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Article

Telling a Different Story: Grace Tiffany's *Ariel* (2005)

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Abstract

Set in the Bermuda Triangle, Grace Tiffany's novel *Ariel* (published in 2005) originally appropriates the Shakespearean romance, providing a long prequel to the hypotext's dramatized events and rewriting its story. The novel centres on Ariel, whose origin is now that of a spirit born from the hallucinated brain of a Jewish mariner; he is an unfortunate traveller who survived the shipwreck of his master's ship only to die of thirst on a faraway island. There Ariel remains and meets, in turn, Sycorax, who is also stranded there, pregnant; Caliban, her son; and, later on, Prospero and Miranda. But *this* Ariel is nothing like the saucy yet gentle spirit we find in Shakespeare. Shakespeare's play has long been discussed in the light of issues such as male-controlled cultural hegemony, heteronormativity, and, of course, colonialism: Tiffany's novel does bring all these concerns to the fore but—surprisingly enough (also taking into account its intended readership)—fails to question them, and even seems to bolster Eurocentric and patriarchal discourses that, to all intents and purposes, stain the novel's (happy?) ending and, eventually, tell a different and even unreceptive story.

Keywords: *The Tempest*; Shakespeare; Grace Tiffany; Ariel; young adult literature

1. A Problematic Ariel

With reference to children's narrative, John Stephens remarks that "children's writers often take upon themselves the task of trying to mould audience attitudes into 'desirable' forms, which can mean either an attempt to perpetuate certain values or to resist socially dominant values which particular writers oppose" (Stephens 1992, p. 3). This definition may resonate with Grace Tiffany's first novel avowedly dedicated to young readers, *Ariel*, published by HarperCollins's imprint Laura Geringer Books in 2005. The novel, which was given the 2006 Best Books for Young Adult award by the American Library Association, appropriates (Sanders 2006) William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, providing a long prequel that tells about Ariel's birth and residence on the island and, through her meeting with the other characters, tackles different topical issues such as patriarchal hegemony and colonial impositions. If on the one hand, Tiffany's narrative serves the purpose of young adult literature in that it "tend[s] to be […] interrogative of social constructions, as well as critical of the notion of a responsive universe beyond what might be readily identified as social institutions" (Coats 2011, p. 322), on the other hand, it ultimately seems to veer towards more traditional, gender-normative, and Eurocentric paradigms.

As highlighted by Laura Tosi, adapting Shakespeare for younger readers "is no innocent or easy operation, in that all formal transformations are guided by precise ideological choices" (Tosi 2014, p. 8; my translation). *Ariel* does not (or does not completely)

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exploit the Shakespearean hypotext as "mark and property of the cultured and the educated" (Bottoms 1996, p. 73), but questions it and warns us against the dangers of reading Shakespeare's romance merely as a tale of generosity and reconciliation. Tiffany apparently embarks on questioning the Shakespearean play and the cultural and political hegemonic values it contains and yet fails to oppugn them thoroughly as it drifts towards its ending.

Grace Tiffany has authored many fiction books set in the Renaissance and centred on Shakespeare and his family, many of which are nowadays considered crossover novels, enjoyable by young and adult readers alike. Among the others, the two on Judith Shakespeare: *My Father Had a Daughter* in 2003 and the very recently published *The Owl Was a Baker's Daughter* (2025), as well as Shakespearean-canon-inspired novels such as *The Turquoise Ring* (2005), based on *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Paint* (2013). If, as Roberta Seelinger Trites points out with reference to adolescent novels, growth "is inevitably represented as being linked to what the adolescent has learned about power" (Seelinger Trites 2000, p. x), a book based on *The Tempest* seems to fall perfectly into this category; indeed, the play has been, alongside *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, one of the most frequently adapted ones for young people. The Shakespearean drama, with its basic plotline based on authority and romance, offers a deep meditation on power, in its multifarious manifestations (colonial, political, patriarchal, even magical) up to the eventual, if not total, renunciation of it over forgiveness. Then again, in children's literature "appropriations of Shakespeare offer the implied reader not only an understanding of a playtext, but also a model for reading that playtext" (Hateley 2009, p. 15). As a Shakespearean scholar herself, in 2000 Grace Tiffany read Shakespeare's Ariel as the bringer of "healing grace", interpreting the character as a literary representative of the Holy Spirit through which "grace, mediated through the Spirit, allows repentance and forgiveness to follow tragic choice so that *ha-mar-tia* becomes *felix culpa*" (Tiffany 2000, pp. 429, 431). Bearing this in mind, one may say that the rift between professional and 'creative' Shakespeare is here at its widest as Tiffany goes from an utterly positive (critical) depiction of Ariel as an entity whose function is that of revealing "the weakness of human will and the redemptive control of the Holy Spirit" (ibid., p. 421) to an entirely negative rendition of the same character: a rather problematic switch as it is operated on the terrain of young adult fiction which typically explores not only sexuality and early romantic experiences, but also the (traumatic) negotiation of gender-related social beliefs and expectations.

As Holly Hassel and Tricia Clasen explain, with regard to this specific kind of literature, "[c]hildren's and young adult literature provides a space in which readers are able to engage with critiques of patriarchal, homophobic, and otherwise narrow definitions of gender such as those they encounter in lived reality. At the same time, it's a site in which predominantly female readers witness increasingly more complex portrayals" (Clasen and Hassel 2017, p. 6). Tiffany's novel offers a rather challenging model, problematically styling Ariel as 'she' which may include her in the number of the above-mentioned "increasingly more complex portrayals". Tiffany's Ariel is a selfish, mischievous, tricksy, unreliable, and prejudiced pixie-like being, who instils spiteful, discriminating, and totally falsified feelings and views of reality into people's hearts and eyes. The novel is seemingly forgetful of the original character's compassionate nature, which makes for Ariel's capacity for empathy, for example when he seems to urge Prospero to act humanely towards his enemies (Shakespeare 1987, 5.1.20–28) and rather looks to and emphasizes Ariel's original darkest and most unsettling side. Shakespeare's spirit is also capable of performing emotional cruelty and producing extreme psychological terror; in 1.2 he almost sounds pleased in describing how his action has caused alarm, turmoil, and utter fright in the shipwrecked

mariners. Moreover, he uses his invisibility and magic, as well as music, in order to lure, disorient, and trick Prospero's adversaries—and Caliban too—almost depriving them of their wills; and it is exactly this malice that is exploited and magnified in the novel.

2. Who Is Ariel, What Is She?

Where does Ariel come from? Shakespeare's play does not provide any detail about his origin, although we know for sure that he is not human ("Were I human", he famously says in act 5). In Tiffany's novel Ariel's birth is rather fantastic. Ariel sprung from the hallucinated brain of a Jewish mariner, an unfortunate traveller who survived the shipwreck of his master's ship only to die of thirst on a remote island in the Bermuda triangle. There Ariel remains and meets, in turn, pregnant Sycorax, who is also stranded there; Caliban, her son; and, later on, Prospero and Miranda as well as Ferdinand, Antonio and the other castaways.

In fact, Tiffany's Ariel shares almost nothing with other fictional renditions of the Shakespearean elfish character. In the early nineteenth century, Mary Lamb famously introduced Ariel in her narrative as "a lively little sprite" who "had nothing mischievous in his nature" (Lamb and Lamb 1894, p. 177). The Lambs, as Laura Tosi justly foregrounds, "were the first […] to appropriate some of the characteristics of fairy tales" (Tosi 2025, p. 80) in their retellings and *The Tempest* makes no exception in that it centres mainly on Miranda's and Ferdinand's romance which duly receives Prospero's paternal approval drifting towards its (forgone) happy ending. We also find the play among Edith Nesbit's early twentieth-century adaptations for children. Akin to Lamb's narrative, Nesbit's, included in her *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare* (Nesbit [1907] 1997), is a happily-ever-after story whose conclusion corresponds to Miranda's and Ferdinand's betrothal, an event that brings on reconciliation and happiness for everyone, except for Caliban who, passingly mentioned in the tale as "a hideous, deformed monster, horrible to look on, and vicious and brutal in all his habits" (Nesbit [1907] 1997, p. 49) is soon forgotten, while Ariel is eventually left on the island, "free as air, so that he could wander where he would, and sing with a light heart his sweet song" (ibid., p. 57).

The Tempest later resurfaced in modern narrative abridgments as well, such as Leon Garfield's *Shakespeare Stories* (Garfield [1985] 1994) and in Bernard Miles's *Well-Loved Tales from Shakespeare* (Miles 1986). In Garfield, Ariel is a delicate spirit, freed by Prospero from an unjust imprisonment and ever grateful to him, his master, although at times a bit naughty and peevish. On the other hand, Miles's tale emphasizes all the more the stark moral difference between the evil Sycorax (and her monstrous, half-witted son) and Ariel, who is "so fine and delicate you can hardly see him […] so nimble he can move like a flash of light—very different from ugly bound-up-like-a-hoop old Sycorax" (Miles 1986, p. 18). Miles's Ariel is given pride of place at the conclusion of the story as he trespasses the narrative barriers and becomes a sort of Tinkerbell-like creature that may bring good luck to the children who are smart enough to pay attention to his flimsy but very musical presence. More recently, Marcia Williams's beautifully illustrated *Tempest* centres largely on the restoration of Prospero to his dukedom, while both Ariel and Caliban, who has eventually "grown a little wiser" (Williams 2014, p. 58), are enfranchised from their servitude, the latter especially thanks to the fact that Prospero, who has been reinstated to his position of power, is now "of mind to forgive" (ibid.); at the same time, Ariel, the faithful, may now "fly as free [as] any sprite might wish" (ibid., p. 59). All these narratives closely follow the play's main plot and never depart from its (mainstream) design of a 'good' Prospero who guides the action towards a happy conclusion with the help of a feisty but ever grateful Ariel.

Tiffany's Ariel departs from these fictional precursors and is in fact presented as a malignant, vindictive, and insensitive being who is first the product and later the manipulator of the consciousness, either gullible or deranged, of the humans she encounters. Erica Hateley has briefly stated that Tiffany's novel, although originally appropriating the early modern play by placing Ariel at its centre, "erases 'Shakespeare', obliterates *The Tempest*'s plot, and genders Ariel as feminine and '*childish*' (Tiffany 2005, p. 193) while identifying both categories as negative" (Hateley 2009, p. 186). This, as we will see, is true, with special regard to Ariel's characterization as a negative female role; and yet, even though the original Shakespearean plot is eventually subverted, Ariel still relies on it in order to substantiate her lies, especially when she tries to bend Prospero's will to her own fantasies. Shakespeare is not totally *erased,* then, but rearranged into a tale of malice.

In the novel, Ariel comes into being from the delirium of a dying sailor, named Jasper, stranded on a Bermuda island: "She jumped from the head of a luckless sailor, who was blown against the Atlantic in the fifty-eighth Year of Our Lord, separated from the boat of his master in a storm off the coast of Malta" (Tiffany 2005, p. 1). During a terrible storm in the Mediterranean, Jasper had doubted his master, who had promised the crew that no one would perish at sea, and had stolen a boat which had later drifted him astray towards the Atlantic: "For seven weeks his boat was blown, while he wept and cursed himself and his own bad faith and for the loss of his master, whose name was Paul but whom the sailor called Lion of God" (ibid., p. 2). Paul is, of course, St Paul whose shipwreck off the coast of Malta, is detailed in Acts 27. Eventually stranded on a faraway beach, Jasper perceives, in his final agony, a colourful being hovering over him:

> So in the end he called on his dreams to save him, and as she tossed, muttering, on the beach, one of them came. She was beautiful. Transparent, she yet shimmered with all the colours of the rainbow, green and yellow and purple and blue and orange and red. She hovered above him and looked at him with soft violet eyes, and he could not see that she was a dream and had no heart. "Are you the Lion of God?" he croaked. He said the words in Hebrew, the tongue he knew best. "*Ari-el*?" A faint breeze blew the words to her ears. He babbled on. "*Ar-i-EL*? I am in exile, but the Promised Land lies before me. We will possess it, you and I, and none will stand in our way!" She brushed his mad, haggard face with her radiant wings. He smiled with insane bliss, and died (ibid., p. 5).

Moments before death, he names the dream-like creature he sees above him after Paul's attributed byname אֲרִיאֵל, '*ari el*', which in Hebrew means the lion of God. Tiffany may have had in mind a phrase attributed to Augustine which defines Paul as "a veritable lion, a red lion, the great lion of God" (Caldwell 1970, *passim*), but more probably Taylor Caldwell's 1970 novel on the life of Paul of Tarsus, *Great Lion of God: A Novel about Saint Paul*, which borrows its title from the same alleged Augustinian source. In Isaiah 29:1, the same epithet (Ariel) is in fact used with reference to Jerusalem.

Ariel's name, though, despite its Christian/Biblical roots, comes from the mind of one who distrusted Paul (and therefore God) and whose last words stand far from any form of repentance or forgiveness but only speak of conquest and even of violence. Out of such a mind Ariel is born by a process we may reasonably call parthenogenesis. In Hesiod's theogony, a number of deities share this kind of birth, including Night (Nyx) and her daughter Strife (Eris), all female entities to which Hesiod gives "a unique and unprecedented role in shaping the cosmos" (Park 2014, p. 262). Similarly, Athena herself, the goddess of tactical warfare, but also intellect and wisdom, was born from Zeus' head, even though her birth is not strictly asexual as it earlier involved a sexual encounter between Metis and Zeus himself. Nevertheless, the product of such a birth is again a warriorlike, intense, and powerful being. Akin to Athena's delivery, but in a Christian context, which

is much more attuned to Tiffany's own chords, parthenogenesis also occurs in Milton's *Paradise Lost* when Sin is generated directly from Satan's mind. Sin is, of course, beautiful and terrifying at the same time, so much so that her own father became "enamour'd, and such joy [… he took]/With [… her] in secret, that [… her] womb conceiv'd/A growing burden" (Milton 2019, bk 2, ll. 765–77); and this incestuous "burden" is Death.

In the novel, Jasper dies even before he can realize that a being has sprung from his brain, but these mythological and literary echoes cast an unpromising shade on Ariel. In addition, her new female gendering also binds her, ominously, to these predecessors. Ariel is no Athena, even though like Hesiod's deities she does have a predominant role in fashioning the events, or at least she desperately tries to have one; she resembles indeed Hesiod's Nyx in her capacity to becloud the human minds and confound them and, of course, Eris, in that she brings on turmoil and discord. But she is also definitely the heir of the Miltonic Sin, since she is born from the mind of man who distrusted the Lord. Yet she may not be defined as an allegory of Sin (or sin), in that she stands completely unaffected in front of any kind of religious/Christian idea. She does not act as she were aware of (or feared) some supernatural or superior entity and will show equal indifference and contempt towards both Sycorax's pagan goddess, Setebos, and Prospero's prayers to God and the Virgin Mary. Although she will tentatively act as a trickster in the novel, she does not do so in order to lead human beings away from God or faith but only to satisfy her own capricious and selfish will in an entirely solipsistic course of action. This also makes of her, as Hateley has briefly alluded to, a child whose *selfishness* is a way to test boundaries as well as immaturely asserting independence but also—as Jean Piaget famously discussed (Piaget 1929, p. 167)—an unconscious cognitive inability to distinguish between one's own perspective and desires and the ones of the others.

After Jasper's death, once she is done flying, careless and free, changing colours and shapes, a quality that will be partly inherited by Julie Taymor's 2010 translucent, if greyish, Ariel, she longs to know what exists beyond the island, not out of curiosity or thirst for knowledge, but because she wishes to conquer and dominate the rest of the Triangle territories, with the help of a man she is sure will come, an all-conquering enterprise one would hardly attribute to Shakespeare's Ariel. But this Ariel is nothing but a liar, as the Prologue warns us:

> The first thing you should know about Ariel is that she's a liar. Dreams lie, and she is both dream and the maker of dreams. Her work is not to tell the truth but to play: to sing, dance, and spin thrilling pictures in the air. She likes bold colors; subtle hues and shades do not interest her. She paints with a broad brush, making those she touches seem what they are not.
>
> Take that as a warning.
>
> Now, let's start at her beginning. (Tiffany 2005, p. 1)

As has been stated, she is indeed both stereotypically feminine and child-like, in that she is stubborn, mischievous, and even prone to pout when things do not go the way she wants. Such rendition makes of her a negative example but especially negative for the novel's young readers who may not identify with her but must learn, right from the beginning, that she is not to be trusted nor imitated. With regard to *The Tempest*, many classic adaptations for children focus "almost exclusively on Prospero, his past, his intentions, and his methods" while "[*a*]*ppropriations* of the play for older readers tend to focus more on child figures within the text, offering them as figures of identification for the implied reader" (Hateley 2009, p. 147; emphasis in the original). These figures may of course be both Caliban and Miranda, whose characterization in the novel also offers, as we will see,

some space for identification; yet this makes Ariel no less problematic. And this difficulty is enlarged and made more puzzling by the fact that she is a female-gendered being.

In Western thought, the antagonism between mind and body has traditionally been correlated with an opposition between male and female, with women regarded as entangled in their corporeal reality in a way that hinders rationality or at least makes it very difficult for women, enmeshed as they are in matter and nature, to attain any proper intellectual level or comprehension. Tiffany's Ariel transcends the physical dimension of femininity as she has no body and seems to inhabit a wholly cerebral dimension; at the same time, she shares no relationship with nature or materiality, a state that is emphasized by the fact that she has no heart. This could be remindful of the non-human characterization of Shakespeare's Ariel but also signals the lack of any kind of compassion or empathy—which the early modern Ariel did somehow possess. Her a-corporeality denies, in fact, the characteristics that have traditionally informed the construction of female sexed difference and even displays a strong wish for dominance and conquest which are traditional male stereotypes. Her ambiguity, however, does not lead to a critique against the social and cultural marginalization and exclusion of women but serves the creation of a being who is only seemingly strong and determined. Indeed, she is portrayed as dependent on a man who, she says, "will sail from the east one day" (Tiffany 2005, p. 17) and save her from her confinement on the island. Heavily reliant on someone else's arrival, she needs to be rescued and is consequently unable to guide her own destiny, to shape her own future, and (again) incapable of presenting young readers with a model of (female) independence, if evil bound.

In fact, the first human being who will reach the island after Jasper is Sycorax, a Saxon girl who, after having been kidnapped by Vikings in her village in Britain, is marooned on the island, pregnant by an African slave who was also on the ship. She is nothing like Shakespeare's "blue-eyed hag" (Shakespeare 1987, 1.2.269), Mary Lamb's "wicked witch" (Lamb and Lamb 1894, p. 182) or Miles's "ugly bound-up-like-a-hoop old" enchantress. Sycorax is a young girl, a survivor, and on the island her chief worry is to deliver safely her baby into this world, and for that she counts on Ariel's help. But Ariel is no helper, she is "too delicate" (Tiffany 2005, p. 38) for the task—yet another 'negative' feminine stereotypical trait—and leaves Sycorax alone in her time of need. So Sycorax calls to her god, Setebos, praying that she "[c]*urse this worthless sprite who lies! Give her a body so she knows the feel of it*" (ibid., p. 39; emphasis in the original). Despite being left alone, Sycorax gives birth to a beautiful black baby yet disabled precisely because "his mother had had no helping hands, and so on the way out his leg had caught and now was bent in a way it should not have been" (ibid., p. 41). But Setebos had heard the woman's cries and traps Ariel first into the body of an ant and then into the cloven bark of a gumbo-limbo tree.

Being endowed with a body could make her closer to humans, but this corporeity is seen as an impediment, a punishment, a wholly negative and horrifying dimension (of femininity) one needs to reject and despise. Ariel now feels pain and helplessness which almost speaks the words Simone de Beauvoir reserved to puberty, a moment when her body became to her a source of disgust and discomfort (de Beauvoir 1958, pp. 82–83). The transition into an adult body is experienced as a loss or better an undesired change from the child's freedom to womanly constraints as if nature had stolen or better appropriated her body and transformed it into an insufferable burden. Adolescent readers may in a way relate to this stance, and yet the novel provides, at the same time, much more positive models of women who embrace their sex as a source of creativeness and even empowerment: Sycorax and Setebos, also styled as 'she'. This is interestingly different from what we find in *The Tempest*, in which, although unseen, these two figures are regarded as wicked and malignant. Sycorax's aged deformity (of the body, again!) is seen in the

play as a signifier of moral deviance; also, if her pregnancy saved her life, it still led her to be exiled on a desert island. Setebos, on the other hand, is a devilish deity linked to the wild nature of the island whose name Shakespeare took from early modern travellers' journals. Much later, Robert Browning made him the object of a dramatic monologue entitled *Caliban upon Setebos, or Natural Theology on the Island*, published in *Dramatis Personae* in 1864. There, Setebos, although referred to as male, is strongly linked to the moon. He lives "i' the cold o' the moon» (Browning 1927, p. 512, l. 44) and Caliban greatly fears him, especially because this god is icy and unfeeling, isolated and indifferent to earthly suffering. Unlike Browning's, Tiffany's Setebos is a Saxon goddess who "helps women who are carrying children" (Tiffany 2005, p. 25) and shows compassion towards them. It is in fact yet another benign female presence, whose empathic nature and powerfulness set off, by contrast, Ariel's uncaring attitude. Setebos may also be said to embody the idea of female solidarity, a concept totally unknown to Ariel; therefore, Setebos accordingly responds to Sycorax's cry for revenge against the viciously unconcerned spirit.

But Ariel is not defeated and, in her tree, ruminates upon retaliation, which comes horribly. Slyly, she enters the weaker mind of young Caliban and roguishly instils in his mind the idea that his mother does not love him and wishes he has never been born until, one day, the boy, his head full of lies, poisons his own mother—even though it is suggested this could also have been an accident. In *The Tempest*, Ariel emphasizes, right from the beginning of the play, his wish for freedom; in the novel, she twists and corrupts this same notion and transforms Caliban's teenage (legitimate) aspiration to independence into violence and sorrow, transforming adolescent fantasies of rebellion against authority (parents) into a death-marked reality. The result is that Caliban is left alone, prey to sour remorse for what he (thinks he) has done and bitterly curses Ariel for her slandering and deceitful tongue. Again, this embodies another sexist stereotype, the one that considers women as naturally prone to lies and duplicity and therefore not to be trusted. Caliban soon turns down Ariel's baleful influence, and successfully breaks the cycle of anger by using his mind to heal his wounds. Consequently, Ariel loses grip on his thoughts and Caliban is able to regain control of his own actions precisely by rejecting her.

Later comes Prospero's turn. Ariel welcomes him as the "*champion from the east*" (ibid., p. 75; emphasis in the original) she has been waiting for, and quickly manages to enter his thoughts. Prospero succeeds in freeing her from the gumbo-limbo tree by setting it on fire to the spirit's great wonder. She is fascinated by this new man and he by her, yet the readers know that she does not/cannot tell the truth as they have been cautioned against her from the start. Soon enough she begins putting words into Prospero's mouth, building up for him a discourse of power and prestige, a *story* he likes and soon trusts. Prospero tells Ariel how he got to the island, but she finishes off his sentences making him (as well as, possibly, the readers too) believe he is the dethroned duke of a distant country. The original story of the duke of Milan, ousted and betrayed by his brother, which is the core plot of the Shakespearean romance, becomes here one of Ariel's own devising. Prospero, who—as we will find out only at the end of the novel—is nothing but "a very bad farmer, who owns too many books" (ibid., p. 205), embraces this new (Shakespearean) version of himself and grows stiff into the position of patriarchal ruler of the island, a cultural construction that equates him with the much-critiqued figure of the wizard as an exploitative colonialist. In line with this kind of reasoning, Ariel also talks Prospero into seeing Caliban as "a black monster" and blows into his mind the "image of a dark, lurching, apelike thing" (ibid., p. 89) which literally fogs Prospero's sight and prevents him from seeing the boy's true appearance and heart. In Prospero's eyes, the young kid, is now "anything but a beast", (ibid., p. 101). Once again, the bestial image Prospero has of him corresponds to the animalesque qualities that are attributed to him in Shakespeare's play. From this

characterization also derived the long cultural tradition that led, in the nineteenth century, to the identification of Sycorax's son as the 'missing link' between animal and man. Thus, Daniel Wilson famously compared Caliban to "a poor half-witted brute", that is, "man's assumed progenitor, in that transitional stage of evolution which Shakespeare so nearly realises for us" (Wilson 1873, pp. 101, 131). The image Prospero is presented with by Ariel in the novel stands close to this and feeds exactly on the prejudicial reading of Caliban as a subhuman (colonized) subject. Ariel feeds herself, and her 'victims', on and by prejudice, this time based on the native islander's supposed inferiority and brutish nature. But she goes even further in her wicked make-believe edifice.

Prospero has a daughter, of course, Miranda, who has grown into "a large, muscular girl" (Tiffany 2005, p. 107) and, most of all, she is free from Ariel's control, which Prospero earlier forbade. As for their life on the island, upon their first meeting, Prospero had welcomed Caliban in his tiny household and the two young people became teenagers together, even though Prospero had been careful to protect his daughter's virtue: "Her father repeatedly warned her to cover her shoulders and legs—especially, for some reason, when Caliban was about" (ibid., p. 106). As Hateley underlines, this version of Prospero can be read as a "cultural father figure via an often vexed equation of Prospero with Shakespeare" (Hateley 2009, p. 149). Here such an equation is not explicit—Shakespeare himself shares no role into the narrative—but the hypotext, which tells of an overly protective father is, although not openly, appropriated by Ariel who pictures in Prospero's mind a scene that much resembles the wizard's original account of Caliban's sexual brutality. In the novel, Miranda is fascinated by Caliban, whom she sees as an attractive young man, and the two quickly fall in love. Just as regular adolescents would do (she is fourteen and he is eighteen) they share a kiss, timid and sweet; yet this endearing, innocent first kiss is twisted by Ariel who presents a wholly different scene to Prospero's eyes: "And suddenly Prospero saw a monstrous, ravening, half-naked beast, seizing his darling fourteen-year-old daughter with the clear intent to ravish her" (ibid., p. 137). Ariel's intention is to get rid of Caliban who, according to her, will hinder her plan of imperialistic conquest of the island. Again, the slander she creates by way of clouding Prospero's mind with fanciful hallucinations comes directly from the Shakespearean hypotext in which the duke notoriously accuses Caliban of attempted rape (Shakespeare 1987, 1.2.345–50). As she had earlier convinced Prospero to be the exiled ruler of a faraway dukedom, she now succeeds in this new forgery. Much to Prospero's spite, though, in *Ariel* Caliban and Miranda, especially, refuse to comply with what they feel is an unjustified imposition and start seeing each other secretly. Miranda still does not understand why her father has grown so hostile to her boyfriend, and it is no coincidence that the words she deems incomprehensible come directly from the Shakespearean playtext: "It is senseless.", she says talking about her father's speech, "He is crazed, Caliban. He says you are a 'freckled whelp, hag-born'", Tiffany 2005, pp. 149–50). The idea of Caliban as a "hag-born" (Shakespeare 1987, 1.2.283) monster sounds in fact as the product of a deranged mind, a mind—the readers know—disrupted by Ariel who entered and clouded Prospero's intellectual faculties with a *narrative* the other characters do not recognize as correspondent to the reality they see. Yet, one day, Prospero allows Ariel to enter Miranda's brain, and she twists her thoughts too.

This happens on the day when Antonio, Gonzalo, and the king of Naples' party are shipwrecked on the island. Miranda's meeting with Ferdinand, the king's son, would fulfil Prospero's plan. But whose plan is it? Is it Prospero's or is it Ariel's? Prospero's first impression of Ferdinand is in fact not entirely positive—and indeed the boy is weak, pale, and self-centred—but Ariel is ready to change this, and later makes Miranda too go blind through a mirage that transforms Ferdinand into "something indefinably glorious" (ibid., p. 172); thanks to Ariel's revengeful and prejudiced deceit, the girl soon forgets Caliban

and is all about the new boy. In *The Tempest*, Miranda, as Lorie Jerrell Leininger points out, has been turned into a "sexual bait" whose chastity serves "a specific end in the play's power dynamics" (Leininger 2001, p. 226). Protecting her virtue, as Prospero has done, is functional to the enslavement of the native, while trading it will guarantee a politically and economically advantageous marriage.

3. "Prospero Wakes"

"Is this the promised end?", one could legitimately ask. Perhaps not. "Star-crossed lovers" Miranda and Caliban eventually triumph over Ariel's controlling plans and (Shakespearean) lies and, unlike the Veronese unfortunate pair, will be free to live their romance. Thus, *The Tempest*'s marriage plot is seemingly subverted and the norm of the strategic and beneficial homosocial pact, from which women are totally excluded, is dismantled. This of course may speak to the novel's young readers and tell them a story of emancipation (also from their childish *personas*) and independence with which they may identify. Once Miranda is freed from Ariel's lies, she sees Ferdinand for what he really is and runs back to Caliban, and yet her awakening does not come as an act of self-will or of autonomous liberation but happens thanks to Prospero's re-activation of truth and his reinstatement in a position of power and control.

Chapter 15, appropriately entitled "Prospero Wakes", eventually tells a different story, and "this one is true" (Tiffany 2005, p. 186). Prospero comes from a family of farmers but, unlike his brother, Antonio, he was not interested in the business and wished to become a poet. Antonio started a cattle breeding enterprise with Alonso and was soon successful, while Prospero grew intolerant of trade and, while at a fair in Lisbon, took his daughter Miranda with him on a boat, leaving his wife, Althea, behind. The boat trip almost ended in tragedy as they got caught in a storm and later stranded on a distant island. No duke, no wizard, just an imprudent, careless man. This forms a competing version of, and annihilates, both *The Tempest*'s plot and Ariel's fantastic tale of 'Prospero the duke' (as well as the one of 'Caliban the beast'). Ariel is shocked by such an ordinary tale and will have none of it. Thus, she tries to convince Prospero that there is still time for revenge, victory, and empire and turns to yet another *grand narrative* of (male) conquest and cruel hegemony and invasion: "Let us construct a hollow wooden horse, and wheel it onto the beach, and hide inside it! When they come to stare at it, we shall jump out of its belly and lop off their heads!" (ibid., p. 193). But time has come to go back home for Prospero and the others, including Caliban, whom the old man now sees in his true colours and acknowledges as his son. It is he, not his brother, nor Alonso who eventually asks for forgiveness, while everyone seems to wake up from a dream or from a different narrative which is the Shakesperean one Ariel has tried to transform into reality. Miranda eventually sees Ferdinand for what he really is, a spoiled, uptown, white boy and is reunited with Caliban, while Prospero shrinks "back into an ordinary man" (ibid., p. 213) and is ready to return home where he will beg his long-lost wife to take him back, much to Ariel's disgust. The patriarchal discourse of control and authority that Ariel has preached, also by appropriating the Shakespearean text, seems to be finally crushed; nevertheless, as the finale of the novel invites its young readers to "supersede the father (Prospero/Shakespeare)", it does not dispose of "the paternal discourses of authority" (Hateley 2009, p. 164). Prospero wishes Caliban to leave the island with them as he is ready to make him his heir: "If you sail with us back to Milan, I will make you my heir. I have no son, after all" (Tiffany 2005, p. 217). Miranda's existence and rights as daughter are erased and what seems to be a sign of inclusion—Prospero's blessing of her daughter's black and disabled boyfriend—becomes an act of female subjugation. Miranda turns into an object to exchange between her father and her prospective husband, as Caliban is also instructed to

"see to Miranda" and control her sexuality as she is seen dangerously "exchanging wide smiles with the burliest of the sailors" (ibid., p. 222). "She's in your keeping now" (ibid.), Prospero warns his *son* Caliban.

Tiffany had already suggested a similar 'patriarchal' twist in *My Father Had a Daughter*, published in 2003. The novel, roughly echoing *Twelfth Night*, tells the story of Judith Shakespeare, the Bard's teenage daughter, who, after the death of her twin brother Hamnet—of which she deems herself partly responsible—decides to follow her father to London dressed as a boy. There she enters his company at the Globe and soon earns the role of Viola. Her crossdressing becomes the instrument and the site of experience, growth, loss (of her virginity, too), and of an eventual coming to terms with her sorrowful past. This final reconciliation and her coming of age, however, does not correspond to some kind of emancipation or deliverance. Judith returns home, goes back to Stratford, to her role as a girl/woman which she accepts fully by marrying a man of her father's choice, whom she does not even like. No challenge to patriarchal normativity has been completed, not in London, where she poses as a boy, nor at home where she conforms to her duty, becomes a wife and, we understand, will be a mother. The trajectory of the novel veers towards the idea that difference and a-normativity must be brought back to a customary path, must follow an accepted script, and may, at best, be content to live on as memories: "The memories we bear inside are more real than the things we touch" (Tiffany 2003, p. 291) are Judith's final words.

As Judith Shakespeare had to give up a potentially different life by leaving London, in *Ariel* the characters, Miranda and Caliban in particular, leave the only home they have ever known (the island) and sail towards a new world which promises to be far less brave. According to Northrop Frye, Shakespeare's main goal in *The Tempest* is reaching for "a vision of a serene community" (Frye 1957, p. 182) and this is done at the expense of women. If in the original romance Miranda totally submits to her father's marriage plot, in the novel, as we have seen, she meets no fairer destiny. Although she is allowed to stay with the boy she likes, she must accept submission and control. This "large, muscular girl" (Tiffany 2005, p. 107) must now be *tamed*, she must align to the rules of an exchange between the father and the (son)-husband, which will guarantee that her potentially disruptive sexuality will be contained.

In addition, if in *My Father Had a Daughter* the narrative point of view is Judith's, in *Ariel* we have the presence of an omniscient narrator who not only (negatively) introduces Ariel right from the very Prologue of the narrated action, but also, if not too obtrusively, guides the readers towards the acceptance of a certain interpretation of the events: Miranda and Caliban do have their happy ending after all, and Prospero eventually sees things clearly and gets rid of Ariel's baleful influence. If some irony may also be spotted in the revelation that Prospero is no more than a "ordinary man" (ibid., p. 213) and "Princess Claribel" is a cow Antonio and Alonso brought at a fair in Lisbon and later sold to an African king, any ironic spark soon dies out when we realize that the young generations are guided towards a model of patriarchal normativity. Prospero eventually puts the blame for all that has gone by on the island on Ariel—"you made me forget things I should not have forgotten and blinded me to things I should have seen. Despite your glory, you have done much harm", he tells her (ibid., p. 225)—and prays to God that He may put Ariel "to sleep" (ibid., p. 226). In the end, he sees her as a representative of demonic power, while the novel even offers an image suggestive of the Virgin Mary crushing the snake under her foot: "The two halves of blackened wood rolled on the sand, and for a moment they seemed to writhe like snakes. He put his foot on them" (ibid.). This, however, gestures towards a facile solution. By blaming all evil on Ariel, Prospero thinks he is now able to see reality as it is and to regain (adult) control of his existence. But does he really give up imposing

his will on others by practicing (Christian) understanding and acceptance of diversity? As a parent, he should allow for his children to express themselves fully and freely, guiding them into adulthood rather than making them adhere to a *pre*-scribed code. Yet the novel instructs us towards a different normativity. Not only had Prospero instructed Caliban to "see to Miranda" (ibid., p. 222), but he imposes a set of rules on Caliban as well. He has made the boy his heir, excluding his daughter, and yet Caliban is not fully accepted as he is and there are conditions given to him if he wishes to be welcome on board and in Milan. He will have to conform to Western habits, signified by his wearing clothes. Clothing has been historically used by colonizers as a controlling apparatus on native populations, in the same way that their nudity was considered as an absence of civilization and morality. Forcing Caliban to dress in restrictive, European garments means the erasure of his culture and the acceptance of (colonial) rules. Moreover, even his impairment must be concealed as a condition of happiness: "If your feet could accustom themselves to shoes, you might be happy there", (ibid., p. 217). Patriarchal control and normativity have the upper hand, and their die-hard cultural and gendered hegemony is hailed, passively accepted and ultimately reinstated, or better, *normalized* into the novel's ending. Resistance to dominant values of gendered and racial oppression has not won the field and the audience is given a *desirable end* that tells an old story of acceptance of patriarchal and colonial codes and of their imposition on gendered subjectivity and difference/otherness.

And Ariel? Her infantile and (negatively) feminine nature has not changed and she remains on the island still waiting for her champion. And he will come, eventually. He is a man who, two hundred years later, lands on the island's shore and fearlessly claims it "for the glory of Holy Spain!" (ibid., p. 232). Ariel smiles and leans closer to the man, "Cristobál Colón" and whispers, "Come, my lord […] Let's march inland" (ibid.). Another story of conquest, blood, and violence is about to begin.

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