Angles

New Perspectives on the Anglophone World

4 | 2017

Unstable States, Mutable Conditions

“Earth, the chatterer father of all speech”: From Shakespeare’s *brave new world!* to William Carlos Williams’ *Nuevo mundo!*

Anna Aublet

Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/angles/1494>

DOI: 10.4000/angles.1494

ISSN: 2274-2042

Publisher

Société des Anglicistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur

Electronic reference

Anna Aublet, ““Earth, the chatterer father of all speech”: From Shakespeare’s *brave new world!* to William Carlos Williams’ *Nuevo mundo!*”, *Angles* [Online], 4 | 2017, Online since 01 April 2017, connection on 06 June 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/angles/1494> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/angles.1494>

This text was automatically generated on 6 June 2022.

Angles est mise à disposition selon les termes de la Licence Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International.

"Earth, the chatterer father of all speech": From Shakespeare's *brave new world!* to William Carlos Williams' *Nuevo mundo!*

Anna Aublet

- 1 "America, that is I should say a place like Paterson always reminds a good deal of Shakespeare. You know how Americans are about Shakespeare: dies in 1616 or so—the pilgrims land in 1620." (SUNYBUF A298) In these notes, briefly jotted down on a rumpled prescription sheet, William Carlos Williams ironizes on the discrepancy separating his America from Shakespeare's England, only ultimately to reclaim the playwright's legacy by concluding: "he is like us". By "us," Williams refers to Americans, a people whose task is to recover an indigenous idiom, like Shakespeare in his own time and place.
- 2 From Shakespeare's *Tempest* (1611, hereafter *Tmp.*) to Williams' *Tempers* (1913) I would like to argue that we have two instances of a common quest for, and consideration of, language. As Williams depicts the contact of Columbus' sailors or the first pilgrims with the New World, we are reminded of the shipwreck at the opening of *The Tempest* that leads the characters of the play to reconsider the old hierarchy, as they strive to adapt to an ever-changing ground.

"They enter the new world naked" (*Spring and All* 95)

"Nuevo Mundo!" (GAN 182)

- 3 William Carlos Williams' poetry endeavours to break free from the shackles of the colonizer and the verbal and mental vassalage to the Crown that outlived 1776. After Emerson's cry for independence in *The American Scholar* (1837) and Whitman's

autochthonous yawp (1855), it was Williams' turn to howl for sovereignty, followed by Allen Ginsberg exactly one century after Whitman's own declaration of independence.

- 4 In *The Great American Novel* (hereafter GAN), looking into the remnants of the past, through the sterile layers of prehistoric bark covering the soil, Williams chooses to sail back up in time—"a rebours" (GAN 170), quoting Huysmans' book—to tell the history of his continent and thus invents his own mythology:

Through conquest and struggle of all imaginable sorts through periods of success and decline, through ages of walkings to and fro in the fields and woods and the streets of cities that were without walls and had walls and burst their walls and became ruins again; through the changes of speech: Sanscrit, Greek, Latin growing crooked in the mouths of peasants who would rise and impose their speech on their masters, and on divisions in the state and savage colonial influences, words accurate to the country, Italian, French and Spanish itself not to speak of Portuguese. Words! Yes this party of sailors, men of the sea, brothers of a most ancient guild, ambassadors of all the ages that had gone before them, had indeed found a new world, a world, that is, that knew nothing about them, on which the foot of a white man had never made a mark such as theirs were then making on the white sand under the palms. *Nuevo Mundo!* (GAN 181-2)

- 5 As the poet tells his reader about the discovery of the Americas by Columbus, he highlights the importance of speech and its various phases through time, its mutability and its capacity to journey from one land to another and to transcend social classes. Words were indeed the "mark" the white man was about to print on the "white sand". The word becomes figure, *figura* and letter, *litera* printed on the untouched soil. The whiteness of the sand recalls the blankness of an untouched wilderness, a pastoral garden given to men to cultivate, where all hierarchy is forgotten. The concept of blankness is already an allusion to the figure of Caliban whose "inaccessible blankness"—much like Moby Dick's—"[is] circumscribed by an interpretable text" (Spivak 118). Spivak's acute remarks on Caliban in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* help us to understand the character as a corporeal variant of the continent itself³.
- 6 In this context of "New World blankness", the possibilities for invention and creation are endless, and the crosspollination of different cultures and languages is a chance to create anew. In her article on Williams and his "New World encounters", Gabriele Hayden emphasizes the poetic fertility of the new ground: "Williams based his New World poetics on a primitivist model in which the Americas and Americans—native, mestizo, and even creole—represent not only sexual deviance but also artistic innovation." (177) The hybridity borne by the land is a *leitmotiv* in Williams' work and is not without recalling Shakespeare's pastoral in *The Winter's Tale* (2008: 172), for instance, in which Polixenes (true to his name) argues that hybridity "is an art / That nature makes" in response to Perdita's calling carnations and gillyflowers "nature's bastards" (IV.4.81-4). We would like here to contend that the genetic instability and hybridity of the language, evident in both works, is contingent upon the unbounded mutability of the land itself.
- 7 Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* opens on a shipwreck, thus unleashing and staging a blurring and effacement of the old hierarchy and a shift from civilization to nature. In Williams's work and in Shakespeare's play, the characters are stranded on the shore, like the reader/audience on the edge of their seat. We must listen to the sounds, following the traces and signs in order to distinguish reality from illusion for "we are such stuff/ As dreams are made on" (*Tmp.* IV.i.156-7). Who are the savages and who are

the civilized people? The Natives become the true heroes, creators of an autochthonous language, the readers of signs and undecipherable glyphs. All forms of preconceived and prehistoric hermeneutic grids are challenged in both works.

- 8 Moreover, the masque-like interlude in act IV—orchestrated by Prospero—reveals in the middle of the wilderness what is an English countryside with its agricultural fields. Prospero thus becomes the epitome of the cultured European in the wilderness, although in the words of Leo Marx, “both the wild and the cultivated versions of the garden image embody something of that timeless impulse to cut loose from the constraints of a complex society” (42-3). The masque somewhat prophetically depicts a Jeffersonian utopian vision of society, a balance between art and nature, with which Williams identified. In this seemingly primitive pastoral garden that is the isle—and the America of Williams’ sailors—a cultured (and cultural) garden appears, causing the identity and geographic situation of the island to mutate, making it what Michel Foucault calls a heterotopia. The relationships of the play are thus easily reversible, since in a heterotopia the common rules of society do not apply:

The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another [...] (Foucault 6)

- 9 Shakespeare’s island transforms into a microscopic scale of the world and provides a solid ground on which to base our analysis of Williams’ New World. Beyond the many parallels that can be drawn between the island and the discovery of the Americas in terms of relationships between the inhabitants of the isle (a point which I will come back to), the doubling and two-folded aspect of the land itself is the first comparable trope⁴: the New World is an echo chamber of the old, on a microcosmic level. Once on this new soil, the characters of the play are faced with a past that returns to haunt the present, much like the first sailors depicted by Williams. The pilgrims and mythical figures of his novel *In the American Grain* (1923, hereafter IAG) are constantly faced with the instability of hierarchical order and the mutability of the land itself, in constant metamorphosis. The idyllic *locus amoenus* is penetrated by a perverted market economy, provoking a shift of power that Williams will denounce throughout his work. This variability is also true of Williams’ own work, its generic porosity and metamorphic aspects, which in turn also reflect what is sometimes perceived as the poet’s own ambivalence towards the bloody *conquista* of Latin America and his fascination for the Spanish Golden Age. However this interpretation of Williams’ work seems restrictive, since it tends to ignore the notion that any text, narrativization or staging of history, is a form of colonization in itself. Let us bear in mind that, if Williams as a Latin-American had claimed to *be* a Caliban (Fernandez Retamar 1974), and had identified with the victimized people against the pressures of the colonizer, he would also have “legitimize[d] the very individualism that we must persistently attempt to undermine from within”, as argued by Spivak (118). The contradictions within the poet’s work account for the very complexity of his history. And it is indeed these gaps which animate the poetic force of the text, conferring it more veracity, not a truthfulness to the facts, but a certain degree of authenticity. *In the American Grain* should not be read as a secondary source, a record and examination of historical facts. Instead, it should be construed as a primary source, as a resolutely modern and modernist poetic work of art, a work of its time, reflecting the anti-puritan *Zeitgeist* of the 1920s in America.

- 10 The general mutability and instability of Williams' work is what Vera Kutzinski famously called "New World" aesthetics in her essay *Against the American Grain* (1987). Williams' project in this partial history of America is not historical accuracy. It is not intended as an account of colonization but rather as a poetic project meant to transform the soil of America into a fertile poetic land, thus grounding the American language in the country's *Sub Terra*⁵.

"Be not afeard" (*Tmp.* III.2.130)

- 11 In his unfolding of America's mythical map in the novel *In the American Grain*, Williams suggests that one of the possible causes for the over-capitalistic American society was the puritans' first reaction to the wilderness. In a chapter entitled "Benjamin Franklin," the poet doesn't conceal his reproof: he blames the Puritans for what he sees as their complete lack of sensuousness and absolute fear of the wilderness. Refusing any kind of extravagance, in Williams' assessment, they also reject their potential sense of wonder. Their angst and unease before the land is thus the experience which would have scared them into signs—divine intimations and manifestations in nature, that the writers of the American Renaissance were also seeking centuries later.

Because if there is 'only earth', 'just America', and no sacred mission, no manifest destiny, no chosen people, no promised land, then there is indeed only 'the wilderness' and an 'errand' on nobody's behalf going nowhere, carrying and signifying nothing. (Tanner 1989: 22)

- 12 In his reference to Macbeth's monologue and to the dread possibility that something might "signify nothing", Tony Tanner highlights the importance of scrutiny of a divine immanence in the development of American history.

It is necessary in appraising our history to realize that the nation was the offspring of the desire to huddle, to protect—of terror—superadded to a new world of great beauty and ripest blossom that well-nigh no man of distinction saw save Boone. (IAG 155)

- 13 Daniel Boone, the woodsman—who also morphed into James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo—epitomizes the continuous dilation of the continent to the West, an escape from the old European land register, cartographic remnants of the past. He is also filled with wonder as he discovers the wilderness beyond the edge of the Appalachians. *In the American Grain* goes on to praise his merits and those of a French Catholic priest, Père Rasles, who displays a real sensibility to the world's sensuality and touch, contrary to the exacerbated puritanism of Franklin and his obsession with profitability and rationalization. In his epigraph to *Paterson* I, Williams presents his poem as "a reply to Greek and Latin with the bare hands" (2). The contact and touch of his "bare hands" is the chosen tool for Williams, the itinerant physician, with which to read, examine and decipher the world. This is also D.H. Lawrence's assessment in his review of Williams' work:

There are two ways of being American; and the chief, says Mr Williams, is by recoiling into individual smallness and insentience, and gutting the great continent in frenzies of mean fear. It is the puritan way. The other is by *touch*; touch America as she is; dare to touch her! And this is the heroic way. (Doyle 91)

- 14 "Fear" is a recurring word in Shakespeare's play⁶, from the moment the characters set foot on the isle:

GONZALO. All torment, trouble, wonder and amazement
Inhabits here: some heavenly power guide us
Out of this fearful country! (*Tmp.* V.1.104-6)

- 15 While Gonzalo acknowledges the complex sensuousness and tempers of the isle, his first instinct is to flee. Caliban keeps reassuring Trinculo and Stephano about the island's safety in an attempt to put their minds at rest. In Lawrence's words, he chooses "the heroic way" in his approach to the wilderness, as he tells his partners in crime:

CALIBAN. Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again. (*Tmp.* III.2.130-8)

- 16 Caliban here depicts the sounds and noises surrounding him, emphasizing his ability to poetically embrace the sensuous qualities of the isle. For Williams, the new language that is fitted to the American soil can only be retrieved through the ears, "by listening to the minutest variations of speech" (*Autobiography* 362) and by deciphering "the roar of the river forever in our ears" (*Paterson* 17), which accounts for the acousmatic aspects of his poetic work. He strives to act as a "Caliban", pricking up his ears at the humming of nature. Insofar as the first reaction of the other characters of the play is indeed to "huddle" and "protect", they are more likely to fall under Lawrence's first category. What remains strikingly evident is the complex quality or tenor of the New World, a land that accepts and fosters "radically opposed interpretations" (Marx 45) and reactions. These oppositions also corroborate the well-known interpretation of the play, according to which the action is set in America, thus foregrounding the dualities between master and slave, colonizer and colonized.⁷ The characters of the play, natives of the island, are indeed often paralleled with the indigenous peoples of North and South America.

Eppur si muove

- 17 What we could call Ariel's "burial" by Sycorax deep in the pine tree is what makes him a real native of the land, an "Indian" in Williams' sense of the term. The identification with the land, the "primal and continuous identity with ground itself" (IAG 33), is what establishes him as an indigenous inhabitant of the island. The Indian is to Williams a metonymic continuation of the land itself. For the poet, it is by being buried within the soil that the Native Americans became the land. If anyone was to begin the quest to possess the American territory they should go about it "as the Indian possessed it" (IAG 137).⁸ D.H. Lawrence found a formula that aptly expresses the end of the allegiance to the Old Continent, when he states: "Whatever else you are, be masterless" (1923). For Williams, Indian signified newness and independence, as he exclaims in *The Great American Novel*: "Oh to hell with Masters and the rest of them. To hell with everything I have myself ever written" (176). He condemns his contemporaries, and in particular T.S. Eliot, for being "content with the connotations of their masters"⁹ (IAG 24), whereas being "indianlike" (IAG 137) was the real and "new" way of being American. In Barthesian terms, it is as though Williams aimed at scraping off the connotation from

the word in order to put an end to the lexical allegiance to the British Crown. The poet wedges the word open to reveal its multiple meanings. The conflagration of the library in the third book of *Paterson* performs this cathartic process, burning all the connotations and freeing the word from its fetters, handing it back to the land.¹⁰ Likewise, *In the American Grain* seeks to wash the words clean and articulate the lexical chaos of old grammars:

In these studies I have sought to re-name the things seen, now lost in a chaos of borrowed titles, many of them inappropriate, under which the true character lies hidden. In letters, in journals, reports of happening I have recognized new contours suggested by old words, so that new names were constituted. (IAG 5)

- 18 To paraphrase Miranda's famous call—which itself mutated a few centuries later into Aldous Huxley's well-known dystopia—Williams sets off to find and tame the brave new American word. The Old Italian for "brave", *braidò*, *brado* originally signified "savage" and "wild" and I would like to use the word in this sense here. With "the bare hands", Williams' task is to try and capture the outlines of the continent with wild words that keep bouncing off its borders, wandering outside of their confines to become extravagant. These words cannot be imported and arbitrarily grafted onto the new continent: they have to be excavated from the ore.¹¹
- 19 The "profound cleft", the "cavern" Williams refers to in *Paterson* I, is where the imagination can be found. It is in the heart of his *locus* that the poet will dig up the words for a new poetry. Native Americans, buried deep within the soil, thus turn into living remnants of the past, corpses haunting the *hic et nunc* of the poet, like "airy charms" (*Tmp.* V.1.63) freed from the very heart of their locality.
- 20 Besides the Natives' capacity to live organically and in all sensuousness with the land, Williams admired their ability to integrate the fluxes and refluxes of an ever-changing ground into their daily life.

(Shakespeare) a man stirred alive, all round not minus the intelligence but the intelligence subjugated—by misfortune in this case maybe—subjugated to the instinctive whole as it must be, but not minus it as in almost everything— not by cupidity that blights an island literature—but round, round, a round world *E pur si muove*. That has never sunk into literature as it has into geography, cosmology. Literature is still mediaeval, formal, dogmatic, the scholars, the obstinate rationalists— (*Imaginations, The Descent of Winter* 258-9).
- 21 Williams seeks to integrate into literature that mutability of the world, the fluid texture of the American map so impossible to fix, and whose legend (in all its senses) can only be told by American words. The new world, *terra incognita*, extends into a gigantic wilderness, blank and without glyphs or scriptures, where the writer can ultimately free himself from the old bonds and finally "save the words from themselves" (GAN 172).
- 22 Williams praises Boone for seeking "to grow close to [the ground], to understand it and to be part of its mysterious movements[.] Like an Indian" (IAG 137). In the first book of *Paterson*, the unstable state of the continent is inextricably linked to the question of a mutable American identity.

the ground has undergone
a subtle transformation, its identity altered.

Indians! (*Paterson* 18)

- 23 The transformation experienced by the continent is first and foremost lexical: from India to America, Indians to Americans. Through the figure of the Indian, Williams reconciles his Latin Puerto-Rican roots with his Americanness: Carlos and Bill are only united through poetry. The Indian inhabits a liminal space with which Williams identifies.¹² The Native American becomes, like Iris in Shakespeare's masque, an arc binding two different *loci* together.¹³

"Ban, 'Ban, Ca-caliban / Has a new master. get a new man." (*Tmp.* II.2.173-4)

"It is the American idiom." (*Paterson* 222)

- 24 William Carlos Williams tells his reader in *The Descent of Winter* (1928) that one of the qualities he most admired in Shakespeare was his "mean ability to fuse himself with everyone which nobodies have, to be anything at any time, fluid, a nameless fellow whom nobody noticed much— and that is what made him the great dramatist. Because he was nobody and was fluid and accessible" (*Imaginations* 253). In Williams' observation of the playwright, it appears as though the very name 'SHAKESPEARE' was in itself unstable and mutable, an empty receptacle that readers would fill with their own connotations and imagination.¹⁴ While offering his reader this definition, Williams is implicitly identifying with his master.

Against these larger pressures Williams places his own hero: William Shakespeare. This Shakespeare was a figure molded very much after Williams' myth of himself: the figure of the unlearned "natural" brought into high relief against the classical scholar, Francis Bacon. [...] Shakespeare was—finally—a figure of the artist *par excellence*: a force, an anomaly, a man outside the new learning, a man without a history, like Ulysses a man with no name, a person realized most fully in the act of creating other figures [...]. (Mariani 284)

- 25 Indeed, William Carlos Williams, M.D., never gave up his medical practice and remained a family doctor in Rutherford, N.J. throughout his life. This position in society provided him with a peculiar vantage point from which to write his poetry. Because he was a doctor, and because he was of Boricua origins, Williams believed he could find a language for diversity— a democratic language accessible to all classes and layers of the population with which he became acquainted in his daily tasks. Therefore, the epithets "fluid and accessible" are also appropriate to Williams, the professional man and the poet. By choosing not to leave the country for the Old Continent and run away "after the rabbits" (*Paterson* 3) like his friend Ezra Pound, Williams elected his local Garden State as the setting for his poems. If Shakespeare was the "natural" man as opposed to Bacon, Williams was the ordinary man as opposed to the High Church advocate T.S. Eliot.
- 26 Another feature of Shakespeare's plays which was appealing to Williams was the quality and texture of the language, or as he calls it "dialect": that unstable and progressive form of English given to the writers to shape.

But the dialect is the mobile phase, the changing phase, the productive phase, —as it was to Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dante, Rabelais. [...] Language is changing and growing new means for extended possibilities in literary expression and I add basic structure, the most important of all. (SUNYBUF D7: Notebook B. 1948: 64)

- 27 These qualities of the language are what he finds in American English, an "idiom" with which to play, adaptable and malleable, and which needs to be stretched out to fit the swellings and crevices of the continent and the starts and jolts of its history. The search is for an extending fabric of language that will fit the map and espouse its asperities.

Ta panta rei

- 28 The mutability and changeability of the continent is well highlighted in *Paterson* through the ghostly presence of the Passaic River, as it is in the *The Tempest* by the sea surrounding Prospero's island. Water is not only an allotropic and labile element emphasizing instability, it is also an agent of transformation and mutation.
- 29 The river slides and sloughs to the ocean and yearns towards the fluency and fluidity of language. *Paterson* somehow becomes a succession of disorienting tales, and rhapsodic fragments, creating a city that rises and falls following the vagaries, fluxes and refluxes of the Passaic River. Interestingly, Williams several times invokes snake-like shapes throughout his long poem whether to refer to the river or a cavern in the rocks, implicitly recalling the process of exuviation, i.e. the ability of the snake to find new life by getting rid of its old skin. The sloughing which is both "the collapse of soil or rock into a hole or down a bank" (OED), leading up to fluency and the exuviation of the snake, further emphasizes the inextricable link between the beginning and the end of life.
- 30 In the introductory lines of the poem, the poet follows the itinerary of the river:
- From above, higher than the spires, higher
even than the office towers, from oozy fields
abandoned to grey beds of dead grass,
black sumac, withered weed-stalks,
mud and thickets cluttered with dead leaves—
the river comes pouring in above the city
and crashes from the edge of the gorge
in a recoil of spray and rainbow mists—
- (What common language to unravel?
.. combed into straight lines
from that rafter of a rock's
lip). (*Paterson* 7)
- 31 The narrator traces the poetic movement of the river. The ricochet and backwash effects of the waves are also those of the poetic imagination, running away to the open sea and diving into the bleak and muddy waters of the Passaic. The opening passage sounds as a proclamation of the poet's conception of his art:

(the multiple seed,
packed tight with detail, soured,
is lost in the flux and the mind,
distracted, floats off in the same
scum.)
Rolling up, rolling up heavy with
numbers.
It is the ignorant sun
rising in the slot of
hollow suns risen, so that never in this
world will a man live well in his body

save dying— and not know himself
 dying; yet that is the design. Renews himself
 thereby, in addition and subtraction,
 walking up and down.
 and the craft,
 subverted by thought, rolling up, let
 him beware lest he turn to no more than
 the writing of stale poems . . .
 Minds like beds always made up,
 (more stony than a shore)
 unwilling or unable.
 Rolling in, top up,
 under, thrust and recoil, a great clatter:
 lifted as air, boated, multicolored, a
 wash of seas— (*Paterson* 4-5)

- 32 The poetic spirit or imagination finds itself floating *ab hoc et ab hac* in the same dregs as the fertile germ swept away by the river's seesaw. The poet's task is to fish it out and take possession of this potential language, to help it bud.
- 33 In the poem's inaugural descent, the poet sketches what will become the ceaseless undulating back and forth movement ("walking up and down") between the inside and the outside, between Paterson, the poet, and Paterson, the city. The fluidity and lability of water enable such oscillation and invite the reader to embark upon a quest reminiscent of Ishmael's spiritual vagrancies in Melville's *Moby Dick*. The continuous fluvial current, the Heraclitean *ta panta rei*, stands in contradiction to the stasis that Williams saw in words, and in a poetry he strove to renew. To the omnipresence of the spatial prepositions expressing movement ("from mathematics to particulars", "into a river", "rolling in", "top up", "rolling up", "walking up and down") the poet opposes the ancient scriptures, full of overwrought and overused words: "the writing of stale poems" (4).
- 34 It is the stasis, the mineral fixity of tuff, that the root *sta* of *stale* comes to signify. "Stale" is stagnation. At the other end of the spectrum is fluidity of imagination, of language, and river. In order to break away from what he perceives as the static character of conventional poetry, the narrator goes as far as to immerse himself in the river at the conclusion of his poem "the Wanderer", like a prelude to the epic *Paterson*.
- Then she, leaping up with a fierce cry:
 "Enter, youth, into this bulk!
 Enter, river, into this young man!"
 Then the river began to enter my heart,
 Eddying back cool and limpid
 Into the crystal beginning of its days. (*Collected Poems I*: 35)
- 35 Originally a symbol of the wedding between men and God, the baptism actualizes the "new marriage" desired by Williams through a perfect organic exchange, a real contact between the Passaic River and the poet. The muddy waters of the Passaic are like the "prehistoric ooze" (25) at the birth of Flossie in *White Mule*: they enable renewal. In *The Tempest*, Alonso laments that his son "i' th' ooze is bedded" (III.3.121), the sea is hereby turned into the ever-absent maternal figure of the play.
- 36 For Williams, the waters are also a "prehistoric" matrix since they carry out Paterson's immemorial history. The river's current and the poem's flow suggest the "lines of flight"¹⁵ of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 12), those of a language that "evolves by subterranean steps and flows, along river valleys or train

tracks [...]” (Deleuze and Guattari 7). Likewise, in *Paterson*, a few pages after the passage quoted above, Williams again links aquatic fluxes and thought:

Jostled as are the waters approaching
the brink, his thoughts
interlace, repel and cut under,
rise rock-thwarted and turn aside,
but forever strain forward—or strike
an eddy and whirl, marked by a
leaf or curdy spume, seeming
to forget (*Paterson* 7-8)

- 37 Imagination itself becomes a moving fluid enabling the reader to find contact and the poem itself becomes rhizome, it functions as a subterranean brook (in the words of Prospero “the veins of the earth” (I.2.305) so often travelled across by Ariel), irrigating thought and leading to newness and creation. The subterranean tracks taken by the imagination to create a network of signifiers enables the poet to sidestep any obstacle. In the words of Alba Newman, “the flexibility of the mind, however, moving by liquid, subterranean paths, eludes these strictures, allowing for invention and revelation.” (67) Words keep streaming and dripping on each other, thus creating a network of signifiers and signifieds, their value changes depending on the co-text and surrounding words. According to Claude Richard, this is what enables the poet to emphasize and circumvent the gap between word and meaning, signifier and signified, connotation and denotation, and to play with this shedding (sloughing?) process.¹⁶ Words are thus unstable and mutable for their meaning is never fully set and they keep bouncing off each other.

(Lang)WEDGE

“Earth the chatterer, father of all speech” (*Paterson* 39)

- 38 As Williams unfolds the last lines of *Paterson* I, his words are reminiscent of his British master:

Thought clambers up,
snail like, upon the wet rocks
hidden from sun and sight—
hedged in by the pouring torrent—
and has its birth and death there
in that moist chamber, shut from
the world— and unknown to the world,
cloaks itself in mystery—
And the myth
that holds up the rock,
that holds up the water thrives there—
in that cavern, that profound cleft,
a flickering green
inspiring terror, watching . .
And standing, shrouded there, in that din,
Earth, the chatterer, father of all
speech (*Paterson* 34)

- 39 Interestingly, Williams calls earth the “father of all speech”, when, in Shakespeare’s play, the character most identified with earth is Caliban whose mouth spits vile

profanities and curses: "What, ho! slave! Caliban! / Thou earth, thou! speak" (*Tmp.* I. 2.312-3). In this way, Caliban would appear to be the father of a new speech, the language of the isle that isn't yet fully developed, and which is therefore morphing and metamorphosing, along with the very territory that supports it: the heterotopia also applies to him and to his language.¹⁷ Much like the relationship between Williams and English, Caliban holds a peculiar relationship to language—that Prospero taught him—as a power that is both liberating and enslaving, from whose constraints he strives to escape. As Caliban bids Prospero to free him from his bonds, his chains are not only material, they are mainly verbal:

CALIBAN: You taught me language; and my profit on 't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language! (*Tmp.* I.2.362-4)

- 40 Fire, air and water are also present in both Shakespeare's and Williams' works, thus amounting—with earth—to Pythagoras' tetractys, the number four being a symbol of the cosmos. In *The Tempest*, "the remnants of a cosmos [...] finally flounder amidst the overwhelming chaos" (Lecerle 339), while Williams's poetry is an attempt at articulating chaos in all its significance — articulating as the bridging together of particulars to create a new significant entity, verbal or otherwise. With expert healing hands, the doctor-poet is thus stitching together clauses, words and particulars. The poet's task in his case is to try and decipher the illegible chatter of the earth (the word 'chatter' itself, being of onomatopoeic origins, acts as a primitive act of language as well as sound) and the "roar of the river forever in our ears (arrears)" (*Paterson* 17).
- 41 The state of "in-betweenness" of the language is, in essence, *grotesque* —if we adopt Bakhtin's definition of the term in relation to Rabelais (1984). That transitional phase of the language is effectively represented in the play by Caliban. Like the yet-unformed and ever-morphing isle, Caliban's language is unstable, it fumbles and struggles to find the contours of the ground. In many aspects, Caliban is equated with the figure of a child in the play, his language and body are, according to Bakhtin, "in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created [...]" (Bakhtin 517). Cursing becomes the verbal symptom of a grotesque body. The stuttering in particular underlines the gaps the poet comes to stitch. Matthew Hart's evocation of "synthetic vernacular poetries" is particularly relevant in this context, since it defines the discrepancy and the very hybridity of American poetry, on the edge "between vernacular self-ownership and the wilful appropriation of languages that will be forever foreign" (Hart 7).¹⁸ The poet is thus weaving different cultures, *loci* and languages together, while at the same time stitching and mending the words after their brutal transplantation into the American ground. To Julio Marzán, in his 1994 essay on Williams' Spanish American roots, "the bridge between two cultures was an image that Williams surely heard often", because his mother was standing with one foot in Porto Rico and the other on the continent: 'she stands bridging two cultures, three regions of the world, almost without speech'" (Marzán 52-3). To Bakhtin, the incapacity to express words also engenders a process of inflation of the body as in pregnancy: a certain inarticulate entity is retained by the body, which cannot be expressed and will thus come out with all the ejaculatory manifestations of a body giving birth, stammering and spluttering. The potential for an authentic and autochthonous poetry is enshrouded in the gap, in the silence of the stutterer between two words or syllables..

- 42 Not only is the isle a double of the American continent, the very character of Caliban also acts as such. More than the embodiment of the colonized and the representative of indigenous people, I would argue that Caliban is also—and perhaps mainly—a double of the land itself. Beyond the figure of the indigenous character, the native of the isle, Caliban's body, with all its crevices and swellings, becomes the very map of the territory, of a ground also pregnant with words experiencing a "mobile phase, changing phase" and ultimately "a productive phase", much like Williams' definition of Shakespeare's dialect (SUNYBUF D7: Notebook B. 1948: 64).
- 43 If Caliban strives to stake out the limits of his territory, whether spatial, physical and verbal, the other characters of the play also fumble and scramble through the wilderness, their language constantly disrupted, interrupted and muted.

Locus excambius

- 44 Williams, like Shakespeare, makes considerable use of puns. Gonzalo's conception of an idyllic commonwealth has been greatly commented on in relation to Montaigne's essay *Des Cannibales*, but in this scene language is also repeatedly suspended and muffled by Antonio and Sebastian's constant punning:
- GONZALO. When every grief is entertain'd that 's offer'd,
Comes to the entertainer—
SEBASTIAN. A dollar.
GON. Dolour comes to him, indeed: you have spoken truer than you purposed.
SEB. You have taken it wiselier than I meant you should.
GON. Therefore, my lord,—
ANTONIO. Fie, what a spendthrift is he of his tongue!
ALONZO. I prithee, spare. (*Tmp.* II.1.16-9)
- 45 Sebastian here impedes the flow of language by interrupting Gonzalo. The aposiopesis point to the mutability of language in every sense of the term, as the characters are often being silenced, muted. The asteismus serves to emphasize the porous phonetic frontier between "dollar" and "dolour", linking the two nouns and highlighting the pejorative effects of inorganic and a-natural business exchanges, as the *locus amoenus* is corrupted and becomes a *locus* of artificial exchange. Here again, the paronomasia comes to flesh out the error or split in the naming process. Words are fluid, they are muted depending on the characters uttering them.
- 46 A comparable process occurs in the opening of Williams' *Paterson* III, "The Library":
- I.
I love the locust tree
the sweet white locust
How much?
How much?
How much does it cost
to love the locust tree
in bloom?
A fortune bigger than
Avery could muster
So much
So much
the shelving green
locust
whose bright small leaves

in June
lean among flowers
sweet and white at
heavy cost. (*Paterson* 90)

- 47 The pun on "locust" / "low cost" comes to signify their phonetic proximity. The choice of the locust tree is thus an oral, phonetic choice on Williams' part. What the poet seems most interested in is not so much the meaning of the signified as the value of the spoken sign. The pun somehow advocates a close listening to the sound of the American language.¹⁹
- 48 In both instances, words are tokens whose circulation defines the contours and currency of a new verbal economy. Ultimately, the silent (muted) *low cost*, a near-homophone of *locust*, leads onto the possibility of an inexpensive love, to be confronted to a final *heavy cost* of loving the things of the world (*Furia* 36).

"The pine and cedar: graves at my command" (*Tmp.* V.1.48)

- 49 William Carlos Williams sometimes alludes to the meanderings and wanderings of the imagination, through the image of a crevice in the bark of a tree. In this sense poetry and art are forces that bore a hole in the trunk, to reveal a different perception.
- So also, poetry is that force which may revivify common living at various moments of depression blasting aside lifeless anatomies of past-usage, putting sense in that which is senseless—*splitting the wood and letting up a green interest*. (SUNYBUF C150, my italics)
- 50 Similarly, it is Prospero's art "that made gape / The pine" (*Tmp.* I.2.292-3) and let out the airy spirit Ariel in *The Tempest*. "By writing he [Shakespeare] escaped from the world into the natural world of his mind." (*Imaginations* 258). The fissure in the bark is the *locus* through which the poet gains access to his poetic imagination. From the hole in the tree, Ariel is reborn. Again, the word *locus*²⁰ echoes the locust and the "low cost" of the poem, placing the words in a complex economic network of signifiers. In Williamsian terms, the trunk of the tree is the *locus* of thought, a microcosm of the "profound cleft", the "cavern" mentioned at the end of *Paterson* I and again—as a resounding echo—in *Paterson* V: "through this hole / at the bottom of the cavern / of death, the imagination / escapes intact" (205). The hole in the pine becomes the hole in the ground, a ditch or an excavation. It becomes an allusion to the womb and to the ooze the embryo lives in before birth, a place "hidden from sun and sight" (*Paterson* 33). As Ariel begs for his freedom, Prospero clearly asserts the spirit's knowledge of the deepest inner Eleusinian mysteries of the earth:
- Thou dost; and think'st it much to tread the ooze
Of the salt deep,
To run upon the sharp wind of the north,
To do me business in the veins o' the earth
When it is baked with frost. (*Tmp.* I.2.252-6)
- 51 The pine tree comprises the beginning and the end of life: womb and tomb. In Williams' poetry, what knowledge may be concealed within the tree is only accessible and retrievable through myth. Myth becomes the intermediary between the known and the unknown, a heuristic tool.
- 52 In both these cases, the performative power of language is foregrounded and it unleashes unknown and unknowable imaginative powers: the aforementioned and

enigmatic "green interest". It is words that perform the splitting of the pine's trunk, a magic spell. The original opening lines for Williams's collection *The Wedge* (1944) put into poetic practice both language's incantatory performative properties and the splitting up of the wood he mentions in his notebook. Like Prospero, the poet unleashes the poetic spirit:

With the tip of my tongue
I wedge you open
My tongue! (SUNYBUF D6)

- 53 Interestingly, Louis Zukofsky, who helped Williams with the editing of the volume, did not like its original title: (*lang*)WEDGE and Williams agreed to the switch. However, the title initially chosen does suggest that Williams believed that language has the power to both cleave and stabilize. The wedge etymologically supports both the transformative aspect of a tool that breaks and splits in two and the stabilizing effect of the peg that keeps the crack open. *Langwedge* thus figures both the device capable of splitting the atom and the mechanical device leading up to a possible opening and widening of the imagination, the crack is left open as a legacy for future generations. Williams here advocates an archaeological strategy in his approach to the past, where he does not stand passive but exhumes or pulls out, and true to his training as an obstetrician, gives birth to his own history.

*

- 54 As Williams describes his writing process as iconoclastic²¹ in his *Autobiography*, he advocates the peeling off or "stripping" of the layers covering the body of the novel, asserting that beneath the strata lies a cipher. To some extent, the assertion also applies to the body of the continent. Etymologically, the cipher is both a zero and a figure, a blank matter that needs to be *transfigured* and *deciphered* (figure and cipher both being designations of numerical worth) and which can take any value at all depending on the context and co-text. The language should thereby take the print of a flickering and staggering continent: "America is a mass of pulp, a jelly, a sensitive plate ready to take whatever print you want to put on it—" (GAN 175). This idea somehow echoes Thoreau's appraisal in *Walden* that, before starting anything anew, "the walls must be stripped, and our lives must be stripped, and beautiful housekeeping and beautiful living be laid for a foundation: now, a taste for the beautiful is most cultivated out of doors, where there is no house and no housekeeper." (31)
- 55 The new American identity is thus only to be found under the layers of dead leaves that cover its body. Like Williams' patients, it must "strip" in order to reveal the cipher on which to start building "a house to last two hundred years" (*The Buildup* 334), or in this case, three centuries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aji, Hélène. *Ezra Pound et William Carlos Williams: Pour une poétique américaine*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 2001.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhalovič. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.
- Darras, Jacques. "Le Grand Poème Américain." *Revue française d'études américaines* 15 (1982): 343-371.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1988.
- De Tocqueville, Alexis. *De la Démocratie en Amérique*. Vol. II. Paris : Gallimard, Pléiade, Chap. XVIII "Pourquoi les écrivains et les orateurs américains sont souvent boursoufflés", 1992.
- Doyle, Charles. *William Carlos Williams: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Psychology Press, 1980.
- Foucault, Michel, and Jay Miskowicz. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986): 22-7.
- Furia, Philip. "Paterson's Progress." *boundary 2*:9, A Supplement on Contemporary Poetry (Winter 1981): 31-50. DOI: 10.2307/303035
- Giles, Paul. "Transnationalism and Classic American Literature." *PMLA* 118.1, Special Topic: America: The Idea, the Literature (Jan. 2003): 62-77. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/823200>
- Hart, Matthew. *Nations of Nothing but Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing*. New York: Oxford UP, 2010.
- Hayden, Gabriele. "New World Encounters: William Carlos Williams, Rafael Arévalo Martínez, and El Nuevo Mundo." *William Carlos Williams Review* 30.1 (2013): 181-199. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/willcarwillrevi.30.1-2.0181>
- Kutzinski, Vera M. *Against the American Grain: Myth and history in William Carlos Williams, Jay Wright, and Nicolás Guillén*. Baltimore, John Hopkins UP, 1987.
- Lecerle, Ann. "Religion and the Decline of Magic, or Ropes and Tropes in *The Tempest*." In "*Divers Toyes Mengled*": *Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Culture*. Eds. André Lascombes and Michel Bitot. Tours : Publication de l'Université François Rabelais, 1996. 335-346.
- Lawrence, David Herbert. *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Vol. 28. New York, Cambridge UP, 2003.
- Ludot-Vlasak, Ronan. *La Réinvention de Shakespeare sur la scène littéraire américaine:(1798-1857)*. Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2013.
- Mariani, Paul. *William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked*. San Antonio: Norton & Company, 1990.
- Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1964.
- Marzán, Julio. *The Spanish American Roots of William Carlos Williams*. Austin : U. of Texas P., 1994.
- Mayoux, Jean Jacques. *Vivants Piliers: Le Roman Anglo-Saxon et Les Symboles*. Vol. 1. Paris: Julliard, 1960.
- Newmann, Alba. "Paterson: Poem as Rhizome." *William Carlos Williams Review* 26.1 (2006): 51-73. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/willcarwillrevi.26.1.0051>

- Roberto Fernandez Retamar. "Caliban: Notes towards a Discussion of Culture in our America". Trans. Lynn Garafola et al. *Massachusetts Review* 15 (Winter-Spring 1974): 7-72. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25088398>
- Richard, Claude. *Lettres américaines: Essais*. Paris: Alinéa, 1987.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Ed. Martin Butler. London: Penguin Books, 2007.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Winter's Tale*. Ed. Stephen Orgel. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.
- Tanner, Tony. *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men: Essays on 19th and 20th Century American Literature*. Vol. 31. New York: Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Tanner, Tony. *City of Words: American Fiction, 1950-1970*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.
- Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. Ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer. New Haven: Yale UP, 2006.
- Williams, William Carlos. *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams*. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1951. Referred to as *Autobiography*.
- Williams, William Carlos. *Selected Essays*. New York, Random House, 1954.
- Williams, William Carlos. *In the American Grain*. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1956. Referred to as *IAG*.
- Williams, William Carlos. *Imaginations: Kora in Hell / Spring and All / The Descent of Winter / The Great American Novel / A Novelette & Other Prose*. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1971. *The Great American Novel* is referred to as *GAN*.
- Williams, William Carlos. *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*. Vol I. 1909-1939. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1986.
- Williams, William Carlos. *Paterson*. Revised Edition. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1995.
- Williams, William Carlos. SUNY Buffalo archives referred to as *SUNYBUF*, containing:
- A298: Shakespeare
 - C150: "what is the use of poetry?"
 - D6: Notebook
 - D7: Notebook.

NOTES

1. The observation echoes Tocqueville's assessment that there is no intermediary space in America, no middle ground: "l'espace intermédiaire est vide" (590).
2. Cette observation rappelle celle de Tocqueville lorsqu'il affirme qu'il n'y a pas d'espace intermédiaire en Amérique, pas de canton ou paroisse : « l'espace intermédiaire est vide » (590).
3. This idea will be further developed in the last part "(Lang)wedge".
4. This doubling effect and the ghostly present Old World within the new is to Mayoux a key feature of America's identity: "Et peut-être est-ce là un caractère fondamental de la vision américaine, depuis l'installation dans ce pays vide où tout représente des doubles." (Mayoux 75).
5. "Sub Terra" is the opening poem of Williams' collection *Al Que Quiere* (1917).
6. An automatic search showed eighteen occurrences of the root-word "fear" in the play.
7. The parallel between the setting of the play and the American settlement was first made by Edmond Malone in his "Essay on the Chronological Order of Shakespeare's Plays," published in

1790. For a detailed argument about Elizabethan travel literature and the fascination for the New World, see Marx (1964).

8. On the topic of the election of a primitive "Indian" figure over the highbrow British model, see Paul Giles' article about Thoreau and Emerson: "By emphasizing the Indian rather than the English provenance of names like 'Yankee,' from the Indian 'Yengeese,' Thoreau lays stress on what he takes to be a nearer, more authentic matching of location to language" (Giles 69).

9. On the contrary, Williams admires his contemporary Gertrude Stein for "smashing every connotation that words have ever had" (*Selected Essays* 163).

10. "Pour lui, la littérature canonique n'est rien de plus qu'une couche morte du palimpseste littéraire qui recouvre le sol et le rend infertile" (Aji 88). The conflagration thus becomes a way to get rid of the "dead layer" canonic literature covering the American soil.

11. I am here paraphrasing Williams' famous assessment: "[...] the essence which is hidden in the very words from which we must recover underlying meaning as realistically as we recover metal out of ore." (*Autobiography* 362). For Williams, the "underlying meaning", the essence of language can only be retrieved through archaeological exhumation.

12. On this topic see J. Darras' article on the Great American Poem, in which he identifies Williams' eccentricity (in its first original acceptation) with the Indians' in his poem *Desert Music*: "La musique est indienne, comme l'Indien, bénéficie de cette situation frontalière." (Darras 356).

13. In Greek Mythology, Iris personifies the rainbow uniting heaven and hell, the sea and the sky. See Lecercle (1996).

14. The idea of Shakespeare's character as a projection is a point developed by Ludot-Vlasak: "Il semble donc que la réalité de l'homme décrit comme étant Shakespeare réside souvent davantage dans les désirs ou les attentes que les biographes, amateurs ou professionnels, projettent sur lui." (Ludot-Vlasak 19).

15. In French "ligne de fuite".

16. The association between fluid textures and the unveiling of gaps and cracks within language, between signifiers and signifieds, is discussed at length in C. Richard's essay on H.D. Thoreau: "l'hydrodynamique de la lettre": "la loi du flux mène donc, par la logique de la lettre, à la reconnaissance de l'écart comme erreur" (Richard 136).

17. "In the so-called primitive societies, there is a certain form of heterotopia that I would call crisis heterotopias, *i.e.*, there are privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc." (Foucault 4).

18. The author later elaborates on the notion of gap and unstable state as the womb, the *locus* of vernacular languages: "Like Homi K. Bhabha's rooted-but-cosmopolitan subjects, synthetic vernacular poems live in the interstices among the 'modernist (and nationalist) insistence on territorialized imaginations of identity', the 'minoritarian modernity' experience of those who are exiled from or within metropolitan nations, and the increasingly transnational nature of human culture and political economy. The poems forged in those gaps therefore strive to be 'both-cosmopolitan-and-vernacular'" (Hart 9).

19. "I say this once again to emphasize what I have often said — that we here must listen to the language for the discoveries we hope to make." (SUNYBUF C150: "What is the use of Poetry?")

20. "Say I am the locus where two women meet" (*Paterson* 106, my italics).

21. "So that the novel is most at home and occupies its greatest esteem when nothing but the clothes remain, which, when stripped off reveal—a cipher. The iconoclast at work." (*Autobiography* 369, my italics).

ABSTRACTS

When D.H. Lawrence wrote about Shakespeare's *Tempest* in 1923, "whatever else you are, be masterless" (Lawrence 1923), he somehow found the perfect motto for William Carlos Williams' own poetic art. Embarking upon his (con)quest for "THE word" (GAN 165) to be the fertile humus on which to found all American literature, William Carlos Williams states: "Oh to hell with Masters and the rest of them. To hell with everything I have myself ever written" (176). He thus attempts to take Whitman's "barbaric yawp" further and get rid of the old allegiance to the Crown once and for all. Much like Caliban's voice in *The Tempest*, the poet's speech is unstable, it fumbles around the wilderness, thus mimicking the very babbling of a New Continent. Language is therefore mutable, in that English words have to be grafted onto a new land. However they are also mutable insofar as they are very often silenced and hesitant. The poetry born in such a land is wild and wanders outside the confines of the Old World. The words and verses are dented and extravagant, in the first acceptance of the term: they are vagabonds attempting to define the contours of an ever-morphing ground whose first mutation was its name, from India to America, so that in the words of Tony Tanner, "if anything, it is the instability of language and society which has more often made itself felt to the American writer" (Tanner 1971, 27). Shakespeare's play provides a fertile ground in the analysis of Williams' modernist approach to language since it is itself set in a liminal space constantly drifting across many countries and continents. Miranda's expression of bewilderment is somehow mirrored by Williams' sailors in *The Great American Novel* (1923) as they first get visual contact with the shores of the New Continent. In this paper, I propose to chart the processes through which the poet manages to claim ownership of his land through language, in spite of its "nearly universal lack of scale" (IAG 75)¹. I intend to use Shakespeare's play, and in particular the figure of Caliban, not as the Native American enslaved by the settlers, as has already been done, but as the allegory of the pilgrimage for THE word, the quest pursued by Williams. Like Ahab boarding for the hunt of his life, Williams sets off to capture and tame the brave new American word, using his sense of bewilderment in lieu of a harpoon.

"Whatever else you are be masterless" (Lawrence 1923) écrivait D.H. Lawrence en 1923 au sujet de *La Tempête* de Shakespeare, mais sa formule s'applique particulièrement bien à l'art poétique de William Carlos Williams qui publia la même année son *Grand Roman Américain*. En quête du mot, "THE word" (GAN 165), sur lequel fonder une nouvelle littérature américaine, Williams s'exclame : « Oh to hell with Masters and the rest of them. To hell with everything I have myself ever written » (176). Sa poésie est traversée par la volonté de poursuivre le travail inauguré par Whitman et prolonger son cri barbare sur les toits de l'Amérique, afin de dépoussiérer les vieilles grammaires qui enchaînaient encore l'Amérique à l'Angleterre. La langue de Caliban dans *La Tempête* se fait le miroir de la voix trébuchante et des bégaiements du poète qui tente de définir les contours d'un territoire aux mouvements ondulatoires. La langue même subit une mutation alors que le verbe britannique vient se greffer sur une terre nouvelle et provoquer l'efflorescence d'une poésie elle-même sauvage et vagabonde (étymologiquement « brave », comme le Nouveau Monde de Miranda). Les vers et vocables se heurtent aux contours du Nouveau Monde et reviennent écornés de leurs extra-vagances, en même temps qu'ils définissent le délinéament d'une terre en constante métamorphose dont la première mutation fut le nom qui la désigne : de l'Inde à l'Amérique. La pièce de Shakespeare se révèle un terreau fécond pour l'analyse de l'approche du langage de William Carlos Williams puisqu'elle se déroule dans un espace intermédiaire, liminaire, en déplacement continu à travers le monde. L'étonnement audible dans la célèbre exclamation de Miranda trouve un écho dans celle des marins du *Grand Roman*

Américain (1923) de Williams en apercevant les côtes du continent. Nous nous proposons ici d'observer comment le poète parvient à prendre possession de sa terre par le langage malgré la « pénurie quasi-universelle d'échelle » (IAG 75)² qui caractérise, selon lui, le continent. L'œuvre de Shakespeare, et en particulier la figure de Caliban, nous livre une version riche du pèlerinage pour LE mot dans lequel nous entraîne Williams. Tel Achab embarquant pour la quête d'une vie, Williams se jette à corps perdu dans l'immensité pour capturer « à mains nues » (*Paterson* 2) l'idiome américain.

INDEX

Keywords: Williams William Carlos, Shakespeare William, *Tempest* (The), Caliban, New World, heterotopia, language, American poetry, fluidity, fluency, liminal, dialect, wilderness, stutter

Mots-clés: Williams William Carlos, Shakespeare William, *Tempête* (La), Caliban, Nouveau Monde, hétérotopie, langue, poésie américaine, fluidité, liminaire, dialecte, sauvage, balbutiement

AUTHOR

ANNA AUBLET

Anna Aublet is Doctoral fellow at Université Paris Nanterre under the supervision of Prof. Hélène Aji. Her dissertation "L'oracle en son jardin, William Carlos Williams & Allen Ginsberg." focuses on the programmatic, poetic and epistolary correspondence between the two poets. She is the recipient of a scholarship by IDA (Institut des Amériques) and went to study Williams' and Ginsberg's extensive archives in Stanford, CA, Buffalo, NY and New York, NY. Recent papers include: "—Now my garden is gone": Allen Ginsberg ou l'impossible *nostos* (Séminaire Carte et Territoire, Ecole Normale Supérieure de Paris – Ulm, March 2015); "A new minting of the words': William Carlos Williams et la lettre sonnante et trébuchante" (Séminaire Valeur et Signe, Ecole Normale Supérieure de Paris – Ulm, April 2016); "Time then to make a home in wilderness': Allen Ginsberg's elusion strategy" (European Beat Studies Network meeting, Brussels, October 2015); "El humus necesario en una tierra nueva': William Carlos Williams' extra-vagrancies in the New World" ("Modernités dans les Amériques", IDA, November 2015); "As Machines eat all Names and Forms': Allen Ginsberg's American Angel Machine" (European Beat Studies Network meeting, Manchester, June 2016). Contact: anna.aublet [at] gmail.com