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ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

METATHEATRICAL AND METAFICTIONAL SPACES: MULTICULTURALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM IN EARLY MODERN AND POSTMODERN INTERPRETATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation analyses the cultural transformations resulting from multilingualism and multiculturalism and their impact on the literary conceptions of space and place in the early modern society and the contemporary period, from geocritical and ecocritical perspectives, as well as discourse theory (Ferdinand de Saussure 24; Margaret Wetherell 5; Michel Foucault 131; Laura Alba-Juez 210; Jacques Derrida 4-5; Guy Cook 11). I will follow the metatheatrical and metafictional spaces created in each early modern and postmodern literary work under scrutiny to develop the notion of reconstructing and repurposing of discursive spaces in metatheatrical and metafictional contexts and to show that multilingualism and multiculturalism are not merely sociological concepts, but they may be taken over in drama or fiction to recreate imaginary spatial configurations. Starting from the multicultural and meta-theatrical dramatic spaces of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), passing through the discussion of the fictional narrative *The Blazing Word* (1668) by Margaret Cavendish, and continuing with the analysis of Julian Barnes' historiographic metafiction *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989), this doctoral dissertation traces the metatheatrical and metafictional coordinates that have fostered the development of multilingualism, and the more general manifestation, multiculturalism, throughout times, as expressed in literary works.

The questions raised by this dissertation are: What kinds of relationships can be tracked in narrative fiction and in early modern drama between individual lives, societies, and the global community? What is the role of proto-globalization (in the early modern period) and globalization (in postmodern times) in the rise of multiculturalism in the world? What are the metaphorical spaces engaged in the development of multicultural identities in literature? In what ways do the dramatic or narrative techniques suggest metatheatrical and metafictional spaces? These questions are the underlying leitmotifs of this doctoral dissertation. Answering them does not mean having solved the complex social problems generated by multicultural and multilingual confrontations. However, the appeal to literary texts may show the ways in which metaphoric spaces in both drama and fiction play a role in the configuration of character which, in turn, responds to resounding questions of identity, and even imaginings about possible influences of past identities on contemporary issues. Whatever the reason for adducing such questions to the foreground of the academic discussion, the end result is clear and even palpable: spaces and identities of the past have meaningfully shaped future actions and have influenced people's capacity of looking at the present.

The main argument of this dissertation is that multilingual and multicultural encounters in drama and fiction display metatheatrical and metafictional connotations, according to literary genre. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, multilingualism finds its accomplishment in the synthetic meta-discourse of the theatre—as the playwright speaks through various characters' voices, fashioned via meta-theatrical discourse. In Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, the talking animal-humans speak the discourse of science, in conversation with the human Empress, in the utopian world of the fictional narrative. In Julian Barnes' postmodern meta-novel, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, multicultural spaces are symbolically diversified to constitute as many forms of meta-fictional discourse: from the cruise-ship to Noah's Ark, Mount Ararat and the outer space; from a lonely raft floating adrift in the immensity of the ocean to the Orinoco jungle, the multicultural and multilingual spaces of metafiction are constructive of the characters' identity.

Despite the apparent annihilation of vast spaces brought about by globalization in the modern and post-modern age, when viewed from the intercultural perspective—rather than the merely economic one—globalization involves people's specific experiences in different spaces, which may be transformed by writers into various literary discourses—whether drama, fictional narrative, or novel. When viewed from the perspective of the creation of metaphoric spaces in literature, geocriticism (Robert T. Tally Jr. "Adventures" 21) becomes the right lens through which various characters in drama and fictional narrative may be interpreted. This theory goes hand in hand with ecocriticism (Tom MacFaul 179; Simon C. Estok 104; Rose McKenna 271; David Gray 8), where nature's importance and the development of identity in space can be taken over in literary texts to show the variety of experience shaped by space and place.

Interpreting space and place in literature has been an interest of the critics ever since the 1970s, when many explored the tenets involved in the discipline of human geography and explained how people perceived, felt, and thought about space and place in different contexts and cultures. In the introduction to the collection of essays entitled *Literature and Geography: The Writing of Space through History*" (2016), the editor, Emmanuelle Peraldo, explains the origins of the literary critics' interest in interpreting space in literature. As Peraldo notes, "The *Spatial Turn* as a transdisciplinary phenomenon in the humanities was coined for the first time in 1989 by Edward Soja in *Postmodern Geographies* to explain the increasing concern of academics in social sciences for space in the 1960s and '70s, especially with the contribution of Henri Lefebvre (1974), Deleuze and Guattari (1980) and Michel Foucault (1984)" (Peraldo 1). As a conclusion, in considering the impact of the spatial turn in literary studies, Peraldo

speaks metaphorically about "Space gradually occupying all space… (1)." This means that the analysis of literary space has come to have an impact on our understanding of geographic space in real life, and also that critical studies discussing literature and space have proliferated so much that they have gradually come to occupy most part of the critical landscape.

On the other hand, the concepts of meta-theatre and meta-fiction have also gained momentum in the latter half of the twentieth century. While I accept all the current definitions concerning meta-theatre and metafiction, besides the principle of the unstable relationship between language and the reality they describe, or between the dramatic/fictional world and the reality described, I would add the notion of change and transformation, which lies at the basis of the classical meaning of the prefix *meta-*. Meta-theatre and meta-fiction, therefore, reveal several possible transformations of reality as filtered through multiple minds, or multiple variants of the authorial persona in relation to a dramatic or fictional reality. Viewed from this perspective, meta-theatre is a symbolic spatial characteristic of *The Tempest*, while metafiction may not be specific only to postmodern novels (such as Julian Barnes' *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* discussed in this dissertation) but also to earlier types of narrative, such as Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* (even if this fictional narrative does not fulfil all the theoretical requirements of a generic novel). By submitting to the principle of change and transformation in drama or fiction, with multiple symbolic spaces, several (authorial) points of view, and multiple possibilities of interpretation, even seventeenth-century fictional narratives may be looked at from the angle of metafiction.

I use the concept of metafictional space of narration to explain the narrative that uses both its narrative form and its thematic content, as well as its characters and setting(s), to explore the nature of fictional space and, therefore, the nature of reality. As a result of this theoretical positioning, the novel and the fictional narrative discussed in this dissertation involve (1) pseudo-authorial narrators who recurrently comment on their act of composition (such as the worms in Julian Barnes' novel; or the reference to Julian Barnes in the half-chapter "Parenthesis" of the novel *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*; or even the Epilogue to the Reader in *The Blazing World*, in which the narrator describes the reasons for writing this narrative); (2) characters which are aware of their fictional status (such as in the chapter "The Dream" in Julian Barnes' novel, in which the narrator lands in a modernized version of heaven but is aware of his own status as fictional character; or the Empress in *The Blazing World*, the character that invites another woman, Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, the fictional story's author, to her realm in order to discuss scientific topics); and (3) some kind of crossing of conventional boundaries between past and present, or between the space of narration and

the space of the story-world (such as the interferences among various alternative stories in Julian Barnes' novel or the invention of the parallel world of the North Pole in Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*).

Considering the long-lasting tradition of multiculturalism and multilingualism, the aim of this dissertation is that of tracing the course of multilingualism and multiculturalism through individual characters and societies, as represented in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *The Blazing Word* by Margaret Cavendish, and Julian Barnes' meta-novel, with a view to appreciating the cultural influence of these sociological concepts, which have an impact on the literary works under discussion. My understanding of these concepts (multiculturalism and multilingualism) reveals a positive and communicative stance, involving transmission and respect for tradition, even when dealing with multiple points of view represented by characters evolving in different literary works. These characters communicate in different languages and they develop multiple discourses, which affect their identities and relations to others. Outsiders in *The Tempest*, for example, may be understood differently by a member of the sixteenth-century audience and by a postmodern one, who may look at the play from a postcolonial perspective. Similarly, a postmodern novel writer, such as Julian Barnes, may rework differently the themes of solitude, friendship, retribution, and the new worlds, as compared to Shakespeare, but the meta-novel is also based on echoes from *The Tempest*.

The first chapter of this dissertation, entitled "Proto-Globalization, Space, Multilingualism and Multiculturalism" (1), establishes the methodological framework (geocriticism, ecocriticism, discourse theory) and the concepts used in this dissertation. Concepts such as cosmopolitanism (Sheldon Pollock 76), multiculturalism (Joachim Frenk 22; Anne Philips 3; C. James Trotman ix; Charles Taylor 61), multilingualism (Larissa Aronin and David Singleton 1; John Edwards 1), proto-globalization (Van der Bly 1406; Jon D. Carlson 195), globalization (Paul Kirkbride et al. 15), meta-theatre (Lionel Abel 134-135; Mary Ann Frese Witt 23; Stephen Purcell 19), meta-fiction (William H. Gass 24-25; Yaël Schlick 1; Patricia Waugh 5; Mark Currey 2) and historiographic metafiction (Linda Hutcheon 71) are defined and discussed in the cultural contexts of the early modern period and the postmodern one. While approaching the three literary texts comparatively, this dissertation does more than interpret one work in relation to the other. Considering the complexity of multiculturalism and multilingualism during the historical periods discussed, my argument focuses on the repurposing and reconstruction of these aspects within the literary texts discussed.

For this reason, the first subchapter of chapter 1, entitled "Challenges of Proto-Globalization and Globalization: Then and Now" (1.1) discusses the economic and cultural

effects of early modern proto-globalization triggered by the travels of exploration, which, in turn, generate the exceptional development of literature, including Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*. Alternatively, among the effects of postmodern globalization are the diversity of languages and cultures entering in contact with each other, which explains the extraordinary diversity of spatial metaphors through which meta-fictional narratives express the character's identity, as in the case of Julian Barnes' *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*. I argue here that the literary texts written in the early modern period reflect the challenging changes of early modern proto-globalization through the indirection of metatheatre and metafiction, while the postmodern meta-novel uses metafictional techniques to reflect the complexity of experiential places in shaping the characters' identity.

The second subchapter of chapter 1, entitled "Multilingualism and National Cultures" (1.2), debates the impact of using several languages in multicultural societies and the ways in which these multilingual aspects are reflected in the literature of the respective periods. I argue that multilingualism, like multiculturalism, is a way of defining and complementing the process of the formation of national identity through language and discourse, specific to a certain geographic space. This process is even more visible if this space is the discursive space of drama, narrative fiction, or meta-novel.

The third subchapter of chapter 1, entitled "Language, Speech, Discourse and Space" (1.3), debates the tenets of discourse theory in the context of spatiality to demonstrate that discourse analysis can be a useful tool to interpret these literary works from a multicultural perspective. Throughout this theoretical chapter I introduce concepts such as metatheatrical space, metafictional space of narration, and multicultural cosmopolitanism to explain the complex cultural exchanges revealed through the diversified medium of the literary works discussed.

The fourth subchapter of chapter 1, entitled "Multicultural Literary Encounters" (1.4), demonstrates the impact of multiculturalism in the three literary works discussed. I argue that the play (*The Tempest*), the fictional narrative (*The Blazing World*) and the meta-novel (*A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*) manifest symbolically the multicultural literary encounters dealing with national identities, in relation to multilingualism and expression through various languages.

The second chapter of this dissertation, entitled "The Island as Space of Multilingual Encounter: *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare" (2), examines the metaphoric space of the island in Shakespeare's last play and the implications of this imaginary space during the dramatic exchanges among characters. I argue that the multicultural and multilingual

encounters among characters create a meta-theatrical space through which each character speaks in his/her own language, or dramatic discourse. Through this interplay of a variety of dramatic discourses, the play creates a specific discursive space, and this is why the island's exact geographic location has created so many critical controversies throughout time, revealing the ambiguity of space and the fractured geography of the play.

The first subchapter of chapter 2, entitled "Multiple Discourses in *The Tempest*" (2.1) establishes the theoretical frameworks of discourse theory and geocriticism, through which I analyse space and place in this play. The second subchapter, entitled "Discourse of Power and Magic: Prospero" (2.2) examines the space of the island as viewed from the perspective of the authoritarian figure of Prospero and the metatheatrical environment he creates through his powerful discourse of magic. Therefore, Prospero's island is not only magical, but also a natural and symbolic environment, and it dramatizes social, economic, and political confrontation.

The third subchapter of chapter 2, entitled "Discourse of Love: Miranda and Ferdinand" (2.3), examines another type of discourse, the discourse of love developing between Miranda and Ferdinand in the same metaphoric space of the island of the mind. While Miranda uses the discourse of love and emotion to marvel at the wonderful brave new world she sees before her eyes, Ferdinand is more rational, but no less impulsive in expressing his emotions in the magical space of Prospero's island.

The fourth subchapter of chapter 2, entitled "Discourse of the New World: Caliban" (2.4), examines the controversial figure of Caliban from a multicultural perspective, arguing that it is this discursive difference and externality of Caliban's character that makes him not only sympathetic to the audiences (despite being called a "monster" by many of the play's characters), but also an indication of the play's metatheatrical nature. Caliban deploys the discourse of the New World on an island in which Prospero tries to impose Old-World habits and structures. The result is grotesque, but also illuminating, and this is why Caliban is left alone on the island to meditate on his own condition and to seek for grace.

The last subchapter of chapter 2, entitled "Multi-Discursive Theatrical Confrontations" (2.5), wraps up the discussion about multiple meta-theatrical discourses in *The Tempest* by showing that it is exactly the play's multi-discursive and multilingual quality that gives it its ambivalent spatial flavour, which enjoins the audience to mediate fully on the complexities of human identity. As I see it, Prospero's island represents several places at the same time: a haven for shipwrecked castaways; a refuge for a distressed father and his three-year-old daughter (Prospero and Miranda), twelve years before the storm event; a common

place for Machiavellian plotting for a group of hard-hearted politicians (the Neapolitan party); a location for the placement of an imaginary utopian society for a benevolent and rather naïve counsellor (Gonzalo); a place of love engagement between two young and noble heirs (Miranda and Ferdinand); a site of half-hearted recognition and comic plotting for a group of servants, aided by a marginalized and enslaved creature (Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban); and, finally, a safe haven for the boatswain and the ship's crew, who sleep over the entire action of the play, but are available at the end to transport everyone back to civilization. None of these spaces can be seen as real, because they are expected to be interpreted in the meta-theatrical key.

The third chapter of this dissertation, entitled "Metafictional Utopia: *The Blazing World* by Margaret Cavendish" (3), is an analysis of the hybrid spaces and multilingualism in early modern fiction, as revealed in Cavendish's fictional narrative. This fantastic travelogue dramatizes and interrogates many of the ideas expressed in relation to New World narratives in the early modern period, and even includes echoes of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. I argue that Cavendish's fictional narrative displays ambiguous meta-fictional spaces that are suitable to a postmodern novel, while multiculturalism and multilingualism are distinctive features relevant for this spatial diversity.

The first subchapter of chapter 3, entitled "Hybridity and Multilingualism in Early Modern Fiction" (3.1), examines the multicultural nature of the discourses of the New World that influenced Cavendish's fantastic narrative. I argue that Margaret Cavendish includes the ideas of multiculturalism and multilingualism in her narrative work to speak for the advanced scientific notions of her time, which also include transgressive feminist perspectives and utopian narratives.

The second subchapter of chapter 3, entitled "Interrelated Discourses and Spaces in *The Blazing World*" (3.2) examines the narrative spaces in this work of fiction to show that the multiple discourses and languages described by Cavendish account for the diversity of cultures which had come in contact with European explorers in the early modern period. Cavendish's spatial metaphors take a life of their own, as the products of fancy, or imagination, and they become embodied in the space of narrative fiction. The desert space of the North Pole, in Cavendish's narrative, is not so desert after all, as it is populated with fantastic and hybrid creatures, who speak the common language of human compassion and understanding, despite their hybrid animal-like physical features.

The third subchapter of chapter 3, entitled "Authorial Invention and Metafiction" (3.3), examines the ambivalent genre of Cavendish's fictional narrative, demonstrating that the original features of multilingualism and multiculturalism introduced in the story makes it a *sui*

generis example of meta-fiction, at a time when such a genre was not even defined. The mock-ironic tone and the utopian insertions, plus the narrative technique of multiple points of view and the unreliable narrator, as well as the self-referential frame in which the narrator meets the author herself are highly advanced narrative techniques for the seventeenth century, which requires a reconsideration of the generic aspects of this fictional narrative.

The fourth subchapter of chapter 3, entitled "The North Pole as Utopian Place" (3.4) is a presentation of the main space of Cavendish's fictional narrative, the North Pole, which is an archipelago of fictional islands, where the hybrid inhabitants speak the common language of civility and human understanding. Margaret Newcastle's romantic vision of utopia involves the Reader in the resplendent world of imagination. As the power of imagination is the best guide to this magnificent world, Cavendish's fictional narrative speaks for meta-fictional techniques used by postmodern writers.

The fifth subchapter of chapter 3, entitled "Icy and Shining Islands: *The Blazing World* and *The Tempest*" (3.5), compares the two almost-contemporary works (drama and narrative fiction) from the point of view of the metaphoric spaces represented in both of them: metaphoric islands of the mind. Both works invent fictional islands (or archipelagos)—whether in the Mediterranean Sea or the imaginary North Pole—and in both of them the characters use various discourses and languages to express their complex identities. While Cavendish's Blazing World represents a telescopic image viewed through the perspective of the wandering princess (and her alter-ego, the Duchess of Newcastle), and the characters speak in diversified voices, Shakespeare's island in *The Tempest* is a place of the mind, where characters develop various discourses in a meta-theatrical environment.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation, entitled "Spaces of Multicultural Recognition: *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* by Julian Barnes" (4), examines the metafictional spaces in the ten and a half chapters of Julian Barnes' meta-novel in order to show that the fluctuating human experience can create fictional spaces according to the emerging environment and, at the same time, identity is shaped by the physical spaces in which it develops. The metaphoric islands of imagination (mountain, desert, jungle, cruise-ship, Noah's Ark, the raft, the outer space and the moon) in Barnes' metafiction are structured as multiple places of multicultural encounter, where philosophical, religious and scientific systems of belief intersect, as characters strive to regain an elusive and volatile identity. I argue that the multiple spaces represented in Barnes' meta-novel are fragmented in many places of experience, where characters embark on a futile attempt to find themselves, with no particular end in view.

The first subchapter of chapter 4, entitled "Metaphoric Islands of Imagination in Julian Barnes' Metafiction" (4.1), demonstrates that the metaphoric spaces of imagination in Barnes' meta-novel, such as mountain, desert, jungle, cruise-ship, raft, Noah's Ark, or the outer space and the moon, are allegorical spaces marked by an acute sense of the postmodern relativism. More similar to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* than Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, the spaces in Barnes' meta-novel show that all patterns of thought and language are relative to the space(s) of their origin, and they are interlinked as a result of the process of globalization. In this way, past and present are intertwined and interdependent, while the concepts of multiculturalism and multilingualism are mere words when confronted with the realities of life.

The second subchapter of chapter 4, entitled "Biblical Story: Noah's Ark in "'The Stowaway'" (4.2), examines the motif of Noah's Ark that runs like a red thread throughout the chapters in Julian Barnes' novel, especially in the chapter entitled "The Stowaway." Through the version of the humble worms saving their lives in the Great Flood, Barnes creates a metaphor for the voice of the disenfranchised and the humble, often neglected in the authoritative discourse of power. At the same time, through the pervasive biblical story of Noah's Ark linking most of the chapters in Barnes' meta-novel, the author shows the ways in which history is interpreted differently, at various times, by different people, depending on their place of origin or political allegiance.

The third subchapter of chapter 4, entitled "Allusions to Noah's Ark in "The Wars of Religion," "Shipwreck," and "The Mountain" (4.3), continues the discussion about the motif of Noah's Ark in other chapters of Barnes' novel, showing that the space of the Ark is a place of multicultural and multilingual existence. Therefore, the space of Noah's Ark is a metaphoric location for the generation of multiple discourse and languages, just as in the exemplary biblical story, where the families of Noah's sons generated the roots of the main branches of Indo-European languages.

The fourth subchapter of chapter 4, entitled "The Cruise-Ship as Multicultural Space: Tourists and Terrorists in "The Visitors" (4.4), discusses the biblical myth of Noah's Ark in a postmodern context, showing that the space of the multinational cruise-ship is at once a place of modern fear and anxiety as well as a suitable location for the commodification of culture and politics. Among the conglomeration of French, Italian, Swedish, American, British, and Japanese families, the Arab terrorists stand out for their implacable demonstration of faith, but also as definitive statements of alternative points of view in the postmodern age, apart from different cultures and religions.

The fifth subchapter of chapter 4, entitled "Outer Space and Multiculturalism: "Project Ararat" (4.5), examines Barnes' chapter from the perspective of spatiality, showing that the outer space, like the space of the mountain or the space of scientific achievement and of religious faith are just possible modes of manifestation of ideology in a complex and volatile postmodern world. In an environment formed of postmodern simulacra in modern-day America, where a replica of the ancient Noah's Ark can be found in a provincial North American town, moral and religious convictions can be as volatile and uncertain as distant spaces, like the moon or the outer space.

The fifth chapter of this dissertation, entitled "Representing Displacement: Spaces of Imagination in Narrative and Drama" (5), focuses on the geocritical concept of displacement to show how the meanings of the metaphoric spaces discussed in the three literary works can be displaced from their initial point of origin and made to mean differently, depending on various social, economic and cultural factors. I argue that the spaces of the sea, mountain, island, and Jungle in drama and narrative fiction acquire different dimensions in relation to the characters involved in the dramatic action or in the narrative, while they are also metaphoric places of literary metamorphosis and transformation.

The first subchapter of chapter 5, entitled "Geocriticism, Ecocriticism and Spaces of Imagination" (5.1), redefines the geocritical and ecocritical principles from the perspective of multiculturalism and multilingualism. I argue that these fictional and representational spaces show a common feature of *displacement*, of transformation and emotional dislocation through literature, which is achieved by means of language and discourse. The second subchapter of chapter 5, entitled "Tempests and Seas: *The Tempest*, *The Blazing World*, and "Shipwreck" (5.2), discusses the motif of the sea tempest and shipwreck in the three literary works, showing that these spatial concepts come down to the essential meaning of change, mutability, and spiritual transformation through catastrophe, a sea-change that permeates all these metaphoric spaces of transition.

The third subchapter of chapter 5, entitled "Islands and Mountains: *The Tempest*, *The Blazing World*, and "The Mountain" (5.3), examines the spatial metaphors of the island and the mountain in the three literary works, with an emphasis on issues of isolation, remoteness and quasi-magical dedication to a certain purpose, as well as multiple points of view created by individual consciousness, like in a kaleidoscope of images. Just like the island, the mountain is a place where characters find their true selves or true knowledge. All three literary works show the power of narrative and drama to shape different discourses and engender new worlds.

The fourth subchapter of chapter 5, entitled "Space in Art, Architecture, and the Jungle: *The Tempest*, *The Blazing World* and "Upstream!" (5.4), focuses on the meta-theatrical and meta-fictional metaphor of the artistic message, which raises above the lower territory of the metaphoric spaces represented in the respective literary works, showing that literary space is various and valid for all purposes. The metatheatrical message of Prospero's Epilogue in *The Tempest*, the multiple narrative points of view and the Epilogue to the Reader in *The Blazing World*, as well as the symbol of the jungle (represented in letters) and the upcoming movie in Barnes' "Upstream!" show the variety of interpretation of these multicultural and multilingual literary spaces.

The sea, the mountain, the island, the forest, and the jungle, as represented in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, and in Julian Barnes' *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* are metaphoric places in which characters evolve differently, according to their psychological condition, religious belief, education, or in relation to their function in society. Thus, Prospero's island is a place of authority for himself, but a confusing labyrinth to others, such as the members of the Neapolitan party. To Caliban, the island is his childhood home, but also a place where he is tormented by the spirits manipulated by Prospero; Caliban remains alone on his island at the end of the play, to seek wisdom and grace.

The sea, the mountain, Noah's Ark, and the Jungle in Barnes' chapters from *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* are spaces that are meant to challenge the characters' decency, sanity, and even their life. In *The Blazing World*, the wild natural spaces of the islands at the North Pole are controlled by the benevolent power of the Empress and the Emperor, but their authoritative capacity is not so obvious. This is especially because all the characters in the fictional narrative—from those living in the resplendent cities of gold and diamond to the wild woods where satyrs roam—speak the language of human civility and compassion. Therefore, multicultural and multilingual encounters converge within the discursive coordinates of this common language, which is also the metafictional or meta-theatrical discourse of the literary work.

From *The Tempest* and *The Blazing World* to Julian Barnes' meta-novel, multiculturalism may be looked at as a social practice rather than a philosophical or sociological concept, with ramifications in the lives of the characters. Whether multiculturalism—or its opposite, xenophobia—is practised on a desert island, in the characters' imagination, as in *The Tempest*; at the imaginary North Pole, among speaking animals, in *The Blazing World*; or on various islands of the mind (Noah's Ark, a cruise-ship, a

church, a boat or a raft lost at sea, a mountain cave, The Titanic, the jungle or the Moon), as in Julian Barnes' meta-novel, the concept takes as many shapes as there are characters to experience it. This plurality of interpretations may be related to the literary genre—since, in the play, characters perceive and describe the world differently, according to dramatic action and their dramatic function and, in fiction, there are several points of view attributed to different characters—but this is mostly the result of psychological stimulation.

Most of the characters' perceptions in *The Tempest* are caused by the individual illusions manipulated by the master puppeteer Prospero, with the help of the spirit Ariel. Therefore, what the characters see and hear (even what they are supposed to eat and smell) are theatrical illusions created by a single-minded and one-sided author (Prospero, often associated with Shakespeare), who imposes his will upon others. This is metatheatrical discourse and it is present in *The Tempest* at various dramatic levels. *The Blazing World* challenges gender conventions and proposes fluid spaces governed by a meta-authorial female agency, and this may be interpreted as metafictional technique in Cavendish's storyline. In Julian Barnes' metafictional narrative, the God-like, omniscient illusion-maker is the individual mind, set in different circumstances, which creates complex shapes out of the surrounding reality, and then releases these shapes into the world, just as so many alternative forms of reality. The postmodern instability of perception and experience—and the realization of the fact that there are so many points of view and identities—may be seen as representing a multicultural view of life.

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