and Piazza universale set out by Thomaso Garzoni tooke their names of the universall worlde, in words to represent things of the world: as words are types of things, and everie man by himselfe a little world in some resemblances...”<sup>518</sup> The dictionary entry *Tipocosmia* reads as “a type or figure of the whole world”, while *tipo* is: a tipe, a figure, an example, a forme, a draught, a likeness, a shadow of a thing, a patterne, mould or sample whereby the image-maker or mason noteth his stone, or melteth his brasse<sup>519</sup>. Florio's application of the Renaissance Neoplatonic theory to vernaculars is significant: man, the little world, relates not only to the macrocosm, but also to the sphere of the currently spoken languages. As images of God's word, human idioms have both a reflective and a creative function: they represent the universe, man and the divine, but they also give man the *forms* or *moulds* to construct his own reality like the *image-maker* or *mason*. Adding the verbal sphere of the vernaculars to the *macrocosm-microcosm* interplay, Florio seems to say that vernaculars are simultaneously latent arenas of the archetypal *logos* and instantiations of individual and communal creativity.

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<sup>516</sup> R.C. Simonini, JR., Introduction to J.Florio, *Second Frutes* (1591) A facsimile reproduction, Longwood College, Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, Delmar, New York, 1977, p.1: “Study of Italian was implemented during the Tudor and Stuart period by the publication of twelve grammars and dialogue manuals and four dictionaries. Four of these works were by Florio: the two already mentioned, *Worlde of Wordes* (1598) and *Queen Anna's World of Words* (1611)”.

<sup>517</sup> Michael Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England: A Cultural Politics of Translation*, Cambridge, UK, New York, 2005, 'Gender and the Language Arts', pp. 244-254.

<sup>518</sup> J.Florio, *A Worlde of Words*, op.cit., p.1

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, p.421.

In conclusion, the Elizabethans' experience with languages was marked by a series of contradictions: Greek, Latin and Hebrew were mediums of divine revelation for some and dead languages for others; the flourishing English oscillated between being a temporal manifestation of God's word or just the natural language of a nation, whose lettered speakers turned to Latin, French, Italian or Spanish to make themselves understood by continental guests, as Giordano Bruno reports.<sup>520</sup> The efficiency of the spoken word on stage, in magic and in public life had its counterpart in the authority of the printed text; the respect for the sacrality of words was contradicted by their treatment as objects of play, the confidence in their truth was denied by the realization of their elusiveness.

All these tensions converge to one cardinal problem: the nexus between things and names, modified by the new meanings given to them and the fast multiplication of language systems within the Elizabethan cultural horizon. The phenomenon had been prefigured already by Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia* (1516), where he imagined a better language than the existing ones, harmonious in sound and perfect in the thought expression<sup>521</sup> disclosing indirectly an uneasiness about a fracture between things and names that was in the air. Apart from the conceptual shift produced by the Reformation, the new, unpredictable arrangements of sounds and meanings, the Elizabethans were exposed to, presented them with the endless realm of the hypothetical, where each thing could be called and predicated in as many ways as languages on the globe. For cognition this must have had an effect analogous to Bruno's breaking the limits of the Aristotelean universe and postulating an infinity of worlds.

### 5.3 Shakespeare, Dee and Professional Idioms

The power of names and the bonds between names and things are a concern both for Shakespeare and for Dee, but each of them approaches the matter according to

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<sup>520</sup> G. Bruno, *La Cena de le Ceneri*, ed. Aquilecchia, Torino, Einaudi, 1955, p.145 informs his reader that the Nolan did not have to study English, as “i gentil'uomini con i quali lui suol conversare, tutti san parlare o latino, o francese, o spagnolo, o italiano: i quali sapendo che la lingua inglese non viene in uso se non dentro quest'isola, se stimarebbono salvatici, non sapendo altra lingua che la propria naturale”.

<sup>521</sup> C. Marrone, *Le lingue utopiche*, Stampa alternativa & Graffiti, Viterbo, 2004, p. 34.

his specific cultural focus and language choice. As a playwright whose works are a form of incarnated *logos* that needs to be communicated, to become *dialogos*, Shakespeare writes in English, contributing to reinforce it as a conveyer and creator of shared meaning. Many of his characters are of different origins - Greeks, Romans, Danes, French, Spaniards, Neapolitans, Venetians, Sicilians, Bohemians -, but they speak inevitably the language of his spectators. While Florio wanted to help the lettered Englishmen become proficient in Italian, offering them an instrument to expand their mind and creativity and access other realities, Shakespeare proves that language is not a barrier to absorb cultures, to imagine them, to communicate ideally with the whole world. Objectively he had access to these different cultures precisely because people like Florio were translating contemporary and ancient continental writings, but he was committed to demonstrate that the vernacular of his native island was perfectly equipped to shape a microcosm with a complete aesthetic autonomy, which does not have to be, as Edmund of Langley, Duke of York remarked in *Richard II*, “a base imitation” of “fashions in proud Italy”(II. I. 22-3).

Resonating the supporters of natural vernaculars, Shakespeare considered the mother tongue foundational for every human being, in other words *to be is to be in a language*, which relates the self to the world, to other humans and to God. Being in consonance with others through the mother tongue music is essential in his plays. When the sense of communion is irreversibly broken, language dies out, leaving the ground to ravaging disease, as in *Timon of Athens*, where the embittered and alienated protagonist concludes: “Lips, let sour words go by and language end: /What is amiss plague and infection mend!” (V. I. 225-6). Being forced out of one's mother tongue equates to 'speechless death', as Thomas Mowbray explains in *Richard II* when he is sentenced to life exile and realizes that it would deprive him of 'breathing native breath' and turn his tongue into a useless instrument.<sup>522</sup> Losing, even temporarily, the capacity to be coherent within one's language group is becoming a miscategory of being, “a very land-fish, language-less, a monster”, as Thersites says about Ajax, in *Troilus and*

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<sup>522</sup> The language I have learn'd these forty years,/ My native English, now I must forego:/ And now my tongue's use is to me no more/ Than an unstringed viol or a harp,/ Or like a cunning instrument cased up,/ Or, being open, put into his hands/ That knows no touch to tune the harmony:/ Within my mouth you have engaol'd my tongue,/ Doubly portcullis'd with my teeth and lips;/... What is thy sentence then but speechless death,/ Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath? (I. III. 160-173).

*Cressida*<sup>523</sup>. *Monster* and *fish* are two names Caliban gets oftenly called, as a mark of his not being tuned to Prospero's world. The latter's civilizing attempts proceed from teaching Caliban “how to name the bigger light, and how the less,/ That burn by day and night” (I. II. 334-5), in a verbal restating of the world creation. Thus Caliban's conversion to the values of Christian civilization goes along with turning his 'gabble', - expression of “a thing most brutish”-, into language<sup>524</sup>. Beyond remarks on racism and colonial ideology, this can translate as granting him an existential status within a new community.

Shakespeare reflects in English on the phenomenality of the spoken language, inquiring into the impact of words on human passions and ethical choices, as well as on the relationship between things and names, but thanks to the universal perspective, the reflections acquire philosophical value. Besides, his conviction that the poet captures the divine forms in words and gives them shape, makes the issue of language to a certain extent secondary.

Although engaged in the transformation of the world, a Protestant, and exposed to the most diverse linguistic areas during his continental travels, Dee was not receptive to the potential of the vernaculars. He used English when he expected a wide public to read his commitments, as in the *Mathematicall Preface*, or in his private diaries, which means that he actually desired them to be communicated; but in the field of magic, true to the orientation of the perennial philosophy, he considered Latin, Greek and Hebrew as languages of power. Dr. Dee studied his Latin and Greek, the traditional sacred languages, at St John's College, Cambridge<sup>525</sup> (1542-1546). His contacts in Paris with Guillaume Postel,<sup>526</sup> who translated in 1552 the *Book Yezirah*, stimulated his interest in Hebrew. According to D. Harkness, “Dee's library contained more Hebraic materials than any other library in England during the period and many of the

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<sup>523</sup> Tersites meets Ajax who prepares to fight Hector, and because “he is so prophetically proud of an heroic cudgelling that he raves in saying nothing“ he mistakes tersites for Agammemnon (III. III. 250-1). According to Tersites, Ajax “wears his tongue in his arms” (III. 3. 273), actually “he's grown a very land-fish, languageless, a monster. A plague of opinion! a man may wear it on both sides, like a leather jerkin.”(III. III. 266-8).

<sup>524</sup> 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 endow'd thy purposes/ With words that made them known (I. II. 353-8).

<sup>525</sup> Beside astronomy, philosophy, geometry and arithmetic.

<sup>526</sup> D. Harkness informs that Postel was “one of Dee's associates in Paris”, in *John Dee's Conversations with Angels, Cabala, Alchemy and the End of Nature*, CUP, 1999, p.82.

works were annotated.”<sup>527</sup> In the *perennial philosophy* Hebrew appeared as the natural receptacle of Adam's heritage in line with the myth of the Edenic revelation. In this frame of reference the focus was on *Genesis* 2:19-20, where God, after forming 'every beast of the field, and every fowl of the heaven', 'brought them unto the man to see how he would call them; for howsoever the man named the living creature, so was the name thereof. The man therefore gave names unto all cattle, and to the fowl of the heaven, and to every beast of the field'. Adam's *onomathesia* was assumed to be based on the connaturality of names and the things they signified. Primeval names were conceived as icons of things, supposed to enable immediate access to their essence<sup>528</sup> and this could also find confirmation in a classical text like Plato's *Cratylus*, where the name is defined as a sort of imitation of the thing (430 b) and “primary names may be compared to paintings, and in paintings it's possible to present all the appropriate colors and shapes, or not to present them all. Some may be left out, or too many included, or those included may be too large” (431 c). The search for the original idiom in early modernity highlights the desire of philosophers to connect to Adam's wisdom and to penetrate the mystery of divine creation, as the things named by Adam had been called into being by God's word.

However, Hebrew does not seem to have offered Dee the final answers he needed. His experience in the field does not seem to be different from that of other Christian Cabalists before him, Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522), Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) and Paulus Ricius (+1541) who focused on the hermeneutical resources of the Cabala rather than the language itself as M. Idel pointed out.<sup>529</sup> Indeed as shown in the analysis of the *Monas*, Dee applies Cabalistical techniques on Latin and Greek, epitomizing the idea that every letter of these sacred idioms and every aspect of it, from its numerical value to the geometrical elements contained in its shape, was a manifestation of divine presence and thus a source of knowledge and operative power.

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<sup>527</sup> Ibid., p.164.

<sup>528</sup> C.Marrone, *Le lingue utopiche*, pp. 68-71.

<sup>529</sup> M. Idel, *Kabbalah, New Perspectives* (1988), Italian version, *Cabala. Nuove Prospettive*, Giuntina, Firenze, 1996, ch.10, pp. 235-238 details the treatment of the Jewish tradition by the Christian philosophers of the Renaissance.

The approach to verbal issues in the *Monas* is pertinent to the past-oriented mindset of the pious philosopher, no less than to the immutable status of the book-bound dead languages under study, whose creative archetypes consisted actually only in letters and their numerical values. It is plausible that Dee was dissatisfied successively with their limitations, or he may have tested his *Monas* without achieving the expected magical effects. But he may have also reasoned that by its post-Babylonian subdivision into various human languages, the Adamic idiom entered the temporal law of transformation and diminished its original transparency and mystical power. The ultimate step for someone like Dee who strived for perfect knowledge, could have been only the direct communication with God, whose word was the source and foundation of existence. In the *Monas* he claimed that the 'Voice of the Creator of the Universe' was 'the medicine of the soul'<sup>530</sup>. Years later, in preparation of his scrying sessions, he prayed God to 'fix his word' in his ear.<sup>531</sup> His prayers were responded and Dee was finally imparted the "aeternall liquor", the "dew of Truth, proceeding from a fowntayn most sweete and delectable", in other words the "Celestiall speche", he identified in a note as *Lingua et Vox Angelica*<sup>532</sup>, an idiom referred to successively by scholars, linguists and *arcana* lovers as Angelic or Enochian.<sup>533</sup>

### 5.3.1 The Transmission of Enochian

In communicating the *celestiall speche* via Kelly, the 'spiritual creatures' confirm as usual Dee's prospects, echoing for example his conviction that human idioms veil the essence of things, instead of disclosing it:

your voyces are but fayned: shaddows of the wordes and voyces that substantially do comprehend euery substance in his kinde. The things which you do look on, bycause you see them not in dede, you also do name amysse: you are confounded, for your offenses<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>530</sup> *Monas*, p. 41.

<sup>531</sup> MLP, p. 54.

<sup>532</sup> LMQ, p.267.

<sup>533</sup> LMQ, p. 267.

<sup>534</sup> Ibidem.



Revealing to Dee the original names of things, an undeniable evidence of his being one of the elect,<sup>535</sup> meant also promising him extraordinary powers, as the Angel Me (Medicine of the Soul) claims:

The waters shall stand, if they here they own speche. The heuens shall move, and shew them selues, when they know theyr thunder. Hell shall tremble, whan they know what is spoken to them<sup>536</sup>.

The modalities used to 'transmit' the Enochian language correspond once more to Dee's cultural background and expectations, a new evidence- if need be- of Kelly's ability to comply in his own way with the philosopher's input. Thus the celestial tongue is communicated starting from the alphabet, in the fashion languages like Latin, Greek or Hebrew were taught<sup>537</sup> and in a theatrical form that reminds popular magical performances. The angel Me "wiped his finger on the top of the Table, and there cam out aboue the Table certayn Characters enclosed in no lines: but standing by them selues, and points betwene them<sup>538</sup>. Then, as Kelly reports, Me took a great globe from under the Table, laid a book on the Globe, took off the crown of gold from his head, made a cursy, "and from under the Table taketh a rod of gold in his hand, being diuided into three distinctions. He puteth the ende of the rod on the first of the Characters, and sayeth, Pa: and there appeared in english, or latin letters, Pa: he sayd, veh: and there appeared veh in writing: Then Ged: and after that he sayd, Unus, Unus, Unus, Magnus, Magnus, Magnus<sup>539</sup>.

The report continues with Dee's philologically accurate adnotations regarding the pronunciation:

Then Graph: [ The sownd as Grapkpha, in the throte.] Then Tal, [in sownd stall or xtall]. Then gon. Then na [but in sownd Nach at is were in the nose.] Then ur , [in

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<sup>535</sup> Ibid., p.268. Me reassures him: "thow shalt speak with us."And we will be spoken with, of thee, reminding him that in the course of time only three humans had the privilege to be "taken from amongst you, as they were, do yet speak with us", which he adnotates as "perhaps Enoch, Elias and John".

<sup>536</sup> Ibidem. Dee adnotates in English: "The Powre of the primitiue diuine or Angelicall speche."

<sup>537</sup> In CED, p. 28, Donald C. Laycock compares the Enochian alphabet to alphabets of Semitic languages He denies similitudes to Hebrew, classifying it rather as possible stylized forms of Samaritan or Ethiopic. As "the angelical language was dated back to 'before the Flood', and was supposed to be "the most ancient script of mankind" Laycock compared successively the alphabet to proto-Semitic, Egyptian hieroglyphic, and Sumerian and concluded that it did not resemble any of them.

<sup>538</sup> LMQ, p.269.

<sup>539</sup> Ibid., pp.269-70

sownd our or ourh.] Than mals [in sownd machls.] Then Ger [ in sownd gierh.]  
Then drux, [in sownd drovx.] Then Pal: the p being sownded remissly etc.<sup>540</sup> (Fig.  
8).

At one point Kelly captures this vision in the scrying crystall sphere:

The leaues of the boke, are all lyned: full of square places, and those square places  
haue characters in them, some more than other: and they all written with cullour,  
like blud, not yet dry. 49 square spaces, euery way, were on euery leaf, which  
made in all.2401.square places.<sup>541</sup>

Deriving names from tables was actually a procedure familiar to Dee and  
practised in the previous sessions, where angelic names were conveyed through  
letters arranged in squares<sup>542</sup>. The linguist Donald C. Laycock made two remarks  
in the context: first that the angelic names were actually *formants* of the squares  
and second that they could be found “in identical or very similar forms, in  
standard magical texts such as those of Agrippa and Peter d'Abano”.<sup>543</sup> The same  
scholar analyzed the new names derived from the letters forming one of the  
squares, by “reading in different directions along the diagonals”, specifying that,  
actually “the names were dictated before the square itself was given” (Fig. 9) and  
remarking: “the procedure for generating these names would have seemed logical  
and proper to Dee, as qabalist and mathematician – though his mathematical  
sense must have been upset by the lack of symmetry in the directions for reading  
the planetary names.”<sup>544</sup>

The names of the 7 Women, 7 Men, 7 Wenches and 7 Boys will be inscribed in  
Dee's wax seals – mainly in the *Sigillum Aemeth* and used in invocations. (Fig.10)  
While the new names are obtained by a diagonal reading of standard magical  
names arranged in squares, the geometrical construction of the *Sigillum Aemeth*  
achieved by Dee is strikingly similar to the 'Sigillum Dei' from his own fourteenth

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<sup>540</sup> It is surprising to note that the name of the graphic sign does not correspond to the English  
sound added in the column. This could mean that the correpondences may have been shifted  
numerically, maybe in a play of 7 and 3. Dee seems to have decoded this enigmistic game after  
some thought, for he writes “Thus I deciphred them after a day or two or three”.cf. LMQ,  
p.271. This aproximation 'after a day or two or three' is surprising for a man with a strong need  
for precision. Was this written much later, and so Dee could not remember the time it took him  
to decipher, or did he simply pretend to have deciphered them?

<sup>541</sup> LMQ, p.269.

<sup>542</sup> D.Laycock, CED, pp.24-5. : Zaphkiel, Zadekiel, Cumael, Raphael, Haniel, Michael, Gabriel,  
(S)Zabathiel, Zedek(i)el, Madimiel, Semeliel, Noganel, Corabiel, Levanel.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid, p.25.

<sup>544</sup> Ibidem.

century edition of the Pseudo-Solomonic *Liber Juratus* [R&W, DM 70] as S. Clucas has demonstrated in his study *Angelic Conversations and the Ars Notoria*.<sup>545</sup> In Appendixes 1-5 to the *Five Books of Mystery*, J. H. Peterson reproduces other seals one can compare Dee's to, including the *Sigillum Aemeth* proposed by Athanasius Kircher in *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, Rome, 1652-4.<sup>546</sup> The criteria of deriving the names inscribed succesively in the wax seals were easy to discover, yet in the case of Enochian, Laycock's expert investigation could not identify any consistent method. After examining almost a hundred squares , 'some of them as large as 49x49' he had to conclude: "If the Enochian language is generated by some systematic process from squares, whether as a cipher or as a set of mystical words, we do not have the method."<sup>547</sup>

As long as Kelly delivered angelic messages that confirmed Dee's knowledge, he had the support of the philosopher's books, supposedly always at hand. When he started transmitting the Enochian, Kelly knew he was free to invent, but at the same time he had to devise modalities of keeping the appearance of consistency. One of Dee's notes mentions his efforts to put on paper the letters he saw in the crystal:

Monday, I went to London: and EK remayned attending the accomplishing of the promise, for the Tables ending and for the perfect forme of the holy letters receyuing: Which two points (when I cam home that after none), I fownd done. But it is to be Noted, that, When EK could not aptly imitate the forme of the Characters, or letters, as they were shewed: that then they appered drawn on his paper with a light yellow cullor, which he drew the blak uppon, and so the yelow cullor disapearing: there remayned onely the shape of the letter in blak: after this manner and iust of this quantitie and proportion.<sup>548</sup>

The letters suddenly 'appearing' in a light yellow colour suggest that Kelly may have used invisible ink for the transcription of the alphabet. One would expect the listed Enochian letters to correspond to the sounds in the parallel column, yet this is not so. The correspondences grapheme-phoneme may have been shifted numerically, maybe in a play of 7 and 3. Dee seems to have decoded this enigmistic game after some thought, for he writes "Thus I deciphred them after a

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<sup>545</sup> Clucas, Stephen, *Angelic Conversations and the Ars Notoria*, in *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies in English Renaissance Thought*, International Archives of the History of Ideas 193. Dordrecht: Springer, 2006, p. 246, plates 14 and 15.

<sup>546</sup> QLMA, p.435.

<sup>547</sup> CED, p.27.

<sup>548</sup> QLMA, p. 405.

day or two or three”<sup>549</sup>. The adnotation 'after a day or two or three' is surprising for a man with a strong need for precision. Was this written much later, and so Dee could not remember the time it took him to decipher, or did he simply pretend to have deciphered them? One fact is undeniable: the enigmatic and enigmistic way of conveying the angelic language put Dee's analytical and mnemonic capacities to a hard test, so, addressing Me he had to admit he needed time to grasp and assimilate the novelty:

Δ: You perceyue that I haue diuerse affayres which at this present do withdraw me from peculier diligence using to these Characters and theyr names learning by hart: And therefore I trust, I shall not offend, if I bestow all the convenient leysor [leisure] that I shall get, abowt the lerning hereof.<sup>550</sup>

The spirit answered promptly:

Peace, Thow talkest, as thowgh [though], thow understodest not. We know thee, we see thee in thy hart” and warns him that God will soon show himself alive and “Beautiful are the footsteps of his comming, and great is the reuenge of the wicked.<sup>551</sup>

With all the doubts aroused by inconsistencies in the system, which he accurately listed<sup>552</sup>, Dee never wondered why Kelly was writing 'continually' and seemed to understand “the language and the sense thereof, as if it had byn english”<sup>553</sup>. To prevent questions or doubts, the angels specifically forbid “dubble repetition” or reading over the text.<sup>554</sup> Kelly must have realized it was difficult to remember one's improvisations, and when Dee was puzzled by inconsistency, a 'Voice' promptly summoned him in plain English: “One Note more, I have to tell thee. Ax

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<sup>549</sup> LMQ, p.271.

<sup>550</sup> LMQ, p. 274

<sup>551</sup> LMQ, p. 274.

<sup>552</sup> LMQ, p. 333: “I finde diuerse dowts which I cannot order, to my contentment.

1. How many of my ruled leaves, shall I tak for the writing of the first leafe?

2. How shall I make the distinctions of the last 9 lines of the first leafe answerable to all the former words: how is more then two hundred & some are of 3 hundred letters, & top 9 rows have but 49 letters.

3. how shall I do for the true orthographie, Seing g and C and p & c haue so diuerse sownds, & not allwayes one: as g sometymes as gh & sometymes as J. And C sometymes is like K, sometymes is like S. p sometymes is like ph, & sometymes is p-&sometymes f.

4. The number of the words in the first leafe, -every row, is not all one; nor 49 allwayes.

5. of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Table, when is to be set down all the tables following, all the table... will not agree to fill up...all places& to set down the ... perfectly. “

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., p.330.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid., p. 311.

[ask] him not, What he sayeth, but write as thow hearest: for it is true”, and Dee relapsed into prayer:

Δ: Then, o lord, make my hearing sharp and strong, to perceyue [perceive] sufficiently as the case requireth<sup>555</sup>.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1583 Dee must have been trying to decipher the messages by looking at patterns and a 'voyce' warned him: “Interpret not, till your understanding be furnished.<sup>556</sup>” Another evidence of Kelly's strategies of control is that while many names in Enochian were obviously obtained by the letter transposition system, the spiritual creatures forbid Dee to apply it to Enochian, bringing forth tenets the philosopher could not argue against. For example on April 28, 1583 the spirit IL put him in the position to reflect that “those letters of our Adamicall Alphabet haue a due peculier unchangeable proportion of their formes, - and likewise that theyr order is also Mysticall.”<sup>557</sup> IL reinforced this statement by reminding Dee that “These letters represent the Creation of man: and therefore they must be in proportion. They represent the Workmanship wherewithall the sowle of man was made unto his Creator.”<sup>558</sup>

Conveying a language is not an easy enterprise. Dr. Dee put down accurately Kelly's sensations before words started pouring through his mouth:

There was a savor of fire felt by EK. There semed one with a sword, suddenly to thrust out of the stone at EK his hed. Whereat he started; and sayd he felt a thing (immediatly) creeping within his hed, and in that pang becam all in a sweat. And he remayned much misliking the moving and creeping o the thing in his head<sup>559</sup>.

Later on Kelly reported either that the shewstone sent fire into his eyes, or his eyes fire into the stone: the new language was forged dramatically, in pain and sweat, by violence and alchemical combustion. The mere transmission of Enochian provides enough clues that it was Kelly's invention. Indeed, except for a few people with 'Cabalistical Brains' like Dee, as Meric Casaubon would put it, the commentators of the Enochian language have expressed scepticism, both to its objective reality as a sacred idiom and to its coherence as a communication

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<sup>555</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid., p.319

<sup>557</sup> QLMA, p. 373.

<sup>558</sup> Ibidem., p.373.

<sup>559</sup> LMQ: pp. 286-7

system. Laycock based his extensive research on linguistic and cryptographic analyses of manuscripts, comparing Enochian to various other languages of the past and the present, as well as to encoding systems based on letter-number combinations, from Trithemius down to contemporary experience in the field<sup>560</sup>. Finally he compiled *The Complete Enochian Dictionary*, divided into two sections: *Angelic-English* and *English-Angelic* with an Appendix that contains the edited version of the Enochian Calls from the manuscript of the *48 Claves Angelicae* (Cracow, 13 April-13 July 1584).

### 5.3.2 Quiddities, Names and Paradoxes in Enochian

The predominance of nouns, versus other morphological items and the lack of inflection are the first striking aspects of Enochian. The most 'accomplished' paradigm is that of the verb **say**:

I say	Gohus
he says	gohe, goho
we say	Gohia
saying	Gohol
is said (to you)	Gohulim
they have said (have spoken)	Goho

This can be accounted for in the context of the *philosophia perennis*. In this trend of thought, as W. Schmidt-Biggemann explains, participating in divine wisdom was understood primarily as “knowledge of the quiddities of things”<sup>561</sup>, which “is neither a categorical nor a syntactical one, for knowledge of essences is not structural knowledge”<sup>562</sup>. In successive reports of scrying sessions like those in Cracow in 1584, this becomes explicit. Thus on Saturday, April 21, in reference to

<sup>560</sup> Experts in encoding and decoding methods have appealed to computer capacities, but no pattern could be identified. Therefore, as Laycock asserts “if the Enochian language is generated by some systematic process from squares, whether as a cipher or as a set of mystical words, we do not have the method.” CED, op.cit., p. 27.

<sup>561</sup> W.Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op.cit., pp.410-11.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid., p. 410.

Kelly's perplexity “why joyn you numbers with these letters, and added none with those of the former Table”<sup>563</sup> Gabriel specifies that “the numbers we speak of, are of reason and form and not of merchants” and that:

Every Letter signifieth the member of the substance whereof it speaketh. Every word signifieth the quiddity of the substance. The Letters are separated, and in confusion: and therefore, are by numbers gathered together: which also gathered signifie a number: for as every greater containeth his lesser, so are the secret and unknown forms of things knit up in their parents<sup>564</sup>

Via Kelly, Gabriel discloses the creative principle at the base of Enochian: the combination of letters and numbers, which contain *the unknown forms of things*. As expected, every word signifying *the quiddity of the substance* is proposed as a step into the knowledge of the Creator's mind and an increase of power over things:

Where being known in number, they are easily distinguished; so that herein we teach places to be numbred [numbered]: letters to be elected from the numbred, and proper words from the letters, signifying substantially the thing that is spoken of in the center of his Creator, whereby even as the mind of man moved at an ordered speech, and is easily perswaded [persuaded] in things that are true, so are the creatures of God stirred up in themselves, when they hear the words wherewithal they were nursed and brought forth: For nothing moveth that is not perswaded: neither can anything be perswaded that is unknown.<sup>565</sup>

Investigating every layer of this idiom, an expert linguist like Donald C. Laycock concluded that “the phonology of Enochian is thoroughly English”; “there is nothing strikingly un-English about the grammar” and “the order of the words is strongly English”. The strangeness is given by the “vocabulary elements” which “are probably arbitrary”<sup>566</sup>, even if in some cases there are formally recognizable units endowed with a different sense: **nazarth** - pillar of gladness, reminiscent of Nazareth, **levithmong** - beast, evocative of the Leviathan and probably mongrel, **christeos** - *let there be*, **paradiz** – *virgin*. The 'angelic' for *brightness* has various forms derived from *Lucifer*: **luciftian**, **luciftias**, **lucifatianu**, **lukiftias**. The lexeme **micaolz** – *mighty*, with the variants **micalz**, **micalzo**, **omicaolz** hints at

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<sup>563</sup> *A True and Faithful Relation of what passed for many years between Dr. John Dee and some spirits*, ed. Meric Casaubon, London, 1659, rpt. Golem Media, Berkeley, CA, 2008, p. 92.

<sup>564</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>565</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., pp.41-3.

*mickle* and the name of the Enochian letter representing E is **graph**, which needs no comments. Recognizable displacement of meaning or letters is joined to occasional diletant mimicking of Hebrew names, like *izizop* 'vessels, containers' from the Hebrew *ašišot* 'vessels'<sup>567</sup>. A reader with a taste for words can find various examples resonating other languages<sup>568</sup>, probably the most eloquent being *the speech from God* – said in 4 different manners, but each time pointing to *logos*: **loageth, logaeth, logaah, logah**. These echoes of lexemes familiar to Elizabethan ears denounce one of the paradoxes of Enochian: instead of replacing the *shaddows of the wordes and voyces* of the postlapsarian language Babylonia, the new names appear, in cases like those quoted above, as overlapping shadows of commonly circulated terms.

An intriguing aspect of Enochian is the use of various names for one thing. For example, God's names are: *Baeovib, Gahoachma, Iadpil, Iaida, Iaidon, Idoian* (AC:VV), *Idoigo, Ioiad, L, Zilodarp, Zirenaid*.<sup>569</sup> Their reduced number as compared to the cabalistical tradition is less surprising than the lack of a unifying concept denoting God: instead one can choose between: *Ascha, Iabes, Iad, Mad, Oiad, Piad*<sup>570</sup>. The same is valid for *man* - *cordziz, molap, ollog, ollor, olora*; *power* – *bab, lansh, lonsa, lonshi, lonshin, micalz, micalzo, micaolz, nanaeel* and *time* - *capimao, cocasb, cocasg*.

Other names have, on the contrary, a great number of meanings. For *gascámpho* Dee adnotates: “Or gáscampho – why didst thou so: as god sayd to Lucifer. The word hath 64 significations”; further down the word *sémhaham* is said to have 72 significations”<sup>571</sup>.

The multiple names for one thing, as in the cases above, - an evidence of Kelly's approximations, - and, viceversa, the presumed large semantic area of lexemes like *gascámpho* or *sémhaham* build another paradox of Enochian: the denial of the univocal correspondence of names and things in the primeval idiom, which was supposed to deliver the archetypes of things as archetypes of language. Arbitrariness is more obvious in the case of numbers: if the numbers from 1 to 10

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<sup>567</sup> D. L. Laycock, CED, p.43.

<sup>568</sup> Italian was heard in England at that time thanks to the Protestant refugees and cultural exchanges, so what about words like: *babalanuda* for *harlot* ?

<sup>569</sup> CED, p. 211: Names of God:

<sup>570</sup> The name Deo exists, but it denotes the name of the Seventh Aethyr.

<sup>571</sup> LMQ, p. 310.



could be identified and correspond to letters<sup>572</sup>, the composition rule of the remaining numbers is utterly obscure: 12 -OS; 456-CLA; 1000-MATB; 9996 – CIAL or 69 636 -PEOAL<sup>573</sup>.

The most numerous names in Enochian belong to the spiritual creatures that appear in the crystal. They are angels, demons and cacodemons, Kings, Princes and Governors. Each has a specific role or expertise. Thus some angels are powerful in transformation, like Abmo,<sup>574</sup> Rxao or Rxpao who is ruled by Cbalpt Arbiz<sup>575</sup>. Others are powerful in mechanical arts like Cnbr/Cnabr, whose companions are, as one expects Nbrc, Brcn and Rcnb. There are angels skilled in medicine like Rsn/Rsoni<sup>576</sup>, Sias<sup>577</sup> and Varg/Varsg,<sup>578</sup> and angels powerful in change of place like Tdim/Tdnim<sup>579</sup> or Utpa/Utlpa<sup>580</sup>. Specific angels are skilled in finding metals and precious stones like Ussn/Uspsn<sup>581</sup>, and others are powerful in mixtures of natures, like *Boza/Boaza*<sup>582</sup>, whose companions are *Ozab, Zabo, Aboz* or Taad, companions: Aadt, Adta, Dtaa<sup>583</sup>. The inventory of names includes numerous governors of the various Divisions of the Aethyr, like Abaiond, Calzirg, Genadol, Paraoan, Nocamal, Tocarzi, a.s.o, planetary angels with the associated *Filiae Lucis, Filii Lucis, Filiae Filiarum Lucis* and *Filii Filiorum Lucis*<sup>584</sup>; confirming angels -Sach<sup>585</sup>, confounding angels – Urch<sup>586</sup>, ministering angels Lang<sup>587</sup>; praising angels – Luah<sup>588</sup>. The angelic Kings ruling over various regions are connected to geographical coordinates: Olpaged-East<sup>589</sup>, Zarzilg-East-South-East<sup>590</sup>; Zurchol-South-South-East<sup>591</sup>, a.s.o. The list of names includes a

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<sup>572</sup> 0-T; 1- L, EL, L-O, ELO, LA, LI, LIL; 2-V, VI-I-V; 3-D,R 4 S, ES; 5-O, 6-N, NORZ; 7- Q; 8-P; 9-M, EM, 10-X.

<sup>573</sup> CED, p. 44.

<sup>574</sup> CED, p. 71.

<sup>575</sup> CED, p.164

<sup>576</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid.p.168.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid., p. 178

<sup>579</sup> Ibid. p. 172

<sup>580</sup> Ibid., p.183.

<sup>581</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid., p.90

<sup>583</sup> Ibid. p. 171

<sup>584</sup> Ibid., p.196.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid., p166.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid., p.183.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid., p.127.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid., p.131.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid., p.146.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid., p.186.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid., p.190.

consistent number of cacodemons and evil spirits, among which: Agb, Cms, Pfm, Rrb, Xdz, Adraman, Arzulgh, Coronzon, Githgulcag,<sup>592</sup> Zrruoa (reversal of Aourrz) commanding cacodemons of Fire of Air<sup>593</sup>, Tplabc demonic name (*reversal of Cbalpt*) commanding cacodemons of Earth of Earth<sup>594</sup> a.s.o.

In his creative fervor Kelly may have remarked that the letter transposition system produced every now and then combinations impossible to pronounce. Anticipating Dee's eventual perplexity, the spirit signed as H points out :

These words which thow seest in the last Table, **some of them unhable to be pronownced**, are notwithstanding the names of those 7 which held the fayr and bewtiful Crownes. Which names (as I sayd before) do comprehend non onely the powre, but also the **Being of the rest**.<sup>595</sup>

This is another paradox of Enochian: the 'voice of the Creator', the 'celestiall speche' is mostly a written reality, the letter and not the spirit, breath or sound vibration that had called the world into being and was expected to grant Dee operative powers. Kelly probably ignored the aspects of Enochian conflicting with the theory of the primeval idiom, but they ultimately served his strategy to keep Dee amazed and disconcerted by his own ignorance. The boosting obscurity of Enochian is paradoxical to Dee's aspiration to be *completely and perfectly trained and taught in the true and accurate knowledge and understanding of God's secrets and wonders*.<sup>596</sup> Yet this aspiration to accuracy of knowledge is, in its turn, paradoxical to the use of names in Renaissance magic.

### 5.3.3 Names and Magical Operations

In accepting the reality of this occult language Dee was not just being ingenuous, but thinking within the frame of mind of his cultural orientation, which involved the belief in the power of names in Christian practice, as well as in magic. In both

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<sup>592</sup> Ibid., p.203.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., p.190.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>595</sup> QLM, p.211.

<sup>596</sup> Prayer in MLP, p.55, discussed in *Angels and Wonders*.

cases names had to be efficient, not meaningful. Thus invoking by name the persons of the Holy Trinity, angels or saints, presupposed opening a channel of communication with the divine, while exorcists believed they had to call demons by name in order to cast them out. Calling the devil by its name implied the possibility of materializing him. The same was valid for names used in theurgy or in various healing formulas, whose efficiency had been legitimated by the tradition of magic. A famous example is the formula *Abracadabra*, probably of Egyptian origin, even if Agrippa assumes it to be a name of Hebrew derivation<sup>597</sup>. Quoting *Serenus Samonicus* he claims it can cure “the Hemitritean Fever or any other” if written on a paper or parchment “diminishing letter after letter backward, from the last to the first,” and hanged about the neck of the sick person.<sup>598</sup> The arrangement of letters in the shape of an arrow or knife point, obtainable with any name of minimum three letters, mattered more than any speculation on its possible etymology, as it built the image that could pierce disease and thus annul it.

a b r a c a d a b r a  
a b r a c a d a b r  
a b r a c a d a b  
a b r a c a d a  
a b r a c a d  
a b r a c a  
a b r a c  
a b r a  
a b r  
a b  
a

Christian myth, magic and Cabala fused in the explanation of the efficiency of names in magical operations within the *philosophia perennis*<sup>599</sup>. In the theses on magic of his *Conclusiones nongentae* Pico della Mirandola advanced the following principles:

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<sup>597</sup> F. Graf contends the Egyptian origins of the formula: ARBAΘ ABAOΘ BAKXABRH in *La magia nel mondo antico*, op. cit., p.104.

<sup>598</sup> C. Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, Book III, Ch. XI.

<sup>599</sup> W.Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op.cit., passim. The Christian Cabalists reflected on the names of the Trinity and the divine predicates (pp.59-128), relating the Jewish doctrine of the ten Sephiroth and the Tetragram, put forward by Abraham Abulafia (1224-1292) and Joseph Gicatilla (1247-1304) (p.105) to the Christian Neoplatonic speculation on divine names, rooted in Proclus' (410-485) “Theologia platonica”, Dionysius the Areopagite's dialectic on divine names, St. Jerome's (340/50-419/20) and Isidore of Seville's (+636) “positive philosophy of divine names”(pp.76-80) and Raymond Lull's positive predication of divine attributes”(pp.81-92).

3. Ideo voces et verba in magico opere efficientiam habent, quia illud in quo primum magicam exercet natura, vox est Dei.<sup>600</sup>
4. Quaelibet vox uirtutes habet in magia, in quantum Dei voce formatur.<sup>601</sup>

These theses connect magic as *imitatio Dei* to the creation of the world in *Genesis* (1:3-5), where God's voice started calling things into being, that is naming light, the day, the night, the earth, the heavens, the seas. God's voice breaking the original silence marked the beginning of time and space as cosmic vibration, therefore motion, energy, rhythm, sound and number, a conception that harmonized with the Pythagorean basis of Dee's mindset. As author of the *Monas hieroglyphica*, he would have also agreed with Agrippa's explaining the divine origin of *our word* in a series of Neoplatonic emanations setting out from the word of God, "the cause of causes, because from it are produced all beings":

The word therefore is the Image of God, the acting intellect the image of the word, the soul is the image of this intellect; and our word is the image of the soul, by which it acts upon naturall things naturally, because nature is the work thereof. And every one of those perfects his subsequent, as a father his son, and none of the latter exists without the former.<sup>602</sup>

The revelation of the *lingua and vox angelica* may have sounded for Dee as a confirmation of Agrippa's ideas on divine names, delivered by God to humans "out of his goodness", as they are "the mysteries and conveyances of Gods omnipotency", and "instituted and firmly established by the most high God, after a certain manner, with an immovable number and figure of Characters, and breath [breathe] forth the harmony of the Godhead'. That is why they have to be religiously observed and invoked 'with fear and trembling". The consequence of their revealed nature is that "we may not for any reason whatsoever, change them; therefore Origen commandeth that they be kept without corruption in their own Characters; and Zoroastes [Zoroaster] also forbiddeth the changing of barbarous and old words;"<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> G.Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones*, op.cit., pp. 118-9: "Suoni e parole nell'opera magica hanno efficacia, perché ciò in cui la natura pratica originariamente la magia è la voce di Dio."

<sup>601</sup> Ibidem, "In magia qualsiasi voce ha potere nella misura in cui è voce di Dio."

<sup>602</sup> C. Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, op.cit., Book II, Ch.Ix.

<sup>603</sup> Ibidem.

Pico's theses 21 and 22 on magic justify the power of non-signifying names versus signifying ones:

5. Non significatiue uoces plus possunt in magia, quam significatiuae, et rationem conclusionis intelligere potest, qui est profundus ex praecedenti conclusione.<sup>604</sup>
6. Nulla nomina ut significatiua, et in quantum nomina sunt, singula et per se sumpta, in magico opere virtutem habere possunt, nisi sint hebraica, uel inde proxime deriuata.<sup>605</sup>

The belief in the superior power of non-signifying names in magic, - except for names in Hebrew or derived from that language -, could justify Dee's feeling comfortable with the obscurity of Enochian. As sacred words, they were expected to be loaded with divine energy, an explanation detailed again by Agrippa:

Therefore sacred words have not their power in Magicall operations, from themselves, as they are words, but from the occult Divine powers working by them in the minds of those who by faith adhere to them; by which words the secret power of God as if were through Conduite pipes, is transmitted into them, who have ears purged by faith, and by most pure conversation and invocation of the divine names are made the habitation of God, and capable of these divine influences; whosoever therefore useth rightly these words or names of God with that purity of mind, in that manner and order, as they were delivered, shall both obtain and do many wonderfull things...<sup>606</sup>

The operative power in magic summed *the occult Divine powers* of sacred names to the energy embedded in the proper names of things, as “names indeed contain in them wonderfull powers of the things signified” and they can be made efficient in actions, for according to Magicians, “proper names of things are certain rayes of things, every where present at all times, keeping the power of things, as the essence of the thing signified rules, and is discerned in them, and know the things by them, as by proper, and living Images.”<sup>607</sup> The natural power of things, captured by the senses in spoken or written words, rests on their signification, generated in the mind through *certain seeds of things*:

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<sup>604</sup> G.Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones*, op.cit., pp.120-1, “I suoni non significativi, in magia, hanno più potere di quelli significativi: e può capire il senso della proposizione, chi ha approfondito la proposizione precedente.”

<sup>605</sup> Ibidem, “Nessun nome, in quanto nome preso singolarmente e di per sé, può avere efficacia nell'opera magica per il suo significato: a meno che non si tratti di nome ebraico o di prossima derivazione dell'ebraico.”

<sup>606</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>607</sup> C.Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, Book I, Ch. lxx,

That proper names of things are very necessary in Magicall operations, almost all men testifie: For the naturall power of things proceeds first from the objects to the senses, and then from these to the imagination, and from this to the mind, in which it is first conceived, and then is expressed by voices, and words. The Platonists therefore say, that in this very voice, or word, or name framed, with its Articles, that the power of the thing as it were some kind of life, lies under the form of the signification. First conceived in the mind as it were through certain seeds of things, then by voices or words, as a birth brought forth, and lastly kept in writings.<sup>608</sup>

Agrippa is confident that his ideas on the efficiency of names in magical operations find confirmation in Socrates' statements: "for as *Plato* saith in *Cratylus*, All Divine words or names, have proceeded either from the gods first, or from antiquity, whose beginning is hardly known, or from the Barbarians"<sup>609</sup>, whereby, according to him, the Barbarians alluded at were the Jews. Agrippa's quotes from Plato's *Cratylus* and later on *Philebus*<sup>610</sup>, display the specific reading of classical sources in this tradition. The adept was not interested in the Platonic debate in *Cratylus* on the correctness of names with the two positions under focus: Hermogenes' assumption that correctness is dictated by conventional use, versus the possibility of a 'natural' bond between things and names advanced by Cratylus. As the names relevant to magical operations had been delivered initially by God, they had to be taken for granted, so the connection between the signifier and the signified was not a point at issue. What definitely appealed to the philosopher of this trend were Socrates' statements in *Cratylus* that using names is a sort of action, that names are a sort of tool (387c-388a), while the reference to Homer's characters whose names revealed their essence (394 d-e) may have sounded natural. This specific understanding of names in the philosophical trend he adopted, coupled with his confidence in being a privileged adept, most probably motivated Dee's accepting the nebulous letter and sound combinations of Enochian, taken for emanations of God's mind he had to be grateful for, not question.

The hypostatization of names in Renaissance Neoplatonism represented basically a reinforcement of the archaic approach to word *dynamis*, actualized in

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<sup>608</sup> Ibid., Book I, Ch.69, *Of the Vertue of Proper Names*.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid., Book III, ch.XI.

<sup>610</sup> Ibidem: "Therefore Divine Plato in *Cratylus* & in *Philebus* commandeth to reverence the names of God more than the Images or statues of the gods: for there is a more expresse Image and power of God, reserved in the faculty of the mind, especially if it be inspired from above, than in the works of mens hands".

rituals that gave birth to poetry, magic and performance. In *Language and Myth*, 1953, Cassirer distinguished between mythic thought and discursive logical thought, as the “two poles in an evolutionary continuum”<sup>611</sup> and “since it was language which actually produced the organization of reality and shaped the forms of predication, the contrasting characters of mythic thought and the logical thought, he argued, would be reflected in man’s attitude to language.”<sup>612</sup> In Cassirer's opinion mythic imagination “tends towards concentration, telescoping, separate characterization” of images, which results in the sphere of language in “attributing a physico-magical power to the word, and in a relation of identity and substantial unity between name and thing.” By contrast, logical thought, which “tends towards expansion, implication and systematic connection”, considers the word “a symbol and vehicle which mediates between the immediate data of sense impressions and ideation”<sup>613</sup>. In this frame of reference Dee's approach to language in magic reveals a mythico-poetical dimension which stands in an obvious tension with his need for precision, clarity and understanding on a logically articulated basis.

#### 5.3.4 Names in Shakespeare's magic

The power of names, the nexus names-things and the question of significance build recurrent topics in Shakespeare's plays and are inherent in his poetic art. One can address them in magic, in theatre and in the theatre of the world he mirrored in the three plays under focus. The first remark on the use of names in magic is that neither Prospero, Ariel, nor Oberon, Puck, or the three witches in *Macbeth* use non-signifying names to perform their magic. It is telling that a verbal item like *abracadabra* does not appear in any of Shakespeare's works. Prospero is very clear in his commands to Ariel and all the suggestions, linguistic or not, - music,

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<sup>611</sup> The evolutionary concept at the basis of Cassirer's statements applies for the beginning of cultural history. However in the history of culture it is difficult to identify a linear and irreversible development of mythic thought into logical thought, but an alternation of mental orientations where either rationality or imagination prevails. Suffice mentioning, closer to our days, the Romantic reaction to the Age of Reason, and the present efforts of the philosophical world to recuperate imagination and emotion.

<sup>612</sup> Commented in S. J. Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action*, op.cit., p. 33.

<sup>613</sup> Ibidem.

images, voices -, create confusion only to put his enemies' reason to test. There is purpose in the confusion induced by the witches' verbal messages. As they want to subvert order and values, to turn the fair foul and viceversa, their sybilline predictions are based on paradoxes. For example, the divination addressed to Banquo sounds:

First Witch. Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.  
Second Witch. Not so happy, yet much happier.  
Third Witch. Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.

(I. III. 65-7)

It has been remarked that the famous scene when they prepare their *hell-broth* in act IV has striking similarities with Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Book VI, where Erichtho concocts her copious poisons. In Shakespeare's play the naming of the ingredients boiling in the cauldron has a double function: a theatrical one, to communicate the public the monstrous recipe, and a magical one, to increase the poisonous effect of their potion, by transferring the vocal energy to the ingredients.

Round about the cauldron go;  
In the poison'd entrails throw.  
Toad, that under cold stone  
Days and nights has thirty-one  
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,  
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

.....

Fillet of a fenny snake,  
In the cauldron boil and bake;  
Eye of newt and toe of frog,  
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,  
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,  
Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,  
For a charm of powerful trouble,  
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

.....

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,  
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf  
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,  
Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark,  
Liver of blaspheming Jew,  
Gall of goat, and slips of yew  
Silver'd in the moon's eclipse,  
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,



Finger of birth-strangled babe  
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,  
Make the gruel thick and slab:  
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,  
For the ingredients of our cauldron.

(IV. I. 4-34)

This ritual chant suggests several remarks. First of all, as in Erichtho's poisonous potion<sup>614</sup>, the list of ingredients is made up of things turned monstrous under specific conditions, like the Toad, that under cold stone /Days and nights has thirty-one/Swelter'd venom sleeping got, versus, for instance, Lucan's "froth from dogs/Stricken with madness, foaming at the stream" (v. 790-1). Secondly, also in tune with Lucan, some ingredients named are parts of things: not the dragon, but the scale of dragon, not the wool but the tooth of wolf, a. s. o. To the stereotyped components of poisonous recipes belonging to the toad, the bat, the fenny snake, the adder, the lizard, the hemlock, the goat, the birth-strangled babe, bodily parts of assumed enemies of Christianity were added: the *liver of blaspheming Jew*, the *Nose of Turk* and the *Tartar's lips*, possibly viewed by Shakespeare's public as toxic and destructive as any of the animal parts assigned traditionally to the devil's sphere. In a religious perspective the witches bring together elements used by the devil to enact his plan of ruining God's creation. These names of fragments of created beings disclose the devil's work as deconstruction: unable to destroy creation, he undermines its goodness and unity by turning little parts of the created species into his weapons.

A remarkable difference from Lucan's witch consists in keeping the weird sisters within the realm of comprehensible human language, while Erichtho breaks the tongues of men and picks up dissonance to mix it up with the most terrifying natural sounds of the non-human sphere.<sup>615</sup>

The magical power of words in the *Macbeth* episode is also expressed by the binding procedures applied to language: repetition, like the three times recited: "Double, double toil and trouble;/ Fire burn, and cauldron bubble" (IV.I) and the

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<sup>614</sup> Lucanus, Marcus Annaeus, *The Civil War* (Pharsalia), translated by Sir Edward Ridley, The Online Medieval and Classical Library, <http://omacl.org/Pharsalia/book6.html>, lines 788-820.

<sup>615</sup> Erichtho utters "dissonant murmurs first/ And sounds discordant from the tongues of men/... scarce articulate: the bay/ Of wolves, and barking as of dogs, were mixed/With that fell chant; the screech of nightly owl/Raising her hoarse complaint; the howl of beast/And sibilant hiss of snake – all these were there;/And more- the waft of waters on the rock,/The sound of forests and the thunder peal." (v.812-820)

rhyme and rhythm patterning. As K. Thomas informs, in Shakespeare's time, "the enunciation of charms and incantations was believed to set up rhythms and emanations in the air which might exert an occult influence upon the sufferer"<sup>616</sup>.

In MSND, Puck recites a spell while squeezing the flower juice on Lysander's eyes (III. II. 448-464) and so does Oberon, when he wants to charm Titania:

What thou seest when thou dost wake,  
Do it for thy true-love take,  
Love and languish for his sake:  
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,  
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,  
In thy eye that shall appear  
When thou wakest, it is thy dear:  
Wake when some vile thing is near

(II. II. 27-34)

In rhyme and rhythm words are bound, and following the analogical thinking at the base of magic, they will bind by being bound. In the magical atmosphere of the wood of Athens in MSND Puck, the fairies and the young lovers speak in verse, using very simple rhyming patterns, - aa/bb/cc/ etc.-, which are the most binding ones, because their sound coincidence is the minimal response to an elementary need for meaning, order and similarity.

In Shakespeare's vision of magic, names manifest their power by being pronounced, not written. They are neither non-signifying, nor belonging to Latin, Greek, Hebrew or Angelic, but simply English, understandable by the characters in the play and the theatre audience. Rather than intrinsic, the power of words derives from their being bound in sentences and in verse patterns, which corresponds to the millenia-old practices of popular magic.

### 5.3.5 Naming in Theatre

As discussed in the *Theoretical Premises*, Shakespeare understood the poetic creation as a translation of divine *forms* into *shapes*, as giving the *airy nothing a*

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<sup>616</sup> K.Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op.cit., p. 227.

*local habitation and a name* (V. I. 7-17). In the process of play writing, the character's name comes at the end, which is pertinent to conceiving art as *imitatio dei* and to the Neoplatonic interpretation of Genesis 2:20, where Adam gives names to every living creature, after they had been substantiated by God according to his plan and archetypes. When Shakespeare's characters are historical figures like the ones in the Roman and the chronicle-plays, he adds to their name his own version of their story, opening to an interesting case of intertextuality; but he often invents characters, conceiving their names as an emblem, a synthesis of their nature, an icon of their persona. This proves that the poet can make the name and the thing co-substantial, his creative procedures can restore the correspondence between names and the very quiddity of things assumed to have characterized the Adamic language.

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare makes this privilege of the poet explicit. As previously suggested, the choice of Prospero for the protagonist hints at the concept of *prosperity*, defined, theologically, by Florizel in *The Winter's Tale* as “*the very bond of love*” (IV. III. 586)<sup>617</sup>. The right Duke of Milan's prosperity is explicated in his enlightened humanity, the love for his daughter that motivates the tempest,<sup>618</sup> and the use of his 'nobler reason' to solve conflicts and restore justice. Again, semantically *prosperus* and *faustus* are partial synonyms, thus Shakespeare's character can also appear as a reply to Marlowe's Faustus. Miranda – the name of a wonder master child, who is a magus as much as a theatre maker -, is object of admiration, *admir'd Miranda* (III. I. 37), but she also wonders at the “brave new world”(V. I. 183) she unexpectedly has to face. Her name and her character illustrate the double nature of wonder, which binds the subject and the object in an interchangeable relation.<sup>619</sup>

In MSND, the simple survey of the characters' names<sup>620</sup> displays the encounter of the *antique fables* of Greece and the Germanic *fairy toys*, actualized

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<sup>617</sup> G.Dragnea Horvath, op.cit., pp. 76-81.

<sup>618</sup> I have done nothing but in care of thee, -/ Of thee, my dear one! thee, my daughter! - who/ Art ignorant of what thou art, nought knowing/ Of whence I am: nor that I am more better/ Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell./ And thy no greater father (I. II. 16-21).

<sup>619</sup> In the same vein Caliban is an anagram of Canibal, while Trinculo's name alludes at his drinking habit, no less than at homosexuality.

<sup>620</sup> Bottom, a weaver; Cobweb, a fairy; Demetrius, in love with Hermia; Egeus, father to Hermia; Fairy; Flute, a bellows-mender; Helena, in love with Demetrius; Hermia, daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander; Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus; Lysander, in love with Hermia; Moth, a fairy; Mustardseed, a fairy; Oberon, king of the fairies; Peaseblossom, a

by lovers and the rude mechanicals, in particular Bottom, who participates in the staging of a story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but is also charmed by the fairies. The physicality of his name, like those of his troupe companions: Snout, Flute, Quince, is a sort of *objective correlative* between two worlds of imagination, the historical anchor of two 'airy' mythologies, just as the names of the fairies: *Moth*, *Cobweb*, *Mustardseed*, *Peaseblossom* fix their elusiveness in natural phenomena. Titania, as the Fairy Queen, suggests the classical lineage of the Titans and of Hecate, divinity of the night, patron of spirits and daughter of Perses the Titan, illuminating once more the profound, archetypal connections between cultures distant in time and space. Indicative is also the lack of a proper name for some characters in *Macbeth* marked only as an Old Man, a Porter, An English Doctor, A Scotch Doctor, the Three Witches. All of them appear as resonators for a category and account for the morality play encapsulated in the plot.

If the creation of a character ends by its name, the staging of a play starts vice versa from the name of the *dramatis personae*, listed at the beginning of the text, and representing the first predication of this adjunct of being, that has to be incarnated by the actor. As stage director, Quince assigns the parts by naming them, a replica of the divine calling things into being. His power is manifest in distributing roles, deciding who is going to incarnate each part in the theatre, just as God was assumed to distribute roles in the universal theatre. Once he impersonates the role, the actor has to completely assume the persona's name and identity. Bottom's ignorance in theatrical matters comes out when he ingenuously insists on the revelation of the actor's name during the performance:

Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck: and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,— 'Ladies,'—or 'Fair-ladies—I would wish You,'—or 'I would request you,'—or 'I would entreat you,—not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are;' and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

(III. I. 38-48)

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fairy; Philostrate, master of the revels to Theseus; Puck, or Robin Goodfellow; Quince, a carpenter; Snout, a tinker; Snug, a joiner; Starveling, a tailor; Theseus, Duke of Athens; Titania, queen of the fairies

He does not understand in his grossness, that the actor has to desubstantiate himself to a shadow, and that on the stage changing name means changing identity, and therefore quiddity.

### 5.3.6 Paradoxes of Language in the Theatre of the World

One of the most persistent topics in Shakespeare's theatre is the intriguing nature of language, questioned in all its aspects: as means of communication, foundation of personal and national identity, instrument of thought, object of play, vehicle of love, faith and poetry. The most general remarks regard words in their spoken, live hypostasis, contemplated both as names of things and as articulated discourses. As early as *The Comedy of Errors* (1589), Dromio of Ephesus claims that "Words are but wind" (III. I. 75), therefore a mere breath, a few sounds voiced and dissipated in the air. And yet, in spite of their diminutive dimension and volatile nature, words cover enormous concepts or realities, as Henry Bolingbroke, afterwards King Henry IV, realizes,<sup>621</sup> and they move the world. Verbal misunderstandings and word play create and revert comical situations in Shakespeare's comedies. In the tragedies discourses or simple names turn into *dangerous conceits*, that *burn like the mines of sulphur*, as Iago very well knows,<sup>622</sup> when he fabricates facts causing Othello's and Desdemona's destruction. The tragedy of King Lear revolves around the word *nothing*, the *civil brawls* between the Montagues and Capulets, which make so many victims, are "bred of an airy word", as Prince Escalus denounces<sup>623</sup>; the word *banished* changes Juliet's destiny.<sup>624</sup> The murders committed by Macbeth are the actualization of the weird

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<sup>621</sup> How long a time lies in one little word!/ Four lagging winters and four wanton springs/ End in a word: such is the breath of kings. (*Richard II*, I. III.212-15)

<sup>622</sup> Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons/ Which at the first are scarce found to distaste/  
But, with a little act upon the blood,/ Burn like the mines of sulphur (*Othello, The Moor of Venice*, III. III. 327-30).

<sup>623</sup> Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,/ By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,/ Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets,/ And made Verona's ancient citizens/ Cast by their grave beseeching ornaments,/ To wield old partisans, in hands as old,/ Canker'd with peace, to part your canker'd hate (*Romeo and Juliet*, I. I. 95-101).

<sup>624</sup> 'Romeo is banished,' to speak that word,/ Is father, mother, Tybalt, Romeo, Juliet,/ All slain, all dead. 'Romeo is banished!'/ There is no end, no limit, measure, bound,/ In that word's death; no words can that woe sound./ (III. II. 122-6).

sisters' prophecies and his wife's 'pouring' her spirits in his ear, when she decides to "chastise with the valour of my tongue/ All that impedes thee from the golden round,/ Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem/ To have thee crown'd withal" (I. V. 25-9).

Not only do the airy words inspire deeds and impact the individual or national destiny,- when the protagonist of the play is a king-, but they reabsorb factuality into their ostensible, deceptive texture and prove, paradoxically, more powerful and enduring in time than acts, which acquire a significance only when made known and evaluated in words and later on deposited in the collective memory as chronicles, stories, reports. The trace left behind by an individual is the narrative of his life, while the events of an epoch and a community survive as history. Delivered to the plurisemantics of words, historical facts alter their nature, they can be easily deformed, misjudged, become Rumour. Shakespeare makes of this concept of Virgilian inspiration a concrete character "painted full of tongues", who recites the prologue to *Henry IV*, Part II, pointing out the distorting effects of language:

The acts commenced on this ball of earth.  
Upon my tongues continual slanders ride,  
The which in every language I pronounce,  
Stuffing the ears of men with false reports.

(Induction, 5-8)

The story of Macbeth illustrates the full circle of words. They give him the input to action, but he abandons himself to their insubstantiality, ignoring another language paradox: the same words can serve truth or falsity, good or evil, *fair* or *foul* as they are ethically and aesthetically neutral. Macbeth lacks the discernment that might allow him to give an objective evaluation of the witches' prophecies. In change he makes their words correspond to his own ambition and calls them 'the perfectest report'. (I. V. 2) The incapacity of the Macbeth couple to question verbal equivocation translates into their complete surrender to their power. The duplicity of words starts working in them: they play double, dissimulate, hide their murders behind false statements, but never find peace and discover "Tis safer to be that which we destroy/ Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy (III.

II. 7-8). Perpetual existential uncertainty means loss of freedom for Macbeth: “But now I am cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in/ To saucy doubts and fears.” (III. IV. 24-5) This proves that what makes man free is getting out of the conceptual ambiguity of language into the straightforward, intelligible truth, which represents, actually the principle that animated Dr. Dee in his intellectual adventure.

Macbeth's dependency on words has counterparts in other characters. Thus while he begins “to doubt the equivocation of the fiend/ That lies like truth”(V. V. 43-4) at the end of his life, Banquo questions the prophecies from the start. Faced with the weird sisters, he behaves almost like a scientist, keeping his reason cool and trying to categorize them according to natural criteria, like gender distinction<sup>625</sup>, phenomena that can produce illusions like the 'earth bubbles' (I. III. 79-80) or the 'insane root/ That takes the reason prisoner” (I. III. 84-5). In asking the witches to “look into the seeds of time/ And say which grain will grow and which will not”, - a clear reference to the parable of the sower in Luke, 8, 5-15, where the seed is the word of God -, Banquo examines the messages and decides that they come from the devil<sup>626</sup> and that

...oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's  
In deepest consequence.

(I. III. 123-6)

In act IV, Malcolm shows Macduff how words can build up a convincing, but completely mendacious representation of reality, when he lays “taints and blames” on himself and later on unspeaks his own detraction. (IV. III.123-4) Entrusting his life to the fiend's equivocation actuated in language, Macbeth mistakes the essence of things for their void containers: words, a new evidence of his confusion. Thus his wife's death is but a word:

She should have died hereafter;  
There would have been a time for such a word”.

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<sup>625</sup> You should be women,/ And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ That you are so (I. 3. 47-7).

<sup>626</sup> After the first prophecy proves true, by Macbeth being named Thane of Cawdor, he exclaims: “What, can the devil speak true?”(I. III. 107)

(V. 5. 17-8)

Instead of being a fruitful interstice of work for his salvation, his own lifetime is just a wasting away to death in the perspective of yesterdays and tomorrows which are not even words, the minimum meaning-bearer linguistic units, but a series of vain syllables, an empty sequence:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death.

(V. IV. 19-23)

The cycle of words is completed with Macbeth's realization that the chronicle of his acts, a poor performance on the world's stage, is just a despicable, pointless mass of words.

...It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

(V. IV. 26-8)

Language is therefore the principal means to communicate, judge and know, but it can deliver man to truth as well as to falsity, it can be the substance of his prayers that pierce heaven, as Prospero states, or the indirect cause of damnation, according to *Macbeth*, who realizes before his final duel with Macduff his being unable to find his way out of the *juggling fiends'* continual *double sense*

That keep the word of promise to our ear,  
And break it to our hope.

(V. VII. 49-51)

Another paradoxical aspect of language in Shakespeare is that although “words are very rascals since bonds disgraced them”, as Feste comments in *The Twelfth Night* (III. I. 24-5), hinting alledgedly at the assumed primordial correspondence between things and names, they are the only instruments to seal human or metaphysical bonds. Loyalty to God, to the king, to a lord, a friend or a lover is



expressed and ratified verbally, just as the pact with the devil is. Hermia's oath to Lysander in *MSND*, reiterates the word-binding ritual lovers have performed since human memory. The story of Dido and Aeneas she alludes at is, as a matter of fact, just another word creation:

My good Lysander!  
I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,  
By his best arrow with the golden head,  
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,  
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,  
And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,  
When the false Troyan under sail was seen,  
By all the vows that ever men have broke,  
In number more than ever women spoke,  
In that same place thou hast appointed me,  
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

(I. I. 168-178)

Lysander answers by: "Keep promise, love" (I. I. 179), but he is the one that will soon break the promise. Throughout the play the whimsical, fugacious nature of love is continuously interwoven with the elusive nature of words.

### 5.3.7 What's in a Name?

The structural ambiguity of language is basically due to the missing correspondence between names and things, a given for Dr. Dee and a motivation of his quest for the sacred idiom, while for Shakespeare it becomes an object of inquiry. As subspecies of the *genus* word, - specifically spoken word-, names are also wind, a mere breath, therefore devoid of substance. This idea in reference to the commonly spoken language was expressed by Michel de Montaigne in his *Essais* (1580). An analysis of proper names given to children in his time, in the light of *Cratylus* 394 d,<sup>627</sup> leads the French thinker to the conclusion that the name is not the person, the name is "but a word for al mouths... Or three or foure dashes

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<sup>627</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, (1580). English version by John Florio (1603). *Of Names*, Book I, Ch. XLVI.

of a pen..."<sup>628</sup>. Equally insubstantial are for Montaigne articulated discourses, as he considers rhetoric "a false, a couzening and deceitfull art", an instrument devised, "to busie, to manage, and to agitate a vulgar and disordered multitude".<sup>629</sup> Montaigne's principal argument for dismissing discourses is that they can "bastardize and corrupt the essence of things".<sup>630</sup> His *Essais* were translated into English by John Florio in 1603<sup>631</sup>. Their influence on *The Tempest* is unanimously accepted; however it is difficult to say whether Shakespeare's consistent exploration of the nexus names-things in the plays written before 1603 could have been inspired by reading Montaigne, eventually in French or by a diverse intermediation. It is more likely Shakespeare's independent elaboration, which encounters Montaigne's conclusions, but covers a wide range of aspects directly connected to Elizabethan reality.<sup>632</sup> Also, by the specific nature of his art, the playwright focuses on the processuality of the names-things dynamics, disclosing its multiple consequences in historical praxis.

Grammatically declinable as Proper and common nouns, but also adjectives, names are understandable in Shakespeare's theatre as individual designations or designations of a class of objects, as titles in the social scale, sacred symbols, categories of thought, or attributes added by characters to things, to themselves and to other people. Physically devoid of substance, names of things in Shakespeare are actually a condensation of human judgement and passions. Actually there is a telling reciprocity: humans give meaning to names, names give value to humans.

A name has an individual definition and a commonly accepted one, which can often diverge. *Honour* and *conscience* are two examples. The former constituted itself as a value in the medieval code of behaviour, the latter came forth with the Reformation, as the space of encounter with one's own sense of guilt and responsibility in front of God. Shakespeare shows how both concepts were called into question and dismissed by the rising, pragmatically grounded

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid., p.186.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid., Ch.LI. pp.231-2.

<sup>630</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>631</sup> Edition consulted: *The Essayes of Michael Lord of Montagne* translated by John Florio, The first Booke, Volume 2

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<sup>632</sup> The English tradition included already the nominalism of William of Ockham (c.1285-1347/8)

individualism. In *Henry IV*, Part I, Falstaff dismantles the belief in honour on the battlefield, proposing his own catechism:

Can honour set to a leg? No. Or an  
arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound?  
No. Honour hath no skill in surgery then? No.  
What is honour? a word. What is in that word,  
honour? air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it?  
he that died o'Wednesday. Doth he feel it?  
No. Doth he hear it? No. It is insensible  
then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live  
with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not  
suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it: honour is a  
mere scutcheon; and so ends my catechism.

(V. I. 133-143)

In *The Tempest*, when inciting Sebastian to kill his brother, the King of Naples, Antonio famously dismisses *conscience* with a physicist that nullifies every essential value:

Ay, sir: where lies that? if it were a kibe,  
'Twould put me to my slipper; but I feel not  
This deity in my bosom: twenty consciences,  
That stand 'twixt me and Milan, candied be they,  
And melt ere they molest!

(II. I. 284-8)

Falstaff's definition of honour as a *mere scutcheon*, a coat of arms, therefore an emblem, alludes at the reification of names and the power of symbols in the medieval mentality that still survived in the Elizabethan era, but was also being vigorously challenged. Antonio's cynicism encompasses reflections on the sacralization of concepts,- conscience as a new deity- through the predominance of religious thought. Actually on the model of religion, the name of king, nobility titles and the base of this pyramid, family names, were sacralized. An offence to a name could cost the life of the offender, because of its absolutization. Family names were together with the individual name got at baptism, the first predication of the persons' identity and equally a sort of predestination, which limited their choices. This phenomenon is taken to extreme consequences in *Romeo and Juliet*,

where the clash between determinism of names and the reality of a person turns tragical. Thus Romeo is ready to abnegate his name:

Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized;  
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

(II. II.50-51)

Falling in love with a Montague, Juliet is forced to realize the tension between the insubstantiality of names and the value attached to them by tradition and mental habits:

What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,  
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!  
What's in a name? that which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet;  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,  
And for that name which is no part of thee  
Take all myself.

(II. II. 40-49)

Juliet's questioning the substance of names evokes Hermogenes' position in *Cratylus* and Saussure's modern theory on the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, proposing an opening towards modern theories of language, that notably diverges from Dr. Dee's interest in recapturing the original correspondence between names and things. Besides, Juliet's position towards the idolization of names is philosophically pertinent to Francis Bacon's discussion of the fallacies of thought derived from language inadequacies, specifically treated under the idols of the marketplace in the *Novum Organum*, Part I.

However Shakespeare is not an author with a thesis, but inquires into phenomena and brings them on the stage. Giving substance to a name is not necessarily a fallacy of thought, but a natural mental process symmetrical to naming things by abstracting their essence to an airy word. It is a process that makes the contact with reality possible through the intermediation of language and explains the cognitive power of every word creation. This subtle process is

hinted at in the comical register of MSND when Lysander asks “Where is Demetrius?” adding:

O, how fit a word  
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

(II. II. 106-7)

The same play explores the impact of love on the status of a person, measurable by the names he or she is addressed. In her first monologue, Helena speculates on the power of love:

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,  
Love can transpose to form and dignity

(I. I. 232-3)

The plot successively proves the theory. When loved, characters come out of the space of indeterminacy and low esteem: *eros* attaches them attributes that project them higher on the existential scale. In charming Titania, Oberon commands her to fall in love “when some vile thing is near”. (II. II. 34) The first *vile thing* she sees is Bottom 'translated' into a human with an ass's head, but to her enchanted eyes he is an *angel, a gentle mortal, wise, beautiful, a gentleman*<sup>633</sup>. Titania is an immortal spirit 'of no common rate' (III. I. 161) and in order to make him a suitable lover for her she needs to *purge his mortal grossness*. The first step is raising him from beastly ugliness and simple mind to the highest human qualities, deemed divine: beauty, gentleness, wisdom.

When humans fall in love, they divinize the objects of their passion. After the treatment with the magical juice, Demetrius perceives the repudiated Helena as a “goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!”(III. II. 137). From an object of revulsion she turns into an object of veneration. In the human realm, love and worship are close, as they both participate in wonder, and this is equally proven in *The Tempest*, as shown before, when Ferdinand imagines Miranda to be “Most, sure, the goddess/On whom these airs attend!”(I. II. 418-9), which replicates Miranda's own reaction at his sight:

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<sup>633</sup> Tita. [Awaking] What angel wakes me from my flowery bed? (III. I. 136); I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:/Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note, (III. I. 144-5);Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful (III. I.155); Instructing her fairies: Be kind and courteous to this gentleman (III. I.1 71).

I might call him  
A thing divine. for nothing natural  
I ever saw so noble.

(I. II. 413-6)

A rejected lover does not return to the state of a *vile thing*, but is dismissed with names loaded with negative passion. After Oberon touches her eyes with the antidote herb, Titania confesses horrified her visions, her being 'enamour'd of an ass', (IV. I. 83) whose visage her eyes now do *loathe*. (IV. I. 85) The most blatant behavior in this respect is Lysander's, who treats Hermia first with apprehension, care and respect, calling her 'my love' (I. I. 127), 'fair love' (II. II. 35), 'sweet' (II. II. 45), but after the dose of magical drops, rejects her with offensive, violent names:

Away, you Ethiop!

(III. II. 257)

Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose,  
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

(III. II. 260-1)

Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out! Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

(III. II. 263-4)

Get you gone, you dwarf;  
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;  
You bead, you acorn!

(III. II. 328-330)

By pushing his repudiated lover down on the scale of being to the status of beast, plant, object; relegating her to the field of ugliness, according to the standards of the time (*Ethiop*), of hell (*tawny Tartar*) and witchcraft (*hated potion*), Lysander turns love into hate, the blessing of grace into curse, which denies Hermia an existential status in normal humanity. She cannot even be neutrally ignored, but becomes the contrary to every prerogative of love: beauty, transport to heaven, life. So passionate is the process of alienating an ex-lover.

An analogous alienation actuated in names has Caliban as an object, the character whose cultural difference is perceived as impure, hateful, disgusting, potentially dangerous. Unable to identify and homologate him in their cultural terms, the others call him names aimed at crying out his inadequacy to their standards, but implicitly defining themselves. Miranda calls him *a villain*, (I. II. 309) and this is likely the least offensive of the long series of names put on him. Prospero, his lord and Christian civilization teacher, calls him *slave*, *earth* (I. II. 313-4), *tortoise* (I. II. 316), *poisonous slave*, *got by the devil himself/ Upon thy wicked dam* (I. II. 319-20), *most lying slave* (I. I. 344), *filth* (I. II. 345) *abhorred slave* (I. I. 351), *savage* (I. II. 354), *a thing most brutish* (I. II. 357), *hag-seed* (I. II. 365), *malice* (I. II. 367), *the beast Caliban* (IV. I. 140), *a born-devil* (IV. I. 188), *this mis-shapen knave* (V. I. 267-8) *demi-devil* (V. I. 272), *a bastard* (V. I. 273), *this thing of darkness* (V. I. 275). Stephano names him *cat* (II. II. 89), *moon-calf* (II. II. 115), *a monster*, *a servant monster* (III. I. 3), *man-monster* (III. I. 14), *Monsieur monster* (III. I. 22). For Trinculo he is *a strange fish* (II. II. 28), *a very shallow monster* (II. II. 155-6), *a very weak monster* (II. II. 156-7), *a most poor credulous monster* (II. II. 157-8), *a most perfidious and drunken monster* (II.II.162-3), *this puppy-headed monster*, *most scurvy monster* (II. II. 168-9), *an abominable monster* (II. II. 172), *a most ridiculous monster* (II. II. 178), *a howling monster*, *a drunken monster* (II. II. 193), *a brave monster* (II. II. 201), *servant-monster* (III. I. 5), *deboshed fish* (III. II. 31). Antonio calls him *a plain fish*, *marketable* (V. I. 266).

In the field of love or merely social acceptance, as in the case of Caliban, attributes are attached to others as an expression of passionate judgment. In politics good names or bad names are the result of actions and their appreciation in the community, so the deeds speak for the name firsthand.

### 5.3.8 The Name of King, Man and the Name of Macbeth

The ethical, political and religious behaviour is guided in the story of Macbeth by the two metaphysical names: God and the devil. The loyal king exercises his power in God's name, while an usurper like Macbeth acts "i' the name of

Beelzebub” (II. III. 4-5) or “in the other devil's name” (II. III. 9) just like the equivocator, alluded at by the Porter.<sup>634</sup> The name of king is at the centre of the debate: in theory it should be sacred, as it represents an actualization of the divine power on earth, but in practice it is usurp'd, when the witches “put the name of king” upon Macbeth. (III. I. 58) Still *the king is but a man*, as Henry V acknowledged,<sup>635</sup> and this paradoxical bond between a divinely grounded function and a mortal man makes the name of king sacred and vulnerable at the same time. One of the king's sacred attributes is to name his noblemen. As a translation of God's naming in the human realm, the ritual has foundational value: the change of social and economic status it effects is perceived as a rebirth, the acquisition of a new identity, an ontological mutation. However, the monarch's human limits, predispose him to error. Duncan admits “there's no art/To find the mind's construction in the face” (I. IV. 11-2) and so his naming Macbeth Thane of Cawdor and calling Lady Macbeth “by the name of most kind hostess”(II. I. 16) would prove disastrous for his life. At the end of the play, the first political act of the young Malcolm is to name his thanes and kinsmen earls:

My thanes and kinsmen,  
Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland  
In such an honour named.

(V. VII. 90-1)

This is a ceremony of renewal of the world, no less than an open issue: a new king is a new promise, but he is, again, just a man. The protagonist of the play, precipitated in the dilemma between the title of king and his mortal condition, realizes that in becoming a king, the name of man is part of the equation and thus the play becomes a persistent interrogation on the essence of man, or rather on its various understandings, which is suggested not only by the recurrence of the noun *man* and his compounds: *gentleman*, *kinsman*, *hangman*, but by its various connotations. *Man* designates *humanity* or *human condition*, as distinct from the animal realm, but intimately related to it by their common created origin, as

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<sup>634</sup> Here's a knocking indeed! If a man/ were porter of hell-gate, he should have old/ turning the key. [Knocking within] Knock,/ knock, knock! Who's there, i' the name of/ Beelzebub? Here's a farmer, that hanged himself/ on the expectation of plenty: come in time;/ have napkins enow about you; here you'll/ sweat for't. [Knocking within] Knock, knock!/ Who's there, in the other devil's name? Faith,/ here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed/ treason enough for God's sake, yet could not/ equivocate to heaven: O, come in, equivocator (II. III. 1-13).

<sup>635</sup> King Henry: I think the king is but a man, as I am”(Henry V, IV. I. 106-7)



Duncan's horses, turned wild after his murder, prove. It connotes mankind as the society of men. Man means God's creature and finally the woman's counterpart - a male, capable of decision, action and cruelty, according to Lady Macbeth. The protagonist vacillates between this meaning induced by his wife and his understanding of man as God's creature, endowed with *an eternal jewel* - the soul -, he gave to the *common enemy of man* for his own ambition.<sup>636</sup> This duplicity of understanding makes him ignore how much his ego-centric pursuits affect mankind, or rather he prefers to choose the meaning that suits him best, as in the speech he holds to the murderers, in act III.I, where he proves to know that *man* is a class of beings created by God and endowed with the gift of grace, but prefers in the end to instill them the necessity to behave like cruel males:

Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;  
 As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,  
 Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves, are clept  
 All by the name of dogs: the valued file  
 Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,  
 The housekeeper, the hunter, every one  
 According to the gift which bounteous nature  
 Hath in him closed; whereby he does receive  
 Particular addition from the bill  
 That writes them all alike: and so of men.

(III. I. 92-101)

Macbeth is aware of the *catalogue*, the *bill* that writes men alike, but he also realizes that the individual is unique through his soul and the *particular addition* enclosed in him *by the gift of bounteous nature*. What he does not add in the monologue, although he knows it very well, is that man can freely dispose of the gift of grace and is responsible for his acts, which can make him change class in the world order. This is actually what happens to him. At the beginning he is called *brave Macbeth*, with the comment “well he deserves that name”(I. II. 16) by the Sergeant; *valiant cousin* and *worthy gentleman* by Duncan (I. II. 24). As a king he belongs to the category of tyrants “whose sole name blisters our tongues”, according to Malcolm (IV. III. 12). At the end of the play, facing Young Siward, Macbeth is aware that his name stands for horror and causes fear:

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<sup>636</sup> No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,/ For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;/ For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;/ Put rancours in the vessel of my peace/ Only for them; and mine eternal jewel/ Given to the common enemy of man,/ To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings! (III. I. 64-70)



powerful in this theatre. The person that bears it gives substance to this title by acting for the common good, which means in God's name, or as the ally of the prince of darkness, turning the name of king into a weapon against his own people, and finally himself.

#### 5.4 Dr. Dee on Name and Fame

Shakespeare's treatment of the role of names in theatre and in magic rests on ideas retraceable in Renaissance Neoplatonism, which could bridge a closeness to Dee. The dramatist's concern with the phenomenality of names and things in the theatre of the world is out of Dee's speculative interests, but not out of his social life and attention to his public image. Since the beginning of his career, Dee proves to have been acutely aware that one's reputation in society is a construct that sums up several factors: his ancestry, the narrative of his deeds, the people he is related to professionally and politically, the works he leaves behind and the public opinion on his character. The interaction of these factors become the person, the thing. Many of his efforts to give substance to his name and control his own image in the public arena are actualized in words. For example Dr. Dee fashioned his family lineage going back to legendary figures of the Welsh tradition, just as he would fashion the 'historical evidence' of England's claims to parts of North America. He was careful in expressing his opinions in written form, he kept two types of diaries in English: a private and a spiritual one. To seal his public figure he made up a coat of arms, which is a synthesis of his religious beliefs, his aspiration for truth and an expression of power. (Fig. 11)

*A Refutation of Slander*, added to the *Mathematicall preface* to Euclid is the best suited example for Dee's ideas on fame and its dependency on words in general and names in particular. Referring to himself in the third person, Dee denounces those who “against him, by name do forge, fable, rage and raise slander by word and print”, rhetorically asking: “will they provoke him by word and print likewise to note their names to the world? With their particular devices,

fables, beastly imaginings and unchristianlike slanders?”<sup>639</sup> Rather than writing an apology based on a coldly argued defense, Dee responds to his detractors with a pamphlet that is actually a battle of names. The central issue is to contrast his own name, - placed in a list of famously ill-treated philosophers next to Socrates, Apuleius, Joannes Picus, Earl of Mirandola and Joannes Trithemius<sup>640</sup>-, to the anonymous multitude he divides into four categories significantly spelled with capital letters: VAIN PRATING BUSYBODIES; FOND FRIENDS; IMPERFECTLY ZEALOUS and MALICIOUS IGNORANT.

What disturbed Dee was being called a conjuror, a life-threatening accusation in a period when subtle distinctions were not privileged and the mere name of conjuror, meant sorcerer, a collaborator of the devil, a danger for the community. Adopting the same logic of qualifying by names, Dee turns the tide, by insisting on his being on the side of God, while the others are on the side of the devil. Thus he is an “honest student and modest Christian Philosopher”<sup>641</sup> who had spent a lot of time, effort and money to seek the advice of Lady Philosophy and Queen Theology<sup>642</sup>, whereas his slanderers belong to the unchristianlike category, which is that of God's enemy, made clear by attributing them fables and beastly imaginings, all allegedly falsifying devices of the prince of darkness. To make the suspicion of being a “companion of hell-hounds and a caller and Conjuror of wicked and damned spirits”<sup>643</sup> sound even more preposterous, Dee attributes the devil a long series of passionate names: “...the chief Enemy of Christ our Redeemer; the deadly foe of mankind; the subtle and impudent perverter of Godly Verity; the hypocritical crocodile, the envious basilisk, continually desirous in the twinkling of an eye to destroy all mankind both in body and soul eternally?”<sup>644</sup> ...“the impudent, crafty, obstinate Liar and continual disgracer of God's Verity to the uttermost of his power?... the Author of Death everlasting... that murderous Tyrant, most greedily awaiting the Prey of Man's Soul”<sup>645</sup>.

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<sup>639</sup> J.Deer, *Essential Readings*, op.cit., p.45.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid. p.45.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid., p.43.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>643</sup> Ibid., pp.43-4.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid., p.44

<sup>645</sup> Ibid., p.45

## 5.5 Words and *Intellectus Intentus*

Along with the radicalized perspective of the discourse, which evokes the polarized world in *Macbeth*, the *Refutation of Slander* is informed by an awareness analogous to that of Shakespeare's characters that names are powerful in common speech and their meanings and effects depend on man's intentionality in social interaction. The dependency of word significance on the subject's will and aims is obvious in historical practice, no less than in the art of theatre, where the playwright adjusts his poetic idiom to his aesthetic and ideological purpose, and the stage director and actors try to control the meanings embedded in the text and their effects on the audience. The same is valid for the control exerted through words in magic by the bonding agent. Irrespective of their assumed intrinsic power of divine derivation, or of their lack of significance, names do not become efficient in magic, unless they serve the magician's will.

Shakespeare and Dee demonstrate that in theatre, in magic and in normal life, the power of words consists in their efficiency and that their significance is subordinated to man's intentionality. This brings to mind Roger Bacon's approach to language as a dynamic reality, whose institutionalized grammar rules and shared meanings are diversified with every user, according to his subjective wishes to signify. In *Summa grammatica* (1245) and *De signis* (ca1267) Bacon claimed that “it is the speaker, who, knowing the rules of language, can decide consciously and knowingly to exempt himself from the rules, for the sake of some signifying intention, thus adapting the *intellectus significatus* to the *intellectus intentus*. As Bacon puts it nicely elsewhere, it is not the sign which signifies but rather the speaker by means of the language—in the same way that it is not the stick which hits but he who uses it. In other words, language is for man an instrument, a means. This voluntarist conception is to be seen likewise in the context of Bacon's treatment of the magical power of words” (Hackett 1997a, 73-74).<sup>646</sup>

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<sup>646</sup> <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/roger-bacon/>, accessed Jan, 15, 2010. *Summa grammatica* (1245) *De signis* (ca 1267)

The association with Roger Bacon's name is immediate in the case of Dee, as he was a connoisseur of Bacon's works and a defender of his reputation against contemporary attacks on his memory, some of which done publicly on stage. Robert Greene's *Honorable Historie of Frier Bacon, And Frier Bongay*, (1591 first performance) presents Bacon as a necromancer, inventor of diabolical devices like the talking brass head, attributed by John Gower, two centuries before to Robert Grosseteste in the *Confessio Amantis* (c.1390)<sup>647</sup>. Christopher Marlowe alludes sarcastically at Bacon in *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, when the protagonist invokes Mephistopheles and finding him 'too ugly to attend on me', commands him:

Go and return and old Franciscan Frier,  
That holy shape becomes a devill best

(I. III. 253-4)

In *Romeo and Juliet* (1594-96) and in *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598-99), two plays written after Greene's and Marlowe's plays, the two Franciscans, Friar Laurence and Friar Francis, serve the principle of love, trying to heal the evil in their world by inducing a ritual simulation of death. In a previous work we dedicated a chapter to Franciscans and Magicians in Shakespeare, detecting a line of continuity between a figure like Friar Laurence, knowledgeable in the natural properties of things and in the remedies obtainable from them, and characters like Cerimon, a Lord of Ephesus in *Pericles* (1607-9) and Cornelius, a Physician in *Cymbeline* (1609-10) who represent the magician-doctors of the Renaissance.<sup>648</sup> In *Measure for Measure* (1601-4) the Duke returns *disguised as a friar*. In act II he defines himself as "Bound by my charity and my bless'd order" (II. III. 3) and in act III: "I am a brother/ Of gracious order"(III. II. 237-8). All these elements can be hypothetized as Shakespeare's attempt to defend the memory of Roger Bacon, which would place him on the same side of the barricade as Dr. Dee.

Neither Dee, nor Shakespeare defended Bacon for his conception of language, but rather for his lofty ideals and nature-based knowledge in magical experimentations. However, the coincidence between Bacon's consideration of the

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<sup>647</sup> M. Kuper, *Roger Bacon. Der Mann, der Bruder Williams Lehrer war*, Clemens Zerling, Berlin, 1996, p.112.

<sup>648</sup> G. Dragnea Horvath, *Shakespeare. Ermetismo, mistica, magia*, op. cit., pp. 65-73.

subjective, intentional factor in the use of words, which impacted their commonly accepted significance on one side, and Dee's and Shakespeare's manifested awareness of this on the other, is intriguing. The distinction that needs to be made is that while Shakespeare reflected on the human subject's contribution to create the significance of words, set their value and polarity and grant them autonomy of action, Dee made a difference between the commonly spoken language, at the service of good or evil, therefore possible instrument of mystification, and the *cellestial speeche*, assumed to be exempt from negotiated meanings, approximation and arbitrary relations to things.

## 5.6 Transcending Language

Dee and Shakespeare share the conviction that language has a foundational value, however both aspire at transcending the historical idioms they work with. In the *Monas hieroglyphica* Dee steps out of the traditional sacred languages by finding meaning in the pure geometry of letters and in their embedded number combinations, which signified for him tracing the creative potential of the archetypes of language as reflection of God's word. His prayer to be allowed into the realm of pure quiddities through God's voice proves once more his desire to go beyond the known languages, assumed to have obscured and relativized the essence of things. The attempt to transcend languages by another language, albeit the archetypal, divine one, took him to the compact obscurity of Enochian.

As a poet whose texts were exposed to the immediate judgement of an audience, Shakespeare was perfectly aware of his dependency on the power of words, as well as on their possibility to betray him. As Feste complained in *The Twelfth Night* "A sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit:/ how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!"(III. I. 14-5). His very art offered Shakespeare extra-linguistic means of expression: dumb shows, music, scenography and costumes. But in the field of poetic creation, Shakespeare overcomes the boundaries of language by reinventing it, as his own poetic idiom, which is also an instrument of reflection on words themselves. On the other hand, conceiving theatre as a mirror of nature, actually of human nature, Shakespeare

exalts language and simultaneously relativizes it, as he expects the spectators to see themselves through words, to grasp concepts and images that draw on universal forms. Resting within the visual metaphor, this qualifies words as mirrors of things, or rather as lenses through which one sees farther and deeper.

In full progress of a culture of the word, the Reformation was actively imposing, Dee was trying to solve the insufficiency of words in conveying the truth, by attempting a mathematical-symbolic solution, he hoped to find in Enochian: one word corresponds to one thing. Shakespeare chronicles the paradoxes of spoken language and their impact on man, he reveals the plurisemantics and the power of words, but also their limits. Extreme evil and supreme good exist beyond the compass of language. In discovering the murdered king, Macduff experiences the margins of thought and naming: “O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart/ Cannot conceive nor name thee!” (II. III. 70-71). When Macbeth visits the witches in the cavern, he asks them: “How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags! What is't you do?” (IV. I. 48), they promptly answer in one voice: “A deed without a name”(IV. I. 49). As 'imperfect speakers' the weird sisters don't reveal their actual plans to Macbeth, but not naming their deed discloses its nature: they are working at their plan of destruction, the nullification of the creative germens, the denial of God's creative word. As an attempt to undo what God had actuated through his *logos* by naming things, the void they are preparing is nameless.

At the other end of the spectrum, the King of France in *All's Well That Ends Well*, (II. III. 135-6) affirms that “Good alone/ Is good without a name”, hinting at the self-sustaining evidence of the *summum bonum*. Truth is another value that does not need words to speak for itself, in fact Thomas Mowbray in *Richard II* points out that truth “hath a quiet breast” (I. 3. 96). There are other instances in Shakespeare's writings when the eloquence of silence is considered more persuasive than wordiness. In *MSND*, for instance, Theseus tells Hyppolita:

Trust me, sweet,  
Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome;  
And in the modesty of fearful duty  
I read as much as from the rattling tongue  
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.  
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity



In least speak most, to my capacity.

(V. I. 99-105)

The same discourse is present in Sonnet 85, where Shakespeare places *good thoughts* unequivocally above *good words*:

My tongue-tied Muse in manners holds her still,  
While comments of your praise, richly compiled,  
Reserve their character with golden quill  
And precious phrase by all the Muses filed.  
I think good thoughts whilst other write good words,  
And like unletter'd clerk still cry 'Amen'  
To every hymn that able spirit affords  
In polish'd form of well-refined pen.  
Hearing you praised, I say 'Tis so, 'tis true,'  
And to the most of praise add something more;  
But that is in my thought, whose love to you,  
Though words come hindmost, holds his rank before.  
Then others for the breath of words respect,  
Me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.

Thoughts can thus exist without verbal expression, actually they communicate love in a more direct and genuine manner than words do. Words are relegated to exteriority, thoughts belong to the sphere of the mind and the heart, they constitute the internal *logos*, the space of communion with the divine, opened to every 'unletter'd clerk' who cries 'Amen' in recognition.

For Shakespeare, the artisan of language, the encounter with God goes beyond words into the realm of pure thought and eloquent love. For Dee, the philosopher, this encounter occurs in language and the secure path to salvation consists in the *gnosis* of this language, in line with the Renaissance theories of perennial philosophy. It is remarkable that Dee the believer, convinced of his being the recipient of a new covenant, never asked himself why the first-hand knowledge that was delivered to him, proceeded from the cryptic transmission of the alphabet. In no biblical revelation did the angels transmit first the code and second the message. Divine epiphanies do not need cyphers to manifest themselves, as they instantiate in the spirit and not in the letter. Against Dee's will

and faith in the germinating shapes of letters<sup>649</sup> the Enochian language brings evidence that 'the letter killeth' (2 Corinthians 3:6), revealing Dee's unresolved tension between faith on one side and philosophy and science on the other.

With his little Latin and less Greek, as the tradition wants him, Shakespeare relied exclusively on the English vernacular, but turned it into a vehicle of poetry and speculation. Both poetic beauty and the phenomenology of thought transcend the immediacy of linguistic expression, translating it into meta-linguistic significance. By questioning meanings and relativizing names and words in general, Shakespeare anticipates modern approaches to language formulated both by philosophers and scientists. Dee, the philosopher and scientist, proficient in Latin, Greek and at least minimally in Hebrew, wanted to liberate himself from the approximation of words by nourishing directly on God's breath<sup>650</sup>, on mere quiddities, but this superhuman aspiration evolved into a singular philological adventure which proves the limits of a theory and keeps him, in the domain of word power, confined to his cultural context.

### 5.7 Creation and Command in Theatre and Magic

As expression of man's power to act and implicitly of his intentionality, magic uses the *dynamis* of names, formulas, charms, *defixiones* or invocations of spirits primarily as commands, in order to operate changes in nature or in other men's psyche. Oberon and Prospero, as well as the witches in *Macbeth* do so. This was also the supposed utility of the *Monas*, as Dee conceived it, even if the symbol appears today only as an ingenious example of letter-number speculation. In the same respect, the Enochian was meant to grant Dee unusual power: as already stated, the angels claimed that the original names of things would enable him to make waters stand, the heavens move and hell tremble. On the other hand, as this study has sufficiently certified, Kelly's use of words in the scrying sessions illustrate magic as psychological manipulation, in which Dee is the charmed,

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<sup>649</sup> *Monas*, p.22.

<sup>650</sup> According to W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op. cit., pp.223-4, in the Book Yezirah the universe is constituted of God's breath and the world extension is explained as God's breath transporting the power of the word.

bonding object. The messages, the various apparitions and figures of spirits illustrate simultaneously the commanding and the creative capacities of language, or rather the command is exerted through the verbal accounts of the invisible world. In the theatrical performance the power of words exerts itself in the same measure as creation and command. The poetic text represented on stage is an invention, another possible world, but it also keeps the public's attention and emotions in command as MSND and *The Tempest* disclose through various meta-theatrical allusions.

Word and action coincide in the magical and the theatrical performance, which is pertinent to their common origins in the religious ritual and to their understanding as *imitatio dei* according to the Christian Neoplatonism that informed both Dee's philosophy and Shakespeare's theatre. It is in the *Genesis* that God's voice makes word creativity and power exercise coincide, by commanding things to come into being. God's coming out of himself into time and space coincides with the creation of time and space and with the actualization of his thoughts in words. It is to this cosmic *poiesis* that theatre and magic build an analogy, but also, as forms of begetting or bringing forth typified in language, to the *poiesis* explained by Diotima in the *Symposium*, "which all poets beget, as well as all the craftsmen who are said to be creative." (209 a)<sup>651</sup>.

To the truism that Shakespeare's theatre is *poiesis*, one can add that Dr Dee, the mathematician and scientist, was equally open to word creativity, precisely because of the mythico-poetical dimension of the *philosophia perennis*. Assuming the creation of the cosmos as founding phenomenon implied a connaturality of rationality and imagination, measure, precision and aesthetics, instantiated in the power of the word:

Wenn irgend ein Gegestand die Frage nach dem Verhaltnis von Wissenschaft und Poesie aufkommen laesst, dann der geschaffene Kosmos. Die Etymologie zeigt jedenfalls an, was gemeint war – selbst wenn die den Worten inhaerente Bedeutung im Sprachgebrauch verschliffen ist: Das griechische Poiein heisst <machen>, das, was Poesie hervorbringt, ist in diesem Sinne ein Gemachtes,

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<sup>651</sup> On human creativity as analogous to the divine: Salman, C., *Anthropogony and Theogony in Plato's "Symposium"*, *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (Feb. - Mar., 1991), pp. 214-225, The Classical Association of the Middle West and South, Inc.

etwas, was ins Werk gesetzt wird; und das im poetischen Prozess ins Werk Gesetzte ist der Kosmos: das schoene Ganze.<sup>652</sup>

In the Renaissance, philosophers work with myths and conceive God as an artist, so Ficino in his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*.<sup>653</sup> They bring together philosophy, poetry and science in advocating magic as practical philosophy aimed at joining heaven and earth, in giving numbers a mystical aura and aspiring at obtaining the fifth essence in alchemical experiments. They place the sense of wonder at the center of their perception and action in the world. Florentine philosophers like Ficino and Pico had painters and poets as conversation partners. Peter French inquired into the historically documented connections between Dee and the Sidneys and made a cross analysis of Philip Sidney's ideas on poetry and the philosophical background of Renaissance magic, pointing out: "Whether in fact Dee greatly influenced Sidney or not, both were clearly working on the same assumptions. Measured verse – music and words – has something divine about it, and produces amazing effects."<sup>654</sup> Dee's education and mindset reveal him as highly receptive to poetic suggestions, or rather, as French puts it "The magically attuned mind, with its emphasis on the imagination, saw symbolism everywhere"<sup>655</sup>.

Symbolism is a precious hint at a language-bound commonality of Shakespeare and Dee that belongs to their domains and their historical period, namely the analogical and associative thinking.

### 5.7.1 Analogical Thought and Emotions

In the traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic logic there are three types of predication: univocal, equivocal and analogical. The scientific revolution imposed the

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<sup>652</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Robert Fludds kabbalistischer Kosmos*, in »Scientia poetica«, Literatur und Naturwissenschaft, Im Auftrag der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen herausgegeben von Norbert Elsner und Werner Frick, Wallstein Verlag, 2004, Göttingen, p.77.

<sup>653</sup> Ficino, Marsilio, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, in Hofstadter Albert, Kuhns Richard, ed., *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1976.

<sup>654</sup> P. French, *John Dee, The World of an Elizabethan Magus*, London & New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ark Paperbacks, 1987, p.138.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

univocal, mathematically based way of thinking, operating a departure from the metaphysical and theological analogy-based thought,<sup>656</sup> which was predominant in Elizabethan England. Indeed, centuries of biblical culture founded on metaphors and similes viewed as 'sacred veils' of the divine rays, according to Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* (Q.I.Art.9)<sup>657</sup> had been an enduring exercise in analogical and associative thinking at the service of the four simultaneous interpretations: literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical. Far from dissolving the mystery of the divine revelation, this cognitive approach was meant to prove its inexhaustible wondrousness. The Reformers attempted to take religious thinking out of that mental frame, - for example by denying transubstantiation and claiming that bread is bread and wine is wine in the Catholic ritual, a step towards univocal predication. However, as thinking God, paradise and hell, angels and devils is possible only by analogy, Luther and Calvin ended by developing in some of their writings a paradoxical style which favored the equivocal predication, *Macbeth* informs about. Against this intricate background, Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620) appears as an attempt to disencumber cognition from uncertainties, confusion and sterile speculation.

Before this turn, Elizabethan England witnessed an unprecedented creative application of analogical and associative thinking in the secular field, which accounts for its great poetry and drama, the popularity of rhetoric and wit, the rise of euphuism<sup>658</sup> as a fashionable literary style, as well as the success of magic and of Neoplatonism. Actually, the Renaissance culture, both Shakespeare and Dee are connected to, is structurally analogical and based on domains and cultural forms permeated by analogy. Not only did the Renaissance thinkers and artists relate themselves to their ancient models, sometimes in a precise correspondence as Raffaello's *School of Athens* in the Vatican Rooms proves, but the very foundation of their ideology consisted in the analogy between man and the world,

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<sup>656</sup> Analysis of the theory of analogy, its evolution in time and its reevaluation in contemporary science in Strumia, A., *Analogy*, in INTERS– *Interdisciplinary Encyclopedia of Religion and Science*, edited by G. Tanzella-Nitti, P. Larrey and A. Strumia, <http://www.inters.org>

<sup>657</sup> Aquinas, Saint Thomas, *The Summa Theologica* in *Basic Writings*, Edited and Annotated, with an Introduction by Anton C.Pegis, Random House, New York, 1945, pp. 14-17.

<sup>658</sup> Imposed by *The Anatomy of Wit* (1578) and *Euphuus and his England* (1580) by John Lyly, euphuism enlarges the field of imagination by cultivating language resources like alliteration; its elaborated similes and antitheses build a multiple, sometimes overloaded predication of every object of thought. Shakespeare uses this style in his plays in a register compass that ranges from powerful rhetoric to ridicule.

the *microcosm* and the *macrocosm*. Man's capacity to create was paralleled to that of Nature, that is God, so Leon Battista Alberti<sup>659</sup>. Disciplines like astrology and alchemy, at the top of the scale of knowledge, work on the same principles: astrology likens the attributes of the various planets and constellations to gods, heroes and mythical creatures from antiquity and after placing these attributes in heaven reprojects them as factors of influence on human reality without any verified cause-effect sequence; alchemy analogizes substances to the two genders and their combinations to gender union. Verbs like *copy*, *imitate*, *reproduce*, *recreate* expressed the concrete engagement of the creative intellects, from artists to natural philosophers, while the popular arts of the Renaissance like painting, sculpture and theatre are types of *mimesis*, proposing simulations of reality or its captured likeness. The trope of the mirror and mirroring used by poets to define their art – so Shakespeare's understanding of theatre as a mirror held up to nature<sup>660</sup> - corresponds to the natural philosophers' aspiration to god-like actualize the divine archetypes in their experiments. It is no coincidence that studying mirrors and optical phenomena was one of their main concerns. The mirrored likeness was a source of wonder and of ineffable knowledge, as God himself let men perceive him only in a series of reflections.

Shakespeare's theatre works with a sophisticated texture of analogies perceptible both at the level of style and in the general construction of each play. Thus they abound in allusions and correspondencies between the personas on stage and characters and situations of Elizabethan England, parallels between various cultural paradigms: English, classical, Italian, French, a.s.o, and various approaches to life, knowledge, the divine, to which one needs to add the affinities perceived by spectators between themselves and the protagonists of the happenings enacted.

Analogy is structural to theatre and poetry, but also to magic. In the operational chain of magic Sir J.G. Frazer identified *The Law of Similarity* and *The Law of Contact* or *Contagion* in the *like produces like* dynamic, which he justified with the association of ideas *by similarity* and *by contiguity*.<sup>661</sup> Taking a minimal analogy as a sufficient cause to produce an effect is explicit in the

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<sup>659</sup> Cf. Yates, Frances A., *L'arte della memoria*, op.cit., p. 337.

<sup>660</sup> Hamlet, III. II. 21-24.

<sup>661</sup> Frazer, Sir James George, *The Illustrated Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion*, op.cit., pp. 21-2.

construction of talismans aimed to capture life from heavens, as Ficino claims in *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*, as well as in the doctrine of signatures, prominent in medicine<sup>662</sup> and, more generally, in the patterning of the visible and the invisible in occult sympathies and antipathies. But claiming like Bruno that Mars can be found “not only in a viper and scorpion but also in an onion and garlic”, while the Sun is present “in the Crocus, in the narcissus, in the heliotrope, in the rooster, in the lion”<sup>663</sup>, is working like a poet who, in his similes and metaphors, virtually reorganizes the world in unexpected associations of objects based on a slight similarity, a principle that also operates at the formal level to produce rhythm, rhyme, alliteration. At the semantic level, sound and meaning sympathies and antipathies, corresponding technically to homophones, synonyms and antonyms are very productive in Elizabethan poetry in creating ambiguity, contrast and paradox, and excell in *conceits* and a popular figure of style like the *oxymoron*. Figures of style are figures of thought. For example, the μεταφορά, as incursion beyond contingent understandings of being, facilitates metaphysical disclosure, just as magical signatures allegedly offered insights into divine mysteries. The geometrically constituted μεταφορά of Dee's *Monas hieroglyphica* can be viewed as a poetical stratification of symbols and myths, which accounts for the large number of interpretations given to it, all of which acceptable. At the same time, Dee's symbol can be classified together with Agrippa's arrangement of the *Adacadabra* formula as concrete poetry, with the difference that the *Monas* has a unique concentration of theological, philosophical, scientific and experimental ideas, of myths and numbers, processes and their formulas, being simultaneously an icon and a narrative of world dynamism.

Dee's imaginative application of analogical and associative thinking is at its highest in the *Monas*, where he, similarly to a poet, works on the meaning disclosure emerging from language-units, in this case from *the germinating shapes of letters*<sup>664</sup>. Poetic creativity in its common understanding, obvious in the conversations with angels, does not appear to be one of Dee's gifts. As a matter of fact, between him and Kelly, the latter was definitely the one with a smack of poetic talent. The alchemical poem included by Elias Ashmole in *The Theatrum*

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<sup>662</sup> McLean, Ian, *Logic, Signs and Nature in the Renaissance. The Case of Learned Medicine*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, Ch. 8 The Doctrine of Signs, pp. 276 – 332.

<sup>663</sup> G. Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, op.cit., pp. 235-6.

<sup>664</sup> *Monas*, p.22.

*Chimicum Britannicum* conveys an easiness to versify and exploit verbal effects.<sup>665</sup> Peter French defined Dee's poetry "abominable".<sup>666</sup> The poem attached to his *Perfect Arte of Navigation*, dedicated "to the right Worshipfull, discrete, and singuler fauorer, of all good Artes and Sciences, M. Christopher Hatton, Esquier: Capitain of her Maiesties Garde, and Ientleman of her priuy Chamber" seems to confirm this opinion<sup>667</sup> (Appendix 2).

Shakespeare is at ease with the plurifocal and plurisemantic nature of his art, which keeps the spectator in a thought provoking space without furnishing any univocal answer, as well as with his dependency on words that can betray understanding by producing ambiguity, equivocation, vagueness. Dr. Dee experiences a tension between his religious and philosophical background, which had trained him to think by analogies and associations and his formation as a mathematician, which urged univocal answers to his dilemmas. His familiarity with Roger Bacon's work (1214-1252) exposed him already to the anticipations of univocal scientific thought<sup>668</sup> and his conviction that the primordial language would offer him limpid, final answers seems to stem from his necessity to overcome the cognitive imprecision of the analogy-based thought. The scrying sessions illustrate this duplicity of approach. He is vanquished by Kelly's manipulations because of his capacity to respond imaginatively to poetic-like inventions and tricked by his emotional vulnerability.

The performative aspect of theatre and of magic is directly connected to emotional participation, a necessary contextual factor that does not favor the tightly argued logical sequence of thought, but rather the spontaneity of analogical and associative reasoning. Aesthetic emotions of a theatrical show are not easy to distinguish from the psychological effects produced by a magical event: involvement, excitement, wonder, fear, amazement, as Prospero wanted it. In Shakespeare's time watching theatrical performances could have easily coincided with the excitement provoked by attending a conjuring séance. Taking imagination for reality was typical not only of theatre goers or people involved in magic, but also of those who were trying to contrast them. Thus a Puritan like

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<sup>665</sup> Included by A.E Waite in the *Biographical Preface to The Alchemical Writings of Edward Kelly*, rp. Stuart & Watkins, London, New York, 1970.

<sup>666</sup> P. French, *John Dee, The World of an Elizabethan Magus*, op.cit., p. 147.

<sup>667</sup> J. Dee, *The Perfect Arte of Navigation*, 1577, rp. Da Capo Press, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum LTD. Amsterdam, New York, 1968, p.1. For the poem see Appendix 2.

<sup>668</sup> Strumia, A., op.cit.



Prynne could unhesitatingly report: “The visible apparition of the Devil on the stage at the Belsavage Playhouse, in Queen Elizabeth’s days (to the great amazement both of the actors and spectators) while they were there profanely playing the history of Faustus (the truth of which I have heard from many now alive who well remember it) there being some distracted with that fearful sight.”<sup>669</sup> Kelly's spirits create thrilled expectation, anxiety, surprise, suspension of reason, which may account for Dee's growing addiction to the experiments.

In the scrying sessions, Dee's thirst for the marvellous stimulated creativity and absorbed it back, but Kelly is the inventor of spirits that have entered the imaginary space of esoterists and scholars, just as, on a much wider and higher scale, Shakespeare's characters have become part of everyone's cultural reality. Kelly's contribution to the dramatic episodes reported in the *Five Books of Mystery* has been hinted at in the section on *Magic and Theatre in the Mysteriorum Libri Quinque*. His merits consist no less in the creation of Enochian.

### 5.7.2 Ludicium in the Language Lab

The conclusion of the most accredited linguist who analyzed Enochian, Donald Laycock, is that it is a form of *glossolalia*, “which is often produced under conditions similar to trance”<sup>670</sup>. In other words, that Kelly may have been 'speaking in tongues', either as a result of hallucinations generated by his labile psyche or produced under the effect of drugs, considering his pharmacy-bound past and his alchemy-oriented future. *Glossolalia*, (from Greek *glossa*, “tongue” and *lalia*, “talking”) a phenomenon related to the ecstatic trance, is defined as “utterances approximating words and speech, usually produced during states of intense religious excitement.”<sup>671</sup> As attested, in altered states of consciousness “the vocal organs of the speaker are affected, the tongue moves without the

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<sup>669</sup> M. Domenichelli, *Il limite nell'ombra*, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>670</sup> D. C. Laycock, CED, *Angelic language or mortal folly?*, p.33.

<sup>671</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica online, Academic edition.

conscious control of the speaker, and unintelligible speech pours forth.”<sup>672</sup> In the past this was attributed to spiritual beings or the Holy Spirit communicating through a human, thus the Bible contains various references to *glossolalia*.<sup>673</sup>

Albeit Kelly appears to be 'possessed' by the spirits, Enochian is not conveyed without his conscious control. Our thesis is that the angelic idiom was neither dictated by invisible agents, nor the product of hallucination, but the result of Kelly's ludic procedures of linguistic creativity. On the face of it, Enochian is a form of word processing experimentation, applying the Cabalistical techniques of text disambiguation as word producing principles. The difficulty in classifying it comes from its combination of purpose and arbitrariness which invariably disrupts the identification of logico-linguistic patterns. (Fig.12)

Analogous phenomena of word creativity are not rare. For example, children produce intentional imitations of language, when they start discovering their ability to mimic adult speech, more precisely when they have assimilated the basic phonetic and syntactical patterns of their mother tongue and try to apply them analogically and creatively, just as they reproduce the adult's world in their games. This proves their mastering the set of rules embedded in the matrix of their mother tongue, but also their awareness of the arbitrariness of names and their created nature, which stimulates them to call things by names of their own invention.<sup>674</sup>

Elizabethans facing new languages proceeded likely the same way, either to pretend they knew them or in a playful mimic. In Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*, where the topic of language is seminal, the First French Lord captures Parolles *the manifold linguist and the armipotent soldier* (IV. III. 266), by instructing his soldiers in ambush to speak in tongues. As Parolles “hath a smack of all neighbouring languages”, he gets trapped by the meaningless mimic of foreign words:

Second Lord. Throca movousus, cargo, cargo, cargo.  
All. Cargo, cargo, cargo, villiando par corbo, cargo.  
Parolles. O, ransom, ransom! do not hide mine eyes.  
*[They seize and blindfold him]*

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<sup>672</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>673</sup> Ibidem: 1 Samuel 10:5–13, 19:18–24; 2 Samuel 6:13–17; 1 Kings 20:35–37; Acts 2:4, 4:31, 8:14–17, 10:44–48, 11:15–17, 19:1–7; 1 Corinthians 12–14, 14:18)

<sup>674</sup> G. Dragnea Horvath, *Aspects of Non-sense Verse in English*, unpublished thesis discussed at the University of Bucharest, June, 1974, advisor Prof.Dr. Mihaela Irimia.

First Soldier. Boskos thromuldo boskos.  
 Parolles. I know you are the Muskos' regiment:  
 And I shall lose my life for want of language; If there be here  
 German, or Dane, low Dutch, Italian, or French, let him speak to  
 me; I'll Discover that which shall undo the Florentine.  
 First Soldier. Boskos vauvado: I understand thee, and can speak  
 thy tongue. Kerely bonto, sir, betake thee to thy faith, for seventeen  
 poniards are at thy bosom.  
 Parolles. O!  
 First Soldier. O, pray, pray, pray! Manka revania dulce.  
 Second Lord. Oscorbidulchos volivorco.

(IV. I. 70-83)

This gabble is an intentional language simulacrum, which is not very far from Kelly's inventions and proves to be, just like Enochian, an “economical tongue”<sup>675</sup>.

Purpose and arbitrariness converge in the invention of languages and alphabets and is not uncommon in English culture. In the Louvain (1516) and Basel (1518) editions of Thomas Morus's *Utopia*, there is a four-lines stanza in Utopian language spelled both in the Latin and in the Utopian alphabet with a Latin translation<sup>676</sup>, that has inspired the most diverse interpretations, from considering it a burlesque mimic of Greek and Persian to a message in French, encrypted by the letter transposition system<sup>677</sup>. In the same line of inventions one can quote Francis Godwin's Lunarian<sup>678</sup>, based on correspondences between musical notes and sentences in an original application of Pythagorean and Neoplatonic ideas<sup>679</sup>. What appears today as an artifice, a game in Godwin's utopia, was taken seriously by scholars like Wilkins in search of a universal idiom for philosophers or by the German Orientalist Andreas Müller<sup>680</sup> (1630-94) and this happened decades after Dee's death. All this accounts for the credibility of Enochian in the eyes of Dr. Dee. Actually it took more than a century to have someone like Swift who

<sup>675</sup> D. Laycock, CED, p.35.

<sup>676</sup> C. Marrone, *Le lingue utopiche*, pp.46-8: Utopos ha Boccas peula chama polta chaaman/Bargol he maglomi baccan soma gymnosophaon/Agrama gymnosophon labarem bacha bodamilomin./ Voluala barchin heman la lavoluala dramme pagloni/. The Latin translation sounds as follows: Utopus me dux ex non insula fecit insulam/Una ego terrarum omnium absque philosophia/Civitatem philosophicam expressi mortalibus./Libenter impartio mea, non gravatim accipio meliora.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid., pp.46-63. treats the interpretations extensively, including the one of André Prevost and Leon Herrmann.

<sup>678</sup> F. Godwin, *The Man in the Moone*, London, 1638.

<sup>679</sup> C. Marrone, op.cit., pp.93-99.

<sup>680</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

subverted myths connected to language as mirror of perfection in *Gulliver's Travels* and sarcastically claimed it was primitive Hebrew that derived from English and not the other way round<sup>681</sup>. The attention devoted to Enochian in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by esoterists and scholars grants it the same intriguing qualities as More's Utopian or Godwin's Lunarian.

Invented idioms are artificial codes based mainly on giving new names to things, but incorporating the logico-syntactical patterns of the source language, that is the mother tongue of the inventor. In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1871)<sup>682</sup> Alice finds in 'a looking glass book', (in which words are to be read from right to left) the poem *Jabberwocky*<sup>683</sup>, made of invented words<sup>684</sup>, where sound and meanings are forced together into artificial linguistic units, called later in the book by Humpty-Dumpty 'portmanteau' words.<sup>685</sup> Alice's reaction is: "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas – only I don't exactly know what they are!"<sup>686</sup> The jabbering of the invented idiom produces in Alice's mind something like the recognition of a pattern, granted by the syntax of the sentences, which is English. Carroll was a mathematician at play and his treatment of words in *Jabberwocky* reveals his mathematical mindset: placed in a formal pattern, but devoid of meaning, the word becomes the symbol of a function. As previously stated, according to D. Laycock, the syntax of the angelic language is rigorously English, which accounts for its invented nature and provides another explanation for Dr. Dee's coping with its obscurity. As a mathematician and Cabalist, he may have perceived the wondrous sound combinations as outward signs of an underlying logical pattern, he was somehow able to recognize.

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<sup>681</sup> Ibid., p.79. *Gulliver's Travels*, 1726 1<sup>st</sup> version, 1735, 2<sup>nd</sup> version; also Daniel Eilon, *Swift Burning the Library of Babel*, The Modern Language Review, Vol. 80, No. 2 (Apr., 1985), pp. 269-282.

<sup>682</sup> Complete title: *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*.

<sup>683</sup> L. Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking Glass*, Edited by Martin Gardner, Penguin Books, 1970. pp.191-8. First stanza: "Twas brillig, and the slithy toves/Did gyre andgimble in the wabe:/All mimsy were the borogroves,/And the mome raths outgrabe".

<sup>684</sup> Ibid., p.271. The most impressive collection of artificial words in English literature is James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, which illustrates the so-called *portmanteau* method.

<sup>685</sup> G. Dragnea Horvath, *Jabberwocky, A Game in the Mirror*, in Romanian, essay on Lewis Carroll's poem with an analysis of two German versions of it, *Secolul 20*, No 7-12, 1991. Philosophical approach in Jean Jacques Lecercle, *Philosophy of Nonsense: The Intuitions of Victorian Nonsense Literature*, Routledge, 1994.

<sup>686</sup> L. Carroll, op. cit., p.197.

Word play and inventions of idioms imply treating language as an object of manipulation, a culturally significant phenomenon in Elizabethan England, and so widely extended that in the *Merchant of Venice* Lorenzo remarks ironically:

How every fool can play upon the word!  
I think the best grace of wit will shortly turn  
into silence, and discourse grow commendable  
in none only but parrots.

(III. V. 48-51)

For Shakespeare *wit* is infused by *grace*, while the proliferation of word play without wit is equated to the meaningless discourses of parrots, a mechanical simulation of language. This implies two basic modalities of language creativity: one that explores meaning and treats the participation in *logos* as divine grace and the second resulting in discourses that remain out of the communicated *logos* in the empty space of non-significance. Enochian was taken by Dr. Dee as a participation in the divine *logos*, but proves to be just an experiment in processing letter and number combinations, not a language, but a simulation of language, a game Kelly had to play and played quite remarkably.

Throughout the *Libri Mysteriorum* the scryer appears to become gradually aware of his capacities to manipulate language. For about a year the spirits spoke through him in Latin and English: the Latin is that of the Bible and the mass and it is used in every séance to underline certain statements or give them a final value, like the repeatedly uttered: *consummatum est*, sentences like *Natura habet terminuum suum*<sup>687</sup>, or the solemn formula to dismiss them: “Valete”<sup>688</sup>. Other times there are approximate quotes from the Bible, or variations on them like in the following example, when Michael says: “*Veh mundo, scandalis: vel scandalizantibus, Veh illis quibus Nos non sumus*”<sup>689</sup>. The editor suggests comparing with Matthew 18:7 and the comparison is quite eloquent: *Vae mundo a scandalis. Necessesse est unim ut veniant scandala: verumtamem vae homini illi, per quem scandalum venit*<sup>690</sup>.

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<sup>687</sup> MLS, p.107.

<sup>688</sup> MLP; p.80.

<sup>689</sup> MLS, p.137: “Woe to the world because of temptations to sin, or to those who cause temptations. Woe to those whom we are not with”.

<sup>690</sup> Ibidem: “Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the man by whom the temptation comes!”

When he becomes more confident with daily practice of Latin, Kelly extends his creativity beyond variations on biblical quotes. In the *Mysteriorum Liber Terzius* (MLT), Uriel announces Dee that “The Fountayne of wisdome is opened” and imparts him the names of the 49 “glorious and excellent Angels” governing all earthly actions,<sup>691</sup> that is all the operations of natural magic. They are divided into 7 groups and their names are given in the Tabula Collecta: 49 *Angelorum Bonorum, Nomina continens [per Δ]*

BALIGON	BOBOGEL	BABALEL	BYNEPOR	BNASPOL	BNASPEN	BLVMAZA
BORNOGO	BEFAFES	BVTMONO	BLISDON	BRORGES	BRALGES	BAGENOL
Bapnido	Basmelo	Bazpama	Balceor	Baspalo	Bormila	Bablibo
Besgeme	Bernole	Blintom	Belmara	Binodab	Buscnab	Busduna
Blumapo	Branglo	Bragiop	Benpagi	Bariges	Bminpol	Blingef
Bmamgal	Brisfli	Bermale	Barnafa	Binofon	Bartiro	Barfort
Basledf	Bnagole	Bonefon	Bmilges	Baldago	Bliigan	Bamnode

The first striking aspect is formal: all 49 names start by B, as if the first letter/sound of these angels' qualification *bonus /boni* would be the very key to excellency and a 'natural' producer of bounty. But this is actually applying the magical theory of *signatures* to language in a reverse way: he did not deduce that the angels had to be good, because of the presence of a sacred symbol in their names, but he produced good angels, imposing a formal mark, valid only for Latin, as an allegedly divine creative principle. Taking into account that Dee owned various works by Lull in his library of manuscripts, including *Compendium artis, Excerpta ex theorica Ramundi Lullii*<sup>692</sup> or *Ramundo Lulii ars magna cum figuris* one wonders if Kelly could have been inspired by 'bonitas' as absolute divine attribute, as one reads in Lull's great table?<sup>693</sup> Every name is rigorously made up of seven letters, and dividable into 2 or 3 syllables, many of which are sound combinations prevalent in Latin or romance languages. Considering that 49 is itself a multiple of seven, one sees the application of seven

<sup>691</sup> MLT, p. 170.

<sup>692</sup> *Catalogus Librorum Bibliothecae Externae Mortlacensis*, D. Joh. Dee, A 1583, 6 Sept. in *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee: And the Catalogue of His Library of Manscripts*, From the Original, op.cit., p. 68; 72; 74; p.87

<sup>693</sup> W.Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op.cit., p. 80

as key number of the divine creation, the archangel Michael had spoken about in the *Second Book of Mystery*.<sup>694</sup>

In Enochian Kelly's ludic procedures have a recognizable design: he proceeds analogously from the graphic sign, to which he assigns a corresponding phoneme, then he passes on to letter combinations to fabricate words. As he must have learned from Dee that the sacred idiom, following the teachings of the Cabala, had to be a system based on letter-number patterning, he applies it setting out always from letters, but most probably at one point he may have realized that inventing casual letter combinations had the same effect as creating words by applying numerical rules to letters. These processing techniques result many times in exotic clusters of consonants or vowels that are very difficult, if not impossible, to pronounce like: **rlodnr** (furnace), **congamphlgh** (Holy Ghost), **Iczhheal** (a Senior of Earth) or **Nrzfm** (ruler of angels powerful in finding the secrets of men); **aa0**, **eai** (among, amongst), **Iaaasd** (Divine Name of Six Letters ruling Fire of Water[sic!]), **Oiiit** (Divine Name of Five Letters, ruling Earth of Air).

Every now and then Kelly replaces letter-number combinations by poetic procedures. Thus the names of the wicked spirits, easier to pronounce, are loaded with undertones that sound aggressive to an English ear: **Gitchgulcag**, **Arzulgh**, **Adraman**. He even delights in a 'conceptual' subtlety of pronunciation: **vooan**, *truth*, pronounced *vō-an*, changes its sonority to *Vooan* when the word is used "by fallen angels"<sup>695</sup>. This obviously makes the distinction between a genuine angel and a devil very thin.

Language experimentation for its own sake is the contrary to disambiguation and search of meaning within a *logos* that needs to be *dialogos*, as it renames things unilaterally, actuating a non-shared arbitrariness of the linguistic signs, which silences meaning and takes understanding on the brink of the absurd, as Enochian convincingly proves. Beside being a modality of deconstructing language, Kelly's application of analytical procedures to its atomary units - the syllable, the phoneme, the grapheme - reifies the various linguistic items. It has been remarked that children play with sounds, letters or words, as they do with blocks. For Kelly letters and words have an amazingly concrete reality, he sees

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<sup>694</sup> MLS, p.126: "In 7, and by 7 must you work all things".

<sup>695</sup> CED, p.182.

them in the scrying crystal in blood, clay<sup>696</sup>, or accompanied by explanatory icons, like **iuréhoh**, about which the reader finds out, that “was hid a prety while with a rym like a thin bladder affore it: and when it was perfectly seen then there appered a bluddy cross over it. It is a Word signifying what Christ did in hel<sup>697</sup>.”

In the end Kelly's *ludicium* in the laboratory of sounds, following unconsciously English syntax in his letter-transposition games, created the magical illusion of a system.<sup>698</sup>

7. Arnah notah lax vart luhoh désmaph, ol ca-pra-mi-na-cah ox-and-an-vah gem-ne-lo-ri-pli-ton-pha ac-cam-plah-no-stapha pr-max-a-da-ha-har or-zem-bli-zad-mah pan-che-fe-lo-ge-doh áschach ólmah ledóh vaxma<sup>699</sup>

Enochian can be regarded as the masterpiece of a deceiver, a phantasmatic idiom, a magical illusion, but it stimulates speculation on sound, letter and number experimentations, which preceded contemporary artificial language processing systems. It mimics the birth of speech with its rhythmically arranged sound patterns working out their way into *logos* and it may be taken seriously on the assumption that God's original voice is not conceivable as grammar or semantics, but as vibration, which is pure sound. Apart from general cultural motivations and his unquestionable trust in God, Dee's belief in the genuine quality of Enochian is rooted in an axiom he had voiced in the *Propaedeumata Aphoristica*: “Whatever is in the Universe possesses order, agreement and similar form with something else”.<sup>700</sup> In Dee's mind there was no room for arbitrariness and it is exactly this incapacity to accept the irrational and the absurd that granted Kelly free ground of action.

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<sup>696</sup> LMQ, p.290

<sup>697</sup> LMQ, p.323.

<sup>698</sup> Other samples of Enochian in Fig. 15.

<sup>699</sup> LMQ, p.335.

<sup>700</sup> Dee, J. *Propaedeumata Aphoristica*, in *Essential readings*, op.cit., p. 22.



## 6. THE TEMPTATION OF THE POSSIBLE: VISION AND SPIRITS

### 6.1 Visual turbulence

In their hypostasis of wonder producers, theatre and magic appear as modalities of exploration and disclosure of the possible, as media through which the invisible makes itself visible, but also as forms of increasing mystery, of keeping the sense of wonder intact. They unveil and cover, decipher and encrypt, in an inexhaustible display of creative potential. The dynamics of disclosure and enclosure is primarily a visual matter. Theatre and magic work both with perceptible images,- the moving images and the scenography of the performance; the magician's talismans, spectres, optical devices and various simulacra of reality - and with the mental images generated by words.

According to Shakespeare the poetic art is an instance of substantiating *forms*, making them visible, while the performance of a text implies the desubstantiation of *actors* to *shadows*, followed by their 're-incarnation' as various characters on stage. His theatre is intent to *hold a mirror up to nature*, proposing the spectators an objectified insight into their conscience; he wants, like Prospero “to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle/ Their clearer reason”(IV. I. 67-8), to clean their “reasonable shores/that now lie foul and muddy”(IV. I. 81-2). However the mental journey towards clarity has to pass through the labyrinth of magic and engage imagination in the enchantment of the performing art, which acts rather like perspectives, optical devices contrived by magicians, “which rightly gazed upon/ Show nothing but confusion”, but “ey'd awry/ Distinguish form”.<sup>701</sup> This may have been illustrated on stage, if, following the hypothesis of Iain Wright, the performers made use of lenses and mirror games designed by natural philosophers like Giambattista della Porta, John Dee and Cornelis Drebbel.<sup>702</sup> In the same line

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<sup>701</sup> Bushy. Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows,/ Which shows like grief itself, but is not so;/ For sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears,/ Divides one thing entire to many objects;/ Like perspectives, which rightly gazed upon/ Show nothing but confusion, eyed awry/ Distinguish form... (*Richard II*, II.II.14-20)

<sup>702</sup> The studied examples are the dagger scene and the procession of kings in *Macbeth*. Wright, I., 'All Done with Mirrors: Macbeth's Dagger Discovered,' *Heat* (Sydney), 10 NS, 2005, pp.179-

of paradoxes of disclosure and enclosure Shakespeare makes his audience *see* spirits, fairies, ghosts, but also questions sight, both as perception and understanding. Mental confusion is benevolently turned ridicule in *MSND*, criticized in dark tones in *Macbeth* and unmasked in *The Tempest*; on the other hand *MSND* and *The Tempest* intentionally relativize the reality of the performance. Puck puts the spectators in the position of thinking they had “slumbered” “while these visions did appear.”(V. I. 56-7); Prospero contends his magical prodigies as well as the performance are just *a vision, a baseless fabric, an insubstantial pageant* (IV. I. 151-5). Human existence itself vanishes away as a performance, for *We are such stuff/ As dreams are made on* (IV. I. 156-7).

John Dee was interested in disclosing things that are 'seminally present' in nature and more specifically, as Clulee claims, “optics appears to be the nexus through which Dee's interests in mathematics, astral physics, and natural magic were articulated and elaborated into a coherent natural philosophy.”<sup>703</sup> His concern with the rationalization of optical phenomena and devices,- perspective, radiation, refraction, burning glasses<sup>704</sup> finds its counterpart in the art he calls *Thaumaturgike*, which implies a manipulative use of knowledge with the aim of creating visual illusions.<sup>705</sup> The *Monas* is a constructed image, the visible symbol of the invisible, a deposit of past events like the creation of the universe and the resurrection of Christ, a compendium of conceptual realities like the astrological, alchemical, numerical and letter systems. In a more scientific perspective it may appear as an energy supply encapsulated in the point and the line for the future transmutations of matter the magician felt destined to actualize. The processuality of disclosing the invisible implies its materialization: in the scrying séances the invisible angelic realm is 'captured' in the material density of the 'shewstone' and

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200; “Come like Shadowes, so Depart”: *The Gostly Kings in Macbeth, Shakespearean International Yearbook, 6, 2006*, 'Perspectives, Prospectives, Sibyls and Witches: King James progresses to Oxford', in J.Lloyd Jones and G.Cullum (eds.), *Renaissance Perspectives* (Melbourne, 2006), 109-53. With comments in S.Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, p.239.

<sup>703</sup> N.Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy, Between Science and Religion*, Routledge, London and New York, 1988, p.70.

<sup>704</sup> According to the Preface to *Propaedeumata Aphoristica*, dedicated to “Master Gerardus Mercator of Rupelmonde, Renowned Philosopher and Mathematician (1558) and the *Mathematicall Preface* to Euclid.

<sup>705</sup> J. Dee, *Essential Readings, Mathematicall Preface*, op.cit., p.41: “to make strange works of the sense to be perceived and of men greatly to be wondered at.” Szulakowska, Urszula, *The Alchemy of Light. Geometry and Optics in Late Renaissance*, Brill, Leiden, 2000, analyzes the metaphysics of light in relation to Paracelsian alchemy, John Dee, Heinrich Khunrath, Michael Maier and Robert Fludd.

Kelly's words and performance. The game of disclosing and occulting accompanied Dee throughout his life, and is also present in his *Refutation of Slander*.

The structural ambivalence of theatre and magic in interpreting the visible and in producing images is pertinent to the profile of the Elizabethan age, which experienced an unprecedented instability in cognitive and representational patterns. In *Vanities of the Eye*,<sup>706</sup> S. Clark gives a complex reconstruction of early modern “visual turbulence”<sup>707</sup> that is the tension among various competing tendencies for the construction of a stable model of conceiving and orchestrating<sup>708</sup> internal and external vision. Traditional epistemological certainties based on the primacy of sight and the belief in spiritual realities perceived by the *mind's eye*, were being relativized by the Reformation, theories on *Melancholia* and a wave of skepticism, that went into two directions: the visual realism of atheists, which found natural explanations for every phenomenon classified as supernatural<sup>709</sup>, and Pyrrhonism, in the aftermath of the first Latin edition of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* by Sextus Empiricus (1560)<sup>710</sup>. The latter considered perception and the corresponding mental images as a subjective act of creativity, of 'making' the object of sight, or as Montaigne put it: 'External objects surrender to our mercy, they dwell in us as we please.'<sup>711</sup>

The most influential factor in this revolution of the sight was religion. As previously argued, the Elizabethans perceived themselves under 'the heaven's eye'<sup>712</sup> (*Comedy of Errors*, II. I. 16), and this comes out in the illustrations of their books too, where “single, unblinking eyes representing the deity looked down panoptically over the contents of many early modern title pages- like the large, vigilant eye of 'Providentia' surveying the globe held aloft by 'history' on the title page of Walter Raleigh's *The history of the world* (1614)”.<sup>713</sup> God's pervasive eye was counterposed to man's reduced capacity to grasp Him in his terrestrial life. An often quoted passage from one of John Donne's sermons expresses this impossibility of seeing divinity beyond the accessible *booke of Creatures*,

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<sup>706</sup> S. Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4 and note 2 p. 7.

<sup>709</sup> As Reginald Scot was trying to do in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*.

<sup>710</sup> S. Clark, *Vanities of the eye*, op.cit., p.4.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>712</sup> Psalm 94, 9: "he that formed the eye, shall he not see?"

<sup>713</sup> S. Clark, *Vanities of the eye*, op.cit. p.11.

whereby the world is the theatre in which one can contemplate God, even if, resonating St Paul (*Corinthians* I, 13.12), this cognition is only by reflection:

For our sight of God here, our theatre, the place where we sit and see him, is the whole world, the whole house and frame of nature, and our medium or glasse, is the booke of Creatures, and our light by which we see him, is the light of Naturall Reason... The whole frame of the world is the theatre, and every creature the stage, the *medium*, the *glasse* in which we may see God... For here we see God in speculo, in a glasse, that is, by reflexion.<sup>714</sup>

The contemplation of the divine in the *booke of Creatures* was the only modality – though indirect - of visual contact with God, after his presence in the perceptible elements of the ritual had been denied. Dismissing the Catholic Mass “as a visual lie”, in line with the reformers' “own determination to see bread as bread and wine as wine – to accept *species* for what they seemed to be“, resulted in “consigning...*the most important of all sensory experiences for Christians* to the category of illusion<sup>715</sup>. Erasing the Purgatory from the metaphysical spaces increased the turbulence of sight and the epistemological tension. The restless souls that could, according to an archaic belief, come back and haunt the living, had been confined to the Purgatory since the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, together with the anxiety for their return. The reduction of the metaphysical spaces to heaven and hell after the Reformation seems to have created the context for the resuscitation of revenants. In the domain of magic the reinforced belief in ghosts made the popular success of necromancy, while in drama it resulted in an interest in Seneca's tragedies, translated around 1560 and the introduction of ghosts as literary procedures on stage, amply investigated by P. Kapitaniak<sup>716</sup> and problematized by S. Greenblatt, taking Shakespeare's Hamlet as an example.<sup>717</sup>

Another influential factor in the visual instability of the Elizabethans was Calvin's discourse on idolatry, translated into English in 1584.<sup>718</sup> His ideas on

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<sup>714</sup> Preached at S. Pauls, for Easter-day. 1628, Digital Collections at BYU, <http://www.lib.byu.edu/>, Harold B.Lee Library. Source: *Sermons of John Donne*, 10 vols, edited by George Potter and Evelyn Simpson, University of California Press, 1953-1962.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>716</sup> P. Kapitaniak, *Spectres, ombres et fantômes - Discours et représentations dramatiques en Angleterre, 1576-1642*, Honoré Champion, 2008. I thank the author for allowing me to read his doctoral thesis before its publication. See also K. Thomas, op.cit., ch.19 *Ghosts and Fairies*.

<sup>717</sup> S.Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, Princeton University Press, 2001.

<sup>718</sup> *A Godly Sermon to Flie Idolatry*, transl. by Robert Horne, Bishop of Winchester, printed by A.M. in London in 1584

perception and mental processes of image-forming resulted in the negative evaluation of theatre and magic as idol producers. In the context it may be useful to remember that the qualification of theatre as the idol-promoting *Chapel of Satan*, at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is in contradiction with its appreciation in the early days of the Reformation, when “Protestant clergymen had embraced the English stage so wholeheartedly as to appear its “driving force”<sup>719</sup>. Calvin's ideas on vision had a controversial effect: he condemned visual delusion and strived to disambiguate sight, but his language, “saturated with idioms of 'juggling', 'dissembling', 'duping', and 'conjuring’”<sup>720</sup> ended by transforming the world into a magical theatre where the devil performed tricks to blur vision.

The central issue of the theologically induced visual quandaries was another of the paradoxes the reformers put into circulation: the axiom that devils could appear in any shape, including that of bright angels. Before the Reformation, when miracles were accepted, theology was more trustful in man's capacity to differentiate angels from demons, with the support of a narrative tradition and iconology. After the Reformation, epiphanies were no longer possible and pictorial representations dismissed as idols. This resulted in a proliferation of visions, sights, dreams, apparitions and undermined the faculty of discernment. No coincidence that the efforts to define criteria of discerning good spirits from wicked ones turned into a battle of ideas on the continent, involving mainly Ludwig Lavater's *Von Gespaentern (De spectris 1569)* and Noel Taillepied's *Psychologie ou traité de l'apparition des esprits (1588)* and no surprise that this controversy did not bring any solutions.<sup>721</sup>

In *Macbeth* the question of delimiting the *fair* from the *foul* is directly related to the reformers' cognitive paradoxes. If the protagonist is trapped in confusion, Malcolm, the future king, shows Macduff that words can make *fair*

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<sup>719</sup> J. Knapp, *Preachers and Players in Shakespeare's England* pp. 91-121. in Orgel, S. and Keilen S. (ed.), *Shakespeare in the Theater*, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York&London, 1999, p.91: “Perhaps the most influential figure among these early Reformers, and a playwright himself, John Foxe, had gone so far to assert that “players, printers, [and] preachers” were “set up of God, as a triple bulwark against the triple crown of the pope, to bring him down” (1563); [quoting from *The Acts and Monuments (1563-83)*, ]; and yet only a few years after the construction of the first permanent playhouses, the Theater and the Curtain (1576), the compiler of *A Second and Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies and Theaters (1580)* called upon “every true soldier of Jesus Christ” to join him in his assault upon “the chapel of Satan, I mean the Theater”, “to the suppressing of those which fight against [God's] word.”

<sup>720</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>721</sup> S.Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, op.cit., pp. 207-211.

things look *foul*, testing his respect for clear principles. The latter's integrity makes Malcolm exclaim:

Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell;  
Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,  
Yet grace must still look so

(IV. III. 21-3).

In a context tragically infested by equivocation, Malcolm cries out the necessity to neutralize equivocation and restore a straight way of reasoning, while in the final duel, Macduff sarcastically alludes to the devil as the *angel* Macbeth has served, hinting again at the protagonist's mental confusion and the Reformers' paradoxical statement that Satan can appear disguised as an angel.

The capacity of wicked spirits to appear as angels is taken for granted by Dr. Dee. In the second scrying session with Kelly, alias Talbot, (March, 10, 1582), Uriel warns the philosopher that “there is a spirit, named Lundrumguffa using you who seketh your destruction, in the hatred of men, in the hurt of thy goods” and orders him: “Discharge him tomorrow with Brymstone”.<sup>722</sup> Next day Kelly calls Uriel and “there appeared one, clothed with a long robe, of purple: all spangled with gold, and on his hed [head], a garland, or wreath of gold: his eyes sparkling: of whome I axed [asked] Whether the characters noted for the Table, wer perfect”<sup>723</sup>. As it comes out this glorious spirit is Dee's persecutor Lundrumguffa costumed as a good angel. He is unmasked by Uriel who “threw the brave spirit down by the sholders. and bet him mightyly with a whip: and toke all his robes, and apparell of him: and then he remayned all heary[hairy] and owggly[ugly]”<sup>724</sup>. Uriel beat the wicked spirit to show Dee “how God hath ponished thy enemy.”<sup>725</sup> and Dee was grateful and blessed his holy name<sup>726</sup>

The instability of sight in the Elizabethan world is directly connected to language. In the interface between the visible and the invisible, language is the only instrument of disclosure, but it is at the same time, inevitably, an instrument of creation. In *Thinking with Demons*, S. Clark has proved that demonology and

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<sup>722</sup> MLP, p.72.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid., p.73.

<sup>724</sup> Ibid., p.74

<sup>725</sup> Ibid., p.74.

<sup>726</sup> Ibidem.

witchcraft are mainly word constructs.<sup>727</sup> Shakespeare's *Macbeth* places verbal equivocation on the same side with visual enigmas, like the dagger or the apparition of Banquo's ghost, and simultaneously questions the reality of visions and the agency producing them, making more than one explanation possible. In the scene of the banquet Banquo's apparition can be interpreted as divine warning, demonic illusion, or as the objectified phantasma of a tormented conscience. All these hypotheses apply to the vision of the dagger as well; actually Lady Macbeth connects the two visions.<sup>728</sup> In the parade of Kings, Banquo's spirit could be just an illusion produced magically, as in the biblical story of King Saul and the witch of Endor<sup>729</sup> but it may have been enacted on stage as a specular illusion, produced with optical devices, that is by human artifice worked out with natural means. Conversely, Dr. Dee's unconditional trust in the veracity of the verbally delivered angelic visions perceived in a *shewstone* is conflicting both with his conviction that human language is incapable of expressing the quiddity of things and with his optical expertise, which included using natural means "to make strange works of the sense to be perceived". Since the presumed objective reality of the richly populated invisible realm is mainly disclosed through language, it engages human imagination to give it shape. Words have eyes precisely because of this creative faculty considered with interest by theology, Platonic and Aristotelean thinkers and central to theatre and to magic.

## 6.2. Vis imaginativa

According to the medieval thought, before the original sin, imagination was controlled by reason, which could naturally separate bad from good. Will, "the faculty by which we choose good after it has been identified by reason" could not "be deceived in its choice, its love, or any of its activities, because then it was able by nature to apprehend everything as it was, but now it cannot do so unless it is

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<sup>727</sup> S. Clark, *Witchcraft and Language*, in *Thinking with Demons*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, rpt. 2005, pp. 3-10.

<sup>728</sup> This is the air-drawn dagger which you said/Led you to Duncan (III.IV.63-4)

<sup>729</sup> S. Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, op.cit., Ch. 7, *Sights: King Saul and King Macbeth*, pp.236-265.

consecrated by grace.”<sup>730</sup> In the postlapsarian world, imagination needs the control of the “light of grace in the reason”, otherwise, “it will never cease, asleep or awake to form alien and disordered images of bodily objects, or else some delusion or other, which is nothing but a bodily conception of something spiritual or a spiritual conception of something bodily. This is always deceptive and false, and associated with error.”<sup>731</sup> The idea that “The will of man is by his reason sway'd”, as Lysander says to Helena, (II. II. 115) was still central, but the Protestant doctrine of predestination and election made the gift of grace elective, while Renaissance anthropology formulated man's dignity in terms of free will. The divine assistance to man in restraining his fantasy and keeping it by grace under the control of reason became arguable if not precarious, considering also the belief in the devil's reinforced attempts to use fantasy as a vehicle.

Renaissance philosophy reconsidered imagination as a precious cognitive faculty. According to Aristotelean theories, imagination elaborated the data of the senses into mental images, which was possible because “objects in the world gave off resemblances or replicas of themselves (*species*) which then travelled to the eyes and, via the eyes and the optic nerves, into the various ventricles of the brain to be evaluated and processed”.<sup>732</sup> The Platonists, from Marsilio Ficino on, rated imagination as an instrument of power, a force, entitled accordingly *vis imaginativa*, and conceived it as a transmission of influences, from the macrocosm through the cosmic and the human spirit respectively<sup>733</sup>, captured in images, words, or musical sounds, with effects on the human soul, the body or on things external to man, like objects or parts of nature.<sup>734</sup> Agrippa argues that the power of “a strong and exalted imagination...is in the soul of man from the root of his Creation”<sup>735</sup> and it has a crucial role in the cognition process. The knowledge, emanated from God as light of wisdom, descends through mind and reason, before it flows into imagination, which converts it into images, making it corporeal knowledge visible to the eye.

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<sup>730</sup> *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Penguin Classics, 2001, Chapter 64, p.90.

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 65.

<sup>732</sup> S. Clark, *Vanities of the Eye, Vision in Early Modern European Culture*, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp.1-2.

<sup>733</sup> D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, The Warburg Institute, London, 1958, p. 48.

<sup>734</sup> D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, op.cit., pp. 76-82.

<sup>735</sup> C.Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, op.cit., Ch. xliii.



This understanding of cognition makes a distinction between knowledge acquired by elaborating sense perceptions, and contemplative truth which emanates from God, even if in both cases the object of the mental image is not directly present to the eye. The Renaissance representatives of the *philosophia perennis* did not deny Aristotelean cognition theories, but knowledge obtained through senses was imperfect, as the natural world, though created after God's plan, was corrupted after the fall. Besides, in the Post-Reformation context, when religious certainties were volatile and the devil could appear in any form, divine wisdom poured directly into mind, reason and imagination had the certainty of truth, because free from the 'allurements of the senses', preachers and demonologists were warning about.

Dr. Dee regarded imagination as the faculty that processes divine input into sensible information. This is proved by the *Monas*, a symbol inspired by the Holy Spirit, as he declared, and reasserted during the conversations with angels. When on April 18, 1583, Uriel provokes Dee: "I will ask thee one question. Haue we any voyce or no?", the philosopher promptly replies:

Δ: I do think you haue no organs or instruments apt for voyce. but are mere spirituall and nothing corporall: but that you haue the powre and property from god to insinuate your message or meaning to eare or eye, in such sort as mans Imagination shall be, that both they here [hear] and see you sensibly.<sup>736</sup>

Uriel confirms: "We haue no voyce but a full voyce that filleth euery place"<sup>737</sup> The dialogue makes it plain that the wonders reported in the *Five Books of Mystery* are actually experienced in the imagination, both in Dee's and Kelly's, or rather, Kelly's 'seething brain' produced one vision after another, Dee willingly responded to. As a philosopher of his time, he did not consider only 'cool reason', his organ of cognition, but also his imagination, the subtle instrument the philosopher fathomed the invisible with. The problem that comes out of the scrying sessions, is that transcendence did not work in him directly, as in the *Monas*, but sent images into the solid medium of the crystal, interpreted and conveyed by Kelly. One wonders if he understood this system of communication as an automatical converter of metaphysical messages, almost scientifically, -

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<sup>736</sup> LMQ, p.352.

<sup>737</sup> Ibidem. Adnotated by Dee as *Vox angelorum*. cf. note 427.

since the voice of the angels was mere vibration -, because he never worried about his *medium's* imagination. And yet, as his memorials and his *Refutation of Slander* certify, Dee knew that there could be another type of imagination, an uncontrolled faculty of invention, which mystifies truth, the instrument of calumny and of the devil according to him, which enabled the ignorant to spread *fables* and *beastly imaginings*<sup>738</sup> on his account. This suggests a conceptual distinction Shakespeare dedicates attention to.

### 6.2.1 Such tricks hath strong imagination

Communicating on the same wave-length of imagination is at the base of the unwritten pact between playwright, performers and spectators in theatre. The poetical images of the text and the suggestions of movement and sound on the stage reach their target, when the circle of imagination is closed by the public's participation in it. *Imagination*, *fantasy* or *fancy* belong to the same conceptual area; in some contexts they are interchangeable, yet Shakespeare tends to distinguish them in his plays. Imagination appears as a cognitive-creative function that translates *forms* into *shapes*, and is essential for the poet, as already stated. Pertinent to this conception is Miranda's statement that she could not envision her future without Ferdinand:

... - I would not wish  
Any companion in the world but you;  
Nor can imagination form a shape,  
Besides yourself, the like of.

(III. I. 53-57)

A strong imagination is common to the lunatic, the lover and the poet,<sup>739</sup> according to Theseus in *MSND*, but it works differently with each category: the

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<sup>738</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.43-4.

<sup>739</sup> The lunatic, the lover and the poet,/ Are of imagination all compact:/ One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,/ That is, the madman; the lover, all as frantic,/ Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt (V. I. 7-11)

lunatic multiplies things mechanically,<sup>740</sup> by seeing 'more devils than vast hell can hold', the lover's imagination has a transfiguring effect, as he “sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt”, while the poet *bodies forth the forms of things unknown*, making them perceptible and granting them an ontological status. The exalted imagination of the *seething brains* is contrasted to *cool reason*:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
more than cool reason ever comprehends.

(V. I. 4-6)

The subtle semantic distinction between *apprehend* and *comprehend* highlights two modalities of cognition. To apprehend means *to seize, to lay hold on*, while to *comprehend* is *apprehend with the senses, esp. sight* [comprehendere visu]<sup>741</sup>, but also to *include, enclose*. One can deduce that imagination is the organ of intuition, able to catch forms that do not present themselves to the eye, while reason needs to con-prehend, to piece together various data in one judgement that makes sense. The same verbal pair - *apprehend* and *comprehend* – returns after Theseus' discourse on the poetic frenzy:

Such tricks hath strong imagination,  
That if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;  
Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

(V. I. 18-23)

The tricks he mentions are actually cognitive strategies based on imagination, which fabricates agencies to explain both psychological and natural phenomena (joy; bush-bear)<sup>742</sup>. The advantage of imagination over *cool reason* in accounting for various events is that it *comprehends*, it encloses the causes, supplying for the

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<sup>740</sup> In *Henry IV*, Part II Lord Bardolph speaks about the “great imagination/Proper to madmen”(I.III. 31-32).

<sup>741</sup> Oxford English Dictionary Online.

<sup>742</sup> This can be compared to Montaigne's Ch. XX in *Essays*, which in Florio's translations sounds: *Fortis imaginatio generat casum: A strong imagination begetteth chance*, and to Antony's words in *Antony and Cleopatra*: *Sometimes we see a cloud that's dragonish;/ A vapour sometime like a bear or lion,/ A tower'd citadel, a pendent rock,/ A forked mountain, or blue promontory/ With trees upon't, that nod unto the world,/ And mock our eyes with air: thou hast seen these signs;/ They are black vesper's pageants.* (IV. XII. 2-8).

missing links and data. This epistemological shortcut, typical of childhood and mythical thought, but also of madmen, lovers and poets, reveals how imagination tames virtually what reason cannot control.

When imagination as internal sight is no longer aimed at comprehending reality, but turns into an uncensored contriver of scenarios that are neither nature based, nor controlled by reason, it is termed as *fantasy* or *fancy*, and it represents an escape of the mind from reality into the field of strange dreams, of the possible perceived as real and of the impossible perceived as possible. The creations of fantasy surpass or contradict nature, they are often “past the size of dreaming”, thus “nature wants stuff/ To vie strange forms with fancy.”<sup>743</sup>

Under what circumstances does this creative capacity of the mind break loose from reason and work on its own? One of them is definitely love. In MSND Hermia thinks “thoughts and dreams and sighs,/ Wishes and tears” are due to love, as they are “poor fancy's followers” (I. I. 154-5). Oberon knows that a hyperactive fantasy belongs to erotic desire and is absent in chastity, when he explains the effects of *the little western flower called love in idleness* with the story of Cupid's fiery shaft that missed *a fair vestal, an imperial votaress* and wounded *the milk-white flower*, turning it purple *with love's wound*, just as “the imperial votaress passed on,/ In maiden meditation, fancy-free”(II. I. 164). The love-inspired fantasy goes so far as to make a character like Helena deny her own self and wish to be 'translated' to Hermia:

My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,  
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.  
Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,  
The rest I'd give to be to you translated.

(I. I. 188-191)

Ambition is another factor that stimulates fantasy. Gonzalo's candid plans of reforming society represent its innocuous side, but actual dreams of power are evil as they reflect Lucifer's sin of pride. Invariably, the fantasy of politically ambitious characters produces “wrong imaginations”<sup>744</sup> like Antonio's vision of a crown dropping on Sebastian's head in *The Tempest* (II. I. 207-8), and the

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<sup>743</sup> Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*, (V. II. 97-8)

<sup>744</sup> Earl of Gloucester, *King Lear*, (IV. VI. 291).

“horrible imaginings” (I. IV. 138), that assail Macbeth when his “black and deep desires”(I. IV. 51) start taking shape.

The concrete conditions for fantasy to start inventing is the lack of a clear vision, understood both as eye-sight and as understanding. In the three plays examined, strangeness and difficulty of perception go hand in hand. Thus Macbeth finds out like Henry V that *fantasy plays upon our eyesight*<sup>745</sup>, a thesis illustrated in MSND and *The Tempest* too, both in the dramatic situations and in the rich texture of figures of style and images that focus on the eye, sight, visions, dreaming, seeming, on what S. Clark calls *equivisual paradoxes*.<sup>746</sup> Tightly connected to this topic is darkness, seminal in *Macbeth* and in MSND, where both the main action and the play within the play take place at night. This puts forward the interdependency of internal and external sight, so Helena speaks about the “dark night, that from the eye his function takes” (III. II. 177). In the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, the impossibility to see clearly makes Pyramus conjecture on his lover's death and commit suicide.

According to the beliefs of his cultural context, Shakespeare ascribes fantasy to external factors, like magic, able to *latch one's eyes*<sup>747</sup> and spirits, that can concur to produce love or stimulate ambition. Specifically in *Macbeth* it can be motivated by the devil's inspiration and connected to Dee's *beastly imaginings*. However, both in these plays and in others Shakespeare treats fantasy as an infirmity of the mind, the emanation of an idle brain and a choice of man to believe in his dreams, rather than make an effort to understand reality and adapt to it. In MSND Helena's discourse on love is a series of contradictions, which illustrate what Bottom remarks later in the play, namely that “reason and love keep little company together...” (III. I. 151):

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;  
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:  
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;  
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:  
And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd.

(I. I. 233-9)

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<sup>745</sup> Henry, Prince of Wales, in Henry IV, Part I, V. IV. 137-8.

<sup>746</sup> S. Clark. *Vanities of the Eyes*, op.cit., p. 252.

<sup>747</sup> Oberon. This falls out better than I could devise./ But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes/ With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do? (III.II.35-7)

Fantasy as a defect of reason is evident in Macbeth, who admits his *dull brain* and obviates judgement to get out of confusion, urged also by his wife who prefers action to thinking. *The Tempest* illustrates it throughout the whole play, which is, as previously debated, a labyrinth set up by Prospero to test his enemies' reason. The final ritual, aimed at purging their *unsettled fancy*, and cleansing *the reasonable shore/ That now lies foul and muddy* (V. I. 81-2), proves that fantasy is the emanation of useless brains, boil'd within their skulls<sup>748</sup>. As shown in the chapter on *Wonder in Theatre and Magic*, delivering oneself to wonder implies a suspension of reason, or in Prospero's terms, causes reason to be devoured.<sup>749</sup> Phantasms, illusions, dreams are explained by Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* as "the children of an idle brain/ Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,/ Which is as thin of substance as the air/ And more inconstant than the wind..." (I. IV. 97-100). The wind of fantasy, Benvolio agrees, "blows us from ourselves"(I. IV. 105), that is, it moves the center of the individual's being into the *as if* perspective, the desirable, unlimited, but utterly ostensible domain of the possible.<sup>750</sup>

In explaining imagination, Shakespeare adheres to Platonic ideas, but in evaluating fantasy or fancy as an infirmity of the mind, that cannot resist the temptation of the possible, he is both close to its medieval understanding and modern. In a previous study we discussed his definition of fancy as comparable to Dante's *lieve fantasia* in *Convivio* (Tratt. 4,15)<sup>751</sup> and the terms Prospero uses in describing the purification ritual of his enemies' *unsettled fancy* (V. I. 79-82) as surprisingly close to the imagery of a mystic like Walter Hilton<sup>752</sup>. On the other hand, even if in the plays under focus spiritual agencies may be considered as 'causes' of the characters' fantastical behavior, Shakespeare suggests that the problem is man's nature and his desire to change his condition, his effort to emancipate himself by entrusting his reason to the vast realm of the hypotheses, of

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<sup>748</sup> Prospero. A solemn air and the best comforter/ To an unsettled fancy cure thy brains,/ Now useless, boil'd within thy skull! (V. I. 58-61).

<sup>749</sup> Prospero. In this last tempest./ I perceive these lords/ At this encounter do so much admire/ That they devour their reason and scarce think/ Their eyes do offices of truth, their words/ Are natural breath: but, howsoe'er you have/ Been justled from your senses, know for certain/ That I am Prospero and that very duke/ Which was thrust forth of Milan, who most strangely/ Upon this shore, where you were wreck'd, was landed,/ To be the lord on't (V. I. 153-162)

<sup>750</sup> G. Dragnea Horvath, *Shakespeare, ermetismo, mistica, magia*, op.cit., p.88.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid., pp. 85-6.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid., pp.89-90.

the promising, of the desirable. In placing the responsibility on man's choices and his capacity to follow reason or fantasy, Shakespeare is closer to modern mentality than Dee, who was convinced the visions in the crystal were coming from God and his enemies' *beastly imaginings* from the devil.

### 6.3 Spiritual Beings

The intermediation between the visible and the invisible specific to theatre and to magic is fitly served in the Elizabethan Renaissance by the spiritual beings, whose existence was taken for granted by religion, popular culture and *perennial philosophy*. Actually, in spite of differences of level or approach, these domains agreed that the invisible world was more extended and powerful than the visible one and each of them contributed entities that were object of faith: angels, demons, fairies, devils, supercelestial and celestial intellects, weather spirits, animal spirits, *genii*, souls of the dead. An analysis of Elizabethan magic and theatre has to take these intermediaries between man and the metaphysical realm into account. Not only are they present in both arts, but they define magic as shown in the *Theoretical premises*. In fact magic was completely delegitimated when the mechanical model of the universe replaced the animistic one.

Animism, defined as the belief in spiritual beings which can interfere with humans, helping or harming them, is probably the most archaic and most enduring human belief. According to Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, who gave the first in-depth analysis of this phenomenon in *Primitive Culture* (1871)<sup>753</sup>, the basic idea and the model for all the other spiritual beings must have been the human soul facing mortality. The final breath of a dying man looked like giving up something that had inhabited the body. In English a synonym of *to die* is *to give up the ghost*. Every archaic culture was based on the belief in spirits, either those of dead ancestors or those governing whatever moved in nature and in the human mind.

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<sup>753</sup> Animism was approached also by Sir James G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915), the sociologist Emile Durkheim in *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915) and Sigmund Freud in *Totem und Tabu: Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker* (1913).

One of the main tasks of the primitive magician was to control these agencies<sup>754</sup>. Generally considered as the primeval form of religion, animism can be equally viewed as the oldest sustainable explanation of natural and psychological phenomena, which makes use of fantasy to extend rationality to the unknown. The objectified spirit becomes an elementary instrument of thinking causation, immortality, of explaining prodigious events, sudden disease and unexpected healing, damage, deformity, anxiety, or transformations in the natural world. Incorporated in the field of ancient philosophy as *daimon* and in the Jewish-Christian tradition as angels and demons, these entities, closer to humans than the radical Otherness of the divine and more manageable than its *mysterium tremendum*, were remarkably versatile in changing their names and appearance and assumed various functions in theological, philosophical, physical, medical or visual theories. They continued to intrigue European intellectuals like Swedenborg, Kant and Schopenhauer through and after the Age of Reason<sup>755</sup>.

The Elizabethans believed in the existence of these fantastical entities because they had manifested themselves in time, as the Bible, ancient fables, books on magic and demonology, fairy-tales and experiences communicated by tradition attested. In the English popular culture, like elsewhere in Europe, spirits and ghosts could materialize as visions, but also incarnate themselves in animals, humans or hybrids like the werewolf, which betrays the tendency of man's mind to concretize its visions, in order to make them credible, that is accepted by other minds. This passage from indefinite, invisible entities to corporeal beings was legitimized primarily by religion. A figure of authority like St. Augustine defined demons in *De Civitate Dei* following Apuleius, as “animals in respect of species; in respect of soul liable to passions; in mind, capable of reason; in body, composed of air; in life-span eternal”<sup>756</sup>, but relegated the pagan cults of ancient

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<sup>754</sup> M. Eliade, *Shamanism, Archaic techniques of ecstasy*, op.cit., Arkana, Penguin Books, 1989, pp. 5-6 : “the shaman controls his “spirits”, in the sense that he, a human being, is able to communicate with the dead, “demons” and “nature spirits”, without thereby becoming their instrument. To be sure, shamans are sometimes found to be “possessed”, but these are exceptional cases for which there is a particular explanation.

<sup>755</sup> E. Swedenborg, *Arcana Cælestia* (1749–1756); *De Cælo et Ejus Mirabilibus et de inferno. Ex Auditibus et Visis* (1758); *Drömboken, Journalanteckningar, 1743–1744* (1859); *Diarum, Ubi Memorantur Experientiae Spirituales* (1983–1997), I. Kant, *Träume eines Geistersehers* (1766); A. Schopenhauer, *Versuch über das Geistersehen und was damit zusammenhängt*, (Parerga und Paralipomena, 1845-1851).

<sup>756</sup> St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, eng. *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, Penguin Classics, London, 1984, Book IX, 8, p.352 in reference to Apuleius, *De Deo Socratis*.



Egypt, Greece and Rome to demon worship. This implies that demons had the capacity to incarnate as gods or animals and “interact constantly with mortals in very physical ways” as W. Stephens has remarked in *Demon Lovers*.<sup>757</sup> In this study, Stephens traces the history of the transformation of fallen angels from pure spirits with airy bodies to entities that could take on human or animal shape, copulate with humans and procreate, as the inquisitors claimed in 'ascertained' cases of witchcraft. The visitations of spiritual beings were unpredictable, but not unintentional. Theology emphasized God's permission to these agencies to challenge, test or punish humans.

*Perennial Philosophy* treated spiritual beings in the broader attempt to conceptualize what S. Toussaint named “la participation organique de l'incorporel au corporel”<sup>758</sup>. The integration of the corporeal and the incorporeal was elaborated by Ficino ignoring the dogmatic tenets of the Church. For him the world is not divided into the postlapsarian domain of nature and the afterlife spaces of hell, purgatory and paradise, populated by the traditional angels, souls of the dead and devils, but is an animated *unicum*, with a body, a soul and a spirit which infused movement and made the fifth essence present everywhere. The visible planets whose energy he taught to capture with images in *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*, were moved and determined in their specific profile by demons, he believed to “have souls and aetheric or aërial bodies, according to their status” and whose “bodies are of a like nature to the human spirit.”<sup>759</sup> The difficulty to introduce these ideas in a period when the Inquisition was becoming very harsh, made him admit the existence of bad demons and ultimately desist from clarifying his distinctions.<sup>760</sup>

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<sup>757</sup> W. Stephens, *Demon Lovers, Witchcraft, Sex and the Crisis of Belief*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2002, p. 61.

<sup>758</sup> S. Toussaint, *De l'enfer à la Coupole Dante, Brunelleschi et Ficin*, Fondazione Camillo Caetani, 1997, Roma, p.115.

<sup>759</sup> D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic, From Ficino to Campanella*, The Warburg Institute, University of London, London, 1958, p. 47.

<sup>760</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7. Walker quotes a significant passage from Ficino's *Commentary of the Laws*: “That the powers of the higher spirits, however it may be done, influence our spirits we cannot deny, since we clearly see that our bodies are moved by the higher bodies... But if these spirits act on our spirits, they also act on our bodies. Indeed passions of the human body, whether induced by these higher spirits or higher bodies, overflow into the soul in so far as the soul, by acquired or natural affects, has sunk itself in the body. But there is this difference: that those [celestial] bodies move our souls through our bodies; the [celestial] spirits, on the other hand, both move the soul through the body, and directly move the soul, and move it through that [human] spirit which the Physicians often call the bond of the soul and body.”

In *De Occulta Philosophia*, Agrippa made a complete survey of intelligences and spirits, good and bad, according to Proclus, Psellus, Iamblichus, as well as Christian and Hebrew Theologians (Book, III, chs. xvi- xvii), but he also developed a doctrine of spiritual elements. Thus if Ficino transported the Aristotelean fifth essence down to the natural world, Agrippa made the four elements participate in the celestial worlds: “The elements are not only in the lower world, but also in the heavens, in the stars, in the demons, in the angels, and finally even in the creator and the archetype. In the lower worlds, the elements are dense forms, clumsy matter and material elements; in the heavens, however, they are according to their characteristics and strengths, in a heavenly mode and more excellent than below the moon. For the heavenly earth is without density, the agility of the water and the air without violent flowing; the fire does not injure but illuminates and animates everything with its warmth.”<sup>761</sup>

Bruno was even more radical in this integration. For him the divinity was present in things, *natura est deus in rebus*<sup>762</sup>, and on the other hand: “the infinite universe is one: a single continuum: a compound of ethereal regions and worlds. The worlds are innumerable, and they should be understood to reside in diverse regions of the single universe and to exist according to the same law of nature as this world which we inhabit is understood and does reside in its own space and region.”<sup>763</sup> As far as spiritual beings are concerned, Bruno accepted that “it is easy for demons to penetrate through bodies and to initiate thoughts in us”<sup>764</sup> and attempts a classification as “not all spirits or demons have the same level of existence, power and knowledge”.<sup>765</sup> He distinguishes the *aqueous and terrestrial spirits*, who are deprived of reason and hostile, from the *wiser demons* which reside in the air, the *ethereal spirits*, “which are pure and luminous” and the *spirits of fire* “which are more properly called heroes and gods” and “are said to be the ministers of God”<sup>766</sup>.

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<sup>761</sup> W.Schmidt-Biggemann, op.cit., p. 316.

<sup>762</sup> G.Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, translated and edited by Arthur D. Imerti, with an Introduction and Notes, University of Nebraska, Lincoln and London, p. 235.

<sup>763</sup> G.Bruno, *On the Infinite, the Universe and Worlds*, in Renaissance Philosophy, Vol.I, *The Italian Philosophers*, ed. Arturo B. Fallico and Herman Shapiro, New York: The Modern Library, 1967, p. 418.

<sup>764</sup> G. Bruno, *Essays on Magic* translated and edited by Richard J. Blackwell, CUP, 1998, p. 124.

<sup>765</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>766</sup> Ibid., pp.124-5.

To this already wide and diversified inventory of spiritual entities, Dee's scrying experiments will add new names, attributes and physical descriptions. The world of the possible, contained before him only in written words, started taking shape and this actualization of spirits who acted and talked in the crystal globe plausibly convinced him of the veracity of the experiments. Dee was a believer, but he was also a scientist.

The proliferation of various classes of spiritual beings in early modernity, before and after the Reformation, is a consequence of the cultural syncretism initiated with the Italian Renaissance and adopted by intellectuals on the continent and in England, as much as an expression of religious instability, the mark of a crisis of belief, that did not resolve itself into disbelief, skepticism or atheism, but rather into an exploration of the possible in search for other objects of belief. Novalis' statement "Wo keine Götter sind walten Gespenster" in *Die Christenheit oder Europa* (1799) is likely to apply not only to the passage from the Greek *Götterlehre* to Christianity, but also to the shift from early modernity to modernity. On the other hand, the success of ceremonial magic with representatives of the *philosophia perennis* like Dr. Dee can be interpreted as an attempt to discipline and control these agencies, converting their knowledge and power into benefits for man.

Certified only by language either in oral or written form<sup>767</sup>, the existence of spiritual beings can be proven, as W.Schmidt-Biggemann points out, in a logical circle: "They are held to be real since they are believed to have effects. This belief may be the particular effect they have, and this is indeed precisely what believers attribute to the spiritual world. Thus there is no possible critical or emancipatory access to the world of spirituality".<sup>768</sup> Consequently if "the spiritual world is to be interpreted in terms of its own credibility, its semi-existence between tangible reality and poetic fiction has to be accepted and taken seriously."<sup>769</sup>

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<sup>767</sup> S. Clark, *Witchcraft and Language*, in *Thinking with Demons*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, rpt.2005, pp. 3-10.

<sup>768</sup> W.Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op.cit., p.3.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid., p.4: "This is, incidentally, the principal prerequisite for understanding any religious phenomenon. If religion is not taken seriously, it cannot be understood, it can only be denounced. It is the same with spirituality. Anyone who is interested in more than merely dismissing as nonsense the vast literature on spirituality in the Western tradition must accept this particular form of virtual reality. Such an acceptance does not imply that this reality is

### 6.3.1 Semantic Turbulence

The proliferation of spiritual entities in the Elizabethan world and the lack of criteria to discern them was accompanied by semantic relativism. Neither theologians, nor translators of the Bible were rigorous in distinguishing them lexically, and even less was popular culture. Elizabethans referred to these entities loosely or sometimes interchangeably as fairies, spirits, goblins, elves, angels, demons, devils. In *Macbeth*, the dead Banquo is indicated as a *soul*<sup>770</sup>, a *ghost*<sup>771</sup> and a *spirit*<sup>772</sup> in the King's parade, act IV<sup>773</sup>. As K. Thomas informs, for the Elizabethans fairies belonged “to the same genre as the witch's familiars or the conjurer's demons”<sup>774</sup>. Indeed Shakespeare's fairies *run by triple Hecate's team*, a goddess associated explicitly with magic in *Macbeth*. Ariel is a spirit whose name appears in Agrippa's book, but is alluded at by various characters in the play as *devil* and *fairy*. Prospero's spirits pinch and torment Caliban physically just as fairies allegedly did.<sup>775</sup> In MSND Puck mentions the ghosts wandering at night, “damned spirits all”, that before morning “troop home to churchyards”<sup>776</sup> and Oberon specifies, obviously for the public: “But we are spirits of another sort”<sup>777</sup>, suggesting that the lack of semantic difference<sup>773</sup> can result in a lack of conceptual clarity.

In Shakespeare's plays *spirit* is also an entity assigned to every individual at birth to guide and inspire his actions, the agent that calibrates the individual

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necessarily believed to be ‘true’ in any defined way, but that it is to be understood as a fantastical condition of human behaviour.”

<sup>770</sup> As soon as the murderers confirm their resolution to kill Banquo, Macbeth comments: “It is concluded. Banquo, thy soul's flight./ If it find heaven, must find it out to-night.” (III. I. 141-2).

<sup>771</sup> Stage directions, III. IV. the Banquet scene.

<sup>772</sup> In front of Banquo's vision with a glass in his hand, Macbeth exclaims: “Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo.”(IV. I. 134).

<sup>773</sup> In front of Banquo's vision with a glass in his hand, Macbeth exclaims: “Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo.”(IV. I. 134).

<sup>774</sup> K.Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op.cit., p. 609.

<sup>775</sup> They pitch him “i'the mire”, lead him, “like a firebrand, in the dark/ Out of my way,” and then “Sometime like apes that mow and chatter at me/ And after bite me, then like hedgehogs which/ Lie tumbling in my barefoot way and mount/ Their pricks at my footfall; sometime am I/ All wound with adders who with cloven tongues/ Do hiss me into madness. (II. II. 9-13)

<sup>776</sup> MSND, III. II. 381-2.

<sup>777</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

soul. In this sense it is a synonym of the Socratic *daimon*, the Latin *spiritus* and the Christian guardian angel. This historical filiation of concepts is synthetically explained by the Soothsayer in *Antony and Cleopatra* when he advises Antony to avoid staying by Caesar's side:

Thy demon, that's thy spirit which keeps thee, is  
Noble, courageous high, unmatchable,  
Where Caesar's is not; but, near him, thy angel  
Becomes a fear, as being o'erpower'd: therefore  
Make space enough between you.

(II. III. 19-23)

In *Julius Caesar* there is yet another name to denote the same idea: *genius*<sup>778</sup>. Macbeth uses it too in comparing himself to Banquo:

There is none but he  
Whose being I do fear: and, under him,  
My genius is rebuked; as it is said,  
Mark Antony's was by Caesar.

(III. I. 54-7)

Pertinent to Shakespeare's interests as a dramatist, this dispensation of immortality actualizes as power in human interaction, rather than as a sum of attributes. Shakespeare's personas ascribe their own reactions to the genius or guiding spirit, the way heroes of ancient literature did. Demetrius tells Helena: "Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit/ For I am sick when I do look on thee" (II. I. 211-2). In *The Tempest*, Ferdinand promises Prospero to control his instincts before marriage<sup>779</sup>, with the following words: "the strong'st suggestion/ Our worser genius can, shall never melt/ Mine honour into lust" (IV. I. 26-9). The idea that one person has a good spirit and a *worser* one reflects the cosmic tension between good and evil in the microcosm. When the worser spirit is predominant, as in the protagonist of *Richard III*, Queen Margaret calls him a *cacodemon* and sends him to hell, which is again placing a classical concept in a Christian context:

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<sup>778</sup> Brutus: Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar, I have not slept./ Between the acting of a dreadful thing/ And the first motion, all the interim is/ Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:/ The Genius and the mortal instruments/ Are then in council; and the state of man,/ Like to a little kingdom, suffers then/ The nature of an insurrection. (II. I. 61-9)

<sup>779</sup> Prospero: If thou dost break her virgin-knot before/ All sanctimonious ceremonies may/ With full and holy rite be ministered,/ No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall/ To make this contract grow; but barren hate,/ Sour-eyed disdain, and discord shall bestrew/ The union of your bed with weeds so loathly/ That you shall hate it both. Therefore take heed,/ As Hymen's lamps shall light you (IV. I. 15-23).

Hie thee to hell for shame, and leave the world,  
Thou cacodemon! there thy kingdom is.

(I. III. 143-4)

Used only in the plural, *spirits* denote the various *pneumata* in Galen's medical theory<sup>780</sup> particles responsible for physiology, bearing the individual characteristics and possible agencies of contamination.<sup>781</sup> When Lady Macbeth decides to pour her spirits in Macbeth's ear (I. V. 27), this could have been taken not only as a metaphor for persuading her husband into murder, but literally as actual transfer of her nature to Macbeth's soul through the ear, one of the orifices the demons used to penetrate the body. The natural, vital and animal spirits determine the stamina and it was believed magic could bind them, increasing or diminishing their energy. Shocked by the tempest and charmed by Miranda, Ferdinand declares: *My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up* (I. II. 487). In act II, scene I, when some of the group are possessed by "a strange drowsiness"(II. I. 198) under the effect of Ariel's solemn music, Antonio remarks that the others "fell together all, as by consent;/ They dropp'd as by a thunder-stroke" (II. I. 201-3), while his *spirits* were *nimble*, and in fact he immediately starts instructing Sebastian to become a regicide. Also, in act III, Alonso, invites Gonzalo to sit down and rest: "Old lord, I cannot blame thee,/ Who am myself attach'd with weariness,/ To the dulling of my spirits: sit down, and rest."(III. III. 4-6)

The multiple meanings of *spirit* and *spirits* in Shakespeare's plays argue for his vision of theatre as mirror of the time, specifically as reflection of the semantic and conceptual instability regarding these entities in the Elizabethan context. Poetry, that works with multiple meanings and suggestions, was not expected to infuse rigor into these overlapping concepts, but neither did philosophy supply clear distinctions or a systematic reduction of the classes of spirits. On the contrary, as seen before, it contributed to their multiplication and

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<sup>780</sup> They were "particles that travelled through the blood, from the liver to the heart via the veins, and from the heart to the brain via the arteries. The initially "natural" spirits, concocted in the liver along with the humours, became "vital" spirits in the heart, themselves refined into "animal" spirits by the cerebellum." In N. Arikha, *Passions and Tempers, A History of the Humours*, Harper Collins, 2007, pp. 38-9.

<sup>781</sup> On the evolution of their interpretation in the 17<sup>th</sup> century: Clericuzio, Antonio, *The Internal Laboratory. The Chemical Reinterpretation of Medical Spirits in England (1650-1680)* in Rattansi, Piyo and Clericuzio, Antonio, *Alchemy and Chemistry in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, London, 1994, pp. 51-83.

every philosopher proposed a variation of the inventory and roles of spirits. Examining Dee's marginalia on the works of Dionysius the Areopagite, D. Harkness discovered that

he noted, for example that the number of angels within each hierarchy was “innumerable”, despite scriptural references to “a thousand times a thousand” or “ten thousand times ten thousand”.<sup>782</sup>

This numerical progression of spiritual entities, analogous to Bruno's expansion of the universe into an infinity of worlds, proves once more the tension between Dee's faith and his continuous desire to increase his knowledge by accumulation. It is also the counterpart of his extraordinary capacity of synthesis manifested in the *Monas*. Prospecting such a vast territory of the possible that needed to be explored, the philosopher created the space in which Kelly could freely invent one spirit after another. Within *ten thousand times ten thousand* possibilities, every contrivance has a right to exist. During the scrying sessions, Dr. Dee refers to the spiritual entities they get in contact with as angels, spirits, creatures, or by naming their function in the hierarchy of the invisible, like princes, governors, kings etc. In doing so he keeps on the side of high culture, faith and rigor. Kelly nonchalantly veers away into the bewildering categories of popular culture. The Enochian *tohcōth* is explained as follows: “this name comprehendeth the number of all the fayries, who are divels next to the state and condition of man”<sup>783</sup>.

How can the spirits in Shakespeare's theatre and Dee's experiments be approached? For the poet as well as for the philosopher they appear both as objects of inquiry and professional instruments. They can be divided according to their cultural sources and their relationship with nature. Nature can be branched into human nature and Nature, the microcosm and the macrocosm. Accordingly spirits participate in human nature, pertaining to the criteria of individuation, or in the movements and transformations of the cosmos and the tangible Nature, they can be personal or impersonal. However, impersonal spirits or angels can change class and become personal guardians or professional spirits of a specific individual, which proves again the multiform, elusive nature of these entities and their resistance to being classified.

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<sup>782</sup> D. Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels*, op.cit., p. 109.

<sup>783</sup> CED, p.35.

### 6.3.2. Spirits and Goals

Dee and Shakespeare share the conviction that spirits are instrumental to their arts, but their motivations and goals are diverse. The philosopher expects the angels to deliver him absolute knowledge, including the *celestiall speche*, so that he could gain power over creation and make his doctrine operative in the natural world. The 'creatures' serve Kelly too in his effort to comply with Dee's extraordinary requirements, send him oblique messages and, all in all, exert through them his own magic as art of persuasion.

Shakespeare brings spirits on stage to expose the public to its own imaginary world, by warning about the role of fantasy in stimulating desire and obscuring reason. In *MSND* the disarray created by blind Cupid is first augmented by the fairies, who then benevolently adjust it. In *Macbeth* the confusion of the weird sisters aims at using the protagonist as an instrument to undermine the goodness of creation, while in *The Tempest* it is artificially created by Prospero - the prince, magician, theatre maker -, with the help of spirits, to test his enemy's reason, bring justice and try to “chase the ignorant fumes that mantle” the “clearer reason” of his enemies. *The Tempest* suggests that all spirits in Shakespeare's plays serve him to edify his public and *melt the darkness*, not by giving final answers, but by provoking dilemmas and questioning man's ideas about himself in an epistemological tension that prefigures the Cartesian doubt. Thus Shakespeare's spirits stimulate the public's fantasy only to call its attention to the necessity of a *clearer reason* and of self-examination.

In the *Five Books of Mystery* Dee is the co-author and receiver of the messages, actor and spectator in the angelic performances. The spirits create confusion and disambiguate it partially when the knowledge they reveal confirms ideas in the books he has studied. As proved in various sections of this investigation, the philosopher is also confronted with utter obscurity, the opposite of his expectations, which does not, however, undermine his trust in them. Kelly suggests several times that the spirits are inventions, mere actors in a drama of cognition the philosopher wants to perform. On May, 8<sup>th</sup>, 1583, for example, a



Man appears in the stone and asks Dee rhetorically: “How pitifull a things is, when the wise, are deluded?”<sup>784</sup>. With the declared desire to do him good, he assures Dee:

Man: - As truly as the Lord liueth, all that is done, is lies.<sup>785</sup>

However Dee smells the smoke<sup>786</sup> and classifies this warning as a wicked tempter. Since the philosopher prefers to believe in his special status and in the God-willed apparitions, there is no analogous function to Shakespeare's spirits in rendering him, as a recipient of the performances, more self-aware, even if Kelly may have wanted to.

In Shakespeare's plays one can distinguish between the textual references to spiritual entities and the actual presence of spirits on stage as characters in the plot. The genius or personal angel is not manifested, but only referred to. Analogously angels and devils are mentioned by various personas, but do not appear on stage.

Dee's and Kelly's scrying experiments are aimed at rendering the angels manifest. The angels, in turn, teach Dee various lessons by using 'shewers', that is entities that take on various understandable and recognizable shapes and make the secrets of creation visible. The necessity to render the invisible manifest becomes more urgent in moments when Dee's incredulity has to be dissipated. For example, Salamian warns the philosopher that “Mamon, with his servants, are present about thee: whose presence doth hinder the presence of the vertues Adonay our comming”<sup>787</sup> and urges him to drive him away but Dee replies:

It is incomparably more easy for you to do. And as for my parte, I fele neyther in body, nor sowle, any token of his presence or working.<sup>788</sup>

In order to make Dee aware of his incapacity to pierce the invisible, Salamian performs an operation of efficient disclosure:

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<sup>784</sup> QLMA, p.407.

<sup>785</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>786</sup> Ibidem. The complete episode in Appendix 3.

<sup>787</sup> MLP, p.82.

<sup>788</sup> Ibidem.

Δ:...Thereuppon he caused the whole chamber (which we were in) to appere very playnely in the stone: and so there shewed a gret cumpany of wycked spirits to be in the chamber: and among them, One, most horrible and grisely thretting [threatening] and approaching to our heds: and skorning and gnashing at us.<sup>789</sup>

As already mentioned, Shakespeare's characters are aware of their *genius* or *demon* [daimon] and of the *pneumata* responsible for their physiology. These entities could be classed as personal spirits, as they pertain to human nature as much as the soul, which turns into a ghost after a sinful life. Ghosts appear on stage in Shakespeare's plays<sup>790</sup> to denounce concealed murders and abuse, which responded to the general expectations of the audience<sup>791</sup> and the function of theatre as a cathartical ritual of justice. Together with the personal spirits, ghosts delineate Shakespeare's concern with human nature in life and afterlife. This differentiates him from Dee, who is not interested in exploring the *microcosm* or in contacting the spirits of the dead, as necromancers pretended to do in his time. His focus is on angels as instantiations of God's intellect and the entities in charge of the world's physical and chemical processuality, which belong to the same divine emanations. Therefore Shakespeare uses spirits to highlight man's relationship to his peers, to Nature and to transcendence. Dee's all encompassing vision of spiritual entities regards the *macrocosm* and the energies he aspired to command for the transformation of Nature.

### 6.3.3 Good and Bad Spirits

In the context of the visual and semantic turbulence of their age, can the playwright's and the magician's spirits be divided into good and bad ones? In MSND the fairies have a dual behaviour: they can be unpredictably harmful and/or harmless<sup>792</sup> malefic and/or benefic. They can produce weather changes, disease and infertility with their disputes, as Titania acknowledges to Oberon<sup>793</sup>:

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<sup>789</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>790</sup> In *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.

<sup>791</sup> K.Thomas, op. cit, on the purpose of ghosts, pp. 711-718.

<sup>792</sup> Stephano: Monster, your fairy, which you say is a/ harmless fairy, has done little better than played/ the Jack with us. (IV. I. 196-8).

<sup>793</sup> MSND, II. I. 81-114.

And this same progeny of evils comes  
from our debate, from our dissension;  
We are their parents and original

(II. I. 115-17)

However the same fairies engage in restoring harmony, mend the defects of love fancy and at the end of the play promise health and fertility.

The spirits in *The Tempest* torment the selfish and the ignorant and enchant Ferdinand according to Prospero's intentions and the application of the principle of justice. They are able to create the illusion of hell by producing “several and strange noises/ Of roaring, shrieking, howling, jingling chains,/ And more diversity of sounds, all horrible” as The Boatswain, reports (V. I. 231-33). But they can also artificially recreate heaven, inducing the revelation of the sacred in a character like Caliban, who recounts to Stephano and Trinculo:

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. 147-155)

The harmfulness of Shakespeare's spirits can be minimal, - actualized in domestic accidents that look like practical jokes -, or absolute. The first category is represented by “the shrewd and knavish sprite/ Call'd Robin Goodfellow”,

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?

(II. I. 33-39)

By contrast, the aim of the *cruel ministers* in *Macbeth* is to *untie the winds and let them fight/ Against the churches*. Their malignity enacts the devil's enmity and is therefore directed against the divine creation and order. Even Hecate, mentioned

only as a divinity of the night in MSND794, describes herself in *Macbeth* as *The close contriver of all harms*, (III. V. 7) and announces: “this night I'll spend/ unto a dismal and a fatal end.”(IV. V. 20-1). In *Macbeth* the ambiguity of the spirits does not manifest itself in aims or actions, - obviously destructive-, but in the domain of word equivocation, - the demon-witches *lie like truth*. Compared to the whimsical behaviour of the spirits in MSND, which actually accounts for uncontrollable natural events, the word equivocation of the cruel ministers in *Macbeth* appears more devastating as it affects the history of a nation, it takes time prisoner. If weather changes, disease, infertility or the physical deformity ascribable to the fairies are impossible to avoid, the devil's equivocation could have been resisted to or unmasked by mere questioning and by making a morally valid choice and thus the ruinous effects of their lying like truth could have been prevented.

In *The Five Books of Mystery* spirits can be divided into good and evil, according to their attitude to Dee. The majority of the entities that manifest themselves in the stone are good to him: they reassure him of his being elect, instruct or admonish him, when he seems to 'deviate from the right path', they defeat the few evil spirits classified as his personal enemies. In other cases figures like the Man try to dissipate the charm of the scrying sessions, but Dee is convinced of their wickedness. A debatable case, connected to later scrying sessions on the continent, is Madimi. Initially a little girl and later a provocative young woman, she commanded Dee and Kelly the cross-matching and blurred Dee's moral sense with the promise of absolute knowledge, the one before the original sin, therefore before man was able to distinguish between good and evil. Considering the spiritual entities from Kelly's point of view, they are all aimed to be efficient, therefore good for his purposes.

The attempt to circumscribe the nature and attributes of spirits according to ethical or theological criteria is thwarted by the subjective perception of the various humans they interact with and by the principle of utility, according to which all of them are good as far as they serve the playwright's or the magician's ends.

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<sup>794</sup> Puck: And we fairies, that do run/ By the triple Hecate's team,/ From the presence of the sun,/ Following darkness like a dream,/ Now are frolic... (V. II. 13-7).

### 6.3.4 Angelus Tuae Professionis

In ceremonial magic one can consider every spirit or angel conjured, invoked, prayed or commanded as a professional aid. Since Renaissance magic was an operative modality of philosophizing, spiritual beings were instrumental to the philosopher in two directions: to access divine wisdom and to transform reality, actuating his mission as a priest and a healer. There is no doubt that for Dr. Dee contacting spirits represented the highest achievement in his profession. A contemporary mind finds it hard to conceive that an exchange of philosophical ideas in 1582 involved the participation of spirits, as Dee's private diary reports on May, 23<sup>rd</sup>:

Robert Gardener declared unto me hora 4 ½ a certayn philosophicall secret, as he had termed it, of a spirituall creatuer, and was this day willed to come to me and declare it, which was solemnly done, and with common prayer.<sup>795</sup>

The magician's spirits could be assimilated to the *daimon* of classical culture and the guardian angels of the Jewish-Christian tradition. Girolamo Cardano (1501-1576), who met Dee in 1552 or 1553, expressed in his *De Vita Propria*<sup>796</sup> the belief “that guardian angels had inspired the work of philosophers such as Socrates, Plotinus, and Synesius, and he argued that guardian angels influenced his own natural philosophy.”<sup>797</sup> In *De Occulta Philosophia* Agrippa claims that “Every man hath a *threefold good Demon*, as a proper keeper, or preserver, the one whereof is holy, another of the nativity, and the other of profession.”<sup>798</sup> The *holy Demon* has a supernatural cause, “from God himself, the president of Demons, being universall, above nature” and it is assigned “according to the Doctrine of the Egyptians to the rationall soul”, this Demon “doth direct the life of the soul & doth alwaies put good thoughts into the minde”, which allows Agrippa to equate it to the Socratic *daimon*. The *Genius* is defined as the Demon of the nativity, descending at birth “from the disposition of the world, and from the circuits of the Stars”. The *Demon of the profession* is equally determined by the

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<sup>795</sup> *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee*, op.cit., p. 15.

<sup>796</sup> Published in 1643.

<sup>797</sup> D. Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels*, op. cit., pp.112-3.

<sup>798</sup> C. Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, Book III, ch. xxii, op. cit., online edition.

position of the stars, as every profession was represented and protected by a specific astral configuration. The harmony of these three entities governing individual life was considered essential by Agrippa.<sup>799</sup>

Dr. Dee had all the reasons to consider the angels that appear in the sessions - Uriel Michael, Raphael and *Fortitudo Dei* [Gabriel] - as his guardian angels. Uriel tests him on the subject:

Ur: The strength of God, is allwayes with thee. Dost thow know, what thow writest?

Δ: In two senses, I may understand it: eyther that the good Angel Gabriel<sup>800</sup> is allwayes with me, though invisibly: or els, that the strength, and mighty hand of God, allwayes is my defense.

Ur: Fortitudo Dei, tecum semper est.

One can make a comprehensive list of professional spirits in *The Five Books of Mystery*, adding to the traditional angels mentioned above, “the 49 Angels glorious and excellent, appointed for the government of all earthly actions: Which 49 do work and dispose the will of the Creator: limited from the begynning in strength, powre, and glorie”<sup>801</sup> and various other anonymous apparitions that respond to Dee's dilemmas or anxieties.

On March, 14, 1582, when Kelly, still marked as E.T. (Edward Talbot) was trying to win Dee's trust, the angel/ demon of Dee's profession materializes itself. Thus Michael appears with a man “hauing his hed all hyd, as it were in a blak hode”<sup>802</sup>. The scene seems to be that of an execution. The man is stripped of his clothes and left “onely in his shirt”. After showing him the letters NA in a “little rownd Tablet, as it were, of the bignes of a sixpence”, Uriel “seemed to take apparaile,” that looked like silk and “put on the man”. The man kneels, hands up and Uriel performs a sort of ritual of consecration, remnant of Catholic suggestions: he sets something that looked like “a lawrell bush” on the man's head and gave him the round thing to eat. Dee notes down: “the man turned his face

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<sup>799</sup> Ibidem: “When therefore a profession agrees with our nature, there is present with us a Demon of our profession like unto us, and sutable [suitable] to our Genius, and our life is made more peaceable, happy, and prosperous: but when we undertake a profession unlike, or contrary to our Genius, our life is made laborious, and troubled with disagreeing patrons.”

<sup>800</sup> MLP, p.56: He equates Gabriel to Praevalescentia-siue praepotentia-siue Fortitudo praevalescens-Dei.

<sup>801</sup> MLT, p.170.

<sup>802</sup> MLP, p.77.

toward E.T. the skryer: and the man did resemble me (John Dee) in countenance. And then he turned to Michaël agayn. Michael wrote upon the mans back, thus, ANGELUS TUAE PROFESSIONIS.

Δ: Then E.T. asked me, yf there were such Angels of a mans Profession: and I answered yea; as in Agrippa and other, is declared.”<sup>803</sup>

The angel of Dee's profession as his own image in the crystal with a laurel bush [sic!] on his head, illuminates Kelly's creative use of written sources and his intuition that Dee was hoping to find in the world of the spirits the recognition of his merits, the real world had denied him. It attests the psychological dimension of magic as art of persuasion and it proves that, in spite of its theological implications and the pious attitude of the adept, magic remains fundamentally a man-centered domain, in other words, at the end of the journey the magician finds the reflection of his own image.

### 6.3.5 These our actors...were all spirits.

Shakespeare's spirits are main instruments in the plot and in *The Tempest* overtly indicated as the playwright's professional aids. As previously discussed<sup>804</sup> the name Ariel, probably taken from books of magic, was adapted by Shakespeare to evoke the *airy nothing* the poet works with. After the masque in act IV, Ferdinand asks; “May I be bold/To think these spirits?”(IV.I.119-120) and Prospero replies unequivocally: “Spirits, which by mine art I have from their confines call'd to enact/My present fancies.” (IV. I. 120-2). Further on he explains:

...These our actors  
As I foretold you, were all spirits and  
Are melted into air, into thin air:

(IV. I. 148-150)

The actors are part of the *baseless fabric of this vision*, the magical illusion of the theatrical performance, but the statement is reversible- all spirits are actors -, and

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<sup>803</sup> MLP, pp.76-7.

<sup>804</sup> 4.2.5 Theatre and Magic in *The Tempest*.

it allows to view them as players and as entities enacting Prospero's will, turning his intention into action.

Analogies have been pointed out between Prospero and Oberon, the fairy king, but also *king of the shadows*, (leader of actors III. II. 347), both masters of spirits and invisible to most of the actors in the play, as playwrights or stage directors are. Puck is a trickster, but Prospero also calls Ariel “My tricky spirit” (V. I. 226). They have analogous attributes and are equally spectators and actors in the plot. Puck declares: “I’ll be an auditor;/ An actor too perhaps, if I see cause” (III. I. 84-5), while Ariel is praised by Prospero for his performance: “Bravely the figure of this harpy hast thou/ Perform’d, my Ariel; a grace it had, devouring” (III. III. 83-85). The witches' beards could be an allusion to the fact that they were actors, as only male actors were accepted on stage, so Macbeth could have been victim of a theatrical illusion. The spirits in *The Tempest* are kept under control by Prospero's books of magic, as Caliban knows, when he insists on burning them to deprive him of power<sup>805</sup>, but in the Elizabethan theatrical jargon, *book* also meant the script of the play, as John Florio informs.<sup>806</sup> The weird sisters and Hecate are called “cruel ministers/ Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen” (V. VII. 97-8), which implies that the couple used them, just as Prospero uses his spirits for good purposes<sup>807</sup>. In *The Tempest* spirits are also called ministers. Ariel presents himself and his fellows as *ministers of Fate* (III. III. 62) and Prospero calls the other spirits *my meaner ministers* (III. III. 87). This is just another lexical confirmation of the spirits' instrumental character.

Kelly's and Dee's spiritual entities are also actors, even if each of the two may have given his own interpretation to the term. Dee probably understood all participants, the angels/ spirits, Kelly and himself as co-acting in scrying experiments, he commonly referred to as *actions*. Michael appears on April 28, 1582 and announces:

Mi: This is one Action, in one person: I speak of you two. (which Dee adnotates as “Union of us two”).

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<sup>805</sup> Remember/ First to possess his books; for without them/ He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not/ One spirit to command: they all do hate him/ As rootedly as I. Burn but his books. (III.II.102-106)

<sup>806</sup> OED Online: 1598 FLORIO Worlde of Wordes 51/3 Buriasso,...a prompter, or one that keepes the book for plaiers.

<sup>807</sup> Hecate warns the witches in fact, that Macbeth is “a wayward son, / Spiteful and wrathful; who, as others do,/ loves for his own ends, not for you” (III. V. 11-13)



Δ: You meane us two to be ioyned so, and in mynde united, as yf we wer one man?

Mi: Thou understandest.<sup>808</sup>

This sounds rather as a suggestion to raise Kelly from the status of medium to that of partner. Several pages later, this subliminal message transmutes into the doctrine at the core of Renaissance magic, which conceived the philosopher as actor between the visible and the invisible, able to steer the oneness through the wholeness and lead the diversity of the manifested world back to its creator, the all-comprising One, the All in all:

The Actor, The Actor, The Actor:

One Disposer; he, which is one in all; and All in all.<sup>809</sup>

One of Dee's adnotations defines the philosopher's art as *practice with spirituall weapons*, the weapons being the various spirits, called sometimes, as in Shakespeare, *ministers*.<sup>810</sup>

For Kelly the spirits were players, performers in an ingenious farce his partner interpreted as a privileged dialogue with transcendence. The theatrical dimension of the conversations with angels has been outlined in the section on *Magic and Theatre in the Five Books of Mystery*. One can add that the types of dramatic episodes the spirits give life to are diverse: there are scenes with biblical angels confirming Dee's special status as a vessel of a new revelation; dumb shows that describe arguably alchemical reactions or simply display alchemical symbols (Fig.13); language lessons, when Enochian is transmitted; pageants of the *Kings, Princis and Ministers Heptarchicall*, governing the elements and the living beings; stagings of prophetic visions preannouncing: "new worlds... New manners: strange men..."<sup>811</sup>, the death of the Queen of the Scots and "a great preparation of ships against England by the King of Spayn, the Pope and other Princis called Catholik, &c"<sup>812</sup>. The prophecy concerning the rise of the British Empire, a topic Dee was much interested in, is a theatre withing the theatre, as it shows the terrestrial Globe projected within the crystal ball. King Carmara, "a spirit with a triple Crown on his hed in a long purple robe, with a rod in his hand"

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<sup>808</sup> MLT, p.151.

<sup>809</sup> MLT, p.165.

<sup>810</sup> QLM, pp.191-2.

<sup>811</sup> LMQ, p.262.

<sup>812</sup> QLMA, p.404.

shook his rod, “and the Globe under him did quake.”<sup>813</sup> The flag that he 'holdeth up' has 'the picture of a woman paynted on it', obviously England's monarch Elizabeth, and on the other side of the flag, were the Armes of England.”<sup>814</sup> The spirit “florished with the flag very much, and went as though he did marche, in warlike manner upon the upper and utterparte of the Globe” and, predictably, “All the people in the Globe seemed to be glad and reioyce.”<sup>815</sup>

It is Kelly's merit to have translated each of Dee's intellectual dilemmas or aspirations into theatrical characters, giving them a name, a shape, a voice and often an accurate description of their “peculier formes, and attire,”<sup>816</sup> with an amazing attention for the detail:

King BOBOGEL appeared in a blak veluet coat, and his hose close, rownd hose with veluet upperstocks: ouerlayde with gold lace: On his hed a veluet hatcap, with a blak feather in it: with a Cape hanging on one of his sholders, his purse hanging about his neck and so put under his gyrdell at which hong a gylt rapier, his berd was long: he had pantofells and pynsons. And he sayd, I weare these Robes, not in respect of my self, but of my government, etc.<sup>817</sup>

The figures that appear in the crystal respond to Dee's questions, but also serve Kelly to test his partner's moods and move his affections. The variation in tone and register from one episode to the other may also be the externation of the scryer's own moods or of the atmosphere between the two. Thus the spirits can be severe, solemn, ironical or simply entertaining: one of the illustrations of the *heptarchicall* doctrine is enacted by the sudden apparition of several “ioly [jolly] fellows, all trymmed after the manner of Nobilitie now a dayes”, who “daused, lept and kissed”<sup>818</sup>. In the following session the music goes on:

Now come in 7 men who with Musicall Instruments ... Afterward cam 42 more, seming to be very far behynde the first 7. Their Melody sownded very swetely and pleasantly all the while from the begynning ... These Musicians did play, one with an other, iestingly: they bobbed one an other, and than played agayn. The 42, which semed a far of, cam nerer and nerer, and seemed to bring a rownd thing, like a table in theyr hands...<sup>819</sup>

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<sup>813</sup> QLM, p.193.

<sup>814</sup> Ibid., pp.193-4.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid., p.194.

<sup>816</sup> QLM, note 2 p.183.

<sup>817</sup> QLM, pp.184-5

<sup>818</sup> QLM, p. 217.

<sup>819</sup> QLM, p.221.

Shakespeare understands poetic creativity as an elaboration of divine archetypes into humanly accessible shapes, analogous to the natural ones. The process ends by placing the shape in space and giving it a name. Many of the spirits in Dee's and Kelly's experiments have first a name and only successively a shape. For example, before parading in significant costumes and making their seals known (Fig.14), the 7 *Princis Heptarchicall* were listed in capital letters in the *Tabula Collecta* of the 49 angels in charge of earthly actions. In the *Monas* Dee expressed his belief in the germinating shapes of letters<sup>820</sup> focusing on a geometrically-built symbol. The *Five Books of Mystery* illustrate the germinating power of letters bound together in names and forcing shapes out of Kelly's imagination, which Dee comprehended as the actualization of God's word.

One of the most popular Shakespearean quotes on the topic of spirits is an exchange of replies between Glendower and Hotspur in *King Henry IV*, Part I:

Glendower: I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

Hotspur: Why so can I, so can any man, but will they come when you do call for them?

(III. I. 53-55 )

Can Hotspur's sceptical stance versus the efficiency of conjuring insinuate a doubt about the existence of spirits? The spirits on stage are incarnations of a poetic creation, substantiations of *things unknown*, of *forms, bodied forth* by the poet's imagination, after his eye had glanced “from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven”. Theoretically their nature is expected to reflect the duality of their inspiration, appearing simultaneously as humanized expressions of the *numinous* or vice versa as divinized versions of human rationality and passions. And yet, on stage, Shakespeare's spirits mix up with humans and can be confounded with them. In front of the public, their metaphysical status is contradicted by their being incarnated by actors, which turns the divine familiar, accessible and controllable because reproduceable with human means. This is reminiscent of the medieval religious drama, where the sacred was brought down to simple humanity as long as God could be interpreted by a tanner, but can also be viewed as a suggestion of their status as mere human inventions, a step towards secularization.

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<sup>820</sup> *Monas*, p.22.

Prospero's control over Ariel and the other spirits submits the elusive realm of the invisible to man's reason and will and points out the fact that their very existence depends on his imagination.

Kelly may have agreed with Shakespeare's ideas on the nature of spirits and on human control over them. Conversely, Dee continued to believe in their objective existence, as divine manifestations. The *Five Books of Mystery* end with the report on the séance that took place on Thursday, May 23, 1583. The way Kelly and Dee conclude the session is telling for their respective approaches to scrying. The medium considers the session as a theatrical performance, and so, at the end of the show, the spirits “pluck the curten, affore the stone, all ouer. The curten is like beaten golde: [The other curtens did not cover all so wholly as this did.]”<sup>821</sup> Dee, the pious philosopher, confirms his priestly role in a ritual that puts him in contact with God:

Δ Semper sit benedictus Trinus et Unus.  
Aeternus et omnipotens Deus noster.  
Amen.<sup>822</sup>

### 6.3.6 Angels, Spirits and Nature

Uriel, Michael, Raphael, Gabriel and the other angels contacted during the scrying séances possess the highest knowledge on God's creation, as Me<sup>823</sup> declares:

We see all things: and Nothing is hid from us: respecting out Creation.<sup>824</sup>

Responding point to point to Dee's dilemmas, they deliver him first the heptarchicall doctrine, based on the mystical number that governs the actualization of God's word. This confirms a conviction Dee expressed in the *Mathematicall Preface* :

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<sup>821</sup> QLMA, p.419.

<sup>822</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>823</sup> Medicina Dei, Raphael.

<sup>824</sup> LMQ, p.267.

By Numbers [...] we may both winde and draw our selues into the inward and deepe search and vew, of all creatures distinct vertues, natures, properties, and Formes: And also, farder, arise, clime, ascend, and mount vp (with Speculatiue winges) in spirit, to behold in the Glas of Creation, the Forme of Formes, the Exemplar Number of all thinges Numerable: both visible and inuisible, mortall and immortall, Corporall and Spirituall.” (MP)<sup>825</sup>

The communication of divine knowledge continues with the *49 Angels glorious and excellent*, appointed for the government of all earthly actions<sup>826</sup> and by the revelation of Enochian, the *Celestiall speche*, so that Dee could have the proper instrument of commanding the elements or, rather, the entities in charge of them.

The inventory of spiritual beings in Shakespeare's plays does not include any of the traditional angels, but fairies, demon-witches and Prospero's spirits of the air. In *MSND* and in *Macbeth* these entities have more knowledge and power than humans, but the fairies do not disclose their knowledge, they act on the lovers and Bottom when they are asleep, while the witches give Macbeth verbal or visual insights into the future with the aim of confusing, not instructing him. In *The Tempest* Prospero has attained such a level of knowledge from the *secret studies* (I. II. 77), that he commands the spirits and through them the elements, but at the end of the play this knowledge is drowned in the sea together with his book and buried certain fathoms in the earth with his broken staff (V. I. 54-7).

In the *Five Books of Mystery* seven of the *49 Angels glorious and excellent* that govern earthly actions are Princes, in a reflection of worldly hierarchies that may have sounded appropriate for Dee, who believed in the world as divine emanation. The seven princes appear in a seven-pointed star, the symbol of the mystical heptarchy and introduce themselves by name and attributions. *The first Holder*, who “pulled his hand of from the Heptagonum”, is Bagenol/ Hagenol/ Bagonel<sup>827</sup>, and he is predictably in charge of coordination and leadership. The second prince of nature is BORNOGO, and he has the “powre to alter the Incorruption of NATVRE”.<sup>828</sup> This paradoxical statement is followed by the claim: “I prevayle in Metalls: in the knowledge of them” and by assuring Dee

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<sup>825</sup> Mathematicall Preface, in György E. Szönyi, *Paracelsus, Scrying and the Lingua Adamica*, op.cit., p.209.

<sup>826</sup> MLT, p. 172.

<sup>827</sup> QLM, p. 194. Dee remarks the aproximation of names in his notes.

<sup>828</sup> Ibid., p.195.

“With my seale, I seale her and she is become perfect,<sup>829</sup> alledgedly an allusion to alchemical processes aimed at obtaining the perfection of the philosophers' gold. The third is BEFAFES, the Prince of the Seas, who has power over waters and in presenting his credentials to Dee, lets him know:

I drowned Pharao: and haue destroyed the wicked. I gaue life unto the seas: and by me the Waters move. My name was known to Moyses. I liued in Israel.<sup>830</sup>

The fourth prince, BUTMONO, has power over the earth. He declares: I kepe the bodies of the Dead, but he also promises Dee to open the bowels of the earth for him, the treasures of the mines and cavernes.<sup>831</sup> The fifth prince is BLISDON, who presides over living beings, or , as he says:

I am life and breath in Liuing Creatures. except the Image of One<sup>832</sup>.

The spirit governing fire, BRORGES makes his apparition with a vision of hell: “The sight of the fyre is very owgly [ugly], grisely, terrible, and skarsly of mans eye can be beholden.”<sup>833</sup> Finally the spirit of the air, BRALGES, appears in a stone “that semeth all Blew” and announces that “the powres under my subiection are Invisible”<sup>834</sup>.

Shakespeare's spirits control the elemental sphere by being able to materialize themselves in any shape they choose or are ordered to take, trespassing any barriers of species, shape or substance. Ariel appears as a harpy (III. III), and the other *ministers* under Prospero's command as classical divinities or “in shape of hounds” (IV. I.). The witches master the winds,<sup>835</sup> “vanish” in the air, Banquo explains them away as earth or water bubbles.<sup>836</sup> In MSND the fairies wander everywhere, *over hill, over dale, through flood, through fire* (II. I.

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<sup>829</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>830</sup> Ibid., pp.195-6.

<sup>831</sup> Ibid., pp.196-7.

<sup>832</sup> Ibid., p.198.

<sup>833</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>834</sup> Ibid., pp.199-200.

<sup>835</sup> Sec.Witch. I'll give thee a wind.

First Witch.Thou'rt kind.

Third Witch. And I another.

First Witch. I myself have all the other. (I. III. 11-4)

<sup>836</sup> Banq.“the earth hath bubbles, as the water has,/ And these are of them” (I. III. 79-80).

2-6) and Puck reveals his transformation capacity which ranges from animals to pure elements like fire:

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,  
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;  
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,  
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.

(III. I. 112-17)

Prospero commands spirits of the air, the light element, symbolically standing for the intellect and the poetic art, useful in his attempts to contrast ignorance, epitomized by Caliban, the earth, but as a master of the air he also manipulates the insubstantiality of illusion.

A feature Shakespeare's spirits have in common with the angels and spirits in the *Five Books of Mystery* is their capacity to cover enormous distances at great speed and to compress time. The weird sisters are "posters of the sea and land" (I. II. 33), Titania's fairies wander *swifter than the moone's sphere*, (II. I. 7) Puck puts *a girdle around the earth in forty minutes* (II. I. 175-6) and Ariel promises: "I drink the air before me, and return/ *Or ere your pulse twice beat*" (V. I. 102-3). In *The Five Books of Mystery* events of the past or the future take place the second they are described. Concentrating centuries or millenia in a few words and images is one of the wonders Dee was commonly exposed to during the sessions. For example, in *Mysteriorum Liber Secundus*, Michael uses various 'shewers' to inform Dee on "the mighty hand and strength of God", evoking in an ingenious elaboration the creation of man as the creation of the first letter of the alphabet, the 'a':

Mi: Et te primus Creauit Deus.

Δ: Then the shewer flew up like a star. And an other cam in, all his cloth being plucked up: and so seamed naked: He hath a little 'a'. This 'a' did go rownd about him, begynning at his feete: and so spirally upward; and he seemed to be all Clay. Ouer the 'a' was the number 6.

Mi: Et Creata sunt et pereunt in Nomine tuo.

Δ: And therwith this shewer fell down all into dust on the Earth: and his white garment flew up, like a white smoke: and allso a white thing did fly out of his body.

Surgit Innocentia ad faciem Dei.<sup>837</sup>

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<sup>837</sup> MLS, p.97.

Though supernatural, the playwright's and the magician's spirits participate in human nature. They have reason and passions, as Augustine imagined them in line with Apuleius, but are also gendered and of different ages. The fairies *Peaseblossom*, *Cobweb*, *Moth* and *Mustardseed* are not supposed to have a specific age or gender, but they were interpreted by young boys, and so were Puck and Ariel. Titania and Oberon are gendered and sexually free. Hecate is a female divinity, evoked as triple Hecate<sup>838</sup> in MSND and acting on stage in *Macbeth*. However the weird sisters are doubly-gendered, they look like female witches, but have beards, in conformity with their intention to subvert order and create confusion, and in fact, for an instant, their double-gender is an epistemological challenge for Banquo and for the audience too. The discourse on spirits and gender becomes more elaborate, but also more ambiguous taking into account the fact that the parts were all performed by male actors, named in the theatrical jargon *shadows*. Being 'immaterial', shadows were not supposed to be endowed with gender or show their age.<sup>839</sup>

Beside the traditional angels, obviously perceived as masculine, the 'shewers' in the *Five Books of Mystery* are gendered and of various ages: men, women, children, daughters and sons. These are the apparitions that disclosed the names to be written on the *Sigillum Aemeth*:

Then cam in 7 yong men, all with bright cowntenance, white appareled, with white silk upon theyr heds, pendant behinde as women had.<sup>840</sup>

7 little wenches, covered with white silk robes, and with white abowt theyr hed, and pendant down behinde, very long.”<sup>841</sup>

7 little Children which cam in, like boyes couered all with purple, with hanging sleues [sleeves]:theyr heds attyred all (after the former manner) with purple silk.<sup>842</sup>

In later spiritual diaries, Madimi turns into a herald of free sexuality, a provocative “virgin and harlot”, who opens her garments and stands naked before

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<sup>838</sup> alluding to the ancient statues placed at the crossroads.

<sup>839</sup> See *Theatre and Magic in The Tempest*.

<sup>840</sup> MLS, p.134.

<sup>841</sup> MLS, p.136.

<sup>842</sup> MLS, p. 137.



them<sup>843</sup>, calling to mind Oberon's story with Hyppolita and the Fairy Queen's interest in Theseus and Bottom. A picturesque detail in Kelly's visions is that angels sweat. After unmasking and defeating Lundrumguffa, who was seeking Dee's destruction, Uriel "drew the wycked spirit away, by the leggs, and threw him into a great pitt, and washed his hands, as it were, with the sweat of his own hed: for he seamed to be all in a sweat."<sup>844</sup> In expectation of 7 *Bundells*, (*like faggots*) to fall on his hands *from heven-ward*. Michael "seemed to sweat water abundantly, somewhat reddish or bluddish"<sup>845</sup>.

The use or abuse of Nature by spirits and humans is an issue present in Shakespeare's plays and in the *Five Books of Mystery*. In the *Quartus Liber Mysteriorum* it appears as the contrast between good and bad magic. After the parade of the Princes of Nature, the following vision is reported:

Then cam in Anncient and graue [grave] Cowtenanced men in blak gownes: of all manner of sortes. [in note: Philosophers] Diuerse of them had bokes: and some had stiks like measures. [in note:Geometry] and they parted into two Cumpanies. Eyther cumpany had his principall. One of these Cumpanies fell at debate among themselues. The other Cumpany stode still. There appeared before eche of these Cumpanyes a great boke. Uppon the bokes was written; on the one, Lucem; and on the other, Mundi tenebras. The Forman spred his hands ouer them, and they all fell down: and the boke with Lucem on it waxed bright: and they which attended on that boke (Lucem) departed.<sup>846</sup>

This is an obvious staging of Dee's interest in philosophy and geometry and of his concern with being named a necromancer. A successive vision shows an exemplary punishment of those philosophers and geometers working for the darkness of the world:

In the meane space of the former multitude some were falln deade, of some theyr mowthes [mouths] drawn awry: of some theyr legs broken &c.<sup>847</sup>

The scene regards the *practice with spirituall weapons*, as Dee adnotates it and is explained by Hagonel in these terms:

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<sup>843</sup> J. Dee, *Essential readings*, op.cit., p.88.

<sup>844</sup> MLP., p. 74.

<sup>845</sup> MLT., p. 174.

<sup>846</sup> QLM, p.190.

<sup>847</sup> Ibidem.

These that lye here, are lyers, witches, enchanters, Deceyvers, Blasphemers: and finally all they that use NATVRE, with abuse: and dishonor him which rayneth for euer.<sup>848</sup>

The angels' benevolent responses to Dee's prayers confirm his status on the right side, as member of the "Cumpany" of philosophers and geometers who work for God's Light.

The sharp contrast between the abuse of nature by enchanters and the healing of nature by good magic is illustrated in *Macbeth* and in *The Tempest*. The demon-witches make *the treasure of Nature's germens tumble all together,/ Even till the destruction sicken* (IV. I. 58-60), but are contrasted by the grace-given healing gifts of the English King. Prospero's victory over the *foul witch Sycorax*, interpreted as a compliment paid to James I for his commitment against witches, allows other interpretations. For instance, by setting Ariel free from the witch's charms and placing him under his command, Prospero indicates the way to the emancipation from superstition and to exerting power through the creative qualities of the mind. In these aspirations he is close to Dee, except for the philosopher's missing power over the spirits.

According to Dee's convictions, the angels/ spirits were above the created Nature, governing it as *ministers* of God. On the contrary, Shakespeare's spirits participate in Nature and depend on it. In MSND, *Peaseblossom*, *Cobweb*, *Moth* and *Mustardseed* are fairies and parts of the diminutive visible nature, which is the domain where they can exert their power. Titania orders them to provide for Bottom: *apricks and dewberries*, to steal the honey bags from the humblebees, to make light with *the fiery flowworm's eyes*, and *pluck the wings from painted butterflies/ to fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes* (III. I. 161-8). Oberon and Titania are king and queen of the fairies, their power is greater: their jealousy and fights cause destructive weather changes<sup>849</sup> as mentioned before and they can wipe off *the blots of Nature's hand* that cause deformities in the newborn. However, Titania needs to be protected in her sleep against animals feared by humankind, so the fairies' lullaby is also a protective charm:

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<sup>848</sup> QLM, pp.191-2.

<sup>849</sup> The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain;/ The plowman lost his sweat, and the green corn/ Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard;/ The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,/ And crows are fatted with the murrion flock (II. I. 93-97).

You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;  
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,  
Come not near our fairy queen.

.....  
Weaving spiders come not here;  
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!  
Beetles black, approach not near;  
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

(II. II. 9-12; 20-23)

The Queen of Fairies is not immune to the flower juice either, she gets fancy-sick like the human lovers in the play. Even if rendered special by Cupid, the flower Oberon solves the lovers' problems and his own with, is a natural drug. In *Macbeth* Hecate obtains the *artificial sprites* aimed at provoking the protagonist's final confusion by distillation of “a vaporous drop profound” hanging upon the corner of the moon.<sup>850</sup> The toxic broil prepared in the cauldron by the witches is a mixture of parts of nature, including human nature, like the finger of birth-strangled babe or the Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips. Moreover, the demon-witches need the collaboration of the protagonist couple to actuate *nature's mischief* (I. V. 47-9), that is to undo the divine creation by attacking *the treasure of Nature's germens* (IV. I. 59).

One can conclude that in Shakespeare's plays the changes in nature effected by the spiritual entities cannot be done without the germens of creation, which is pertinent to Polixenes's statement in *The Winter's Tale* that “nature is made better by no mean/ But nature makes that mean”, as discussed in 3.2.2 *Nature in Shakespeare*. Even the evil actions of spirits work with parts of the created nature, including humans. Thus Polixenes's statement can be rewritten as: *Nature is made better [or worse] by no mean, but nature makes that mean*, whereby the Nature after the fall is understood, which contains the principle of degeneration in itself. Shakespeare's conviction that the created Nature reigns supreme over man's condition and includes the spirits, - as actualizations of its power and processuality, as its principles of degeneration, or as man's inventions - , differentiates him from Dee, who aspired to “force nature artfully” as he claimed in Aphorism II of the *Propaedeutumata aphoristica*, using the knowledge conveyed

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<sup>850</sup> Hecate: Upon the corner of the moon/ There hangs a vaporous drop profound;/ I'll catch it ere it come to ground;/ And that distill'd by magic sleights/ Shall raise such artificial sprites/ As by the strength of their illusion/ Shall draw him on to his confusion:

by angels and the energy of the various *spirituall weapons*, disclosed to him during the scrying sessions.

The distinction is also provable by examining the horizons of their imaginary. A surrealistic apparition like the tongue that voices the spirits' admonishment for Dee to govern his tongue<sup>851</sup> can be associated to Macbeth's vision of the dagger; Banquo's ghost can be compared to the "blak shadow" that appeared in the corner of Dee's study and "sayd that it was the Macedonean" Dee and Kelley were just talking about<sup>852</sup>. However if one treats spirits as personified concepts, there is a remarkable distance between Shakespeare's fairies that belong to the familiar vegetal-animal realm and the angel Michael appearing with brazen legs, or a *Ternary joined together into one hed and three bodyes*<sup>853</sup>. The fantasy of a poet decided to hold a mirror up to nature is distinct from the experimental-scientific background of the visions identified by Kelly in the crystall ball. Shakespeare's hybrid - Bottom with an ass's head – grows from language, it materializes a way of saying Dee himself used in his notes, in reference to *the Wicked enemy*, whose *envy* and *ass-hedded folish ambition* he and Kelly laughed at<sup>854</sup>. Bottom's metamorphose belongs to those phenomena thought possible between two close reigns of the natural world and notably different from the compound man described in the *Quartus Liber Mysteriorum*, an artifice worth of two scrying partners initiated in transmutations: "the one half seemed to be most fresh flourishing herbes: The other half seemed to be of diuerse metalls, and his right fote seamed to be Leade"<sup>855</sup>.

### 6.3.7 Spirits and the Mind

In considering the angels and spirits actualizations of God's intellect and power, Dr. Dee is obedient to their requirements, which means he considers the

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<sup>851</sup> QLMA, p. 408: "after long prayer, appeared in the stone a thing like a Tunge, all on fyre thus hanging downward [follows the drawing of a tongue]. The Tongue warns Dee for having 'spoken iniquitie'. Dee doubts 'the veritie of that tongue', but has to ask "forigveness bitterly at the Lord his hand".

<sup>852</sup> LMQ, p.344.

<sup>853</sup> QLM, pp.227-8.

<sup>854</sup> QLMA, p.387.

<sup>855</sup> QLM, p. 224.

traditional angels and all the other spirits as more powerful than man. At the same time, he believes the supreme knowledge conveyed in the scrying sessions, Enochian included, will grant him the capacity to control natural processes and influence the course of human history. His faith is in contradiction with his professional aspirations, a paradoxical attitude that emerges already in Aphorism I in the *Propaedeumata*, which reads:

As God created all things from nothing against the laws of reason and nature, so anything created can never be reduced to nothing unless this is done through the supernatural power of God and against the laws of reason and nature.<sup>856</sup>

This statement seems to confirm the supernatural as absolute, but places God in contrast with the laws of reason and nature, which is a paradox, as both reason and nature emanate from God in a theo-philosophical perspective. If Dee opposes the laws of reason and nature to the supernatural power of God, one can also deduce that he contrasts humanity and its being bound to reason and nature, to God as the source of unthinkable possibilities. However in viewing himself as the object of God's election, Dee extrapolates his own person from humanity, the laws of reason and nature, which is again, paradoxical. On the other hand, Dee fully accepts the human appearance of the various spirits that 'materialize' themselves, in conformity with the Renaissance man-centered mindset informed by Platonism, which replicated human nature in the structure of the macrocosm and in the spirits and astral demons, diversely from Aristoteleans, who devised the celestial engines as pure intelligencies, for example.<sup>857</sup> The 'incarnation' of spirits and demons expected to obey to man's command is another expression of the Renaissance philosopher's aspiration to transform his visions into reality by action. In regard to this subject, S. Toussaint suggestively asks:

N'est pas cela le démonisme de la Renaissance: que certains corps accomplissent intégralement les oeuvres de l'intellect?"<sup>858</sup>

Shakespeare's Prospero is a perfect illustration of this idea: he controls other humans and the elements, because he commands spirits, which appear as bodies

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<sup>856</sup> J. Dee, *Essential Readings*, op.cit., p. 21.

<sup>857</sup> P. Zambelli, *L'ambigua natura della magia*, op.cit., pp.ix-x.

<sup>858</sup> S. Toussaint, *De l'enfer à la Coupole Dante, Brunelleschi et Ficin*, Fondazione Camillo Caetani, 1997, Roma, p.115:

that accomplish the works of his intellect. According to S. Orgel, “Prospero's vision is also a realization of the qualities of mind that have been controlling the play<sup>859</sup> ... ” and the source of the power is imagination, the ability to make images, to project the workings of the mind outward in a physical, active form, to actualize ideas, to conceive actions.”<sup>860</sup> In this sense, the mind, for Prospero, “is an active and outgoing faculty (not, that is, a contemplative one)”<sup>861</sup>. Nevertheless, this extraordinary power that allows Prospero to extrapolate himself from humanity and act on it and on nature like a god is abandoned in the end, when he frees the spirits and delivers himself to his peers, rejecting his superhuman status, to return to his basic humanity and to prayer. His control over the elements, the spirits and the human nature was just a man-willed magical and theatrical illusion and his act of abjuring magic is a proof of wisdom and faith.

Dr. Dee does not reach this stage of wisdom, which would have allowed him to realize the contradiction between his piety and his oversized aspiration to be delivered absolute knowledge by God, as well as the power to operate great wonders by commanding spirits. The philosopher lives in the tension between a religious and a scientific attitude and does not make the distinction between man's natural state and the cultural projection of his own image. Diversely from Shakespeare and Kelly himself, the philosopher praised books more than anything and took their information in faith, without realizing that spiritual entities were mental representations of a book-transmitted cultural construct, he could have controlled with his greatest natural gift: his mind.

### 6.3.8 Spirits and Culture

*The Five Books of Mystery* bring together spirits from Dee's rich personal library, angels of the Christian tradition, personifications of substances from alchemical experiments and invented spirits. In the note that opens the *Mysteriorum Liber Primus*, Dee mentions Annael, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel with their

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<sup>859</sup> S. Orgel, *The Illusion of Power, Political Theater in the English Renaissance*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1975, p. 47.

<sup>860</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>861</sup> Ibid., p.47.

specific virtues, derived from the etymology of their names. As mentioned in previous chapters, C. Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia* is one of the first sources the spirits' statements hint at, as Dee himself adnotates,<sup>862</sup> followed by J. Reuchlin. Thus in connection with the name NA, the philosopher comments: "Vide Reuchlini *de Verbo Mirifico* de nomine NA"<sup>863</sup> and on the sigillum Emeth he notes down: "De sigillo Emeth, vide reuchlinim *Artem Cabalisticam*, lib.3. et Agrippam lib.3 cap.11".<sup>864</sup> When a spirit introduces himself as SALAMIAN, Dee readily adnotates "Of Salamian you may rede, in the call, Diei Dominicae in *Elementis Magicis* Petri de Abano, there called Salamia".<sup>865</sup> Other sources are Arbatel, *De Magia Veterum*,<sup>866</sup> Petrus Galatinus,<sup>867</sup> Georgius Agricola's *de re metallica*<sup>868</sup>, Giovanni Pontano's astronomical poem *Urania sive de stellis*<sup>869</sup>, Marcus Heremita *de Lege spirituali*,<sup>870</sup> and the Bible, of which the most quoted are the Genesis,<sup>871</sup> Psalms,<sup>872</sup> Daniel,<sup>873</sup> Matthew<sup>874</sup>, Luke<sup>875</sup> and John<sup>876</sup>, the Apocryphal II, Esdras<sup>877</sup> and The Book of Tobit<sup>878</sup>. For scrying sessions that go beyond May, 23<sup>rd</sup> 1583, other sources have been identified<sup>879</sup>.

The identification of the cultural sources in *The Five Books of Mystery* cannot actually be reduced to the direct references or quotes: the impressive list of Dee's readings, published by Roberts & Watson and examined by various scholars over the past years, are the inspiration of his quest and expectations and indirectly, through Kelly's quick learning, the content of the angelic answers. However, Kelly's approximations have the effect of destabilizing the philosopher's certainties and placing him in a position of cultural inferiority versus the angelic intellects.

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<sup>862</sup> MLP, pp.76-7

<sup>863</sup> Ibid., p.78.

<sup>864</sup> Ibid., p.79

<sup>865</sup> Ibid., p.81.

<sup>866</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>867</sup> MLS, p.111.

<sup>868</sup> QLMA, p. 366. Georgius Agricola 1494-1555.

<sup>869</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>870</sup> Ibid. p.367.

<sup>871</sup> passim.

<sup>872</sup> passim.

<sup>873</sup> MLS, p.92.

<sup>874</sup> LMQ, p.276

<sup>875</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>876</sup> MLS., p.89.

<sup>877</sup> MLP, p.85.

<sup>878</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>879</sup> D. Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels*, op.cit., pp.104-5: Dionysius the Areopagite, Ficino, Trithemius, Francesco Giorgi.

For example, Dee is puzzled by Michael's statement that “in dede no letters, but dubble numbers,” is “the Name of God” obtainable by number and letter transpositions within a series of concentrical circles<sup>880</sup> and resulting in a name of 40 letters. The 40 letters name is not given in the text, but alluded at: Δ: I haue red [read] in Cabala of the Name of God of 42 letters: but not yet of any, of 40 letters”, which he adnotates as :”Vide Galatinum [Petrus Galatinus], lib.3.cap.11”<sup>881</sup>. Three inscriptions, possibly transcribed from Galatinus follow, in Hebrew and Latin, explaining the Holy Trinity in unity and the unity in Trinity, as well as the double nature of Christ by analogy to the unity of the rational mind and the flesh.<sup>882</sup> In the end, Dee admits before Michael: “I am not good in hebrue tung, but, you know my meaning.”<sup>883</sup> The angel is ready to explain Dee his 'error' of understanding and simultaneously 'adjust' Kelly's aproximations in a smart way:

Mi: The letters being so taken oute, being a name, and a number, doth certefye the old rule of 42 letters, whan you restore them in again.<sup>884</sup>

Beside remarking Kelly's merit of absorbing, albeit unprecisely, the highly demanding requisites of Dee's own knowledge and of the books at hand from his library, the question arises if he brought any of his previous culture into the game? Since the angels can promptly speak the Latin of the Bible and the Mass,- with some errors that alert Dee's sense of linguistic precision -, one can surmise his familiarity both with the Catholic ritual and with the language. His English style may have been influenced by translations of the Bible into English, or, more probably by the very popular books of prayer. Once Dee mentions “a little prayer boke” (in english meter made by one William Hunnis which Mr Adrian Gilbert had here: and it lay on the Tabel by us all the while this last action). In note the reader finds out the title: *Seuen Sobs of a Sorrowfull Sowle for Synne*, published in London in 1583, and the fact that it was a translation of the *Seven Penitential Psalms* in rhyme.<sup>885</sup>

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<sup>880</sup> MLS, pp.109-11.

<sup>881</sup> Ibid., p.111.

<sup>882</sup> Ibid., pp.111-2.

<sup>883</sup> Ibid., p.112.

<sup>884</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>885</sup> QLMA, p.386.



Kelly definitely had a basis of astrology and alchemy, quite obvious in *Mysteriorum Liber Secundus*, where one can remark a mixture of allegorical language, as for example the 7 *yong men* “all with bright countenance, white appareled, with white silk upon theyr heds” carrying, a metal ball, each, - of gold, silver, copper, tin, iron, quicksilver and lead -, respectively<sup>886</sup> and an incipient codification of substances by letters and numerical proportions. All this is combined with popular culture, where fairies and *divels*, spirits and 'creatures' were more or less the same thing, a wicked spirit like Lunderunguffa is hairy and ugly, as English popular drama may have shaped them, angels like Michael appear as in religious processions:

all his hed [head] glystring like the sonne. The heare [hair] of his hed was long. He had wings: and all his lower parts seamed to be with feathers. He had roab over his body: and a great light in his left hand.<sup>887</sup>

D. Harkness hypothesized his being exposed “to religious drama”<sup>888</sup>, but maybe he actually belonged to the Elizabethan theatrical culture. His time was rich in festivals, pageants and street events of the performative type. M.A. Katrizky's recent studies have given attention to a popular figure that animated the public places in Europe, including Elizabethan England: the quack or the mountebank, who sold remedies, promoting himself through entertaining, persuasive performances.<sup>889</sup> Quacks or mountebanks moved from place to place, offering their expertise in a theatrical way, just like the ancient itinerant *kathartaí*, the experts in purifying rites, the *agyrtai kai manteis*, begging priests and diviners, and other charlatans (*alazónes*) the intellectuals of the Greek *polis* were trying to delegitimize. Before his collaboration with Dr. Dee, Kelly may have been an itinerant quack: this could explain his adventurous past, his interest in alchemy and his theatrical talents. In favor of this hypothesis come some fragments of letters, written between 1587-89, when he was no longer under the intellectually demanding influence of Dr. Dee and could relapse into his natural style. This brief

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<sup>886</sup> MLS, p.134.

<sup>887</sup> MLP., pp.74-5.

<sup>888</sup> D. Harkness, *Shows in the Showstone: A Theater of Alchemy and Apocalypse in the Angel Conversations of John Dee*, op. cit., p.723.

<sup>889</sup> M. A. Katrizky, *Women, Medicine and Theatre, 1500-1750, Literary Mountebanks and Performing Quacks*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2007.

lesson of alchemy sounds like the promotion of an elixir in front of an all-absorbing, obedient public:

As you are willing to take my advice, I will partially reveal to you the Arcanum, so that the field may not disappoint the hopes of the husbandman. Open your ears... If you are in earnest, all your thoughts must be concentrated on the fixed earth and the indestructible metallic water; ...but it is foolish to do by much what you can do by little... For this woman,- to be more frank than discreet - is a viscous water, extracted from the bowels of Jupiter, i.e., from white lead...To regulate the fire is mere child's play... I have given you both luminaries and the best instruction concerning these things, if you can bear it in mind.<sup>890</sup>

Kelly's past as a mountebank would explain the recurrence of the curtain, the table, the table-cloth and the chair in the angelic performances and their producing from under the table (cloth) various unexpected things. Many make a 'cursy' (courtesy) when they appear or before they disappear. The spirit IL comes with "a great bundell of empty potichayre [apothecary] boxes" which, as Kelly reports, "seme [seem] to my hearing to rattle".<sup>891</sup> This type of occupation would also account for the appearance and behaviour of invented spirits like King Carmara, King Bobogel, Prince Bornogo, Prince Butmono, King Blumaza, etc. and for unorthodox performances of traditional angels, like one of Michael's prestidigitation shows:

1. Δ: Then he toke oute of the fire in the basket, a white fowle like a pigeon. That fowle had a Z uppon the first of 7 feathers which were on his brest. That first feather was on the left side.

Mi: Note. There is a mysterie in the seuen, which are the 7 governing the 7 which 7 govern the earth. Halleluyah.

Mi: Write the letters.

Δ: Now, a small l in the second fether. Then he couered thos first two letters, with the other feathers. The third an l, like the other. The he couered that allso. The fowrth an R. He covereth that. The fifth a great roman H. He couered it. The sixth feather had a little i. Then he hid that feather. The last feather had a small a.

Mi: Prayse God.

Δ: Then he put the fowle into the basket: and set it down by him. Then he hong it up in the ayre by him.

Δ: Then he lift up his sworde over us, and bad us pray. Δ: We prayed.

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<sup>890</sup> A. E. Waite, (ed.), *The Alchemical Writings of Edward Kelly*, translated from the Hamburg edition of 1676 and edited with a biographical preface, reprint Stuart & Watkins, London, 1970, pp. 51-3.

<sup>891</sup> QLMA, p. 366.

2. Δ: Then he stretched out his hand and there cam an other basket to him, and he pluckt out a white byrd, much bigger than the other: as big as a swan: with '7' feathers on his brest.

Mi: Dixit et factum est.<sup>892</sup>

Though considered the Elizabethan secular author with the most numerous references to the Bible,<sup>893</sup> Shakespeare does not bring angels and devils on the stage, yet, quite suggestively, refers to them in figures of speech that define the spectrum of human behaviour, which ranges from the few who “are angels”<sup>894</sup> to those “worse than devils”<sup>895</sup>. This distinguishes him radically from the tradition of the mystery plays, and from contemporaries like Marlowe, whose *Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* has characters like Lucifer, Belzebub, Mephistophilis, a Good Angel, an Evil Angel and various Devils, beside spirits in the shapes of ALEXANDER THE GREAT, of his Paramour, of DARIUS, and of HELEN. Visible to the audience, but ignored by many of the characters in the play, the spirits incarnated on stage are original creations inspired by the oral and the written tradition and build an extensive discourse on the mutations in the religious field and the realm of imagination.

Shakespeare makes his spirits coexist and interact not only with humans, but significantly with the world of classical mythology. In MSND his original fairies, an allusion to the pre-Christian substratum, interact with Theseus and Hippolyta, in *The Tempest* the spirits of the magus appear as Iris, Juno, Ceres, a harpy, in *Macbeth* the weird sisters consort with Hecate. According to Mercutio the fantasies of romantic infatuation are induced by Queen Mab, the fairies' midwife, while Helena in MSND attributes them to the *wing'd Cupid*. Following the inclination of their mind, Elizabethans presumably apprehended Cupid as a spirit, a fairy or a devil.

The direct lineage of the Celtic-Germanic lore with the classical world was not uncommon in books on demonology. In *De praestigiis daemonum* J. Weyer, associates the trickster goblin Puck, alias Robin Goodfellow with the cruel

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<sup>892</sup> MLS, p. 117.

<sup>893</sup> Noble, Richmond, *Shakespeare's biblical Knowledge and Use of the Book of Common Prayer*, Macmillan, New York, 1935.

<sup>894</sup> *Henry VIII*, (V. III. 10-14) Lord Chancellor addressing the Archbishop of Canterbury: ...but we all are men,/ In our own natures frail, and capable/ Of our flesh; few are angels: out of which frailty/ And want of wisdom, you, that best should teach us,/ Have misdemean'd yourself, and not a little...

<sup>895</sup> Prospero, III. III. the banquet scene.

dionysiac demons, called *kobaloi* [rogues, *goblins*], as though to say “tricksters”.<sup>896</sup> Shakespeare stays within the imagination coordinates of his contemporaries, but changes the function and the polarity of his sources. His Puck is not a cruel dionysiac demon, but the “merry wanderer of the night”, whose tricks are innocent; moreover he brings good luck to those who call him *sweet* Puck (II. I. 40-1). Oberon as King of the Fairies, shares more in common with Zeus and a human being, than with the conjuror's demon and is equally the result of a series of cultural contaminations. K. Thomas claims that Oberon takes the name from a demon “who had been frequently conjured by fifteenth-and sixteenth century wizards”.<sup>897</sup> According to T. F. Thiselton Dyer's reconstruction, more than a century ago,<sup>898</sup> Oberon is the English version of Elberich or Albrich, the dwarf king in the *Nibelungenlied*, passed into the old French romance of "Huon de Bourdeaux," as Auberich, and later Auberon. "Oboram, King of Fayeries," is one of the characters in Greene's "James the Fourth,"<sup>899</sup> and is mentioned as King Oberon by Spenser in the *Fairy Queen* (Book II, 1 and 10). Titania, the Fairy Queen is also a synthesis of classical suggestions, from Diana, styled in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as Titania (Met. III. 173), to Proserpina, given by Chaucer in the *Merchant's Tale* as the queen of Pluto, the King of Fairies.<sup>900</sup> As a spirit of the night, she can also be associated with one of the ancient Hecates, daughter of Perses the Titan<sup>901</sup>. Titania is not a dangerous contriver of charms, but a jealous, proud and weak creature as Hera or any woman would be.

Shakespeare's fairies inhabit the woods and have a kingdom of their own, but they are not predatory. In his time it was commonly believed that fairies occasionally “might swoop down to snatch an unguarded infant child, leaving a changeling in his place.”<sup>902</sup> Changelings were children with various health

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<sup>896</sup> J. Weyer, *De praestigiis daemonum*, op. cit., pp.29-30.

<sup>897</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op. cit., p. 609.

<sup>898</sup> T.F. Thiselton Dyer, *Folk-lore of Shakespeare*, [1883], digital version at sacred-texts.com, Ch.I, Fairies.

<sup>899</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>900</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>901</sup> Hecate, daughter of Perses the Titan, is a very different person to the “Triple Hecate,” who, according to Hesiod, was daughter of Zeus and a benevolent goddess. Hecate, daughter of Perses, was a magician, poisoned her father, raised a temple to Diana in which she immolated strangers and was mother of Medea and Circe. She presided over magic and enchantments, taught sorcery and witchcraft. She is represented with a lighted torch and a sword, and is attended by two black dogs.

<sup>902</sup> K.Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, op. cit., p. 609.

problems or deformities. In MSND Oberon promises to protect the 'best bridebed', blessing and consecrating it with *field dew*, so that:

Never mole, hare lip, nor scar,  
Nor mark prodigious, such as are  
Despised in nativity,  
Shall upon their children be.

(V. I. 393-414)

Shakespeare's equation of the *fairy toys* with the *ancient fables* in MSND is not deprived of Christian echoes. Actually in the three plays under focus the discourse on spirits and ancient divinities is embedded in a Christian frame, as to suggest that other religious forms had existed before Christianity, or are contemporary to it, as Caliban's lunar cult. These cults represent a sort of childhood phase of our civilization, in which natural phenomena were explained by imagining antropomorphic beings, a lesson he may have learned from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, one of his acknowledged sources. In *Macbeth*, the same process of fusing classical culture and Christianity is obvious. The three witches are part of Hecate's team and are called weird sisters, from the Anglo-Saxon *wyrd*, meaning fate and mentioned already in *Beowulf*. Their interpretation as the three *moirae* or *parcae* corresponds to a tradition signalled already around 1400. By conceiving the bearded weird sisters as demons and witches and making them part of Hecate's team, he hints at an analogous process within Christianity itself: at least some of his spectators may have wondered if the demonic witches, whose existence was taken for granted by James I and the prosecutors, may not have been anthropomorphic agents created by man's imagination to account for his own fears, ignorance or ambition.

In conclusion, the spirits in Shakespeare's plays and in *The Five Books of Mystery* are the original outcome of imaginatively processing various sources and levels of the Elizabethan culture. Shakespeare brings together in a Christian frame the literary heritage of classical and English authors, books of magic and the folklore legacy, but also the common philosophical assumptions regarding spiritual entities. The spirits in *The Five Books of Mystery* are the result of informing the cultured tradition of magic as part of *philosophia perennis* with the liveliness of popular performances, in a Christian context that is more explicitly biblical than in Shakespeare's plays. The vitality of the Elizabethan culture resides thus not

only in the richness of its sources, but also in the fertile fusion of popular and élite creativity, convincingly illustrated by Shakespeare's theatre and Dee's and Kelly's magic.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 Limits and Praises of Interdisciplinarity**

Ideally speaking, a historical inquiry should be able to bring together specialization and interdisciplinarity. The former examines a well-defined object of study, an author, a text, a trend of thought, a phenomenon; the latter attempts to enlarge the framework, by comparing and contrasting two or more objects of study belonging to the same cultural paradigm or to different ones. The requisites and conditions for each type of research are specific. The critical acumen of the specialist is supported by the well-defined methodology and the established idiom of his or her domain. The author of an interdisciplinary endeavor has to face various problems. The interface of two or more disciplines would fitly require tantamount competence and a training in comparative studies. Suppose these requirements are complied with, formating the research avenues means devising a methodology pertinent to all the study areas involved and calibrating the focus on the comparable aspects of the objects examined, that is on their overlappings, contiguities and differences. For example, Shakespeare's stylistic subtleties have no immediate feedback in Dee's discourse, and vice-versa there is no equivalent of Dee's philosophical-scientific approach in Shakespeare, but there are other ways of bringing the two authors under the same cover, like the philosopher's vivid imagination and response to poetic inventions, vis-a-vis the playwright's use of poetry to question and problematize existential issues of his time.

The inevitable simplifications, a specialist may contest, are compensated by the complexity of the interdisciplinary essay. If the specialist's research unfolds in an articulated linearity to advocate a thesis that can be formulated as a single declarative sentence, the interface of two or more areas spreads out into a network of intercorrelated topics, which decentralize the argumentation, resulting in a

different type of disquisition. As a compare-contrast cross-analysis it builds up a scheme that calls to mind the *analogy of proper or intrinsic proportionality* of the Aristotelian-Thomistic logic, where, as the mathematician A. Strumia explains, “the similarity is established between the “relations” between predicate and subjects rather than between different senses of the same predicate attributed to different subjects. This similarity between the relations can be summarized by a formula which recalls that of a mathematical proportion ... Nevertheless, when we write a mathematical proportion, we establish two “equal” relations (2:3 = 4:6), whereas in the case of the analogy of proportionality, we state that two subject-predicate relations are not the same, but “similar” (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 2, a. 11).<sup>903</sup>

In a corresponding manner, the interface bridges the parties involved without equalizing them, yet this modality of relating domains, authors and their works allows interesting discoveries. For instance, it was only in comparing and contrasting Shakespeare's and Dee's concern with magic and theatre that the identification of Prospero with Dr. Dee could be disputed and replaced by the hypothesis that good, old Lord Gonzalo is more plausibly Shakespeare's character inspired by the philosopher. In the same line, examining the intrinsic commonalities of theatre and magic setting out from their origins and their successive development as alternatives to religion, helped to account for their simultaneous rise in an age of religious turmoil, like the Elizabethan one.

As explained above, the analogy of proportionality places the terms of comparison at the same level, which means that this investigation does not aim to prove the superiority of any of the parties involved, but rather their complementarity. Shakespeare and Dee actualize correlative veins of Elizabethan creativity. As thinkers they complete each other: Dee's belonging to a well-defined theo-philosophical trend allows to qualify him as a *Systemdenker*, while Shakespeare's plurifocal perspective and capacity to question attitudes and ways of thinking of his time, including the versatile meaning exploration at the level of language, qualify him as a *Problemdenker*. Even Kelly's personality and contribution, no matter how trivial, is a complement to Dee's own character and

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<sup>903</sup> *INTERS – Interdisciplinary Encyclopedia of Religion and Science*, edited by G. Tanzella-Nitti, P. Larrey and A. Strumia, <http://www.inters.org>

aspirations and informs, just like Shakespeare's theatre, of the considerably abridged distance between elite and popular culture in the Elizabethan age.

The issue of complementarity hints at the ultimate scope of the present interdisciplinary research, which is the integration of creative and cognitive fields belonging to the same cultural paradigm in an effort to restore the general picture, following the interplay of its existential and epistemological patterns.

The scholarly aspiration to comprehend a past culture in its dynamic complexity by using interdisciplinary interfaces resembles one of the optical experiments of Leonardo da Vinci with mirrors. In his *Notebooks*, Leonardo claims that “The air is full of an infinite number of images of the things which are distributed through it, and all of these are represented in all, all in one, and all in each.”<sup>904</sup> Indeed, to a contemporary eye a past culture is full of an infinite number of interrelated 'things', that is ideas, tendencies, models and representations. The cross-analysis of two or more objects of study tries to highlight the relationships between diversity and oneness, and between oneness and wholeness, in a manner comparable with Leonardo's modality of capturing images with mirrors:

Accordingly if two mirrors be placed so as to exactly face each other, the first will be reflected in the second and the second in the first. Now the first being reflected in the second carries to it its own image together with all the images reflected in it, among these being the image of the second mirror; and so it continues from image to image on to infinity, in such a way that each mirror has an infinite number of mirrors within it, each smaller than the last, and one inside another. By this example it is clearly proved that each thing transmits its image to all places where it is visible, and conversely this thing is able to receive into itself all the images of the things which are facing it.<sup>905</sup> (pp.111-2)

In the end the limits and resources of interdisciplinarity can be judged only against the expectations placed on it. Its tendency to reconstruct a holistic view of a cultural paradigm in a relational, plurifocal perspective by reverting or trespassing the encasements of disciplines entails the risk of getting lost in the labyrinth of topics and reflections. Its foundation in the analogy of intrinsic proportionality challenges the mental schemes of the Cartesian model: the rarefied air of the clear and distinct ideas ordered in a logical argumentation is replaced by a dense texture of quandaries, which makes the research more

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<sup>904</sup> Richter, Irma A. (editor), *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (1952), 1998, pp.111-2.

<sup>905</sup> Ibidem.



adventurous, but may rewardingly disclose unpredictable aspects of various topics. To conclude, the main merit of interdisciplinarity is its capacity to re-problematize the areas under focus. Rather than a thesis, interdisciplinarity proposes a new quest.

## 7.2 Theatre and Magic as Arts of Becoming

As related expressions of the dynamic Elizabethan culture, theatre and magic capture its metamorphic profile in their performances, rituals or experiments aimed at transforming human conscience or nature. They are time-anchored arts that aim to take a distance from time or control it. Theatre wants to *show time its form and pressure*, magic to abbreviate or govern natural phenomena, to act as time's substitute. Their *Dasein* involves a projection beyond the present into the space of the hypothetical, which could be both the past and the future. Their binding power consists in this duality: the here and now of their real processuality grounds on the possible, on the *as if* perspective.

The growing interest for theatre and for magic in England, as early as the Middle Ages, ran parallel or maybe correlated to the widening intellectual concern with concepts like change, dynamism, metamorphosis. C.Walker Bynum pointed out that already in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, “intellectuals, religious leaders, and (insofar we can glimpse them) ordinary people were fascinated by change as an ontological problem...”<sup>906</sup>. In the context “questions such as the end of history, the nature of the universe, the purpose of humanity tended to be treated as questions about change, about coming to be and passing away. Devotional and secular literature tackled in a variety of forms the topic of self-transformation. Not only magic, monsters, and hybrids but also the elements, the process of digestion, and the growth of seeds received new attention.”<sup>907</sup>

In the same century philosophy started elaborating dynamic models of understanding creation. Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253) – Neoplatonic

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<sup>906</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, Zone Books, New York, 2001, p. 18.

<sup>907</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

philosopher of the Oxford School and teacher of Roger Bacon (1220-1292) “proposes a theory of the emergence of space and time from the nature of light. According to this theory, light contains the entire creation ‘in potentia’.”<sup>908</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann judges it as “a kind of big bang theory”, that “describes the extension of the first created point as a bursting. The point extends to all sides unto the limits of the universe, to the heaven of the fixed stars.”<sup>909</sup> Roger Bacon's conviction that experience is the source of genuine knowledge<sup>910</sup>, his experimentations in various fields and in particular his treatises on alchemy, the art of transformation *par excellence*, place him in the same philosophical orientation, centered on *actio* and process, rather than *contemplatio* or conceptual debate. The ideas on movement and change, present in the Italian Neoplatonic thinkers found in England a propitious ground.<sup>911</sup> Ficino's postulate of the dynamic unity of the world, the big animal with a soul and a spirit that mediate between intellect and matter, grounds both on an omnipresent infinite God, who does “extend Himself through all and beyond all”<sup>912</sup> and on the physico-chemical unity of the universe, where matter and essence “are extended through all”<sup>913</sup>, infracting Aristotelean divisions. His *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda libri tres* develop the idea of man as a dynamic unity, able to improve his state of harmony with the cosmos and ultimately his health by operating knowledgeably within a moving world. Francesco Giorgio Veneto belongs to the same current of thought. Highly appreciated by the English intellectuals, his work *De Harmonia Mundi* (Venice, 1525) a fusion of Pythagorean tenets and Christian eschatology, is a work in which „the dynamics of the becoming of the cosmos are decisive”<sup>914</sup>.

Though not well-received at Oxford during Queen Elizabeth's time, Bruno incited debates on the Copernican theory and an interest in new ideas, like the infinity of worlds. His concept is different from non-finitude, as counterpart of finitude. Whereas non-finitude can be defined as static and descriptive, infinity is a dynamic concept, based on the virtually unlimited  $n+1$  extension. Bruno was

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<sup>908</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op.cit., p. 284.

<sup>909</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>910</sup> M. Kuper, *Roger Bacon, Der Mann, der Bruder Williams Lehrer war*, Verlag Clemens Zerkling, Berlin, 1996, p.5.

<sup>911</sup> The intellectuals of Thomas More's group were the first to introduce Ficino and Pico in England.

<sup>912</sup> M. Ficino, *Platonic theology*, Book II, Ch., VI, p.123.

<sup>913</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>914</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op.cit., p. 306.

also interested in the tension between contraries as source of dynamism. For example in *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* he states: “So mutation from one extreme to the other... and motion from one contrary and the other through its intermediate points, come to satisfy us; and finally, we see such familiarity between one contrary and the other that the one agrees more with the other than like with like... What I wish to infer from that is that the beginning, the middle, and the end, the birth, the growth, and the perfection of all that we see, come from contraries, through contraries, into contraries, to contraries. And where there is contrariety, there is action and reaction, there is motion, there is diversity, there is number, there is order, there are degrees, there is succession, there is vicissitude”.<sup>915</sup>

To the dynamic perception of space and time, one can add the dynamic anthropology, prefigured a century before by Ficino and Pico and confirmed by the historical context. Indeed, in the full shift of their economic, religious, social and cultural life, the Elizabethans were 'no longer contented to be what they are'<sup>916</sup> in a likely acute awareness of bursting limits and categories and of the tangible chance to turn the possible into reality. In spite of unyielding Aristoteleans, the majority seem to have agreed that the principle of things was no longer their pre-established *telos*, but dynamism, which meant progress and transformation. The popularity of theatre and of magic at all social levels is just another evidence of this mental orientation. Man's self-image, central to this process, was actually the main object of the attacks on theatre formulated by Puritans, who presented themselves as the stronghold of fastness on this moving ground. The idea that man could be actor and spectator, able to take on various identities, that he could be a fictive self or several selves<sup>917</sup> contradicted the Stoic *στάσις* of human character at the base of Christian mentality for centuries and

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<sup>915</sup> G. Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, transl. and edited by Arthur D. Imerti, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 2004, pp. 90-1.

<sup>916</sup> Clown. If men could be contented to be what they are, there were no fear in marriage; for young Charbon the Puritan and old Poysam the Papist, howsome'er their hearts are severed in religion, their heads are both one; they may jowl horns together, like any deer i' the herd. (*All's Well That Ends Well*, I. II. 55-60)

<sup>917</sup> Michael O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm, Anti-Theatricalism, and the Image of the Elizabethan Theater*, in S. Orgel, *Shakespeare in the Theater*, op.cit., in reference to Barish, J. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice, on Western anti-theatricalism*. pp. 61-6; note p. 88.

caused in the Puritans an anguish comparable to that expressed by Tertullian in *De Spectaculis* (c.200).<sup>918</sup>

The context favored the awareness that words were endowed with *dynamis*, the force to operate changes in reality, or actually create new realities. The mobility of sight produced epistemological doubts and fomented imagination, valued by philosophers as a privileged channel of communication with the divine. It is commonly assumed that the Reformation replaced a culture of *showing* by a culture of *telling*, by doing away with images and insisting on the authority of the word. With the Protestant victory in the Civil War and the beginning of empirical science, imagination was censured, the word, more specifically the written word, prevailed over the image and the vastly populated invisible realm started being brought down to palpable reality. But before this process was accomplished, in spite of adversity from parts of the English society, theatre and magic had their moment of glory, when words, images, spiritual beings and imaginary spaces were exalted in a wonder producing impetus and a harmonious integration of *showing* and *telling* that contributed to the unique profile of the Elizabethan Renaissance. In the passage from the Catholic tradition to a crystallized Protestant model, theatre and magic appear as a continuation of forms belonging to the preceding paradigm: theatre is a spectacular ritual, appealing to the senses and stimulating for the imagination, that brings together the élites and the humble Elizabethans, as a Catholic celebration used to do. The magus takes over the prerogatives of the priest as healer, guardian of miracles, intermediary between the visible and the invisible.

The two domains did not exhaust their encounter in early modernity. Censorship or temporary prohibition, - after 1648 when theatres were closed down -, did not prevent theatre from continuing to be a vital art, charming spectators with its staged stories and its special effects and contributing as a mass-medium to distill reason from the *fumes of ignorance*. By extension of its semantics, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century it produced the *theatrum* of science and nature, laboratory, garden or museum, concurring with natural magic to the rise of modern science. The perception of the individual or of an entire social class as protagonist on the stage of world history has dominated European mentality for

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<sup>918</sup> W. Tydeman, *The Theatre in the Middle Ages, Western European Stage Conditions*, c.800-1576, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978, p. 25.

centuries and has been elaborated in various manners by visual arts, philosophy, ideology, communication. Utopias as scenarios that draw on the possible have their roots both in Renaissance theatricality and in the desire of the magus to reform the world. The multiple, Protean self of the Renaissance theatre and magic has continued to mark our cultural tradition. In periods of optimism it is perceived as a resource, in moments of alienation as precarious ontology.<sup>919</sup> Contemporary world privileges the Protean self again. Its transformism includes unprecedented experiments like producing life artificially or programming the characteristics of a future child, cloning, changing one's body or gender, all instances of exercising free will over contingent or transcendent determinations that echo Renaissance anthropology and the definition of magic as man's power to act. They are made possible by science and inspired by “a media-intensified expansion of the techniques of theatrical effect into the fields of politics, sports, music, culture and leisure-time consumption”.<sup>920</sup>

The art of memory, with its theatre of icons, one of the magical prodigies of the Renaissance, appears today as an anticipation of artificial intelligence and computer memory. Stage performances and the moving pictures of the magician's optical experiments have been transmuted into cinema, television and computers. Encrypting methods based on letter and number combinations have turned into scientific codes and word processing systems. Centuries after the Renaissance, the power of images shines through the talismans of publicity and the visual manipulation of propaganda. Hystrionism and the magic of the word are acknowledged today as instruments of political persuasion. Dynamism informs every field of existence, the distance between the real and the possible is being abridged at an ever more accelerated pace. The culture of *showing* has vigorously come back supported this time by a completely innovative visual technology. For the first time in the history of humanity, the competition of various economic,

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<sup>919</sup> R. M. Rilke, in *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München, Der Nachdruck des Textes folgt originalgetreu der Erstausgabe von 1910. Herausgegeben von Joseph Kiermeier-Debre, 1997, pp.208-209: “Außen ist vieles anders geworden. Ich weiß nicht wie. Aber innen und vor Dir, mein Gott, innen vor Dir, Zuschauer: sind wir nicht ohne Handlung? Wir entdecken wohl, daß wir die Rolle nicht wissen, wir suchen einen Spiegel, wir möchten abschminken und das Falsche abnehmen und wirklich sein. Aber irgendwo haftet uns noch ein Stück Verkleidung an, das wir vergessen. Eine Spur Übertreibung bleibt in unseren Augenbrauen, wir merken nicht, daß unsere Mundwinkel verbogen sind. Und so gehen wir herum, ein Gespött und eine Hälfte: weder Seiende, noch Schauspieler.”

<sup>920</sup> Ibidem. p. XIV Cf. Erika Fischer-Lichte, ed. *Theatralität und die Krisen der Repräsentation*, Stuttgart; Metzler, 2001.

political, religious or social models is global and the possibility that man could destroy his own civilization is real. Man's power over nature has come to a critical point and the definition of his humanity is undergoing changes, whose direction is impossible to grasp yet.

This essay is also an effort to understand contemporary tendencies and dilemmas by going back to their anticipations.

### 7.3 Dr. John Dee

In the relatively brief history of Dee scholarship, two tendencies can be remarked: one that follows F. A. Yates in considering Dee a Great Magus and occultist and the other focused on the non-magical dimension of his scientific and scholarly contributions, where he appears as a natural philosopher or as an intelligencer.<sup>921</sup> Bringing Dee closer to the contemporary mentality is a necessary step in assimilating his contribution. However, the exclusively secular perspective on Dee deprives him of a fundamental side of his personality. Dee was a believer and understood his contributions as divinely, archetypally inspired and aimed at returning to God a transformed, elevated humanity.

One of the reasons of dissent with F. A. Yates stems from the significance attributed to magic and nature in our culture. In Dee's time *magus*, *wise man* and *pious philosopher* were interchangeable terms, while *natural philosophy* was a synonym for *natural magic*. The concept of nature defined God's creation in its postlapsarian status and the application of magic to it was aimed at curing its decay caused by the original sin. This is what Ficino meant when he claimed that magic joined medicine with priesthood.

As Renaissance magic became an object of persecution like witchcraft, Dee could not declare himself publicly a magus. However in 1564 he defines the *Monas* a magical parable, and mentions the Magician as the one who operates in the world. The secret scrying séances he strongly denied in public were *ars notoria* or ceremonial magic, conceived at the Renaissance as the highest

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<sup>921</sup> Sherman, William H., *John Dee. The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1995.

philosophical endeavour, which enabled the pious philosopher to rise beyond his mortal status and communicate with the angelic intellects. In *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, Bruno articulates the priorities of the Renaissance philosopher in a formula that sounds like an abstract of Dee's intellectual biography:

...we need that wisdom and judgement, that skill, industry, and use of intellectual light that are revealed to the world by the intelligible sun, sometimes more and sometimes less, sometimes most greatly and sometimes most minutely. This custom is called Magic, and she, inasmuch as she depends upon supernatural principles, is divine; and, inasmuch as she turns toward the contemplation of Nature and to the scrutiny of her secrets, she is natural. And she is said to be intermediate and mathematical, inasmuch as she depends upon the reasons and acts of the soul that is at the horizon between the corporeal and the spiritual, the spiritual and the intellectual.<sup>922</sup>

Placing Dee in the tradition of the *philosophia perennis* solves the apparently contradictory nature of his interests and contributions, his faith and his scientific mind, his powerful fantasy and his need for order and rigor. According to W. Schmidt-Biggemann, perennial philosophy is based “on the unity of revelation and science” and as such “has to assimilate science to revelation. Revelation takes precedence over science, if its divine origin is taken seriously. The doctrine of creation, as part of revelation, has consequences for human knowledge. Knowledge is held to derive from a divine origin, and, just as any other existence, it is created. Human knowledge is received through communication with the divine, since God reveals all wisdom to the human race. It is accordingly impossible to separate science and divine revelation.”<sup>923</sup> The universal science of perennial philosophy “claims to include all of transmitted knowledge”, thus its realm “spans everything from revelation to poetry.”<sup>924</sup>

As a representative of this philosophy in early modernity Dee is in the lineage of Raymond Lull, Johannes Trithemius, Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Johannes Reuchlin, Abraham Herrera, Cornelius Agrippa, Guillaume Postel, Francesco Giorgio Veneto, Giordano Bruno.<sup>925</sup> His contributions and mindset allow associations with Paracelsus and Girolamo Cardano. In the English

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<sup>922</sup> G. Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, op.cit., p. 239.

<sup>923</sup> W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis*, op.cit., p. 409.

<sup>924</sup> Ibid., p. 412.

<sup>925</sup> Ibid, passim. The tradition continues the ancient genealogy of Philo of Alexandria, Origen, Dionysius the Areopagite, Plotinus, Proclus.

tradition Dee steps in the traces of Roger Bacon, he himself felt congenial. Bacon combined theology and natural science in an analogous way, as “mythology and poetry are historically integrated into his encyclopaedia, as are the magical arts and astrology.”<sup>926</sup>

#### 7.4 Sir Edward Kelly

A conclusion imposes itself on Sir Edward Kelly. Dee understood magic as the art of transfiguring the world and man himself, a means of salvation, a solution in a period of great mutations and anxiety, that often assumed apocalyptic proportions<sup>927</sup>. Kelly practiced magic as psychological manipulation exerted on Dee's fantasy. The domineering position he gradually gains can be very simply explained by the fact that Dee was bookwise, while Kelly was worldwide.

The hypothesis that he may have been a mountebank, an itinerant alchemist-apothecary before becoming Dee's scryer allows to account for his familiarity with the science of his time, as well as for his ability to adapt to the requirements of his 'public', his theatrical talents and the folklore vein that pervades his descriptions of the world of spirits. In the *Biographical Preface* to his edition of Kelly's alchemical works, A. E. Waite leaves the question of his author's earnestness open, remarking however Kelly's creativity: ”Convict or martyr, seer or cheating conjuror, knave or saint, matters nothing in comparison ... with regard to his visions, it must be admitted that either he was a clairvoyant of advanced grade, or he was a man of most ingenious invention.”<sup>928</sup> In the context, Waite adds a note:

Disraeli, in his “Amenities of Literature”, observes that “the masquerade of his spiritual beings was most remarkable for its fanciful minuteness.”<sup>929</sup>

There is no doubt that Kelly was a deceiver, but he learned that deception can have different levels and methods: when nourished by philosophy, it can become

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<sup>926</sup> Ibid., pp. 420-1

<sup>927</sup> Deborah Harkness has insisted on this aspect.

<sup>928</sup> Ibid., p.xxvi.

<sup>929</sup> Ibidem.



so sophisticated as to simulate divine revelation. The *Five Books of Mystery* disclose his attempts to warn Dee through various characters about the spurious nature of the experiments. As his indirect messages are always taken for discrediting provocations of wicked spirits, Kelly goes on playing with Dee's ingenuity till the end. This mercurial trickster is a Puck who jests to an Oberon<sup>930</sup> distracted by his visions. Like Puck and the *Orpheotelestái* criticized by Plato, Kelly is an *offspring of Selene and the Muses*. He cleverly binds Dee's imagination, challenges his judgement and confuses him, offering him in change the consoling *medicine of the soul* he needed.

Apart from being a subtle psychologist, Kelly gives an example of Elizabethan creativity. In her study on *Women, Medicine and Theatre, 1500-1750*<sup>931</sup> M.A. Katrizky includes 4 chapters on literary mountebanks in early modern Europe, the drama characters inspired by these figures. Ben Jonson's *Alchemist* embeds the critical references to Dee in the satirical display of common charlatans. Supposing Kelly had been a travelling apothecary, a mountebank, before his encounter with Dee, the latter's inextinguishable desire of knowledge forced him to make literature and perform it in the process. In the end, Kelly reveals himself much more than Jonson imagined his deceivers to be, for he is intellectually equipped to be the partner of a philosopher, a convincing playwright and actor, the shadow behind the spirits of the scrying séances, the creator of many ethereal beings and of the Enochian language, an idiom that has fascinated, intrigued and consumed the minds of many serious scholars.

#### 7.4.1 The Question of Authorship

Kelly's consistent contribution to the *Five Books of Mystery* raises a question of authorship: is it correct to put them exclusively under Dee's name? The tendency is to ignore Kelly or to accept him only as absolutely secondary. Yet, during their

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<sup>930</sup> Puck. I jest to Oberon (II. I. 44).

<sup>931</sup> M. A. Katrizky, *Women, Medicine and Theatre, 1500-1750, Literary Mountebanks and performing Quacks*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2007, Chs.2,10,13,22.

appearances the spirits order Dee to consider Kelly a partner at the same level, which discloses Kelly's claiming rights for his creative efforts. The necessity to reconsider Kelly has been perceived by scholars themselves, for example by G. Szönyi.

It is obvious that the *Five Books of Mystery* could not have come into being without Dee's intellectual input, direct participation and accuracy in writing down and annotating the messages. But it is no less true, that the messages, description of characters and the Enochian are the product of Kelly's creativity. An argument in favor of co-authorship is the difference in style between these books and Dee's other writings. The *Monas*, for example, exudes enthusiasm and is open to metaphor, but the style is simple and concise, one could call it scientific. The conversations with angels reveal the contrast between the clear and direct manner of Dee's questions and the creatures' answers in a symbolic and allusive language, mimicking various biblical styles and tones, from psalms and proverbs to the solemn apocalyptic prophecy. Another argument would be the poetic dimension of the conversations which can be ascribed only to Kelly.

### 7.5 Dee and Shakespeare

The 37 years of age that separate Dee from Shakespeare represent the distance between the outcome of the Elizabethan Renaissance and its decline. In Dee's youth high magic was part of the perennial philosophy and appeared as the solution to all personal and national problems. The wise man's task was to provide the knowledge necessary to reform the world. Animated by enthusiasm for man's capacities to enact his own cultural emancipation, Dr. Dee devised a long-term program for “the advancement of good Letters and wonderful, divine and secret Sciences”<sup>932</sup> and tried to acquire as much knowledge as possible from books. Successively he wanted to go beyond the approximations of his written sources, so he started his scrying experiments, which meant accessing the very source of wisdom, God himself. When Shakespeare worked in London as a theatre author

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<sup>932</sup> J. Dee, *Essential Readings*, op.cit., Letter to Sir Cecil, p. 29.

and actor, the attitude to magic had changed. Roger Bacon was criticized on stage as a necromancer, magic was under the attack of a religious radicalism, which became official with James I, the author of *Demonologie*. Dee himself was object of satire in Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*. On the other hand, though privileged for a period as a form of entertainment and protected by Elizabeth and James I, theatre also started to be contrasted as the devil's art and associated with magic by the rising Puritans. Playwrights themselves encouraged the interpretation of their art as a magical illusion. Possibly intended as a disclaimer, this attitude proved their awareness of theatre's belonging to the sphere of play. This does not mean that Shakespeare understood his art as free of consequences, but rather as a virtual reflection of reality, an image of nature in the mirror, efficient, but impossible to fix. *The Tempest* makes the association of theatre with magic explicit and interprets the *baseless fabric* of visions the two arts worked with as a labyrinth trial of the mind, necessary for its emancipation from ignorance. In this he definitely felt close to Dee, to whom he paid an homage in the play, by portraying him as *Holy Gonzalo, honourable man*, for whom Prospero's eyes shed fellowly tears (V. I. 62-4). It was the only way he could revere Dr. Dee, while being an author and actor of the *King's Men*.

The greatest playwright and the most brilliant philosopher of the Elizabethan Renaissance were equally committed to the cultural emancipation of their nation and they were also the most Europe-oriented men of culture in their country, but this orientation was actualized in different ways: Dee travelled extensively on the continent and contacted intellectuals, noblemen and monarchs of various nations; as far as we know, Shakespeare travelled in imagination through his characters, from Athens and Ephesus, to Sicily, Florence, Venice, Padua, Paris, Wittenberg, Bohemia a.s.o.

In a modern perspective Dee is a scientist and Shakespeare a poet, but in their environment human creativity was not yet divided into poetic and scientific, as it was an imitation of divine creation. Assuming the creation of the cosmos as founding phenomenon implied a co-naturality of rationality and aesthetics, instantiated in the power of the word. In conceiving their arts as *imitatio Dei* Dee and Shakespeare draw on Renaissance Platonism, but their approaches to man's possibilities and to nature diverge. The philosopher was confident in the wise men's capacity to transform the world, redeeming it from its postlapsarian status.

This implies that he valued man above Nature. The playwright was skeptical versus the possibilities of human art to improve nature. Being just a part of the created Nature, man participated in its laws. Besides, the spectrum of Shakespeare's humanity is much wider than Dee's, who made a clear cut distinction between himself and the vulgar many. Depicting all human types in their moments of sublimity but also of misery and dread Shakespeare was a realistic judge of *this quintessence of dust*. The distinction in evaluating Nature and human nature is suggestively illustrated by Dee's angels and Shakespeare's fairies, demon-witches and spirits. These 'professional aids' participate both in the supernatural and in the human nature and can serve the principle of good or the principle of evil. However Dee prefers to rely only on the good angels Uriel, Michael, Raphael, Gabriel and the princes that govern the elements and the living beings as they are ministers of God, instantiations of his power and thus above Nature. Conversely, Shakespeare's spiritual entities can cause changes in Nature, but are part of it or depend on it.

Although aware that magic could be good or bad, serving God or his enemy, Dee preferred to stay on the serene side of faith and the good, protesting publicly against the suspicions that he might be a devil's conjuror. As the scrying sessions prove, he was unaware of the duality of magic as art of persuasion, which turned him into an object of Kelly's enchanting techniques. In Shakespeare's plays magic can be benefic or malefic and it has a dual structure, as it implies a binary relation between a charmer and a charmed, a bonding agent and the object of his action. In *MSND*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* it is actualized by spirits with the help of words, parts of nature, sounds, visions that impress the senses. In the corporeality of the actors the fearful sacrality of spiritual beings is made familiar and the doubt insinuates itself that they may be reified reflections of human desires and fears. For Shakespeare magic stimulates emotions and fantasy, confounds reason, provides strategies to motivate illicit behaviour and moves in the volatile area where insecurity resolves itself in worship. Magic is like theatre an art of persuasion, but Shakespeare uses it therapeutically, as a vaccination against its own confusing effects. He wants to edify his spectators, *chase the ignorant fumes* and uncover their *nobler reason*, as Prospero does, in order to increase socratically their self-awareness. At the end of the game, Prospero abjures magic as rough and drowns his book, which is a book of magic, but could

be also taken for the play script, and for books in general. Prospero who is a magus and a master of revels, understands his ultimate reality beyond the temporal power he is invested with by magic, books, or the enchanting theatrical simulations. He delivers himself to his peers and to divine justice, returning to the instrument of salvation of any humble Christian, the prayer that *pierces heaven*.<sup>933</sup>

Both Shakespeare's theatre and Dee's magico-philosophical adventures are incursions into the possible, the realm of forms, divine archetypes, or 'seeds'. In a modern perspective their arts explored the virtual area of simulations that can be assimilated to the playground of hypotheses.<sup>934</sup> This is the sphere where science and poetry, theatre and magic encounter. However in treating the possible, Shakespeare and Dee have diverging attitudes. The numerous meta-theatrical allusions inserted in his plays and the explicit discourse on the magical procedures of theatre in *The Tempest* disclose Shakespeare's critical distance to his own creations and the purposeful construction of his plays and poetical idiom. In divulging the secrets of his art and insisting on the dream-like quality of the show, the playwright knew like Aristotle that “the poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e. what is possible as being probable or necessary” and he also knew that “what convinces is the possible”<sup>935</sup>.

Dee works mostly with the possible, the vision of a British Empire, the plan for the advancement of learning, the Monas as a symbol that could change the world, the conversations with angels and the idiom that would enable him to command nature, but being animated by an unfailing faith and an unfailing sense of wonder he is acritically bound to the tenets of the philosophical orientation he belongs to and remains true to his ideas all his life. In spite of the missing result of the scrying sessions with Kelly, in 1607 he returned to the “consoling company of the angels”<sup>936</sup> with one of his first skriers Bartholomew Hickmann. Dee exercises doubt on details during the conversations with angels, but he never questions their

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<sup>933</sup> *Ecclesiastes*, 35:21: The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds; *The Cloud of the Unknowing and Other Works*, London, Penguin, 2001, p. 149: short prayers pierce heaven.

<sup>934</sup> Andrea Battistini, *Il Barocco, cultura, miti, immagini*, Salerno editrice, Roma, 2000, p. 92 citing Popper and Kundera contends that scientific research has a narrative structure analogous to that of the novel, which remains in the field of play and hypothetical formulas, avoiding to draw final conclusions.

<sup>935</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 9, 145, *Complete Works*, op.cit., vol. II.

<sup>936</sup> B. Woolley, *The Queen's Conjuror*, p.289.

reality and metaphysical scope, as he did not question his divine inspiration in the *Monas*. Shakespeare, instead, translates his own critical judgement to his characters who meditate on their life crises, history, religious issues, affections. Their monologues are an insight into live thought, an example of self-awareness and their dialectic prefigures modern relativism.

Dee does not include relativism in his patterns of thought. His absolute confidence in his sources and in the veracity of the scrying sessions, ground both in his faith and in conceiving truth as having the absolute value of mathematical theorems. His test was precision, inherent in the world from the creation. When he became an author himself in the *Monas*, he insisted on the divine source of rigor:

It is a condition, however, that you do not commit any fault, however small, against the mystical symmetry for the fear of introducing by your negligence a new discipline into these hieroglyphic measurements; for it is very necessary that during the succeeding progression in time they must be neither disturbed nor destroyed. This is much more profound than we are able to indicate, even if we wished to do so, in this small book, for we teach Truth, the daughter of Time, God willing.<sup>937</sup>

Dee's dependency on the written word, his formidable collection of books and manuscripts and his generous lending them to others paved the way for the emergence of the first modern public libraries in England. Actually his addiction to books is another aspect of his faith. They were object of veneration, as the Bible was for the common Elizabethan. They delivered him, as he told Emperor Rudolf in Prague, "the secrets of the universe, and mankind's position within it"<sup>938</sup>. For him books were instruments of power, as they crystallized metaphysical wisdom and conveyed it to philosophers in an accessible manner, allowing them to turn it operative in the world. They were so much part of his life, that they populated his dreams. In the Halliwell edition of his Private diary one can read Aug, 6<sup>th</sup>, 1597:

... this night I had the vision and shew of many bokes in my dreame, and among the rest was one great volume thik in large quarto, new printed, on the first page whereof as a title in great letters was printed "Notus in Judaea Deus." Many other bokes methowght I saw new printed, of very strange arguments. I lent Mr. Edward

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<sup>937</sup> *Monas*, op.cit., pp. 45-6.

<sup>938</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

Hopwood of Hopwood my Malleus Maleficarum to use tyll new yere's tyde next, a short thik old boke with two clasps, printed anno 1517.<sup>939</sup>

Being separated from books meant for Dee being deprived of his life's inspiration. According to one report, in the final two weeks of his life, as he lay dying in his bed, his daughter Katherine “conveyed away his books unknown to him ... which when he came to understanding, it broke his heart”.<sup>940</sup>

Shakespeare must have been an avid reader, considering the great number of biblical and classical references identified by scholars in his work. Maybe Prospero's reference to Gonzalo furnishing him with books is a hint at Shakespeare's having taken advantage of Dee's library. His scripts were called *books*, according to the fashion of the time. However, he considered his work published [made public] on the stage and was indifferent to the publication of his Sonnets and plays, done by others. The live word prevailed for him over the written one, both in theatre and in magic and this is obvious in his attitude to language as well.

Dee and Shakespeare share the conviction in the power of the words, but substantiate it differently. The former is interested in the language of languages, the voyce of the Creator, the idiom beyond good and evil, the direct source of wisdom and link between poetry and magic at the core of Renaissance Neoplatonism. His participating in the divine language proved to be a magico-theatrical illusion; his need for clarity and precision in noting down this supreme language, the impossible task of rationalizing his own enchantment. Shakespeare believes in the mother tongue's founding virtue, that is in the spoken language. The shared language is shared meaning and it pertains to a human being as fish pertains to water.<sup>941</sup> Working with words professionally he is aware of their multiple meanings, of their deceitful, equivocal nature: their airy substance does not annul their impact on human life and history. The words' non-quiddity as referred to things and their ethical neutrality, makes them potential vehicles of opposite principles like love and destruction. His characters can be masters of the words, manipulating their meanings or can stand on the other side, becoming

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<sup>939</sup> *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee and The Catalogue of his Library of Manuscripts*, edited by James Orchard Halliwell, op.cit., p.59.

<sup>940</sup> B. Woolley, *The Queen's Conjuror*, op.cit., p.290.

<sup>941</sup> A very land-fish, languageless, a monster (*Troilus and Cressida*, III.III.266).

objects of their seducing power. Dee wanted to transcend language relativism through Enochian, viewed as a sample of eternity, a potential instrument to help him outdo his mortal limits. Shakespeare thinks language can express and access metaphysical realities, but is mainly contingency. On stage its role as meaning deliverer can be replaced by other instruments of significance, like mimic, music, dance, scenery. In the interiority of the self, good thoughts communicate with transcendence without the support of good words.

In the field of language Shakespeare and Dee open to modernity in a complementary way: the application of the cabalistical techniques of interpretation of the holy texts - the gematria, notarikon and the temurah – Dee makes use of to create his *Monas* -, is an anticipation of scientific symbolism in the modernity, while Kelly's application of the same to create the Enochian, even if done in a spirit of play, anticipates word processing systems and codes we all benefit from today with the generalized use of informatics. In Shakespeare's skepticism versus names and their bonds with things, Hermogenes' position on the arbitrariness of names resurfaces (Cratylus). The conviction that the bond between names and things is merely a social convention will be turned into an influential theory on the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign by Ferdinand de Saussure.

There is magic in Shakespeare's theatre and conversely there is theatre in Dee's magic and dramatic tensions in his own personality. In the theatre of the world he presented himself as “a modest Christian philosopher”, but had the ambition to write the script of the future for monarchs to translate it into real performance. He rejected accusations of being a conjuror, but in the privacy of his study practised ceremonial magic. The conversations with angels reveal this self-confident, highly qualified scholar involved in and unwaresly seduced by Kelly's theatrical tricks.

The way Dee and Shakespeare handled their public image is also distinct. Except for the sonnets which allow a poetically encrypted insight into his private life, Shakespeare objectified his persona in the plot, the characters and the style of his plays. This form of self-effacement has induced the most fanciful hypotheses regarding his identity, up to denying his existence altogether. On the contrary, John Dee manifested an acute awareness of being at the centre of his own stage and a desire to control his public image. The result is that his biography and character exert a fascination equal or even superior to that of his works.



Shakespeare considered himself a poet and a theatre maker, but he was also like Prospero a magician and a philosopher. Dee, the magician and philosopher, was receptive to poetic suggestions and involved in the theatrical experimentation of the scrying sessions. Their legacies complement each other in every way and build up the highest examples of creativity in the Elizabethan Renaissance.

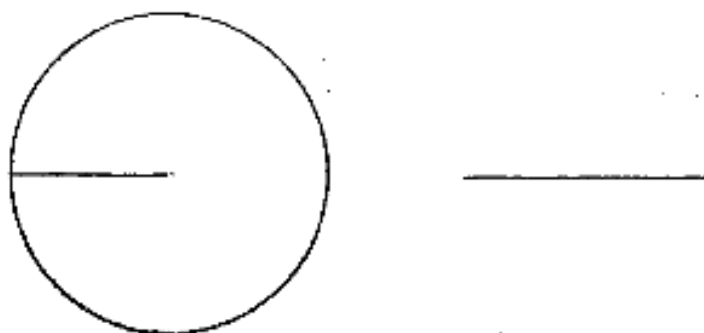
As a playwright and actor Shakespeare had the privilege of an immediate feedback from his public, the satisfaction of a shared imagination, something Dee never had, for apart from his involvement in the education of the rising middle class and his dialogue with European scholars and monarchs, he was a free-lance philosopher, “an academician of no academy”, like Bruno and other famous early modern thinkers. As his visions were too distant from his contemporaries' mindset, too sophisticated, Dee missed the applause that rewarded Shakespeare's work, the intellectual and emotional participation in his ideas. Viewed from this perspective, Kelly's performance, with all its undertones of deception and ridicule, looks like a friendly hand lent to a solitary thinker, a comforting evasion for a great man kept prisoner by his own ideas.

September 2007-March 2010

FIGURES

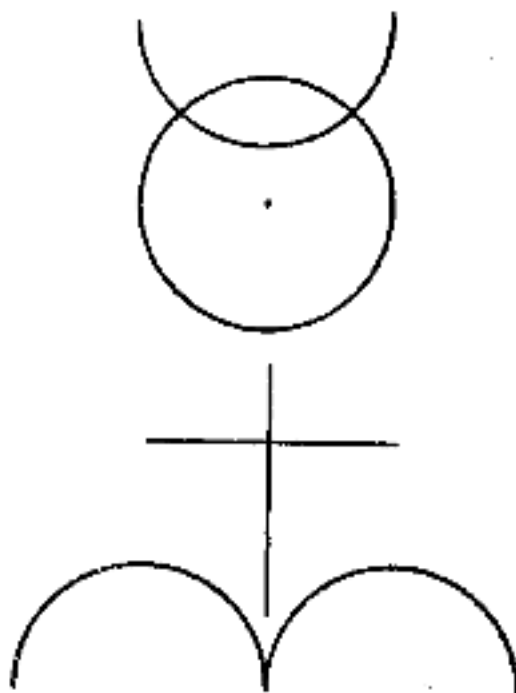


**Fig. 1 Monas Hieroglyphica, 1564 edition, front page** (published with the permission of Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com))

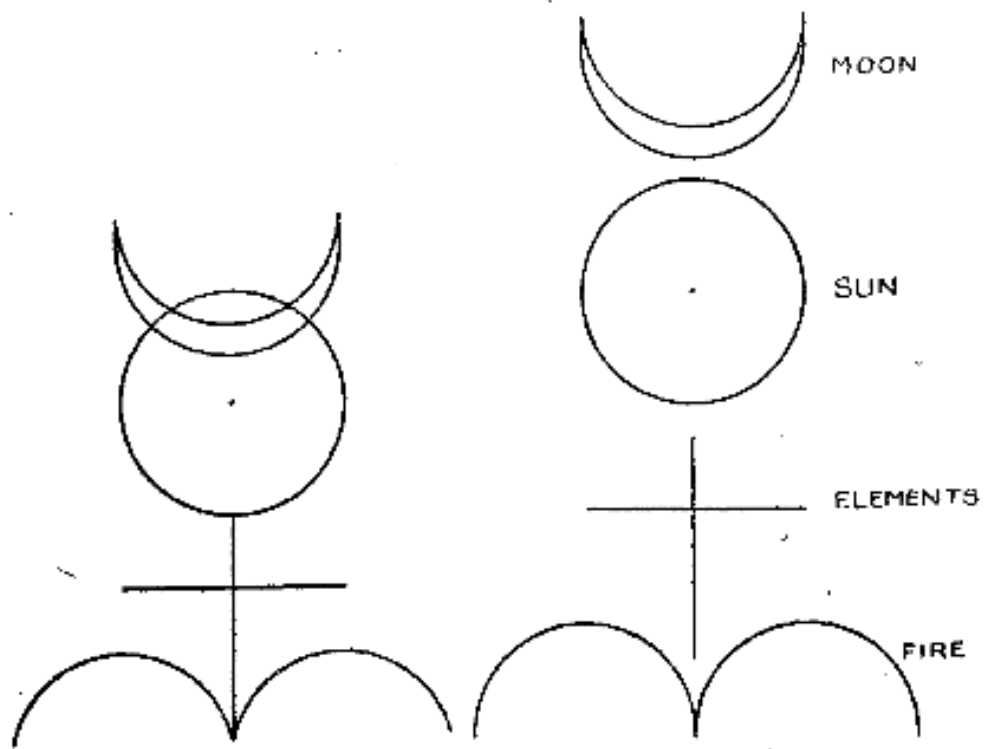


**Fig. 2 Monas Hieroglyphica, Theorem II** (published with the permission of Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA  
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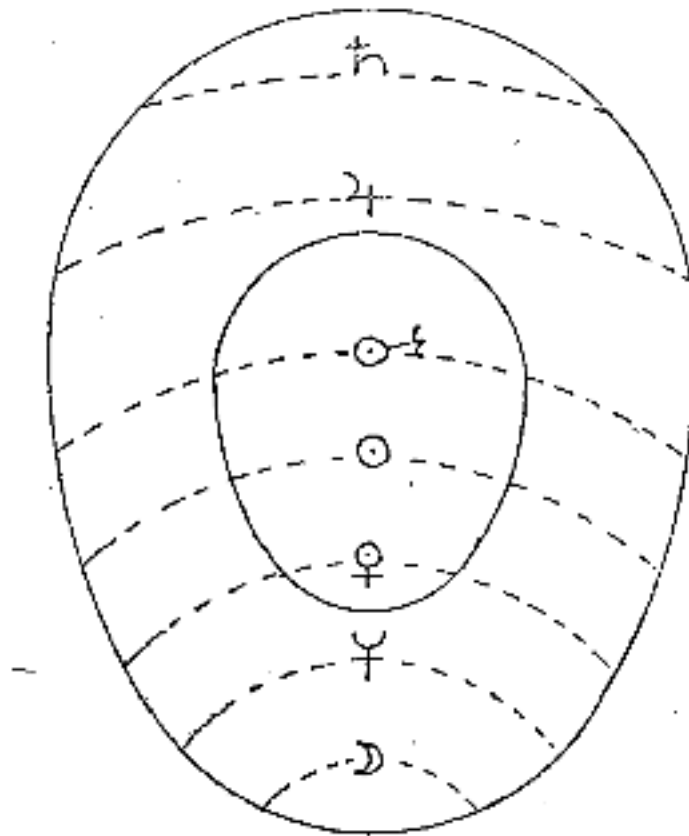
THE HIEROGLYPHIC  
MONAD



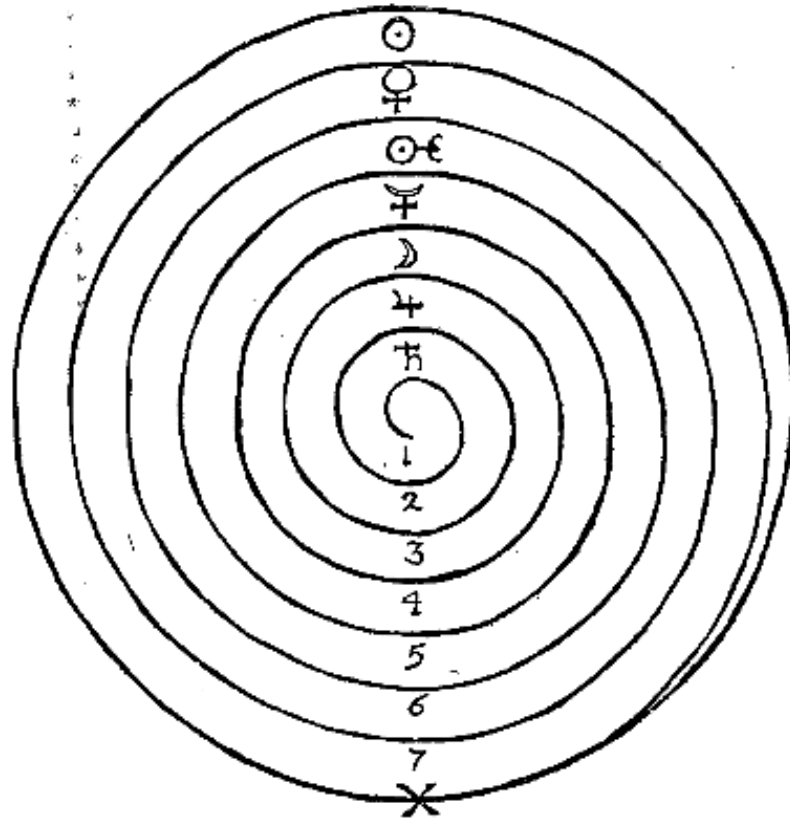
**Fig. 3 The Hieroglyphic Monad** (published with the permission of Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com))



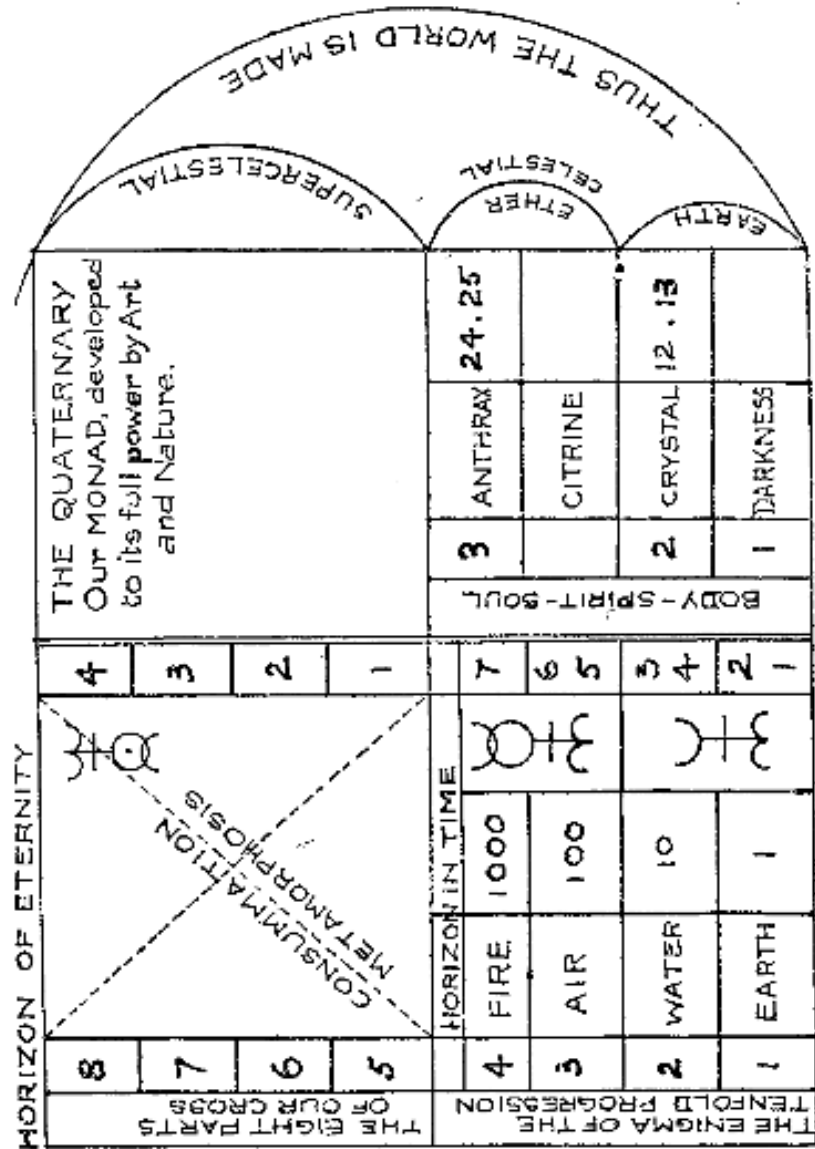
**Fig. 4 Monas Hieroglyphica, Theorem X** (published with the permission of Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com))



**Fig. 5 Monas Hieroglyphica, The Cosmic Egg, Theorem XVIII**(published with the permission of Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com))



**Fig. 6 Monas Hieroglyphica, Metamorphosis of the Cosmic Egg** (published with the permission of Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com))



**Fig. 7 Monas Hieroglyphica, The Canon of Transposition, Theorem XXIII**  
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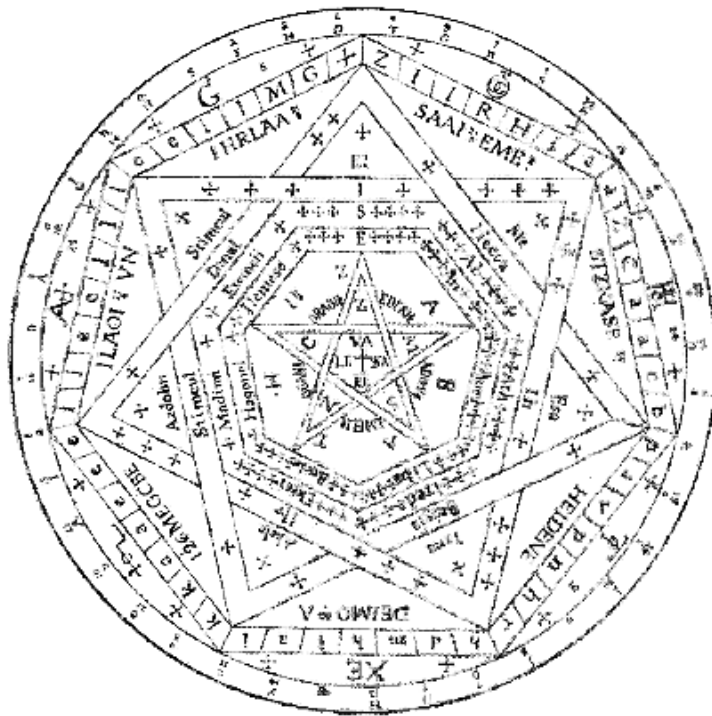
V - Pa - - - - b  
 K - kel - - - - c  
 G - ged - - - - g  
 X - gal - - - - d  
 Z - or - - - - f  
 S - un - - - - a  
 J - grupl - - - - s  
 U - Tal - - - - m  
 C - gon - - - - i  
 W - na - - - - h  
 F - ve - - - - l  
 N - mals - - - - p  
 R - ger - - - - q  
 D - druz - - - - u  
 T - Pal - - - - x  
 V - ned - - - - n  
 C - don - - - - r  
 H - ceph - - - - z  
 X - van - - - - u  
 Z - fan - - - - f  
 W - gisg - - - - t

**Fig. 8 The Enochian Alphabet** (published with the permission of Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com))

S	A	A	I <sup>21</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	E M	M E	E <sub>8</sub>
B	T	Z	K	A	S	E <sub>30</sub>
H	E	I	D	E	N	E
D	E	I	M	O	<sub>30</sub>	A
I <sub>26</sub>	M	E	G	C	B	E
I	L <sub>4</sub>	A <sub>4</sub>	O	I <sub>21</sub> / <sub>8</sub>	V	N
I	H	R	L	A	A	<sub>21</sub> / <sub>8</sub>

Ur: Those 7 names, which procede from the left hand to the right, are the Names of God, not known to the Angels; neyther can be spoken or red of man. Prove if thou canst reade them.

**Fig. 9 Table with the Names of God** (published with the permission of Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com))



**Fig. 10 Sigillum Aemeth** (published with the permission of Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com))



**Fig. 11 Dee's coat of arms** (image published with the permission of Huntington Library, San Marino, California and ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission)

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28. Notgah ox vr auonsad vl dath nox lat ges orn val sedcoh leth  
arney vas ars galep odámpha nol axar vox apracas nolph admi  
adpálsah noh vrh gednach vax varsablox vrdam pagel admax  
lor vantage oxandah lamfó nor vorsah axpáa, ols nugaphar  
ádras vxár nostrúgan ampacoh vortes lesqual cxoh.

---

29. Ses vah nómré gal sables orzah, get les part, ox ar se de cól-  
machu ardéh lox gempha lar vamra goh naxa vors admah  
gebah, sentúgel admá geod alzeh orzam vánchet.<sup>396</sup> oxam  
prah geh orzad Val nexo, vam seleph oxa, noha par gúmsah  
askeph nox adroh lestof ad moxa nonsúrrach

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30. Vomchál as pu gán san var, sem quáh lah set gedoh argli  
oranza vor zina sedcátah zuréboh admich, ors arсах varsab,  
oliba vórtes lúsanfah, adnah vor semquáx, vorsan lap varsah  
gebdah voxlar geoh, gemfel ad gvns. aldah gor vanlah, gehu-  
dan vor sableth, gedvel ax ors, manch var sembloh.<sup>397</sup>

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31. Ar dam fa gé do lah Luxh arcan Mans hubrah vor semblas  
adna gor partat, nor vilso ádchu apri sed amphle nox arua  
getol. Vor sambla geth, arse pax vor sah. geth aho gethmah or  
gemfa nah prax chilad ascham na prah oxáh var setqua lexoh  
vor sámbleh zubrah.

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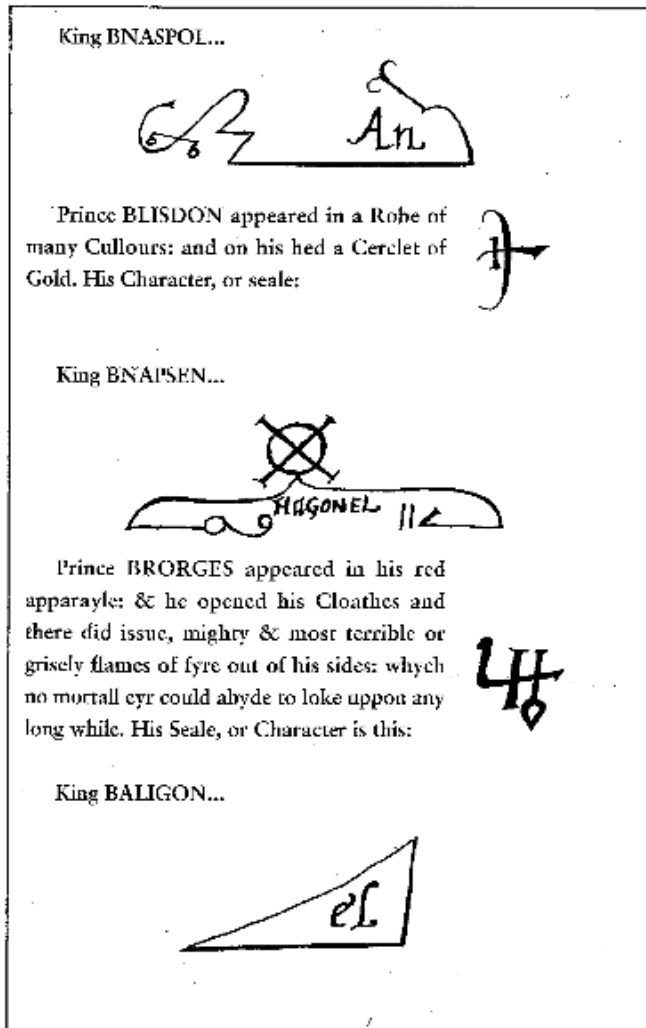
<sup>396</sup> Vanket.

<sup>397</sup> 48.

**Fig. 12 Samples of Enochian** (published with the permission of Red  
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[www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com))

g	B	B	B	B·O	L O	B	9
D2	f l	8	2	22	d 30	B·9	6
g	30	8	2	22	d 30	9·23	B
o p	+	+	+	6	666	6	BB
B	2	8·G	9F	3Q	9Q	11Q	12
98	B	8·G	9F	3Q	9Q	11Q	F
BB	M	M	M	M	d B	A	B
68	2	6 5	6 6	6·8	F	7	B·B
68	6 b	6 5	6 20	F	7	6 3	2
M	6 6	6	6 6	I	I	N	6
699	+	+	+	6 B	I	N	6 4
L	4 6	6	9 16	2 4	B 38	B 9	6

**Fig. 13 Possible Alchemical Tables** (published with the permission of Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com))



**Fig. 14 Seals of the Princes Heptarchicall** (published with the permission of Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com))

## APPENDIXES

### Appendix 1 The New Covenant – excerpted from *A True and Faithful Relation...*,

Berkeley, CA: Golem Media, 2008.

Aprilis 21.

Thus, am I resolv'd, O Almighty God, as concerning the ease, so hard to flesh and blood, to be resolv'd in, thus: And that I desire, that we all four, might with one minde and consent, offer and present unto thee, this writing as a Vow, Promise, and Covenant, if it be pleas'd thy Divine Majesty to accept it.

WE four (whose heads appeared under one Chryselline Crown, in one pillar united, and inclosed) do most humbly and heartily thank thee O Almighty God (our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier) for all thy mercies and benefits hitherto received, in our persons, and in them that appertain unto us: And at this present, do faithfully and sincerely confess, and acknowledge, that thy profound wisdom in the most new and strange doctrine (among Christians) propounded, commended, and enjoy'd unto us four only, is above our humane reason, and Christian profession to thy of: For that in outward they of words, it seemeth to us exactly to be contrary to the purity and chastity, which of us, and all Christians, thy followers, is exactly required. Notwithstanding, we will, herein, captivate, and tread under-foot all our humane timorous doubting of any inconvenience, which shall, or may fall upon us, or follow us in this world, or in the world to come, in respect or by reason of embracing of this Doctrine, listened unto, of us, as delivered from our true and living God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who only hath the true original power and Authority of his releasing and discharging: And whose pardoning, and not imputing of sin unto us, through our lively faith in the most worthy merit, and precious blood of the Lamb Immaculate, shed for us, is said shall be our justification and salvation. We, therefore (according to blessed *Joseph* his counsel last given) most humbly and sincerely require thy Divine Majesty, to accept this our Covenant with thee (for that, thy merciful promises made unto us, may be to us performed; and thy divine purposes in us and by us, may be furthered, and advanced and fulfilled.) This, as we acknowledge thy divine wisdom and grace offered unto us in this thy last mystical Admonishment: And dost most earnestly will us to accept *the same, as lawless just with thee*, Which Admonishment standeth upon two parts: That is to wit, upon our true Christian charity spiritual between us four, and also upon the Matrimonial licence and liberty, indifferently among us four *to be used*: So we the same four (which hereto will subscribe) covenant with thy Divine Majesty, upon the two principal respects before rehearsed, truly and unfeignedly to accept and perform heretofore and amongst us four, in word, thought and deed, Christian charity, and perfect friendship, and all that belongeth thereto: And as for the Matrimonial-like licence, and liberty, we accept and allow of it, and promise unto thee (O our God) to fulfill the same, in such sort, as the godly are permitted to fulfill, and have been by divers testimonies commended for, and by Divine doctrine willed to fulfill, in Matrimonial conversation, whenever thy mockers and allurements (Matrimonial-like) shall draw and perwade any couple of us. Beseeching thee, as thou art the only true Almighty and Everlasting God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Thou wilt, in thy infinite mercies, not impute it unto us for sin, blindness, rashness, or presumption; being not accepted, done, or performed upon carnal lust, or wanton concupiscence: But by the way of *Abraham-like faith and obedience*, unto thee, our God, our Leader, Teacher, Protector and Justifier, now and for ever: And hereto we call the holy Heavens to be witnesses, for thy honour and glory (O Almighty God) and our discharge, now and for ever. Amen.



**I** Edward Kelly by good and provident (according to the Laws and ordinances of God) determination and consideration in these former Actions, that is to say, appearings, shews made, and voyces uttered, by the within named in this Book, and the rest whatsoever Spirits have from the beginning thereof (which at large by the Records appeareth) not only doubted and disliked their insinuations and doctrine uttered, but also divers and sundry times (as coveting to eschew and avoid the danger and inconvenience that might either by them, their selves, or the drift of their doctrine ensue, or to my indamage divers wayes, happen) sought to depart from the exercises thereof: and withall boldly (as the servant of the Son of God) inveighed against them: urging them to depart, or render better reason of their unknown and incredible words and speeches delivered; and withall often and sundry times friendly exhorted the Right Worshipful Master JOHN DEE (the chief follower thereof) as also in the Records appeareth, to regard his soules health, the good proceeding of his worldly credit (which through Europe is great) the better maintenance to come of his wife and children, to beware of them, and withall to give them over: wherein although I friendly and brotherly laboured; my labour seemed to be lost and counsel of him despised, and withall was urged with replies to the contrary by him made, and promises, in that case, of the loss of his soules health, if they were not of God: Whereunto upon as it were some farther case of them, or opinion grounded upon the frailty of zeal, he ceased not also to payn unto me his soul, &c. which his persuasions were the chief and onely cause of my this so long proceeding with them: And now also at this instant, and before a few dayes having manifest occasion to think they were the servants of Satan, and the children of darkness; because they manifestly urged and commanded in the name of God a Doctrine Damnable, and contrary to the Laws of God, his Commandements, and Gospel by our Saviour Christ as a Touchstone to us left and delivered, did openly unto them dislike their proceeding, and brotherly admonished the said Worshipful, and my good friend Mr. JOHN DEE. to beware of them: And now having just occasion to determine what they were, to consider all these

C c c

these

\* April 22  
at eight.

The  
women.

An action  
required  
by the wo-  
men.

these things before mentioned by me and wisely to leave them; and the rather because of themselves, they (as that by their own words appear-eth) upon our not following that Doctrine delivered, gave unto us a *quiescens*, or passport of freedom: But the Books being brought forth \*, after some discourse therein, after a day or two had, and their words perused spoken heretofore, did as it were (because of the possible verity thereof, *Deo enim omnia sunt possibilia*) gave us cause of further deliberation: so that thereby, I did partly of my self, and partly by the true meaning of the said Mr. DEE in the receiving of them, as from God; and after a sort by the zeal I saw him bear unto the true worship and glory of God to be (as that was by them, promised) by us promoted, descend from my self, and condescend unto his opinion and determination, giving over all reason, or whatsoever for the love of God: But the women disliked utterly this last Doctrine, and consulting amongst themselves gave us this answer, the former actions did nothing offend them but much comforted them: and therefore this last, nor agreeing with the rest (which they think to be according to the good will and wholesome Law of God) maketh them to fear, because it expressly is contrary to the Commandment of God: And thereupon desiring God not to be offended with their ignorance, required another action for better information herein; in the mean, vowing, fasting, and praying, Mrs. DEE hath covenanted with God to abstain from the eating of fish and flesh until his Divine Majesty satisfie their modes according to his Laws established, and throughout all Christendome received. To this their request of having an action, I absolutely answer, that my simplicity before the Highest is such as I trust will excuse me: And because the summe of this Doctrine, given in his name, doth require obedience which I have (as is before written) offered, I think my self discharged: And therefore have no farther cause to hazard my self any more in any action. Wherefore I answer that if it be lawful for them to call this Doctrine in question, it is more lawful for me to doubt of greater perill; considering that to come where we are absolutely answered were folly, and might redound unto my great inconvenience. Therefore beseeching God to have mercy upon me, and to satisfie their Petitions, doubts and vows, I finally answer, that I will from this day forward meddle no more herein. 22. of April, 1587.

By me

EDWARD KELLY.

Apriis

## Appendix 2

The poem composed by John Dee for Christopher Hatton, Captain of Her Majesty's Guard and Gentleman of her Privy Chamber

Transcribed from Dee, John, *The Perfect Arte of Navigation*, 1577, Da Capo Press, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum LTD.* Amsterdam, New York, 1968.

TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFVL M. CHRISTOPHER Hatton, Esquyer, Capitayn of her Maiesties Garde, and Ientleman of her Priuy Chamber

Yf Priuat wealth, be leef and deere,  
To any Vvight, of Brytish Soyl:  
Ought Publik Weale, haue any peere?  
To that, is due, all Wealth and Toyl.

Whereof, such Lore as I (of \*late,)  
Haue lernd, and for Security,  
By Godly means, to Garde this State,  
To you I send, now, carefully.

Unto the Gardians, most wise,  
And Sacred Senat, or Chief Powr,  
I durst not offer this Aduise,  
(So homely writ,) for fear of Lowr.

But, at your will, and discreet choyce,  
To keep by you, or to imparte,  
I leaue this zealous Publik voyce:  
You will accept so simple parte.

M'Instructors freend did warrant me,  
You would so do, as he did his:  
That \*Redy freend, can witnes be,  
For Higher States, what written is:

Of Gratefulnes, due Argument.  
Yf greuous wound, of sklandrous Darte,  
At length to cure, they will be bent,  
M'Instructor, then, will doo his parte,

In earnest wise, I know right well:  
No Merit shall forgotten ly.  
Thus much, I thought, was good to tell:  
God graunt you Blis, aboue the Sky.

**TO HIM HE DEDICATES**

### Appendix 3

May, 8<sup>th</sup>, 1583. Kelly uses the procedure of *mise-en-abîme* to declare the falsity of the experiments, but Dee decidedly rejects the idea. The episode reveals once more the contradiction between his public and his private image. In public Dee repeatedly and vehemently rejected the suspicion that he was conjuring spirits, in private, he rejects with equal force the idea that the séances are a mere illusion.

Man: How pitifull a thing is it, when the wise, are deluded?

Δ:- I smell the smoke; procede Syr, in your purpose.

Man: i come hither, for the desyre I haue to do thee good.

Δ: Come you, or are you sent. Tell the veritie I charge thee, in the name and by the powre of the aeternall Veritie.

Δ:Note: After I perceyued euidently that it was a wicked tempter, who had powr permitted him at this instant, I began with some Zeale and egreness to rebuke and to charge him. But he stiffly and stowtely did contemne me a good while, mock me, and at length thretten to destroy me, my wife, my children, & c.

Δ:I thereuppon made my earnest prayers to god agaynst this Spirituall enemy, but he in the myddle of my prayers, sayed thus,

Man: -As truly as the Lord liueth, all that is done is lies.

Δ:That, thy sentence, will I record agaynst thee; to be layde to thy charge at the dredfull day.

Δ: After this great turmoyle past, was this voyce (following), hard [heard] of EK  
A voyce: Pereant tenebrae, cum Principe Tenebrarum.<sup>942</sup>

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<sup>942</sup> QLMA, p. 407.

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**Gabriela Dragnea Horvath**

**Theater und Magie in der Elisabethanischen Renaissance**

**Abstract**

**1. Konzeptwahl und Untersuchungs-Objekte**

Den Studien vergangener Jahrzehnte zufolge kann die moderne Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis – legitimiert durch die modernen Wissenschaften – den Zugang und die Formen der Darstellung, die Abläufe sowie die Rituale bis zum frühen modernen Theater und zur frühen modernen Magie zurückverfolgen. Die vorliegende Studie stellt eine Querschnitts-Analyse dieser zwei Hauptstränge in der Elisabethanischen Renaissance vor, präziser und spezifischer: die Darstellung der Magie in Shakespeares Theater versus John Dees Theorie und Praxis der Magie. Die theatralen Aspekte von John Dees Vermächtnis werden mit Shakespeares Sicht auf das Theater verglichen. Es wurde folgendes Studienmaterial benutzt:

7. William Shakespeare: *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* und *The Tempest*.
8. John Dee: *Monas Hieroglyphica* und *John Dees Five Books of Mystery*, editiert durch Joseph H. Peterson (Weiser Books, Boston, MA/York Beach, ME, 2003) vom Originalmanuskript von Dees spirituellen Tagebüchern (Sloane 3188), ergänzt durch Information aus *De Heptarchia Mystica* (Sloane 3191) und *Mysteriorum Libri Quinque* (Sloane 3189). Die *Five Books of Mystery* geben Dees spirituelle Sitzungen mit seinem Medium und Partner Edward Kelly wieder.
9. Gelegentlich wurde auch Bezug genommen auf andere Stücke von Shakespeare und auf Dees *Mathematicall Preface* zu Henry Billingsleys Übersetzung von Euclids *Elements of Geometry* (1570), die Aphorismen-Sammlung *Propaedeumata Aphoristica* (1558), seine Briefe und privaten Tagebücher.

Die Dissertation ist vergleichend und interdisziplinär. Sie hebt die Vernetzung zwischen Theater, Magie, Religion und Philosophie hervor und zeichnet Verbindungslinien zwischen alter und Renaissance-Philosophie. Sie bezieht Kulturgeschichte, Anthropologie der Aufführungspraxis, moderne religiöse Gedanken, Semantik und Hermeneutik literarischer Texte mit ein.

Die Shakespeare gewidmeten Abschnitte enthalten und entwickeln Gedanken aus unserer früheren Forschung, die bei Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma, 2003 unter dem Titel *Shakespeare, ermetismo, mistica, magia* erschienen sind. Einige Kapitel der These wurden in ihrem Entwicklungsstadium auf drei internationalen Kongressen als Paper vorgestellt.

*Demon as Other* an der Gonzaga-Universität in Florenz, 21.–23. Februar 2008, Konferenz-Titel: *The Problem of the 'Other' in Contemporary and Traditional Philosophy*.

15. *What's in a Name? Dee and Shakespeare on the Power of the Words*, Gonzaga-Universität Florenz, 19. – 21. Februar 2009, Konferenz-Titel:

*Word and Disclosure, Philosophy/Literature.*

16. *The Brightest Heaven of Invention: Renaissance Platonism, Word and Creativity in Shakespeare*, Bukarest, 13. – 14. November 2009, Center of Excellence for the Study of Cultural Identity, Konferenz-Titel: *Imitatio-Inventio: The Rise of 'Literature' from Early to Classic Modernity.*

## 2. Entwicklung der Dissertationsthese

Die Forschung geht von den historischen Prämissen (Kapitel 2) aus, welche die Bedeutung des Theaters und der Magie in der englischen kulturellen Tradition vor und während der Renaissance bestätigen. Sie beinhaltet – unter Berücksichtigung beträchtlicher Unterschiede – soziale Verbindungen und kreative Felder, die mit Religion, Alltagskultur, Renaissance und klassischen Ideen sowie dem Königtum zu tun haben. Das Theater entwickelte sich aus religiösen Zeremonien, und die Reformer begriffen es von Beginn an als ein wirksames Massen-Medium. Unter Königin Elisabeths Regentschaft wurde es zu einer nationalen Institution und erfreute sich der Protektion von James I. Die Popularität des Theaters wurde einzig durch die erstarkenden Puritaner eingeschränkt, die darin ein Werk des Teufels erblickten.

Magie war enger als das Theater mit der Gestaltung und dem Aufkommen der englischen Nation verbunden. Sie durchdrang die Mentalität jeder sozialen Schicht, die herrschende mit einbezogen. Sie stand in einer zwiespältigen Beziehung zur Religion, die sich dem Überleben und Wiederaufkommen der vorchristlichen Mythologie, dem Überlappen der priesterlichen und Magier-Rolle in der Gestalt des alten Druiden, der Beschäftigung des Klerus mit der Magie, aber auch dem Magus in der neoplatonischen Tradition verdankte. Die Reformation trug zur Verringerung der charismatischen Macht der Priester bei, reduzierte das Ritual auf die Predigt und steigerte damit indirekt die Attraktivität der Magie. Diese war oft religiöses Streitobjekt, angefangen bei Wycliffes Versuch, das Christentum zu reformieren bis zur postreformatorischen puritanischen Militanz. Der Kampf gegen die Magie schlug in soziale und kulturelle Spannungen, Verfolgung und Kriminalität um. Magie wurde zum Bestandteil gesetzgebender und politischer Gewalt und wurde Zentrum von Bücherstreits, z.B. von Reginald Scot und indirekt Johannes Weyer einerseits und König James I und Bodin andererseits. Magie trug zur Entwicklung der modernen Wissenschaft bei, wie John Dees Pionierwerk zur angewandten Mathematik, Gilberts Forschung der Magnete, Bacons Entwürfe einer neuen Epistemologie und die frühen Untersuchungs-Ergebnisse der Royal Society beweisen.

Die *Theoretischen Prämissen* (Kapitel 3) werden mit einer konzeptuellen Analyse des Theaters eingeleitet. Dabei rekurren sie auf griechische Wurzeln und werden mit einer Diskussion des Shakespeareschen Theaters fortgesetzt, welches sowohl Aristotelische Ideen als auch platonische Theologie einbezieht. Auf diese Weise hält das Theater mit seiner Aufführungspraxis *der Natur einen Spiegel* vor, welcher, wie das antike Theater, *mimesis* und *catharsis* einbezieht. Das Theater als Dichtung besteht in der Verwandlung der göttlichen Archetypen (*forms*), in wort-gekleidete Gestalten (*shapes*), wodurch dem luftigen Nichts (*airy nothing*) eine räumlich-lokale Wohnstätte und ein Name gegeben wird. In der *Genesis* und dem Anfang von *St. John's Gospel* ist Gottes Wort beides, ontologische Grundlage und Instrument der Schöpfung. Indem Hüllen in Worte gegossen werden, geriert sich die poetische Erfindung als *imitatio dei* und der

Dichter, in die Mitte zwischen Himmel und Erde platziert, wie in Giovanni Picos Adam und der Gestalt des Magus in der Renaissance.

Der zweite Teil des Kapitels behandelt die Magie. Er analysiert die antiken griechischen Quellen der Magie als kulturelles Konzept, vor allem bei Herodot, Heraklit, Aischylus und Plato und definiert Magie als den Ausdruck des menschlichen Glaubens in seine ihm immanente Macht über das Sichtbare, das Unsichtbare und die Zeit, erklärt in Ritualen und Praktiken, welche den Gebrauch von Wörtern, Zahlen, Bildern und Materie einbezieht. Der nächste Teil präsentiert das Wiederaufleben der Magie in der *philosophia perennis*, eine philosophische Strömung, die durch W. Schmidt-Biggemann gründlich erforscht und präzise definiert wurde. In der Renaissance haben Marsilio Ficino und Giovanni Pico Magie als höchste Realisierung der Natur-Philosophie betrachtet. In diesen Gedankengängen war es die philosophische Mission, die gefallene Natur zu retten, und der philosophische Magier verstand sich als Priester und Arzt der Natur, nicht hauptsächlich als ihr künstlicher Imitator.

Der Tradition hauptsächlich von Ficino, Pico, Trithemius, Agrippa und Paracelsus<sup>943</sup> folgend, sah John Dee die Magie als eine menschliche Möglichkeit, sich selbst und die Welt zu erneuern, sowie die höchstmögliche Grenze der Weisheit, mit der er von seinem Schöpfer ausgestattet wurde. Sein Magie-Konzept besteht darin, Wissen aus schriftlichen Quellen zu assimilieren und sie mit der Weisheit zu kombinieren, die dem Adepten von Gott direkt eingegeben wird. Gleichermäßen einflussreich ist die Überzeugung, dass der Schlüssel für diesen Fortschritt in *mathematischen Dingen* besteht, welche die *ewigen und göttlichen Dinge* mit den *natürlichen Dingen* verbinden; *beide sind substantiell und akzidentell, sichtbar und unsichtbar*. Dee ist auch der Ansicht, dass die Stimme des Schöpfers die Medizin der Seele sei; somit sei die Mathematik die Sprache der Schöpfung. Dee verstand die Schöpfung als eine alle Seinsstufen enthaltende *apokatastasis*, welche ihn befähigte, einen Langzeit-Plan für den „Fortschritt guter Literatur und wunderbarer, göttlicher und Geheimwissenschaften“<sup>944</sup> auszuarbeiten. Im selben Geist engagierte er sich intensiv in der Anwendung von Wissen in jedem Bereich praktischer Tätigkeit und in der Formulierung von Englands imperialer Ideologie. Kapitel 3 endet mit einer Übersicht über die Merkmale von Magie und Theater als Konsequenz ihres gemeinsamen Ursprungs im religiösen Ritual: Dynamismus, das Ziel, eine ontologische Mutation zu bewirken, der Wunderglaube, die Wichtigkeit von Worten und Bildern. Eingebettet in den Elisabethanischen Kontext, sind diese Eigenschaften spezifisch durchdrungen von der Renaissance-Philosophie und der Reformation.

Kapitel 4 trägt den Titel *Wunder in Theater und Magie*. Es beginnt mit der Diskussion der zentralen Rolle von Wunderglauben in Religion, Theater, Magie und Philosophie und differenziert zwischen den verschiedenen englischen Ausdrücken und den griechischen Begriffen *thauma* und *thaumazein*. Shakespeare macht einen Unterschied zwischen Wunder als Manifestation der Gnade Gottes und Wunder, die auf der Stufe der menschlichen Subjektivität begriffen und nach menschlichem Ermessen geschehen könnten. Die Analyse seines Wunder-Konzepts widerspricht dem Geist der Reformation, die das *opus operatum* und die Möglichkeit von Wundern verneint. Der Dramatiker entwirft Wunder, die sich

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<sup>943</sup> Fachleute haben sich auf diese Verbindungen bezogen, hauptsächlich Clulee, Harkness, Clucas, Szönyi. (Siehe Bibliographie).

<sup>944</sup> *Letter to Sir William Cecil*, in J. Dee, *Essential Readings*, op.cit., p. 29.

vom Sublimsten bis ins Monströse entfalten und ambivalent in ihren Quellen und Wirkungen sind. Wunder können positiv und kreativ sein, wenn sie zu Gerechtigkeit führen und edleren Geist wie in *Der Sturm* stimulieren. Im Gegensatz dazu sind sie zerstörerisch wie in *Macbeth*, wo sie Gerechtigkeit aufheben und zu Mord inspirieren. Die Wunder der Liebe im *Sommernachtstraum* stehen, wie in Platos *Symposium*, zwischen Weisheit und Dummheit, indem sie Ewigkeit und Endlichkeit, Ätherisches und Fleischliches, Sichtbares und Unsichtbares verbinden. In den drei fokussierten Stücken heben Wunder die Substanzlosigkeit der Liebe, die Macht der Illusionen und Träume und schließlich die traumähnliche Natur des Lebens selbst hervor.

Dem philosophischen Hintergrund Dees entsprechend konzipiert er Wunder als göttliches Instrument des Magiers, um die Welt zu transformieren. Das wird durch die Analyse der *Monas hieroglyphica* bewirkt, die ihm nach eigenen Worten vom heiligen Geist eingegeben wurde, ein geometrisches Symbol, das Griechisch und Latein, Zahlen, astrologische Zeichen und Alchemie in sich vereint. Dee glaubte, dass sein Hieroglyph fähig sei, das Wissen der Grammatiker zu reorganisieren, ein erweitertes Zahlenverständnis zu begründen und Geometrie und Logik zu revolutionieren. Des weiteren würde sie die gegenwärtige Ausübung von Musik, Optik und Astronomie überflüssig machen und sowohl für den Kabbalisten als auch den Philosophen das Verständnis für ihre Kunst erweitern. Eine Übersicht der Interpretationen des *Monas* durch verschiedene Gelehrte offenbart seine Reichhaltigkeit und führt zu der Schlussfolgerung, dass Dees Verständnis von Magie in die Richtung göttlicher Semiotik führt, einer Interpretation der Schöpfung durch Sprache und als Sprache.

Die Wunder, die Engel Dee in *Five Books of Mystery* offenbart haben, bestätigen hauptsächlich das Wissen, das er von seiner reichen Buch- und Manuskriptsammlung hatte, befähigen ihn jedoch nicht, außergewöhnliche Handlungen zu vollbringen. Der einzig bemerkenswerte theoretische Aspekt besteht darin, dass der Schlüssel für die Welt-Struktur und ihrer Funktionen die Nummer 7 sei, die mystische *Heptarchie*. Dee wurde durch die Konversationen mit den Engeln in den Fängen von Kelly gehalten, der in der Kristallkugel wunderbare Ereignisse zu identifizieren glaubte. Die Gespräche werden als einzigartige Form von *theatrum scientiarum* klassifiziert, in denen das Überschreiten der Naturgrenzen ein virtuelles Geschehen darstellt, welches sich in Worten substantialisiert. Darüber hinaus geben diese Konversationen Einblicke in personifizierte theo-philosophische Konzepte und das reale Konfrontations-Drama zwischen Dee und Kelly, einem Philosophen und einem Schwindler, die sich gegenseitig in einem Spiel von Anziehung und Abstoßung, von Nabelschau und Kreativität, einen Wettstreit zwischen Herrschaft und Kontrolle lieferten. Der Abschnitt, der den theatralischen Aspekten der *Five Books of Mystery* gewidmet ist, ergänzt *Theatre and Magic in The Tempest* und deckt den bemerkenswerten Unterschied zwischen Prosperos Macht, die Geister zu kontrollieren und andere Menschen zu manipulieren auf sowie Dees gehorsame, glaubensfundierte Selbsthingabe an die Engel, die eigentlich Kellys Verführungskunst entstammt. Der Abschnitt 4.6, *The charmed Magician* (der betörte Magier) offenbart Kellys kenntnisreiche und agile psychologische Manipulation und den erfundenen Charakter der Gespräche mit den Engeln. Kapitel 4 endet mit einer kritischen Debatte der weithin akzeptierten Idee, dass Prospero von John Dee inspiriert sei und schlägt Gonzalo, einen ehrlichen alten Berater, als theatralisches Porträt des

Philosophen in *Der Sturm* vor, wobei textanalytische und kontextuelle Argumente eingebracht werden.

Kapitel 5 trägt die Überschrift *Die Macht der Worte*, das ein zentrales Ingrediens von Theater und Magie darstellt. Anfangs befragt es die Elisabethanischen komplexen Erfahrungen mit Sprachen, die durch zahlreiche Widersprüche gekennzeichnet sind: Griechisch, Lateinisch und Hebräisch waren Medien göttlicher Offenbarung für einige und tote Sprachen für andere; das florierende Englisch oszillierte zwischen einer temporären Manifestation von Gottes Wort und der natürlichen Sprache einer Nation, deren Literaten zu Latein, Französisch oder Spanisch neigten, um sich kontinentalen Gästen verständlich zu machen, wie Giordano Bruno in *La Cena de le Ceneri* berichtet. Die Wirkung des gesprochenen Wortes auf der Bühne, in der Magie und im öffentlichen Leben hatte ihren Gegenspieler in der Autorität des gedruckten Textes; dem Respekt vor der Heiligkeit der Worte wurde durch ihre Behandlung als Spielobjekte widersprochen, das Vertrauen in ihre Wahrheit wurde durch die Tatsache ihrer Flüchtigkeit verneint.

Shakespeare und Dee haben unterschiedliche professionelle Ausdrucksformen. Shakespeare reflektiert auf Englisch über die Erscheinungsweise der Alltagssprache, indem er den Zusammenprall der Worte in Leidenschaften und moralischen Entscheidungen befragt. Er betrachtet die Muttersprache als grundlegend für jedes menschliche Wesen, mit anderen Worten: Sein ist Existenz in Sprache (*to be is to be in a language*), welche das Selbst mit der Welt, mit anderen Menschen und Gott verbindet.

Dee interessiert sich für ‚heilige‘ Sprachen: Latein, Griechisch und eine Weile für Hebräisch, welches in der *perennial philosophy* als das natürliche Erbe Adams im Zusammenhang mit dem Mythos der Offenbarung im Garten Eden gebracht wurde. Shakespeare entwickelt das kreative Potential des lebendigen Englisch, Dee wird bestimmt von seiner Abhängigkeit von toten Sprachen, deren kreative Archetypen ausschließlich in Buchstaben und deren numerischen Werten bestehen, wie die *Monas hieroglyphica* belegen. Auf dem Weg zum absoluten Wissen strebt Dee danach, den Zusammenhang zwischen Namen und Dingen wiederherzustellen und nimmt an, die Sprache des Gartens Edens wieder erweckt zu haben. Die Antwort auf das Beten, welches „sein Wort in seinem (Gottes) Ohr fixiert“, wurde in einer Sprache materialisiert, welche Dee *Lingua et Vox Angelica* nannte und die nachfolgenden Gelehrten, Linguisten und Esoteriker als Engelsprache (Angelic) oder Enochianisch (Enochian) nannten. Nach der Beschreibung, wie die Engel ihre Sprache lehrten, identifiziert die vorliegende These das Paradox der Engels-Sprache und enthüllt die Axiome über den Gebrauch von Namen in der Magie, wie sie Pico in den *Conclusiones* und Agrippa in *De Occulta philosophia* formuliert haben. Dees Annahme des Enochianischen enthüllt die mythisch-poetische Dimension seiner Gedanken.

Shakespeares Gebrauch von Namen in der Magie ist ebenfalls poetisch. Diese manifestieren jedoch ihre Kraft in seinen Stücken dadurch, dass sie ausgesprochen und nicht geschrieben werden. Sie sind weder nichtssagend, noch gehören sie dem Lateinischen, Griechischen, Hebräischen oder der Engelssprache an, sondern sind schlicht Englisch und daher für die Zuhörerschaft verständlich. Die Macht der Worte leitet sich eher von ihrer Bindung an Sätze und Vers-Muster ab, als dass sie ihnen immanent wäre, was mit der Jahrtausendalten Praxis der populären Magie korrespondiert. Das Theaterstück befasst sich hauptsächlich mit der Dynamik von Namen und Dingen im Welttheater, und die Charaktere sind

sich der Tatsache bewusst, dass die Macht der Namen nicht von ihrer Substanz (bloß Atem, *mere breath*) abgeleitet wird, sondern von den Bedeutungen, welche die Menschen ihnen geben, wie die drei untersuchten Stücke beweisen. In einem Kreisprozess geben Menschen den Namen Bedeutung, und Namen wiederum geben Menschen Werte oder können sie zerstören. Die Dissertation diskutiert die Kreativität der Sprache bei Shakespeare ausschließlich in Verbindung mit dem Privileg des Dichters, den Namen und das Wesen des Charakters in Übereinstimmung zu bringen. Der Abschnitt 5.7.2 *Ludicium in the Language Lab* platziert das Enochianische in seinen kulturellen Kontext und untersucht seine kreativen Muster. Das Enochianische wurde üblicherweise entweder als genuin metaphysisch oder als Produkt von Kellys Halluzinationen angesehen. Die vorliegende These verfißt seine künstliche Natur. Enochianisch wurde von Kelly durch die Benutzung von kabbalistischen Techniken geschaffen, in denen Text-Auslegungen als wortschöpferische Prinzipien dargestellt wurden. Die Schwierigkeit, ein Idiom zu erfinden und es zu erinnern, macht aus Enochianisch eine Verbindung von Phantasie und Willkür, was die Klassifikation mit logisch-linguistischen Instrumenten unweigerlich verunmöglicht.

Kapitel 6 trägt den Titel *The Temptation of the Possible: Vision and Spirits* (Die Versuchung des Möglichen: Vision und Geister). In der Annahme, dass Theater und Magie Wunder erzeugen, erscheinen sie als Modalitäten, das Mögliche erforschen und erschließen zu können, auch als Medien, durch die das Unsichtbare sich zeigt und als Formen wachsender Mysterien und Fortsetzung von Wundergläubigkeit. Die Dynamik von Enthüllung und Verschllossenheit ist primär ein visuell-räumlicher Vorgang. Theater und Magie arbeiten beide mit wahrnehmbaren Bildern und geistigen Bildern, die durch Worte hervorgerufen werden. Zu den wahrnehmbaren Bildern gehören die bewegten Bilder und die szenische Darstellung, die Glücksbringer der Magier, Gespenster, optische Spiele (Vexierbilder) und verschiedene Simulationen der Wirklichkeit.

Der erste Teil des Kapitels beschäftigt sich mit den sichtbaren Turbulenzen der Elisabethanischen Kultur. Traditionelle Gewissheiten, welche auf dem Primat des Sehens beruhten, wurden durch die Reformation relativiert, aber auch durch Theorien über *Melancholia* und eine Welle von Skeptizismus, die in zwei Richtungen wiesen: den sichtbaren Realismus der Atheisten, der für alle Phänomene eine natürliche Erklärung fand, die vorher als übernatürlich angesehen wurden. Gleichermaßen erzeugt der Pyrrhonismus in der Nachwirkung der lateinischen Ausgabe von *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* von Sextus Empiricus (1560) die Vision als eine Art subjektive Kreativität und Objekt-Schöpfung. Das eröffnet die Möglichkeit, über Sehen und Imagination in Shakespeares Stücken und in den *Five Books of Mystery* nachzudenken. Übereinstimmend mit den Glaubenssätzen in der *philosophia perennis*, glaubt Dee, dass eine exaltierte Imagination das höchste kognitive Instrument wäre, denn es verwandle Wissen, das von Gott als Licht der Weisheit erscheine, in Bilder. Die Erfahrung von göttlichem Wissen in der Imagination erhöht automatisch die Glaubwürdigkeit von Kellys Erfindungen. Shakespeare ist ebenfalls an den mächtigen Imaginationen der Poeten, Verrückten und Verliebten interessiert, in Übereinstimmung mit Theseus im *Sommernachtstraum*, speziell in seiner Teilhabe am kognitiv-kreativen Prozess. Jedoch unterscheidet der Dramatiker diesen Prozess von ungehemmter Einbildung, einer kreativen Fähigkeit, welche Szenarien entwirft, die durch Vernunft nicht zensiert werden und eine geistige Flucht vor der Realität in den Bereich von befremdlichen Träumereien darstellen, wo das Mögliche als real und

das Unmögliche als möglich betrachtet wird. Beispiele aus den drei untersuchten Stücken bestärken diesen Gedanken.

Der zweite Teil des Kapitels wendet sich den spirituellen Wesen zu, die in der Magie zentral sind und in Shakespeares Stücken auftauchen. Im Elisabethanischen Kontext sind diese Wesen Teil der Alltagskultur und der Renaissance-Philosophie, welche mit ihrer Hilfe versucht, die körperlichen und nicht-körperlichen Anteile in einem Konzept zu vereinen. Beispiele für diese Integration finden sich bei Ficino, Agrippa und Bruno und werden durch Reflexionen über die Ausbreitung dieser Entitäten in der Elisabethanischen Ära ergänzt. Dies ist eine Konsequenz des kulturellen Synkretismus und der Glaubenskrise, die durch die Reformation hervorgerufen wurde. Geister sind entscheidend für Magier und Dramatiker, aber ihre Interessensgebiete und ihre Ziele unterscheiden sich. Für Dee stellt der Kontakt mit Engeln das höchste erreichbare philosophische Ziel dar, während Shakespeare die Darstellung von Geistern auf der Bühne dazu benutzt, das Publikum mit seiner eigenen imaginären Welt zu konfrontieren, indem er sie davor warnt, die Rolle der Phantasie, welche Begierden stimuliert und Vernunft verdunkelt, zu unterschätzen. Die Geister, die in Shakespeares Stücken und in den *Five Books of Mystery* auftauchen, partizipieren an der übernatürlichen und an der menschlichen Natur. Sie sind fähig, enorme Distanzen mit großer Geschwindigkeit zu überbrücken und die Zeit zu komprimieren, sie können verschiedene Gestalten annehmen, einschließlich eines gestaltlosen Elements wie das des Feuers. Sie erscheinen aber in Menschen- oder menschenähnlicher Gestalt, besitzen ein Geschlecht und sind unterschiedlich alt. Für Dee und sein Medium Kelly gibt es gute Engel oder schlechte Geister. Bei Shakespeare können sie, wie im Fall von Ariel, guten menschlichen Zielen dienen oder aber der Zerstörung von natürlichen Bedürfnissen, wie die dämonischen Hexen in *Macbeth*. Sie können aber auch ambivalent wie die Feen im *Sommernachtstraum* sein. In *Der Sturm* enthüllt Prospero, dass die Darsteller der pantomimischen Einlage Geister sind, eine umkehrbare Annahme, die Spekulationsobjekt in der Dissertation ist. Sowohl bei Shakespeare als auch in den *Five Books of Mystery* sind die Geister Akteure in zwei Richtungen: Sie sind Schauspieler auf der Bühne oder treten in den Kristallkugel-Shows auf. Sie verkörpern auch bei den Philosophen Gottes Kontrolle über die Natur und vollenden bei Shakespeare die Arbeit des Intellekts. Ein bemerkenswerter Unterschied besteht darin, dass Uriel, Michael, Raphael, Gabriel und die Fürsten, welche die Elemente und die menschlichen Lebewesen in den *Five Books* beherrschen, als Minister Gottes entworfen sind, und das außerhalb der Natur, während Shakespeares Geister, Feen und Dämonen Veränderungen in der Natur bewirken können, jedoch Teil von ihr oder von ihr abhängig sind. Die kulturellen Quellen der Geister sind ebenfalls unterschiedlich: Shakespeare fügt das literarische Erbe der Klassik, englische Autoren, Magie-Bücher und das Vermögen der Folklore in einen christlichen Rahmen ein. Die Geister in den *Five Books* stammen aus der Tradition der Magie, die mit der *philosophia perennis*, aber auch der Lebendigkeit von populären Aufführungen (z.B dem Auftreten von Jahrmarkt-Quacksalber-Figuren) verknüpft wurden. Der christliche Kontext ist expliziter biblisch als in Shakespeares Stücken.

Die *Schlussfolgerungen* (Kapitel 7) summieren die Übereinstimmungen und die unterschiedlichen Beiträge Shakespeares und John Dees in der Elisabethanischen Renaissance und heben Edward Kellys kreativen Anteil in den spirituellen Sitzungen hervor, indem sie für die Anerkennung seiner Verdienste



plädieren. Ein kurzer Abschnitt erläutert Theater und Magie als verwandte Ausdrucksformen des vielgestaltigen Profils der Elisabethanischen Kultur und verfolgt ihre Spuren und Manifestationen bis in die Moderne.

### 3. Forschungsergebnisse

1. Die Dissertation vergleicht das Theater und die Magie hinsichtlich ihrer gemeinsamen Ursprünge im religiösen Ritual und ihre inneren Verbindungen mit Religion und Philosophie in der Elisabethanischen Renaissance.
2. Sie betont die zentrale Rolle des Wunders in Theater und Magie und fördert die semantische Analyse im Vergleich des Konzepts mit Religion und Philosophie.
3. Es handelt sich hier um den ersten Vergleich zwischen Shakespeare und John Dee.
4. Sie demontiert die Idee, dass Prospero von Dees Figur inspiriert sei und bringt Texthinweise und kontextuelle Beweise, dass Gonzalo, ein ehrlicher alter Berater in *Der Sturm*, Shakespeares Porträt von John Dee darstellt.
5. Sie stellt John Dee in die Tradition der *philosophia perennis*, Rechenschaft dafür ablegend, wie einem modernen Gelehrten die konflikthafte Natur seines Glaubens und seines wissenschaftlichen Geistes erscheint, seine kraftvolle Phantasie und sein Bedürfnis nach Ordnung und Strenge.
6. Sie klärt Kellys Rolle und kreative Teilnahme bei den spirituellen Sitzungen und betrachtet ihn als Co-Autor der dramatischen Episoden in Dees spirituellen Tagebüchern.
7. Sie interpretiert das *Enochianische* als eine Kunst-Sprache, entstanden durch das kreative Verarbeiten analytischer Instrumente der Text-Hermeneutik, wie sie in der Kabbala benutzt wurde.

**Der Lebenslauf ist in der Online-Version aus Gründen des Datenschutzes nicht  
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