Degenerating *Tempests*: The Loss of the Ethical Power of Shakespeare's Emotions in *Brave New World*

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1. Old and new projects of 'sentimental education'

The Tempest is largely considered to be one of Shakespeare's most enigmatic works. Copious interpretations have prospered in time due to its "resistance to tell us clearly how to make sense" (Bigliazzi and Calvi 5). Its gaps, incongruities, opacity, elusiveness, implicitness have long functioned as 'generative' places of significance. While "rooted in the time of the play's conception", point out Silvia Bigliazzi and Lisanna Calvi, its issues are "capable of signifying in different ways in different ages and contexts, as well as through different media" (6). Wystan H. Auden, who wrote his poem *The Sea and the Mirror* as a commentary on *The Tempest* in 1944, defined it as "a mythopoeic work, an example of a genre that encourages adaptations, including its own, inspiring people to go on for themselves [...] to make up episodes that [the author], as it were, forgot to tell us" (Kirsch xii). Thus, quoting Linda Hutcheon's words, *The Tempest* could be seen as one of those stories that, "like genes, adapt to [...] new environments by virtue of mutation – in their 'offspring' or their adaptations. And the fittest do more than survive. They flourish" (*A Theory of Adaptation* 32). Indeed, bearing in mind that Prospero's very name implies an idea of 'flourishing', this article suggests that the play's capacity to constantly regenerate itself – to "re-appear" like a "revenant" (Calbi 7) in ever new forms of reworking – is mainly to be attributed to Prospero's staging of emotions that act as a powerful stimulus for the pursuit of both individual and collective

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'prosperity'. As Margaret Atwood pointed out in her 2000 Empson Lectures, in which she made several references to *The Tempest*, any text can "grow and change and have offspring" (126); yet, as she specified in relation to the "social and moral responsibility of the writer" (90), if "the artist [...] doesn't engage himself with the social world at all, he risks being simply irrelevant [...], a recluse" (104); in contrast, she stated, Prospero "uses his arts – magic arts, arts of illusion – not just for entertainment [...], but for the purposes of moral and social improvement" (102).

It is definitely in this sense that both Prospero and his story can be seen 'flourishing' in a famous 1932 offspring of *The Tempest*: Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. The novel's intertextual relation with the play – much more akin to permutation than to replication or imitation[1] – may be considered appropriative not only for the "reproductive dimension of appropriation" (Weimann 14), suggesting "the manifold ways in which texts feed of and create other texts" (Sanders 2), but also for the ethical commitment informing the writer's interpretation (3), which is parodic yet deferential. According to Hutcheon's argumentation of parody, it could indeed be seen as a homage meant "to renovate, to renew" (*A Theory of Parody* 77). The aim of this article, in fact, is to discuss how Huxley succeeds in emphasising the "improving function" (Atwood 92) of Shakespeare's art by shedding new light on its emotional power, albeit from an inverted perspective: he shows us how the banishment of Shakespeare can help a self-proclaimed 'utopian' regime to stunt the intellectual and moral growth of its subjects by replacing 'eudaimonistic' emotions – aiming at one's own flourishing through meaning and purpose (implicit in Prospero's name) – with full time experiences of 'hedonistic' enjoyment and sensual pleasure. Thus, while Huxley's novelisation offers itself as a *re*generative retelling of *The Tempest* – as well as an "intertextual mosaic" (Kristeva 37) of Shakespearean quotations – it is also a warning against the possible *de*generation of Shakespeare and the culture it epitomises in contexts in which – like the humans subjected to eugenic experiments in the novel – all "serious books" will undergo "genetic mutations capable of totally altering their form and content" (Manferlotti 68, my translation). Importantly, since in *Brave New World* these mutations, unlike those claimed by Hutcheon and enacted by Huxley, are dangerously aimed at 'extinction', the novel can be seen as a cautionary tale advocating the need to constantly regenerate Shakespeare over time in order not to lose the power of its emotions to change and renew all who experience them.

In the wake of the 'affective turn' that flourished in the Nineties and marked the passage to the new millennium (Clough 1), various literary researches are now refocusing on emotions and considering them a "hallmark of Shakespearean drama, together with their powerful ability to generate feeling among readers and audiences" (Craik 1; see also Meek-Sullivan; Mullaney)[2]. The present article aligns itself with this view and pursues its aim of analysing Huxley's metatextual commentary on the ethical meaning of emotions in Shakespeare's works by moving within an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that encompasses cognitive psychology and philosophy. In the context of psychological studies such as that of Richard Lazarus, for which emotions play a fundamental role in conditioning individual behaviour and determining the adaptive capacity of human beings in relation to the environment, Keith Oatley's inquiries are particularly interesting. Oatley, who has devoted a number of articles and essays specifically to Shakespeare, explains how in general he considers all those imaginative works "that have sufficient resonance" ("Emotional Intelligence" 217) as a repertoire of paradigmatic examples of life's vicissitudes and of potential solutions experienced through emotions; thus, as a privileged site for understanding the functioning and relevance of emotions in people's existence and relationships. However, as he argues in "Shakespeare's Invention of Theatre as Simulation That Runs on Minds", Shakespeare's plays seem to him to have been invented specifically to forge the social world through the exploration and explanation of the psycho-emotional dynamics inside and outside the characters. These include the performative ability to affect and be affected through emotions, since, as Robert C. Solomon writes, "emotions [...] are...activities that we 'do,' stratagems that work for us, both individually and collectively" (5). In fact, reminding us how in *Romeo and Juliet* it is not the Prince's threats that convince the two feuding families to restore peace to Verona but only the grief over the death of the two lovers, Oatley points out that emotions are shown by Shakespeare to be far more effective in producing "a clarification of the real" and behavioural change ("Substance and Shadow" 20-21). This almost didactic demonstration, says the scholar, is enacted by the playwright in the "simulation-space" of his works (19), whose world-creating function can be likened to that of dreams (17), and not only in the works that, like *The Tempest*, have an explicitly oneiric quality. In *Othello*, for example, "the same idea for wicked ends" (21) is spectacularised. Exploiting the persuasive power of emotional language, Iago acts as a

stage director and Prospero's negative counterpart, "creat[ing] a simulated world to transform Othello's perception, and ultimately his sense of self" (21). He also explicitly states, similarly to Prospero in the Epilogue: "If consequence do but approve *my dream* / My boat sails freely with both wind and stream" (II.3.55, my italics).

According to Oatley, moreover, the object of Shakespeare's investigation is not only the motivations, desires and the often dramatic effects of the characters' emotions on themselves and others, but also the functioning of 'emotional intelligence': the ability to perceive, understand, express and regulate one's emotions, but also to use them to aid one's mental processes, increase one's knowledge of oneself and others, and assist one's moral and social actions (Mayer et al. 197). In an attempt to understand the reality around them and decide what action to take to resolve the crises afflicting them, Shakespeare's characters often embark on a painful journey of self-analysis: they try to recognise and control their emotions, which are often mixed, changing, linked to "inner goals that are not necessarily coherent" (Oatley, "Substance and Shadow" 24), and therefore disorienting. But it is precisely from this emotional awareness that emerge, for Oatley, both their psychological complexity – which makes their personalities not reducible to types or repetitive patterns of behaviour, such as we find in *Brave New World* – and their ability to resonate with the inner world of spectators or readers, who respond with empathy and sympathy to their emotions: they not only experience the characters' feelings, but imaginatively project on the stage of their mind similar scenarios that affect them, or that 'might' affect them in similar circumstances, as famously theorised by Aristotle in the *Poetics*. In fact, thanks to what Oatley calls 'simulations that run on minds', this subjective internalisation of character allows one to construct a mental model of oneself and others, and of oneself in relation to others, "at levels that are typically more insightful than those or ordinary life" ("Substance and Shadow" 18). The emotions felt and brooded over by the characters in the defamiliarising space of the play are thus able to be, in Shakespeare's own words, "motion generative" (*Measure for Measure* III.2.98) also in the public, that, provided the dynamics of the plot are humanly plausible, is emotionally and ethically transformed by them.

In the philosophical sphere, Martha Nussbaum also speaks of the 'intelligence of emotions', but the scholar uses the term not so much to emphasise the capacity of emotions to assist the processes of reasoning

as to underline their cognitive quality and intentionality. Emotions are 'intentional', in her view, because their object "figures in the emotion as it is seen or interpreted by the person whose emotion it is" (27), whereby intentionality implies a way of seeing and evaluating an object through one's eyes and beliefs and according to one's aims of flourishing. This does not mean excluding the body, however. As Nussbaum points out, the emotions are necessarily "like other mental processes, bodily" (44), but the fact that they take place in a sentient being does not give us reason "to reduce their intentional/cognitive components to non-intentional bodily movements" such as the simple appetites of hunger and thirst, or to think that there is a natural interdependence between certain emotions and certain bodily sensations, such as between anger and the boiling of the blood, or between fear and trembling. Of course, there are "feelings without rich intentionality or cognitive content, let us say feelings of fatigue, of extra-energy, of boiling, of trembling, and so forth" (60) (what psychologists call 'arousals'), which, however, while they 'may' accompany certain emotions, are not absolutely necessary for them since both the plasticity of the human brain and the temporal and spatial differences between different cultures do not allow for the same physiological responses in all human beings. What really 'moves' us, then, are not mere sensory reflexes or affects – those purposely cultivated in *Brave New World* – but beliefs, appraisals, judgements. It is the meaning and value we ascribe to objects or persons that are somehow beyond our total control that make us feel more vulnerable, needy, incomplete, especially since these objects and persons are always in relation to our self – our identity and individuality – and, in the Greek eudaimonistic view, to our personal goals of prosperity. Yet, the scholar specifies, these are not egoistic feelings. Compassion too is eudaimonistic "but it can include the well-being of distant others as an element of value in my scheme of ends and purposes" (Nussbaum 31), extending to that of human society as a whole. It is for this reason, then, that emotions are also crucial from an ethical point of view. Emotions contain "judgements that can be true or false, and good or bad guides to ethical choice" (1) in both the individual and social spheres. Therefore, "we cannot plausibly omit them [...]. We will have to grapple with the messy material of grief and love, anger and fear, and the role these tumultuous experiences play in thought about the good and the just" (1-2).

This, as Nussbaum reminds us, is what Greek tragedy and Aristotle teach us in an exemplary manner. The theatre's ability to generate empathy

is fundamental because it allows us to imaginatively reconstruct in our own mind the experience of another person (331); to bring an individual far from our life into the scheme of our own goals and ends, humanising him/her and creating the possibility of a bond. Yet, the ethical value of tragedy lies above all in the generation of compassion. Besides suggesting an intense 'suffering together', compassion entails a "judgement that the person is in distress and that this distress is bad" (302). Thus, it implies both a value judgement, generated by the "recognition that the situation matters for the flourishing of the person in question" (307), and an ethical judgement, because, in the person experiencing it, it gives rise to a desire to put an end to that person's suffering by behaving more humanely and rightly. In short, "implicit in the emotion itself is a conception of human flourishing and the major predicaments of human life" (310). This makes tragedy, with its extraordinary ability to make us imagine the experiences of others and share in their sufferings, a genre with "an enormous educational importance" (428). Tragic stories – the erasure of which, as we shall see, helps to preserve the non-empathetic society of *Brave New World* – are obsessed with portraying the possibilities and weaknesses of human life and, by asking the viewer to reflect on the causes of these sufferings, they also demand an extension of involvement that enables us to become better citizens of the world. However, as Nussbaum points out, it is not only the tragic content that 'moves' us. It is the poetic, visual and musical resources of the drama itself that are structured in such a way as to have an emotional and moral weight: "The fact that Sophoclean tragedy inspires compassion for human suffering and the fact that it is great and powerful poetry are not independent facts: it is the poetic excellence that conveys compassion to the spectator, cutting through the habits of the everyday. It is not so easy for just anyone to construct a story that will move the heart" (433).

As I have explained in more detail in an essay devoted to the 'sentimental education' imparted by Prospero in *The Tempest* (Esposito 2024), although the play that Huxley takes as a model for his reflection is 'not' a tragedy, the 'tempest' that Prospero artfully stages *en abyme* for his intradiegetic audience of Italian dignitaries, including the King of Naples Alonso, is conceived as such to the same moral effect, functioning, like the 'mousetrap' in *Hamlet*, as "the thing / In which to catch the conscience of the king" (II.2.557-8). Indeed, Shakespeare's refined investigation into the cognitive and persuasive power of dramatic art and language is made manifest and didactically demonstrated through the device of metatheatre:

exploiting theatre's simulative power in the separate and protected space of fiction, the "passions of the mind"[3], and their actual or potential effects on events and people, are explored with a clearly educational intent thanks to the playacting of characters who assume the role of spectators in their own dramas. The tragicomedy presents itself, therefore, and perhaps more than any other Shakespearean work, as a "laboratory-like environment" in which emotions are "put on display and analysed with no interferences caused by the complexities created by the real world" (Forcione, qtd. in Gonzáles 529). On his oneiric island-theatre, Prospero, who is both magician-director and "master educator" (Rosenhan 52), arranges the plot according to his personal 'project' (or 'dream'), commanding his helper-actors to stage his 'rough magic'. His enemies – his brother Antonio, who usurped his dukedom, and King Alonso, who helped him to do it – and their most prominent companions – Alonso's son, brother and advisor – are brought out of their senses with wonder, fear and suffering, and only brought back to reason – freed from the spell (of theatre) – when Prospero, once verified the transformation that his simulation has caused in them, is 'infected' by Ariel's response and moved to compassion. He himself, therefore, changes. Exercising his 'emotional intelligence', he switches from a negative to a positive emotional state: from a ruthless desire for revenge to one of mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation, with all that this vitally means for the political situation of his Duchy, torn apart by social unrest and in search of stability. And, in fact, it is to the compassionate and virtuous love of Ferdinand and Miranda – the offspring of Alonso and Prospero – that the baton is left, in the sign of that "myth of regeneration" that John Gillies (140-155) sees in the new beginning marked by the arrival of Alonso and, therefore, by the union of the two young people, the true *topos* of renewal.

However, in order to better grasp Huxley's focus on the ethical dimension of Shakespeare's emotions, it is important to stress how Prospero's (and Shakespeare's) real goal, pursued even tyrannically (through 'rough' magic), is in fact aimed at the transformation of the play's extradiegetic audience. It is to them that the Duke-Magician hopes to have persuasively shown, by his own example, how through the empathetic experience of dramatic emotions such as pain and suffering one can come to achieve a better knowledge of oneself, one's own emotions and those of others, and to feel the compassion that enables one to gain a greater awareness of what is or is not right to do from a moral point of view[4].

Therefore, if Prospero "puts his knowledge into the services of his political power through re-educating his subjects" (Rosenhan 57), the idea that is directly recalled is that of *delectare et docere* formulated by Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poesie* (1595), whereby the ultimate aim of Prospero's educational 'project' ("which was to please" [Epilogue 12]) would be to show us how the *movere* of all poetic art serves to attain an action-oriented knowledge, based on the recognition and correction of ethically and politically flawed behaviour.

2. A motionless (brave new) world of hedonistic happiness

Perhaps it is precisely for the reasons outlined above, in combination with "the enormous subtlety of the psychology" that amazed Huxley when reading the works of Shakespeare ("Revolution" 165), that the latter has always been focal in the author's fiction and non-fiction production (Meckier 129). According to Manferlotti, Huxley is a writer born "with a cassock" (16, my translation), an intellectual who engages in a strenuous moral struggle against the crisis of early twentieth-century civilisation, made up, from his gloomy point of view, of vulgar mass culture, consumerism, techno-scientific mechanisation of existence, authoritarianism, and contempt for the human values of literature, embodied exemplarily by Shakespeare. With *Brave New World*, in which decadence is endorsed by characters bearing the names of illustrious targets of Huxleyan criticism – Ford, Freud and Marx, to name but a few – the author chooses, not by chance, to frequent the anti-utopian genre – pedagogical and denunciatory *par excellence* – to "articulate a judgement on reality" (Manferlotti 16, my translation) that ends up "shifting the discussion onto the ethical plane alone" (23, my translation) in a manner quite similar, but even more uncovered and didactic, to that of *The Tempest*. This last, however, is so relocated, updated and transformed by the rewrite, also through significant changes in genre and plot, that, following Gérard Genette's equating of the term 'hypertext' with adaptation and 'hypotext' with source, the novel could be seen, like Joyce's *Ulysses* in Genette's analysis, as "an extreme case of emancipation from the hypotext" (309). In fact, as Ira Grushow puts it, "what is more important than demanding exact correspondences between the characters and incidents of play and novel, is the recognition that *The Tempest* stands behind *Brave New World* for contrast" (45).

Despite its strongly ironic and satirical quality, which is also typical of anti-utopia (Balasopoulos 61), the novel seems indeed to present itself as a tragic sequel to Shakespeare's tragicomedy, decisively lacking the latter's hope for a generational rebirth: contrary to what Prospero makes the castaways believe up to a certain point, in *The Tempest* no one dies; in *Brave New World*, on the other hand, the protagonist John the Savage, after leaving the 'old world' of an American reservation and experiencing the seemingly perfect 'new world' of London, sees no choice but to kill himself. He thus becomes the sacrificial victim of a system that is actually nightmarish (Guardamagna 179), and that, contrary to what Prospero seeks to correct, is impossible to redeem. It is to him, in fact, that are entrusted three times, and in a tone ranging from enthusiastic to disgusted to revolted, the famous words uttered by Shakespeare's Miranda when she sees people who are new to her and whom she mistakenly believes to be magnificent, proclaiming, according to John the Savage, "the possibility of loveliness, the possibility of transforming even the nightmare into something fine and noble" (Huxley, *Brave* 184-185). John, however, shifting his characteristics (Grushow 45), represents not only a male Miranda – being himself the son of an inhabitant of the 'civilised' world lost many years earlier on a New-Mexico mesa described not by chance "like a ship becalmed" (Huxley, *Brave* 92) – but also, in a sense, Ferdinand, who is a victim of Prospero's trials just as he too becomes a guinea pig in the "experiment" of Mustapha Mond, Controller of Central London (214), and even Caliban when, after hinting at the "music in the air" he hears (192), he eventually tries to defend the 'isolated' lighthouse in which he takes refuge from the incursions of the civilised world, cursing against it.

Notwithstanding the tragic ending, however, at least until the lengthy final discussion with Mond – in which John claims back suffering, unhappiness and even illness – the Savage's 'freak show' vicissitudes make him "a misfit and a parodic figure" (Smethurst 100), a bitterly tragicomic reproduction of his Shakespearean counterparts. The same could be said of the other characters: Lenina, a far more licentious female version of the virtuous Ferdinand, who miraculously falls in love with John but without arriving with him at any mythical or 'regenerative' love union; Bernard Marx, a psychologist specialized in hypnotic techniques badly 'decanted' in the incubation centre, and therefore, like Caliban, deformed and refractory to the "enslavement" of physical and mental conditioning (Huxley, *Brave* 78) but made ridiculously vile and opportunistic by his inferiority complex;

the emotional engineer Helmoltz Watson, copywriter and teacher of the art of persuasive mottos and, therefore, not only a parodic alter ego of John Watson – first, author of the 1913 manifesto of Behaviourist psychology, then vice-president of an advertising company – but also a failed shadow of Shakespeare's genius in a dis-enchanted time; Mond, finally, who, unlike Prospero in *The Tempest*, has preemptively renounced the solipsistic expansion of the boundaries of his knowledge (to the "bettering of [his] mind" [Shakespeare I.2.110]), secreting forbidden books in his study and avoiding exile on an island. Mond, in fact, has decided to pursue both what Shakespeare's Duke of Milan had formerly neglected, his "worldly ends" (Shakespeare I.2.109) – from which he probably derives his name, given the affinity of 'Mond' with 'mundane', the opposite of that which is solitary and contemplative – and the utopian ideals of 'Identity, Community, Stability' advocated by the "welfare-tyranny of Utopia", as Huxley defines it in his "Foreword" to the novel (*Brave* l).

These ideals, however, stretched as they are towards homogenisation, de-individualisation and total immobility, appear to be anything but ethical values pursued for the good of mankind. Indeed, with the same tyrannical but less 'rough' attitude as the 'schoolmaster' Prospero, Mond instructs the demi-puppets of this "edutopia" – to borrow the title of a book by M.A. Peters and D.J. Freeman-Moir's – but only to make them worshippers of their own servitude; and he does so with entirely different instruments[5]. He arouses in them the same wonder and amazement that Prospero induces in the *Tempest*'s castaways with his "charms" (V.1.2)[6], but through the far more prosaic drug 'soma', whose name is highly revealing of its exclusively bodily effect; moreover, he does not instil in them 'fear' and 'pity' with a view to a regenerative purification of the emotions (*catharsis*): instead, he grants them *panem et circenses*, pleasures that are exclusively sensory and ephemeral, aimed at the instantaneous fulfilment of all kinds of desires[7]. The aim is to assure them of a hedonistic, apathetic, unmindful happiness, devoid of emotional and moral disturbance; unadulterated by those "geological upheavals of thought" – as Nussbaum calls them quoting Marcel Proust (272) – that make our lives irregular, uncertain and unpredictable like an uneven landscape rather than a flat surface; that make the mind "project outward like a mountain range, rather than sitting inert in self-satisfied ease" (Nussbaum 1). Indeed, in this exalted version of Gonzalo's Land of plenty (Shakespeare, *The Tempest* II.1.139-163), a euchratic stillness of "energies at rest and in equilibrium" (Huxley,

Brave 74) – a *rigor mortis* symbolised in the *incipit* by the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre's frozen space – is, and must be, an unchallenged rule.

In this 'modern utopia' set in the year 632 after Ford, in which, as Parrinder points out, the "other-worldly goals" of the earlier Christian utopias have been replaced by wholly hedonistic aims ("*Brave*" 18), there is no longer any place, nor any desire to find it, for eudaimonistic emotions, that aim for happiness through the pursuit of reason and virtue. Given their intentional and evaluative character emphasised by Nussbaum, emotions lead us to realise both the salience of certain things or persons for our flourishing and the impossibility of fully mastering them, making us feel more needy, dependent and incomplete. In the New World, on the contrary, where, thanks to advances in genetics, humans are artificially produced and replicated into thousands of identical creatures, the inhabitants have no mothers and fathers and, thus, feel no need for parental love; then, from childhood, they are conditioned through hypnopaedia and other Pavlovian techniques not to develop attachment to anyone, but to cultivate selfish, ephemeral and promiscuous relationships only with members of their own caste. Yet, they are happy: "everybody's happy now" is one of the most repeated slogans. Not only do they have everything they could wish for, but they experience no suffering or fear, not even of death, brought about by gentle euthanasia; nor are they dependent on anyone, least of all God, because they have "youth and prosperity right up to the end" (Huxley, *Brave* 206). All this makes them deeply infantile and radically incapable of feeling any empathy or compassion for others. Indeed, echoing what Aristotle argued in the *Rhetoric*, Nussbaum (315) reminds us that compassion "will be felt only by those with some experience and understanding of suffering; and one will not have compassion if one thinks that one is above suffering and has everything". In short, "an awareness of one's own weakness and vulnerability is a necessary condition for *pitié*, without this, we will have an arrogant harshness". Some components of the highest caste, however, happen sometimes, though rarely, to be incorrectly conditioned and present some "crevice" in their "arrogant harshness" (Huxley, *Brave* 47); they therefore experience strange feelings of diversity, dissatisfaction or transport for something or someone, as happens to Bernard Marx and Helmoltz Watson, who also seek to recognise and express their desires and states of mind. But even if they prove somehow, as often happens to Shakespearean characters, to be resistant to "the rules and standards" of "the culture of emotions that

shaped them" and show a sceptical relationship with its "emotionology" (Meek 284), they always have soma at their disposal, which prevents them from indulging in negative thoughts and from exercising the emotional intelligence that, conversely, Oatley considers psychologically crucial in Shakespeare's works. Indeed, not even the Savage is able to exercise it, even when in the final chapter of the novel, digging the earth in solitude and "digging too in his own mind, laboriously turning up the substance of his thought" (Huxley, *Brave* 224), he vainly seeks solutions through an overly confused patchwork of Shakespearean quotations.

In Central London, in fact, it is no longer allowed to enjoy that solitude which helps us to reflect on our feelings and to understand whether the behaviours we are adopting are right from an ethical point of view. As Andrzej Gąsiorek brings to the fore, "what we have here is social predestination versus the freely chosen life" (220): what the inhabitants feel they ought to do is totally made up of "suggestions from the State" (Huxley, *Brave* 24), inculcated through hypnopaedic education – "the greatest moralizing and socializing force of all time" (23) – and the administration of soma, invented "to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient and long-suffering" (210). Whereas in the past, like Prospero's, "you could only accomplish these things by making a great effort and after years of hard moral training", now "you swallow two or three half-gramme tablets, and there you are. Anybody can be virtuous now. You can carry at least half your morality about in a bottle" (210). It is then unsurprising that, having reached such a 'moral' perfection and political stability – after a long chemical war that raged in the world like a 'tempest' and marked, as in Shakespeare's play, a thunderous change of pace[8] – any form of emotion is viewed with suspicion as potentially deconditioning. It could lead to self-consciousness and to a desire for individual and social change, as Shakespeare himself had acutely perceived when considering the key influence of 'motions' on ethical and political behaviour[9]. According to what John Florio wrote in his 1598 dictionary, *moto* and *movere* meant not only "a passion of man's mind" but also "the impulse to stir up... to trouble, to disturb" (qtd. in Craik 16). Implicit in this are the "links between strong feeling, civil unrest or public commotion – and, from there, the possibilities inherent in *movere* for uprising, rebellion and liberty" (16). Those who govern the 'brave new world' are extremely aware of this. An effective aquatic metaphor used by the Director of the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre underlines how

apathy was imposed in the World State for the sake of political stability through, first and foremost, the elimination of family ties:

> Think of water under pressure in a pipe. I pierce it once. [...] What a jet!'. He pierced it twenty times. There were plenty piddling little fountains. 'My baby. My baby...!'. 'Mother! The madness is infectious. [...] Mother, monogamy, romance. High spurts the fountain; fierce and foamy the wild jet. The urge has but a single outlet. My love, my baby. No wonder these pre-moderns were mad and wicked and miserable [...] they were forced to feel strongly. And feeling strongly [...] how could they be stable? (Huxley, *Brave* 35)

Further on, the same metaphor is repeated to underline the need not to block the impetuous flow of impulses – including the sexual ones – contemplated by Freud's 'hydraulic' conception of emotions[10]: "Impulse arrested spills over, and the flood is feeling, the flood is passion, the flood is even madness; it depends on the force of the current, the height and strength of the barrier" (37). For this purpose, in fact, the inhabitants are also given a "Violent Passion Surrogate" (211), the physiological equivalent of fear and anger

What is ultimately evident when comparing *Brave New World* with *The Tempest* is how in the former the same psychological investigation takes place but in a context in which, reduced to simple sensorimotor impulses, emotions are emptied of their content of intelligence and discernment, and therefore of all meaning. In Shakespeare, on the contrary, writes José Manuel Gonzáles , "there is no meaning without emotion, and no emotion without meaning" (525). Emotions bring together mind, soul, and body (*noûs*, *psiche* and *soma* in the Greek tradition) and unfold within parameters that place them "in relation to cognition, the body, culture and society, making possible a broader understanding of [their] dimensions and functions" (Gonzáles 523). Thus, although, as G.K. Paster's study has recently highlighted, we should not forget the relevance in the Renaissance era of the Galenic theory of humours as a physiological engine of behaviour, it is important to bear in mind that the Shakespearean emotions respond to a multiplicity of perspectives – including the one expressed by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, that considered also appetites inseparable from thought and, thus, potentially 'regenerative' – which favour the idea of a holistic 'mind-body' whole: in Huxley's words, "a universe of complete continuity" ("Revolution" 166). Conversely, alluding at behaviourist techniques in vogue in those years, *Brave New World*'s creatures are also conditioned from infancy to react negatively to ethically formative things,

like nature and books, either with terrifying inputs, such as screeching noises and electro-shock, or hypnopaedia. In the novel's futuristic scenario, in fact, we see the hopes that 'scientific' psychology held at the time realised. By eliminating the overly subjective constructs of mind and consciousness, it aimed at the triumph of both a radical behaviourism capable of explaining any human activity as a mechanical response (output) to stimuli and gratifications (input), and a physiological reductionism so focused on bodily mechanisms alone as to make the treatment of emotions by the sciences of the mind entirely superfluous. As the psychologist M.F. Meyer wrote in an article contemporary with the novel, "Why introduce into science an unneeded term, such as 'emotion', when there are already satisfactory scientific terms for everything we have to describe? [...] The 'will' has virtually passed out of our scientific psychology today; the 'emotion' is bound to do the same. In 1950 American psychologists will smile at both these terms as curiosities of the past" (300).

On the opposite side, psychoanalysis was producing the same harmful effects for Huxley. The theories of Dr Freud, who is cited in the novel as Ford's psychological alter-ego, reduced human reactions to a systematic mental pattern (that of the unconscious repression of sexual desires in childhood producing neurosis in adulthood), ignoring, on the other hand, the importance of the body in the formation of personality[11]. Just like behaviourism, psychoanalysis excluded from its horizons that vital psycho-physical relation that Huxley saw destroyed even in the desiccated structures of language; a relation that perhaps, as he wrote in "The Final Revolution", only "some future Shakespeare" would be able to restore "by some miracle of poetry or [...] poetic prose" (166).

3. The expulsion of Shakespeare from the meaning-making system

Particularly serious in Huxley's eyes was that the sciences of the time were undermining the idea of man as a complex organic whole and, with it, the fundamental differences between individual and individual. Hence, the novel's image of hundreds and hundreds of identical twins horrifying John and driving him to a (sterile) revolt, in the belief that, as the author wrote in "The Oddest Science", "it is obviously impossible for creatures so unlike one another as men at the extreme limits of possible variation to feel, think and behave in the same way" (165). Of Shakespeare's

works, on the contrary, the writer appreciated the fact that, unlike the way science proceeds, through generalizations, only extremely singular cases are treated in them: "highly individualized human beings in exceptional situations" (*Literature* 9). However, even when concentrating "upon some individual case", the writer looks into it so intently that finally he is "enabled to look clean through it" as through "a window opening on to the universal" and "enlightening truth on every level, from the theatrical to the cosmic, from the political to the sentimental and the physiological, from the all too familiarly human to the divinely unknowable" (9)[12]. It is therefore not surprising that, in addition to revisiting *The Tempest* and its 'simulations' carried out in the unique but universalizing context of its laboratory island, Huxley focuses on the subjective reactions – Oatley would define them models of the self and the others – elicited by the emotionally dense Shakespearean characters in particular individuals, true outsiders, belonging to two radically different environments: one 'pre-modern' (the New Mexico reservation), and the other 'ultra-modern' (Central London). The Huxleyan project, therefore, follows its own literary method of investigation by focusing on individual cases that allow him to conduct the same psychological experiment supervised by Prospero/Shakespeare in *The Tempest*. It is significant, for that matter, that in the essay "Vulgarity and Literature", the writer anticipates a view that would be taken up by the branch of psychology to which Oatley belongs in recognizing literature's role as a privileged place of observation of the human soul: "All that modern psychologists [...] have done is to systematize and de-beautify the vast treasures of knowledge about the human soul contained in novel, play, poem and essay. Writers like Blake and Shakespeare, like Stendhal and Dostoevsky, still have plenty to teach the modern scientific professional" (60-61).

In *Brave New World*, in order to realise their 'de-beautifying' project, the World State scientists invented the 'non-human' not least by expelling Shakespeare – the inventor of the 'human' in Harold Bloom's words – and all other poets, as in Plato's *Republic*. Poets, in fact, as stated by the Socratic indictment reported in the very first philosophical utopia, do not act according to reason but by divine inspiration, and represent, therefore, a source of authority superior to the State. Moreover, as Parrinder reminds us in *Utopian Literature and Science*, they can morally corrupt utopians with their "skill to transform [themselves] into all sorts of characters and represent all sorts of things", which "challenges the notion of fixed personal

identity, and therefore, [...] the idea of a stable community based on individual difference and subdivision" (179). Similarly, Shakespeare was banned from the New World for fear that his 'motion-generative' words, so transformative on an individual and social level, might 'decondition' its inhabitants by prompting them to rediscover their humanity, individuality and eudaimonistic goals, including a desire to participate more ethically in the public and political life. The inhabitants are thus totally alienated from Shakespeare's work, deprived of the ability even to understand its language in a context where their senses are only stimulated by "words without reason" (Huxley, *Brave* 23).

Indeed, the official idiom of the World State appears totally discharged of meaning, reduced to a series of rhyming consumerist slogans – such as "the more stitches the less riches", or "ending is better than mending" – and to 'synthetic' hymns like that of the *Orgy Porgy*, whose hypnotic prosody makes them resemble childish nursery rhymes. As Oatley and Johnson Laird point out in a study on the ways in which poetry is able to evoke greater emotions, the prosodic cues – meter, rhythm and rhyme – of a poetic composition are responsible for amplifying the responses elicited by its contents. In some cases, as in music, they can produce an effect completely independent of semantic content, yielding "greater liking, intensity, and perceived and felt emotion" (6-7), which "are also exploited in care-givers' talk to infants, in prayers, and in social rituals" (5). In particular, since in the two psychologists' view, prosodic cues simulate the speed and mood of actions and thoughts, it can be assumed that the upbeat meter, regular rhythm, shorter interval between rhymes, and high pitch of vowels such as the *ee* sound – which are mostly used in the New World's slogans – are responsible for triggering those positive reactions, such as pleasure, lightness and happiness, that are necessary for the persuasive purposes of propaganda, along with the increased fluency in processing and memorability that they also allow. On the contrary, seriousness and reflection seem to be suggested by the low pitched vowel sound *oo* and by the iambic foot, which, maybe not coincidentally, is the metre most frequently used by Shakespeare.

In such a controlled context, where minds are conditioned, moulded and limited even by linguistic structures, the only dissonant elements are the thoughts of 'exceptional' characters – although laughable in their tragicomic impotence to change the *status quo* – who, precisely because of their singularity, become the elective subjects of Huxley's Shakespeare-

based demonstration. The first of these characters is, of course, John the Savage. As a child, his mother – parodically reversing the pedagogical role of parent-mentor that Prospero plays for Miranda in *The Tempest* – had taught him to read with an instruction manual that had miraculously escaped their 'stormy' journey. At a certain point, however, John finds at home, brought by his mother's lover Popè, a large tome gnawed by mice, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, which seems to re-emerge from the abysmal sea depths in which Prospero had sunk his 'magic book'. The words of the volume acquire a "totemic" and "archetypal" value for John (Manferlotti 91), ending up becoming his main source of 'sentimental education'. Thanks to them, he finally gives a name and substance to emotions that he had struggled to express, such as the Oedipal hatred for the native Popè, who soiled his mother's bed exactly – it seemed to him – as Claudius had done with Gertrude's in *Hamlet*. The problem, however, is that the boy, by his own admission, only half knows the meaning of words whose "magic was strong" and that "rolled through his mind; rumbled like talking thunder; like the drums at the summer dances" (Huxley, *Brave* 114). He reads them, as Oatley and Johnson Laird would put it (1), not in an Orwellian way (looking for events and reflecting on meanings) but in a Joycean way (enraptured by their prosody), which makes him too engrossed to be self-conscious. Indeed, in Sean Witters' view, the young man reads "without critical insight" like a "functionally illiterate", so that Shakespeare's works end up having too 'pathetic' a hold on his mind, which is still too ignorant of reality and devoid of a "developed critical consciousness" (84).

Shakespeare's theatre works to all intents and purposes in John's mind as the "world-building model" that, in Oatley's words, "is formed by each of his spectators and readers as they engage with the [...] simulation" ("Substance and Shadow" 21). However, lacking sufficient emotional maturity – even that 'rite of passage' to adult life denied to him in the reservation – and of a repertoire of concepts and knowledge that would enable him to bridge the deep gap in his divided self – caught between the old and the new world –, the young man uses it as an enchanted screen. As Don Quixote did at the threshold of early modernity, he incorrectly interprets the unknown reality around him, unaware that he is experiencing "aesthetic emotions" and, therefore, interacting "not with the mundane world [...] but with a putative work of art" (9), which is at most effective when the "exaltness wanes"; when "you can stand back [...] to recollect it

in tranquillity" and build a "mental model of yourself [...] in a particular relation" to it (Oatley and Johnson Laird 9). In truth, Shakespeare's poetic words – and this is perhaps the most bitter conclusion of Huxley's reflection – fit neither with the too primitive and spiritual milieu of the reservation in which John was born (considered by Huxley himself abnormal and lunatic, with its cults of fertility and '*Penitente* ferocity') nor the too modern and desecrated civilised world (insane and too sclerotized by science to be moved by poetry)[13]. In the reservation, John's reading of Shakespeare was decidedly anomalous; in London, where he brandishes his book like a liberating weapon ("I come to bring you freedom..." [Huxley, *Brave* 186]), his strangeness is tinged with even more ridiculous overtones.

The demonstration of the ineffectiveness of the emancipatory and potentially subversive power of Shakespeare's poetry in a prosaic world – capitalistic, scientific, authoritarian – in which, conversely, "language and mythology are deployed to condition" (Witters 83), occurs, in particular, through the observation of Bernard, Helmoltz and Lenina's reactions to the magic of his dramatic art. As in Prospero's experiment on the dignitaries and himself, one would expect it to generate the same wonder, empathy and compassion in them. John, not surprisingly, mainly uses tragic scripts to stimulate their admiration and lead them to regret their (ac)quiescence. But if Bernard does not prove capable of understanding them due to his stubborn closure to the outside world, Helmoltz, who also writes scripts for sensory films called 'feelies', perceives a lyrical longing within him (an "extra, latent power" [Huxley, *Brave* 159]). He greatly appreciates the "emotional engineering" of Shakespeare – whom he calls a "marvellous propaganda technician" (160-1)[14] – for the piercing quality of his morally inflected words, but he also feels the need, in order to be equally persuasive, to have something important to talk about, at least, following Nussbaum's view, for his own goals and evaluations. He lacks the "insane, excruciating things" that allow one to get excited: "You've got to be hurt and upset; otherwise you can't think of the really good, penetrating, X-rayish phrases. [...] We need some other kind of madness and violence. But what? What? Where can one find it?" (161-2). Unable to find an answer, he even tries to compose a poem about loneliness, inevitably poor, to test, himself, its emotional effects on his students: "I was curious to see what their reactions would be. [...] I was trying to engineer them into feeling as I'd felt when I wrote the rhymes" (157). As a result, the students, being totally unaware of the suffering that leads one to 'imagine' (empathy) and 'feel' (compassion)

the pain of others, denounce him mercilessly, revealing themselves to be incapable of understanding the intimate essence of poetry. Indeed, the New World's 'literary' words, so disfigured and senseless, can no longer "clarify the meanings and significance of human emotions, meanings to which our egotism often blinds us in everyday life" (Oatley, "Substance and Shadow" 28). This makes people unable to see, as Gloucester eventually learns to do in *King Lear*, "how this world goes [...] feelingly" (IV.6.163-165). In part, however, the 'pneumatic' Lenina is still able to do so. She feels an incomprehensible desire for monogamy in a world of compulsory promiscuity and ends up feeling a strange attachment to John. Nevertheless, when she tries to make love to him without too much preamble, John totally inserts himself into what Oatley calls "the goal-plan-action-event-emotion structures of fictional characters", bringing them into being in his mind ("Substance and Shadow" 18): he casts himself too empathetically first in the role of the romantic Romeo, then into that of the virtuous Ferdinand, then into that of the insanely jealous Othello, and finally into that of the totally deranged Lear. An excess of tragic emotion, or 'soul', if you like – an excess that will be his 'fatal flaw' in his personal tragedy – raptures him in front of poor Lenina, who, totally incapable of understanding even a single word of what he says, can only renounce her seduction so as not to end up like *Othello*'s Desdemona.

What must be underlined, in conclusion, is that some of the Shakespearean 'passions of the mind' claimed by John, such as anger, fear and happiness, are still partially recognisable by his interlocutors because they can be considered "universal and innate emotions" (Evans 6). Other feelings, instead, are more difficult to understand in contexts whose expressive conventions and 'structures of feeling' – to quote Raymond Williams – have changed profoundly. The empathetic and ethical power of certain works can be thus compromised not only by the change over time in the ways in which emotions are translated into gestures and words (Meek 281), but also by the obsolescence of certain individual and social dynamics, which are no more universally plausible and, therefore, accessible to the imagination[15]: "our world is not the same as Othello's world", Mond says in the novel, "you can't make tragedies without social instability" (Huxley, *Brave* 193). Even if a stable and happy world is not as "spectacular" and "grand" (195) as one made unstable by conflicts, passions and temptations, in it there is no longer room or need for the nobility and heroism of a tragedy like *Othello*, whose "tonic effects of murdering Desdemona and

being murdered by Othello" are released by the "adrenin" with which the inhabitants' system is flooded "regularly once a month" (209-211). Watson himself, while able to appreciate the intensity of the words of *Romeo and Juliet* when John recites them, cannot help but laugh and show a jarring emotional dissonance, especially when he realises that at the centre of the tragedy is a love thwarted by brawling parents. The reasons for his response – in Bakhtinian terms, a carnivalesque and yet irreversible 'uncrowning' of John's hero – are perfectly understandable: one, in the new world love is completely free, and two, they don't even know what parents are anymore.

As Anthony Manstead and Agneta Fischer point put, "emotions are interpreted, experienced and expressed differently depending on the social and cultural context in which they occur" (3). We all hope that Shakespeare's works will never cease to be 'motion generative'; inspiring compassionate feelings and even healthy subversive desires through their projection of possible and alternative worlds. However, Paul Smethurst warns us against the possibility that in a moment like this, witnessing a "common aspiration for a stable society in which technology and consumerism are foremost", we may eventually have to face the fact that "we are entering a phase of history where Shakespeare no longer speaks to us, or at least not with humanist inflection" (98). To prevent this from happening, at least definitively, Katherine A. Craik asks herself – as Huxley powerfully did in his time by means of satire – whether it has not indeed become necessary to re-theorise, and therefore 'regenerate', the recognisability of his emotions. Of course, one has to push back "against the truism that the affective intensity of the poems and plays echoes unproblematically in and for everyone" and "squar[e] up to our differences from the past" (Craik 9), especially as questions of "power, privilege and gender" are concerned (10). The hope is that, by doing so, in our own 'new world', Shakespeare does not become "old", as gloomily predicted in Huxley's anti-utopia (*Brave* 192): a beautiful but useless object, anachronistic and untimely, like the 'old' magic arts that Prospero leaves behind to greet a new era of greater rationality and stability. After all, it is precisely *The Tempest* that "alludes to and presages the first blooming of modernity", starting that great journey of secular science of which Huxley, in his cautionary sequel of the play, recounts the most inauspicious development possible: "from one end of modernity to the other" (Smethurst 100).

1. As Julie Sanders points out, the rewrite, as a kind of appropriation, "be it in the form of novel, play, poem, or film, invariably transcends mere imitation, serving instead in the capacity of incremental literature [...], adding, supplementing, improvising, innovating, amplifying. The aim is not replication as such, but rather complication, expansion rather than contraction" (15).
2. This article is also based on research on Shakespeare and emotions cultivated as part of a project of the universities of Roma Tre, Milan and Bari: *Applied Shakespeare: Developing New Educational Models for Transversal Competences and Life-skills* (PRIN 2022, coordinated by Maddalena Pennacchia).
3. *The Passions of the Mind in General* is the title of a well-known text written by the Jesuit Thomas Wright in 1604, when the term 'emotion' was not yet widely used. In fact, the term seems to have first appeared in 1590, although Shakespeare sometimes used the word 'motion' to indicate a dynamic force capable of shaking the mind and body and causing a major, often painful, change from one state of mind to another.
4. Not surprisingly, in the Epilogue Prospero seeks confirmation of the success of his experiment. In asking the spectators to 'free' him from the suffering it has caused him too, he asks them to put themselves in his shoes and forgive his own crimes, including the solipsistic narcissism that had formerly distracted him from the good of his subjects (his moral and social responsibility) when, all absorbed in his 'secret studies', he had allowed his brother to seize his dukedom.
5. Parodically exaggerating the pedagogical intent of Prospero, conceived for a period of growing education and literacy, Huxley was being critical of the compulsory state education of his years. According to what he wrote in "Education", the new trends were aimed at manipulating the behaviour of the mass-consumerist populace by imparting to them an unreflective education, without expansion of knowledge; in short, an expert-idiocy oriented only towards the division of labour, such as the one shown by John's mother when she admits that she knew nothing in London beyond her specific duties and the one held by the Director of the Conditioning Centre in extolling the virtue

generated by the teaching of "professional particulars" *versus* the evil of "cultural generalities" (*Brave* 2).

6. In his *Defence of Poesie* (1595), Sidney pointed out the derivation of the term 'charm' from the Roman 'carmina': compositions in verse or rhythmic prose of a religious or legal character that had the merit of being more memorable because of their distinct musicality.
7. As Flora de Giovanni (57-58) brings to the fore, in this post-Fordian world, the Freudian 'pleasure principle' dominates unchallenged, so that no inner space is left for tormented wishes and feelings of impatience that nag at those who, like infants, do not obtain everything immediately.
8. According to Laura Di Michele (10; my translation), what opens *The Tempest* is an "epochal macro-storm [...] a paradigmatic and primordial element of renewal, a symptom and sign of the many whirlwinds that the new century and the new world were generating, unleashing the clash of natural elements on the surface". On *The Tempest*'s 'modernity', see also Esposito, *Oltre la mappa*.
9. Since emotions are linked to the goals of prosperity that concern us and the people who are within our sphere of interest, they cannot fail to be crucial in a political context that, contrary to the emotionless 'brave new world', is aimed at societal and human flourishing. As Nussbaum underlines, "without emotional development, a part of our reasoning capacity as political creatures will be missing" (3).
10. According to this non-cognitive model of Galenic ancestry, very similar to the physiological theory of humours, these impulses are similar to fluid processes that accumulate in the body and create a reservoir of negative energy that must be discharged. Otherwise, the accumulation, which pushes and boils, generates blocks that disturb the normal functioning of the mind (Rosenwein 834).
11. Attacking all reductionist approaches, the author wrote in "The Oddest Science": "just as it is perfectly clear that bodies cannot be understood or successfully treated without reference to their minds, so too it is perfectly clear that minds cannot be understood or successfully treated without reference to their bodies" (165).
12. Literature and science were, however, in constant dialogue in Huxley's work, not least for family reasons: his grandfather was the famous biologist T.H. Huxley and his mother Matthew Arnold's granddaughter. Apart from a number of essays with a distinctly scientific slant, such as "Varieties of Intelligence" or "Personality and the Discontinuity of the Mind" (1927), and the later "Science, Technology and Beauty" and "Politics and Biology" (1957), *Brave New World* is perhaps the most obvious example of this fruitful intermingling of inheritance and interests.

13. This is what Huxley wrote in his "Preface" to the 1946 novel's edition. He admitted that he regretted not having offered John a third way, beyond the both impracticable ones of utopia and primitivism (*Brave* xli-xliv).
14. In Shakespeare, the power of emotions to transform the recipients of a work of invention is simultaneously deployed and unmasked as a dangerous force of persuasion. In *Othello*, Iago is able to enrapture the Moor with words – deemed capable of piercing hearts "through the ear" (I.3.250-251) – the effect of which is such a radical alteration of his conscience that Othello ends up being totally dislocated (Edwards 193). Like the Savage in *Brave New World*, eventually he feels he has no choice but suicide. In *The Tempest*, on the other hand, Prospero breaks the spell before it is too late, declaring his revels concluded and thus provoking, through the metatheatrical device, the awakening of the minds of his victims from a maddening immersive experience. Moreover, he instils awareness, both in them and in the audience, of the artificiality of the simulation that has 'run on their minds'.
15. Nussbaum (169-170) explains how, by drawing on general experiences derived from common situations, classical works, such as those of Sophocles and Euripides, which are based on myths of loss and family conflict, always remain easily recognisable. Others, in contrast, become more inaccessible, such as those of 'courtly love', because we no longer share the metaphysical beliefs and practices necessary to sustain it.

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