The British Institute of Florence

Proceedings of the ‘Shakespeare and His Contemporaries’ Graduate Conference
2009, 2010, 2011

Edited by Mark Roberts

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Dedicated to Artemisia (b. 2012)

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Foreword

The British Institute of Florence (founded in 1917) launched its ‘Shakespeare Graduate Conference’ in 2009, with a view to providing an annual platform for young Italian doctoral candidates, and those who had recently earned their doctorates, to present their own contributions to Shakespearean studies before an audience consisting of their peers and professors as well as members of the public.

The first ‘Shakespeare Graduate Conference’, restricted to the universities of Tuscany, was held in the Palazzo Lanfredini in Florence on Friday 25 September 2009. The morning session was chaired by Professor Serpieri, and the afternoon one by Professor Fernando Cioni (Florence), both of whom gave papers. Papers were also given by Annalisa De Donatis (Siena), Simone Rovida (Florence), Laura Russo (Pisa), Enrico Scaravelli (Florence) and Valeria Pellis (Florence).

The second conference, now extended in subject to ‘Shakespeare and his Contemporaries’ and in appeal to all the universities of Italy, took place on Tuesday 20 April 2010, during the British Institute’s annual Shakespeare Week. One session was chaired by Professor Paola Pugliatti (Florence), and one by Professor Keir Elam (Bologna). Papers were given by Professor Pugliatti and Professor Cioni, and by Francesca Montanino (Siena), Chiara Lombardi (Turin), Mauro Spicci (Milan), Roxanne Barbara Doerr (Verona), Enrico Scaravelli (Florence) and Sheila Frodella (Florence).

The third conference, also entitled ‘Shakespeare and his Contemporaries’, was held on Tuesday 14 April 2011. Sessions were chaired by Professor Carla Dente (Pisa) and Professor Claudia Corti (Florence). There were papers by Professor Dente and Professor Corti, and by Cristina Paravano (Milan), Cesare Catà (Macerata), Francesco Calanca (Florence), Elena Intorcia (Naples), Domenico Lovascio (Genoa), Simonetta Sagliocca (Florence), Maria Elisa Montroni (Urbino) and Eleonora Oggiano (Verona).

For the present online publication, papers presented at the first three conferences have been selected by ‘blind review’. The variety of subject, methodology and critical stance apparent in the texts we have chosen is, we believe, a good indication of the range and vitality of Shakespearean studies in Italy today. We hope that this new initiative of publishing the papers of the British Institute conference online will provide useful assistance to participants in their academic careers.

We take this opportunity of thanking for their valuable advice and cooperation Professor Nicholas Brownlees, Professor Fernando Cioni, Professor Claudia Corti, Professor Carla Dente, Professor Paola Pugliatti and Professor Emeritus Alessandro Serpieri. We also thank the Italian Association of Shakespearean and Early Modern Studies (IASEMS), the University of Florence, and the Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze.

In addition, I should like to thank my colleagues Lucia Cappelli, April Child, Rebecca De Masi, Alyson Price and Hermione Thompson, and especially Sofia Novello, who was the ideatrix of the entire project and has led it from the beginning, as well as the Director of the British Institute, Sara Milne.

Mark Roberts, M.A. (Oxon.)
British Institute of Florence, November 2012

Preface

On the occasion of the first online publication of a selection of papers from the various editions of the 'Shakespeare and his Contemporaries' Graduate Conference it is only fair that a few words are spent on account of the Italian Association of Shakespearean and Early Modern Studies – IASEMS - on the fruitful collaboration with the Conference founding Institution, The British Institute of Florence.

IASEMS is particularly keen on promoting the study of early modern literature and culture among university students, and among young scholars in particular, in a period when the recent restructuring of higher education seems more inclined to privilege the study of contemporary cultural phenomena at large. The availability of recent technologies, with its undoubtedly greater impact on our undergraduates, seems to endorse this trend.

IASEMS, instead, intends to work for implementing and complementing any meaningful interpretation of contemporary literature and culture with the depth of insights offered by a good knowledge of the past. And much of what has been done so far by the association is connected with the 'Shakespeare and His Contemporaries' Graduate Conference, in Florence.

The Conference, with its mixed audience of people of different ages and background, all of them sharing a keen interest in English literary culture at large, is a splendid framework (and venue) to help a young scholar to find the right key for an effective communication.

I would like to highlight also the fact that each year the subject of the Conference aims to suggest a new perspective, a critical viewpoint or a methodology capable of giving a valuable indication as to the direction of contemporary Shakespeare and early modern studies. For this reason IASEMS and The British Institute collaborate in orienting Italian Shakespeare Studies.

Professor Carla Dente
University of Pisa,
Founding member and former President of IASEMS

November 2012

‘Shakespeare Graduate Conference’ 2009

The ‘demusicalisation’ of St Augustine’s *tempus* in Shakespeare’s tragedies

Simone Rovida
University of Florence

Paper given on 25 September 2009

The aim of this paper is to analyse the process of ‘demusicalisation’ of the concept of time in Shakespeare’s tragedies as a perfect example of a wider cultural change that, during the Renaissance, put an end to an old, traditional way of representing and perceiving the philosophical meaning of time.[1]

Shakespeare and his contemporaries inherited a concept of time which dated back to the philosophical and theological inquiries of medieval scholars. Nonetheless the Renaissance universe is a post-Copernican universe where the old dogmas and medieval systems of values and certainties were disintegrating, giving way to the rise of modern relativistic thought, in which everything is mutable and nothing absolutely true or absolutely false any longer. And along with the old dogmas, even the traditional Christian way of conceptualizing time started to be considered more and more inadequate.

In Shakespeare, the Renaissance deconstruction of the medieval semantic view of time is particularly evident. In his tragedies much more than the comedies (where the traditional Neo-Platonic doctrine is more apparent), the concept of time undergoes a radical theoretical change which breaks definitively from medieval Christian thought.

Shakespeare in fact ‘demusicalises’ – and this is exactly what I want to point out – the axiomatic definition of time given by one of the most important medieval scholars, St Augustine. In particular, in Shakespeare the demusicalisation of time implies a deconstruction of the semantic domain and imagery of time given by St Augustine in his famous work entitled *Confessions*. Comparing some passages from *Confessions* with some from Shakespeare’s tragedies, I will show how Shakespeare categorically reverses the semantic ‘isotopy’, or the cluster, the imagery St Augustine used to describe time in his text.

St. Augustine and the musical conception of time

Augustine gave probably the most important definition of time in the history of Christian theology, an image bound to become a true *topos* in Christian culture up to the present day. The idea of Christian *tempus* that comes out from Augustine’s *Confessions* defines a concept of time which is created by God (and not eternal as for Aristotle), is linear (and not cyclical as for the Greek philosophers), and is predetermined, progressing from a beginning to an end (not recurring as for Plato). In short, it is the expression of the so called Christian ‘*Logos*’: the principle of order, rationality, proportion, harmony, and symmetry governing the universe, including both macro- and micro-cosmos, which thus are perfectly interrelated. In Christian thought, in fact, everything is ruled by this single divine principle, which establishes webs of correspondences, hierarchies and symmetries throughout the whole universe, from the divine to the earthly world.

According to St Augustine, time takes its origin from memory, which is closely similar to the divine, logocentric and ordering principle which governs the universe:

---

1. I have borrowed the term ‘demusicalisation’ from a famous study by L. Spitzer, *Classical and Christian ideas of world harmony*, a sort of historical survey about the semantics of the word ‘Stimmung’(i.e. ‘harmony’). Spitzer focuses his attention especially on ‘musicalisation’ processes which men have used to build the concept of ‘harmony’ throughout the centuries, from the Pythagorean theories up to the Neo-Platonic Renaissance inquiries. He stresses the human tendency to perceive the concept of harmony in terms of musical consonances, cyclical repetitions of identical intervals, rhythmical and mathematical proportions between periodical sequences. According to Spitzer, very often, in history, man would figure out the concept of harmony by borrowing images and metaphors from the specific semantic domain of music. But what is more interesting to me is that Spitzer ends his book by also hinting rapidly at the so-called process of ‘demusicalisation’ of the world and the cosmos, a process which took place in the late Renaissance period, between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I have thus chosen to start my paper right from where Spitzer’s study ends.

> For, even when both the voice and the tongue are still, we review - in thought - poems and verses, and discourse of various kinds or various measures of motions, and we specify their time spans - how long this is in relation to that - just as if we were speaking them aloud. If anyone wishes to utter a prolonged sound, and if, in forethought, he has decided how long it should be, that man has already in silence gone through a span of time, and committed his sound to memory… I am about to repeat a psalm that I know. Before I begin, my attention is extended to the whole; but when I have begun, as much of it as becomes past by my saying it is extended in my memory; and the life of this action of mine is divided between my memory, on account of what I have repeated, and my expectation, on account of what I am about to repeat; yet my consideration is present with me, through which that which was future may be carried over so that it may become past. Which the more it is done and repeated, by so much (expectation being shortened) the memory is enlarged, until the whole expectation be exhausted, when that whole action being ended shall have passed into memory. And what takes place in the entire psalm, takes place also in each individual part of it, and in each individual syllable: this holds in the longer action, of which that psalm is perchance a portion; the same holds in the whole life of man, of which all the actions of man are parts; the same holds in the whole age of the sons of men, of which all the lives of men are parts.[2] [St Augustine, *Confessions* XI.27.36, XI.28.37]

Time is recorded in man's memory in the same way the limited time of mankind is recorded in God's will. The principle is the same. Man can experience the sense of time which governs both the single experience and the whole life of the universe because he owns the faculty of memory, that precious and divine faculty which allows him to subdivide his existence into well-ordered temporal sequences, and which is the echo of God's power, the power of giving order, of creating cosmos out of chaos, of establishing a beginning and an end to all things, in other words the power of manufacturing time. Mankind progresses from Genesis to the Apocalypse; the life of each single man progresses from birth to death; every human action progresses from a beginning to an end as does a song, a melody, a speech. And here we have the semantic cluster I want to focus on.

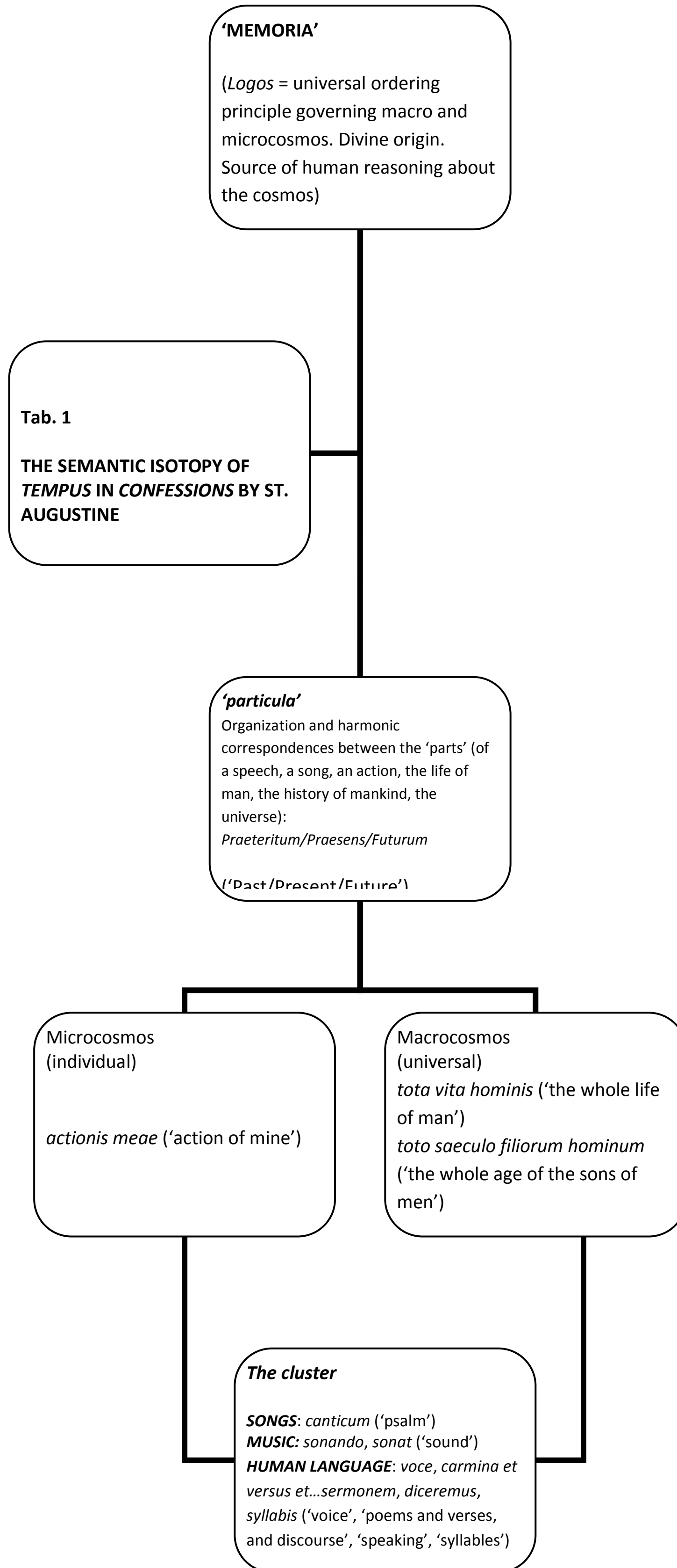
In each case, in fact, the cluster reveals the manifestation of the divine Logos in every part, 'particula' – as Augustine says – of the human universe. A song, in fact, is a fusion of music and words all obeying the same harmonic rules, such as rhythmical subdivision into notes (or syllables, in the case of language) corresponding to the same temporal pattern made of harmony – mathematical proportions, regular alternation of identical sequences. A song, in this respect, like music or human language, is a perfect expression of time: harmonic, rational, proportional, finite, created, linear and progressive, like everything which has been made by God.

The cluster 'memory/song/language/music' is typically Augustinian. It is the semantic isotopy which the philosopher uses most frequently in *Confessions* to explain his concept of time. When we sing or talk or utter a sound, Augustine says, we experience the perfect sense of time. While the action takes place, the future time diminishes while the past grows, until all the future has become entirely past, and time ends, minute by minute, note by note, syllable by syllable. According to the philosopher, in fact, we are able to sing, speak or play music only because we already know, in our memories, the text of a song, a melody, or the meaning of words. In other words, we already know what to do. We own the skill. We need only follow the instructions that, in a sense, are recorded in our mind thanks to past experiences and teachings. While we sing, speak or play music, the future (that is, the words or musical notes which are still left in our memory) is shorter and shorter because in the very instant we use our voice, that word, note or sound has already become past. And what we call present is that very instant, the feeling of time, the attention or the moment we concentrate on to reproduce those words or sounds hidden in memory.

Without memory, which is the principle that keeps together the different parts of a single and harmonic human universe, even music would be untuned, a mere and irrational clash of harsh sounds, as well as which language would be a mere and inarticulate series of sounds without sense. To Augustine, the man who sings a song, the man who plays music and the man who speaks confirm the existence of the same principle which rules the tempus in which God created and posed man.

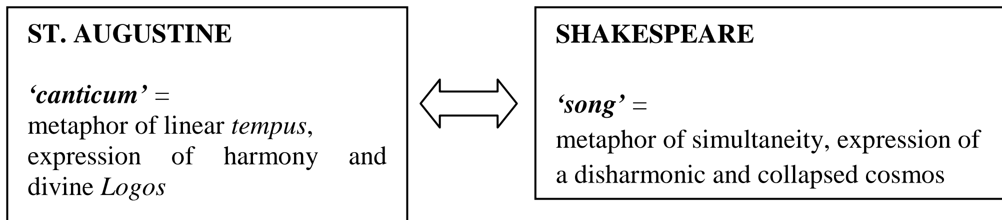
---

[2] St Augustine, *Confessions* XI.27.36, XI.28.37, trans. E. B. Pusey (New York: 1961). I have synthesized the semantic structure of the Augustinian definition of time by highlighting, in the text, the key-words which compose the semantic isotopy 'time/memory/language/music'.



'MEMORIA'
(*Logos* = universal ordering principle governing macro and microcosmos. Divine origin. Source of human reasoning about the cosmos)
Tab. 1
THE SEMANTIC ISOTOPY OF *TEMPUS* IN *CONFESSIONS* BY ST. AUGUSTINE
'particula'
Organization and harmonic correspondences between the 'parts' (of a speech, a song, an action, the life of man, the history of mankind, the universe):
Praeteritum/Praesens/Futurum
('Past/Present/Future')
Microcosmos (individual)
actionis meae ('action of mine')
Macrocosmos (universal)
tota vita hominis ('the whole life of man')
toto saeculo filiorum hominum ('the whole age of the sons of men')
The cluster
SONGS: *canticum* ('psalm')
MUSIC: sonando, *sonat* ('sound')
HUMAN LANGUAGE: *voce*, *carmina et versus et…sermonem*, *diceremus*, *syllabis* ('voice', 'poems and verses, and discourse', 'speaking', 'syllables')

If St Augustine spoke of time in terms of musical language, Shakespeare's tragedies conversely attempt to deconstruct, or, in Spitzer's words, semantically demusicalise the Augustinian definition of tempus.[3]



Tab. 2 The act of singing as a time metaphor in Augustine and in Shakespeare

As is apparent from the diagram, in Augustine the *canticum* represents the metaphor of a linear tempus, the expression of harmony and divine Logos. In Shakespeare's tragedies, on the contrary, the act of singing often expresses the sense of a disharmonic and collapsed cosmos, the twilight of the old medieval system of axioms and dogmas. In fact, the subjects of the songs in the tragedies are essentially folly, death, drunkenness and witchcraft, all perturbing the Augustinian logocentric principle of order and harmony.

In *Hamlet* and *Othello*, for example, we find two extraordinary samples of tragic songs expressing folly: Ophelia's and Desdemona's songs, in which folly is but a means of disrupting the linear and irreversible course of time. Through folly, in fact, the two heroines are able to gain an Edenic or childish temporal dimension: they can thus blend it with a painful present they constantly try to deny. In the first case, Ophelia [in *Hamlet*, IV.v.48ff.] re-writes her recent past, that is, her unhappy love with Hamlet, blending the imaginary fulfilment of her erotic desires (since the protagonist of the song is 'a maid, that out a maid | Never departed more') with the harshness of the present caused by Hamlet's repudiation.

Desdemona [in *Othello*, IV.iii.40ff.] does not experience a proper folly like that of Ophelia, but instead falls into a sort of delirium which in fact recalls Ophelia's peculiar imagery. In the willow song, she imagines herself as a child hearing the song of her servant, who, in turn, is crying for having been fooled and abandoned by her lover. Through this mirror game, Desdemona, like Ophelia, is able to turn back time and correct it by the psychic image of the innocent child. She can thus live in a sort of simultaneous 'present/past' where she can recover an already gone, but pure and untouched, erotic dimension, so displacing the shadows of Othello's coarse accusations of being a lusty prostitute.

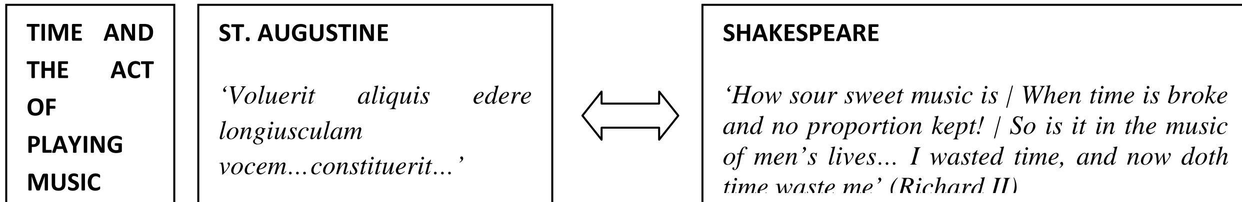
In *King Lear* the fool often sings, and in his songs he complains that the world is untuned, upside-down because 'wise men are grown foppish' [I.iv.158] and roles have been inverted. In *Antony and Cleopatra* (and again in *Othello*), it is noteworthy that the songs are often sung by drunk people, and their contents are remarkably rude and coarse. On Pompey's boat [III.vii.12], for instance, Caesar, Lepidus and Antony celebrate their reconciliation with wine and sing rudely together; in the night feast at Cyprus, Iago, Cassio and the Venetian army also sing similarly trivial songs [II.iii.64ff]. In all these songs the world 'goes round' (as the Roman soldiers scream on Pompey's boat). It is a symbol of a time which is no longer linear, which has broken the rules and subverted the sense of harmony and order.

The songs in the tragedies are never tuned and melodious and they are not – as they are for St Augustine – the expression of a rational and logocentric universe and time, but rather they represent the shadows of the nullification of that very universe, along with the emptiness of the whole human existence (including the concept of time). And this is clearly demonstrated in *Macbeth* too, where the witches – who represent the overturning of a linear Christian time – often sing riddles and dismal songs [IV.i.39ff.], by which they celebrate an anti-Christian, arrhythmic world.

3. For the purpose of this paper I have included text references and quotations from those tragedies which specifically deal with the problem of time in Shakespeare: *Richard II*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*. In the analysis, I compare all the semantic domains composing the Augustinian cluster to Shakespeare's use of them, in this order: the acts of singing, playing music, speaking and finally the function of memory.

The Shakespearean metaphor of time as music: the nullification of 'Logos'

In Augustine, man is the creator and master of time; he is the willing agent who, in the name of God, is able to live in the centre of a well-proportioned universe. The metaphor is that of a man determining, by his forethought, the proportion of music he knows and plays. In Shakespeare, on the other hand, man has lost this skill. He seems unable to play melodious music, and the music we hear in the tragedies is in fact always untuned; it is the symbol of a time that has finally become the master of man, after transforming him into its slave. Once again roles have been inverted: now man has become a passive object in the hands of wicked Time. Like the songs of folly, death, drunkenness and witchcraft, tragic music expresses the same idea of a universe without a centre, in which time tends to dissolve rather than to express its divine origin as in St Augustine's thought.



TIME AND THE ACT OF PLAYING MUSIC	ST. AUGUSTINE *'Voluerit aliquis edere longiusculam vocem…constituerit…'*	⟺	SHAKESPEARE *'How sour sweet music is | When time is broke and no proportion kept! | So is it in the music of men's lives... I wasted time, and now doth time waste me' (Richard II)*

Tab. 3 Music as a time metaphor

The most important and emblematic definition of tragic time as a discordant and arrhythmic force is found in *King Richard II* [V.v.41-61], where Shakespeare reverses the Augustinian image completely. 'Time is broke and no proportion kept', Richard says. Time, and - on a deeper level - the world, is now broken and disharmonious like untuned music. In Augustine, an individual's time is still analogous to that of all mankind; in Shakespeare, man is no longer the agent who produces time in his memory. He is no longer, as he is in Augustine, the creator of time thanks to the divine spark which God lighted in him to let him arrange his own existence as He arranged the universe. In Shakespeare, man is assaulted by time; he becomes its passive instrument (as in the case of King Richard, who, in fact, compares himself literally to a numbering clock). The man who wastes time is wasted by time: this is the great lesson the king learns. The king breaks the principles of harmony on which melodious time along with a fair government should be based: rhythm, continuity, and linearity. This means that no logocentric principle pervades and gives shape and order to human action if man does not decide to act willingly. There is no divine will or Providence acting in the place of man. It is man who creates, by his will, harmonic time. It does not exist on its own. It does not represent the confirmation of the existence of a universal and immanent Logos.

Other occurrences of this semantic cluster ('Time – music - nullification of Logos') are found, for instance, in *King Lear*, where Cordelia speaks about her father's folly like an abused nature in 'th'untuned and jarring senses';[4] Edmund, on the other hand, summarizes the collapse of the cosmos which characterizes the whole tragedy of *King Lear* by saying: 'O, these eclipses do portend these | divisions. Fa, sol, la mi',[5] referring to a melody which has been split into a sequence of senseless notes, senseless as *Lear*'s world actually is, constantly facing a sense of imminent apocalypse.

Iago, while watching the happy Othello and Desdemona after their landing on Cyprus, says to himself, referring to the Moor: 'you are well tun'd now | But I'll set down the pegs that make this music'.[6]

And Hamlet expresses perfectly his being 'out of tune' in a time which - as he himself says - is 'out of joint'; he blames his mother for the crime that has upset the natural order of things in which time once used to be a 'healthful music', and which, after that crime, has instead become a senseless 'rhapsody of words'.[7] Ophelia in turn repents her trust in Hamlet's 'music vows', which finally become 'like sweet bells angle, out of tune and harsh'.[8]

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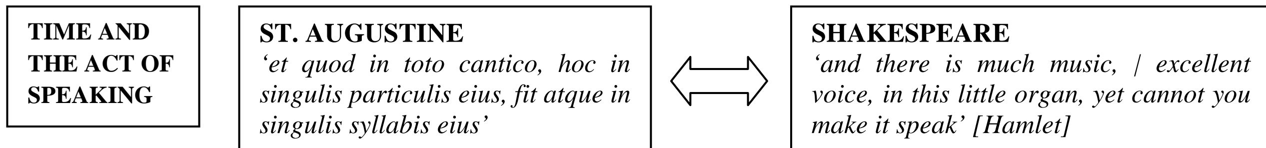
4. *King Lear* (KL), IV.vi.14
5. KL, I.ii.137-8
6. *Othello* (Oth), II.i.200
7. *Hamlet* (Ht), III.iv.53
8. Ht, III.i.153-55

The relationship between time and language in Shakespeare

The third element of the semantic cluster, the relationship between time and the act of speaking, is evident in Augustine; language is treated exactly like music. It is composed of syllables as music is composed of notes, and they both are the manifestation of the same, absolute Logos. In Shakespeare's tragedies, instead, language often becomes aphasic, an explosion of senseless syllables in a senseless universe.



Tab. 4 The relationship between time and speech

Hamlet, in his speech to Rosencrantz and Guildestern, describes himself as a musical instrument, a pipe. And he accuses the two of not being able to make him speak. He metaphorically accuses them of being bad musicians; they lack 'the skill', as he himself says. They do not know any music to play:

> *Hamlet*: I do not well understand that. Will you *play upon this pipe*?
> *Guildenstern*: My lord, I cannot…
> *Ham*: It is as easy as lying. Govern these ventages with your
> Fingers and thumbs, give it breath with your mouth, and it will
> *Discourse* most *eloquent music*. Look you, these are the stops.
> *Guild*: But these cannot I command to any utt'rance of *harmony*. I
> Have not *the skill*.
> *Ham*: Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You
> Would *play upon me*; you would seem to know my stops; you would
> Pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would *sound me* from my
> Lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is much *music*,
> *Excellent voice*, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it *speak*.
> 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be *played* on than a
> *Pipe*? Call me what *instrument* you will, though you *fret*
> Me, you cannot *play* upon me.[9] [*Hamlet*, 3.2]

I have emphasised the key-words referring to the semantic domain of Augustinian time: 'music', 'harmony', 'voice', 'speak'. Yet, as is evident from the text, the Shakespearean semantic isotopy is only apparently Augustinian; its meaning is completely different.

If in Augustine's *Confessions* the man who sings or speaks knows in advance a text because it is registered in his memory, giving humans a sense of time, in *Hamlet* the 'instrument' is out of tune, and the musician does not know the text in advance nor does he possess 'the skill', that is, the ability, to play. As in *Richard II*, Shakespeare seems to deny the existence of a principle of universal harmony founded on perfect correspondences. If Augustine holds, by the principle of analogy, that every aspect of the cosmos reveals the same rhythmic, harmonic, temporal structure established by God, Shakespeare does not deny this principle but rather deconstructs it, reversing the primary function it has in Augustine by giving a sort of negative, completely symmetrical but inverted image. Shakespeare in fact holds that in the world of tragedies every aspect of the cosmos reveals the same arrhythmic and disharmonic structure from the top to the bottom, from the macro to the microcosmos. As we have seen before, time is out of joint, songs are untuned, music is harsh. And language – like music – does not make sense because men themselves (like instruments) are out of tune: they are not able to 'play' an instrument harmoniously, but only to 'fret' it disharmoniously.

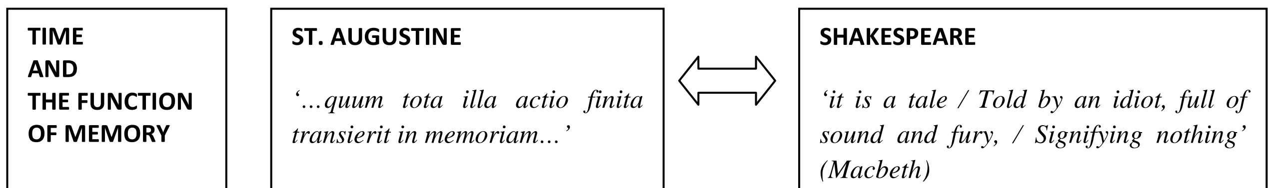
Words are now missing. The words 'stuck in the throat' as Macbeth says in II.ii.33. His need of blessing, in II.ii., is a sort of nostalgia for a past world, for an old temporal order which is now broken. He, the murderer of the king, has destroyed the order of time, world and language. He has destroyed the whole cosmos. The result is confusion between different temporal dimensions so that Macbeth is no longer able to

9. Ht, III.ii.330ff..

distinguish between the present of his delirium and the past of his deeds: he exchanges the reproaches of his own consciousness for reality. He thinks that the guards he killed pronounced a sort of curse before dying: ‘Sleep no more! | Macbeth does murder sleep’.[10] In a sense, Macbeth has murdered even the linearity of Christian tempus, its musicality and harmony. The whole tragedy of *Macbeth* is full of acoustic images underlining this sense of disharmony; it is full of dismal noises, voices, harsh sounds, noises of steps, knocks on doors, bell ringings, rolls of drums, human or supernatural screams along with cries of animals.

The metaphor of ‘the book of memory’ in Shakespeare

In Augustine, memory is the logocentric principle which allows man to compose a narration (‘poems, verses and discourse’), or rather, to give a temporal order to his own experience by subdividing it into different sequences, and then establishing what comes sooner and what later. In other words, according to St Augustine, memory makes it possible to build up a web of semantic and syntactic structures which follow the same rules as a musical composition. In Shakespeare, on the other hand, no narration is any longer possible. It is no longer possible to write anything coherent, true and meaningful.



TIME AND THE FUNCTION OF MEMORY	ST. AUGUSTINE	⟺	SHAKESPEARE
	‘…quum tota illa actio finita transierit in memoriam…’		*‘it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing’ (Macbeth)*

Tab. 5 Time and the metaphor of the ‘book of memory’

In Shakespeare’s tragedies, the image of Augustinian memory has been reversed. Memory often occurs in correlation with the metaphor of writing, or, more specifically, with the image of a book. But the act of writing, in this case, is no longer a synonym for coherent, harmonic and melodious narration as it is for the linearity of a musical stave. Further, the metaphor of the book very often underlines the demusicalisation of time as an effect of the collapse of the old, medieval and pre-Copernican system of axiomatic values and certainties (including the concept of time).

The image of memory always occurs within the same semantic isotopy which links together the image of time and that of writing (or reading). ‘Record’, ‘register’ and ‘write’ are the main verbs by which Shakespeare describes the act of remembering or memorizing. The ‘book of memory’ metaphor occurs in all the tragedies, but the Augustinian idea of memory as a logocentric principle has now vanished. The book of memory is not coherent. And if we carefully consider the contents of memory – the objects that have to be remembered – we realize that everything belongs to the semantic domain of irrationality and absurdity, the very opposite of the Augustinian Logos.

In fact, ‘strange’ is the most frequent adjective used to express what is recorded in memory, corresponding to themes such as the complete loss of sense in *Macbeth*. If not literally irrational, what is memorized generally refers to the semantic domain of moral decay (‘pains’, ‘dreadful’, ‘rooted sorrow’, ‘perilous stuff’, ‘trivial’, ‘slaughter’, ‘hateful’, ‘injuries’ are words that semantically qualify the objects of memory in the tragedies).

The book of memory undergoes constant corrections. The narration is not linear as in Augustine because the subject of the tale itself is mutable: in *Macbeth*, the dreadful events, as the Old Man says, nullify the possibility of fixing an immutable truth in the ‘volume’ of memory,[11] whereas in *Hamlet* (in which time goes backward like a crab)[12] the facts told by the ghost erase the tables of memory, book and volume of brain.[13] Caesar wants to rewrite his book of memory after Antony’s death,[14] while Othello is forced to

10. *Macbeth* (Mc), II.ii.35-36.
11. Mc, II.iv.1-4
12. Ht, II.ii.198
13. Ht, I.iv.95-112
14. *Antony and Cleopatra* (AC), V.ii.118

rewrite that book: the 'fair paper' is now blurred with coarse writings, and the idea Othello formerly had about Desdemona has to be reconsidered.[15]

Re-writing the book of memory is therefore possible for Shakespeare, and it generally happens as a consequence of terrible events which upset the tragic hero's mind. Conversely, erasing pages which have been already written is not possible. One could say that the tragic hero is fatally 'condemned' to remember: he cannot forget anything. There is no escape into the consolation of oblivion. Macbeth constantly returns to the things he thought he had forgotten but which refuse to fade from his mind (as he himself will learn at the end of the drama when he urges the doctor to make an 'oblivious antidote').[16] Othello, too, is not able to forget. He would, but he cannot: his memories and thoughts fatally return to his obsession (the handkerchief), like the raven returns to the infected house.[17]

In conclusion, for St Augustine the book of memory contains an axiomatic truth which can be told by man, whereas Shakespeare's book of memory contains, in Hamlet's words, only 'slanders'.[18] There is nothing true in the tragic universe. And time, too, seems to lose its sense, its meaning, its absolute truth (and this statement is confirmed also by many philosophers who were contemporaries of Shakespeare, like Montaigne and Bruno). 'I describe not the essence, but the passage; - Montaigne says in his *Essays* - not a passage from age to age... but from minute to minute'.[19] And besides, 'in infinite duration – Bruno writes in his *Cause, Principle and Unity* - an hour is no different from a day, a day from a year, a year from a century, a century from an instant'.[20] The logocentric principle has definitely vanished, the Medieval universe has exploded and as a consequence of that explosion even the Shakespearean book of memory, according to the new philosophy of time in the late Renaissance, is no longer able to describe the image of a harmonic and linear time or speech. It only describes confused fragments of words, or syllables of time. 'Words, words, words', Hamlet says; 'syllables of recorded time', Macbeth would add, which compound nothing else but the tale of an idiot signifying nothing.

15. Oth, IV.ii.73-83
16. Mc, V.iii.39-45
17. Oth, IV.i.19-22
18. Ht, II.ii.192
19. Montaigne, Michel de. 'Of Repenting'. *Essays.* Trans. John Florio [1603]. Turner 185.
20. Bruno, Giordano. *Cause, Principle and Unity* [1584]. Eds. Blackwell and De Lucca 88

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Bardolatry in Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare

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Introduction

The widely known invective by Robert Greene declaring

> For there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and beeing an absolute Johannes fac totum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey[21]

recognises the beginning of the rise of Shakespeare in the London theatrical world at the end of the sixteenth century. When *Groats-worth of Witte* was printed in 1592, Shakespeare was in his late twenties, taking his first steps as playwright, but already arousing jealousy and envy from other contemporary literary figures. Far from expressing the dimmest praise, we can read Greene's statement as a photo negative, projecting its real meaning when printed, when colours appear inverted, in our case asserting success.

This is one of the most oft-quoted contemporary passages alluding to Shakespeare; according to Gérard Genette[22] it is an epitext (more generally a paratext); Jorge Luis Borges[23] would call it a 'vestibule'; Philippe Lejeune[24] the 'fringe'. But it is the French critic who most deeply investigated this threshold, which every text has. He asserts that 'a text without a paratext does not exist and never has existed. Paradoxically, paratexts without texts do exist, if only by accident': this is the case of those lost works of which we only know the title such as *Love's Labour's Won* and *Cardenio*.

At the beginning of *Seuils* Genette defines the paratext with the mathematical equation 'paratext = peritext + epitext', using a positional, spatial criterion: the peritext usually occupies well-defined positions and includes those elements placed closer to the text; the epitext is more hazy, including elements placed at a farther distance from the text, but nevertheless referring to it. The necessary condition, in Genette's words, is 'anywhere out of the book'. Going from theory to practice, the peritext is made up of elements such as title, dedication, inscription, epigraphs, preface (foreword and afterword), intertitles, and notes. The epitext is made up of, at least, auto-review, public response, mediation, delayed auto-commentary, correspondence, oral confidence, diary.

The paratext is relevant for its strategic role, its pragmatic function. It is in fact

> a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that – whether well or poorly understood and achieved – is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies).[25]

The paratext appears to be a subtle but powerful means that guides the fruition of the text, whose strength is greater when the receiver of the message is less aware of it. Sometimes this element wields an influence, if not a manipulation, on the public with the aim of promoting the interests of those who produced the message.

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[21] R. Greene, *Groats-worth of witte* (London: 1592).
[22] G. Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: 1987); all quotations from the English edition: G. Genette, *Paratexts* (Cambridge: 1997).
[23] In many of his works of his exceptional literary production.
[24] P. Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique* (Paris: 1975).
[25] Genette, *Paratexts*.

The epitext has been extensively used by Shakespeare critics such as John Munro,[26] Augustus Ralli,[27] and to a lesser degree Brian Vickers,[28] - much more, in fact, than the peritext, which appears relatively neglected despite its pragmatic weight.
Three types of peritext

This paper resumes a wider investigation of the paratextual surroundings of the adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in the Restoration in the years 1660-1737, which originally included over thirty adaptations by more than twenty different playwrights. My focus is now on the contribution that these peritexts had to the rise of the cult of Shakespeare. 'Upon this bank and shoal of time' I will present a small but representative sample of these peritexts, mainly taken from John Dryden.

For the sake of clarity, I have divided the peritexts into three categories: publisher's, prefatorial, and dramatic. This classification has followed a positional-spatial criterion, proceeding with concentric frames that move closer and closer to the dramatic text. The first two are taken from Genette, while the third is a sub-category that I have created for the dramatic texts, which have their own specificity and differ in a number of ways from prose and poetry texts. The publisher's peritext includes front page and title;[29] the prefatorial peritext includes dedications, prefaces to the reader, and in our case essays; the dramatic peritext includes prologues and epilogues.

Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare represent a relevant contribution in the positioning of Shakespeare at the centre of English culture, as Michael Dobson suggests in *The Making of the National Poet.*[30] My purpose is to show how the peritext of the adaptations is a textual space highly characterized by Bardolatry. In a genre where the author recognizes Shakespeare's authorship of the source-text from the very front page, introducing the new play as an alteration of an already existing Shakespearean comedy, history, or tragedy, this climate of Bardolatry is rife.

One of the first peritextual elements a reader meets is the front page, where the title of the work is usually located. Among the over thirty Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, eight clearly declare their status as a modified text from a pre-existing play, such as the following two:

> 1. MACBETH, A TRAGEDY: With all the ALTERATIONS, AMENDMENTS, ADDITIONS, AND NEW SONGS. As it is now Acted at the Dukes Theatre.[31]
> 2. ALL for LOVE: OR, THE World well Lost. A TRAGEDY, As it is Acted at the THEATRE-ROYAL; And Written in Imitation of Shakespeare's Stile. By John Dryden, Servant to His Majesty.[32]

In a few other cases, textual fatherhood is evident from the unchanged and clearly Shakespearean title itself (*The Tempest, Timon of Athens, Troilus and Cressida, King Lear*). Twelve plays then, a little less than a third of the total number, already bear the mark of Shakespeare from the outset. If few traces of Bardolatry are found so far, this may be credited to our focus lingering on the most external threshold of the text, where suprising recognitions of authority and authorship (in a time where copyright was not acknowledged by law until 1709) are nevertheless present.

Moving on to the prefatorial peritext, the level of Bardolatry increases. The general trend of this group of texts is to praise Shakespeare in matters of the general but blame him in the particulars. His merits are transcendent, his faults contingent: the man-author is commended for his impalpable qualities, yet these often do not find their way into the concrete dimension of a play (considered faulty in language and plot). This is true mostly in earlier texts; as time passes, negative tones diminish. In the first years of the Restoration the voice of Bardolatry was not yet tuned into a uniformly harmonic tone of praise.

A good example of this attitude towards Shakespeare can be found in John Dryden, whom I will take here as a case study. In the Introduction of *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage* Brian Vickers does not fail to

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[26] J. Munro, *The Shakespeare allusion book* (London: 1909).
[27] A. Ralli, *A history of Shakespearean criticism* (London: 1932).
[28] B. Vickers, *Shakespeare: the critical heritage* (London: 1974).
[29] Genette says that the title is an element of the prefatorial peritext; but he also says that 'for a long time… the title page remained the only location of a title'; Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 64.
[30] M. Dobson, *The making of the national poet* (Oxford: 1992).
31 W. Davenant, *Macbeth* (London: 1674).
32 J. Dryden, *All for Love* (London: 1678).

remark that 'the full course of Dryden's references to Shakespeare is a curious sequence of ups and downs' and 'Dryden's legacy [regarding Shakespeare] is a distinctly ambivalent one'.

The preface to the adaptation of *The Tempest* by Davenant and Dryden, written by the latter, begins by acknowledging the Shakespearean fatherhood of the source text and manifesting veneration and admiration for the man: '[The play] was originally Shakespear's: a Poet for whom he [Davenant] had a particularly high *veneration*, and whom he first taught me to *admire*'.[33] The tribute is to the immaterial qualities of the poet, not to his imperfect work; in fact Dryden soon adds that Davenant 'found that somewhat might be added to the design of Shakespear',[34] with the assumption that these additions improve the source text.

In the Preface of *All for Love* Dryden invokes the heights of flattery, condensing in a few lines many of the central tenets of Bardolatry: Shakespeare is deified ('Divine Shakespeare'), given the fatherhood of English dramatic poetry, is credited with a naturally oriniating genius, and not least praised for his language:

> 'tis almost a *Miracle* that much of his Language remains so pure; and that he who began Dramatique Poetry amongst us, untaught by any, and, as Ben Jonson tells us, without Learning, should by the force of his own *Genius* perform so much, that in a manner he has left no *praise* for any who come after him.[35]

But the vaguely religious tone that defines the language 'almost a miracle' is quickly darkened by critiques casting shadows on the light of the Shakespearean genius. One year later, in fact, in the Preface of his *Troilus and Cressida*, Dryden says that he needs to remove 'a heap of rubbish'[36] from the source text to create his adaptation. Before going this far he is careful to praise the Bard by a comparison with the great poet and playwright Aeschylus, who was similarly venerated and revered in Greece as was Shakespeare in England. This peritext therefore takes on a eulogistic quality in places, as confirmed by the frequency of words like 'genius', 'great' and 'divine' poet, 'admiration', 'veneration', 'reverence' and the presence of the comparison with the Greek tragedian.

The peritext of *Troilus and Cressida* also includes the essay *On the Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy,* which evinces a similar co-existence of praise and blame for Shakespeare. The faults Dryden ascribes to the Bard are material ones connected to language, plot, and decorum, but often Shakespeare is not the one to blame. The blame lies on the time he lived in or on those who handed down his text. The final result of this attitude is general praise of the Bard as creator, author, poet, genius on one hand, and critiques on specific issues of specific plays on the other: the perfection of the Shakespearean spirit (and its creative genius), versus the imperfection of a body of texts. However, the overall trend seems positive, as Dryden, like many others, ends in praise: 'Shakespear had an Universal mind'.[37]

The uneven situation depicted by this tiny group of examples becomes more homogenous after the turn of the century. In the first decades of the Restoration, there is constructed the image of a 'sublimated' Shakespeare, who transcends materiality and is ultimately configured as a poet, creator, genius belonging to a world beyond ours. But there are also examples of reprimands of his concrete creations, for reasons kept carefully discrete from the conceit of his divinity (frequently connected with language obsolescence and 'faulty' plot). This dualistic attitude is quite widespread and often present in the same author. No one ever explains how such a perfect and great creator can create in such an imperfect way.

Later on, adaptations printed in the eighteenth century show the embryonic beginnings of a new approach to the language of Shakespeare. The process of editing that at the beginning of the Restoration cuts, paraphrases, and modifies the language of Shakespeare without rules or common directions starts to move with a more orderly pace. The flattening of the complexity and richness of the poetic and philosophic Shakespearean polysemy which was inevitably a consequence of Restoration editors is seen less and less. A new sensibility towards the Shakespearean word rises with Cibber, Granville, Burnaby, Bullock and Philips, and changes the idea of the adaptation. From now on adaptation no longer modifies or heavily alters the language with an aim to paraphrase and clarify it. Though at an elementary and imperfect stage, this new

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33 W. Davenant; J. Dryden, *The Tempest* (London: 1670).
34 *Ibid.*
35 J. Dryden, *All for Love*.
36 J. Dryden, *Troilus and Cressida* (London: 1679).
37 J. Dryden, *On the Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy,* in *Troilus and Cressida*.

behaviour towards the text introduces principles that will be more thoroughly developed later on, starting from the 1709 Rowe edition of the works of Shakespeare. The contrast between Shakespeare and his language slowly disappears; the two are considered as elements forming a fruitful counterpoint, and finally as one harmonic musical texture of total praise: a key to holiness, at least literary.

In the last group of peritexts, composed by prologues and epilogues, Bardolatry appears to be stronger than in the previous group. There is no trace of blame for what Shakespeare created. The group is characterized by a widespread presence of religious and sacred tones which can also be found in some prefatorial peritexts. Dryden's adaptations are no exception: the semantic field connected to holiness referring to Shakespeare is strongly present.

Dryden's prologue to the adapted version of *The Tempest* is a celebration of the Bard that places him in the highest place of a triptych with Jonson and Fletcher, of whom he is considered master

> Shakespear, who (*taught by none*) did first impart
> To Fletcher *Wit*, to labouring Johnson *Art*.
> He, *Monarch-like*, gave those his subjects law,
> And is that *Nature* which they paint and draw.[38]

Shakespeare is the sacred, he is the king of poets, and his creative power participates in the same supremacy: we are told a few lines later that 'Shakespeare's pow'r is sacred as a King's'.[39] The image illustrating Jonson's and Fletcher's superiority to all other poets has a similarly religious undertone ('If they have since out-writ all other men, | 'Tis with the drops which fell from Shakespear's Pen').[40] The line echoes a description of Christ who, before being buried, has drops falling from his wound; in this perspective the king of poets is the king of Judeans, his drops of blood are drops of ink, Jonson and Fletcher are conflated with Joseph of Arimathea. Shakespeare's miracle, the poetic creation, is possible through ink; Christ's miracle, the creation of a new world, is possible through blood. Both are unique and their deeds unrepeatable 'Shakespeare's Magick could not copy'd be | Within that Circle none durst walk but he'.[41]

A sacral aura is also present in the prologue of another play adapted by Dryden, *Troilus and Cressida*, where changing Shakespeare's lines is seen as a religious crime, a sacrilege. The ghost of the Bard himself speaks:

> In this my rough-drawn Play, you shall behold
> *Some Master-strokes*, so manly and so bold
> That he, who meant to alter, found 'em such
> He shook; and thought it *Sacrilege* to touch.[42]

The beginning of the prologue has Shakespeare emerging from the reign of shades where he distinguished himself thanks to the eternity of his poetry, which many try to imitate in order to give new life to their dry poetic veins:

> See, my lov'd Britons, see your Shakespeare rise,
> An awfull ghost confess'd to human eyes!
> Unnam'd, methinks, distinguish'd I had been
> From other shades, by this *eternal green*,
> About whose *wreaths* the vulgar Poets strive,
> And with a touch, their wither'd Bays revive.[43]

Eternity connects time with the holy, and eternal is a time that does not pass, a time that has no history. Dryden distinguishes Shakespeare from other poets by the 'eternal green' of his wreath of bay. In other prologues, the Bard or his poetry are 'immortal'. With these praises Shakespeare is heightened into a dimension of eternity, of a time disconnected from reality.

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[38] Davenant; Dryden, *The Tempest*.
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid.*
42 Dryden, *Troilus and Cressida*.
43 *Ibid.*

Conclusion

After the Restoration, the cult of the national poet did not decline; on the contrary, with David Garrick, Thomas Carlyle, and many others it has been rising, until today. Continuing a tradition that grew stronger as time passed, at the end of the last century Harold Bloom asserted an idolatry not only for the author but also for one of his characters: to him, Bardolatry 'ought to be even more a secular religion than it already is',[44] and whoever believes in worshipping

> God actually worship three major literary characters: the Yahweh of the J Writer […], the Jesus of the Gospel of Mark, and Allah of the Koran. I do not suggest that we substitute the worship of Hamlet, but Hamlet is the only secular rival to his greatest precursors in personality. Like them, he seems not to be just a literary or dramatic character. His total effect upon the world's culture is incalculable. After Jesus, Hamlet is the most cited figure in Western consciousness; no one prays to him, but no one evades him for long either.[45]

A sense of sacrality in a dimension of eternity, directed first to the man-author-poet and then to his linguistic-literary creation, seems to characterize the Bardolatry present in the peritexts of the Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare. Jean Marsden's studies on the same topic confirm that the process of canonization of the first literary saint of England and 'the increasing idolization of Shakespeare and his works'[46] can be better understood if we are aware of the relevance of this body of texts in the constitution of Bardolatry.

From the brief overview of peritexts of Shakespearean adaptations discussed so far I hope it is possible to have a bird's eye view of their role in the foundation of Bardolatry, which at this stage is still uncertain, may be developed in future, but is nevertheless present. If we could freely move in the almost eighty year-span of time which saw the creation of these thirty adaptations, we would see more easily how Shakespeare is raised to the role of a cultural hero, a national poet who can challenge and defeat continental, neo-classical rules. He is not only dramatist, but also poet, genius, nature, natural genius, fancy, imagination, and much more: he is a god-poet, father of the English tongue, a cultural icon living in a dimension out of time, eternal, absolute, a transcendent entity going beyond history and materiality (and even beyond the imperfection of his own creation). His faults are in fact assimilated in a *grand récit* with sacral and religious notes that chooses the Bard as its prophet much earlier than the age of the Restoration. In 1623 Ben Jonson says that 'He was not for an age, but for all time': we are in the peritext of the *First Folio.*

44 H. Bloom, *Shakespeare: the invention of the human* (New York: 1998).
45 *Ibid.*
46 J. Marsden, *The re-imagined text* (Lexington: 1995).

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‘Shakespeare and His Contemporaries’ Graduate Conference 2010

Chaos in Arcadia: the politics of tragicomedy in Stuart pastoral theatre

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Moving along the lines of the English translations, re-readings and re-writings of Guarini's masterpiece, this essay aims at analysing the ongoing interplay between tragicomic pastoral theatre and royal power in late Elizabethan and Stuart England.

Nowadays Guarini's *Pastor fido* is generally perceived as little more than marginal in the literary canon of late-Renaissance Italy: only rarely is it included in high school textbooks, let alone read in its entirety or staged in the theatre. Yet, at the time of its composition Guarini's pastoral tragicomedy was thrust into the limelight of an intensely heated cultural debate, which eventually reached all major European universities and courts after the play's publication in 1589.

The reasons for such notoriety lay in the clash between the early-modern aspiration toward literary innovation, on the one hand, and the Aristotelian notions of genre codification, on the other. Indeed, Guarini's *Pastor fido* was conceived as a challenge to the classicistic idea of drama as unquestionably divided into the separate realms of comedy and tragedy. Following in the wake of the dramatic pastoral tradition originating in the sketchy eclogue-style drama of the late fifteenth century, *Pastor fido* was meant to set the highest example of a modern five-act pastoral play featuring a tragicomic pattern. Needless to say, strictly Aristotelian academicians strongly opposed every spurious dramatic form and mockingly labelled pastoral tragicomedy as mongrel and lacking classical decorum: *Pastor fido* was therefore criticised both on the grounds of its 'monstrous' mingling of comic with tragic elements and of the 'indecorously' refurbished language spoken by its rustic characters. However, as the academic debate over the ontological status of tragicomedy spread from Northern Italy to all major European universities — where classical and Italian drama was increasingly being studied, translated and staged — Guarini's experimental play ended up becoming a best-selling success throughout Europe.

Alongside its fame spreading through academic channels, *Pastor fido* enjoyed huge popularity also in courtly environments thanks to its perfect adherence to the taste of the aristocratic élite. The play's dedication to Charles Emmanuel I of Savoy on the occasion of his wedding to Catherine of Austria in 1585 was indeed meant to set forth pastoral tragicomedy as a kind of entertainment worthy of highly sophisticated audiences. Besides, the polished language of the shepherds — following the elegant bucolic style of Sannazzaro's *Arcadia* (1504) — and the solemnity of the plot — revolving around the wedding between two noble descendants of Pan and Hercules — made Guarini's play a fitting choice for princely wedding festivities. On top of this, the play's elaborate pastoral mode allowed for transparent allegories of power based on the analogy between loving shepherds tending their flocks and magnanimous sovereigns taking good care of their subjects, which — it goes without saying — made *Pastor fido* a great favourite with absolutist monarchies throughout Europe.

The play was first published in England in 1591 in order to meet the growing interest arising from the sophisticated environment of the Elizabethan court. In promoting the printing of *Pastor fido* and *Aminta* in a bound edition by John Wolfe's press, the renowned humanist Giacomo Castelvetro was nourishing the appetite for Italian culture of the Elizabethan courtiers, especially those belonging to the Sidney-Essex group. Guarini's play was first translated into English in 1602 and dedicated to Sir Edward Dymoke, whose family had provided the royal Champion for coronation ceremonies since Richard II's accession in 1377. According to the well-known allegory of the sovereign as faithful shepherd, the story of self-sacrificing Mirtillo narrowly escaping death to save his beloved Amaryllis might be read as a panegyric of the Virgin Queen's unconditional love for her people and ultimate victory over the would-be usurper Essex after his abortive plot of 1601. However, the dedication to Sir Edward Dymoke, Champion of Elizabeth I but soon-to-be Champion of James I, also suggests a subtle welcoming of the Stuart monarchs whose fertile marriage

was bound to guarantee political stability as Mirtillo and Amaryllis' wedding eventually saves Arcadia from chaos.

Unlike Tasso's *Aminta* (1573), whose famous chorus of shepherds at the end of Act I conveys the nostalgic regret of Counter-Reformation Italy for the light-hearted sensuality of the classical Golden Age, Guarini's *Pastor fido* lays strong emphasis on the importance of faithfulness and monogamy as a means of preserving the state from socio-political upheaval. Indeed, while the haughty nymph Sylvia's sudden tenderness towards the loving shepherd Amyntas is eventually made possible by Cupid, *Pastor fido* celebrates the god of marriage Hymenaeus under whose auspices Mirtillo and Amaryllis finally re-establish Arcadia's lost harmony. Many things revolve around princely marriage in Guarini's play: the fulfilling of the blind fortune-teller's oracle about Arcadia's future happiness, the purging of the first wanton nymph's unfaithfulness, the political stability of a state whose foundations are laid upon the moral values of constancy and chastity. It is not surprising, then, that *Pastor fido* was translated into English at a time when the Stuart royal couple stood out as the most obvious alternative to Elizabeth's faltering power and unsettling lack of heirs.

In the aftermath of James's coronation as king of England, a Latin version of *Pastor fido* was staged at Cambridge university, followed by the first English pastoral tragicomedy, written by Samuel Daniel and especially performed for the Queen Consort at Oxford university in 1605. Daniel had met Guarini in Italy in 1591 during a journey with his patron Sir Edward Dymoke and his play *Arcadia Reformed* followed in the Italian playwright's footsteps, not only to express Daniel's admiration for continental culture but also to please the Queen's well-known appreciation of *Pastor fido*. Indeed, the pastoral became a landmark of Jacobean court drama and Queen Anna herself exploited the theatre as a venue for allegorical celebrations of power.

What makes *Arcadia Reformed* remarkable from a historical point of view is that Daniel wrote it in an attempt to regain Queen Anna's favour after the ill-starred performance of *Philotas* at the end of 1604. Although Daniel's connections with the Sidney-Essex group had secured him a high place among the Queen Consort's favourites, he embarrassed his noble patrons over the court performance of his tragedy. The play's subtle parallel between the betrayal of Queen Elizabeth by her young favourite Essex and the deception of Alexander the Great by his old-time friend Philotas could not but alarm Robert Cecil, especially given the apologetic light thrown over the controversial figure of the rebellious Earl. In spite of his relatives and friends' re-instatement in high office soon after James's coronation in 1603, the Essex plot to depose an English monarch could not be overlooked or even sympathised with. Suspected by the Privy Council and removed from his post as Master of the Children of the Queen's Revels, Daniel fell into disgrace with his patrons and ended up paving the way for Ben Jonson's career as masque writer.

It was thanks to *Arcadia Reformed*, published in 1606 as *The Queenes Arcadia*, that Daniel regained royal favour. Not only was pastoral drama politically much safer than tragedy: offering the first English version of Guarinian tragicomedy also meant paying homage to Queen Anna's continental literary tastes. The plot revolves around the disruptive effect that two cunning villains, Colax and Techne, are having on the peaceful shepherds' community: the two outsiders' corruption and hypocrisy are dangerously undermining the traditional Arcadian values of constancy and faithfulness, to the point that young swains and nymphs are no longer recognised by the two elderly shepherds acting as chorus in the play.

Even more threatening than the two slanderers is a group of low-life charlatans who take advantage of the inborn innocence of the inhabitants of Arcadia: the pettifogger Lincus, the quack doctor Alcon and the religious impostor Pistophoenax. If Lincus is dismayed at the difficulty of making the naive shepherds turn greedy and quarrelsome, Alcon's business of selling exotic remedies to cure all sorts of imaginary illnesses is thriving because vice has spread like a sickness all over the body politic of Arcadia. Pistophoenax, perhaps the most dangerous of all the outsiders, wears an alluring mask to cover his deformed face, but is stopped by the two elderly shepherds before he can question the ancient rites of Pan and break the chain of religious zeal that holds Arcadian society together.

Although the pastoral community is eventually saved from chaos and restored to its former state of harmony and peace, the disquieting presence of the outsiders among the shepherds leaves the audience with an unsettling sense of anxiety. At the time of its staging on the Queen's behalf, Daniel's *Arcadia Reformed* was most probably understood as a panegyric of the Stuart couple who had relieved England from the political instability originated by the unmarried and childless status of Elizabeth I. However, the disturbance caused by the play's villains unmistakably hints at some of the problems overshadowing James's reign: firstly, the increasing class mobility linked to the unprecedented flourishing of trade in the Elizabethan and early Stuart decades catalysed a period of rapid legal change which Daniel found unpleasantly disorienting;

secondly, the violent plague epidemic which broke out in London in 1603 offered an opportunity to charlatans exploiting people's fears of contagion; thirdly, the 1604 Hampton Court debates on matters of religious practice and liturgy had painfully exposed the growing distance between the bishops, endorsed by the king, and the Puritan clergy. By propounding an idea of the state as a healthy body politic founded on common law, a shared value system and the widespread observance of customary traditions, *Arcadia Reformed* was actually celebrating England and Scotland's political unity under James Stuart while foreshadowing an as-yet-to-be-born concept of Great Britain.

While pastoral tragicomedy enjoyed huge success in both academic and courtly environments, John Fletcher's attempt to stage a companion piece to *Pastor fido* in the commercial theatre was a fiasco. Although the Blackfriars was a private playhouse whose select audience could afford expensive tickets and looked forward to a more sophisticated kind of drama, Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* was received coolly and its experimental mixture of Guarini's continental theories with Sidney and Spenser's pastoral poetry was misunderstood. However, unlike the pastoral setting, the tragicomic formula rapidly took hold in the commercial theatre of the Stuart period, whose political tensions and ideological ambiguities were well-represented by the sensational twists and dizzying reversals typical of the Fletcherian canon.

The plot of *The Faithful Shepherdess* revolves around the theme of chastity, embodied by two female characters: the virgin Clorin, constantly faithful to her dead lover's memory and dedicated to curing bodies and souls with her magic healing powers, and the enduring Amoret, twice brutally wounded by her lover Perigot but nonetheless unfalteringly faithful to him. It is against these two paradigms of uncompromising loyalty that the other characters' morality is measured, ranging from Perigot and Thenot's immature idealism to Dafni's shyness, Alexis's sexual boldness, Chloe's lust, Amaryllis' malevolent jealousy and, finally, the Sullen Shepherd's cynical libertinism. Chastity is a constant concern throughout the play, and all the characters are eventually wounded in the forest at night and being nursed back to health in Clorin's bower. Tamed by the magic power of virginity, a satyr helps Clorin in the task of watching over the shepherds' virtue, in marked contrast with the Italian pastoral tradition where satyrs are usually lustful, treacherous and violent. Meanwhile, the conventional role of would-be rapist is taken on by the Sullen Shepherd whose fierce brutality and monstrous cynicism jeopardise the commonwealth's moral and social order, until he is stopped by the priest of Pan who topically calls him 'a canker to the state' (*FS*, 5, 3).

Therefore, not unlike Guarini's *Pastor fido* and Daniel's *Arcadia Reformed*, Fletcher's play pictures a pastoral community initially under threat of disease and chaos, but ultimately victorious through the pursuit of moral uprightness. However, an ambiguity emerges as to who is supposed to be the shepherds' spiritual guide in *The Faithful Shepherdess*. On the one hand Pan, typically associated with lust and sensuality in Renaissance pastoral literature, is described as an inconsistent god of chastity who orders the satyr to watch over the shepherds' morality while shamelessly enjoying physical pleasure himself; on the other hand, the faithful virgin Clorin stands out as an example of moral integrity and reliable comfort for all shepherds, as opposed to an aloof pagan deity who demands worship while in fact neglecting the care of his flock. Not only does the juxtaposition of two such different paradigms of divinity belie Fletcher's nostalgic regret for the semi-mythical Virgin Queen celebrated in the pastoral works of Sydney and Spenser, but it also conveys his subtle criticism of James's corrupted court and firm belief in the divine right of kings.

Following the disastrous 1608 performance at the Blackfriars, where Fletcher's play had failed to please commercial theatre-goers due to both its obsessive concern with chastity and its highly experimental nature, *The Faithful Shepherdess* was successfully staged at court in 1633 in the wake of the pastoral revival promoted by the French-Catholic Queen Consort Henrietta Maria. This somehow reinforced the aristocratic scope of tragicomic pastoral theatre, which ended up becoming so intertwined with the Caroline court that when the Civil War broke out in 1642 the Parliament passed a bill to close down the theatres in order to prevent social mutiny while depriving the crown of a useful tool for political propaganda. Interestingly enough, *The Faithful Shepherdess* had been chosen for the 1633 performance precisely on account of its preoccupation with chastity so as to counterattack Prynne's Puritan pamphlet *Histriomastix*, in which court theatre and the queen's acting had been labelled as despicable shows of lewdness.

Between 1647 and 1648, when the outcome of the Civil War was still uncertain, a new English translation of Guarini's *Pastor fido* was twice published by the Royalist writer Sir Richard Fanshawe. The tale of the faithful shepherd Mirtillo, whose imminent sacrifice is avoided thanks to his timely recognition as Arcadia's foretold saviour, mirrors the potentially tragic situation of the Stuart king, prisoner of the Parliamentarians and under threat of death. Hence, Fanshawe's translation of *Pastor fido* was in line with the Royalist policy of giving ideological interpretations of literary works that might convey the hope for a happy

ending to the misadventures of Charles I, unmistakably set as a tragicomic hero against the backdrop of the historical turmoil which was leading England to political, social and religious upheaval.

Unlike Mirtillo, King Charles was ultimately executed (in January 1649), and the Royalists' hopes in a monarchic restoration had to be deferred. Fanshawe turned once more to pastoral tragicomedy as a means of concealed Royalist propaganda in 1658; his Latin translation of Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* was published shortly after Cromwell's death. In the newly changed political scenario, as the end of the Commonwealth and the Stuart Restoration seemed at hand, Clorin's constant faithfulness to her dead lover symbolised the relentless loyalty of the Royalist flock to the deceased shepherd king, while her magic healing powers promised England's eventual recovery from the sacrilegious breach between the head and the body politic.

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‘The tragedy of a Jew’, the *passion* of a Merchant: shifting genres in a changing world

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As many scholars have argued, the space physically and figuratively represented in *The Jew of Malta* and in *The Merchant of Venice* places the texts on the threshold of modernity.[47] John Drakakis wrote that the Shakespearean play is performed in an epistemological context that reflects *modernity* in line with the definition of Gianni Vattimo of the modern age as an ‘era of history’.[48] According to Hugh Grady, the *Merchant* provides the vision of a desacralized space where we may perceive the ‘enabling structures of Western modernity’: the autonomous and instrumental reason, and more precisely the Machiavellian logic supporting the nation-state, and the growing capitalist economy.[49]

It is not by chance that Machiavelli appears as a character in the Prologue of *The Jew of Malta*, speaking through his *prosopopoeia* and astounding the spectators in such an unexpected way:

> Albeit the world think Machevill is dead,
> Yet was his soul but flown beyond the Alps;
> And, now the Guise is dead, is come from France,
> To view this land, and frolic with his friends. [*JM* 1-4]

Not only has Machiavelli/Machevill taken the inheritance of the Duke of Guise, the fierce leader of the Catholic French faction against the Huguenots, but he is destined to establish astonishing relationships with the Jew, Barabas – who of those structures is the ambiguous fulcrum of Western modernity – and indirectly with Ferneze, the governor of Malta who exercises authority in domestic and foreign politics.

Machiavelli has the function ‘to present the *tragedy* of a Jew | Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed’ [*1T Prologue* 31-32]. And it is to such a use of the word ‘tragedy’ we should pay more attention: can we really consider *The Jew of Malta* a ‘tragedy’ according to classical rules? Or rather ‘a farce’ according to T.S. Eliot?[50] And what about *The Merchant of Venice*, with its apparently reassuring *happy ending*? Starting from the idea of a changing world and of a new way to represent the world in early modern theatre, I intend to analyse the Jews’ characters focussing on their theatrical power and function in transforming traditional models and genres; secondly, I would like to argue how the classical concepts of *sacrifice* and *fortune* changed in these modern plays, paying particular attention to the story of Abigail in *The Jew* and to the concept of *hazard* in *The Merchant*.[51]

First of all, with reference to what Walter Benjamin pointed out in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*,[52] we may say that modern, baroque drama differs from ancient tragedy in its conception and

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[47] See, among others, A. Hiscock, ‘Enclosing “infinite riches in a little room”: the question of cultural marginality in Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*’, in *The uses of this world: thinking space in Shakespeare, Marlowe, Cary and Jonson*, ed. Hiscock (Cardiff: 2004), pp. 52-81; J. Drakakis, ‘“Jew. Shylock is my name”: speech-prefixes in *The Merchant of Venice* as symptoms of the early modern.’ in *Shakespeare and modernity: early modern to millennium*, ed. H. Grady (London: 2000), pp. 105-21; H. Grady, *Shakespeare’s universal wolf: postmodernist studies in early modern reification* (Oxford: 1996)

[48] Drakakis, pp. 108-09.

[49] ‘a capitalist economy reinforcing in its own autonomous operations the purposeless purposiveness that provides the characteristics, often catastrophic non-teleology of Faustian Western (now global) development’ [Grady, 33]. See also P. D. Holland, ‘The *Merchant of Venice* and the value of money’ in *Cahiers Élisabéthains* vol. 60 (2001), pp. 13-30.

[50] T. S. Eliot, *Selected essays* (London: 1932), p. 123.

[51] L. Woodbridge, *Money and the age of Shakespeare: essays in new economic criticism* (London: 2003); M. Shell, *Money, language and thought* (Baltimore: 1982); H. Berger, Jr., ‘Marriage and mercification in *The Merchant of Venice*: the casket scene revisited’ in *Shakespeare Quarterly* vol. 32 (1981), pp.155-62.

[52] Original edn: W. Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (Frankfurt am Main: 1963)

representation of time: while the latter tends to be characterized by the a-temporal world of myth, the former acts out history, which is often allegorically treated. This allegorical treatment of history also contributes to changing the classic, Aristotelian notion of dramatic genres, in particular the distinction between tragedy and comedy.[53] Through the mirror of literary characters, individuals are no longer represented in their fight against the Gods and their divine, absolute laws, but against history, against other men, human passions and social forces (such as the economic ones). When in the Prologue of *Tamburlaine the Great* the spectator was invited to 'View but this picture in this tragic glass, | And then applaud his fortune as you please' [*1T Prologue* 7-8], for example, the same terms *tragic* and *fortune* had already changed their traditional meaning: the world is ultimately tragic, and tragic is any representation of it. Tamburlaine – the Scythian thief 'come up from nothing' [2*T*, III.i.74] – is himself like a God, and while symbolically holding the world on his shoulders like Atlas ('Such breath of shoulders as might mainly bear | Old Atlas' burden', 1*T*, II.i.10-11), he performs and shows 'on a tragic glass' the cruel spectacle of the world itself where he plays the protagonist's role. Tamburlaine, besides, overturns the stereotypes connected to the image of the Wheel of Fortune: he does not undergo the same destiny of triumph and of fall as traditional heroes of tragic tradition do, but he achieves full power and conquers most of the world; finally, he dies of a fatal disease in a general apotheosis.

Speaking about characters, and taking the Aristotelian definition of tragic and comic characters in the *Poetics* as our reference point, we see that Barabas and Shylock cannot be labelled either as *chrestoi/spoudaioi* or as *phauloi* (i.e. neither of 'a higher type' nor of 'a lower type'):[54] they are in fact simply *Jews*. What does this imply? In early modern England the Jews played a paradoxical role: they represented an abstract and evanescent myth, because people did not know them directly but from the Middle-Age legend of the money-lender;[55] but at the same time they were concretely involved in the development of the Western capitalist economy[56]. While being instruments of this new economy, the Jews were at the same time characterized as parasites. Accordingly, on the one hand both the tragedies of Barabas and Shylock play on the confusion between Jews and merchants,[57] and on the theatrical power and the resonance of figures such as the Medieval Vice and the 'stage Jew';[58] on the other, they express the contradictory conditions of their being *homines clausi* in an open, modern world here represented by Malta and Venice, which symbolically concentrate in their territory a juxtaposition of different meaningful spaces, and contain a variety of religious and ethnic factions often in conflict (such as Jews, Turks, and Catholics).[59]

Based on the public's strong reaction, Marlowe and Shakespeare represent in their plays the trauma of the Jews in coming openly in contact with society and the world outside. When Barabas is forced out of his 'world' – out of the 'little room' where he keeps 'his infinites riches'[*JM* I.i.33-37][60] – and his fortune confiscated, he becomes a monster taking violent and witty revenge on whoever he considers an enemy (his daughter included): whereas the catastrophic ending may be compared to a classical tragedy because it brings death to everyone, the developments of the plot turn it into an almost farcical play deprived of any catharsis.[61] Shylock lives in a 'world apart' too, belonging to the confined Jewish quarter of Rialto [*MV* I.iii.104-106] where he is visited by Christians only to be asked for money and to be cursed [*MV* I.iii.109-111]. Despite discrimination, therefore, Shylock claims that, before being a Jew, he is a human being:

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[53] We can speak of 'performing history' - W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the force of modern performance* (Cambridge: 2003), pp. 28-39.
[54] Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. S. Halliwell (London: 1995), p. 48a; p. 49a; p. 54a.
[55] I would like to refer to the concept of artificial persons as presented in J. C. Agnew, *Worlds apart: the market and the theatre in Anglo-American thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: 1986). In particular 'Artificial persons', pp. 101-148 and pp. 121-122. See F. Marenco, 'Barabas-Shylock: ebrei o cristiani?' in *Il personaggio nelle arti della narrazione*, ed. F. Marenco (Roma: 2007), pp. 169-189; J. Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: 1996); G. K. Hunter, 'Elizabethans and foreigners' in *Dramatic identities and cultural tradition: studies in Shakespeare and his contemporaries*, ed. G. K. Hunter (Liverpool: 1978), pp. 3-30. See also 'The theology of Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*', pp. 60-102.
[56] S. Kleinberg, '*The merchant of Venice*: the homosexual as anti-semite in nascent capitalism', in *Literary visions of homosexuality*, ed. S. Kellogg (London: 1983), pp. 113-126.
[57] *The merchant of Venice*, IV.i.172.
[58] E. Schiff, *From stereotype to metaphor: the Jew in contemporary drama* (Albany, New York: 1982) See in particular the introduction: 'The tradition of the stage Jew', pp. 1-36.
[59] D. Hillman, '*Homo Clausus* at the theatre', in *Rematerializing Shakespeare: authority and representation on the early modern English stage*, eds. B Reynolds & W. West (London: 2005), pp. 161-185.
[60] M. Garber, 'Infinite riches in a little room: closure and enclosure in Marlowe', in *Two Renaissance mythmakers: Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson*, ed. A. Kernan (Baltimore: 1977), pp. 3-21.
[61] It could be interesting to refer to S. Žižek, *First as tragedy, then as farce* (London: 2009)

> I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? [*MV* III.i.55-59]

Behind the cruel bond requested by Shylock from Antonio ('an equal pound | Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken | In what part of your body pleaseth me', *MV* I.iii.147-149), we may thus see not only the most appalling revenge on Christians, but also – paradoxically – a sort of desire to establish a contact between Christians and Jews through the symbolic, Eucharistic medium of flesh and blood.[62] From the making of the bond to the final trial – and also through the allusions to patience and sufferance in reacting to Antonio's swear words [*MV* I.iii.107-108] – Shylock's story may also be read as a story of passion, although parodically rewritten (as parodic is the use of Biblical language in *Malta*).[63] At the same time, in the fierce words that Shylock pronounces against Antonio ('You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, | And spit upon my Jewish gabardine, | And all for use of that which is mine own…', *MV* I.iii.109-111), we could find an echo of the Book of Isaiah ('I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting', *Is* 50:6) and of the Gospel of Mark when he describes the death of Christ: 'And they shall mocke hym, & scourge hym, spit vpon hym, and kyll hym: And the thirde day he shall ryse agayne' (*Mark* 10:34),[64] as related in *The Bishops' Bible* (1568). Shylock, who as a usurer is the symbol per excellence of avarice and greed, highlights what lies at the core of the ethics of the gift: he does not ask for an external gift, but the gift of the self taken from the body, with the (cruel and paradoxical) sacrifice of Antonio's flesh and blood. Failing to do so (and obviously he should fail), he must then suffer the worst punishment for his identity, that of losing all his wealth and of converting to Christianity.

From a theatrical point of view, not unlike Barabas, Shylock is neither a martyr nor a tragic figure: he is a villain with great ability to perform a comic role. Just think of the tragicomic scene when Solanio relates to Salerio the reaction of Shylock to his daughter's elopement with Lorenzo and to the theft of his treasure:

> I never heard a passion so confused,
> So strange, outragious, and so variable,
> As the dog Jew did utter in the streets:
> 'My daughter! O my ducats! Oh, my daughter! Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats! Justice! The law! My ducats and my daughter!' [*MV* II.viii.12-17]

It is a comic cliché whose sources are probably Plautus's *Aulularia*[65] and Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* ('My gold, my gold, and all my wealth is gone!', *JM* I.ii.258), and which will be continued in Molière's *L'avare*.[66]

Nevertheless, it is history that compels us to regard Shylock as a tragic character. If, like Barabas, he is forced out of his world too, it is because the happy ending implies his conversion, but that means also his removal from that public space which he will never belong to (as is shown by Shylock's last words: 'I pray you give me leave to go from hence, | I am not well', *MV* IV.i.392-393). As Lisa Freinkel argues referring to *Slavoj Žižek's The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 'An ideology really succeeds when the facts which at first sight contradict it start to function as arguments in its favour'[67]

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[62] 'The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones, and all, | Ere thou shall lose for me one drop of blood' (*The Merchant of Venice* IV.i.112-113); compare Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*: 'One drop would save my soul, half a drop' (sc. XIV, 75-76) and see J. Adelman, *Blood relations: Christian and Jew in 'The merchant of Venice'* (Chicago: 2008)

[63] S. Munson Deats, 'Biblical parody in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*: a re-examination' in *Christianity and literature* vol. 37 (1988), pp. 27-50; J. Parker, 'The curious sovereignty of art: Marlowe's sacred counterfeits', in *The aesthetics of Antichrist: from Christian drama to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. J. Parker (Ithaca; London: 2007), pp. 183-245 (also 'Blood money: Antichristian economics and the drama of the sacraments', pp. 87-138); D. Inbar, 'Taming of the Jew: Marlowe's Barabas vis-à-vis Shakespeare's Shylock' in *The journal of religion and theatre* vol. 4 (2005), pp. 160-174.

[64] Compare the gospels of Mark (14:65) and of Matthew (26:67); in Isaiah (50:6) and Job (30:10).

[65] 'Heu me miserum, misere perii, | male perditus… Perditissimus ego sum omnium in terra; nam quid mi opust vita, tantum auri | perdidi, quod concustodivi | sedulo?' [Plautus, *Aulularia,* ll. 713-716]

[66] 'Au voleur! Au voleur! à l'assassin! au meurtrier!… Je suis perdu, je suis assassiné, on m'a coupé la gorge, on m'a dérobé mon argent…' [Molière, *L'avare* IV.iv]

[67] L. Freinkel, *The merchant of Venice: 'modern' anti-semitism and the veil of allegory*, ed. Grady, pp. 122-141.

Also female characters – Abigail in *The Jew of Malta*, Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice* (whose melancholy at the opening of Act V Scene 1, in Belmont, has been compared with Antonio's initial sadness), but especially Portia – have a fundamental, pivotal role in expressing the shifting relationships between tragedy and comedy in these two plays. On the one hand, Abigail's unfortunate story recalls the myth of Iphigenia (from Lucretius' *De rerum natura* to Euripide's *Iphigenia in Aulis*), the beautiful young girl destined to love and marriage but condemned to death by her father Agamemnon [*JM* I.i.132-136]. Abigail is described by her beloved, the Christian Mattia, as 'A fair young maid, scarce fourteen years of age, | The sweetest flower in Cytherea's field, | Cropped from the pleasures of the fruitful earth, | And strangely metamorphised nun' [*JM* I.iii. 14-17]. Forced by Barabas to love Lodovico and to be closed in a nunnery (pretending to be a nun), Abigail converts to Christianity and suffers her father's revenge: she is killed by the poisoned water along with the whole nunnery. From this point of view Abigail's sacrifice could be compared with Califa's slaughter in *Tamburlaine*, which borrows from Isaac's sacrifice:[68] Abigail betrayed her father becoming in reality what Barabas asked her to be in the art of simulation (*JM* I.ii.251 sgg.).[69] Just as Califa is unable to fight, Abigail is unable to simulate. That is what the tragedy of Barabas, not unlike Tamburlaine's tragedy, shows in a tragic glass: the Machiavellian world claims that every form of innocence, simplicity and sincerity has to be removed and sacrificed. If the tragedy of the modern world consists in simulation, the theatre assumes, on the contrary, the function of revealing the truth behind the mimesis while demystifying the power struggles prevailing in the society.

The Merchant of Venice displays a similar context and analogous premises, but raises more problematic issues. The same episode of the Jew's daughter's betrayal fades from tragedy to a gloomy, happy-ending-comedy characterized by Jessica's evident sense of guilt [*MV* II.iii; II.vi] and by her melancholic revival of ancient sad stories (Troilus and Cressida, Thisbe, Dido, and Medea: *MV* V.i.1-85).

More generally, and also in line with the anthropologic implications of Machiavelli's thought (see the recent interpretations of Giulio Ferroni),[70] it is the notion of *Fortune* that changes from the classical conception of *Fate* or *Tyke* to a wider, historical, human 'field of forces' here converging into a modern conception of hazard.[71] We may consider the semantic transformations of some key-words such as *venture*, *fortune*, *misfortune*, *chance*, which absorb and reflect an economic meaning here embodied in the Venetian scene.[72] When Solanio and Salerio analyze Antonio's sadness, at the beginning of the drama, for example, they use 'venture' [*MV* I.i.15, 21, 42] to indicate investments or merchandise [*MV* I.i.45]. The words 'fortune' [*MV* I.i.44] and 'misfortune' [*MV* I.i.21] are used in similar contexts and tend to have similar economic meanings. The tragic conflict between the human condition (and human sufferance) and Fate, between *éthos* (also literary character) and divine laws, in fact, is transferred into a different field of forces where instrumental reason and economic worth tend to dominate and prevail.[73]

Accordingly, we may read the caskets' scene as a sort of *mise en abyme* of these premises, and of the relationships between intelligence and chance in running any risk. The notion of hazard, in particular, is a fundamental key-word in Portia's lottery [I.ii.28-30]; etymologically linked to an Arabian (and later French) name referring to the game of dice, and to the castle called Hasart or Asart during the siege of which the game was invented (OED), it summarizes and substitutes the notion of fortune itself. Used for the first time in the *Merchant* by Bassanio [*MV* I.i.151] when he confesses to Antonio his will 'to shoot another arrow' [*MV* I.i.148] when leaving in pursuit of Portia (who is described as a 'golden fleece', *MV* I.i.170), the word hazard assumes in the caskets' scene a twofold meaning: firstly it refers to the whole enterprise of choosing the correct casket (an act, that of choosing, which involves judgement and chance); and secondly to the

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[68] M. Ephraim, 'Jephthah's kin: the sacrificing father in *The merchant of Venice*.', in *Journal for early modern cultural studies* vol. 5 (2005), pp. 71–93; I. McAdam, *The irony of identity: self and imagination in the drama of Christopher Marlowe*, (London: 1999)
[69] A. Beskins, 'From Jew to nun: Abigail in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*' in *Explicator* vol. 65 (2007), pp.133-36.
[70] G. Ferroni, *Machiavelli, o dell'incertezza: La politica come arte del rimedio* (Roma: 2003)
[71] Compare 'Thy life is dear, for all that life can rate | Worth name of life in thee hath estimate: | Youth, beauty, wisdom, courage, all | That happiness and prime can happy call; | Thou this to hazard needs must intimate | Skill infinite or monstrous desperate' (*All's Well that Ends Well* II.i.186); 'Now expectation, tickling skittish spirits, | On one and other side, Trojan and Greek, | Sets all on hazard' (*Troilus and Cressida* Prologue, 22); 'The terms of our estate may not endure | Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow | Out of his lunacies' (*Hamlet* III.iii.6); 'Give up yourself merely to chance and hazard, | From firm security' (*Antony and Cleopatra* III.12.19).
[72] J. Ozark, *The merchant of Venice: choice, hazard and consequence* (London: 1995) (see also: Shell; Woodbridge).
[73] G. Melchiori stresses the shifting boundaries between the traditional genres, and proposes for the *Merchant* the definition of tragicomedy, speaking of a kind of theatre where – in opposition to the classical theatre – 'il gioco del caso si è sostituito alla necessità del fato' - G. Melchiori, *Introduzione to Shakespeare: Le commedie romantiche* (Milano: 1982), p. XXXVIII.

correct casket, the lead one, which bears the inscription 'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath' (*MV* II.vii.8-10): Bassanio becomes thus the hero who gives and hazards all he has (Antonio included).

So, if hazard may be considered as the symbol of a modern conception of Fortune which unites chance with intelligence and judgement, and choice with risk (which is a mathematical and financial concept[74] also connected to the idea of a religious salvation),[75] we may consider Portia ('a lady richly left', 'fair', 'and | Of wonderful virtues', *MV* I.i.161-162) as really being the positive embodiment of the Machiavellian qualities (those of the Prince): beauty, intelligence, and (as she shows not only in the caskets' scene, but also in the trial scene) the capacity to exploit the best opportunities and to strike a balance between fortune and hazard, and between knowing and doing [*MV* I.ii.12-14]. It is thanks to her wit so convincingly used and performed in the final trial that the play turns to its (almost apparent) happy ending; and that is not surprising: even though among her social and marital duties there is the necessity to tame an 'alien' like Shylock,[76] the young lady of Belmont cannot avoid showing once again her virtue (corresponding to the wide notion of *virtus* in Machiavelli's work: i.e. physical and moral courage).

Portia contributes to changing not only the rules of the game (the lottery), but also the rules of the play, making more shifting and aleatory the distinctions between tragedy and comedy, in her directing a successful performance of a changing world, a play which we may compare to the image (related by Portia herself) of the last night at Belmont as a 'daylight sick', 'a little paler', 'a day | such as the day is when the sun is hid' [*MV* V.i.124-126].

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[74] M. Netzloff, *The lead casket: capital,mMercantilism, and* The merchant of Venice, ed. Woodbridge, pp. 159-76.
[75] I refer for example to John Donne (*Sermons* 11) and Blaise Pascal (*Pensées* 443 ff.).
[76] E. S. Mallin, *Jewish invader and the soul of the state:* The merchant of Venice *and science fiction movies*, ed. Grady, pp. 142-67.

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Shylock è un Gentleman! *The Merchant of Venice*, Henry Irving e l'Inghilterra Vittoriana

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Il *Mercante* Vittoriano

Linda Rozmovits, in un suo interessante studio sulla ricezione di Shakespeare nell'Inghilterra del secondo Ottocento, ritiene che *The Merchant of Venice* 'might be well described as a late Victorian popular obsession'. In altri periodi e in altri luoghi, la commedia shakespeariana riposava comodamente all'ombra di tragedie come *Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello* o dei drammi storici e, fatta eccezione per il suo ebreo che attirava l'interesse di grandi e mediocri attori in cerca di ruoli memorabili, era catalogata decisamente nel limbo dei lavori minori. Non è certo così per l'Inghilterra del secondo Ottocento, che sembra eleggere il *Merchant* a opera esemplare, dalla cui rilettura si possono trarre una quantità inesauribile di spunti per una società in via di trasformazione:

> The play seemed to serve as a lens through which people filtered their experience of social life and social change, through which they negotiated their responses to events and developments that disturbed or excited them, and, on occasion, into which they sought to retreat from a society that was changing in ways they considered to be unmanageable, if not at times intolerable. [cfr: Rozmovitz, 1998, p. 3]

Tra il 1870 e il 1920 il *Merchant* è una delle opere shakespeariane studiate con maggior frequenza tanto sui banchi di scuola che nelle università e non mancano le riscritture del testo specificatamente indirizzate ai più piccoli (sull'onda del grande successo dei racconti da Shakespeare di Charles e Mary Lamb del 1807, altri scrittori si cimentano nell'impresa: basti ricordare, tra gli altri, i racconti shakespeariani di Edith Nesbit del 1897). Tuttavia, ad affascinare il pubblico vittoriano, che ne riconosce la perfetta incarnazione dei propri ideali - almeno sulla carta - liberali, sono soprattutto Portia e Shylock. La signora di Belmonte diventa presto una vera e propria icona per quel numero sempre crescente di donne coinvolte nei primi, sensibili cambiamenti verso l'indipendenza e l'acquisizione dei propri diritti; per molte di loro, leggere o vedere incarnata a teatro l'eroina shakespeariana, piena di *wit* e di spirito di indipendenza, doveva rappresentare una vera e propria ragione di entusiasmo:

> Wealthy and uncontrolled by either husband or father, learned, independent, dressed as a man and making her petition in a court of law, Portia held a magnetic attraction for those who aspired to the freedom she possessed [cfr: Rozmovits, p. 5]

Per quelle poi che non si contentavano del testo shakespeariano, ma di Portia volevano indagare il passato, conoscere i suoi mentori e i suoi affetti più cari, c'era sempre il bel racconto di formazione scritto da una shakespeariana 'doc': Mary Cowden Clarke.

Nel suo divertente *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines,* apparso nel 1850, la Cowden Clarke raccoglie quindici racconti dedicati ad altrettante eroine shakespeariane. In *The Heiress of Belmont,* il racconto dedicato a Portia, la Cowden Clarke indaga tra le pieghe del passato dell'eroina shakespeariana, facendo risalire la sua abilità nell'avvocatura a una passione d'infanzia coltivata attraverso gli ideali di *mercy* e *tolerance* impartitegli dal benevolo zio Bellario. Riletto alla luce del suo passato, il famoso monologo su 'the quality of mercy' del IV atto assume un significato profondo, e Portia emerge come un'eroina *tout court*. Una simile lettura non faceva altro che rafforzare un mito, l'immagine femminile in cui la donna vittoriana voleva rispecchiarsi: alti valori morali, indipendenza, buona cultura, intelligenza e ironia, seppur velate da inappuntabili maniere e da una classe naturale. La grande attrice Ellen Terry, nelle sue memorie, parla della

sua prima interpretazione di Portia al Princess of Wales nel 1875 come di un momento memorabile: questo personaggio è stato l'unico a farle sentire 'the feeling of the conqueror' [cfr: Terry, 1932, p. 86]. Portia conquista così, nell'immaginario tardo vittoriano, una sua collocazione precisa, libera dalle catene e dagli obblighi che il suo personaggio le impone. In questo stesso periodo, a fianco della signora di Belmonte, un altro personaggio, da sempre vero protagonista della storia del *Merchant,* è destinato a passare attraverso la lente di una società progressista che ne modifica nel profondo il destino.

Lo Shylock vittoriano è messo per la prima volta profondamente in discussione, esempio prediletto per quella borghesia nei cui dibattiti la questione ebraica entra sempre più di frequente.

Nella seconda metà del Diciannovesimo secolo, la comunità ebraica in Inghilterra stava compiendo grandi passi nel suo percorso di integrazione nella società. Nel 1858, con l'entrata di Lionel Nathan Rothchild in Parlamento, viene abbattuto un importante ostacolo per l'accesso degli ebrei alle cariche pubbliche. Quando poi, negli ultimi decenni del secolo, un'immigrazione di massa dall'est Europa fa aumentare sensibilmente la comunità anglo-giudaica, l'Inghilterra si dimostra una patria accogliente, attenta com'è ad investire in 'an image of itself so distant from many of its "intolerant" counterparts' [cfr: Rozmovitz, p.6]: certo quando il flusso migratore comincia a superare le aspettative, iniziano anche i non pochi problemi di convivenza e la *tolerance* si ritrova ben presto temperata da una giusta dose di *distance*. Pur se segnato da molte contraddizioni, non si può ignorare il ruolo di primo piano della comunità ebraica in questi anni di grande sviluppo economico e industriale, dove al predominio della vecchia aristocrazia si sostituisce una plutocrazia alto-borghese, e in cui i grandi banchieri hanno un posto fondamentale. Come fa notare ancora la Rozmovits, la predominanza di ebrei nei circuiti bancari e finanziari 'has the effect of extending their mobility within the social and the political spheres, resulting in a visible Jewish presence in high places which seemed to some a nefarious presence indeed' [p.6]. Sono anni molto controversi in cui l'integrazione è solo apparente, fortemente esibita da una società che si vuole a tutti i costi aperta e cosmopolita, fermo poi veicolare sottobanco le fobie e le ansie per 'l'altro'. Per comprendere meglio tali ambivalenze basta guardare alla letteratura, che in questi decenni così prolifici racconta bene le due facce della stessa medaglia: mentre il romanzo di genere diventa uno tra i più appetibili catalizzatori di ansie xenofobe (si pensi ad esempio al *Dracula* di Bram Stoker), la ultra-civile società vittoriana si bea sotto l'egida dei grandi scrittori che rendono fiorente il romanzo borghese. Specchio sempre più veritiero della società che descrive, il romanzo nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento si fa politicamente corretto, denuncia il pregiudizio e ridefinisce se stesso sulla base dei principi di tolleranza e misericordia.

Nel 1876 George Eliot pubblica *Daniel Deronda*, romanzo di formazione alla rovescia in cui il giovane protagonista, da rampollo dell'aristocrazia si scopre figlio di ebrei e diventa portavoce della causa sionista; qualche tempo prima Dickens, nel suo *Our Mutual Friend,* nel disegnare il suo ebreo Riah pensa ad uno Shylock riletto, non più carnefice, ma capro espiatorio dell'ipocrisia borghese. Questa breve descrizione del variegato scenario vittoriano ha se non altro lo scopo di delineare il più possibile il contesto all'interno del quale si muove la storia scenica di *The Merchant of Venice* in questi anni così significativi per quanto riguarda la sua rappresentazione e ricezione. Tenendo conto di queste riflessioni, si può quindi tornare all'oggetto di questa analisi, soffermandosi su un'avventura teatrale che, perfetto specchio del suo tempo, è destinata a segnare un momento importante nel destino scenico dell'opera, influenzandone per molto tempo le messinscena a venire: si tratta del *Merchant* tutto vittoriano dell'attore e *stage manager* Henry Irving.

The Merchant of Venice al Lyceum Theatre

E' la sera del Primo Novembre 1879: la platea del *Lyceum Theatre* di Londra, che all'epoca avrebbe potuto contenere più di milleduecento persone, è di certo gremita. Non è la prima volta che gli spettatori affezionati del *Lyceum* si ritrovano ad assistere ad uno Shakespeare sotto la direzione di Henry Irving: solo l'anno precedente, il primo sotto il suo manageriato, un interessantissimo *Hamlet* aveva suscitato l'interesse di critica e pubblico, inaugurando tra l'altro il sodalizio artistico tra Irving e la già famosa Ellen Terry. Come si vedrà a breve, questo Primo Novembre segna un momento particolare nella storia del *Lyceum Theatre*, del suo capocomico e primo attore e della sua compagnia. La scelta di avvicinarsi a un'opera come il *Merchant* è per Irving apparentemente accidentale e repentina. L'ultima parte della precedente stagione del teatro aveva confermato una netta virata verso il melodramma con la messinscena di *The Lady of the Lions* di Bulwer e *The Iron Chest* di Colman; una tendenza che sembrava dovesse riguardare anche la stagione successiva. E se poi a Shakespeare si doveva tornare, c'era semmai da aspettarsi *Othello*, di cui da tempo si parlava; tra i progetti in cantiere c'era poi un *Coriolanus*, ma di certo al *Merchant* non pensava nessuno.

Quando Irving annuncia la sua decisione, tutti, a partire dai fedelissimi collaboratori Bram Stoker e Henry Loveday, restano scioccati. Ma Irving sembra assolutamente convinto: ad aprire la nuova stagione del *Lyceum* sarebbe stato *The Merchant of Venice.* Galeotta fu, almeno secondo leggenda, una crociera nel Mediterraneo a bordo del *Walrus,* una nave a vapore affittata dall'amica e generosa sostenitrice la Baronessa Burdett-Coutts. Proprio durante questo viaggio di ristoro, Irving sarebbe rimasto profondamente affascinato dalla figura di un ebreo Levantino incontrato per caso a Tunisi: pieno di dignità nel portamento, la sua figura patriarcale sembrava venire scalfita per un momento da una subitanea e repentina rabbia durante una transazione economica con alcuni mercanti; una rabbia che egli riusciva però dignitosamente a controllare, tornando immediatamente alla ferma compostezza di prima. La visione di questa scena avrebbe portato Irving a riflettere sul personaggio di Shylock, fornendogli l'intuizione per una nuova e interessante lettura su cui lavorare. E se, per presentare l'ebreo shakespeariano al nuovo pubblico londinese, ci si dimenticasse del *villain* della tradizione, così come della furibonda passionalità inaugurata da Edmund Kean, e si preferisse invece l'immagine di un uomo moderno, padre affezionato e uomo d'affari, fedele e devoto alla sua religione, che reagisce con dignità e superiorità alle persecuzioni e alle vessazioni ai danni di se stesso e della sua comunità? Pensieri di questo tipo dovevano essere passati per la mente di Irving in quei giorni spesi al sole del Mediterraneo, riflessioni che lo avrebbero portato a ripensare al *Merchant* non già come a una delle meno interessanti e brillanti commedie di Shakespeare, ma come a un dramma ibrido, eterogeneo e pieno di contraddizioni, a tratti fortemente tragico, pieno di possibilità per chi, come lui, amava fare della scena un luogo di sperimentazione e di riflessione.

'I am going to do *The Merchant of Venice*' [cfr: L. Irving, 1951, p.105]: al suo rientro, la decisione viene immediatamente comunicata a tutta la compagnia, il tempo è ormai tiranno. Un mese di prove, debutto previsto per sabato Primo Novembre: scene, costumi, scelta dei comprimari. Tutto è curato nel dettaglio, niente lasciato al caso. Questo *Merchant* doveva sorprendere la platea del *Lyceum*, proporsi come una seria occasione di riflessione, ricorrendo a qualcosa di assolutamente originale. Per perseguire il suo obiettivo, Irving costruisce una macchina scenica complessa e articolata, che pur nella sua eterogeneità riconosce comunque il suo centro nel personaggio di Shylock. Siamo in fondo ancora in un teatro da 'grande attore', sebbene illuminato da una creatività nel concepire la messinscena nella sua totalità che anticipa e offre continui spunti alla moderna regia ormai quasi agli albori. Viene piuttosto naturale quindi, quando si pensa a Irving, riconoscere in Shylock il fulcro dell'interessante lavoro di rielaborazione scenica del *Merchant.* Laurence Irving, nipote e biografo di Henry, ben riassume quello che fin dall'inizio il nonno avrebbe voluto trasmettere con l'interpretazione del suo ebreo:

> a new conception of Shylock as a symbol of a persecuted race, a Jewish merchant in some ways more of a gentleman than anyone else in the play… a proud man, respected on the Rialto, the leader of his synagogue and conscious of his moral superiority to many of the Christians who baited him. [cfr: *Ibidem*, p. 110]

Questo Shylock rappresenta in tutto e per tutto l'uomo vittoriano: dignità e fierezza, alti valori morali, ricchezza mai ostentata, forte senso di appartenenza al proprio popolo e ai suoi principi morali. Non stupisce certo una simile scelta, ancor più se si tenta di leggerla alla luce di quel più ampio obiettivo di Irving, perseguito fin dall'inizio della sua direzione, di fare del palcoscenico del suo *Lyceum* lo specchio perfetto della borghesia vittoriana. Un luogo di moralità, di sereno svago, di rispettoso culto dei classici, e anche – in nome di quell'impegno poetico culturale di cui quella stessa borghesia tanto si compiacque – di un'attiva ricerca di forme teatrali letterariamente superiori al consueto teatro edificante del tempo.

La scelta del repertorio e la cura della messinscena giocano certo un ruolo fondamentale in questo processo di edificazione morale; da qui il recupero e la rilettura della drammaturgia shakespeariana, perseguito su diversi fronti: se Shakespeare è autore richiamato di frequente sul palco del *Lyceum*, Irving stesso si preoccupa di curare, assieme a Frank A. Marshall, anche una sontuosa edizione completa data alle stampe nel 1906. D'altra parte, il processo che conduce Irving alla rifondazione del suo teatro, investe anche il lavoro su sé stesso. Irving spende molta della sua carriera a costruire per sé un'immagine precisa: quella di attore colto, intellettualmente evoluto, tenacemente impegnato nel ricollocare il suo antico mestiere dalla categoria del mero intrattenimento a quella di arte eletta a diffondere i più alti valori sociali e culturali. Una scelta felice, a cui sia la *upper class* che l'elite culturale londinese rispondono riconoscendo nel *Lyceum* il loro luogo di culto. Nobilitare la figura dell'attore, fare di esso un artista a tutto tondo, ribadire sempre il concetto per cui 'acting is a serious work – much more serious than many people think.' [cfr: H. Irving, 1878, p.11] Se questa è la dichiarazione d'intenti, ben si comprende la scelta di fare di Shylock 'a serious

man': l'ebreo shakespeariano incarnato dal futuro 'Sir' Henry Irving non sarebbe stato certo il *villain* da commedia popolare, ma un *gentleman* fiero e dignitoso, vittima di una società che nel vessarlo non fa' altro che rivelare la sua corruzione. Certo si tratta di una lettura della figura di Shylock (e se vogliamo del *Merchant* nel suo complesso) perfettamente in linea con i tempi, per cui riproporre il testo shakespeariano significa rovesciarne le ambiguità, facendone il veicolo artistico della propria immagine morale. È significativo a questo proposito che, a pochi giorni dal debutto dello spettacolo, la rivista *The Theatre,* di cui Irving era uno dei proprietari, pubblichi un articolo su *The Merchant of Venice* in cui si propone di leggere l'opera come una dichiarazione di tolleranza: 'The sympathy enjoyed by Shylock is designedly aroused in the interest of the great but downtrodden race he represent'; e se a una lettura immediata Shylock incarna i più facili stereotipi, l'autore invita a leggere tra le righe: 'He more than counteracted with one hand what he seemed to do with the other' [cfr: Gross, 1994, p. 115].

Il dibattito è fertile e il terreno più che spianato ad accogliere il *sympathetic Merchant of Venice* di Irving. Tuttavia, vale la pena sottolinearlo, si tratta sempre di interpretazioni del testo 'that become important in the lives of people not because they're Jewish, but because they're not' [cfr: Rozmovits, p.8]. Sono pur sempre punti di vista completamente esterni alla questione ebraica nella sua complessità, per cui si se si abbandona definitivamente il vecchio stereotipo dell'ebreo *villain*, si rafforza al tempo stesso un altro tipo, quello del *sympathetic Jew* che punta fin troppo esplicitamente all'animo dello spettatore. Non è un caso che questo Shylock sia proprio uno dei più attaccati da scrittori e registi ebrei del secondo Novecento (tra cui Arnold Wesker, Philip Roth e Moni Ovadia) che imputano a Irving la colpa di aver contribuito con la sua interpretazione a diffondere un'immagine stereotipata, falsata e 'cristiano-centrica' del popolo ebraico. [cfr: Gross, cap.XIX, pp.325-352]

Certo è che, nonostante la *sympathy* sia uno degli assi nella manica di questo Shylock, Irving non lo rappresenta certo come un povero vecchio, debole e indifeso: al contrario, il suo ebreo appare come una figura statuaria, piena di dignità, che esibisce fieramente, nell'abito e nei modi, i segni della completa appartenenza alla propria religione e alla propria, come lui stesso sottolinea, 'tribù'. Non poteva essere diversamente: il connubio tra attore e personaggio è totale e non sono pochi i critici e gli studiosi a leggere in Irving, talvolta non senza un pizzico di malignità, la spiccata tendenza a plasmare ogni personaggio a sua immagine e somiglianza. Alto e snello, aristocratico nella figura ma rigido nel portamento, aveva non pochi difetti di pronuncia: tuttavia, perfetto manager di sé stesso, sapeva convertire quei difetti in grandi punti di forza, catalizzando l'attenzione per la sua straordinaria presenza scenica. La sua notorietà si accompagna all'immagine di grandezza e di raffinatezza che era in grado di trasmettere ai suoi personaggi: 'No one was ever great as Irving looked. He could look greatly ascetic, greatly satanic, greatly sardonic or melancholy; he was never ordinary' [cfr: Hughes, p.10]. È così che bisogna leggere anche il suo Shylock: fuori dall'ordinario, lontano da tutti i tipi a cui la tradizione aveva abituato lo spettatore; con la sua interpretazione dell'ebreo shakespeariano Irving riesce brillantemente a trasportare la classe e la dignità proprie del *gentleman* vittoriano nel ghetto veneziano di fine Cinquecento.

Figura 1. Henry Irving in Shylock - Lyceum Theatre (1879)

Tuttavia, per comprendere meglio la modernità di questo *Merchant*, occorre ritornare un momento alla messinscena nella sua complessità: se il fine di Irving è spingere alla riflessione, evidenziare le ambiguità presenti nel testo per esaltarne le virtù morali troppo spesso accantonate da rappresentazioni viziate, sottolineare il contrasto e la convivenza di generi attraverso una messinscena fortemente illusionistica e dal grande potere drammatico, il primo passo è quello di operare sul testo per adattarlo il più possibile ai suoi

obiettivi. Se si guarda alla nota di apertura dell'edizione a stampa della prima *acting version*, si può osservare come sia Irving stesso a fornire la chiave con cui motivare tanto le scelte di adattamento drammaturgico quanto quelle più peculiarmente inerenti alla messinscena:

> In producing *The Merchant of Venice* I have endeavoured to avoid hampering the natural action of the piece with any unnecessary embellishment; but have tried not to omit any accessory which might heighten the effects. I have availed myself of every resource at my command to present the play in a manner acceptable to our audience. [cfr: H. Irving, 1879, p. 2]

Fare del linguaggio della scena un vero e proprio sostegno per il testo, che ne metta in risalto la potenza drammatica senza tuttavia intaccare il corso dell'azione; presentare l'opera in una maniera che possa definirsi accettabile per il suo pubblico. I diversi tagli e spostamenti apportati all'originale shakespeariano hanno questa duplice funzione: da un lato l'obiettivo è quello di salvaguardare la potenza illusionistica della scena, evitando che un numero eccessivo di cambi possa spezzare la fluidità dell'azione e rompere la suggestione. Il risultato è un adattamento che, se senz'altro privilegia il piacere dell'illusione di gusto spiccatamente vittoriano, pecca nel togliere un po' di equilibrio a un testo piuttosto corale com'è l'originale shakespeariano, tendendo invece a esaltare la predominanza di un protagonista sugli altri. Un secondo e non meno importante motivo trainante questo lavoro di adattamento drammaturgico è il supportare una messinscena del testo che ne esalti i valori morali: in questo senso vanno lette le omissioni minori, i non pochi tagli a quelle brevi frasi o singole battute che, se pur potevano divertire lo svezzato pubblico elisabettiano, avrebbero senz'altro infastidito la fin troppo sobria borghesia vittoriana. Come acutamente fa notare James Bulman, 'Irving's *Merchant* tended to romanticize Shakespeare's play by heightening its pathos and striving for grand theatrical effects' [cfr: Bulman, 1991, p.33].

Irving sembra operare per selezione, costruendo una misurata partitura da cui emergono le linee chiave della sua interpretazione del testo: la commedia viene presto sostituita dalle note drammatiche, perfino tragiche, che esaltano su tutti la vicenda di Shylock. Analizzando il lavoro di messinscena, emerge infatti piuttosto chiaramente come la ricerca dell'effetto drammatico e realistico, portata avanti attraverso un originalissimo lavoro di scrittura scenica, sia il più delle volte finalizzata a dimostrare 'the subtle psychological nuances of which Irving's naturalistic acting was capable' [cfr: Bulman, p.33].

Lo stage manager è anche abile sperimentatore, sapiente regista, direttore di scena: tuttavia a guidare il suo lavoro è ancora l'attore che è in lui, capace di veicolare tutte le arti del teatro verso la particolare lettura del proprio personaggio. Fin dall'apertura del sipario, ogni minimo dettaglio è curato per cullare lo spettatore nella magia delle calli veneziane. Un' ouverture lenta, calibrata, ricercata in ogni suo effetto, che ricorda in più di un'occasione il monumentale *Merchant* di Charles Kean. Lo scopo di Irving è senz'altro quello di immergere lo spettatore in una Venezia ibrida, eterogenea e giocosa, fargli respirare la stessa aria che i personaggi principali avrebbero poco dopo respirato. Non ci sono molte note riguardo all'uso della luce, di cui è noto che Irving fu un grande sperimentatore. Ciò che è certo è che già con la luce a gas Irving si fece pioniere di sperimentazioni cromatiche, di intelligenti combinazioni poetiche nate dal contrasto di luce e ombra, che avrebbe perfezionato introducendo al Lyceum la luce elettrica nel 1892. Tra le sue scelte innovative, quella di dividere in gruppi distinti la tradizionale fila di luci di proscenio, ottenendo così la possibilità di separare l'avanscena per zone e ottenere una maggiore varietà di effetti. Di vecchia data è anche il definitivo abbandono dell'uso del sipario nei cambi di scena, sostituito dal meno macchinoso buio, che aveva anche l'effetto di non spezzare brutalmente l'illusione.

E' proprio il buio a introdurre, nella terza scena del I atto, lo Shylock di Irving:

> He comes forward as a man between fifty and sixty years of age, infirm enough to need the support of a stick, with an iron-gray wisp of beard. [cfr: Fitzgerard, 1906, p.128]

Il costume con cui si presenta questo Shylock deve aver interessato non poco il pubblico, ancora abituato a una precisa immagine dell'ebreo, poggiata su stereotipi di vecchia data. Questo Shylock è lontano in tutto e per tutto dal 'conventional Hebrew usurer with a patriarchal beard and flowing robe, dirty and hook-nosed', ma al contrario si presenta come un 'picturesque and refined Italianized Jew, genteelly dressed, a dealer money in the country of Lorenzo de' Medici' [cfr: Fitzgerard, p.128].

Figura 2. Henry Irving in Shylock - Lyceum Theatre (1879)

Irving vuole per il suo Shylock un'immagine esteriore che sia all'insegna della sobrietà, e che non lo distingua, se non per qualche tocco orientale, da qualsiasi altro mercante di Rialto:

> Pale and lean visaged, his wisp of grey beard threaded with streaks of black, he leaned upon a stick, is head slightly bowed, so that normally his glance was upwards and askance. His dress was sober and picturesque… Gone was the red hat or red wig; in its place he wore a tightly fitting black cap down the front of which ran a bar of yellow suggesting a racial badge… The poise and dignity of his bearing was that of a Levantine Jew, an alien in Venice and therefore more saturated with Judaism than those of his race who had rubbed shoulders with Europeans. From the outset his manner suggested that Shylock kept his household and himself apart from Western custom and thought- isolated in its habits by choice and force of race. [cfr: L.Irving, 1951, p. 350]

Uso sapiente della pausa, opposizioni ritmiche e cromatiche, reiterazione del gesto (i cosiddetti *three times* di Irving sono noti e, soprattutto per il suo Shylock, ricorrono di continuo a enfatizzare e sottolineare gesti e azioni): così Irving costruisce la sua messinscena, dal più piccolo movimento del suo personaggio, monade che spicca in un coro piuttosto uniforme, fino alla più complessa orchestrazione della sua macchina scenica.

Nel raccontare la tragedia di Shylock Irving procede per contrasti, rintracciando sapientemente nella mescolanza di generi un aspetto predominante della sua messinscena: le note cupe e drammatiche spiccano – sembra voler dire Irving - solo se poste in rapporto dialettico con la loro controparte gioiosa. Così la profondità con cui Irving tratteggia il suo ebreo si misura in rapporto alla leggerezza con cui dipinge i personaggi corali. In questo senso vanno letti alcuni momenti significativi della sua regia, momenti che denotano la sua straordinaria capacità di farsi abile scrittore della scena per supportare una personale lettura del testo.

È il caso della terza scena del II atto, dove forse emerge con maggior forza la personalità romantica e incisiva di Irving regista: è il momento della fuga di Jessica dalla casa paterna con i denari e i preziosi del padre. Shylock è invitato a cena da Bassanio, e la figlia approfitta dell'assenza del padre per organizzare la fuga con l'amato Lorenzo. Un'imponente scenografia riproduce la casa di Shylock affiancata da un ponte praticabile. Appena dopo l'uscita dell'ebreo la scena si tinge con i colori della mascherata: una dolce serenata accompagna l'ingresso di Lorenzo che arriva a bordo di una gondola; una volta raggiunto da Jessica, i due ripartono mentre le maschere danzanti avvolgono la scena.

Fin qui niente di nuovo: Charles Kean aveva già utilizzato la mascherata, immettendo i meccanismi dell'intermezzo musicale tra le pieghe del testo, conferendo in tal modo al momento di intrattenimento una funzione drammaturgica. Tuttavia, la forza drammatica di questa scena sta' nel suo porsi in netto contrasto con ciò che Irving inventa immediatamente dopo. Un veloce cambio viene annunciato dal repentino abbassarsi e alzarsi del sipario: alla gioiosità della mascherata si contrappone lo stesso scenario ora vuoto, cupo e desolato, a segnare l'inizio di uno dei momenti dal più forte impatto emotivo dell'intero spettacolo:

> The stage emptied; ripples of laughter died away: one heard the tapping of Shylock's walking stick. Then, in an interpolated scene illustrative of Irving's genius, Shylock entered carrying his lantern, slowly wending his way home from dinner. He crossed the bridge, descended the steps,

> and crossed stage left to his house. He knocked at the door three times, slowly. There was no answer. He paused: the silence disturbed him. With greater deliberation he knocked again, three times. Then, raising his lantern to search the darkened upper windows, across his features came a look of dumb and complete despair. The curtain fell on this picture of 'unrelieved simplicity', 'the image of the father convulsed with grief.' [cfr: Bulman, pp.32- 33]

Si tratta di una breve aggiunta al materiale drammaturgico originale, di una piccola pausa dal racconto per soffermarsi sul personaggio: eppure sarebbe rimasto nella memoria come uno dei momenti di maggiore forza drammatica nella storia scenica del *Merchant.* Ellen Terry lo descrive come uno dei più emozionanti a cui abbia mai assistito come spettatrice e non c'è recensione che non si soffermi su questo passaggio, che acquisisce così un'importanza tale da essere eletto a parte integrante della drammaturgia, come fosse indistinguibile dalla penna di Shakespeare. In nessun altro momento il pubblico deve aver sentito tanto forte l'empatia con questo personaggio che ora incarna il padre tradito da una figlia ribelle, vista dagli occhi dell'irreprensibile spettatore vittoriano come 'an odious, immodest, dishonest creature, than whom Shakespeare drew no more unpleasant character' [cfr: *The Spectator*, 8 Nov. 1879]. Bulman legge acutamente in questa invenzione di Irving una tendenza, mutuata dall'opera e dalla librettistica del tempo, alla creazione di momenti a effetto che esaltino la tensione drammatica: alcuni critici dell'epoca avrebbero addirittura riconosciuto in questa scena un'esplicita eco del *Rigoletto* verdiano [cfr: Moore, 1976, p. 210]

Nell'immaginarci lo Shylock di Irving mentre batte a una porta che non gli sarà aperta, vengono subito alla mente le parole di Ettore Samigli, pseudonimo tra i tanti di un giovane Italo Svevo che, nel 1880, scriveva a proposito di Shylock 'Curvo, solo, abbandonato dall'unico essere che aveva oltre il dovere di non disprezzarlo anche quello di amarlo; ma chi riderebbe di questa triste figura?' [Svevo, 1954, p.42] Quel che è certo è che il ritorno di Shylock alla sua casa vuota è destinato a diventare un vero e proprio topos teatrale, riproposto molte volte da quella tradizione realistica che si sviluppa dopo Irving, e che proprio in Irving riconosce uno dei suoi capostipiti. Come già Charles Kean, Irving identifica in un realismo plastico la giusta chiave per inscenare il suo *Merchant* e in particolare la monumentale *Trial Scene,* luogo in cui la tragedia di Shylock si consuma: ecco quindi l'aula di tribunale, 'with its ceiling painted in the Verrio style' [Fitzgerard, p.130], affollata da spettatori, nobili, guardie, gente del popolo. L'inconfondibile tocco di sapienza registica dello stage manager si rivela nella scelta di far accompagnare il suo Shylock da Tubal e da un gruppo di ebrei, esigua controparte alla folla cristiana. La loro presenza è subito motivata da come Irving decide di aprire l'atto:

> Part of the crowd of spectators point and jeer as two Jews enter. One of the Jews brushes against Gratiano who angrily resents it. Solanio and Salarino interpose and the Jews retires upstage right, joining the other Jew. While this has been going on, some of the crowd at the back- all of whom have been watching the foregoing- take the opportunity to jeer at three Jews who are amongst them; the guards interpose across the barrier, and with their halberds, gently forced the three Jews into a corner by themselves right. The rest of the crowd now keep apart from them. [Bulman, p. 45]

Non è difficile immaginare l'effetto dell'inserimento di simili comparse nell'indirizzare la *sympathy* dello spettatore verso Shylock. Niente della 'steady joyousness' di Edmund Kean, quel suo 'burst of exultation, when his right is confessed' [Hughes, 260], appare in Irving. Al contrario, l'entrata del suo Shylock è avvolta da una terribile calma, da un silenzio che per intensità appare insopportabile: una terribile, fredda sete di vendetta sembra accompagnare questo Shylock, che si presenta in scena spogliato di ogni orpello: via il mantello, addosso solo un abito nero dalle maniche strette che accentuano la magrezza del corpo. L'effetto drammatico è di nuovo ottenuto per sottrazione e anche la recitazione si regge su un sottile equilibrio di pause e piccoli gesti, alternati a battute pronunciate con una tremenda, monolitica fermezza. In uno dei *prompt books* conservato alla Folger Shakespeare Library, frasi come 'I stand for judgement', 'I would have my bond' e 'I stand here for law' sono evidenziate e riscritte più volte a lato, isolate dal contesto ed elette a momenti chiave per definire la fermezza con cui lo Shylock di Irving avrebbe condotto la sua causa [cfr: Mellish's Prompt Book, 1879]. Per temperare una così impassibile sete di 'giustizia', non poteva che comparire un difensore della 'misericordia' molto più sopra le righe. Così, fin dal costume, una ampia tunica lavorata ai bordi con un abbondante strascico, la Portia di Ellen Terry deve adattare la sua recitazione per fare da contrasto tematico ed emotivo a Shylock.

Figura 3. Ellen Terry in Portia - Lyceum Theatre (1879)

Il risultato è una Portia- Balthasar che, se senz'altro non manca di fascino nel recitare il suo famoso monologo sulla natura della misericordia 'with a charmingly romantic stile' [Bulman, p.48], certo non convince né nell'esibire una finta mascolinità, né dei seri propositi con cui porta avanti la sua arringa. Ma del resto così deve essere nella tragedia di Shylock: il fascino di Portia trova la sua legittimità tra le mura romantiche di Belmonte, ma nel tribunale veneziano non rappresenta più la vittoria della misericordia su un'intransigente giustizia, ma l'incarnazione di quella ipocrisia cristiana che agisce per far capitolare il protagonista. Se pure ne esce sconfitto, quella di Shylock risulta così una completa vittoria morale; e se la sua caduta viene mostrata nel crescente terrore che lo assale mentre si fa' spettatore della sua rovina, è pur vero che la cattiveria con cui i 'buoni' cristiani lo scherniscono non fa' altro che accrescere tra il pubblico il numero dei suoi sostenitori. Con la sua abilità nell'orchestrare i contrasti drammatici, Irving prepara il terreno per un'uscita di scena del suo personaggio che sarebbe rimasta nella storia:

> When Shylock grasped the severity of his sentence, his eyelids became heavy as thus he was hardly able to lift them and his eyes became lustreless and vacant. The words "I am not well" were the plea of a doomed man to be allowed to leave the court and to die in utter loneliness. But Graziano's ill-timed jibe governed Shylock's exit. He turned… Slowly and steadily the Jew scanned his tormentor from head to foot, his eyes resting on the Italian's face with concentrated scorn. The proud rejection of insult and injustice lit up his face for a moment, enough for the audience to feel a strange relief in knowing that, in that glance, *Shylock had triumphed*… as he reached the door and put on his hand towards it, he was seized with a crumpling convulsion. It was but a momentary weakness indicated with great subtlety. Then, drawing himself up to his full height once more, Shylock bent his gaze defiantly upon the court and stalked out. [L. Irving, pp.343- 344]

Nel trionfo morale di questo Shylock, l'ultra-civile pubblico vittoriano ha riconosciuto probabilmente l'apologia dell'intero popolo di cui l'ebreo shakespeariano è il rappresentante più noto. La grande abilità di Irving risiede probabilmente nell'aver saputo interpretare con grande acutezza gli umori e le pulsioni del pubblico a cui si rivolgeva, toccando con sapienza le giuste corde emotive e assecondando il loro desiderio di apparire tolleranti, giusti, accoglienti. Dopo una simile dipartita dalla scena del personaggio principale, il V atto con il suo romantico gioco delle coppie diventa così solo un grottesco tentativo di tornare alla commedia, di ristabilire un ordine nell'ormai sbiadita perfezione del mondo cristiano. Il risultato è un contrasto stridente, che non può non apparire come 'an ironic post mortem in which the villains of the Erinyes dance upon the hero's grave' [Hughes, p. 263]. Il Novecento, pronto a gettare ombre sulla commedia romantica e a rovesciarne ironicamente i significati, avrebbe preso a piene mani da questi spunti, rileggendo in innumerevoli versioni il V atto del *Merchant* come una pallida eco di un'armonia irraggiungibile per una società malata. Tuttavia, la scelta di interpretare Shylock come un *sympathetic Jew* è ormai ampiamente diffusa, come dimostra la schiera dei vari epigoni e imitatori di Irving con le cui interpretazioni si inaugura il nuovo secolo. Anche quando Shylock torna ad essere il *villain* grottesco del passato, o quanto meno il terribile e temibile usuraio in cerca di sangue, lo fa per quel teatro che si vuole distaccare da una tradizione

da cui comunque deriva e che tiene sempre presente: che lo si voglia contrastare o imitare, dal *sympathetic Jew* non si può comunque prescindere.

Lo Shylock di Irving si è impresso così tanto nella storia dell'interpretazione del ruolo da aleggiare, come uno spettro ispiratore, nel famoso allestimento di Jonathan Miller che debutta al National Theatre di Londra nel 1970: lì, in una Venezia che sembra in tutto e per tutto la Londra vittoriana, si aggira, elegante, lo Shylock *gentleman* di Laurence Olivier, in un dichiarato omaggio al suo grande predecessore Sir Henry Irving.

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‘Shakespeare and His Contemporaries’ Graduate Conference 2011

‘I wish this solemn mockery were o’er’: William Ireland’s ‘Shakespeare Forgeries’

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Paper given on 14 April 2011

Jonathan Bate has linked William-Henry Ireland’s forgeries to the cultural and literary context of the 1790s because in those times the mystery around the identity of Shakespeare was becoming a serious concern for scholars and critics. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, there had been no reason to doubt that Shakespeare was the real author of the plays, mainly because they were perceived as the unrefined product of a man with no particular skill or education: ‘[H]e was not sufficiently highly regarded for anybody to worry themselves about his provincial origins and lack of a university degree.’[77] However, by the end of the century, when Shakespeare started to be ‘hailed as a genius, even a God’, doubts about the authorship of his plays came to the fore: ‘The moment a faith takes hold, heretics emerge’, states Bate.[78]

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, poet laureate and first editor of Shakespeare Nicholas Rowe remarked with a paternalistic attitude in his *Life of Shakespeare* that the playwright ‘had no knowledge of the writings of the ancient poets’: his father gave him ‘no better education than his own Employment’ and so he fell prey to the mingling of tragedy and comedy, ‘the common mistake of that age’.[79] In pursuance of that prejudice, Shakespeare’s texts were frequently emended, corrected and ‘improved’ in order to make both plot and language conform to Neoclassical norms and standards. His works were perceived as flawed, uneven, and automatically associated to the coarseness of the literary tastes of the past. Jeffrey Kahan writes: ‘Indeed, many of Shakespeare’s plays were rewritten drastically. Every nuance of the Bard’s writing came under scrutiny: his language, his humour, his morality. His puns were deemed to be in bad taste. They were removed. The funny episodes in sad plays and the sad bits in comic plays were erased. His characters were inconsistent. Adaptors simplified Shakespeare’s heroic men into plain heroes and his distressed women into recognizable damsels in distress.’[80] Between 1747 and 1776, works such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Othello* appeared in altered forms at the Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatre more than 3731 times.[81]

As Loretta Innocenti has brilliantly demonstrated in her work, the practice of adapting Shakespeare’s texts in the eighteenth century was so common that the sheer number of circulating apocrypha made it hard for audiences and playwrights to locate the original Shakespearian text: ‘Molte delle difficoltà nello stabilire la forma filologicamente definitiva del canone shakespeariano nascono infatti dalla molteplicità di copie, di copioni, e di prompt-books della stessa opera, con interpolazioni di capocomici e degli attori, indicazioni sommarie di messe in scena che spesso non seguivano fedelmente il testo scritto.’[82] Some adaptations, like Dryden’s *All for Love* or Rowe’s *Jane Shore*, were even more successful than their primary source and despite the 1709 Copyright Act, which limited the proliferation of pirate copies, Shakespeare’s texts continued to be manipulated. It was only from the second half of the eighteenth century that the concept of original text began truly to be taken into consideration, in parallel with the move to glorify Shakespeare as a semi-god.

Jonathan Bate maintains that, with the rise of the Romantic movement, ‘this conception of what is to be a genius has the effect of investing talismanic power in the *author’s original manuscript*’.[83] During the eighteenth century, while texts were abused and contaminated without respect for their source, the lack of

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[77] J. Bate, ‘The authorship controversy’, *The genius of Shakespeare* (London: 1997), p. 73.
[78] Bate, p. 75.
[79] N. Rowe, *Some accounts of the life etc. of Mr. William Shakespeare, 1709* (London: 2009), pp. 26; 46.
[80] J. Kahan, *Reforging Shakespeare: the story of a theatrical scandal* (London: 1998), p. 22.
[81] Kahan, p. 25.
[82] L. Innocenti, *La scena trasformata: adattamenti neoclassici di Shakespeare* (Firenze: 1985), p. 83.
[83] Bate, p. 82.

any written evidence of the poet's existence was not seen as 'a cause for serious consternation'.[84] However, as the end of the century approached, the cult of Shakespeare, or Bardolatry (originated in 1741, when the Bard was granted a monument in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey, and sanctified in 1769 with Garrick's Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford), gradually dissociated the image of the sublime poet from the works of the unschooled playwright, providing him with a place in the pantheon of the English poets and effectively transforming his few extant written traces into sacred relics. This can be seen as 'an attempt to fill the gap left by the absence of original manuscripts'.[85] As Maurizio Ascari remarks, at this stage Bardolatry focused entirely on the author and not on his plays;[86] for this reason there had been no theatrical performance of Shakespeare's works during the Jubilee. The Bard was presented paradoxically as both an omnipotent and an invisible entity, whose existence relied purely on an uncertain and shifting handwriting.[87] His image became evanescent and rarefied, implicitly encouraging belief in his life by an act of sheer faith. Within this climate of fanaticism, Bardolatry focused on compensating for and explaining the biographical void hanging over Shakespeare's existence as a playwright. On the one hand, it generated a frenetic search for papers, manuscripts or artefacts that could prove the existence of the poet; on the other hand, it spawned the proliferation of several biographical anecdotes that oscillated between truth and myth.

This is the reason why Ireland's forgeries are to be firmly located in their historical context, halfway between the proliferation of adaptations of Shakespearian works and the veneration of the Bard as a poetic divinity, whose acolytes desperately craved for some documents to validate their literary devotion. Ireland's forgeries responded to several speculations about the identity of Shakespeare, adapting his image to a contemporary audience (sometimes with involuntarily humorous outcomes) and bridging the gap between the man and the god the rise of Bardolatry had created. The forgeries were a sort of attempt to explain the genius of Shakespeare.

Ireland fabricated a catalogue of the books Shakespeare possessed in his – presumed – library, which included more than 1100 volumes, some of them in Latin, Greek and French, in order to dispel the doubts that he was an uneducated man who, according to the testament found in 1747, did not possess any books. He forged a *Letter to Anne Hatherrewaye*[88] which clarified the image of the poet as a faithful husband and a sentimental poet (and dismissed any suspicions about his homosexuality). Enclosed with the letter there was a lock of hair, which the actor had cut and offered to his bride as a token of devotion. The lock and the lyrical imagery in the letter completed the image of the poet as true man of feeling, which obviously matched the widespread sensibility trends of the latter part of the eighteenth century. He forged a document called *The Profession of Faith*,[89] which silenced any rumours about his Catholic background (in 1757, a paper attributed to Shakespeare's father John had proven his adherence to Roman Catholicism). He also forged a *Letter to*

[84] *Ibid.*
[85] *Ibid.*
[86] See M. Ascari, *I linguaggi della tradizione: canone e anticanone nella cultura inglese* (Firenze: 2005), pp. 178-183.
[87] See P. Ackroyd, *Shakespeare* (London: 2005), p. 187. 'The subject of Shakespeare's handwriting is in itself important, since there is now no other means of tracing his physical presence in the world. We might note, for example, that in each of six of his authenticated signatures he spells his surname differently. He abbreviates it, too, as if he were not happy with it. It becomes "Shakp" or "Shakspe" or "Shaksper". The brevity may, of course, equally be a sign of speed or impatience… The differences in the spelling of his surname can of course be ascribed to the loose and uncertain orthography of the period rather than to any perceived lack of identity, but it does at least suggest that his presence in the world was not fully determined. In a mortgage deed and a purchase deed, signed within hours or even minutes of each other, he signs his name in two completely different ways. It is even supposed by some calligraphers that the three signatures on his will are written by three different people, since the dissimilarities "are almost beyond explanation". The author, as if by some act of magic, has disappeared!'
[88] 'Dearesste Anna | As thou haste alwaye founde mee toe mye Worde moste trewe soe thou shalt see I have stryctlye kept mye promise I praye you perfume thys mye poore Locke with thye balmye Kysses fore thenne indeed shalle Kynges themmeselves bowe and paye homage toe itte I doe assure thee no rude hande hath knottedde itte thye Willys alone hath done the worke neytherre the gyldedde bauble thatte envyronnes the heade of Majestye noe norre honourres moste weyghtye woulde give mee halfe the joye as didde thysse mye little worke fore thee The feeling thatte dydde nearest approache untoe itte was thatte whiche comethe nygheste untoe God meeke and Gentle Charytye fore thatte Virrtue O Anna doe I love doe I cheryshe thee inne mye hearte fore thou arte as a talle Cedarre stretchynge for the its branches and succourynge smaller Plants fromme nyppynge Winneterre orr the boysterouse Wyndes Farewele toe Morrow bye tymes I wille see thee tille thenne Adewe sweete Love | Thyne everre | Wm Shakspeare', in P. Pierce, *The great Shakespeare fraud* (Gloucestershire: 2004), p. 67.
[89] 'I being nowe off sounde Mynde doe hope thatte thys mye wyshe wille ate mye deathe bee acceded toe as I nowe lyve in Londonne ande as mye soule maye perchance soone quitte thys poore Bodye it is mye desire thatte inne suche case I maye bee carried to mye native place and thatte mye Mobye bee there quietlye interred with as little pompe as canne bee ande I doe nowe inne these mye seyriouse moments make thys mye professione of faith and whiche I doe moste solemnlye believe I doe fyrste looke toe oune lovynge and greate God ande toe hys glorious sonne Jesus I doe alsoe beleyve thatte thys mye weake ande frayle Bodye wille returne toe duste butte fore mye soule lette God judge thatte as toe hymselfe shelle seeme meete…', Pierce, p. 53.

Southampton[90] in which he confirmed that Shakespeare had been given a consistent amount of money by the Earl, thus making the poet appear as a trustworthy friend of the royalty. Moreover, a letter from Queen Elizabeth[91] appeared to prove that Shakespeare was loyal towards the monarch (and not a conspirator with the Earl of Essex in the 1601 plot, as other anecdotes indicated). The forgeries demonstrated that he was a courteous and dignified gentleman at heart; for instance, some revealing marginalia made clear he would not attend Guy Fawkes' execution because 'he lykedde notte toe beholde syghtes of thatte kynde'.[92] Finally, some financial deeds and various legal certificates proved that Shakespeare was punctual in payments and negotiated terms with his publishers, much in the manner of a typical eighteenth-century author.

The forgeries were perceived as authentic because they confirmed the neoclassical notion of Shakespeare's 'exceeding candor and good nature',[93] and they also portrayed Elizabethan literary culture as a commodity market, protecting intellectual property exactly like material goods. The forgeries made the Bard a gentleman, or even a lord; they assuaged concerns over his personality, such as his unruliness (he was purportedly accused of deer-poaching in the property of Sir Thomas Lucy in Charlecote, and subsequently fled to London in fear of persecution); they glossed over his degrading jobs as a butcher or a horse-keeper. James Boaden, a firm believer in the forgeries, remarked that a man who was on such intimate terms with the aristocracy could neither be a deer-poacher nor a humble horse-keeper.[94]

The forgeries also helped to solve partially the unsettling problem of the real authorship of the plays. In 1734, Lewis Theobald had questioned *Henry the Fifth*; *Two Gentlemen of Verona* had been accused by Thomas Hammer in 1743; Samuel Johnson had attacked *Richard II* in 1745 and soon after Richard Farmer expressed his doubts about *The Taming of the Shrew*.[95] Once the forgeries had dispelled public suspicions about the identity of Shakespeare, there was no further reason to be sceptical about his lawful authorship. Clearly, people wanted to believe they were authentic, because they produced an image of a 'better' Shakespeare, an improved playwright. In order to reinforce this opinion, Ireland announced the discovery of the manuscript of *King Lear*, which the forger had rewritten and purged from vulgarity, as he declared in his *Confessions*: '[I]t was generally deemed very extraordinary that the productions of Shakespeare should be found so very unequal, and in particular that so much ribaldry should appear throughout his dramatic compositions. I determined on the expedient of rewriting, in the old hand, one of his most conspicuous plays, and making such alterations as I conceived appropriate.'[96]

Here are some examples of Ireland's corrections:

> *Shakespeare*: Leave thy drinke and thy whore
> *Ireland*: Leave thy drinke and thye hope
>
> *Sh*: I would divorce me from thy mother's toombe
> Sepulchring an adultress
> *Ir*: I would divorce thee from thye Motherres Wombe
> And say the Motherre was an Adultresse
>
> *Sh*: with presented nakedness, outface

[90] 'Mye Lorde | Doe notte esteeme me a sluggarde nor tardye for thus havyinge delayed to answerre or rather toe thank you for youre greate Bountye I doe assure you my gracious ande good Lorde that thrice I have essayed toe wryte and thrice mye efforts have benne fruitless I knowe notte what toe saye Prose Verse alle all is naughte gratitude as all I have toe utter and that is tooe greate and tooe sublime a feeling for poore mortals toe expresse O my Lord itte is a Budde which Bllossommes Bllooms butte never dyes itte cherishes sweete Nature ande lulls the calme Breaste toe softe softe repose Butte mye goode Lorde forgive thys mye departure fromme mye Subjecte which was toe retturne thankes and thankes I Doe retturne O excuse mee mye Lorde more at presente I cannotte. | Yours devoteddlye and with due respecte | Wm Shakspeare', Pierce, p. 50.

[91] 'We dydde receive youre prettye Verses goode Masterre William through the hands off oure Lorde Chamberlayne ande wee doe Complemente thee onne theyre greate excellence Wee shalle departe from Londonne toe Hamptowne forre the holydayes where wee Shalle expecte thee with thye beste Actorres thatte thou mayste playe before ourselfe toe amuse use bee notte slowe butte comme toe use bye Tuesday nexte asse the lorde Leicesterre willee bee with use. | Elizabeth R.
Shakespeare's note
Thys Letterre I dydde receive fromme my moste gracyouse Ladye Elyzabethe ande I doe request itte maye bee kepte with all care possible./Wm Shakspear/For Master William Shakspeare ate the Globe bye Thames', Pierce, p. 70.

[92] Pierce, p. 60.

[93] Rowe, pp. 38-39.

[94] Pierce, p. 71.

[95] J. Shapiro, *Contested Will: who wrote Shakespeare?* (London: 2010), p. 65.

[96] W. H. Ireland, *Confessions, 1805,* see <http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Confessions_of_William-Henry_Ireland>

The wind and persecution of the sky
Ir: And with Adam-like nakedness out-face
The wind and persecution of the sky

Ireland's objective was to clarify the meaning of the play and make it more even and symmetrical, by prolonging and extending its parts. Two lines in Shakespeare become an alarming expansion:

Sh: I have a journey, sir, shortly to go:
My master calls, and I must say no

Ir: Thanks, sir; but I goe toe thatte unknownne Land
Thatte Chaynes each Pilgrim fast within its Soyle
Bye livynge menne mouste shunnd mouste dreadedde
Stille mye goode masterre thys same Journey tooke
He calls mee I amme contente and straight obeye
Thenne farewelle Worlde the busye Sceane is done
Kente livd mouste true Kente dys mouste lyke a Manne[97].

The forgery here can be seen as a typically eighteenth-century linguistic adaptation which worked to clarify Shakespeare's language. Double-meanings, obscure metaphors, puns were simplified in order to reduce the richness of Shakespeare's language, which, in those times, was perceived as redundant and even potentially threatening (unruliness in style equalled social disorder). Here Ireland behaves much like Shakespeare's editors (in particular Pope), who longed to demonstrate that the coarse language and ribaldry were spurious additions by printers and players and did not belong to the authentic Shakespeare.

Despite (or perhaps because of) these good intentions, the reactions that ensued the exposure of the forgeries were ferocious. When Edmund Malone published his 424-page *Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments,* the Ireland versions were called upstarts and cheats, lampooned in newspapers, accused of blasphemy: James Boaden – friend turned foe – warned William Henry to 'be aware, sir, of the enormous crime you committed against the divinity of Shakespeare'.[98] Someone even suggested that Samuel be executed like a traitor, his head exposed on London Bridge. William Henry was forced to leave first London and then England, and his father's activity as a draughtsman and antiquarian collapsed (even his collection of Hogarths and Van Dycks was dismissed as forgery).

There were two central factors in this tragic outcome of the controversy: the first one is linked to the Copyright Act and the protection of intellectual property. Literature in the eighteenth century was a commercial commodity (and a costly one): plagiarism was the equivalent of money counterfeiting. The forgeries were dangerous because they proved that the boundaries between authentic and fake could easily be crossed.[99] The second reason is more ideological and it concerns the sacred name of Shakespeare, which the forgeries had dared doctor and usurp. Shakespeare was not only the national poet; he was a national emblem of power and stability in a troubled decade of national upheaval and chaos (French Revolution, Industrial Revolution, American Revolution). Forging the image of Shakespeare was perceived to be alarmingly subversive, threatening the national identity and the main values of the English nation. Robert Miles discussed how in the 1790s the so-called 'Republic of Letters' was fiercely policed. In his *Inquiry*, Malone stood as both judge and guarantor of this republic, dedicating almost 90 pages to dismantling in detail each of the forged letters, and reinforcing his argument with a recurrent legalistic terminology.[100] Moreover, the neoclassical scholar called Ireland's friends 'Dissenters' and 'Jacobites' (according to him, the forgeries showed a clear disrespect for the monarchy and the king), reasoning that whoever was behind the forgeries must have been a dangerous supporter of the French Revolution.

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[97] Pierce, pp. 76-77.
[98] Ireland, <http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Confessions_of_William-Henry_Ireland>
[99] See P. Bailey, 'An age of forgery', in *The house of forgery in eighteenth-century Britain* (Aldershot: 1999), pp. 7-23 .
[100] '"Forging" the national poet was not only to pollute the sacred… it was also to call up fears of miscegenation, as we see from Malone's metaphor, where the national poet, acting as a metonym for the nation, is menaced by "foreign admixture" (where the very multiplicity of Malone's metaphorical vehicles-blood, currency, the sacred-enacts the previous point about the overlap of disciplinary references)', R. Miles, 'Trouble in the republic of letters: the reception of the Shakespeare forgeries', in *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 44, no. 3 (Fall 2005), pp. 317-340.

Moving beyond the historical context, it is notable that Ireland's fakes acquire a fascinating and complex linguistic dimension as palimpsests that both recuperate and question the reception and the image of Shakespeare. By resurrecting Shakespeare's voice into his own present, Ireland acted as ventriloquist, establishing a dialogic exchange with the memory of the poet. We might even envisage the forgeries as elaborate pastiches that self-consciously imitate, deconstruct and re-fashion their source model.

According to Genette, what distinguishes pastiche from forgery is that the latter are not identified as such by the reader: they are perceived as authentic and legitimate. Briefly, forgeries cannot possess anything that might betray their fictional status; their style must be as close as possible to the original without repeating lines *ad verbatim*, and they must be totally devoid of anachronism.[101] However, as I have already pointed out, Ireland's forgeries were deeply anachronistic. He frequently dated his letters and deeds mentioning the Globe before it had been built; he referred to actors, like John Lowin, who were only twelve years old at the time of writing; he addressed the manuscript of *King Lear* to 'Mye Gentle Readerres', despite the fact that Elizabethan playwrights did not technically own the material they wrote, much less anticipated its publication. In one memorable letter he writes that Elizabeth liked to have 'her rolles and tea' – unfortunately for him, tea was not yet available in Elizabethan England.

Above all, what was evidently anachronistic was orthography and spelling. Ireland's method consisted in doubling as many consonants as possible, avoiding any kind of punctuation and adding an 'e' at the end of each word (Hathaway spelt 'Hatherrawaye', London spelt 'Londonne', and so on). Although there were no fixed syntactic rules in Elizabethan times, this brand of archaic spelling was already obsolete for Elizabethan writers and Ireland forgeries seemed strongly – and strangely – caricatured (perpendicularly is spelled 'perrepennedycularely' and inattention becomes 'innetennecyonne'). Malone wrote in his *Inquiry* that 'the spelling was not of Elizabethan times, it was of no time whatsoever',[102] and parodies of Ireland's style started to appear in newspapers.[103]

So while everybody was smoothing out Shakespeare's language, trying to even out its complexities, Ireland did the opposite: he forged a language which was much thicker and more poetical than the standardized versions that circulated in neoclassical adaptations. I would like to suggest that Ireland's forgery was *consciously* fictional; he practiced a deliberate stylization of the past, recreating a language that looked and felt pointedly antique. This is, according to Genette, exactly the opposite of forgery: what the Russian Formalists called stylization, which Genette dubs saturation,[104] is the exaggeration, repetition and abuse of a particular stylistic trait until it dominates the entire linguistic structure. In a way, it seems that Ireland's forgeries almost flaunted their own fictional status: even their ambiguous origin (the chest of a mysterious gentleman named Mr. H.) is allusive of a literary trope, reminding readers of the manuscripts found at Naples in Walpole's Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto,* and Chatterton's *Rowley* papers found in the Gothic church of St. Mary Redcliffe in Bristol. The Ireland forgeries have a distinctive and volatile metafictional quality. They mock the devices of representation of the real and the authentic even while they exploit these techniques to assert their own status.

Perhaps William Henry was trying to get rid of a precocious anxiety of influence; this would explain why he felt the need to distance himself from the overpowering Shakespearian model and create his own line of continuity. He forged a *Deed of Gift from Shakespeare to Ireland* in which Shakespeare gave all the profits of his plays to a 'Masterre William Henrye Irelande' who had saved him from drowning into the Thames. The deed was even matched by a lyric depicting the arms of Shakespeare and Ireland joined together.[105] He also faked a testament (dated five years prior to the real one) where he makes Heminge the executor of his plays and instructs him to go to the Globe and look for them in a chest. The rest of the treasure would go to

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[101] G. Genette, *Palimpsestes*, *la littérature au second degrée* (Paris: 1982), p. 95.

[102] E. Malone, *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments* (London: 1796), p. 33. see <http://www.archive.org/stream/inquiryintoauthe00malo#page/32/mode/2up>

[103] 'Tooo Missteerree Beenjaammiinnee Joohnnssonn/DEEREE SIRREE,/Wille youe doee meee theee favvourree too dinnee wytthee meee onnn Friddaye nextte attt twoo off theee clocke too eatee somme muttonne choppes and somme pottaattooeesse/I amm deerree sirree/Yourre goodde friendde/WILLIIAME SHAEKSPARE', *The Telegraph* (1796), quot. in Pierce, p. 114.

[104] Genette, p. 95.

[105] 'Inne life wee/Wille live togetherre/Deathe/Shalle fore a lytelle/Parte use butte/Shakespeares Soule restless/Inne the Grave shalle uppe/Agayne ande meete hys freynde hys/IRELAND/Inne the Bleste Courte of Heevenne'

Shakespeare's dedicatory note

'Givenne toe mye mouste worthye/Ande excellaunte Freynde Masterre/William Henrye Irelande inne
Remembrance of hys havynge/Savedde mye life whenne onne/Thames/WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE', Pierce, p. 52.

an illegitimate child, probably that very mysterious W.H. (William Henry) who had rescued him and who might also be the mysterious 'begetter' of the Sonnets. So another problem was solved.

Given this network of overlaps and inheritance, Ireland truly saw himself as Shakespeare's contemporary when he announced the finding of a lost play. *Vortigern*, *a Historical Tragedy* was performed at the Drury Lane in 1796, after the forged letters had been exposed by Malone. The prologue tried to dispel the accusations of plagiarism ('Demand no other proof – nor idly pore/ O'er mouldy manuscripts of ancient lore/ To see if every tawny line display / The genuine ink of fam'd Eliza's day / Nor strive with curious industry to know/ How poets spelt two centuries ago')[106] but the audience would not be convinced. According to *The Times*, the first Act was watched in silence, though every line of it 'spoke itself an actual forgery'; the second and the third proved less tolerable, while the fourth elicited 'rude murmurs' and 'continual merriment'. In the fifth Act, the bursts of laughter reached its culmination when Kemble delivered the infamous lines 'I would this solemn mockery were o'er'.[107]

The plot was felt as distinctively Shakespearean: Vortigern, a Saxon general, murders Constantius, king of Romanised Britain, in order to gain control of the crown and the kingdom. After the murder, he intends to use Flavia, his daughter, to strengthen his political connections by offering her hand to a Saxon Baron. But Flavia, already engaged to Constantius' son, Aurelius, flees into the forest disguised as a boy to escape from his father's wrath. After realizing his daughter's escape, Vortigern blames Edmunda, his innocent wife, who is deeply offended and shuts herself into a 'stony' silence which will drive her to madness. The allied troops of Romans and Scots attack the castle and Vortigern surrenders. The play ends when Vortigern confesses his crime, Edmunda's reason is restored when she recognizes Flavia by a birthmark on her forehead (whom she believed to be dead), and Aurelius becomes king of England and marries Flavia.

The play presents a structure that adapts Shakespearian themes to the tastes of a genteel eighteenth-century audience. Vortigern's final monologue explicitly acknowledges his sin, 'ambition';[108] but instead of dying the murderer is spared and taken away, his final *agnition* allowing the play a traditional happy ending. However, the reassuringly familiar architecture of the play is continually disturbed by an elaborate system of mutilated echoes drawn freely from Shakespeare's macrotext. Themes from *Macbeth, As You Like It, The Winter's Tale*, *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* are impossible to miss,[109] and some lines are taken verbatim from Shakespeare's plays: Macduff's 'Confusion now hath made his masterpiece' (*Macbeth*, II, iii, 64) recurs in Edmunda's 'Now woe indeed hath made her masterpiece'.

Hence *Vortigern* acquires significance precisely because it must be read as a forgery. The interpolation of elements which do not belong solely to one play but to the entire Shakespearian macrotext eludes the standardization and avoids the limitations of neoclassical standards. Adaptations in the eighteenth century tended to reduce or even eliminate the parts of the dramatic plot that did not give the entire structure a thematic coherence; the comic scenes were cut out from tragedies and many comedies were exaggerated, even farcically, to highlight regularity of mood and tone. *Vortigern* is a rather more ambiguous adaptation. It is rhapsodic and even carnivalesque, mixing fools and kings, grotesquerie and farcical elements, embodying everything that eighteenth century adaptations of Shakespeare tried to rule out or avoid. Therefore, the play acquires a special literary value only if we read it as pastiche.

Arguably, *Vortigern* recuperates the very essence of Shakespeare's drama that eighteenth-century emendations were trying to suppress. Instead of choosing one form or another, rationalizing the plot, Ireland mixes everything in a whimsical melting-pot with no concern of time, place or action – much like Shakespeare himself might have done. He liberates the play from the restricting neoclassical unities, piecing together a variety of codes and forms from the Shakespearian imagery and inserting them in a structure which was recognizable to an eighteenth-century audience. In a sense, Ireland's work rescued Shakespeare from the linguistic cage of his time, giving him a new identity moulded from hybridism and diversity itself.

Ireland was so severely (and possibly disproportionately) punished for his liberties because he was ahead of his time. He challenged Shakespeare scholars and fooled the so-called 'experts', freely meddling with tradition and the canon. Ironically, he died on April, 23, just like Shakespeare, and he was buried in

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[106] W. H. Ireland, *Vortigern, A historical tragedy* (London: 1799), viii.

[107] Anectode related in J. A. Farrer, 'The immortal hoax of Ireland', in *Literary forgeries* (London: 1907), p. 226.

[108] Here Ireland is clarifying the reason of Vortigern's murder. Adaptations of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century usually explained the cruelty of the villains, see Innocenti, p. 76.

[109] Refs. S. Doug, 'The greatest Shakespeare hoax', in *The Smithsonian Magazine* (June 2010), see <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/The-Greatest-Shakespeare-Hoax.html?c=y&page=1>

Southwark, an area of London charged with echoes from Shakespeare's times. But unlike the poet he died penniless and unknown. However, his forgeries still live in our (post-)modern times because they reverberate in the endless transformations, manipulations and rewritings of Shakespeare's works. They showed that tradition is not untouchable or static and that, like any cultural artefact, it needs constant reworking to survive and proliferate.

Coda: art as forgery

Shakespeare himself is infamously not exempt from accusations of forgery. After Greene's death in 1593, the hack writer and sometime playwright Henry Chettle published a posthumous book called *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit, Bought with a Million of Repentance*, in which the poet (or his ghost-writer) warned his fellow 'university wits' about 'an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers… and being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is in his own conceit the only Shakescene in a country'.[110] Shakespeare was denounced as a plagiarist who stole from other playwrights in order to embellish his own stories. Recent scholars have now reframed this perspective, concluding that Shakespeare's outstanding ability and creativity reside precisely in his assembling of diverse elements and the mixing of heterogeneous tones and moods. And perhaps Ireland anticipated this argument, substantially proving that the legacy of Shakespeare might reside in the very process of appropriation and forging of his image and his language.

Ireland's fakes may be subversive, illicit, even blasphemous to some, specifically because they do not pretend to sanctify Shakespeare or protect his work from what Malone's *Inquiry* terms any 'admixture whatsoever'.[111] Yet he understood that the way to salvage Shakespeare's image and language was to recreate it, transforming it into a textual construct and opening it up to borrowing and re-writing. Ireland's line is certainly not that of David Garrick and Edmund Malone, who wanted to preserve the memory of Shakespeare but ended by glorifying only themselves. He occupies a different place, closer to Chatterton, Macpherson, and Milton's forger William Lauder. His work shows a sort of affectionate companionship between what he presented as his ancestor and himself; it suggests that the creation of a literary identity relies on the questioning of the very notion of authenticity and originality. As F. G. Waldron wrote some days before the performance of *Vortigern*: 'Should Vortigern… by critical process be proved a forgery: the ingenious impostor may be ranked with Chatterton in fame'.[112] The forger had indeed become a poet.

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Giulietta come aporia: William Shakespeare e l'idea di Amore nel Platonismo del Rinascimento

Cesare Catà
University of Macerata

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Con *The most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*,[113] il teatro shakespeariano definisce i contorni di un archetipo culturale della cultura occidentale: l'idea di amore assoluto e fatale. Tale duplice aggettivazione dell'idea di amore, in apparenza logicamente ossimorica se si considera questo concetto come il compimento della felicità del singolo soggetto, diviene pacifica nel capolavoro di Shakespeare. Con *Romeo and Juliet*, in altre parole, l'apparente opposizione tra i due termini oppositivi di realizzazione/distruzione viene naturalmente a concepirsi come essenzialmente propria dell'idea di amore. In questo senso, nel porre il *topos* d'amore quale elemento drammaturgico della tragedia, Shakespeare definisce la natura essenzialmente tragica dell'amore, trasformando così una contraddizione logica in un fondamentale archetipo culturale.

Ovviamente, la tradizione classica offre un immenso bagaglio di *exempla* concernenti la tragicità del sentimento d'amore, descritto quale *μήνις* e *furor*, o nella interazione tremenda tra le forze di *ήρως* e quelle di *θάνατος*. Tuttavia, nella Classicità tali derive vengono concepite come deviazioni letali da quella che è una corretta conduzione dell'amare inteso quale ricerca e realizzazione della felicità; nell'opera shakespeariana, ben diversamente, prende forma una visione nella quale è l'essenza stessa di ciò che chiamiamo amore – e non una sua terribile metamorfosi alterante – a determinarne l'esito micidiale. In *Romeo and Juliet* l'amore è tragico in se stesso. In ultima analisi, non è per un impedimento alla sua realizzazione che il sentimento dei due sfortunati giovani di Verona termina nella tragedia: esso si realizza, propriamente, in tale esito.

Il presente intervento intende proporre una chiarificazione ermeneutica del peculiare retroterra filosofico nel quale Shakespeare, con *Romeo and Juliet*, giunge a definire i connotati dell'archetipo dell'amore come paradosso tragico. In particolare, ciò che propongo è di prendere in considerazione i legami tra il genio di Stratford e la tradizione neoplatonica rinascimentale, alla luce della cifra cortese di *Romeo and Juliet*. Infatti, nella definizione dell'amore offerta dal Neoplatonismo del Rinascimento e sviluppata nella letteratura cavalleresca, possiamo ritrovare, *in nuce*, la medesima concezione filosofica presente nel dramma; i legami tra Shakespeare e tale tradizione possono dunque valere come preziosa traccia per comprendere la definizione dell'amore tragico offerta in modo decisivo nell'opera del Bardo.

Giorgio Melchiori, in un celebre studio dedicato al *Romeo and* Juliet,[114] definisce il testo shakespeariano come una 'tragedia anomala', da un punto di vista sia morfologico che tematico. Morfologicamente, *Romeo e Giulietta* si pone come una tragedia anomala in quanto costruita secondo gli schemi e le forme tipiche della convenzione poetica cortese. A livello tematico, ciò che costituisce l'anomalia del dramma è il suo stesso argomento: ossia l'Eros, topica che domina la commedia, ma per la quale non può esservi posto preminente nella costruzione drammaturgica tragica, se non come elemento che ne innesti i meccanismi narrativi. Prima di *Romeo and Juliet*, la scrittura drammatica non aveva in effetti mai conferito dignità tragica esclusiva a una storia d'amore.

Di fronte a tale duplice anomalia, tematica e formale, Melchiori individua delle 'ragioni esterne e contingenti' per spiegarne la presenza. In particolare, egli ebbe a ritenere che la stesura del testo venisse portata avanti da Shakespeare, tra il 1592 e il 1594, allorquando il sopraggiungere della crisi dei teatri pubblici e la loro chiusura costrinse il drammaturgo a concepire un lavoro adatto per l'*audience* delle corti, vale a dire strutturato conformemente agli schemi della lirica, secondo un ideale cavalleresco che potesse

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[113] Per l'edizione di riferimento, cfr. *The complete works of William Shakespeare*, Oxford, 2004, pp. 245-278.

[114] G. Melchiori, 'La tragedia lirica: *Romeo and Juliet*', in *Shakespeare: Genesi e struttura delle opere* (Milano: 2005), pp. 209-230. cfr. anche idem, '*Romeo and Juliet*: la retorica dell'eros', in *L'eros in Shakespeare*, eds. A. Serpieri & K. Elam (Parma: 1988)

essere apprezzato e recepito da un tale ambiente. Ad avviso dello studioso, ‘la distribuzione stessa dei ruoli, con l’inconsueta ampiezza di quelli femminili … e la prolissa e antiquata retorica dei vecchi … suggeriscono che, dopo aver concepito la tragedia per una normale compagnia, Shakespeare, negli anni della peste che aveva provocato la chiusura dei teatri pubblici, contasse sulla fama raggiunta come elegante poeta nella vena cortese per un fornire un testo da presentare a corte e nei più sofisticati teatri privati, gli unici ancora aperti a Londra… Ecco la ragione dell’uso del linguaggio tipico delle corti d’amore’.[115]

Ciò che qui si vorrebbe indagare è la possibilità che, per spiegare ‘l’anomalia’ di *Romeo and Juliet* in quanto tragedia lirica cortese, non vi siano soltanto ‘ragioni esterne e contingenti’, come asserito da Melchiori, ma altresì delle ragioni filosofiche più profonde: l’esigenza, cioè, di utilizzare la forma cortese per descrivere un’idea di amore che, nella sua stessa autenticità, si presenta come fatale e, dunque, essenzialmente tragico. In altri termini e più specificamente, la presente proposta interpretativa vorrebbe leggere l’inusuale forma cortese del testo shakespeariano come un veicolo comunicativo utilizzato dal drammaturgo per un’idea di amore quale fondamentale paradosso connesso con la finitudine umana – un’idea che, nella cultura del Rinascimento, possiamo vedere descritta nel Neoplatonismo, in modo particolare nell’opera di Marsilio Ficino; un’idea che, inoltre, trova una declinazione decisiva in quella letteratura cavalleresca i cui modelli saranno appunto ripresi in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Dunque, la forma cortese del testo può rispondere all’esigenza di descrivere una concezione dell’idea di amore come desiderio di trascendenza del soggetto, concezione che la filosofia ficiniana, nel Rinascimento, ha ampiamente tematizzato. In Shakespeare tale idea, assumendo un profilo pienamente tragico, parrebbe caricarsi di profondi aspetti luterani, alla luce dei quali il desiderio di trascendenza, in cui consiste neoplatonicamente l’amore, si traduce in una contraddizione dell’esserci individuale.

Giova, a questo proposito, ricordare come le fonti principali a partire dalle quali Shakespeare riscrive genialmente la storia degli amanti nati sotto contraria stella siano costituite dalle versioni in lingua inglese tratte delle *Histoires Tragiques* (1559) di Boaistuau, a sua volta traduttore e reinventore della IX novella di Bandello (1554) nella quale si narra la storia di Romeo e Giulietta riprendendo una antica tradizione italica che va da Masuccio Salernitano a Luigi da Porto. Le versioni inglesi della *Histoire tragique* riproposta da Boiastuau sono quella di Arthur Brooke, con il suo poema in versi *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562), e quella in prosa di William Painter, raccolta in *The Palace of Pleasure* (1567).

Sia nel caso di Brooke che in quello di Painter, siamo di fronte a riscritture del testo dal sapore fortemente puritano, nelle quali le vicende d’amore sono lette alla luce della colpa in esse insite, e da cui immancabilmente si origina una fine tragica (quale punizione) dei loro protagonisti. Trasposta la questione dal piano morale a quello metafisico – uno spostamento che diviene tutt’uno con la geniale reinvenzione drammaturgica operata nel dramma – , permane in Shakespeare un senso luterano della ‘colpa’ dei protagonisti; colpa da rintracciarsi tuttavia, non più nelle loro azioni, bensì nel loro stesso essere, nella loro stessa natura, la quale diviene di impedimento alla risoluzione appagante del loro sentimento. Romeo non può amare Giulietta in quanto Romeo, e viceversa. Di qui l’idea di un amore come paradosso, che non può manifestarsi che nella tragicità.

In Shakespeare, in questo preciso senso, parrebbe darsi una concezione neoplatonica dell’amore come nostalgia dell’Uno originario che, correlata a una sensibilità di matrice luterana, si trasforma in una dialettica della finitudine come contraddizione; dialettica all’interno della quale il sentimento dell’amore deve mostrare la sua ineliminabile paradossalità per essere autentico. Non sembra dunque fuori luogo ipotizzare che la morfologia cortese affatto anomala del testo possa venire utilizzata per l’esigenza drammaturgica di descrivere un’idea di questo tipo, presente in tanta letteratura cavalleresca. Questa anomalia avrebbe dunque una giustificazione interna e profonda, e non solo esterna e contingente.

La forma cortese del dramma è così evidente e assume una tale rilevanza all’interno del testo, da non poter essere derubricata a una mera esigenza di *audience*, pur ammettendo che *Romeo and Juliet* venisse composto nei mesi della chiusura dei pubblici teatri. Risulta anzitutto indicativo che, come prologo al II Atto, Shakespeare ponga un ulteriore sonetto oltre a quello iniziale: scelta affatto inusuale per le convenzioni del teatro elisabettiano privo di interstizi, ma che trova una giustificazione nella tradizione cortese franco-italica. Inoltre, è la stragrande maggioranza delle parti del testo a essere composta in versi: l’86 per cento, di cui circa un quinto è costituito da forme poetiche rimate o chiuse. Infine Shakespeare, in alcuni passaggi del

[115] Melchiori, ‘La tragedia lirica’, p. 217.

dramma, utilizza significativamente la forma del sonetto per far pronunciare ai suoi personaggi delle battute-chiave.

Anche alla luce di tali dati, la morfologia cortese di *Romeo and Juliet* parrebbe porsi come un fenomeno che non può essere compreso alla stregua di una scelta squisitamente contingente. Si tratta di una forma così preminente che, assumendo uno specifico valore semantico all'interno dell'architettura drammaturgica, deve porsi come tutt'uno con la materia del testo.

Importante, in questo senso, è notare come la retorica d'amore presentata nel dramma si strutturi con una marcata differenziazione dei registri linguistici adottati dai diversi personaggi a livello quasi simbolico. Quella peculiare caratterizzazione linguistica che sempre nel teatro shakespeariano conferisce ai personaggi la propria specificità umana è evidentemente presente, in *Romeo e Giulietta*, per definire una dialettica tra l'amore assoluto e la sua negazione. La morfologia cortese è utilizzata per definire il primo dei componenti di tale dialettica.

La contrapposizione frontale tra i giovani amanti veronesi e il 'mondo adulto' è presentata, nel testo, come uno scontro non sintetizzabile tra linguaggi diversi. Se la Nutrice, Mercuzio, i servi dei Capuleti (coloro che 'relativizzano l'amore') parlano utilizzando la prosa o il verso sciolto comico, Romeo e Giulietta si esprimono nella forma della lirica cortese: la quale non può dunque essere semplicisticamente intesa come l'espediente comunicativo per stimolare un pubblico di corte, ma – tenendo presente la fondamentale connessione tra dizione e personaggio, linguaggio e essere nel teatro shakespeariano – come il codice retorico necessario per definire una ben precisa concezione dell'idea di amore.

Emblematica, in questo senso, è la celebre battuta della V scena del primo Atto, allorquando Romeo scorge il volto di Giulietta durante il ballo nella casa dei Capuleti. La modalità con la quale viene descritto l'incontro tra i protagonisti nella parole di Romeo è, esattamente, un sonetto dal chiaro sapore neoplatonico:

> O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
> It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
> Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear;
> Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
> So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
> As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
> The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,
> And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.
> Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!
> For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

Questa battuta di Romeo è una sublime lirica d'amor cortese: si tratta di cinque distici rimati (conclusi dalla ripresa della prima rima nell'ultima) che formano un sonetto sul modello italiano, con una sestina in luogo dell'ottava, e una quartina in luogo della sestina, presentando un evidente passaggio tra il sesto e il settimo verso. Tale utilizzo della retorica lirica tramite lo strumento del sonetto non è privo di significato: la sua funzione drammaturgica tradisce una concezione filosofica dell'idea di amore che la tradizione neoplatonica ha visto ampiamente svilupparsi nella letteratura di matrice cortese.

Possiamo, in questo senso, notare come vari elementi collegabili al Neoplatonismo rinascimentale, e specificamente alla concezione d'amore definita da Petrarca a Marsilio Ficino, siano presenti in modo non estemporaneo nei versi shakespeariani poc'anzi citati. Si tenga anzitutto presente, preliminarmente, come questa battuta (che potremmo a ragione definire 'il sonetto di Romeo') assuma una funzione drammaturgica decisiva all'interno del testo: è con essa che viene descritto l'incontro tra i protagonisti e, dunque, l'innestarsi del motore narrativo di tutta la vicenda. Ci troviamo nel fulcro di *Romeo and Juliet*, la cui morfologia retorica viene dunque caratterizzata in modo decisivo da tale utilizzo di un registro neoplatonico.

Nel sonetto di Romeo troviamo una serie di topiche liriche, di tradizione già petrarchesca e cavalcantiana, rispondenti direttamente alla matrice della poesia cortese. Anzitutto, quello descritto da Romeo è un rapimento d'amore di tipo ascensionale: dalla testimonianza empirica offerta dai sensi della vista e dell'immaginato tatto, l'immagine di Giulietta diviene eterea, angelicata, sino a essere identificata con la Bellezza ideale nell'ultimo verso. Petrarca, nel *Canzoniere*, e Marsilio Ficino, nel *De Amore*, descrivono un medesimo *iter* dell'estasi amorosa dai sensi alla Bellezza immateriale.

Altro *topos* neoplatonico è certamente quello che pone gli occhi come 'porta del cuore', e dunque la visione della Bellezza come *medium* tra l'anima e il Divino; l'immagine sensibile del bello induce l'anima umana al desiderio e alla contemplazione della bellezza intellegibile assoluta, scevra dalla materialità: esattamente l'esito che troviamo nel discorso di Romeo.

Inoltre, profondamente neoplatonica è l'idea in base alla quale la visione della Bellezza, da cui si origina l'amore, conduca il contemplante alla trascendenza di sé medesimo. Romeo deve rinnegare se stesso, la sua singolarità specifica, per poter accogliere in pieno la Bellezza di Giulietta; e la celeberrima domanda che lei gli pone poche battute più avanti – 'O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?' – possiede esattamente questo valore filosofico. Nel fare cenno alla Bellezza intellegibile, l'incontro con il Bello sensibile conduce a un trascendimento-rifiuto della finitudine del soggetto.

Con le sue parole, il giovane Montecchi definisce la Bellezza 'too rich for use, for earth too dear!' L'immagine sensibile di Giulietta non può essere definita e compresa all'interno della mera sensibilità empirica, stretta 'nei lacci delle cose terrestri', per dirla con Ficino. Giulietta fa cenno a una trascendenza non materica. In questo preciso senso, la riflessione ficiniana giunge a definire l'amore come nostalgia dell'Uno divino; l'anima umana, prima (un 'prima', si badi bene, di ordine ontologico e non cronologico) di assumere forma corporea, contempla le idee eterne, la cui memoria viene risvegliata dall'incontro con la Bellezza sensibile. Ecco perché Romeo può comprendere la vera natura dell'amare ('Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!') nel momento in cui il suo desiderio viene a rivolgersi all'assoluto della Bellezza. Platonicamente parlando, Giulietta suscita in lui la nostalgia dell'Uno. La reciproca pretesa di estinguere nella vicenda terrestre tale nostalgia costituisce la cifra luterana dello sviluppo shakespeariano, in chiave tragica, dell'idea di amor platonico espresso dalla retorica cortese. Amare davvero, in questo senso, è infatti necessario e impossibile a un tempo.

Risulta interessante comparare il sonetto di Romeo con un sonetto tratto dal canzoniere shakespeariano e con un testo delle *Rime* michelangiolesche, al fine di comprenderne meglio la funzione drammaturgica e il retroterra neoplatonico:

When I consider every thing that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment,
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheered and check'd even by the self-same sky,
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory;
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay,
To change your day of youth to sullied night;
And all in war with Time for love of you,
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.

Al di là delle cristalline consonanze formali, ciò che è interessante notare nella relazione tra questo sonetto del canzoniere shakespeariano e quello di Romeo nell'ultima scena del primo Atto è il medesimo sostrato filosofico che essi esprimono a livello ermeneutico. La Bellezza che Romeo vede in Giulietta come 'too rich for use, for earth too dear', è la medesima che, nel Sonetto XV, non può essere soggetta al tempo, in quanto immagine di una eternità che la trascende. Naturalmente, si tratta di una tematica dominante nei *Sonetti* di Shakespeare, e i cui legami con la tradizione cortese sono stati adeguatamente messi in luce dalla critica. Ciò che vorrei qui osservare è il valore drammaturgico che, alla luce del legame tra la lirica cortese e il Neoplatonismo, assume tale *topos* nell'ambito della tragedia veronese. Infatti, se in *Romeo and Juliet* si fa presente il medesimo codice linguistico utilizzato da Shakespeare nel canzoniere, ciò significa che la morfologia cortese del dramma è strumentale per esprimere un'idea di amore tragico i cui connotati filosofici sono da rintracciarsi nello stesso retroterra filosofico (di matrice platonica, appunto), da cui prendono le mosse i *Sonnets*.

Osservando alcune consonanze tra il sonetto di Romeo e una delle Rime di Michelangelo – il quale evidentemente declina, dal canto suo, una relazione profonda sia con la filosofia neoplatonica che con la spiritualità luterana – questo discorso può chiarificarsi.

Come può esser ch'io non sia più mio?
O Dio, o Dio, o Dio,
chi m'ha tolto a me stesso,
c'a me fusse più presso
o più di me potessi che poss'io?

O Dio, o Dio, o Dio,
come mi passa el core
chi non par che mi tocchi?
Che cosa è questo, Amore,
c'al core entra per gli occhi,
per poco spazio dentro par che cresca?
E s'avvien che trabocchi?

È noto il legame tra il canzoniere shakespeariano e l'opera letteraria michelangiolesca, anche in virtù del condiviso legame con la tradizione petrarchesca. Una tradizione, quella petrarchesca, di stampo neoplatonico, la quale in Michelangelo giunge ad assumere accenti tragici (come non sfuggì a Thomas Mann in un suo celebre intervento). Nel sonetto di Romeo assistiamo, come possiamo vedere, a una non dissimile espressione letteraria concernente l'idea del *topos* d'amore.

La critica, nel corso degli anni, ha preso adeguatamente in esame il rapporto tra Shakespeare e il Neoplatonismo, offrendone una esaustiva panoramica anche relativamente alle fonti attraverso cui esso poté essere conosciuto e prendere forma all'interno della cultura del drammaturgo di Stratford. Per tramite di John Florio, Shakespeare conobbe con ogni probabilità l'opera ficiniana. L'eco di alcune idee ficiniane nel *Romeo e Giulietta* possiede dunque altresì una giustificazione storica. Nel *De amore,* Ficino si sofferma sul concetto di *beatificatio*, al fine di mostrare l'esigenza dell'anima di trascendere la singolarità individuale per una ri-congiunzione con l'Uno divino originario. Desiderio ultimo dell'anima è tornare alle idee che ha originariamente contemplato all'atto della sua creazione. La bellezza è precisamente ciò che, attraverso gli occhi, giunge nell'anima per istillarvi il ricordo immemorabile di tale contemplazione. Riconosciamo qui i connotati dell'antropologia ficiniana che caratterizzerà tanta parte della cultura rinascimentale: l'uomo è immagine finita dell'infinito, microcosmo in cui l'universo immenso si condensa, vivo riflesso della divinità chiamato a realizzare la natura potenzialmente divina del suo essere. Si tratta del principio dell'*homo imago Dei*. Conformemente a questa antropologia, l'amore è la realizzazione della divinità dell'anima umana. Nell'amato, l'amante ama Dio; nel desiderio d'amore, egli desidera trascendere la propria finitudine e realizzare la propria natura celeste. Per definizione, un tale concetto di amore non può – e non deve – trovare concretizzazione: il suo oggetto elevandosi al livello dell'ideale.

Possiamo a questo punto riconoscere la cifra platonico-petrarchesco-ficiniana che pervade *Romeo and Juliet*, e come essa si declini in chiave tragica, secondo quella caratterizzazione della colpa della finitudine che Lutero teorizzerà da presupposti agostiniani e che troverà ampia eco nella filosofia moderna, da Pascal a Kierkegaard, da Hiedegger a Barth.

Il celeberrimo incontro tra i protagonisti del dramma può apparirci in questo senso come una sorta di sonetto cortese a due voci che i due giovani di Verona cantano riconoscendo la sacralità dell'amore:

Romeo: If I profane with my unworthiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
Juliet: Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.
Rom: Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
Jul: Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
Rom: O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
They pray — grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.
Jul: Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.
Rom: Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.
[Kisses her.]
Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin is purged.
Jul: Then have my lips the sin that they have took.
Rom: Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged!
Give me my sin again.
[Kisses her.]
Jul:You kiss by th' book.

Il sottofondo dal sapore ieratico del dialogo è evidente, e diviene esplicito nella battuta di Giulietta in cui il baciare di Romeo, nella sua perfezione, è paragonato all'adempimento di un precetto biblico: 'you kiss by th'book'. Il nome stesso di Romeo, d'altronde, rimanda etimologicamente alla nozione di 'pellegrino verso la città santa'. Città santa che, nel contesto del dramma, non è altro che Giulietta stessa. Platonicamente, la Bellezza di Giulietta risveglia, giungendo attraverso gli occhi di Romeo, la nostalgia di Dio nella sua anima. Da quel momento, essere Romeo, per il giovane Montecchi, sarà una contraddizione inaccettabile – ed è in questa chiave dal profondo valore filosofico che possiamo leggere l'iper-citata battuta di Giulietta ('Romeo, Romeo, perché tu sei Romeo?').

Si confronti, in questo senso, il ruolo-chiave di Mercuzio all'interno del dramma. Il suo registro linguistico, anzitutto, è oppostamente speculare a quello utilizzato dai due amanti: lo si potrebbe definire un registro linguistico anti-cortese (che non a caso rimanda in più punti al linguaggio di *Love's labour lost*), la cui funzione drammaturgica consiste essenzialmente in una decostruzione di quanto Romeo edifica con le sue parole sublimando il sentimento d'amore. Mercuzio è colui che, con l'espediente retorico del *joking*, relativizza il senso dell'amore. Infatti, sinché Mercuzio è vivo l'amore non assume una svolta tragica, poiché esso è relativizzato. L'amore, infatti, preso sul serio ('joking aside', potremmo dire) implica la necessità della catastrofe.

Significativo è il fatto che la scena della morte di Mercuzio si ponga al centro matematico esatto del dramma, quasi dividendolo in due perfette parti. Tale rilevazione può essere compiuta anche da un punto di vista morfologico: a una prima parte meno marcatamente lirica, fitta di molte intrusioni prosastiche, fa seguito dopo la morte di Mercuzio una seconda parte quasi totalmente in forma lirica, nella quale di fatto una sola scena è in prosa. Tuttavia, nella prima parte oltre un terzo dei versi pronunciati sono in rima; nella seconda, la rima interessa meno del sette per cento della versificazione. A livello ermeneutico, questo cambio di registri linguistici dopo la morte di Mercuzio significa qualcosa di ben preciso: la preminenza della forma lirica indica l'espandersi dell'amore e della visione del mondo dei due giovani rispetto a ogni altro principio; l'abbandono della rima fa cenno alla fine del dolce incantamento dell'amore appena sbocciato, per lo spalancarsi di un sentimento che, nella sua tragicità, travolgerà ogni cosa.

La morte di Mercuzio è dunque drammaturgicamente funzionale a rivelare la natura dell'amore che *Romeo and Juliet* sottende a livello filosofico: un terribile trascendimento della finitudine, un'impossibile necessità. Se Mercuzio non morisse e continuasse a parlare dell'amore, non solo esso apparirebbe nella innocua forma ludico-anticortese di *Midsummer night's dream*, ma, nel realizzarsi, infine si snaturerebbe. Conformemente ai principi platonici e agli ideali cavallereschi, per mantenere la sua vera natura (per essere preso sul serio) l'amore non deve concretizzarsi.

D'altronde, è rivelativo in questo senso il celebre monologo di Mercuzio che preannuncia il primo incontro tra i due amanti a casa Capuleti. Le fantasmagorie di quel discorso (che non senza significato ci riporta al clima e alle fonti del *Sogno di una notte di mezza estate*, dove l'amore è esorcizzato a mero incantamento) dovranno essere esperite nella carne da Romeo tramite la visione di Giulietta; e, soprattutto, si rivelerà nel suo pieno significato quel 'niente' di cui Romeo accusava di parlare il suo migliore amico: 'Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace! Thou talk'st of nothing'. l 'nothing' – il niente – si rivelerà essere il senso ultimo del discorso di Mercuzio, poiché l'amore, spinto alle estreme (più vere) conseguenze, è non altro che la nientificazione, l'annullamento del singolo nella sua finitudine.

La morte di Mercuzio segna dunque la vera cesura tragica del dramma: essa possiede la medesima funzione che nei drammi sofoclei spetta alla rivelazione di Tiresia. Similmente, quanto proferito da Mercuzio, sia in punto di morte (quando viene assassinato), sia 'in punto d'amore' (poco prima che Romeo incontri Giulietta) possiede una funzione profetica. Si avvereranno sia le sciagure che egli lancia contro entrambe le famiglie degli amanti; sia quella idea dell'amore come *furor* distruggente che egli affresca nel monologo sulla regina Mab.

Romeo, come icona drammaturgica, è esattamente colui che viene consumato dalla follia d'amore perché, platonicamente, egli crede sino in fondo alla necessità di una unione mistica con l'amata. Egli guarda Giulietta non diversamente da come il poeta del *Canzoniere* guarda Laura: con una trasfigurazione idealizzante che, se tradotta in realtà, conduce all'annullamento di sé, all'abbandono dell'esserci. Si noti come Romeo si ponga, in questo senso, tra i personaggi di Otello e Amleto: se quest'ultimo non può amare Ofelia perché scorge troppo profondamente la verità, e il primo non può amare Desdemona in quanto si arresta a un livello troppo bestiale della realtà, Romeo si insinua in quella medietà che gli permette di credere al senso dell'amare, senza tuttavia riconoscervi l'inganno implicito. Amleto vede troppo, perché possa amare; Otello troppo poco. Romeo ama in virtù della sua sapiente inconsapevolezza – che è il connotato fondamentale dell'amore non ancora disincantato, dell'amore 'giovanile', dell'amore in senso proprio.

In Romeo, non a caso, quel non-essere che Amleto pone come *question* è una necessità che non si pone in discussione, il fine essendo il compimento del suo rapporto con Giulietta. Il Luteranesimo teoretico di Amleto (che ha studiato a Wittemberg) diviene in Romeo la base per il compimento del proprio martirio. Le riflessioni – kierkegaardiane *ante litteram* – del Principe di Danimarca sono per Romeo di una chiarezza disarmante nella loro necessità. La tragedia della finitudine patita da Amleto, più tardi posta a tema nella pagine di Kierkegaard, è in *Romeo and Juliet* vista attraverso gli occhi degli amanti, e dunque si pone come tragedia della solitudine. Se Romeo – in quanto Romeo – non può incontrare Giulietta, e viceversa, sono tali limiti a dover essere forzati, sino alle più estreme conseguenze.

Ecco perché l'amore – per essere tale – si deve mescolare con il niente, quel *Nihil* che nei medesimi anni di Shakespeare Charles de Bovelles e Montaigne indagavano da un punto di vista filosofico. L'*Anéantissement* di Montaigne, che John Florio tradurrà con *Consummation*, e che nell'*Amleto* William Shakespeare porrà quale alternativa nel più celebre monologo della storia del teatro occidentale – 'to be or not be' – secondo la prospettiva filosofica di Romeo e di Giulietta deve darsi in maniera simultanea: essere (per essere amati) e non essere (per poter amare): 'that is the question'. La contraddizione della finitudine, l'assurdità dell'esserci, è qui posta nella sua nudità.

In conclusione, possiamo quindi non senza ragioni ipotizzare che William Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*, utilizzi la retorica della poesia cortese per dare forma a una concezione filosofica dell'amore di tipo neoplatonico-cavalleresco, letta in chiave luterana. Vi è un ordine di ragioni *ad intra* il testo, e non soltanto *ad extra*, per spiegare l'anomalia morfologica del dramma nei suoi aspetti lirico-cortesi. Shakespeare ricorre alla forma lirica, per esprimere il principio cortese secondo cui l'amore, per essere propriamente tale, non deve essere esperito.

Dunque, è per questo motivo che, nel definire l'esatta natura dell'amore, il Bardo di Stratford ha utilizzato il codice della tragedia lirica. Per affermare che l'amore è impossibile per definizione. Che esso può rimanere vero solo se non viene vissuto. Che incontrarsi e compenetrarsi fino in fondo, per due esseri umani, è impossibile sinché essi sono chiusi nei perimetri identitari della loro finitudine. Che la forma duale non può essere declinata nella vita. Che Giulietta – quella visione sconvolgente e meravigliosa che riempie gli occhi e l'anima di Romeo facendogli sospettare quale sia il senso ultimo dell'esistere – sia fondamentalmente un paradosso. Un'aporia non risolvibile. Questo è probabilmente il tratto più inquietante, ma nondimeno affascinante, dell'opera di William Shakespeare.

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‘Other’ translations of Shakespeare’s plays: the ‘ASL Shakespeare’ project

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From the point of view of literature, the drama is only one among several poetic forms... Nevertheless, the drama… is capable of greater variation and of expressing more varied types of society, than any other.

The essential is not, of course, that drama should be written in verse… The essential is to get upon the stage this precise statement of life which is at the same time a point of view, a world, - a world which the author’s mind has subjected to a complete process of simplification.

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Introduction

Shakespeare is internationally reputed to be a literary icon, largely because of his masterful use of the English language. His plays have been translated into many different languages over the centuries, bearing witness to their huge appeal to a variety of audiences while they address universal themes overriding space and time barriers.

Being internationally staged, Shakespeare’s plays also have an impact on various cultures all around the world. As this staging is mainly carried out through translation, the international performance of Shakespeare and Shakespeare in translation has become an area of academic study and research.

Each literary translation involves a passage from one language – and therefore from one culture – to another. Literally, the verb ‘translate’ (from the Latin verb ‘trādūcĕre’, combining the words *trans*, meaning ‘across, beyond’, and *ducere*, ‘to lead’) means ‘to remove from one place to another’, and also ‘to turn from one language into another’. What happens when this translation involves two languages as different as English (a natural language) and American Sign Language?

The aim of this paper is to bring together the apparently unrelated fields of performance theory, Shakespeare studies, and deaf studies, showing how Shakespeare’s highly evocative language has been ‘translated’ and staged in American Sign Language (ASL). (This work is primarily thanks to the ASL Shakespeare Project, which first made possible the translation of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* into American Sign Language.) The latter possesses the peculiarity of being visual, iconic and ‘extraordinarily concrete and evocative’ at the same time [Sacks: 1990, 175] – qualities common to all sign languages.

Theatre, being based on spatiality, expressivity and gestuality, is a genre naturally suited to sign language. William Stokoe, whose pioneering studies greatly contributed to establishing sign languages as real languages endowed with grammar and syntactical features and equally complex and well-built as vocal languages, believed that the structure of sign language is not merely narrative or prosaic, but also, and mainly, ‘cinematic’ [Stokoe, cited in Sacks: 1990, 135].

Moreover, theatre is not merely a means for cultural expression; it has always been used as a way to participate in ‘other’ cultures, as Simona Zinna reminds us in her recently published essay *Dar Voce alla Cultura Sorda: Il Teatro come Strumento di Comunicazione e Partecipazione Culturale* (2010).

This paper will be therefore structured into three main parts, respectively focusing on:

1. the importance of gestuality in both Shakespeare’s plays and sign languages (here ASL);
2. ‘visual’ and evocative features of sign languages;
3. the translation process of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* into ASL.

Ultimately I will highlight how deaf performances can engender intersections across disciplines and cultures, paving the way to new perspectives on performance, language, and culture. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* in ASL – suspended between hearing and deaf worlds – imparts to hearing and deaf audiences alike a newly doubled, visual Shakespeare while 'joining two distinctly different cultures: the hearing world, with Shakespeare as one of its greatest poets, and the visual/gestural language of the Deaf'. Indeed, the stated aim of the authors of the ASL Shakespeare Project was 'bringing Shakespeare into contact with [American Sign Language], and vice versa, so that both will be illuminated' [see the section 'Project description' at http://www.yale.edu/asl12night/project.html]. Like other deaf performances, it invites the audience to rethink the possibilities of theatre and also suggests different potential meanings of performance in general, shaking up 'entrenched ideologies based on the normal hearing body' [Bauman: 1997, 171].

Performance and gestuality

Although Shakespeare's theatre is frequently associated with spoken language and the lines uttered by actors on stage, it is also true that the expressivity of the actors' bodies and their gestuality are primary in the staging process. In 'Translating Shakespeare for the theatre', Jean-Michel Déprats, balances the undeniable orality of the canon against the admission that:

> Now, theatricality does not imply orality alone. Shakespeare's plays are also dramatic in the sense that they call for stage action. By means of precise indications of gesture and movement, or through implicit suggestions of physical bearing, they have the capacity to set the body in motion. For a language has a body, and not only in the metaphorical sense. There is, indeed, a gestic quality of the poetic word… Every dramatic text demands to be brought to life by the player's body, voice, and action. The word pronounced on stage must be deciphered or decoded by the actor's body if it is to be understood by the spectator. That it should be uttered is not enough; the entire body must participate in the act of speaking. And the language of Shakespeare possesses this 'physicality' to the highest degree.[116]

Director Peter Novak, Associate Professor of Performing Arts at the University of San Francisco, translated Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* into American Sign Language with an emphasis on the history of gesture in visual renditions of Shakespeare. As the translation process could not be documented on paper, it was videotaped thanks to a grant from Yale Digital Media Center. This project, called ASL Shakespeare, provided the newly founded Amaryllis Theatre - dedicated to employing actors with disabilities - with the script for its debut performance, staged at Philadelphia in 2000.

In their introduction to *Remaking Shakespeare: performance across media, genres and cultures* (2003), editors Pascale Aebischer, Edward J. Esche and Nigel Wheale refer to Novak's description of the ASL translation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* as the 'literature of the body', stating that this 'evok[es] William B. Worhen's assertion that performance "is a means of textualizing the body"' [p. 5]. Indeed, in Novak's production there is an 'incorporation of text and context through sign language' [p. 9]. Novak himself, in his essay 'Shakespeare in the Fourth Dimension: *Twelfth Night* and American Sign Language', refers to his ASL translation of *Twelfth Night* as a 'somatic form of literature', a 'corporeal artefact that will expand conventional notions of language, gesture and culture' (18). He also points to the fact that there is no great distance between Shakespeare and sign language. This point is reinforced by the example of John Bulwer, physician, author of the seventeenth century *Chirologia: or the natural language of the hand* and *Chirotomia: or the art of manual rhetoric* (published jointly in 1644), and teacher of the deaf. His illustrations or 'chirograms' portray gestures, expressions and body movements, thus providing historians with precious historical information about the significance of gestures in Elizabethan society and theatre. Bulwer asserts that the hands and their gestures were better suited to communicate universally than spoken languages. However, he also acknowledges the limits of these representations: they are static, and art could not express their motion, only conveying 'one moment within a continuum of emotions and physical expressions' [p. 20].

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[116] J-M. Déprats, 'Translating Shakespeare for the theatre', in *Ilha do desterro: a journal of English language, Literatures in English and cultural studies*, no. 36 (Jan-Jun, 1999), pp. 75-6

Figure 1. **Renderings from Bulwer's *Chirologia* (1644)**

This is a restriction, Novak adds, that any ASL translator or performance theorist shares: 'to describe in words or static images the movement and 'inflection' of the body' [p. 21]. In the specific case of Shakespeare's plays, it must be noted that the language they use is 'visceral', requiring a combination of words and movement through the physical presence of an actor on stage. Concordantly ASL is a 'visually-based' and 'performed' language, strongly relying on the sense of sight and resisting any attempt at methodic transcription, which could not represent 'how the body fashions itself in space' – as any theorist of acting, rhetoric and performance will know.

'Visual' and evocative features of sign languages

Before tackling the issue of Shakespeare's translation into ASL, it might be useful to observe that the process of translation is subtly different from that of interpretation. Interpreting allows the intersection of two spoken languages, whereas translation introduces various permutations of the two interacting elements: the languages may be written rather than spoken, or else one might be spoken and the other written. Moreover, in the case of interpreting sign language, one may be written and the other a sign language.

Interpreting skills inevitably require the necessary knowledge of both the source language and the target language. In her essay 'Sawing the air thus: American Sign Language Translations of Shakespeare and the Echoes of Rhetorical Gesture', Lindsey Diane Snyder states that:

> The linguistic knowledge of both the target and source languages is especially important when translating English into ASL because the interpreter is changing the language mode from spoken to visual and must consider these varying linguistic parameters as s/he is formulating an appropriate translation.

The peculiarity of ASL as a 'visual', spatial language is that it requires specific actions of cultural mediation both to provide an accurate interpretation and to convey other specialised aspects of communication. This occurs, for instance, when interpreting information based on sound for deaf audiences. Shakespeare's language, in particular, makes an extensive use of puns. Moreover, meter, rhyme and rhythm play a crucial role in his plays as in drama at large. An obvious question arises here: how is it possible to translate a pun, meter or a rhyme into sign language?

Before trying to answer this, it is worth considering the basic linguistic features of ASL as compared to English. First of all it should be noticed that a 'sign' is not a mere gesture, but rather a symbol and the equivalent for a word. Oliver Sacks highlights what he calls the 'compression' of sign units in sign languages, capable of conveying a considerable amount of information through the sign formation. The latter involves four distinctive parameters: handshape, location of the sign, movement pattern, and palm orientation. Facial expression can also contribute to the linguistic functions expressed by the sign, helping to express a certain syntactical feature (such as relative or interrogative clauses) or taking the function of a quantifier or an adverb. It is this 'linguistic use of space' [Sacks, 133] which differentiates sign languages from any spoken language: what is linear, temporal, sequential in a spoken language becomes simultaneous and concurrent at different levels in sign languages.

Snyder draws attention to the fact that while in English, 'phonetics and phonology are kinesthetic, using the lips, tongue, teeth and soft/hard palates', ASL 'cherology' (a term used by William Stokoe as a

synonym for 'phonology', from the Greek word: χείρ, 'hand'), 'embeds the semantics of a word or phrase in the phonology by using the parameters in the formation of signs'. In addition, the tone of sentences and expressions, made possible by the vocal inflection in spoken languages, is already included in the formation of the word in signed languages and is conveyed through the energy and emphasis (movement) of the sign.

To reinforce the idea that rhyme and rhythm are possible in sign language, Snyder refers to Clayton Valli's analysis of ASL poetry. According to deaf linguist and poet Valli, while in English there are two fundamental types of rhyme – assonance and alliteration – ASL offers the possibility for four types of rhyme:

> contour path rhyme (repetition of movement path), hand-shape rhyme (repetition of hand-shape), location rhyme (placement of sign in a particular location repeated), and non-manual sign rhyme (eyebrows, head/mouth movement repeated)… The meter, which differs by being more specific about counting and use of rhythm, is illustrated in ASL by the hold/movement segments in a sequence that parallel syllables in English.

In order to obtain an appropriate theatrical interpretation, Snyder further argues, it is vital to 'incorporate appropriate performance gesture' to these poetic devices, thus connecting rhetorical gesture and ASL.

Although deaf studies, performance studies and Shakespeare studies have been treated and studied so far as distinct and separate disciplines, they actually share some common ground. Shakespeare's language was always intended for the stage, thus implying and even requiring a complete involvement and fusion between the words uttered and the movements of the actor's body on stage. This is something to bear in mind when tackling the issue of translating Shakespeare in sign language.

What is the point of displaying such intersections? What contribution could they give to each area? The goal of this paper is to show how the overlapping of these fields can help to illuminate the extant key features of each, while also bringing forth new views on performance, language and culture. Indeed, interdisciplinary and intercultural discourses have the potential to fuel serious reconsideration of assumed and widely accepted notions, thus offering new constructive perspectives.

The translation process of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* into ASL

On the basis of such premises, it should be clear at this point that translating Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* into ASL does not simply mean translating a dramatic text. This is how Novak envisaged the whole process: 'The translation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* into American Sign Language (ASL) reflects a confluence of cultures, where the nature and process of theatrical translation has been revisited and, to some extent, re-envisioned' [*Signs and Voices*: 2008, p.220].

The translation process therefore involves the passage from an oral/aural text into a visual/manual one, and relies on the translation of the various types of language the Shakespearian text contains (musical lyrics, blank verse, and prose) through the use of a completely peculiar modality, a visual language with a different sense of rhyme and rhythm. The outcome will be 'a new "text" – a literature of the body – a corporeal artefact that will expand conventional notions of language, text, and performance' [*Signs and Voices*: 2008, p.220].

Actor and translator Robert DeMayo also explains the difficulty of the translation process. The latter involved three steps: starting from Shakespeare's text, the precise meaning of his language must be discovered; next Shakespeare's text is translated into modern English form; finally, this English can be translated into ASL. The whole ASL translation process was videotaped and recorded on a DVD starring deaf actors including Adrian Blue, Peter Cook, Robert DeMayo, Monique Holt, Jacke Roth, and Dennis Webster.

According to Novak, in addition to what has been said so far in relation to the act of translating, it is important to consider one more point when facing the issue of translating English into ASL. Namely, the fact that 'the intrinsically performative and visual nature of ASL requires a new analysis of performance texts, one based on the understanding of the ASL performance *as* literature *and* performance simultaneously' [p. 24].

Twelfth Night was performed in ASL and voiced in English: 'each character is split in two'. While the deaf actors on stage signed the lines, hearing performers recited them. This 'bifurcation of voice and body' allowed the hearing audience to 'hear one language (Shakespeare's text) while simultaneously seeing an altogether different one (ASL)… in essence, they *see* Shakespeare for the first time' (19). Other ASL

performances of Shakespeare's plays had been staged before, but this was the first time that the ASL translation became the play's focus. Novak stated it took sixteen months to produce a translation which, besides offering a 'visual' rendering of Shakespeare's language, actually makes the hidden meaning of the original text more vivid and clear than is possible through spoken language. The translation crucially enables a 'spatial mapping of the concepts'.

The following pictures offer a few examples of 'visual puns' used in Novak's ASL production of *Twelfth Night*, illustrating some stratagems for rendering a faithful ASL translation of the Shakespearian text (which are occasionally in danger of impairing the creative possibilities of ASL itself). Very early in the play [Act I, Scene I, ll.18-21], a servant asks Orsino: 'Will you go hunt, my lord?'

Orsino asks, 'What Curio?' and the servant says, 'The hart'.

Orsino replies, 'Why so I do, the noblest that I have,' meaning heart.

***Figures 2*. From ASL Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Act I, Scene I**

Adrian Blue - director, translator, storyteller, playwright and actor - who played the role of Orsino in this production, explains the choice he made to render this exchange visually:

> The homophony of HART and HEART brings up a double meaning that doesn't exist for these two signs in ASL. So I conveyed the double meaning through the verb. I used a cross on my fingers to represent the cross hairs in taking aim – the verb AIM – and then I moved my fingers to my heart to suggest it's like taking aim at the heart. [*Signs and Voices*: 2008, pp. 236-237]

A further example of visual pun can be seen in Act I, Scene III, when Sir Toby Belch, Olivia's uncle, is rebuking the foolish Sir Andrew Ague-cheek, pretender to his niece, because he is not courting Maria, thus showing a lack of 'manly' initiative. This is why, Toby Belch insists, if he does not do so, he 'might never draw sword again'.

As the two images above clearly show, the sexual allusion contained in the word 'sword' is made highly explicit as it is rendered visually.

Shakespeare's sexual puns are vividly animated through sign language. Novak references the frequent sexual allusions of the plays lend themselves well to sign language, facilitating an explicit 'visual augmentation of the text' and 'providing nuance and explication of character in ways that the original cannot' [*Signs and Voices*: 2008, p.225]. Typically, Malvolio's bawdiness and fantasies are objectified as he plays them out visually. In Act I, Scene V, Malvolio describes to the curious Olivia the young girl disguised as the boy Cesario who wishes to speak to her and waits at the gate to be let in.

> *Olivia*: Of what personage and years is he?
> *Malvolio*: Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy; as a squash is before 'tis a peascod, or a codling, when 'tis almost an apple: 'tis with him in standing water, between boy and man. He is very well-favoured, and he speaks very shrewishly; one would think his mother's milk were scarce out of him. [ll.149-155]

While the voiced lines do not reveal anything of the sexual allusions hidden in Malvolio's words, the phallic imagery he hints at becomes clearly visible in the ASL translation. The signs used by Malvolio to describe Cesario have a double meaning: they both refer to vegetables and fruit (the squash and the apples) and to male sexual organs (respectively, the penis and the testicles).

***Figure 3*. From ASL Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Act I, Scene V**

Regarding metre, Novak extensively tackles the question of how to translate meter and rhythm into ASL in his aforementioned 'Shakespeare in the Fourth Dimension: *Twelfth Night* and American Sign Language'. In English, as in other spoken languages, metre is what gives rhythm to a verse or a line through a recurring pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. Conversely, it is clear that 'sound cannot be the basis for word

stress and, therefore, metrical structure in ASL', which is a visual-gestual language and not an aural-oral one. However, movement, location and handshape contribute to establishing verse-form in ASL (as in all sign languages). Classifiers are one way of doing this.

Classifiers are 'a set of signs which are made with a specific handshape' representing a noun and indicating the location, movement, size, shape, or texture of that noun. 'Because they can replicate a formal structure through repetition of movements, handshapes or locations, they are understood as a forme of verse in ASL' [p. 25].

Some examples of classifiers include the 1 classifier (that can be used to represent, among other things, a person standing, or, if placed horizontally, a pair of scissors, etc.), and the 2 classifier (that can represent, for instance, a person walking if the fingers, pointing downwards, move). Even if it is possible to recount a story exclusively using one classifier handshape, most stories make use of several classifiers.

The following sequences and images illustrate the use of some classifiers in Novak's ASL *Twelfth Night*. The first images show the use of the 1 classifier to represent a person, respectively Olivia and her handmaid.

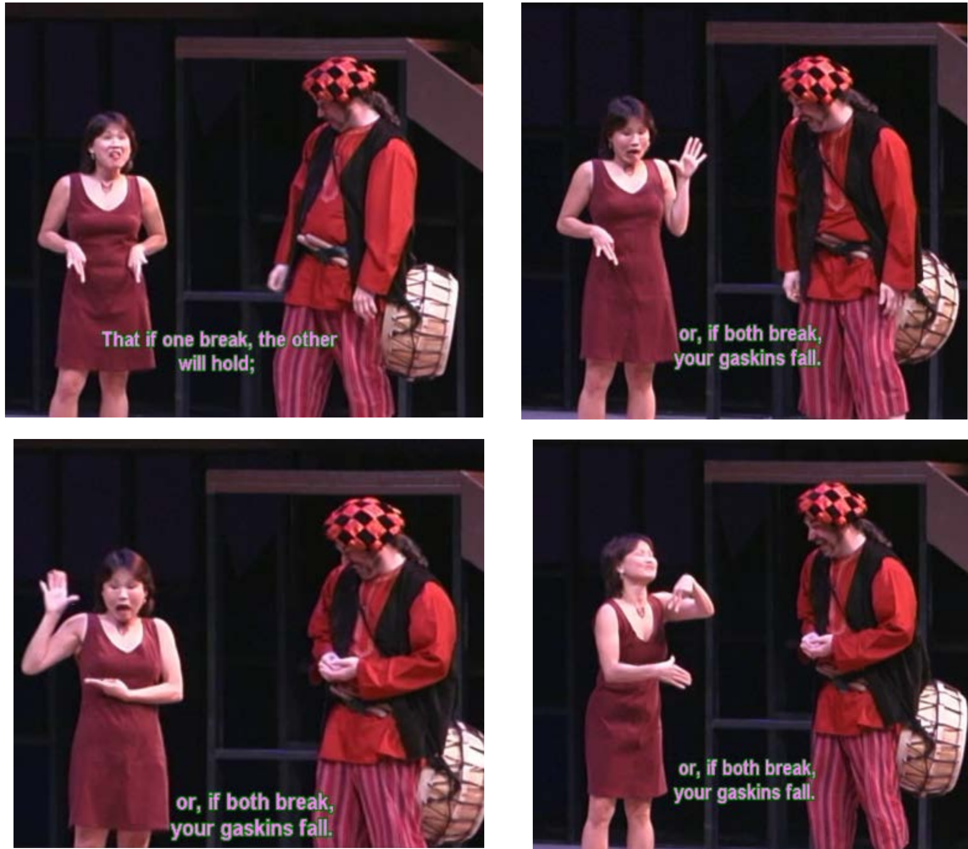
***Figures 4*. From ASL Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Act I, Scene I**

In the sequence below, taken from Act 3, Scene I, the 1 classifier is used to describe the physical location of Orsino and Olivia. When Feste refers to visiting both households (where he entertains for money) regularly, he shows this visually by moving himself between the two classifiers which represent Olivia and Orsino.

Later on, when he says to Viola, 'I think I saw your wisdom there,' he simply moves the classifiers back and forth in front of Viola, implying her involvement in both houses at once.

A combination of classifiers can be used to construct what Novak calls a 'mimetic narrative' [p. 26]. The next images visually reproduce the exchanges between Maria and Feste – Act I, Scene V, ll.14-15. When Maria warns Feste that Olivia could be angered by his long absence, the fool replies that he is 'resolved on two points': he relies on both Olivia and

Orsino for money. Maria responds, 'That if one break, the other will hold; or, if both break, your gaskins fall.' Here the actress playing Maria uses a combination of classifiers: the suspenders are made by using a 3 handshape, but after being cut they fly up becoming 5 classifiers. The motion of cutting the suspenders is made by using a 2 classifier iconically reproducing the image of scissors cutting the suspenders off. Finally, after the gaskins fall, they reveal his bare legs, represented by a 2 classifier.



Rhyme can be visually rendered in sign language by using a similar handshape, or movement, while rhythm 'is created in a variety of ways: movement paths, assimilation, change of a sign, choice of a sign, handedness, alternating movement, movement duration, and movement size' [Valli & Ceil: 2000, 194]. This is made clear by the images below, which show the predominance of similar handshapes and of recurrent movement paths used for the sign translation of the first lines from *Twelfth Night*.

Text	**ASL translation**
- / - / - / - / / / If music be the food of love, play on;	

/ - - / - - / / - -
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,

- / -/ - / - - / /
The appetite may sicken, and so die.

Conclusions

On the basis of what has been said so far in this paper, we might ask what advantages an ASL translation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* can offer for either deaf or hearing audiences. Arguably, such an advantage consists for the former demographic in the possibility of accessing a literary icon, thus partaking in his linguistic mastery and creative genius; moreover, it is a way to give academic relevance to ASL itself, showing its manifold possibilities. And to the latter it instead represents the possibility to 'see' Shakespeare, to enjoy a new, visual experience of words as well as an unusual perception of performance, the unique opportunity to see with ears and hear with eyes.

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Lucanic words and Machiavellian deeds: dreams and plans of destruction in Ben Jonson's *Catiline*

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As part of a wider doctoral research project about the reception of the figure of Julius Caesar in early modern English drama, this paper deals with a particular depiction of this character, which might be defined as destructive and has its origin in Lucan's renowned epic poem *Bellum Civile*.[117] The influence of Lucan's Caesar and of the imagery of destruction constantly associated with him throughout the whole poem is discernible in many early modern English plays. In most cases this influence has similar outcomes, but it takes a peculiar form in Ben Jonson's second Roman tragedy *Catiline His Conspiracy* (1611): the destructive traits are attributed to Catiline and his crew and not to Caesar. Jonson's Caesar has often been branded as a Machiavellian figure, an idea recently confirmed by the realisation that a key passage in the play (the speech Caesar addresses to Catiline in 3.3.1-39) is an almost direct translation of a passage from Niccolò Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine* (1525).[118] My purpose here is to show how a close study of Jonson's handling of these two sources in *Catiline* can help us understand his choice to attribute Lucan's Caesar's destructive traits to Catiline while making Caesar a shrewd Machiavel. This transfer is not accidental but, on the contrary, sets up a meaningful contrast between opposed perspectives on politics and action. Before dealing with Jonson's tragedy in closer detail, it will be useful first to show how Lucan portrays Caesar and how thoroughly the imagery of destruction innervates his poem, and then to offer a brief survey of its influence on a few early modern English plays.

Lucan depicts the Roman general at one of the most important and controversial moments of his career: the civil war against Pompey. In his expression of republican nostalgia, he very obviously ascribes much of the responsibility of the conflict to Caesar, who is systematically demonized using the whole rhetorical equipment at Lucan's disposal and portrayed as unequivocally opposed to freedom and country. Most critics, however, agree that something is hidden beneath this negative representation: a kind of guilty, unavowable, but unmistakable admiration on the author's part for the destroyer of the republic. For the Latin poet he is the instigator and the winner of the civil war, but at the same time the man of destiny, 'a sort of Hegelian *Geschäftsführer des Weltgeistes*',[119] the instrument of an inscrutable historical process which, turning Rome into an empire, made it even more glorious and powerful. Lucan is like 'a slave to the sinister allure of his character',[120] intensely enraptured by the diabolical greatness of this 'black giant, [this] sublime monster'[121] of unlimited ambition, this superhuman and 'charismatic demon'.[122] This Caesar is, in short, 'a monstrous being, subverter, out of lust of power, of every divine and human law . . . often thirsty for evil just for sheer fun',[123] 'a Zeus-like being whose attacks wither and destroy all in their way',[124] portrayed as 'an enticing figure of horror, not a distortion of hatred'.[125] His predominant passion is a rage which sometimes

[117] All references to Lucan are to *Civil war*, ed. S. H. Braund (Oxford: 2000).
[118] D. Lovascio, 'Jonson's *Catiline* and Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine*', in *Notes and queries*, vol. 57 (2010), pp. 411-3.
[119] C. Walde, 'Caesar, Lucan's *Bellum civile*, and their reception', in *Julius Caesar in western culture*, ed. M. Wyke (Walden: 2006), pp. 45-61, 49.
[120] E. Narducci, *Lucano: un'epica contro l'impero* (Bari: 2002), p. 257, translation mine.
[121] F. Gundolf, *The mantle of Caesar*, trans. J. W. Hartmann (London: 1929), p. 41.
[122] J. Griffin, 'Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and the dramatic tradition', in *A companion to Julius Caesar*, ed. M. T. Griffin (Hoboken: 2009), pp. 371-98, 375.
[123] Narducci, 235-6, translation mine.
[124] F. M. Ahl, *Lucan: an introduction* (Ithaca: 1976), p. 198.
[125] Gundolf, 41.

'erupts into a completely irrational fury which seems to deprive the character of any logic outside destruction for its own sake':[126] 'something demonic pulsates in him, connecting him to the infernal forces of evil'.[127]

Bellum Civile offers many passages which exhibit the destructive nature of Caesar. From the start, Lucan compares the Roman general to Jove's thunderbolt (*Civil War*, 1.151-7) repeatedly portraying him as an unstoppable force of nature. Soon enough, the poet shows us how great is Caesar's enjoyment in the exercise of violence and destruction:

> Caesar, mad for war, rejoices to proceed only by shedding
> blood, rejoices that Hesperia's lands he tramples
> are not empty of the enemy, that the fields he invades are not deserted,
> that his march itself is not for nothing, that non-stop he wages
> war after war. He would rather smash the city-gates
> than enter them wide open, with sword and fire devastate
> the fields than tread them with the farmer unresisting.
> He is ashamed to go by paths permitted, like a citizen. (*Civil War*, 2.439-46)

Caesar 'cannot live without war, because his whole possible inner gratification resides in it'.[128] His yearning for devastation and massacres is virtually unlimited: when he is presented with the unexpected opportunity to raze Massilia, though such an 'enterprise' is not part of his plans, Caesar welcomes it with exultation. At the peak of his delusion, he urges his soldiers with the following words: 'Although we are hurrying to the western region of the world, | There is time to destroy Massilia. Rejoice, soldiers! | By a gift of Fate, war is presented to you as you proceed' [*Civil war*, 3.359-61].

However, it is during and after the decisive battle of Pharsalus that Caesar's cruelty and ferocity reach their culmination. This is a terrible clash, in which not only fellow-citizens, but also men bound to one another by blood ties are forced to face each other in combat as a result of the future dictator's uncontrolled fury and of his 'superhuman force capable of destroying the *pietas* which naturally keeps together members of the State'.[129] As Lucan writes:

> Here Caesar, maddening the people and goading them to frenzy,
> goes ranging round the troops, adding fires to spirits already blazing: wickedness must not be missing in any section of his army.
> . . . Wherever he goes round . . .
> there is a vast night of wickedness; slaughter follows
> and the groans as of a voice immeasurable, and armour clatters
> with the weight of falling breast, and swords on swords are shattered.
> In person he supplies fresh swords, hands them weapons,
> and orders them to mangle with their steel the faces of the enemy,
> in person he advances the line, onward drives his army from behind,
> with blow of inverted spear he rouses the reluctant,
> forbids them to strike the masses and indicates the Senate;
> well he knows which is the empire's blood, which are the guts of the state,
> he knows the starting-point of his course to Rome, the spot to strike
> as the Liberty of the world makes her final stand. [*Civil War*, 7.557-9, 567, 571-81]

In this account the battle actually looks more like an 'expressionistic nightmare'[130] than a realistic description: no grim detail of this horrendous slaughter is spared. And yet, at the end of this bloody and fratricidal struggle, the reader is presented with an even more chilling scene:

> [Caesar] sees rivers driven on
> by gore and mounds of corpses high as lofty

[126] Narducci, 189.
[127] L. Nosarti, 'Quale Cesare in Lucano?' in *Acta classica universitatis scientiarum debreceniensis*, vol. 38-9 (2002-3), pp. 169-203, 196, translation mine.
[128] *Ibid.*, 189, translation mine.
[129] M. Lapidge, 'Lucan's imagery of cosmic dissolution' in *Hermes* vol. 107 (1979), pp. 344-70, 367.
[130] W. R. Johnson, *Momentary monsters: Lucan and his heroes* (Ithaca: 1987), p. 99.

> hills, he watches heaps sinking into putrefaction
> and counts the peoples of Magnus; a place for feasting
> is prepared from where he can discern the faces and the features
> of the dead. He is delighted that he cannot see the Emathian land
> and that his eyes scan fields hidden underneath the carnage . . .
> And not to lose the joyful sight of his wickedness, in a frenzy
> he refuses those unfortunates the pyre's flame. [*Civil War*, 7.789-95, 797-8]

As Lorenzo Nosarti remarks, 'in these verses we witness a *Steigerung*, a heightening of the concept of *ira*, we are now at the next stage, we are in front of *crudelitas*, *feritas*'.[131] The reader can't help feeling appalled by Caesar's extraordinary intoxication while he contemplates the streams of blood and the piles of his enemies' corpses, which actually seem to arouse his appetite. The Roman general revels in the visceral reality of blood: before the decisive battle, while exhorting his soldiers with sadistic voluptuousness to devote themselves to carnage and to give vent to their most violent drives, he is possessed by a 'gruesome delusion of slaughter':[132] 'I seem to look at streams of blood | and kings trampled on together and the Senate's | mangled body and nations swimming in an endless victory' [*Civil War*, 7.292-4]. This uncontrollable desire for massacres is discernible even in the character's name: Lucan himself traces the etymology of the name *Caesar* back to the Latin verb *caedo*, 'to kill' [*Civil War*, 7.721-2].

No wonder, then, that such a literary creation has been one of the most influential characters in Western literature, never ceasing to fascinate (or disgust) writers, critics and readers in every age. Restricting discussion to the playwrights of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we must recall the crucial relationship that commentators such as William Blissett have perceived between Lucan's Caesar and the birth of a particular type of villain that appeared on the English stage at the end of the sixteenth century. Blissett aptly designated such a dreadful 'world-conqueror and destroyer of the peace'[133] the *Caesarian villain*; the stereotype finds fullest embodiment in Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* [1587-8]. Moreover, the rediscovery of Lucan's Caesar also brought about the integration of the traits of the destroyer in some English playwrights' characterizations of Caesar himself. Such traits are especially conspicuous in the anonymous *Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey or Caesar's Revenge* [1595], Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia* [1594, a translation of Robert Garnier's *Cornélie*, 1574] and John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *The False One* [1620], but are developed even further in Jonson's *Catiline*. The influence of *Bellum Civile* is even more striking in light of the fact that the first English translation (of Book 1 alone) of Lucan's poem was not published until 1600.[134]

The anonymous *Caesar's Revenge* is rich in lurid images of devastation. This comes as no surprise, since the play is framed by the appearances of the choric figure of Discord, who clearly states that her only aim is to bring death and 'endlesse woe' to the world.[135] The play opens with her gruesome description of the battlefield after the battle of Pharsalus:

> Hearke how the Romaine drums found bloud & death,
> And *Mars* high mounted on his Thracian Steede
> Runs madding through Pharsalias purple fieldes.
> The earth that's wont to be a Tombe for Men
> It's now entomb'd with Carkases of Men. [*Caesar's Revenge*, 1.1.1-5]

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[131] Nosarti, 194. translation mine.
[132] Narducci, 216.
[133] W. Blissett, 'Lucan's Caesar and the Elizabethan villain' in *Studies in philology* vol. 53 (1956), pp. 553-75, 553. For an overview of Lucan's influence on English literature from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, see O.A.W. Dilke, 'Lucan and English literature', in *Neronians and Flavians: silver Latin I*, ed. D. R. Dudley (London: 1972), pp. 83-112.
[134] The line-for-line translation of Book 1 entered in the Stationer's Register in 1593 and then published in 1600 was by Marlowe himself. The first complete English translation of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* was that by Sir Arthur Gorges in 1614, followed by Thomas May's version in 1626-7. As Dilke, 'Lucan and English literature', p. 95, remarks, before Gorges' and May's translations, 'the English reader who had difficulty in understanding the Latin had to rely on foreign translations for books II-X, and these seem for the most part to have been ignored'.
[135] *The tragedy of Caesar's revenge*, ed. F. S. Boas (Oxford: 1911), 5.5.2554. All references to the play are to this edition.

The Caesar of this play is a complex figure. In 1.3 he is curiously depicted as regretful for his countrymen's bloodshed—such remorse has no authority in any of the historical records and must be seen as the playwright's invention. Right after Anthony, Dolobella and an unnamed lord of the Roman army have expressed their desire to crown him king, Caesar starts pouring out his sorrow for the devastation he has left behind himself in the last internecine battle (1.3.255-67). Anthony, who we may assume knows Caesar quite well, sounds very surprised by these words and rebukes him for this unexpected

> womanish compassion
> To see *Pharsalias* fields to change their hewe
> And siluer streames be turn'd to lakes of blood.
> Why Caesar oft hath sacrificed in France,
> Millions of Soules, to Plutoes grisly dames
> And made the changed coloured *Rhene* to blush,
> To beare his bloody burthen to the sea. [*Caesar's Revenge*, 1.3.269-75]

By luridly recalling Caesar's past massacres, Anthony casts a shadow on the sincerity of his regret. Moreover, right after a second lamentation by Caesar about his most recent war crimes, Anthony, Dolobella and the lord very easily convince him that the blame for the civil war is all Pompey's. This is enough to make Caesar instantly forget his previous cares and feel ready for a new fratricidal battle: he will swiftly pursue the runaway Pompey and nobody will be able 'to shrowd him from [his] fatall sworde' [*Caesar's Revenge*, 1.3.331]. Leaving aside any discussion on Caesar's sincerity and consistency, it is important to observe that the main aim of the play is a didactic one: to reproach ambition and revenge as the most likely motives for the outbreak of violence in general and of civil wars in particular.

In light of these considerations, it is easy to understand how the images of destruction are employed as a means to foreground the horrors of civil war, and so to render the censure of ambition and revenge more explicit. These tropes are evident in Anthony's and Cassius's speeches before the final battle of Philippi. Anthony proclaims

> *Aemathian* fieldes shall change her flowry greene,
> And die proud *Flora* in a sadder hew; . . .
> *Hemus* shall fat his barren fieldes with bloud,
> And yellow *Ceres* spring from wounds of men. [*Caesar's Revenge*, 4.4.2112-3, 2120-2)]

Such words are very similar in tone to those uttered by Cassius a few lines later:

> The ground not dry'd from sad *Pharsalian* blood,
> Will now bee turned to a purple lake,
> And bleeding heapes and mangled bodyes slayne,
> Shall make such hills as shall surpasse in height
> The Snowy Alpes and aery *Appenines*. [*Caesar's Revenge*, 5.1.2201-5]

It is quite evident that Discord has managed to infect almost every character in the play with a burning desire for glory and blood. In her penultimate speech, her palpable gloating and satisfaction indicate that she has fully attained her ends:

> I, now my longing hopes haue their desire,
> The world is nothing but a massie heape
> Of bodys slayne, the Sea a lake of blood,
> The Furies that for slaughter only thirst,
> Are with these Massakers and slaughters cloyed . . .
> Hell and *Elysium* must be digd in one,
> And both will be to litle to contayne,
> Numberles numbers of afflicted ghostes,
> That I my selfe haue tumbling thither sent. [*Caesar's Revenge*, 5.5.2531-5, 2541-4]

The perspective of Kyd's and Fletcher and Massinger's plays is, *mutatis mutandis*, essentially anti-Caesarian. In *Cornelia* Caesar, who does not appear until 4.2, is described from the start as an ambitious and ruthless tyrant by his defeated opponents (especially Cornelia, Cicero and Cato), a perspective which the

play only endorses. It is Cassius, in a dialogue with Brutus at the beginning of 4.1, who most vividly recalls the devastation and the horrors with which Caesar has disgraced himself to seize power:

> by bloody iarres
> He hath vnpeopled most part of the earth.
> Both Gaule and Affrique perrisht by his warres;
> Egypt, Emathia, Italy and Spayne
> Are full of dead mens bones by *Caesar* slayne.
> Th'infectious plague, and Famins bitternes,
> Or th' Ocean (whom no pitty can asswage),
> Though they containe dead bodies numberles,
> Are yet inferior to *Caesars* rage;
> Who (monster-like) wyth his ambition
> Hath left more Tombes then ground to lay them on.[136]

This Caesar, 'a bombastic Marlovian conqueror, tyrannical, bullying, and unrepentant',[137] is a sower of death, quite overjoyed by the rivers of blood with which he covers battlefields, veritably glowing with happiness as he recalls the day when 'the Thessalian fields were purpled ore | With eyther Armies murdred souldiers gore' (*Cornelia*, 5.2.61-4) and deeply proud of his heinous deeds in Thapsus, where, after the clash,

> euery where
> Lay armed men, ore-troden with theyr horses,
> Dismembred bodies drowning in theyr blood,
> And wretched heaps lie mourning of theyr maimes,
> Whose blood, as from a spunge, or bunche of Grapes
> Crusht in a Wine-presse, gusheth out so fast,
> As with the sight doth make the sound agast.
> Some should you see that had theyr heads halfe clouen,
> And on the earth theyr braines lye trembling:
> Here one new wounded helps another dying:
> Here lay an arme, and there a leg lay shiuer'd. [*Cornelia*, 5.1.249-59]

Fletcher and Massinger's *The False One* also vilifies, at least in the beginning, Caesar's feral, incessant (and above all illegitimate) quest for power. He himself declares that his faithful comrades are 'Swordes, Hungers, Fires, destructions of all natures, | Demolishments of Kingdomes, and whole Ruines'.[138] However, compared with Lucan, Fletcher and Massinger bestow more complexity on their character, making him capable at least of feeling regret for his actions, in scenes which are similar to those in *Caesar's Revenge*:

> I have enterd *Rome* by force,
> And on her tender wombe, (that gave me life)
> Let my insulting Souldiers rudely trample;
> The deare vaines of my Country, I have opend
> And saild upon the torrents that flowd from her,
> The bloody streames, that in their confluence
> Carried before 'em thousand desolations;
> I rob'd the treasury, and at one gripe
> Snatch'd all the wealth . . . ;
> I raiz'd *Massilia*, in my wanton anger:
> *Petreius* and *Affranius* I defeated.
> Pompey I over threw; what did that get me?
> The slubber'd name of an authoriz'd enemy. [*The False One*, 2.3.37-45, 48-50]

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[136] T. Kyd, *Cornelia*, in *The works of Thomas Kyd*, ed. F. S. Boas (Oxford: 1955), 4.1.105-15. All references to the play are to this edition.

[137] C. J. Ronan, 'Caesar on and off the Renaissance English stage', in Julius Caesar*: new critical essays*, ed. H. Zander (London: 2005), pp. 71-89, 77.

[138] J. Fletcher and P. Massinger, *The false one*, ed. R. K. Turner, in *The dramatic works in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon*, gen. ed. F. Bowers, vol. 8 (Cambridge: 1992), 2.1.199-200. All references to the play are to this edition.

It is easy to note how the Roman general only laments the destruction of his own country, while he is apparently unmoved by the slaughters of Celts and Germans. Here the images of destruction don't appear to be part of an expression of republican nostalgia or a censure of civil strife. They are perhaps best understood, as Clifford J. Ronan suggests, in the context of a condemnation of the 'westward course of the British empire'.[139]

In the three plays I have examined so far the traits of the destroyer and the imagery associated with destruction are considerably developed and have a certain structural importance, but the main reason dramatists deploy them seems to be their will to enliven their plays by creating scenes and dialogues of guaranteed effect. The case of Jonson's *Catiline* is of an altogether different nature. Here the images of devastation—many directly taken from Lucan—are more widespread and have wider implications.

Though it is never actually realised, the possibility of destruction is one of the main themes of Jonson's play: it is constantly dreamt of and talked about by the conspirators. Their speeches abound with Lucanic echoes and would seem to presage a chilling enterprise of unheard-of impiety; in fact, the language stands in sharp contrast to the chronic inaction to which the plotters doom themselves. This inevitably makes them sound like deluded braggarts with the (arguably intentional) result of deactivating the destructive potential of Lucan's images. This happens, for example, in the raving exchange (taken almost verbatim from *Bellum Civile*)[140] between Catiline and his henchman Cethegus in Act 1. Here they both give vent to their dream of bringing back the happy times 'of Sylla's sway, when the free sword took leave | To act all that it would'[141] and when absolutely nobody, not even relatives, children, 'the sick, the old . . . virgins and widows, matrons, pregnant wives' (*Catiline*, 1.241-3) could escape their violence. The most vivid and striking images of destruction are deployed by Cethegus, undoubtedly the most enthusiastic, the most eager, the most thirsty for revenge, slaughters and carnage among the conspirators. He recalls the time when

> Slaughter bestrid the streets and stretch'd himself
> To seem more huge, whilst to his stained thighs
> The gore he drew flow'd up and carried down
> Whole heaps of limbs and bodies through his arch.
> ...The rugged Charon fainted
> And ask'd a navy, rather than a boat,
> To ferry over the sad world that came;
> The maws and dens of beasts could not receive
> The bodies that those souls were frighted from,
> And e'en the graves were fill'd with men yet living
> Whose flight and fear had mix'd them with the dead. [*Catiline*, 1.235-8, 247-53]

He is the only one who never quails after Catiline's defeat in the elections. In fact, he proclaims himself happy to reach his objectives by a dangerous and rough road in a speech which combines two passages from Lucan [*Civil War*, 2.443-4, quoted above, and 1.149-50] and one from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*,[142] constituting the perfect instantiation of the intoxication and rapture he feels while daydreaming about such images of destruction:

> I would not go through open doors, but break 'em;
> Swim to my ends through blood; or build a bridge
> Of carcasses; make on upon the heads
> Of men struck down like piles, to reach the lives
> Of those remain, and stand; then is't a prey
> When danger stops and ruin makes the way. [*Catiline*, 3.1.188-93]

Nevertheless, since Cethegus never completes a single action in the play, his words turn out to be nothing more than cheap braggadocio and he must be dismissed as a ridiculous braggart whose impotence is perfectly epitomized in his answer to Cicero in 5.4. When the consul asks him how he would have used the weapons found in his house he can only answer as follows:

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[139] Ronan, 81.

[140] Cf. *Civil War,* 2.101-2, 104-7, 109-11, 145-6, 149-53; 3.16-7.

[141] B. Jonson, *La congiura di Catilina: testo inglese a fronte*, ed. D. Lovascio (Genova: 2011), 1.230-1.

[142] C. Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great: Part II*, in *The plays of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. R. Gill (Oxford: 1971), 1.3.92-5.

Had you ask'd
In Sylla's days, it had been to cut throats,
But now it was to look on only; I lov'd
To see good blades and feel their edge and points,
To put a helm upon a block and cleave it,
And now and then to stab an armor through. (*Catiline*, 5.4.54-9)

The only satisfaction to his violent drives is 'now and then to stab an armour through' and the only thing he actually manages to destroy during the whole play is the letter with which Cicero has just trapped him [*Catiline*, 5.4.61].

Cethegus's bombastic but empty words are well matched by Catiline's progressively yielding behaviour. Though he never loses his coherence and dignity, after the electoral defeat his attitude seems marked by a desire to inflict destruction on himself rather than on others. First, in an aside, he says he would like to 'reach the axle where the pins are | Which bolt this frame, that I might pull 'em out | And pluck all into chaos with myself' [*Catiline*, 3.1.175-7]. Then, after Cicero's oration in 4.2, he exclaims that if he is to fall it will be 'in the common fire rather than mine own, | For fall I will with all ere fall alone' [*Catiline*, 4.2.451-2]. Even more telling in this respect is the use Jonson makes of an image taken directly from *Bellum Civile* in the final description of the fight between the Catilinarians and the consular troops: that of the Libyan lion which, 'careless of wounds', throws itself against his hunters [*Civil War*, 1.205-12]. Lucan had employed the simile in a different context as a way of extolling Caesar's indomitable courage; Jonson, on the other hand, applies it to Catiline's desperate situation, mainly to glorify his last act [*Catiline*, 5.9.65-72]: conscious that he has no other choice and 'Ambitious of great fame to crown his ill' [*Catiline*, 5.9.65], he runs into the thick of the battle just 'like a Libyan lion | Upon his hunters' [*Catiline*, 5.9.68-9] and heroically fights to his death, which is nothing but a glorious suicide.

The way Jonson exploits and combines the images of destruction drawn from Lucan acquires a specific meaning in the light of his portrayal of Caesar. Though the latter is himself involved in the plot, he shares absolutely nothing of the sterile rage which animates the other conspirators' daydreaming. On the contrary, he is portrayed as the perfect representative of political Machiavellianism: cunning, cynical and scheming. Jonson's choice is indebted to some details found in Plutarch's and Costanzo Felici's works and also to the negative interpretations of the Roman general's career which had been offered by many humanists. They had condemned his ambition, which had led him to become the destroyer of the republic. Leonardo Bruni, for instance, had recognized as early as 1442 that 'the Roman empire began to collapse once the disastrous name of Caesar had begun to brood over the city. For liberty gave way before the imperial name, and when liberty departed, so did virtue'.[143] A similar opinion was later expressed by Sir Thomas Elyot, who believed that Caesar had 'subverted the best and most noble public weal of the world' [1531],[144] while Montaigne in his *Essais* [1580] above all ascribed to Caesar

> that frenzied passion of ambition... which... undid the most beautiful and most richly endowed nature there ever was, making his name abominable to all good men for having willed to seek his own glory from the destruction and overthrow of his country, the most powerful and flourishing commonwealth that the world will ever see.[145]

Leaving aside any possible direct influence of these passages on *Catiline*, it is important to bear in mind that the traits of the 'seditious were parts of Caesar's image... in the mind of the audience'[146] during the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

However, we have to speak of direct influence as far as the relationship between Machiavelli's works and Jonson's second Roman tragedy is concerned. In his *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* (1519) Machiavelli had been highly critical of Caesar as the man who had accomplished the blameworthy enterprise in which Catiline had failed—that is the destruction of the Roman republic—and Jonson shares this view of Caesar whole-heartedly:

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[143] L. Bruni, *History of the Florentine people*, ed. J. Hankins, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: 2001), 1.38.
[144] T. Elyot, *The book named the governor*, ed. S. E. Lehmberg (London: 1962), 3.16.
[145] M. de Montaigne, *The complete essays*, ed. M. A. Screech (Harmondsworth: 1991), 2.33.
[146] V. Gentili, *La Roma antica degli elisabettiani* (Bologna: 1991), p. 62, translation mine.

> nor should anyone be deceived by Caesar's renown when he finds writers extolling him before others, for those who praise him have either been corrupted by his fortune or overawed by the long continuance of the empire... If, however, anyone desires to know what writers would have said, had they been free, he has but to look at what they say of Catiline. For Caesar is the more blameworthy of the two in that he who has done wrong is more blameworthy than he who has but desired to do wrong.[147]

In any event, Machiavelli's contribution to the construction of Jonson's play is even more evident in the secret meeting when Caesar urges Catiline to act as soon as possible, which faithfully translates a few passages from *Istorie Fiorentine*:[148]

> Th'are petty crimes are punish'd, great rewarded.
> Nor must you think of peril, since attempts
> Begun with danger still do end with glory,
> And when need spurs, despair will be call'd wisdom.
> Less ought the care of men or fame to fright you,
> For they that win do seldom receive shame
> Of victory, howe'er it be achiev'd.
> . . . Come, there was never any great thing yet
> Aspired, but by violence or fraud. [*Catiline*, 3.3.17-23, 26-7]

These words very closely reproduce some portions of the speech delivered by one of the plebeians placed under the Wool Guild in *Istorie Fiorentine*:

> i falli piccoli si puniscono, i grandi e gravi si premiano... e del pericolo nelle cose grandi gli uomini animosi non tennono mai conto, perché sempre quelle imprese che con pericolo si cominciono si finiscono con premio... ma dove la necessità strigne è l'audacia giudicata prudenza... né conscienza né infamia vi debba sbigottire; perché coloro che vincono, in qualunque modo vincono, mai non ne riportono vergogna... vedrete tutti quelli che a ricchezze grandi e a grande potenza pervengono o con frode o con forza esservi pervenuti.[149]

Caesar's exhortation is a key moment in the play, when his pragmatism and his qualities as a wise politician emerge most clearly. His conduct from this point on will be marked by the utmost prudence and characterized by the most devious duplicity, finally providing him with impunity.

The contrast set up by Jonson between the fruitless rage of the Catilinarians and Caesar's sharp subtlety cannot be dismissed as a mere coincidence. The rashness and poor foresight of the other conspirators are clearly set against the future dictator's *Realpolitik*. Caesar always remains cold and detached, never abandoning his pragmatism to indulge in delusions of destructive omnipotence. Thus, Jonson sets up an opposition between Lucan and Machiavelli in order to illustrate a universal lesson in politics: since Caesar (and not Catiline) will be the real destroyer of the republic, will turn Rome into an empire paving the way for tyranny, it is implied that it is necessary for those who govern a state to be able to identify and suppress the silent threats which are hidden in its bosom. They are far more dangerous than a conspiracy animated only by an unchecked fury like Catiline's, whose enterprise is bound to fail precisely because of the impatience and ineptness of its members. The deliberateness of Jonson's choice can be explained more fully with reference to the turbulent political situation of Jacobean England. The series of Catholic conspiracies that had threatened the king—first and foremost the Gunpowder Plot—had resulted in a widespread sense of fear and anxiety in the public that was obviously sharpened by the awareness of the blatant corruption of the court.[150] In such a context, the intentional contrast set up by Jonson between Lucan and Machiavelli seems to

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[147] N. Machiavelli, *The discourses*, ed. B. R. Crick, trans. L. J. Walker (Harmondsworth: 1970), 1.10. McLaughlin suggests that perhaps Machiavelli has in mind a similar interpretation proposed by Poggio Bracciolini about a century earlier (M. McLaughlin, 'Empire, eloquence, and military genius: Renaissance Italy' in *A companion to Julius Caesar*, ed. M. T. Griffin [Hoboken: 2009], pp. 335-55, 347).

[148] See Lovascio, 411-3.

[149] N. Machiavelli, *Istorie Fiorentine e altre opere storiche e politiche*, ed. Alessandro Montevecchi (Torino: 2005), 3.13.

[150] See D. Lovascio, 'Introduzione', in B. Jonson, *La congiura di Catilina: testo inglese a fronte* (Genova: 2011), pp. xi-lxx.

corroborate any interpretation of the play which takes into account the events directly beyond the bounds of the stage (that is, the civil war and Caesar's dictatorship) in unlocking the narrative's meaning.[151]

Jonson's dramatic use of the ideas taken from Lucan and Machiavelli confirms his extraordinary ability to assimilate the most varied perspectives, which never results in a slavish imitation of his models. On the contrary, it gives life to a personal and original reworking through which the playwright can express his conception of life, art and, in this particular case, history and politics.

[151] See *ibid.*, lxiv-lxix.

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An intercultural (re)writing of a Shakespearean text: Brecht's *Coriolan*

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'[O]ur virtues | Lie in th'interpretation of the time' [IV.vii.49][152] claims Aufidus in *Coriolanus* [1608?], the last Roman tragedy by William Shakespeare. Through these memorable words, the general of the Volsces states that the appreciation of a person's qualities is historically determined. According to reception theory, the same thing happens with literature. A work's interpretation, even if it is considered a timeless classic, is historically, socially and culturally determined and cannot be believed to be fixed.

This fact emerges clearly in dramatic literature, since the dramatic text comes to life on the stage again and again over the centuries, allowing an infinite number of mise-en-scènes, each one implying its own interpretation of the text and making this interpretation explicit in the form of an adaptation. The role of reception is even more visible when a work undergoes a translation, which is, inevitably, another culture-dependent act.

It has been largely assumed that observing a Shakespearean text through the lens of a non-English language and culture means questioning it and enriching its interpretative possibilities, just as any distancing act unavoidably widens understanding. Yet the answer to the question: 'What is it that endures when he [Shakespeare] is deprived of his tongue?' [Kennedy, 1993: 17][153] is still controversial.

In the present paper the process of interpretation will be analysed through the comparison of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and its German adapted version by Bertolt Brecht, entitled *Coriolan von Shakespeare Bearbeitung [Coriolanus by Shakespeare Revised]* [1951]. The description of the latter work as a multifaceted intercultural practice, profoundly different from the plain ideological reading often associated with the German dramatist,[154] will be a concrete way to obtain an unsettling and complex interpretation of the Shakespearean text.

Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*: history and politics

Shakespeare based the story of *Coriolanus* pre-eminently on Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*,[155] which he read Thomas North's translation, but he also referred to Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, in the English version by Philemon Holland. The two sources differ in their treatment of the subject: the first focuses on the stories of individuals, mitigating the political implications of the Greek text by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, while the second is more interested in the development of Roman institutions and in information concerning the Roman people at large.

Shakespeare's use of Livy's text should not be disregarded. As Anne Barton demonstrates in her revealing essay on *Coriolanus*' sources, this reference can help illuminate the play's political interpretation. In Livy, indeed, the political issues are pivotal in the story of Coriolanus. Anne Barton writes: 'Book 2, in which the story of Caius Martius is told, addresses itself specifically to the question of how *libertas* was achieved, actually, and in men's minds. It begins with threats from without… [and] ends with the overcoming of threats from within, represented by… Coriolanus' [Barton, 1985: 69-70].

Thus, the historian of the Roman Augustan age used the tale of Coriolanus – a successful general in the battlefield but a tyrannical leader towards his people – as a warning for the Roman citizens: 'However

[152] All quotations of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* are from the Arden, 1976 edition.
[153] On this topic, see also Pavis, 1996; Tatlow, 2001; Dawson, 2002; Massai, 2005; Chaudhuri, Chee, 2006; Kujawińska, 2007. See also Coldiron, 2008, and the rich methodological introduction in Huang, 2009 (pp. 23-43).
[154] See, for example, Hultberg, 1959; Michael, 1984, and Guntner, 1993.
[155] See Corti, 1988.

useful in time of war, men like Coriolanus are a threat to the balance of the state, to an evolving republic which must try to take them with it but, if it cannot, has no option but to discard them by the way' [*ibid.*: 70].

Plutarch's and Livy's versions of the story reflect the two-fold essence of Shakespeare's hybrid product, which is both psychologically and politically concerned. Shakespeare animates both Plutarch's narrative of the individual (drastically extending Coriolanus' psychological profile) and Livy's narrative of the Roman republic (by projecting onto ancient Rome the aristocratic England of James I, as Parliament strove against the increasingly untrammelled power of the king and grain riots recurred with increasingly violent results).[156]

As Bryan Reynolds points out in his well-researched reconstruction of *Coriolanus*' historical context, James I became a threat to his English people, because he 'was educated in Roman rather than English constitutional law, and because he wrote several theoretical works intended to legitimize and foster the absolute power of Christian kings' [Reynolds, 2000: 118]. Like Coriolanus, the English king found himself god-like, irreplaceable.

Although the title character of Shakespeare's text may be twinned with numerous domineering English Renaissance figures,[157] the parallels with the king are the most striking. The similitude is demonstrated by an excerpt from one of James I's treaties on power, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, cited by Reynolds to show the king's advocacy of the Divine Right theory:

> [The] allegeance of the people to their lawful King, their obedience, I say, ought to be to him, as to Gods lieutenant in earth, obeying his commands in all things, except directly against God, as the commands of Gods Minister, acknowledging him as a judge set by God ouer them, hauing power to judge them, but to be judged onely by God. [James I in Reynolds, 2000:118]

After reading this passage, one can make of James I the same comment Menenius does on Coriolanus: 'He wants nothing of a god but eternity and a heaven to throne in' [V.III.24-25]. In 1610, the king was asked to make a speech to Parliament to revise his previously stated autocratic tendencies, but the gesture intended for appeasement produced undesirable and unforeseen consequences. His words provoked general discontent and serious fear, as documented by one of the Lord Chamberlain's epistles of the same year, when he writes: 'I heare yt [James's speech] bred generally much discomfort; to see our monarchicall powre and regail prerogative strained so high and made so transcendant every way, that yf the practise shold follow the positions, we are not like to leave to our successors that freedome we receved from our forefathers' [*ibid.* 119]. Ultimately, Parliament responded with the Petition of Right.

In 1607, the enclosing of some fields in England aggravated the already desperate situation of farm labourers. Dearth and depopulation afflicted them. As a consequence, in May and June 1607, destructive insurrections five thousand-strong took place in the Midlands, organized by husbandmen assembled under the indicative name of 'levellers'. In his study of the historical context of *Coriolanus*, David George quotes a description of the riots that can be found in the coeval records: '[The levellers] violently cut and brake downe hedges, filled vp ditches, and laid open all such inclosures of Commons, and other grounds as they found inclosed, which of auncient time had been open… some of them were faine to vse Bills, Pykes, and such like tooles in stead of Mattocke and Spades' [George, 2000:114].

The gentry and the king responded to this unrest with heavy repression. In the towns of Newton and Hillmorton in particular,[158] participants in the riots received exemplary punishments. As it is reported: '[In] the fray some were killed, and wounded, and many taken prisoners, who afterwards were *hanged* and *quartered* and their quarters set up at Northampton, Oundle, Thrapston and other places' [Whalley in George, 2000: 114, italics mine].

Although Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* is nominally set in ancient Rome, we can see in the text clear allusions to these social and political contemporary facts. And topical elements are reflected not only in the content of the play, but also in its linguistic composition. As David George demonstrates in his above mentioned volume, the public discourse on the 1607-1608 dearth and insurrections in England can be easily detected also on the linguistic level of the work.

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[156] See Huffman, 1971, and Bevington-Kastan, 2008.
[157] See Jorgensen, 1949.
[158] George underlines the fact that this town is near Stratford, and that, as a consequence, the riot and its suppression must have been known by Shakespeare (see George, 2000:114).

Shakespeare's plebeians open the play presenting themselves as a 'company of mutinous Citizens, with staves, clubs, and other weapons' [I.i]. Against them, Coriolanus pronounces words, such as '[h]ang ye' [I.i.180], '[h]ang 'em', repeated twice [I.i.204; II.iii.57], and '[l]et them hang' [III.ii.23]. He longs to put down the people's rebellion in a heavily repressive way:

> Would the nobility lay aside their ruth
> And let me use my sword, I'd make a quarry
> With thousands of these *quarter'd* slaves as high
> As I could *pick* my lance. [I.i.196-199, italics mine]

As noted by David George: '[Here,] the use of the Midlands form 'pick' for 'pitch' is noteworthy' [2004: 114]. The terms used by Shakespeare seem to be borrowed directly from contemporary historical documents.

Furthermore, some elements of the play's original staging may have helped to render the opening insurrection scene highly topical. Costumes, for example, should have been a marked sign because, as Ripley maintains: 'Plebeians no doubt sported Jacobean working class attire' [1998: 35].[159] Moreover, if the popular rebellion of the opening scene implied the presence of members of the audience on stage, as Claudia Corti assumes [see 2000: 151], the audience was naturally led to identify itself with the plebeians.[160]

Despite the dangerous topicality of these elements, Shakespeare succeeded in preventing Sir George Buc's censorship. Reflecting upon this fact, David George postulates the idea that the playwright avoided copying the historical events of his time too closely, thus allowing the frequent hints in the play to pass beneath the censor's attention [see George, 2000: 124, 128]. This argument is inconsistent, since George himself defines the allusions to contemporary events in *Coriolanus* as manifest. More convincing is the logic suggested by Annabel Patterson: censorship was avoided through what she calls 'functional ambiguity' [1984: 18]. She defines this as the productive relativistic point of view from which Shakespeare presents the socio-political problems of his time and the cognate theme of class struggles.

Indeed, *Coriolanus* corresponds to Joel Altman's description of Elizabethan theatre in his influential study *The Tudor Play of Mind*, where he writes:

> I shall be asking the reader to consider a great many Renaissance plays to be questions… even questions that question whether such questions can be answered… these plays did not merely raise questions, in the general sense, but literally were questions – or rather fictional realizations of questions. [Altman, 1978: 2-3]

Through the use of the explorative paradigm, corresponding to the humanist rhetorical practice of argumentation *in utramque partem*,[161] the play becomes a heuristic means to examine political questions. It stimulates intellectual inquiry in the domain of fiction, which can be fruitful because it is free from social and political restraints.

This puzzling perspective has also encouraged different interpretations of the play, which have been mainly intended to reflect presumed authorial intentions and supposed fixed universal meanings – all of which are in reality historically or ideologically biased.[162] The theatrical history of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, particularly on the international stage, has consistently privileged the political level over the psychological one.[163] Since the very beginning of its afterlife, the play has been appropriated and adapted as

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[159] On this point see also Brockbank (1976: 74). On the emblematic value of costumes in the Renaissance see Mullini-Zacchi (2003: 101).
[160] In a recent essay on *Coriolanus* and Renaissance body-culture, Claudia Corti (see 2010) traces the view of the human body of the period in different fields of Renaissance culture, as well as in the play's text, and reads the text's clues to performance from a particular perspective: she highlights the iconic value of bodies and body-movements on stage.
[161] See Altman (1978), chapter I 'Demonstrative and explorative: two paradigms', pp. 13-30.
[162] See the excellent account in Ripley, 1998. See also Phillips, 1970; Garboli, 1973; George, 2008.
[163] In her essay on the Italian reception of *Coriolanus*, Mariangela Tempera underlines the text's 'particular status of *political* rather than historical or Roman play' (1996:152) and she highlights the fact that '[a] text as steeped in ideology as this is bound to take on contrasting hues in the hands of different translators' (*ibid.*). For a political interpretation of the play, see, among others, Pettet, 1950 and Huffmann, 1971. Recent socio-political readings of *Coriolanus* can be found in Maurizio Calbi's 'States of Exception: Auto-immunity and the Body Politic in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*' (2010), where the Italian scholar describes the character of Coriolanus as part of the State immunity system; and in Antonella Piazza's 'Volumnia, the Roman patroness' (2010), in which the exceptional political relevance of Volumnia, usually disregarded by critics, is investigated. The old woman, Piazza states, seems endowed with

a manifesto for both poles of the political spectrum. Suffice it to mention its first two English adaptations: Nahum Tate's Tory reading, *The Ingratitude of a Common-wealth: Or, the Fall of Caius Martius Coriolanus* [1681], and John Dennis' Whig one, *The Invader of His Country: or, The Fatal Resentment* [1719]. The fact that '*Coriolanus* has been played almost as often in an adaptation than in any form of Shakespeare's text, cut or whole' [George, 2008:9] is indicative of the extraordinary potential for extraneous and extrapolated meanings in the play.

Brecht's *Coriolan*: history and politics

Coriolanus has been adapted in Germany too,[164] where Shakespeare is considered a national timeless classic on a par with Goethe and Schiller. This sentiment stems from the romantic period, when he, the discourse around him and his works had a central role in the definition of German cultural identity and in the development of German national drama.[165]

Even Brecht's epic idea of theatre arose in the 1920s partly in relation to Shakespeare. More precisely, Brecht opposed the contemporary common productions of Shakespeare's plays because, according to the romantic tradition, they were merely focused on the emotional life of the protagonist and on his/her language, which in the nineteenth-century canonical German translations was a flattened and more rhetorical discourse than Shakespeare's original.

After the second world war, Brecht, like other German intellectuals, felt the duty to free the German cultural heritage – of which Shakespeare is an essential element – from Nazi appropriation.[166] As concerns *Coriolanus*, the Third Reich saw the title role as the symbol of the Nordic hero. The introduction of a 1934 German edition of the play reads:

> The meaning of this last and most mature of Shakespeare's works for the new Germany lies in the heroic features inherent in it. The poet treats the problem of *Volk* [people] and *Führer* [leader]; he portrays the true nature of a Führer in contrast to the indiscriminating masses: he portrays a misled *Volk*, a false democracy whose representatives give in to the wishes of the *Volk* for the sake of egoistical goals. The figure of the true hero and Führer Coriolanus towers high above these weaklings; he wants to lead the misdirected *Volk* to recovery, as Adolf Hitler wants to lead our beloved German Fatherland today. [Hüges in Reynolds, 2000:127]

Not only did Brecht want to reappropriate Shakespeare, but also to turn his homeland theatre into an epic one. To carry out this project he had to begin with translating Shakespearean plays, which were – as it has been said – at the heart of German theatre.

The American critic Eric Bentley understood this motive as early as 1949, writing:

> It has even been suggested that Brecht will translate Shakespeare; perhaps he could not remake the German theatre, as he wishes to do, without translating Shakespeare, who is, after all, the leading German dramatist. Up to now Shakespeare has been the dramatist of German romanticism, which means that of late he has become a somewhat academic figure, a Walter Scott of the stage. Brecht would give us a very modern Shakespeare, doubtless; the hope would be that the modern style would contain more of the original Elizabethan spirit than the romantic style did. The theater of Narrative Realism[167]… has more in common with the great theater of the remoter past than with the theater of today and yesterday. [Bentley, 1949:160]

These words sound prophetic today, anticipating the accomplishments Brecht would eventually make. In approaching Shakespeare as a classic, Brecht advocated a fearless attitude which should not undo the work but restore its original freshness and historical impact. He stated that, to respect the integrity of a classic, one

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Machiavelli's political ability and the meaning of her features can be interpreted as 'Shakespeare's suggestion to the contemporary James to look back to 'prudent' Elizabeth I for advice' (2010:134).

[164] See Brunkhorst, 1973.

[165] See, among others, Williams, 1990; Bate, 1992; Hortmann, 1998; Paulin, 2003.

[166] See Symington, 2005.

[167] 'Narrative realism' is Bentley's expression for epic theatre, which he found an obscure term.

should try to forget its conventional and commonsensical interpretation and see it anew, without adding elements unrelated to the text.[168]

Brecht devoted himself to Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, using the translation by Dorothea Tieck (commonly known as Schlegel-Tieck translation), from the early 1950s; he died in 1956, before finishing his reworking of the play. The Berliner Ensemble completed it for a production in 1964. Thus Brecht (re)wrote the Shakespearean text in the hard political, economic and cultural climate of the German Democratic Republic, which provided him with material to make his adaptation topical (just as Shakespeare did in his version).

The East German people were victims of the autocratic and military based power of Stalin, and they had clear memory of Hitler's autocracy. Thus the title character in Brecht comes to reflect these models. Furthermore, economically the condition of the East German people was as desperate as that of the English people in 1607, though for different reasons. The situation is effectively summed up by Bryan Reynolds in his essay on the similarities between Shakespeare's and Brecht's political perspectives on the story of Coriolanus. He writes:

> The Soviet Union made the years immediately following the establishment in 1949 of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) dire for East Germany's working class. It extracted resources and goods from the GDR and continued to do so until war reparations were formally settled in August 1953. The extraction caused depression and the rationing of staple products like fat, sugar, and meat; consumer durables remained scarce and expensive. Although wages increased for people employed by the state, living standards for the majority were terribly low. [Reynolds, 2000:108]

The government seemed indifferent to these problems and its negotiations with the people failed; on June 16th and 17th 1953, the workers protested in the streets of Berlin and of other cities. Their destiny was the same as that of their English Renaissance counterparts: they were ruthlessly repressed.

Brecht's rewriting: an interpretation of the Shakespeare text

Despite the rigid control of the Communist Party in the GRD, Brecht did not write a reductive version of the play shaped according to the socialist realism that would have pleased the Stalinist authorities. On the contrary, as can be read in his short article on the first scene of the play,[169] Brecht interpreted Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* by putting it back in its English Renaissance cultural context. He highlights how the contradictions inherent in the characters are socially and historically determined, so bringing out the original socio-political questions to which the play responded, identifying the signs in the text of repressed ideas and hopes within Shakespeare's society. Brecht (re)writes the play with this work in mind, making these issues and complexities visible, understandable and meaningful for his audience. In Tatlow's words: 'He modernized by historicizing' [2001:152].

Semantically Brecht revolved his up-to-date transposition around the topics he found central in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*: the danger of the autocratic impulse of heroes when the people of a state are weak (in times of war) and the sense of the precariousness in any historical process. As has been stated above, the first theme is central in Livy's version of the Coriolanus' story, which we may identify as Shakespeare's political source for *Coriolanus*.

Furthermore, to underline the political and topical values of these issues for his audience, Brecht accomplished a light devaluation[170] of the title role, painting as a less brave figure, and a secondary valuation of both the tribunes, who are given more pre-eminence, and the plebeians, whose identities are accentuated and are assigned a higher symbolic value. Despite these shifts in emphasis, it could not be said that Brecht overlaid the Shakespearean text with external and unrelated ideas – he only reworked what is already contained in the play. Brecht did not modify the problematic features of the Shakespearean characters, but explored them to the full by including related textual additions, removing scenes and shortening parts.

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[168] See Brecht, 1957.
[169] See Brecht, 1967.
[170] The terms *devaluation, secondary valuation* and *transmotivation* are borrowed from Gérard Genette theory of transtextuality. For their exact meaning see Genette, 1997 (pp. 354-357, 343-349 and 330-334 respectively).

The plebeians do not prove exemplary citizens. On the contrary, they are shown as a divided group without a proper class consciousness, united only by their neediness and by Rome's circumstance of war, which grants them the tribunes but also puts them under the necessary control of a leader. Coriolanus, in turn, lives in the tragic condition of the dictatorial hero who believes himself irreplaceable. When the people realize their need of democracy and call for it, he is unable to accept his loss of power, finally meeting with personal and/or social disaster.

Notably, Brecht changes the play's ending, operating a *transmotivation*: the protagonist dies not because his mother Volumnia wants him to spare his people but because she explains to him that the Roman citizens have become stronger, so they are able to dispense with autocratic heroes like him. She declares: 'Unersetzlich | Bist du nicht mehr, nur noch die tödliche | Gefahr für alle [Indispensable | you are no more, you are still only the deadly | Fear for all]' [V.iv, p. 374, translation mine].[171]

Thus, the play ends with the utopian idea of the strengthened proletariat, which is a modern political zeitgeist but also mirrors what Tatlow acutely discovers as social unconscious in the Shakespearean text,[172] that is to say the hint at the idea of a happy republic governed by the tribunes. This is a dream that cannot last precisely because of the weakness of the people, who seem to become a coherent force only in times of war.[173] Not by chance does Shakespeare treat this burning issue through the dialogue of three low and foolish characters, who have the features of what the Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin called 'carnivalesque'.[174] The serious matter is entangled with trivial and sexual references (which are likely to be precautionary measures against censorship).[175] At the end of Act IV, Scene 5, one reads:

> *Second Servingman*: This peace is nothing but to rust iron, increase tailors, and breed ballad-makers.
> *First Servingman*: Let me have war, say I. It exceeds peace as far as day does night… Peace is… a getter of more bastard children than war's a destroyer of men.
> *Second*: 'Tis so, and as wars, in some sort, may be said to be a ravisher, so it cannot be denied but peace is a great maker of cuckolds.
> *First*: Ay, and it makes men hate one another.
> *Third Servingman*: Reason: because they then less need one another. [IV.v. 226-238]

Immediately after, the scene ends and there begins the following scene set in a freed Rome. The very first lines are by Scinius, who declares:

> We hear not of him, neither need we fear him;
> His remedies are tame i'th'present peace
> And quietness of the people, which before
> Were in wild hurry. Here do we make his friends
> Blush that the world goes well; who rather had,
> Though they themselves did suffer by't, behold
> Dissentious numbers pest'ring streets, than see
> Our tradesmen singing in their shops and going
> About their functions friendly. [IV.vi.1-9]

As concerns the linguistic level, although the historical identity of the action and of the characters is unchanged, Brecht (re)writes the play in the German language of his own times, in order to make it as clear and direct as the original Renaissance English sounded to the Shakespearean audience. The occasional

[171] From here quotations of Brecht's *Coriolan* are from the Suhrkamp, 1959 edition.
[172] Precisely in IV.v.227-243-IV.vi. (See Tatlow, 2001:174).
[173] For an extremely interesting investigation of the themes of peace and war in Shakespeare's dramatic literature, see the recent book by Paola Pugliatti *Shakespeare and the just war tradition* (2010). The scholar describes the war in *Coriolanus* as 'war for war's sake and the "theatrical" exhibition of heroism for social and political advancement' (*ibid.*:136). Furthermore, she underlines the fact that the value of peace was questioned in Shakespeare's time and in its place 'the pressure of perpetual war' (*ibid.*:61) and the cognate idea of the need of an armed peace established themselves. This point is particularly important in relation to the scene mentioned above, because it is a further demonstration of the use of war by the State to control the masses.
[174] See Bakhtin, 1993.
[175] In the poem 'Besuch bei den verbannten Dichtern' ['A Visit to the Exiled Poets'] (1936), Brecht includes Shakespeare in the list of the exiled authors and makes him state that he tried to use humor to avoid censorship, but this was not enough under James I, who condemned him to silence.

occurrence of anachronistic words has the manifold outcome of actualizing the play, of providing the distancing effect pursued by Brecht in his epic theatre, and of involving the audience intellectually. To mention but a few examples, Brecht's Rome is divided in "Wahlbezirke [electoral districts]" [III.ii, p. 316] as the GDR was, and quintessentially German terms such as "Bierzapfen [beer drawer]" [II.i, p. 270] and "Pfennige [pennies]" [II.iii] are also included.

Brecht endows his *Coriolan* with his own aesthetic style, using detailed terms and expressions which refer to the idiolect of his theatre, reformulating sentences through his gestural method, and syntactically and metaphorically displaying the implied character's emotional state and attitude. All this is in accordance with his well-known borrowing from Chinese theatre, where emotions are represented by a stylized presentation, with the effect of both distancing them from the audience and making them stronger. Moreover, to give the text the key feature of his epic theatre, Brecht included a *lied* that interrupts the dramatic action. Even though it is a new invention, the song's lyrics are deeply rooted in the Shakespearean text.

In conclusion, Brecht revived the meaning of *Coriolanus* by considering its historical remoteness, seen as one major cultural difference, and then rewriting it topically, in contemporary German and using his own dramatic aesthetics. Brecht's *Coriolan* proves an original play in its own right as well as a play aimed at offering a new interpretation of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* which revives and reshapes the boundaries of the academic field of Shakespeare studies, [176] and of the mutable idea of what the Bard is.

In his challenging examination of Brecht's adaptation, Antony Tatlow rhetorically asks the reader: 'Do we not always "replace" the Shakespearean text, especially if we merely wish to reproduce it?' [2001:151] And in the particular case of *Coriolan*: 'Does "Brecht's" text… "replace" Shakespeare?' The answer Tatlow gives, and this paper briefly tried to demonstrate, is: 'Yes, with another reading of the Shakespearean text.' [*ibid.*:188]

[176] For the notion of Shakespeare as a cultural field see Massai, 2005:6.

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‘The greatest feast and ioye that euer Eye sawe’: George Gascoigne’s *The Princely Pleasures* and the Kenilworth Festivities (1575)

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In the summer of 1575, Elizabeth I visited the Earl of Leicester at his castle in Kenilworth where she ‘was magnificently entertained for nineteen days’[177] – from 9th to 27th July – with a sequence of costly shows prepared for her amusement by different contributors.

George Gascoigne took an important literary part in this occasion, as he was commissioned to co-write and edit a collection of texts: *The Princelye pleasures, at the Courte at Kenelwoorth. That is to saye. The Copies of all such verses, Proses, or Poeticall inuentions, and other deuices of pleasure, as were there deuised, and presented by sundry Gentlemen, before the QVENES MAIESTIE: In the yeare 1575*. Published anonymously in octavo form by the printer Richard Jones,[178] Gascoigne’s *Princely Pleasures*[179] is actually not the comprehensive ‘edition’ of the Kenilworth festivities which one might mistake it for – it includes only Gascoigne’s own contributions and some ‘devices’ by other ‘sundry Gentlemen’ presented on the first day show. However, as suggested by its title, the collection comprises a lively dialogue between ‘verses, proses, poetical inventions and *other devices of pleasure*’, underlining from the very beginning its overall generic diversity and complexity. Besides Gascoigne’s account, another substantial printed report of these royal shows, the so-called ‘Langham’s letter’,[180] provides significant details of their staging. Characterized by a semi-phonetic orthography,[181] this document represents a unique description of the Kenilworth pastimes especially because it was written ‘from the point of view of the *spectator*’.[182]

In recent decades, the entertainments performed at Kenilworth have attracted more scholarly attention than any other of the Queen’s summer progresses. However, the majority of critics have offered historical-cultural readings of *The Princely Pleasures*, focusing on the extent to which the outdoor shows

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[177] J. Nichols, *The progresses and public processions of Queen Elizabeth I*, 3 vols. (London: 1823) vol. I, p. xviii.

[178] G. Austen, *George Gascoigne* (Cambridge: 2008), p. 117.

[179] This copy, which was lost in a fire at the Birmingham Free Library in 1879, was reprinted in 1821. *The princely pleasures* was not published under George Gascoigne’s name until 1587, when it appeared in Abel Jeffes’s posthumous edition of the poet’s *The* Whole woorkes *of George* Gascoigne *Esquyre.* Cf. *John Nichols’s the progresses and public processions of Queen Elizabeth I: a new edition of the early modern sources*, ed., Jayne Archer *et al*. (Oxford: forthcoming), p. 52. I owe a special thanks to Dr Jayne Archer who kindly allowed me to consult, before publication, Elizabeth Goldring’s introduction and edition of *Queen Elizabeth entertainment at Kenilworth 9-27 July 1575* (pp. 5-102) in which are contained both *Langham’s letter* (pp. 7-52) and *The princelye pleasures, at the courte of Kenelwoorth* (pp. 52-102). References to this edition are given as page numbers after quotations in the text.

[180] The letter was published anonymously, although the author signs himself ‘R.L.’ and identifies himself in the text as ‘Langham’, ‘Ro. La’ and also ‘Laneham’. The authorship of this ‘letter’ has been often discussed by critics, such as David Scott and Kuin – ‘William Patten and the authorship of “Robert Laneham’s letter”’, *ELR*, vol. 7 (1977), pp. 297-306; R.J.P. Kuin, ‘The purloined *Letter*: evidence and probability regarding Robert Langham’s authorship’ in *The Library*, 6th Series, vol. 7 (1985), pp. 115-25. New research by Elizabeth Goldring has conclusively established the text’s authorship by also illustrating its publication history. See Elizabeth Goldring, ‘“A mercer ye wot az we be”: the authorship of the Kenilworth letter reconsidered’, *ELR* vol. 38, no. 2 (2008), pp. 245-69. For my discussion I have consulted the following editions: *Robert Laneham’s letter: describing a part of the entertainment unto Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575*, ed. F.J. Furnivall (London: 1907) and *A LETTER: whearin, part of the entertainment vntoo the Queenz Maiesty, at Killingwoorth Castl, in warwik Sheer, in this soomerz Progress. 1575. iz signified: from a freend officer attendant in the Coourt, vntoo hiz freend a Citizen, and Merchaunt of London*, in *John Nichols’s the progresses and public processions of Queen Elizabeth I*. All quotations from the letter are taken from Furnivall’s edition.

[181] This aspect has attracted the attention of the historians of English spelling and pronunciation such as E. J. Dobson, *English pronunciation, 1500–1700*, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1957), vol. I, pp. 88-93 and R. C. Alston, ‘Bibliography and historical linguistics’, *The Library*, 5th Series, vol. 21, no. 3 (1966), pp. 186-8.

[182] Goldring, *Queen Elizabeth entertainment at Kenilworth*, p. 5. In line with Goldring’s remark, Logan observes that this account was ‘the only detailed record of specific non-courtly progress entertainment of the period’. S. Logan, *Text/events in early modern England: poetics of history* (Aldershot: 2007), p. 94.

could be intended as a proposal of marriage for the Queen, as a strategy of articulating Leicester's militant Protestant religion-political agenda, or as a means of self-promotion of Gascoigne himself.[183] Thus, no specific attention has been paid to the structure of Gascoigne's account and the iconography which characterized the entertainments' scripts, or to the actual staging of these forms of spectacle. By offering a comparative analysis of *The Princely Pleasures* and Langham's letter, this paper will explore the performative context of such a multifaceted outdoor show, especially with reference to the entertainments presented on the first day and to one dramatic device produced by Gascoigne and staged on the third day.

From stage to text: reading Gascoigne's *The Princely Pleasures*

George Gascoigne's *The Princely Pleasures* belongs to those ceremonial texts published during Elizabeth's reign, the first of which was *The Queen Majestie Passage* (1559) by Richard Mulcaster. Devised for Elizabeth's royal entry into London, Mulcaster's text was printed anonymously nine days after the public ceremony and delivered to the Queen herself as a token of political propaganda which contributed to disseminating 'the message of the spectacle enacted in the streets of the capital'.[184] Like Mulcaster, Gascoigne can be regarded as both the co-author and the editor of the Kenilworth 'ceremonial collection' in which are included some of the entertainments' scripts produced on this occasion and a few records describing their staging. Just as *The Queen's Majesty's Passage* does, the latter text serves to link each display to the next by offering useful information on each author as well as some brief comments upon the actual performance.

Gascoigne's collection opens with a sequence of 'speeches in verses', three in English and the last one in Latin, devised for the first day's show. The first speech was composed by Mr Hunneys, 'Master of the children in her Maiesties Chappell' [p. 57], while the second was both 'deuised and pronounced by master Badger of Oxenforde [Oxford], Maister of Arte, and Bedle in the same Uniuersitie' [p. 58]. A third one was 'deuised and penned by M. Ferrers, sometime Lord of misrule in the Court' and the last composed 'by master Muncaster' [p. 60] while various other verses were 'deuised by M. *Paten*' [p. 61]. As Gascoigne himself suggests throughout the text, these four orations were delivered by four figures representing respectively a 'Sybil' [p. 56], a 'Porter' [p. 57], 'the Ladie of the Lake' [p. 58] and a 'Poet' [p. 60]. A close reading of the welcoming speeches presented before Elizabeth on the first day of her visit at Leicester's castle shows that these texts combine features of contemporary modes of addressing and representing her. At Kenilworth, the opening oration by the pagan prophetess Sybil praises the Queen's virtues in terms that conflate her with the biblical character Deborah, a trope also used in the fifth pageant mounted during Elizabeth's entry procession into London. The speaker makes explicit the link between the ancient wisdom and power of Deborah, who 'governed Israel in peace the space of forty years',[185] and the character of the present ruler, Elizabeth: 'A worthy precedent, O worthie Queene, thou hast, | A worthie woman iudge, a woman sent for staie | …in peace she, through God's aid did always maintain right'.[186] The Sybil describes the Queen's arrival to Kenilworth by employing the biblical symbolism, and advises the audience that Elizabeth 'shalbe called *the Prince of peace*', claiming also that 'peace shalbe [her] shield, | So that [her] eyes shal neuer see the broyles of bloody field' [p. 56; my emphasis].

In a similar fashion to the Sybil's lines, the Porter's oration makes use of divine allegory by depicting Elizabeth as 'a peereles Pearle' who contained 'No worldly wight no doubt, | *some soueraigne Goddes sure* [p. 58; my emphasis]. This mode of representation is reinforced at the end of the same speech:

> Come, come, most perfect Paragon,
> passe on with ioy and blisse,

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[183] I. Nash, '"A subject without subjection": Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and *The princely pleasures at Kenilworth Castle*', *Comitatus* vol. 25 (1994), pp. 81-102; S. Doran, *Monarchy and matrimony: the courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: 1996), pp. 67-72; G. Austen, 'Self-portraits and self-presentation in the work of George Gascoigne', *EMLS vol.* 14 no. 1, Special Issue 18 (2008), pp. 1-34, http://purl.oclc.org/emls/14-1/article1.htm; A.C. Sewter, 'Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* vol. 76 (1940), pp. 71-76, just to mention a few.

[184] W. Leahy, Elizabethan triumphal processions (Aldershot: 2005), p. 60.

[185] R. Mulcaster, *The Queen's Majesty's passage through the city of London to Westminster the day before her coronation*, in *Renaissance drama: an anthology of plays and entertainments*, ed. A.F. Kinney, 2nd edn. (Oxford: 2005), p. 129.

[186] *Ibid.*

> *Most worthy welcome Goddes guest*, whose presence gladdeth all. [my emphasis]

The speech attributed to the 'Lady of the Lake' (p. 58) also seeks to display and affirm the supernatural power of sovereignty ideally embodied in Kenilworth's royal guest. The character alludes to her prophetic and magical capacity in providing King Arthur with Excalibur, viewing Elizabeth's arrival as a threat that could undermine her own authority as guardian of the Kenilworth lake since Arthur's day:

> I am the Lady of this pleasant Lake, who since the time of great king *Arthures* reigne
> That here with royal Court aboade did make, haue led a lowring life in restles paine.
> Til now that this your third arriuall here doth cause me come abroad, and *boldly thus appeare*. [my emphasis]

In the last oration, which concludes the sequence of 'verses' presented on the first day, the emphasis shifts from praise of the Queen to praise of the spectacle itself. By stressing the fact that each show was meant to be a 'gift' to the 'Goddes guest' [p. 58], the Poet's lines draw attention to the underlying function of the Kenilworth pastimes. The metaphor of the gift-exchange announces the delivery of 'heavenly presents' to the Queen from the gods Sylvanus, Ceres, Lyæus, and Neptune:

> Imperium superi pro se dat quisque libenter,
> Musiculas Syluanus aues, pomonaque poma,
> Fruges alma Ceres rorantia vina Lyæus:
> Neptunus pisces, Tela & tutantia Mauors,
> Hæc (Regina potens) superi dant munera diui
> Ipse loci dominus, dat se Castrumque Kenelmi. [p. 61]

Following these verses, *Princely Pleasures* moves immediately to texts written for the third day's performance: Gascoigne explains that on the second day '[being Sunday] there was nothing done vntil the euening, at which time there wer fireworks shewed vpon the water, the which were both strange and wel executed' [p. 62]. The entertainment programme devised for the third day includes a notable 'oration' presented by 'one clad as a Sauage Man' [p. 60] – played by Gascoigne himself – who met Elizabeth 'in the Forest when she came from hunting' [p. 61]. His role seems to be that of an interpreter of the opening speeches delivered on the first day:[187]

> Now to make some *playner declaration and rehersall of all these things before her Maiestie on the x. of Iulie* there met her in the Forest as she came from hunting, one clad like a Sauage man… who seeming to woonder at such a presence. [my emphasis]

After about fifteen lines, Gascoigne invokes the figure of Echo – 'where art thou could I but Eccho finde, | Shee would returne me answere yet by blast of euery winde' [p. 62] – turning his oration into what has been defined as the first echo-dialogue in English.[188] The exchange between the savage man and Echo reiterates the figurative import of the gift-giving imagery inscribed in the Latin speech, reinforcing the claim that the entertainments are symbolically intended as 'tokens of true love' [p. 66] offered to the Queen. The savage man's praise of the Earl of Leicester also inverts the traditional conceit of presents from the gods by casting Dudley as the patron/giver of such 'gifts' [p. 65]:[189]

> *Savage Man*: And who gaue all those gifts?
> I pray thee (Eccho) say?
> Was it not he? who (but of late)
> this building here did lay?
> *ECCHO:* Dudley [p. 65]

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[187] See Austen, *George Gascoigne*, p. 121.
[188] See n. 474 in Archer's edition of *The princely pleasures*.
[189] See Austen, *George Gascoigne*, p. 122.

Elizabeth's role as recipient of these presents is equally emphasized: when the savage man asks 'But wherefore doe they so rejoyce? | is it for King or Queene?', Eccho replies 'Queene' [p. 63]. Thus these gifts, rather than having some divine origin (as asserted in the Latin oration – '*Haec [Regina potens] superi dant munera divi*', [p. 61.]), are reconceived as 'emblematic objects' deliberately offered on behalf of the entertainment's host. At the end of the dialogue between the savage man and Echo, we are told that this device was 'penned, and *pronounced* by master Gascoyne' [p. 68] who therefore becomes simultaneously the deviser and the performer of Kenilworth's gifts.

More importantly, the same dialogue enhances and consolidates the imagery of Elizabeth's predictive *adventus* as monarch by referencing the Sybil's 'prophecie' [p. 64]:

> *Savage Man*: *what Sibill?*
> She which vseth not to lye?
> Alas what dyd that beldame there?
> *What dyd she prophecie?*
> *Eccho*: Prophecie
> O then by lyke she causde,
> the worthy Queene to knowe:
> *What happy raigne she still should hold*,
> *since heauens ordeyned so*. [p. 64; my emphasis]

According to this brief account of some of the texts composed for the Kenilworth festivities, Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures* must be regarded within the context of the multiple performances staged on this occasion. His ceremonial collection contains a selection of the entertainments' scripts, corresponding to separate and self-sufficient units of stage enunciation which nevertheless share a coherent thematic framework.

From text to stage: reception and performance of the Kenilworth entertainment

In writing to his '*good freend*, Master Humfrey Martin Mercer' on 20th August,[190] about three weeks after the Kenilworth entertainments, Robert Langham declares his intention to:

> *see* things sight woorthy, and too be prezent at *any sheaw or spectacl*, ony [only] whear this Progress reprezented vntoo her highness… I wil sheaw yoo a part heer, that coold not see all, nor had I seen all coold well report the hallf: Whear thinges, for the parsons, for the place, tyme, cost, *deuisez*, *straungnes*, and *aboundauns*, of all that euer I *sawe*.[191]

From the very beginning of his account,[192] Langham describes most of the 'deuisez, straungnes, and aboundauns' he has seen during his stay. Despite the fact that he abandons his project a week before Elizabeth's departure,[193] his letter sheds valuable light on the general performative context of the outdoor spectacles.

According to Langham's accounts, the first day of performance (9th July) is presented as a royal entry of the Queen into Kenilworth: Elizabeth's movements are articulated by a sequence of arrivals/pauses/departures which make her progress towards Kenilworth castle a ritual of reception between royal guest and host. Examining the use of space, this welcoming entertainment can be paralleled to the staging of her royal entry into London in which, as Dillon argues, 'the performance space itself' was 'correspondingly *in motion*'.[194]

According to the topographical indications of Langham's letter, the Queen marched at Kenilworth from the 'Park' to the 'courte of the Castl',[195] where at each gate she made a stop. References in both

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[190] *Robert Laneham's letter*, p. 1., my emphasis.
[191] *Ibid*.
[192] In the letter's opening section, Langham also offers a detailed description of the estate and lists the improvements that the Earl of Leicester made to it. He describes, in particular, its spacious and well-lighted rooms, the gardens and their statuary as well as the elaborate fountain. *Ibid*., pp. 2-3.
[193] Logan, *Text/events in early modern England*, p. 112.
[194] J. Dillon, *The language of space in court performances, 1400-1625* (Cambridge: 2010), p. 28., my emphasis.
[195] *Robert Laneham's letter*, cit., p. 5.

Gascoigne's and Langham's accounts confirm that music was particularly prominent in the welcoming show presented at Leicester's castle. The use of instruments, in fact, seems to fulfil a number of functions, especially in some transitional moments of this short parade, such as the beginning or ending of one dramatic device, and Elizabeth's progress from one stop to another.

After the delivery of the first and the second opening speeches, respectively uttered by the Sybil at the 'first gate of the Castl' and by the Porter/Hercules at 'the next gate',[196] the Queen's entrance into 'the base Court' was signalled by a musical interlude. This device was presented by some 'giant trumpeters' who 'stood vppon the wall of the gate… too sound vp *a tune of welcum*' [p. 58]. Gascoigne's record describes their 'performance' as particularly impressive:

> Her Maiesty passing on to the first gate, there stode in the Leades and Battlementes therof, sixe Trumpetters hugelie aduaunced, much exceeding the common stature of men in this age, who had likewise huge and monstrous Trumpettes counterfetted, wherein they seemed to sound: and behind them were placed certaine Trumpetters who sounded in deede at her maiesties entrie. [p. 57]

By merging visual display and sound, fake and true musicians set up a micro-spectacle which is identified by Gascoigne as a 'dumb show' [p. 57]. Langham further stresses the function of this musical device claiming that 'from the foreside of the gate *at her highnes entrauns… this muzik was maintained* from they very delectably while her highnes all along this tiltyard rode vnto the inner gate next'.[197] While the use of instruments helps to ensure the impression of a 'performance *in progress*', it also serves to mark the end of two welcoming orations – those spoken by the Lady of the Lake and the Poet. According to Langham, the former speech 'waz clozd with a delectable harmony of Hautboiz, Shalmz, Cornets, and such oother loud muzik'.[198] Similarly, at the end of the Poet's Latin speech, he notes that some music was played:

> Pleazauntly thus viewing the giftes az [Elizabeth] past, & hoow the posts might agrée with the spéech of the Poet, at the éend of the bridge & entreé of the gate was her highness receiued with a fresh delicate harmony of Flutz.[199]

As previously pointed out, the first day 'show' at Kenilworth consisted of the stage-enunciation of speeches in verses by four allegorical figures. Gascoigne himself refers to these welcoming orations as 'pronounced', 'spake[n]' [p. 58] or simply written on a table, as in the case of William Patten's Latin verses presented right after Mulcaster's Latin speech: 'These verses were deuised by master *Muncaster*, and other verses to *the very selfe same effect* were deuised by M. *Paten*, and fixed ouer the gate in a frame' [p. 61; my emphasis]. By suggesting that Mulcaster's and Patten's entertainment scripts shared the 'same effect', Gascoigne decides to omit the transcription of the latter which is instead included in the letter. Langham himself suggests that he 'took it oout, as foloeth':[200]

> *AD MAIESTATEM REGIAM*
> *Iupiter huc certos cernens te tendere gressus,*
> *Coelicolas PRINCEPS actutum conuocat omnes*
> *Obsequium præstare iubet tibi quenque benignum,*
> *Vnde suas Syluanus aues, Pomonaque fructus,*
> *Alma Ceres fruges, hilarantia vina Lyaus,*
> *Neptumus pisces, tela et tutantia Mauors,*
> *Suaue melos Phoebus, solidam longamque salutem,*
> *Dij TIBI REGINA hæc (cum SIS DIGNISSIMA) prebent:*

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[196] *Ibid.*

[197] Interestingly, in the side-notes of the text Langham includes 'The Trumpetoours' among the list of figures who presented a device before the Queen. *Robert Laneham's Letter*, cit., p. 6., my emphasis.

[198] *Ibid.*, p. 7. References from the *OED* indicates that the Hautboi (Hautboy) was 'A wooden double-reed wind instrument of high pitch, having a compass of about $2^1/_2$ octaves, forming a treble to the bassoon (Now usually oboe)' (1.a) while the Shalm (shawm) was 'A mediæval musical instrument of the oboe class, having a double reed enclosed in a globular mouthpiece' (1.a). The cornet (or cornett) was, in this period, 'a wooden, lip-vibrated wind instrument with finger-holes and a cup-shaped mouthpiece'. *The new grove dictionary of music and musicians*, ed. S. Sadie, 16 vols. (London: 1980), p. 483.

[199] *Robert Laneham's letter*, p. 11.

[200] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Hæc TIBI cum Domino dedit se etI werda Kenelmi.[201]

Patten's verses strategically reiterate the allegorical framework inscribed in Mulcaster's speech. Equally complementary, the contents of each follow a similar structure: Jupiter/Dudley welcomes the Queen to Olympus/Kenilworth castle; he orders the gods/performers to offer to Elizabeth some presents/entertainments; a closing line announces that the guardian of the castle also offers himself as one of the tribute gifts.

From the evidence of available accounts, the final part of Elizabeth's procession appears to deserve specific attention, as it represents the climax of the first day's show. Mulcaster's and Patten's devices together form a single pageant articulated according to a twofold configuration: the delivery of Mulcaster's speech by 'an Actor clad like a Poet' [p. 60] and the transcription of Patten's oration 'on a Tabl, beautifully garnisht'[202] placed at the castle's gate. There followed a tableau representation which visually endorsed the message behind each speech by marking the ending of the entertainment.

In his letter, Langham devotes a two-page section to the delivery of some heavenly gifts before the Queen.[203] According to his description, in the base-court of the castle was erected a 'bridge-like scaffold', 'of a twentie foot wide and a seaventy foot long',[204] gravelled for walking on, and railed on both sides. On each of them, wrote Langham, there were 'seven pair of posts',[205] containing the presents from Sylvanus, Pomona, Ceres, Bacchus, Neptune, Mars and Phoebus which he accurately lists. Such a visual spectacle is equally associated by Langham with both Mulcaster's and Patten's orations: on the one hand, he observes that on a table there was 'a Poem, fayr written, mencioning *théez Gods and their giftes thus prezented vnto her highness*',[206] while, on the other hand, he describes in the Poet's performance how 'in making first an humble obeizaunz at her highness cummyng, and *pointing vnto euerie present az hée spake: the same were pronounced*'.[207] Hence, while these speeches were respectively spoken and transcribed, their presentation ultimately turned into a visual display that symbolically fused together these two self-sufficient devices. This is also underlined by Langham's final comments on the entertainment, which cast Jupiter, the key figure of both Mulcaster's and Patten's verses, that is, as the ideal referent of the 'welcum' show, whose spectacular magnificence was allegorised through a stunning firework explosion:

> after did follow so great a peal of gunz, and such lightining by fyr work long space toogither, as Iupiter would sheaw himself too bee no further behind with his welcum, then the rest of hiz Gods.[208]

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[201] *Ibid.* 'Jupiter looking at you, O Queen, moving your sure steps hither, summons all the heavenly dwellers. He orders each of them to give you some kind homages, Hence, Sylvanus gave his birds, Pomona fruit, Neptune fish, Mars military weapons, Phoebus sweet music and robust and durable health. The Gods give you, O Queen, these gifts (for which you are most worthy); The Lord of Kenelmi [Kenilworth], along with the Lord-owner, offers these presents and himself.' (My translation). The Latin speech devised by Mulcaster and spoken by the Poet was this one: 'Iupiter é summi, dum vertice cernit olympi, | Hunc princeps regina tuos te tendere gressus: | Scilicet eximiæ succensus imagine formæ, | Et memor antiqui qui semper feruerat ignis, | Siccine Coelicolæ pacientur turpiter (inquit) | Muneris exortem Reginam hoc visere castrum, | Quod tam læta subit? Reliqui sensere tonantis: | Imperium superi pro se dat quisque libenter, | Musiculas Syluanus aues, pomonaque poma, | Fruges alma Ceres rorantia vina Lyoeus: | Neptunus pisces, Tela & tutantia Mauors, | Hæc (Regina potens) superi dant munera diui: | Ipse loci dominus, dat se Castrumque Kenelmi.'; 'Jupiter, looking down from the summit of Olympus admires you, O princess and Queen, moving your steps hither, inflamed by the vision of your beauty and mindful of the ancient fire has ever burned (he asks) Will the celestials so disgracefully permit the queen to visit this castle, which she so joyously approaches, without receiving a gift? The rest of the Gods comply with the thunderer's command: each God willingly offers what his powers allow him to donate, Sylvanus gave graceful songbirds, Pomona fruits, Ceres grains, Lyæus dewy wine, Neptune fish, Mars military weapons. These, sovereign Queen, are heavenly gifts from the Gods; the Lord of Kenelmus [Kenilworth] gives himself and the castle'. (My translation).

[202] *Robert Laneham's letter*, p. 10. Just as Gascoigne, Langham pointed out that Patten's speech was written on a table.

[203] In *The princely pleasures*, Gascoigne observes that once Elizabeth proceeded towards the inner court, she passed a bridge which was decorated with 'sundrie presents, and giftes of prouision: As wine, corne, fruites, fishes, fowles, instrements of musike, and weapons for martial defence. All which were expounded by an Actor clad like a Poet, who pronounced these verses in Latine.' (p. 60) References to the speeches' enactment can also be found in the verses spoken by the Savage man who alluded to some 'sundry things' (p. 65) offered to Elizabeth on a bridge: '*Savage man.* So would I her aduise: but what meant all those shifts? | Of *sundry things vpon a bridge*? were those rewards of gifts? *Eccho.* Gifts *Savage man.* Gifts? what? sent from the Gods? as presents from aboue? | Or pleasures of prouision, as tokens of true love? *Eccho.* True loue'. (pp. 65-66; my emphasis).

[204] *Robert Laneham's letter*, p. 8.

[205] *Ibid.*

[206] *Ibid.*, p. 10., my emphasis.

[207] *Ibid.*, p. 11., my emphasis.

[208] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Langham next focuses on the descriptions of other spectacles; he registers some instances of interruption that occurred during the presentation of two orations by the Lady of the Lake and the Savage Man. The first of these interruptions provides an insight into Elizabeth's 'skill at theatrical extemporization'.[209] According to Langham, the Queen rode to the inner gate next to the 'base court Castl' where the Lady of the Lake stood 'arrayed all in sylks, attending her highness coming: from the midst of the Pool'.[210] In his description, he explains that this Lady:

> Met her Maiesty with a well penned meter and matter… vnderstanding of her highness hither cumming, thought it both office and duetie in humbl wize to discouer her and her estate: offering vp the same, her Lake and poour therein… It pleased her highness too thank this Lady, & too ad withal, 'we had thought indeed the Lake had been oours, and doo you cll it yourz now?'.[211]

In this scenario, Elizabeth's interruption of the ritualized performance with an assertion of her sovereign rights over the lake as a part of her kingdom makes explicit her control over her subjects and host. The second instance of interruption recorded by Langham occurred in the forest during the delivery of the Savage Man's oration. From the very beginning, Langham places special emphasis on depicting Gascoigne's impersonation of the woodland character:

> rooughly came thear foorth Hombre Saluagio with an Oken plant pluet up the roots in hiz hande, himself forgrone all in moss and Iui: who, for parsonage, gesture, and vtterauns beside, coountenaunst the matter too very good linking, and had a speech to effect that continuing so long.[212]

Besides praising this entertainment for its 'parsonage, gesture and vtterauns', Langham also perceives Gascoigne's guise as 'Hombre Salvagio'[213] as a memorable show for another reason:

> And shall I tell you Master Martin [the letter's addressee] by the mass, of a mad auenture: az thiz Sauage, for the more submission, brake hiz trée a sunder, kest the top from him, it had allmost light vpon her highness hors head: whereat he startld, and the gentlman mooch dismayd. See the benignitee of the Prins, az the foot men lookt well too the hors, and hee of Generositée soon callmd of him self, 'no hurt, no hurt!' quoth her highnes. Which words, I promis yoo, wee wear all glad to heer, & took them too be the best part of the play.[214]

Some potential references to the alarming episode concerning the savage man who accidentally endangered the Queen by startling her horse also occur in Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures*.[215] In fact, right after the dialogue between the Savage Man and Eccho, Gascoigne includes a comment which might well be connected to the accident recorded by Langham: 'Herewith *he fell on his knees* and spake as followeth' [p. 67]. On the one hand, such a remark may suggest merely that the savage man kneels before the Queen in sign of reverence; alternatively, it might allude to the fact that the poor Gascoigne is, as Langham points out, 'mooch dismayd'.[216] This could even be understood as an attempt by Gascoigne to conceal the 'mad auenture' by offering an alternative reading of it.[217] Thanks to his role as event narrator he can subtly alter his record of the actual performance, and so shape the interpretative possibilities of the history. Interestingly enough, there are no accounts in the letter about the delivery of the last part of the speech by the Savage man, which is instead included in *The Princely Pleasures* immediately after '[he] spake as followeth'. Perhaps this

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[209] A. Hurley, "Interruption: the transformation of a critical feature of ritual from revel to lyric in John Donne's Inns of Court poetry of the 1590s" in *Ceremony and text in the Renaissance*, ed. D.F. Rutledge, (Newark: 1996), p. 107.
[210] *Robert Laneham's letter*, p. 6.
[211] *Ibid*., p. 7.
[212] *Ibid*., p. 14.
[213] *Ibid*.
[214] *Ibid*., p. 15.
[215] See Austen, *George Gascoigne*, p. 124.
[216] *Robert Laneham's letter*, p. 15.
[217] *Ibid*.

might indicate the fragmentary nature of Langham's records, but also that the performance may have ended precisely with the unlucky accident.

The incident reported in Langham's text highlights how fact and fiction were blended together in the Kenilworth entertainments, whose staging epitomized the overall allegorical import of the Elizabethan royal performances: factual negotiations through fictional allegories between the Queen and her subjects. Devised to entertain Elizabeth during her visit, the outdoor spectacles staged at Leicester's castle all share a similar purpose, employing a common encomiastic practice articulated on different levels of theatricality, including processions, dumb shows, allegorical personifications, the delivery of orations and the presentation of gifts.

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Measure for Measure and the Bible of James I

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A singular coincidence creates a significant connection between the Bible of James I and William Shakespeare. The composition of plays such as *Othello*, *King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Pericles* , *The Tempest* and *Measure for Measure* coincided with the first draft of the Bible of James I [1603-1625], the so-called 'Authorized Version'. Among them is *Measure for Measure*, one of the most Christian of Shakespeare's plays, with a title coming from the Gospel: 'Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you again' [*Matt*, 7: 1-2][218]. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Evangelist alludes to the old saying, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', just as the duke says:

> An Angelo for a Claudio; death for death.
> Haste still pays haste, and leisure
> answers leisure; like doth quit like,
> and Measure still for Measure. [V, 1, 406-408]

The whole play has strong religious overtones and is rich in biblical echoes, images, allusions and quotations. Interestingly, it reveals significant links not only with the Bible of James I, but also with the monarch himself. The Authorized Version was part of a precise political strategy aiming at the exaltation and the enhancement of the sovereign and his policy, and the theatre played an essential role in this political campaign, proving to be a surprisingly effective vehicle for political and social messages. Remarkably, the duke of *Measure for Measure* openly resembles James I, as Agostino Lombardo claimed:

> Ma anche v'è da chiedersi se la creazione dell'onesto Duca come ritratto del buon governante in cui Giacomo I, spettatore della prima rappresentazione di *Misura per Misura*, dovrebbe riconoscersi (e tanto più che Shakespeare attinge ai suoi scritti), non sia un avvertimento e insieme una beffa; un serio messaggio politico e, insieme, una irridente sfida del teatrante ai poteri costituiti.[219]

The monarch and his well-known bashfulness in front of his too-enthusiastic subjects are evoked by Vincentio at the beginning of the play:

> I love the people, but do not like to stage me to their eyes; thought it do well, I do not relish well their loud applause and aves vehement, nor do I think the man of safe discretion that does affect it.
> [I, 1, 68-72]

Starting in the 1970s, scholars have investigated the field of research concerning Shakespeare and the Bible, adopting multiple approaches and with different results. The Bible appears unequivocally to be a source of inspiration for the playwright; what is under discussion is the reason why he disseminated biblical references in all his works. On the one hand, the school of thought of Wilson Knight sees the numerous biblical references in the play as a didactic reinforcement of the Christian doctrine as well as a vehicle for religious concepts. On the other hand, some sceptical scholars, like A. C. Bradley, claim that the references are irrelevant and lack any divine or supernatural implications. Shakespeare's familiarity with the Bible does not

[218] The quotations are from *The Holy Bible: containing the Old Testaments and New Testaments out of the original tongues and with the former translation diligently compared and revised by His Majesty's special command: Authorized King James Version*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 1993.
[219] A. Lombardo, in *Measure for measure: dal testo alla scena*, ed. M. Tempera (Bologna: 1992), p.12.

mean that he was definitely Christian, and there is still debate on the meaning of his biblical allusions, and whether they support, challenge or satirize the Christian doctrine. In *Measure for Measure*, this discussion is complicated by the play's anomalous nature: it has been defined as a dark comedy, a tragicomedy, a problem play, 'a comedy that destroys comedy'[220], or 'a subversion of the expected outcomes of justice, or even a radical subversion of all authority.'[221] Yet none of these labels have captured the real essence of this play, which contains such a strong religious flavour.

The present paper purposes to investigate the relationship between *Measure for Measure* and the Bible of James I covering three main points: Shakespeare's knowledge in the biblical field, the impact of the religious theme on the dynamics of the play and on the construction of the characters, and the main biblical references in the text.

The Bible and the Bibles

As a starting point, it is worth taking into consideration the translations of the Bible available at Shakespeare's time in order to identify the importance of the Authorized Version. The development of religious movements during the English Reformation in the sixteenth century led to a rise in interest in the analysis of the biblical text and in its interpretation, placing a decisive importance on the personal readings of the Holy Scriptures and stimulating the translation of the Bible into English. The first complete translation is under the reign of Henry VIII, the *Coverdale Bible* [1537], two years later the *Great Bible* edited by William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale, also known as *Cranmer's Bible*. Reprinted seven times in two years, this translation is known as one of the most successful even though its Protestant translator Tyndale was burned at the stake during the reign of the Catholic Mary I. Published in 1560 under Elizabeth I, the *Geneva Bible* also became very popular at its time due to its relatively cheap price: with its 160 reprints, it earned the title of 'Bible of the family', putting in the shade the *Great Bible*. The reign of the Protestant queen saw also the publication of the *Bishops' Bible* in 1568; recognized as the most weighty and expensive, it circulated for forty years and soon become the official one. Finally, after a Catholic Bible called *Rheims-Douai Bible* [1606], the culmination of years of translation was represented by the Bible of King James, the Authorized Version.

Shakespeare must have known these translations since he quotes from almost all of them in his works; furthermore most of the passages cited are those usually read during the Mass. Therefore, we could conclude that the playwright spent much time studying the Bible under his own volition in order to achieve such thorough knowledge of the text. Peter Milward claims that Shakespeare's knowledge of the Bible is quite extraordinarily extensive, since there are very few books in either Old or New Testaments never quoted from by the playwright. It would be even possible to draw a connection between each phase of his dramatic production and the biblical references he made:

> the Comedies, for instance, would turn on the great text from *Genesis*, *Matthew* and *Ephesians* on Marriage; the history plays, on treatment of kingship as a sacred institution in the book of Samuel; the problems plays, on Pauline theology of sin and redemption. The great tragedies, on the accounts of Adam's sin and the passion of Christ; the final plays, on Christ's teaching of forgiveness and St Paul's proclamation of a new life in Christ.[222]

Actually, in *Measure for Measure*, listed in the in-folio as the fourth comedy after *The Tempest*, references to Genesis, the Gospel of Matthew and Paul's Epistles are to be found consistently, creating a recognizable biblical subtext or, as Piero Boitani has it, an 'antitext' providing the play with unexpected meanings and suggestions.[223]

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[220] H. Bloom, *The invention of the human* (New York: 1998), p. 380,

[221] S. Magedanz, 'Public justice and private mercy in *Measure for measure*' in *Studies in English literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 44, no. 2 (Spring 2004), pp. 317-332, p. 317.

[222] P. Milward, *Shakespeare's religious background* (London: 1973), p. 78.

[223] P. Boitani, 'La caduta di un passero: la tragedia shakespeariana e la Bibbia' in *Memoria di Shakespeare 2*, ed. A. Lombardo (Roma: 2001), p. 29.

Religious elements: numbers and parables

According to numerous scholars, among whom Stephen Marx stands out,[224] the play has the structure of a parable, ending with a moral teaching concerning forgiveness while embodying the most important principles of Christianity such as justice, mercy and grace. For Wilson Knight, 'there is no more beautiful passage in all Shakespeare on the Christian redemption than Isabella's lines to Angelo':

> Alas, Alas;
> Why, all the souls that were forfeit once,
> And He that might the vantage best have took
> Found out remedy. How would you be,
> If He, which is the top of judgement, should
> But judge you as you are? O think on that,
> And mercy then will breath within your lips,
> like man new made". [II, 2, 72-9][225]

Permutations of the word 'grace' recur twenty-three times throughout the whole play and 'justice' thirty-four, thus marking their relevance in the dynamics of the story. *Measure for Measure* is divided into sixteen scenes, which seem to reflect the balance of the title: the first eight scenes are dominated by Angelo, the villain, and culminate with the 'measure for measure' proposal to Isabella (her chastity for her brother's life). In the second group of eight scenes, the power of the duke is restored. In Elizabethan terms, eight is the number representing justice, as stated by Macrobius and by Ben Jonson in his *Masque of Beauty*.[226] The Pythagoreans connected sixty four – eight squared – with heavenly wisdom, and the cipher for eight is formed of two circles, the symbol of perfection. Moreover, it is the number of the beatitudes of the Gospel, the eighth day of the creation is Christ's resurrection and the ancient font was octagonal in shape.

According to Knight,[227] there are conspicuous similarities between biblical episodes and scenes of the play, and the key penetrating both this work and the Christian parables is faith.[228] Many well-known parables are evoked, such as the ungrateful servant [*Matt*, 8: 32-45], the talents [*Matt*, 25: 14-30], the vineyard [*Matt*, 21: 33-43]; in last of these, the masters leave in order to test their servants, returning after a period of observation to reproach or forgive them. This pattern is re-enacted by the duke of *Measure for Measure*, who spies on his people while disguised as a friar. He also uses tricks to try Isabella and Angelo – as God does with Abraham, Joseph, Moses and Job. One of these is the bed trick, a common device in literature and in the Bible, as in the case of Jacob and Leah. At the beginning of Act V, when Vincentio triumphally enters the city, he is acclaimed with the word 'justice', like Jesus who, at his arrival in Jerusalem, is welcomed with 'hosanna'. Finally, the marriage between the duke and Isabella can be compared to the union between Jesus and the church since Isabella is a nun and so in a sense Jesus' spouse.

Names and characters

Shakespeare chooses his setting and character names with singular care to give them a symbolic meaning from the Christian perspective. First of all, it is worth noticing that the story is set in Vienna, a Catholic city at that time and that the duke is disguised as a Catholic friar, a spiritual brother. Actually, Roy Battenhouse claims that 'the duke's role… is a secular analogue of St Luke, "he hath visited and redeemed his people", and is replete with imagery of a star-led shepherd and king of love who rescues the lost and ransoms the guilty by a conquest such as the Church Fathers describe when explicating the Atonement story'.[229] Furthermore, he visits prisoners like St Peter : 'He went and preached unto the spirits in prison' [1 Pet. 3.19]. Yet what is the meaning of the duke within the narrative dynamic? Is he a benevolent incarnation of divine

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[224] S. Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: 2000)
[225] G. W. Knight, *The wheel of fire: interpretations of Shakespearean tragedy* (Oxford: 1949), p.81.
[226] J. McRae, 'Il desiderio e il rifiuto', in *Measure for measure: dal testo alla scena*, ed. M. Tempera (Bologna: 1992), p. 47.
[227] G. W. Knight, '*Measure for measure* and the Gospel, in *Measure for measure*, ed. C. K. Stead (London: 1971).
[228] R. Battenhouse, *Shakespeare's Christian dimension* (Bloomington: 1994), p 7.
[229] R. Battenhouse, 1994, p. 8.

power or a mere mortal, aiming to be God and failing? The character remains ambiguous till the end of the play, aptly in keeping with the ambiguity of a text which simultaneously evokes and evades Christian morality.

The vicar Angelo represents the deceitful world of *Measure for Measure*. He bears the name of a coin (the angel, originally called the 'noble', on which there was the image of St Michael while killing a dragon), but Angelo also meant messenger and suggests Satan, the fallen angel. When the duke calls Angelo, he wonders 'what figure of us think you he will bear?' [I, 1, 16], imagining a coin with an image on. Afterwards, Angelo uses the same metaphor

> Let there be some more test made of my metal
> before so noble and so great a figure
> be stamped upon't. [I, 1, 46-8]

which recurs also in Act II:

> It were as good
> To pardon him that hath from nature stol'n
> A man already made as to remit
> Their saucy sweetness that do coin God's image
> In stamps that are forbid: 'tis all as easy
> Falsely to take away a life true made
> As to put metal in restrainèd means
> To make a false one. [II, 4, 42-49]

'Isabella' means beautiful soul or 'devoted to God'. Embodying chastity, she is characterized by coldness, strict morality and self-sacrifice, qualities which emerge from her first lines:

> *Isab*: And have you nuns no farther privileges?
> *Franc*: Are not there large enough?
> *Isab*: Yes, truly. I speak not as desiring more, but rather wishing a more
> strict restraint upon the sisterhood, the votarists of Saint Clare. [I, 4, 1-5]

Her brother's name, Claudio, means 'lame', and was originally used to identify a sinner. Lucius, the fanatic, is a recurrent name for Lucifer: the light bearer, the favourite among God's angels, but also the fallen angel cast down to Hell after his rebellion against God. The character's name bears all the duplicity of his nature: if on the one hand he is a police informer, on the other he abandons a child he has had from a prostitute. His deceitfulness emerges in his language, which oscillates between two poles: a low level-obscene register –

> some report a sea-maid spawned him. Some that he was begot between two stock-fishes. But it is certain that when he makes water his urine is congealed ice. That I know to be true. And he is a motion generative. That's infallible. (III, 2, 102-10)

– and an elevated and reverent one hinting at the biblical episode of the Annunciation:

> Hail, virgin, if you be, as those cheek-roses proclaim you are no less. Can you so stead me as bring me to the sight of Isabella, a novice of this place, and the fair sister to her unhappy brother, Claudio? (I, 4, 16-20).

He is far from being reliable; the audience is not inclined to believe him when he tells the friar (actually the duke in disguise) 'Friar, thou knowest not the duke so well as I do'.

More minor characters are not exempt from this system of nominal signification. Escalus recalls the 'scale of justice' as Vincentio himself suggests at the beginning of the play: 'the nature of our people, our city's institution, and the terms for common justice y'are as pregnant in as art and practice hath enriched any that we remember' [I, 1, 9-13]. Mariana combines the name of the Virgin Mary and her mother Anne; one of the two friars, Friar Thomas, bears the same name as the disciple who doubted Christ's Resurrection, and the other one is called Friar Peter, referring of course to St Peter. Finally, Barnardine recalls Barabbas, the murderer set free instead of Jesus.

The Bible in the text: references and allusions

All five acts of this play are pervaded by biblical echoes which take the form of precise quotations, references to characters from the Bible, or religious concepts, so that *Measure for Measure* shows a significant biblical subtext. It is necessary to examine only the most noteworthy examples, many of which have been mentioned also by Naseeb Shaheen,[230] one of the most influential scholars in the field of biblical studies and Shakespearian drama.

The first scene opens with a quotation from Genesis, as the duke calls his faithful Escalus like the angel called Abraham: 'Duke: Escalus. | Escalus: My Lord' [I, 1, 1-2].[231] In the Bible this interaction is manifestly similar: 'Abraham, Abraham: and he said, here am I' [*Gen*. 22:11]. As Magedanz reminds us, 'the themes of personal and public morality are announced from the opening of the play',[232] when the duke warns Angelo about the exercise of personal virtues in public:

> Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
> Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
> Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
> As if we had them not. [I, 1, 32-35]

He is actually alluding to the Sermon on the Mount:

> Neither do men light a candle, and put
> it under a bushel, but on a candlestick,
> and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. [*Matt.* 5:15-6]

In Act I, Scene II, set in a street near the prison in Vienna, Shakespeare deliberately shows his audience that the city needs disciplinary measures. What emerges is the image of a state morally corrupted to the core, as suggested by the numerous explicit allusions to venereal diseases as well as the ironic treatment of religion, through the image of the sinner as a pirate, very common in the Elizabethan culture:

> *Lucius*: Thou conclud'st like the sanctimonius pirate, that went to sea with the Ten Commandments, but scraped one out of the table.
> *Second gentleman*: 'Thou shall not steal'.
> *Luc*: Ay, that he razed.
> *First gentleman*: Why, 'twas a commandment to command the captain and all the rest from their functions. They put forth to steal. There's not a soldier of us all that, in the thanksgiving before meal, do relish the petition well that prays for peace. [I, 2, 7-16]

In this context the pirate mirrors the common hypocritical attitude of people pretending to follow the rules while breaking some of them, like the pirate who respects all the commandments except 'Thou shall not steal', which conflicts with his own life and activities. Moreover, the use of 'sanctimonius' had a strong religious flavour: coined after the Reformation, it was a Protestant word used to describe a kind of religiousness hateful to the Protestants. Interestingly, according to the *OED* the word first recurs in Dekker and Middleton's *The Honest Whore* [IV, 1, 141], a play whose title seems to emphasize the same moral problems which concern *Measure for Measure*. On the other hand, piracy, which had enriched England under the reign of Elizabeth I, was banned by James I in 1604. Consequently, in symbolic terms, the Provost's proposal to spare Claudio's life seems particularly appropriate:

> Here in the prison, father,
> there died this morning of a cruel fever
> One Ragozine, a most notorious pirate,
> A man of Claudio's years, his beard and head
> Just of his colour. What if we do omit

[230] N. Shaheen, *Biblical references in Shakespeare's plays* (Newark: 1999)
[231] All quotations from *Measure from measure* are from Arden Edition, ed. J. W. Lever (London: 1998)
[232] S. Magednaz, p. 320.

> This reprobate till he were well inclined,
> And satisfy the deputy with the visage
> Of Ragozine, more like to Claudio? [IV, 3, 67-74]

In the same scene, a dialogue between Lucius and Claudio hides a reference to an Epistle by St Paul:

> Thus can the demi-god Authority
> Make us pay down for our offence by weight.
> The words of heaven; on whom it will, it will;
> On whom it will not, so; yet still 'tis just. [I, 2, 119-122]

In the Epistle to the Romans, St Paul also concentrates on the concept of 'mercy', one of the key ideas of the play:

> For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. [*Rom.* 9: 15-18]

In Act I, Scene III, in a dialogue between Friar Thomas and the duke, Shakespeare takes inspiration from the Gospel of Matthew to characterize Angelo, providing him with a puritanical attitude through the adjective 'precise': 'Lord Angelo is precise: stands as a guard with envy; scarce confesses that his blood flows, or that his appetite is more to bread than stone' [I, 3, 50-53]. In the Gospel the extract runs 'or what man is there of you, whom is his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?' [*Matt.* 7:9].

The beginning of Act II also offers an intriguing parallelism in a dialogue between Angelo and Escalus: 'I not deny the jury, passing on the prisoner's life, may, in the sworn twelve, have a thief or two guiltier than him they try' [II, 1, 18-21]. If interpreted in a Christian perspective, the twelve are the disciples among whom there is a thief, Judas, and 'two guiltier', respectively St Peter, who denied Jesus, and St Thomas; the prisoner, of course, is Jesus himself, who was arrested at the Gethsemane. Another fascinating example is in Act II, Scene II, when Isabella says: 'There is a vice that most I do abhor | and most desire should meet the blow of justice, | for which I would plead, but that I must, | for which I must not plead, but that I am | at war 'twixt will and will not'. Remarkably, only the *King James Bible* has 'warring',[233] giving rise to Isabella's 'at war' –all the other translations available to Shakespeare use 'rebelling' or 'stryueth' (and the Rheims has 'repugning') – suggesting that Shakespeare had this specific translation in mind when writing *Measure for Measure*.

In Act II, Scene II, Isabella tries to convince Angelo to revoke his death sentence against Claudio. His explicitly sharp word shows all his inflexibility:

> *Isabella*: Must he needs die?
> *Angelo*: Maiden, no remedy…]
> *Ang*: He's sentenc'd; 'tis too late.
> *Isab*: Too late? Why, no; I, that do speak a word,
> May call it back again. Well, believe this,
> No ceremony that to great ones 'longs,
> Not the king's crown nor the deputed sword,
> The marshal's truncheon nor the judge's robe,
> Become them with one half so good a grace
> As mercy does. If he had been as you, and you as he,
> You would have slipp'd like him;
> But he, like you, would not have been so stern. [II, 2, 47-48, 55, 57-66]

[233] 'But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members' (Rom. 7.23).

As Marx remarks,[234] these lines are indebted to a well-known passage in St Paul's Epistle to the Romans which Shakespeare makes frequent reference to throughout his plays.

> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? …For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. [*Rom*. 8: 35, 38-39]

St Paul wrote:

> For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. [*Rom*.7:15-19]

In Angelo's soliloquy at the end of the scene, the vicar meditates on the situation and his doubts take the form of a reference to Job: 'O cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint, with saints dost bait thy hook!' [II, 2, 180-181]. According to Battenhouse,[235] when Angelo succumbs to the temptation it is a sort of leviathan echoing Job's words: 'Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? Or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?' [*Job* 41: 1-2]. The metaphor of fishing also recurs in Isabella's soliloquy at the end of Act II:

> Who would believe me? O perilous mouths,
> that bear in them one and the selfsame tongue,
> either of condemnation or approof,
> bidding the law make curtsy to their will,
> hooking both right and wrong to th'appetite,
> to follow as it draws. [II, 4, 172-77]

Angelo is thus compared to a fish using law to furnish his appetite: he considers Isabella's beauty as a hook, a bait which leads him to sin.

In Act III, Scene I, Claudio tells his sister Isabella: 'I humbly thank you. To sue to live, I find I seek to die; and, seeking death, find life. Let it come on' [III, 1, 41]. This recalls a similar concept in Matthew's Gospel: 'He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it' [*Matt*. 10: 39]. Taking his leave, the duke disguised as a friar says 'peace be with you' [III, 2, 248], like Jesus who told his disciples 'Peace be unto you' [*Luke* 24: 36] eight days after his Resurrection.

The first scene of Act IV is set in Mariana's house in the country, where a boy is singing a song: 'but my kisses bring again bring again; Seals of love, but seal'd in vain, sealed in vain' [IV, 1, 5-6]. This alludes to the Song of Song, or Salomon's Song*:* 'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death' [*Sal*. 8: 6]. In the following scene, Barnardine is introduced with a subtle reference to Ecclesiasticus. Claudio describes him 'as fast lock'd up in sleep as guiltless labour when it lies starkly in the traveller's bones: he will not wake' [IV, 2, 63-65]. Concurrently, in the Ecclesiasticus 'The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much' [*Eccl*. 5: 12].

In the same scene, in a dialogue between the duke and the Provost, there are two clear references to the Bible: 'Look, th'unfolding star calls up the shepherd. Put not yourself into amazement how these things should be' [IV, 2, 196-198]. The biblical image of the shepherd seems to recall the pastoral charge of the duke over his subjects. Later, Vincentio adds another reference to the Gospel: 'All difficulties are but easy when they are known' [IV, 2, 198-199]. This speech can be related to a passage from the Gospel of Mark:

> For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. and he said unto them, Take heed

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[234] S. Marx, p. 89.

[235] R. Battenhouse, p. 176.

> what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. [*Mark*. 4: 22-24]

The play ends with a reference to Psalm 45, a marriage psalm in the liturgy of the church. The duke tells Isabella: 'whereto if you'll a willing ear incline, what's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine: so, bring us to our palace' [V, 1, 533-535]. This seems to recall: 'Hearken, o daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear… with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace' [*Ps*. 45: 10, 15].

In conclusion, it is not hazardous to associate William Shakespeare and the Bible since it has been shown that the dramatist took inspiration from numerous books of the Bible so that his plays, and *Measure for Measure)* in particular, are deliberately pervaded by a subtext of biblical references and echoes. This must be considered as part of a specific code of communication between Shakespeare and a contemporary audience familiar with the biblical text evoked in his works. His spectators are involved in a process of interpretation that Harold Bloom calls 'strong reading'.[236] The references and allusions, more or less hidden, reveal new and surprising meanings of the biblical text as well as of *Measure for Measure*, both the most Christian and the most 'immoral' of the Shakespearean corpus. With this work balanced between Protestantism and Catholicism, the dramatist seems to be playing with the civil, moral and religious laws in force at his time, as if attempting to cloud the issue and thus maintain the true meaning of the play, as well as the life and religion of its author, shrouded in mystery.

[236] H. Bloom, *The invention of the human* (New York: 1998)

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The Tempest: riflessioni sul meraviglioso shakespeariano e rifrazioni nei *Naturmärchen* di Ludwig Tieck

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Il presente contributo è frutto di un approccio a Shakespeare non diretto, ma mediato dalla riflessione che un autore tedesco, nella propria stagione giovanile, conduce sulla materia shakespeariana. L'autore in questione è Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), poeta longevo e quanto mai proteiforme nella gamma di generi e gusti letterari in cui si cimenta. Resta, costante fissa in una produzione che va dagli ultimi decenni del Settecento alla metà dell'Ottocento, la passione e lo studio indefesso del bardo inglese, arricchito dallo sforzo di una contestualizzazione storica del *milieu* culturale coevo al grande drammaturgo, tanto da derivargli l'appellativo di 'Vater der Anglistik', o addirittura di antesignano della moderna scienza comparatistica.

Ciò che forse Tieck ci consegna di più originale, di più intimo, di più pregnante per gli esiti del romanticismo aurorale tedesco, e, come intendo dimostrare, per sviluppi molto più vicini ai giorni nostri, sono i *Naturmärchen* redatti fra il 1796 e il 1803, in particolare *Der blonde Eckbert* e *Der Runenberg*. Perle di prosa letteraria, per definizione autoriale stessa si attagliano al genere 'fiaba', ma restano, e per sapienza formale e per esegesi contenutistica, enigmi insoluti, come conferma lo stesso termine tedesco, che non trova a tutt'oggi alcun corrispettivo di traduzione. L'enigma è l'articolazione di un percorso: ci spinge in avanti, costringendoci al contempo a un moto a ritroso, dal sapore indiziario. E gli indizi di cui disponiamo parlano tutti, nel caso di Tieck, di un estro fabulistico che si fa poesia romantica sotto l'egida shakespeariana. Ciò non fa specie nell'epoca che consideriamo: la fine del Settecento già radicalizza il culto indiscusso di Shakespeare, genio per antonomasia, superando quel bipolarismo violento che, endogeno, lo aveva attraversato *in toto*. Secolo di lumi e ombre che assolve il bardo inglese dall'accusa di rozza barbarie, proclamando l'incondizionata libertà dell'immaginazione artistica e, al contempo, decaduta la sovranità del teatro classico francese.

È sempre Tieck che, in una lettera al sodale Wackenroder, sintetizza il clima culturale del tempo: 'Ich lebe und schwebe in Shakespeare'. Si vive in Shakespeare, si sogna con e di Shakespeare. Ecco uno degli indizi di cui si diceva poc'anzi. In Shakespeare l'epoca già ravvisa il respiro ampio della storia, quella mimesi possente che pone al centro la vicenda umana, la vita del singolo che si dilata negli eventi ciclici di generazioni, stirpi, dinastie. Ma, soprattutto, con Shakespeare si sogna. E non è soltanto il retaggio dell'oniromanzia classica che punteggia l'ordito delle opere: sogno premonitore o sogno inviato dagli dèi benevoli all'eroe nelle svolte cruciali dell'azione che sia e che, proprio per questa collocazione testuale, si appesantisce talvolta di una valenza allegorica. Egli invece, nella lettura proposta dall'autore tedesco, riesce ad articolare il linguaggio stesso dei sogni, lieve perché fuggevole e fluidissimo, un linguaggio ad alta densità immaginifica, che suggella la produzione fantasmatica della psiche umana. In un territorio *in limine* si collocano tali sogni, perché landa ancora inesplorata, *in limine*, risulta all'epoca la facoltà che ad essi presiede. Ai primordi della psicologia, suona sorprendente che Henry Home, nel I capitolo di *Elements of Criticism*, dal titolo quanto mai esplicito di 'Perceptions and Ideas in a Train', citi a titolo di esempio proprio Shakespeare, in particolare il soliloquio di Mistress Quickly in *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*, per una modalità di linguaggio che rimanda all'assai più moderno *flow of* consciousness;[237] o, ancora, che chiami in causa l'*incipit* di *The Merchant of Venice* a esplicitazione della libera associazione di pensiero. Parimenti, non mancano sul versante continentale, in Germania nella fattispecie, trattati che studiano, in base ai protagonisti shakespeariani, l'insorgenza di turbe psicotiche, magari declinate nella forma di ossessione monomaniacale.[238] La coscienza vigile è in realtà stato assai precario e, assieme ad esso, barcolla

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[237] Trattasi della schermaglia fra Mistress Quickly e Sir John nella prima scena del II Atto.

[238] È questo il caso, ad esempio, di Christian Garve che, nel 1796, pubblica un saggio dal titolo *Über die Rollen der Wahnwitzigen in Shakespears Schauspielen und über den Charakter Hamlet ins besondere*. O della 'allmähliche Gradation des Affekts' di cui parla

pericolosamente la civiltà di veglia. È tutto un rincorrersi, nelle cronache del tempo, di notizie, voci, racconti di accadimenti strani, inusitati, inquieti: fantasmi apparsi in piena Londra,[239] strane catalessi ad opera di fantomatici adepti al mesmerismo che si intrecciano a notizie di complotti sovranazionali orditi da fantasmatiche sette. Episodi inspiegabili che risvegliano, nel clima di dilagante anomìa, sentimenti contorti, paure inconsce, incubi. Destano meraviglia, ma – e qui torniamo a Shakespeare – è quella forma di stupore che il sommo poeta riesce a suscitare, per dirla col Dryden, con quel suo 'fairy way of writing' che conferisce parola, e con strabiliante naturalezza, ad un Caliban, 'begotten by an Incubus on a witch'.

In un momento nel quale le categorie estetiche necessitano giocoforza di una ricontestualizzazione, è forse proprio Tieck che intuisce la piena valenza del 'meraviglioso' shakespeariano. L'aggettivo 'fairy' connota l'orizzonte della fiaba, regno incontrastato del meraviglioso, e modulo tanto stabile da permettere a Todorov di dedurne simmetricamente altre esplicitazioni del sovrannaturale in letteratura. Ma è evidente, alla vigilia della stagione romantica, la ricerca di una forma originale di fiaba, per un contesto storico e culturale nuovo. Essa esula dai confini nazionali della 'direful tradition' inglese, che menziona Elizabeth Montagu, a difesa dei colori locali contro gli strali di Monsieur Voltaire;[240] rifugge dall'impiego del pedissequo repertorio di personaggi e situazioni che la tradizione settecentesca aveva ridotto a *divertissement* pedagogico per giovinetti aristocratici; si affranca dal dosaggio pedantesco di verosimiglianza nella formula di Bodmer e Breitinger.

Il meraviglioso, perché esso sia tale, non può essere scisso da un'adesione totale e pervasiva, quasi fisica, del fruitore, indipendente dalle elaborazioni successive a mente fredda, quell' 'ebbrezza dell'anima' che, nelle parole di Tieck, Shakespeare sa evocare. Se l'intelletto dormiente, nei versi introduttivi alla fiaba *Pelle d'asino* di Pérrault, è *conditio sine qua non* per predisporre l'*élite* colta e smaliziata alla benevola accettazione della materia fiabesca, il romanticismo tedesco fa della fiaba l'espressione di poesia più alta, che vive della trascrizione simbolica della vita umana di ciascun tempo, di tutti i tempi all'unisono. Prima di giungere alla cosmogonia visionaria del *Kunstmärchen* romantico, andava recuperato il senso di arcano, misterico, connaturato al meraviglioso. E con esso la cifra sua più distintiva, l'indecifrabilità, o meglio, l'indicibilità: 'I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream past the wit of man to say what dream it was… The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream. It shall be called 'Bottom's Dream', because it hath no bottom'.[241] Le parole di Bottom suggellano una notte di prodigi maldestri, di accoppiamenti mitologici - e come tali inquietanti - magicamente sventati da fate ed elfi britanni, di sogni e furori e fantasie di Eros. È un arcano destabilizzante, di una possanza primigenia – la sinestesia annienta la ricorrenza delle formule standard della fiaba (gli ormai triti superlativi assoluti, o espressioni tipo 'qual dirvi non so') e, con esse, i parametri di conoscenza fenomenica. L'incontro col meraviglioso è teofania abbacinante: ciò che resta è un senso di vertigine, squarci di ima inquietudine. Che poi è l'inquietudine dello stesso artista: Bottom 'translated', che in presa diretta, sul palcoscenico, si accende di immediata magia, diventando fisicamente un prodigio vivente, poi dispera di riuscire a 'raccontare' il suo incontro fatato.

È proprio questo aspetto che più parla al giovane Tieck: il meraviglioso shakespeariano, soprattutto nelle opere nelle quali massimamente irrompe il prodigio, ossia i tardi *romance plays*, offre al contempo spunti di riflessione meta-letteraria. Più volte ricorre il quesito su forma e contenuto: Alonso si congeda dagli spettatori proponendosi di ordinare una materia informe e strabiliante in ben strani racconti.[242] E non è un caso che fra le opere tieckiane propedeutiche ai *Naturmärchen*, compaia una rielaborazione, in forma di frammento, di *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1789). Tieck dimostra di aver ben letto fra le righe: è la nuova definizione dell'artista che tiene la scena. Del resto, sottende a *A Midsummer Night's Dream* la riflessione

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Wilhelm Heinrich von Gerstenberg a proposito della gelosia di Otello, nella Lettera nr.15 delle sue *Briefe über Merkwürdigkeiten der Litteratur*.

[239] Sullo spettro di Cock Lane, *revenante* femminile, al secolo Fanny Lynes, le cui visitazioni notturne sono puntualmente riportate dal quotidiano londinese *Public Ledger*, sarà chiamato a indagare, su espresso mandato degli esponenti della chiesa metodista, finanche Samuel Johnson.

[240] Si fa qui riferimento al saggio di E. Montagu *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear, compared with Greek and French Dramatic Poets. With some Remarks Upon the Misrepresentations of Mons. De Voltaire*, pubblicato a Londra nel 1769 e la cui versione in tedesco circola in Germania a partire dal 1772.

[241] Cfr. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, IV, i.

[242] 'Alonso: Whe'ver thou beest he or no, | Or some enchanted trifle to abuse me, | As late I have been, I not know. Thy pulse | Beats as of flesh and blood; and since I saw thee | Th'affliction of my mind amends, with which | I fear a madness held me. This must crave – An if this be at all – a most strange story'. *The Tempest*, V, i, vv. 113-119.

sul ruolo dell'immaginazione in amore e arte. Shakespeare, nella *pièce* tieckiana, sogna e Titania gli conferisce il potere di fare poesia, una volta sveglio a sé e al mondo, coi sogni meravigliosi che ha sognato.

L'assioma 'meraviglioso/sognoì' è ribadito nel trattato del 1793 *Über Shakspear's Behandlung des Wunderbaren*, anteposto alla rivisitazione di *The Tempest*. Poche pagine, ma originali: in controtendenza rispetto alla critica anglofona, impegnata nella definizione del canone shakespeariano, e all'approccio illuministico all'insegna della *disiecti membra poetae*, Tieck designa il meraviglioso quale principio organico che informa l'*opera omnia* del drammaturgo inglese. Questo primo scorcio di esegesi romantica, pur soffermandosi su altre opere, sancisce l'eccellenza di *The Tempest*, evidenziandone, in anticipo sui tempi, la straordinaria compattezza formale e resa teatrale, nonché il potere evocativo, per cui il lettore/spettatore è 'an schöne Träume gefesselt'.[243] L'estetica del sogno – è in tali termini che Alfred Béguin legge il saggio – fondamentale per gli sviluppi del romanticismo europeo, e sostanziale alle fiabe tieckiane, sgorga quindi direttamente da Shakespeare. Ma vi è molto di più e la trattazione vira decisamente verso approdi più moderni.

L'assunto di partenza è l'analisi pragmatica degli artifici tecnici coi quali Shakespeare induce l'*audience* a smarrirsi nella sfera lieve del sogno, realizzando in tal modo la *Täuschung* perfetta della fiaba, tetragona alle irruzioni del reale, o per dirla col poeta tedesco, 'in modo che l'animo mai faccia ritorno al mondo abituale'. Egli indica quindi, come elementi ai quali attinge il meraviglioso shakespeariano, la varietà delle rappresentazioni e la mitigazione degli affetti, l'impiego del comico, l'uso massiccio della musica. Le tesi che seguono, però, paiono concentrarsi sulle continue oscillazioni dell'illusione, scenica e non. La *Täuschung* si fa *Betrug*, l'illusione si dilata in illusorietà: il sogno di Bottom, che fondo non ha, inghiotte come un buco nero l'esistenza umana, inconsistente come l'ordito stesso dei sogni.[244]

Si sfalda quindi ben presto il mondo fiabesco e lieve, sostituito dal gioco perverso che articola l'autore inglese, straordinariamente in anticipo sui tempi; tanto che Tieck menziona il coevo Cazotte, e il dubbio continuo che arrovella i protagonisti del suo racconto *Le diable amoureux*, quel 'sogno o son desto' che manca, ad esempio, all'eroe di Cervantes, viziando così parzialmente l'interesse del lettore. Che di un gioco si tratti, in fondo non fa specie: in *The Tempest*, come peraltro negli altri *romance plays*, la mano sapiente di Shakespeare amalgama i più vari elementi, combina i generi più disparati, non disdegnando nemmeno l'autocitazione, una sorta di *self-cannibalism* autoriale. Perversa è la dinamica, in seno a una sorta di *self-voiding literature*, che presiede a contenuto - affermato e negato a un tempo, spesso quello di una singola scena - e forma, che perfeziona il sabotaggio in atto. Sintomatiche, ad esempio, le prime scene:l'*incipit*, il naufragio provocato dalle arti sapienziali di Prospero mago, in tempo reale e speculare rispetto alla cronaca che Prospero fa a Miranda dell'odissea da loro sofferta; costei cade nel sonno, non si comprende se indotto per magia dal padre o per il coinvolgimento emotivo da lei provato. E anche qui subentra una doppia congettura: le emozioni sono suscitate dal prodigio del naufragio, o, piuttosto, dal racconto ipnotico del padre, che dal subconscio evoca traumi rimossi? Il testo, che vive di continue dilazioni, azioni che naufragano sul nascere, brusche interruzioni, si allenta ulteriormente, allargandosi in più punti in derive di congetture, ipotesi sulla veridicità del prodigio. L'abito di Gonzalo, perfettamente integro dopo il *shipwreck*, è prova che suffraga l'esistenza dell'isola favolosa e magica. Peccato che in essa si riproponga il bieco pragmatismo della vicenda storica, articolato nella contrapposizione fra 'Nature' e 'Nurture'. La lettura epistemologica sfocia in una sospensione di giudizio: come potrebbe essere altrimenti, se le facoltà intellettuali sono soggette a continui intorpidimenti, sopori improvvisi, allucinazioni e sogni spesso indotti da percezioni sensoriali del tutto nuove e, quindi, spossanti? L'alternanza fra veglia e sonno partorisce sogni ben strani: lontani dal linguaggio classico che esplicita, a mezzo di oracoli, la volontà dei numi – li ritroviamo puntuali negli altri *romance plays* – sono piuttosto visioni confuse, che fanno riemergere pulsioni latenti. Lo 'sleepy language' col quale Antonio si rivolge a Sebastian è ipnosi che fa riaffiorare brame di potere inconfessate. La dimensione inconscia, ad alta densità fantasmatica, è l'unico segno certo. Non a caso Tieck, nella fisionomia di Caliban, i cui tratti comici sfumano in un grottesco perturbante, nel segno di un'apprensione d'ignoto che risale verso l'assolutezza dello spavento infantile, coglie quel carattere di *assemblage* proprio dell'attività inconscia, nota oggi come fenomeno di condensazione. Se volessimo farci condurre alle estreme conseguenze - come resistere all'invito di Prospero, tradotto a livello formale

[243] 'Avvinto a bei sogni', mia traduzione.
[244] 'Prospero: And like the baseless fabric of this vision, | The cloud-clapped towers, the gorgeous palaces, | The solemn temples, the great globe itself, | Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve; | And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, | Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff | As dreams are made on; and our little life | Is rounded with a sleep'. *The Tempest*, IV, I, vv. 151-158.

nell'*open-ending* della *fabula* - potremmo addirittura ipotizzare di muoverci all'interno della psiche di Prospero, di uno spazio mentale in cui le coordinate spazio-temporali conflagrano, quello spazio mentale al quale Fludd aveva conferito la planimetria del teatro elisabettiano. A veder bene, la situazione iniziale di Prospero, 'rapt in secret studies' nel proprio studiolo, non si discosta affatto dall'esilio sull'isola, lontano dalla consorteria umana, perso dietro alle proprie arti magiche.

A questo punto, giova chiedersi cosa resta in effetti della fiaba tradizionale. Oltre alle smagliature già menzionate nel discorso del meraviglioso, manca la caratteristica logica compensatoria, atta a riparare i torti del mondo, ribadendo il desiderio, o meglio, le concrezioni di desiderio originate dall'istituirsi del principio di realtà. Il *tableau vivant* finale, con Miranda e Ferdinand, la generazione nuova cristallizzata nell'emblema di un ritorno allo *status quo*, sullo sfondo di agnizioni a metà e del congedo stanco di Prospero, si discosta malinconico dalle altre fiabe che Shakespeare ci ha raccontato. E in fondo la modalità classica della fiaba sembra andar stretta allo stesso Shakespeare, che sconfessa il 'winter's tale' che Hermione attende dal figlio, col corredo standard di spiriti terrifici atti ad evocare reazioni quasi pavloviane,[245] col proprio *Winter's Tale*.

Le osservazioni tieckiane su *The Tempest*, teoria che si fa pratica poi nei *Naturmärchen*, paiono piuttosto anticipare il racconto fantastico, rintracciabile soprattutto nelle strategie adottate a livello testuale (tanto che per molti il genere si sostanzia nella mera modalità del raccontare). Suo carattere distintivo è la molteplicità di punti vista a sostegno delle infinite possibilità di lettura del reale, che sfocia in un livellamento valutativo per via dell'*effet de miroir*,[246] con vicende l'una speculare all'altra, organizzate, sul piano formale, in una struttura a *embedding* che favorisce una trasmigrazione di attributi. Tale *déjà vu* sortisce il più delle volte un senso di straniamento, proprio come nei sogni, là ove situazioni del vissuto personale riaffiorano assolutamente decontestualizzate. E come del sogno tratteniamo qualche particolare, magari un singolo elemento, quasi l'occhio procedesse per anamorfosi, così l'attenzione nel racconto fantastico è catalizzato da un dettaglio, che spesso funge da oggetto mediatore fra due piani, il reale e ciò che si pone al di fuori di esso.

Tutto ciò ricorre puntuale nei *Naturmärchen* tieckiani, e ancor prima in *The Tempest*. I *topoi* sono i medesimi, anche se nelle fiabe, è bene precisarlo, operano al contempo altre suggestioni desunte da Shakespeare. Lo stato emotivo dei protagonisti richiama, ad esempio, la 'slumbery agitation' di Lady Macbeth o il barlume improvviso di 'in-sight' che coglie King Lear; le creature fantastiche, streghe o fate che siano, condividono con gli spettri del *Richard III* la medesima cifra di colpa rimossa del protagonista. Analoga è l'orchestrazione formale: il modulo della *Rahmenerzählung*, che offre la sponda a continue irruzioni del passato in forma di *flashbacks*, richiama il gioco continuo di sipari, anche mentali, che si aprono internamente alla *Tempesta*. La tematizzazione del dubbio, rafforzato dal *topos* del sogno, si puntella sull'impiego massiccio del congiuntivo, come pure sulla ricorrenza del verbo 'scheinen', che pare ispirata direttamente dalla musicalità del linguaggio shakesperiano, là ove l'onomatopea dei lessemi 'sea' 'to see' si sfilaccia nell'eco destabilizzante del verbo 'to seem'. A ciò si aggiunga la sapiente modalizzazione della *suspence*, appresa anch'essa da Shakespeare, questa volta l'*Amleto*, al quale sono dedicate le ultime pagine del saggio, sulla scia di osservazioni già rese a suo tempo da Lessing nella *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*.

Ma è soprattutto nella presentazione del prodigio quale dimensione extra-umana, giacchè esula dalla strumentazione epistemologica di cui disponiamo, che avvertiamo la consonanza più spiccata. Il sovrannaturale d'ignoto, quell' *ab-solutus* sciolto da tutti i legami dal quale origina l'esitazione costante dei personaggi, si configura come spazio dell'indicibile e proprio per questo l'arcano trova forza nuova. Elfi, coboldi, 'spirits of another sort' impallidiscono a fronte di un senso misterico che percorre la natura dell'isola, vicino e intellegibile all'uomo solo in rare esperienze di soglia. Scalzata è pure la mitologia classica, col *masque* di fertilità e quella sua musica celeste inghiottita da violente dissonanze. O, meglio, essa è come svuotata, ridotta a codice standard di comunicazione con l'uomo, se Ariel, per farsi capire, deve

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[245] 'Hermione: What wisdom stirs amongst you? Come, sir, now | I am for you again. Pray you sit by us, | And tell's a tale. Mamillius: Merry or sad shall't be? Hermione: As merry as you will. Mamillius: A sad tale's best for winter. I have one | Of sprites and goblins. Hermione: Let's have that, good sir. | Come on, sit down, come on, and do your best | To fright me with your sprites. You're powerful at it.' William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, II, i, vv. 22-30.

[246] Di rifrazioni, anche se in un'accezione leggermente diversa, che sottolinea un abbacinamento della facoltà di giudizio, parla Nuttall, in un suo prezioso contributo. Vale la pena di citare: 'But in *The Tempest* the prominence given to the ambiguous lower reaches of our conceptual and perceptual apparatus infects all ontological dogmatism with uncertainty… In this way he builds up a sense of shimmering multiplicity of levels, which, together with the gratuitous operations of the supernatural, produce in the audience a state of primitive apprehension similar to that in which the characters find themselves. We are given the impression that the island may, after all, belong wholly to the unassertive world of dreams and ambiguous perceptions…' A.D.Nuttall, *Two concepts of allegory: a study of Shakespeare's* The Tempest *and the logic of allegorical expression* (London: 1967), p. 157.

trasformarsi in arpia *en travesti*; che però a Caliban stesso, creatura *sub* o *super* umana, il linguaggio misterico, denso di musiche, poi di suoni confusi, dell'isola risulti incomprensibile, ciò è come un voler elevare alla potenza il prodigio.

Affrancandosi dal 'supernatural explained', contestato alla Ratcliffe,[247] proprio in virtù del 'supernatural' shakespeariano, Tieck, con le sue fiabe, recupera al meraviglioso una dimensione ontologica, che coincide con l'essenza stessa del *romance*, quella valenza di risignificazione del presente storico unita alla tensione di un desiderio, comunque inattingibile. Dimensione che pervade la natura dell'isola di Prospero – il termine 'wonder', più raro rispetto a 'strange', è sempre a spettacoli di bellezza magniloquente che da essa promanano – così simile agli scenari dei *Naturmärchen*, là ove proprio il termine 'Natur' sostanzia il prodigio di una nuova tipologia di fiaba.

[247] 'We disapprove of the mode, introduced by Mrs. Radcliffe… of winding up their stories with a solution by which all the incidents appearing to partake of the mystic and marvellous are resolved in very simple and natural causes…' Lapidario il commento apparso sul *Quarterly Review* (maggio 1810), che sancisce l'insofferenza ormai conclamata per l'armamentario del gotico letterario, fra i cui adepti compare anche un giovanissimo Tieck. Del resto il Walpole, nella prefazione a *The Castle of Otranto*, dichiarerà senza ambagi che sua fonte diretta d'ispirazione è proprio Shakespeare.

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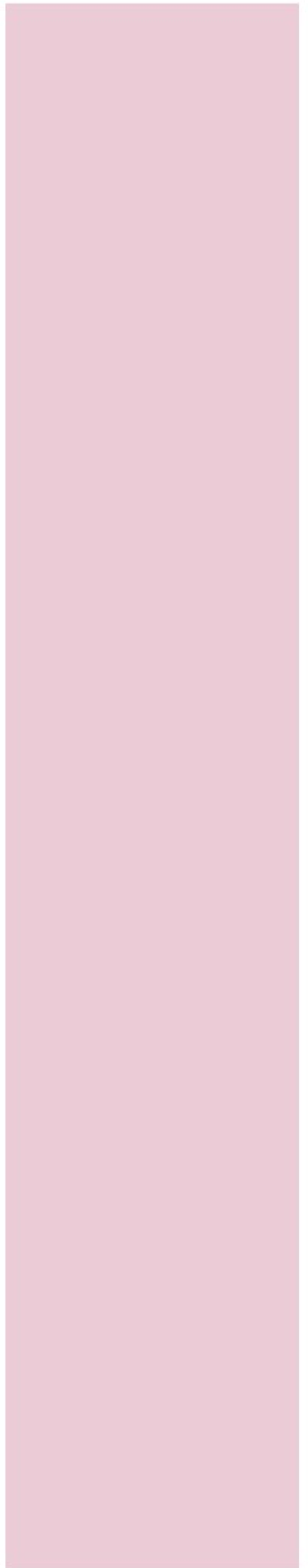

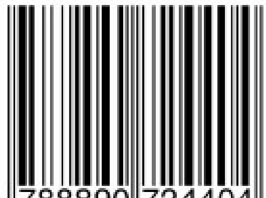
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