



Proceedings of the 'Shakespeare and His Contemporaries'
Graduate Conference
2012 and 2013

Edited by Mark Roberts
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The British Institute of Florence

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Preface

When the British Institute of Florence launched its Shakespeare Graduate Conference in 2009, our guiding principle was to provide 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. Papers from the first three conferences – those of 2009, 2010 and 2011 – were published online in 2013.

The fourth Shakespeare Graduate conference, devoted to “The Notion of Conflict”, was held in the Palazzo Lanfredini in Florence on Thursday 26 April 2012. Like the previous one it was open to universities all over Italy. The morning session was chaired by Professor Paola Pugliatti (Florence), and the afternoon one by Professor Sara Soncini (Pisa), who gave a paper. Papers were also given by Alice Equestri (Padua), Shilan Fuad Hussain (Urbino), Domenico Lovascio (Genoa), and Antonella Tauro (Pisa).

The fifth conference, on “The Italian Connection”, took place on Thursday 18 April 2013, during the British Institute’s annual Shakespeare Week. One session was chaired by Professor Fernando Cioni (Florence), and one by Professor Shaul Bassi (Ca’ Foscari, Venice). Papers were given by both chairs, as well as by Camilla Caporicci (Perugia), Irene Montori (Sapienza, Rome), Diego Passera (Florence), and Cristiano Ragni (Perugia).

For this second online publication, papers presented at the fourth and fifth conferences have been selected by “blind review”. Once again, the vitality and range of Shakespearean studies in Italy today is reflected in the variety of subject, methodology and critical stance apparent in the papers chosen. We trust that this continuing initiative of publishing the papers of the British Institute conference online will help to further participants’ academic careers.

We take this opportunity of thanking IASEMS (the Italian Association of Shakespearean and Early Modern Studies) for their continuing active support.

My own thanks go to my colleagues Lucia Cappelli, April Child, Rebecca De Masi, Sofia Novello and Alyson Price, as well as the Director of the British Institute, Julia Race. I also thank two Library volunteers, Mary Forrest and Maria Rosa Ramponi Bartolini, for their editorial assistance.

Mark Roberts, M.A. (Oxon.)
British Institute of Florence, January 2014

Shakespeare Graduate Conference 2012

The Notion of Conflict

‘Sweet lord, you play me false’: A Chess Game in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*

Alice Equestri
Università di Padova

In Act 5 Scene 1 of *The Tempest* Prospero shows off the last prodigy of his island by drawing a curtain and ‘discover[ing] Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess’ after everyone has become persuaded that they both died in the tempest. This is quite an odd scene: first of all we have the very concrete problem of the visual recognisability of the game. The original audience (like modern audiences) probably found it difficult to distinguish the tiny little chessmen that moved on the board, especially if they sat or stood far from the stage. The board, seen from afar, might also have been easily confused with that of some other game.¹ Moreover, whether the play was originally performed at the Blackfriars indoor theatre or at the Globe, if Prospero is to ‘discover’ the two lovers playing in a space separated from the spot where the rest of the characters stand, the scene demands the use of an inner stage² and this puts even more distance between the chessboard and the audience, not to mention the visibility problems intrinsically caused by the physical conformation of a Jacobean playhouse. Also, because chess was chiefly a royal pastime, part of the audience might not have known what it looked like exactly. Besides, the short dialogue that follows the stage direction does very little to explain to the audience what game they are playing – it could apply to any other popular early modern board game:

MIRANDA	Sweet lord, you play me false.
FERDINAND	No, my dearest love, I would not for the world.
MIRANDA	Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, And I would call it fair play. (V.i.174-178) ³

Also, it may seem quite ridiculous for two lovers to sit at a table playing such a sterile game as chess instead of touching hands, embracing or anyway enjoying a more physical type of relationship. In this sense Ferdinand and Miranda are one of the coldest couples that Shakespeare ever created – unlike, for example, Romeo and Juliet or Lorenzo and Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*, or Troilus and Cressida before her departure. So why does Shakespeare insert the game of chess which, apart from posing all these issues, is only a glimpse which easily runs the risk of being overlooked, since the momentum of the scene is created by the reunion between Ferdinand and his father?

Shakespeare inserts chess-related terminology in some other plays, referring for example to some of the chessmen, like the pawn, the Queen or King, or to the idea of checkmate,⁴ but nowhere else, apart from *The Tempest*, does he actually show any direct reference to the game on stage. This, together with the total lack of any certain evidence that he was a chess player⁵,

has led some critics to think that, though Shakespeare was acquainted with the rules and moves of the game, they held very little attraction for him and therefore the scene was introduced in *The Tempest* just with the aim of showing the young couple in a pretty and engaging attitude.⁶ In particular, commentators tend to concentrate on the popularity of the game among the aristocracy, but it has also been suggested that it could be a tribute to Ferdinand's city, Naples, a famous centre of chess playing in the Renaissance.⁷

Addressing the issue more in depth, Loughrey and Taylor give an overview of chess as a metaphor of courtly love in literature: they mention *Les Échecs Amoureux*, a 1370 French allegorical poem where chess symbolises the lovers' progress in courtship, and romances such as *Guy or Warwick* or *Huon de Bordeaux*, where the hero must beat his beloved at chess before spending the night with her. Thus they underline how chess at once propounds and subverts the idea of chaste love between Ferdinand and Miranda, and how it hints at the idea of love as war – possibly in an Ovidian sense; they establish a relation between the final aim of the game and the political action within the text, controlled by an 'unseen mover', and they emphasise how in both cases a situation of conflict is transformed into play. Moreover, they see Prospero's discovery of the players over a chessboard as an allusion to the dramatist's power of art.⁸ William Poole, instead, expands on the allegorical significance of chess in Shakespeare's age, focusing on the political and sexual implications of the idea of unfair play associated with the scene – namely, Miranda's accusation to Ferdinand of 'wrangling' – thus questioning this idyllic picture of aristocratic entertainment and courtly love.⁹ I believe, however, that none of them digs deeply enough into the concrete dynamics of the game itself to note that several parallels can be made between the characters of the play and the chess pieces and their moves. This is what I propose to do in this article.

There are many versions of the origins of chess. While today we know that it probably came from India (where it was originally called *chaturanga*),¹⁰ medieval and early modern treatises purport that either it was invented during the siege of Troy to divert the soldiers on tedious evenings¹¹ – and they give a number of possible inventors' names: from Diomedes to Ulysses, Palamedes, son of the King of Euboea, and two Greek brothers named Ledo and Tyrrheno – or that it was first created in Babylon, by a philosopher called Xerxes, who used the game to correct the manners of evil King Merodach, teach him royal values¹² and keep him from idleness.¹³ Though it is hard to say exactly how the game spread across Europe, there is evidence that it was already well known in France and England at least one century before the Conquest:¹⁴ Charlemagne himself enjoyed playing it and it is likely that the English scholar Alcuin first brought chess to England on a visit to his native country at the end of the 8th century.¹⁵ Alternatively the Saxons might have received it from the Danes.¹⁶ The game enjoyed a massive popularity among members of the highest ranks, following a set of rules and dynamics that did not differ much from the gameplay we are used to today: this cannot but help the modern reader in the interpretation of Shakespeare's intentions.

Being the strategy game *par excellence*, where it is possible to plan all the moves in advance to defeat the opponent, chess stands as the perfect symbol of Prospero's scheme against his enemies. But it is not just a question of them doing what the sorcerer wants them to: the shipwrecked characters, the concealed ship, and Miranda – almost everyone on the island – act indeed like inanimate chessmen. When Prospero decides where to confine them, they just stay where they are without wandering around. Expressions dealing with the idea of confinement and stasis recur throughout the text. When Ariel reports his management of the tempest he says:

ARIEL The King's son have I landed by himself [...]
 In an odd angle of the isle, and sitting
 His arms in this sad knot. (I.ii.222-225)

A few lines later he tells his master that he has led the King's ship to harbour in a 'deep nook' (I.ii.228) and fastened down the crew 'under hatches' (I.ii.231). Later on, when we first meet Caliban, he complains that Prospero 'st[ies]' him 'in this hard rock' (I.ii.344-345),¹⁷ and in general Prospero's threats to those who show themselves unwilling to comply with his bidding always turn out to be menaces of imprisonment: he tells Ferdinand that he'll 'manacle [his] neck and feet together' (I.ii.464) and shortly after he charms him into immobility (I.ii.468), while he warns Ariel that if he does not heed his orders he will shut him away in an oak tree, just like the one where the evil witch Sycorax imprisoned him twelve years before (I.ii.295-297). In all these cases reference is made to closed, well bordered, secluded spaces where any chance of free movement is impossible. It is as if all these characters were put into giant chess squares and only Prospero could decide when and how to move them. In the quotation above, Ariel suggests that he has 'landed' Ferdinand in his recess, just like a player *lands* a chess piece on a square, and the prince will not stir until Ariel plays the melody which he wants him to follow. At the same time the King of Naples and his train are left in a deserted spot of the island where, instead of thinking about how to save themselves or try to find their missing companions, they show their stillness and complete lack of initiative by engaging in nonsensical activities like betting on who will start speaking first, debating whether Dido was the Queen of Tunis or Carthage, or starting an absurd conversation about how they would manage the island if they were its colonisers. Only Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano, from a certain point onwards, seem to elude his guard but they will be well taken care of in the end. They, along with Ariel of course, are the only ones who, in spite of everything, enjoy the greatest freedom of movement. The rest of the characters are not only enclosed in physical prisons, but Prospero makes very sure that they are also *mentally* imprisoned, and he attains this by magically forcing his enemies (but also his daughter) to sleep. This is in fact the charm he, also through the help of Ariel, uses most throughout the play.

However, chess is above all a game of conflict. It is a game where a king tries to defeat an enemy king. This is, again, what happens in the play and the motif is repeated multiple times: Antonio usurps Prospero's dukedom in the first place, then Prospero, by chasing away Sycorax the witch, actually deprives Caliban of the title of king of the island which was legitimately his by virtue of inheritance; then we see Prospero's attempt to overpower his brother, Antonio, and get his dukedom back; at the same time Sebastian tries to do with his own brother, the King of Naples, what Antonio did with Prospero, and Caliban secretly plans to defeat the duke-coloniser and get his island back. The idea that it is actually a war that everyone is fighting also emerges from the use of certain military expressions. Ariel says that the crew and passengers of the ship have been dispersed 'in troops' (I.ii.221), instead of 'groups' or something similar. Later on, Prospero accuses Ferdinand of putting himself 'upon this island as a spy' (I.ii.457-458) and, when Sebastian sees the spectacle of the banquet, he says that 'one fiend at a time' he will 'fight their legion o'er',¹⁸ while Antonio replies 'I'll be your second' (IV.i.103-104). Stephano wants to appoint Trinculo his 'lieutenant' or 'standard' (III.ii.15-16) and warns him from becoming a 'mutineer' (III.ii.36). In one of the final scenes, then, when Prospero and Ariel prepare to punish Caliban for his attempted conspiracy, the spirit addresses him by calling him 'my commander' (IV.i.167), instead of just 'master' as he normally does.

Chess is also a fight between two colours: the White House against the Black House. *The Tempest* itself exploits quite significantly the black/white dichotomy: the 'darkness' and earthiness of Caliban is opposed to the essence of Ariel, who represents lightness and is an 'airy' spirit (in performance, directors frequently choose to employ a black-skinned Caliban, to emphasise the contrast with the rest of the characters). More stereotypically, black and white symbolise the opposition between good and evil – thus Prospero/Miranda/Ariel and the spirits

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on one side, and the rest of the characters on the other – or alternatively Vice and Virtue.¹⁹ Indeed, when Ariel/the Harpy stages the spectacle for the Neapolitans he accuses them of being ‘men of sin’ (III.iii.53). But it might also stand for the clash between types of magic: the evil magic of Sycorax (which we would now call ‘black’) against the nobler art of Prospero. Ferdinand links the idea of white with his chastity:

FERDINAND The white cold virgin snow upon my heart
 abates the ardour of my liver. (IV.i.55-56)

while elsewhere Prospero calls Caliban ‘filth’ (I.ii.348) in connection with his past attempt to rape Miranda. Finally when Prospero relieves all his enchantments in V.i, he draws this similitude:

PROSPERO The charm dissolves apace,
 And as the morning steals upon the night,
 Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
 Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
 Their clearer reason. (V.i.64-68)²⁰

where he identifies ignorance with darkness, and sense or reason with clarity.

Other than colours, also some of the dynamics that are typical of the game of chess seem to be physically reproduced in the play. The game is played on a well defined, bordered square board made up of sixty-four squares that, as Caxton explains in *Game and Playe of the Chesse* (1474), ‘is made after the form of the cyté of Babyloyne in the whiche this same playe was founden’ and where ‘the bordeur about representeth the walle of the cyté, whyche is right hygh’.²¹

In the same way, Shakespeare’s play is entirely set on an island, which is also a well defined, bordered space and becomes, as noted above, Prospero’s giant chessboard where he moves his enemies as he likes. Each of the two houses represents the perfect feudal society and all the classes are represented: there are the King and Queen, the Knights, the Bishops which represent religious power, and the Rooks, while the front row is made up of pawns, which stand for the lower classes. Prospero’s island too is, if not perfect, a realistic example of a society made up of all the needed classes and types of power: we have Kings, Princes and a Princess, Counsellors, Dukes, the lower classes represented by Ariel and his fellow servant spirits, the crew of the ship and Stephano and Trinculo, while at the very bottom of the ladder there is Caliban, the slave. Prospero is at the same time player of the game and chessman, because he is also King of one of the two houses. The very way in which he fights against the company of the Neapolitans reminds us of the way the King of chess moves. This piece can move only one square at a time, suggesting his old age and the need to be protected. Indeed, the initial formation of the chess pieces implies that the first who will go to war will be the pawns, that is, the common people.²² The King is the very last to move, and he will not do that unless he has to avoid a checkmate. Also, a King can never directly face the other King, because it will always be at least one square away from it.²³ Checkmate is always given by other pieces, so there is never a direct fight between the two kings. All this we may find in the play too. Prospero never gets close to his enemies until the very end, Act 5 Scene 1, when he decides they have been sufficiently punished and prepares to forgive them. He is never directly involved in the fight but he exploits all the time the powers of the spirits of the island, chiefly Ariel’s, to the point that one may wonder what the real powers of Prospero are: if he can truly master magic or if he is just

able to control those who can perform it.²⁴ He is the brains behind the plan, but he is ultimately quite external to the battle. When he asks Ariel to report on the tempest it is immediately clear that the spirit had a very active role in its management and in the management of Prospero's war in general. He says 'I have dispersed them [the crew and passengers] 'bout the isle', 'The King's son have I landed' (I.ii.221-222), 'The rest of the fleet I dispersed' (I.ii.234), and the fact that Prospero asks the spirit about how *he* has 'disposed' of the King's ship and the rest of the fleet (I.ii.226-227) suggests that probably the sorcerer gave Ariel just a few guidelines on what he would have to do to bring the Neapolitans ashore, but the details were entirely up to him.

Prospero, as a ruler, also experiences the chess King's final defeat: checkmate. This happens when the King remains alone surrounded by enemies with no other pieces of his house to defend him, and at the same time unable to free himself.²⁵ When Prospero tells Miranda the story of his banishment from Milan he describes a similar situation: the army levied by his evil brother Antonio with the help of the King of Naples closed in on him and forced him to take to the sea in a boat. Prospero was alone, only with little Miranda and, though he admits that it was 'so dear the love my people bore me' (I.ii.141), nobody spoke in his favour or defended him, and he was defeated exactly like a checkmated king.

Prospero does not resemble only the King of Chess, but he shows some analogies with the roles of the bishop and the rook. The bishop was considered, like Prospero, a man of science,²⁶ and he was represented sitting on a chair with a book open in front of him.²⁷ As concerns the Rook, it is probably a curious coincidence that this chess piece was often called 'duke' in the early modern period, which is also the title owned by Prospero, as opposed to Alonso's kingship,²⁸ though in Shakespeare's time the duchy of Milan was actually ruled by a King, Philip II of Spain, and not a duke. Saul explains the reason for this name: the duke, or rook, is the highest in degree after the monarchs, and should function as a leader, but the author then adds that, because the rooks do not move much from their rank, the name duke would better fit the Queen.²⁹ Rook comes from the French name for the piece: Le Roc, which stands for 'the rock' or the 'keeper of the Rock'

intending thereby, the Governor of a Province, which Commonly is resident in the strongest castle in the Countrey, and those Castles are the strongest, the which are built on a Rocke: which Governments or Presidentships of Provinces likewise, are there conferred, on the greatest men, and they are commonly Dukes. So although these Dukes seeme remote from the King and Court [...] they may be accounted in worth and power next to the King. In this sence (I say) may the Rookes bee called Dukes.³⁰

Reading *The Tempest* from the point of view of colonialist politics, as is often done, Prospero is actually the governor of a province/island and resides away from his home country.

There are other characters in the play whose behaviour bears some resemblances to the moves of the corresponding chess pieces. The case of the pawn is interesting. The pawns are the weakest pieces of the chessboard because they can move only forward and at the pace of one square at a time³¹, but they can defeat any stronger piece. Besides, if they are lucky enough to get to the other end of the board, they are rewarded with a promotion³² and they are immediately endowed with the freedom of movement of a Queen. In this sense pawns can climb the social ladder, which is exactly the same aspiration some of the low characters in the play have. Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano know that if they want to become the new lords of the island they need to kill Prospero, and to do that they get as far as into his cell, where they plan to do an ambush. Again, they decide to fight Prospero right at the moment when he is as 'confined' as he can be: sleeping – so it would be the first time that this physical state works against him

– and alone in his cell. Also, at the beginning of the play, the tempest overturns hierarchy: the sailors understand they have nothing more to lose and, in order to get everyone safely ashore, become the new authorities of the ship.³³

Finally, the figure of the Queen is also very important. This chess piece was introduced by a crucial new rule only in 1475. Before that date the Queen's square was occupied by a male counsellor, called *fers*.³⁴ This change represented a major sexual revolution in the game not only because the Queen was the only female chess piece but also because, having the ability to move as freely as possible on the chessboard, it suddenly became also the most powerful one.³⁵ She is the highest in degree, after her husband, and she is able to defend him when he is in danger.³⁶ Just as the Queen is the only female chess piece, also Miranda is the only female character in the play (if we exclude Ariel and the rest of the spirits who seem to fit a category in-between the two genders) and, to some extent, we may talk about sexual revolution in the text as well. While playing with Ferdinand, Miranda accuses her lover of cheating ('wrangling'): this suggests that after all she is not the submissive woman she appears to be, and she is not the stereotypical lady of a courtly-love relationship.³⁷ Also, it is a confirmation that, though Prospero has driven her life as he wanted, educating her as a future monarch and choosing a suitable husband for her, Miranda shows her inner independence throughout the play both from her father and from her husband-to-be. We might say that, in the perfect enclosed world Prospero has built for her, she has a good margin to be, as Slights says, 'an agent';³⁸ after her father has chosen Ferdinand for her, she chooses him herself, and she makes of an arranged betrothal a union driven by romantic attraction: she meets Ferdinand in spite of Prospero's prohibition, she openly declares her feelings to him instead of waiting for him to do it,³⁹ and finally accuses him of 'wrangling', thus going against the courtly love clichés and showing her strength. In this sense Miranda, though enclosed in Prospero's 'chessboard', finds ways to move freely.

So far it has been suggested that the final game of chess acknowledges and confirms a series of issues that are featured in the preceding part of the play. Yet it also seems to anticipate the epilogue. One of the medieval stereotypes concerning chess, though less exploited than its tie with courtly-love traditions, is the motif of Death playing the game with Man. Melin observes that in these types of representations the chessboard stands for the unpredictable game of life, where death comes unexpectedly and may lead either to salvation or eternal damnation in Hell.⁴⁰ Moreover, as Poole recalls, chess offers a *memento mori*: just as all the pieces will end up in a bag when the game is over, also all mortals, without distinction, will finish their life in a grave.⁴¹ Prospero's final epilogue reveals the unpredictability of the characters' future: will the audience decide to 'release' him from his 'bands, with the help of' their 'good hands' (Epilogue, 9-10)? Or will he end up confined in the text just as both houses will be put in a bag at the end of a chess game? If the actor playing Prospero is hopefully 'freed' by the final applause, the same cannot be said for the character, of whose destiny we will never be sure. After all, his war has come to nothing: both houses end up in a 'bag', the limbo between art and reality. While hierarchy collapses, only the actors remain.

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(Endnotes)

- 1 A number of table games existed in the Early Modern period, and some of them bore even some visual resemblance to chess: e.g. draughts or certain dice games, like backgammon, for instance. See Joseph Strutt and John Charles Cox, *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England from the Earliest Period: Including the Rural and Domestic Recreations, May Games, Mummeries, Pageants, Processions and Pompous Spectacles* (Boston: Methuen, 1801) or R. Seymour and C. Johnson, *The Compleat Gamester: In Three Parts* (London: J. Hodges, 1754).
- 2 D.E. Solem, "Some Elizabethan Game Scenes," *Educational Theatre Journal*, 1 (1954): 20.
- 3 My reference edition is William Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works. Second Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 4 E.g. In *King John* (II.i.122-123) Elinor says: 'That thou mayst be a queen, and check the world!' or in *The Taming of the Shrew* (I.i.58) Katharina asks: 'I pray you, sir is it your will to make a stale of me amongst these mates?'. In *As You Like It* Touchstone mentions a 'Countercheck Quarrelsome' (V.iv.79). See Paul G. Brewster, *Games and Sports in Shakespeare* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1959). In *King Lear* Kent says 'My life I never held as a pawn/to wage against mine enemies' (I.i.147) in order to express his loyalty to his master.
- 5 A painting attributed to the Dutch painter Karel Van Mander, *Chess Players* (c. 1603), was identified as an image of Johnson and Shakespeare playing chess (see Edward Winter, "Chess and Shakespeare," *Chess History*, accessed December 2, 2011, <http://www.chesshistory.com/winter/extra/shakespeare.html>). This is generally considered to be pure speculation but Jeffrey A. Netto sees it as a symbolical representation of the rivalry between the two greatest theatrical wits of the time. See Jeffrey A. Netto, "Intertextuality and the Chess Motif: Shakespeare, Middleton, Greenaway," in *Shakespeare, Italy and Intertextuality*, eds. Michele Marrapodi and Keir Elam (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 218.
- 6 Winter.
- 7 See Winter.
- 8 Bryan Loughrey and Neil Taylor, "Ferdinand and Miranda at Chess," in *The Cambridge Shakespeare Library*, Vol. 2, ed. C.M.S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 30-35 (31).
- 9 William Poole, "False Play: Shakespeare and Chess," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 55 (2004): 50-70.
- 10 "Chess," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, accessed December 7, 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/109655/chess>.
- 11 Seymour and Johnson, *The Compleat Gamester*, vi.
- 12 Strutt and Cox, *The Sports and Pastimes*, 250. This second one is for example the version of the story by Jacobus de Cessolis, in Caxton's translation: See William Caxton, *Game and Playe of the Chesse*, ed. Jenny Adams (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009), book 1, chapter 2.
- 13 Caxton, *Game and Playe of the Chesse*, book 1, chapter 3.
- 14 In the tenth century we find the earliest allusion to this game in England. See Duncan Forbes, *The History of Chess: From the Time of the Early Invention of the Game in India Till the Period of Its Establishment in Western and Central Europe* (London: W.H. Allen, 1860), 219.
- 15 Strutt and Cox, *The Sports and Pastimes*, 250.
- 16 Forbes, *The History of Chess*, 219.
- 17 The same idea is repeated by Miranda just a few lines later, in I.ii.363.
- 18 III.iii.103-104. C. Edelman, *Shakespeare's Military Language: A Dictionary* (London: Continuum, 2004), 197. Also P.A. Jorgensen, *Shakespeare's Military World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956).
- 19 Neil Taylor and Bryan Loughrey, "Middleton's Chess Strategies in *Women Beware Women*", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 24 (1984): 341-354.
- 20 Italics are mine.
- 21 Caxton, *Game and Playe of the Chesse*, book 4, chapter 1.
- 22 Caxton, *Game and Playe of the Chesse*, book 4, chapter 1.
- 23 Caxton, *Game and Playe of the Chesse*, book 4, chapter 2. Arthur Saul, *The Famous Game of Chesse-Play Truly Discovered, and All Doubts Resolved; So that by Reading this Small Booke Thou Shalt Profit More then by the Playing a Thousand Mates. An Exercise Full of Delight; Fit for Princes, or Any Person of What Qualitie Soeuer* (London: A.S. Gent, 1614), sig. C4v.
- 24 For a discussion on master-servant relationships on Prospero's island see Andrew Gurr, "Industrious Ariel and Idle Caliban," in *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, eds. Jean-Pierre Maquerlot and Michael Willems (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 193-208.
- 25 Saul, *The Famous Game of Chesse-Play*, sigg. F5r-F6r.
- 26 J.M. Mehl, "Justice et Administration d'Après le *Liber De Moribus* de Jacques des Cessoles," in *Chess and Allegory in the Middle Ages*, eds. Volker Honemann and Olle Ferm, (Stockholm: Sallskapet Runica et Mediaevalia,

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2005), 161-172 (166).

27 Caxton, *Game and Playe of the Chesse*, book 2, chapter 3.

28 Also in Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624) there are the Black 'Duke' and the White 'Duke'.

29 Saul, *The Famous Game of Chesse-Play*, sigg. C7v-C8r.

30 Saul, *The Famous Game of Chesse-Play*, sigg. C8r-C8v.

31 With the exception of the first move from the base line, which can take the pawn two squares forward, if the player likes.

32 This is a rule called in fact *promotion of the pawn*. This mechanism is explained in Caxton, *Game and Playe of the Chesse*, book 4, chapter 7 and Saul, *The Famous Game of Chesse-Play*, sigg. Fv-F2v.

33 See I.i.18-26.

34 Strutt and Cox, *The Sports and Pastimes*, 252.

35 "Chess."

36 Seymour and Johnson, *The Compleat Gamester*, 122.

37 Jessica Slights, "Rape and the Romanticization of Shakespeare's Miranda," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 41 (2001): 357-379 (371).

38 Slights, "Rape and Romanticization," 364.

39 Slights, "Rape and Romanticization," 366-369.

40 P. Melin, "Death Playing Chess with Man and Related Motifs," in eds. Honemann and Ferm, 9-16 (13).

41 Poole, "False Play," 64 and, "Middleton's Chess Strategies," 341. In Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624), an allegory of a chess game between Protestants (the White House) and the Papists (the Black House), the latter lose and are put in a bag, where the bag stands for Hell.

Il conflitto nell'*Otello* di William Shakespeare:
ricezione e rielaborazione in opere arabe del Novecento

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La tragedia shakespeariana *Otello* è ritenuta un *monumento* della letteratura, sinonimo di prestigio culturale, oggetto di cospicue rielaborazioni da parte di numerosi scrittori arabi. Tradotto e messo in scena al Cairo nel 1884, *Otello* è stato uno dei primi componimenti teatrali occidentali ad essere acquisito nel mondo arabo islamico, su cui ha esercitato un forte impatto per la sua ricchezza culturale. Se il 1884 potrebbe apparire una data molto tardiva, bisogna ricordare che il dramma è stato acquisito mediante il contatto con l'Occidente e ampiamente rivisitato in base al gusto estetico, nonché al sottofondo storico-culturale¹ degli scrittori arabi. Come sostiene lo studioso egiziano M. M. Badawi:

The appeal of the tragedies [...] is immeasurably greater [...] there is a general feeling among students that Shakespeare's tragedies have a much more universal appeal than the rest of the plays. [...] for even now we notice that the academic interest in Shakespeare lags far behind the theatrical: there are many more stage productions than critical dissertations, articles or books on the plays in Arabic².

Mediante il contatto con le diverse realtà culturali, l'*Otello* subisce un costante processo di trasformazione e metamorfosi, accogliendo in sé nuovi elementi. L'opera viaggia nelle letterature arabo-islamiche e si riscontrano diverse rielaborazioni compiute da scrittori di rilievo, che nel Novecento la integrano al proprio patrimonio di conoscenze. Preme sottolineare che in una prima fase di ricezione gli articoli e i commenti alle esibizioni teatrali erano cospicui, laddove erano minori gli studi critici che aderivano a un grado culturale ed accademico elevato³.

Oltre alle rielaborazioni dell'opera, vi sono notevoli riferimenti e allusioni ad essa, questo perché l'*Otello* va a toccare profondamente la sensibilità degli arabi, infatti il personaggio chiave è un uomo arabo che si introduce nel contesto culturale occidentale, confrontandosi con ciò che è diverso insieme a tutti i conflitti e le problematiche che ne conseguono⁴. Tuttavia, l'*Otello* non è soltanto il ritratto di un *Moro* che conduce la sua vita a Venezia, ma anche il confronto diretto tra oriente e occidente, un'opera tutt'oggi di grande attualità e che conferma ancora una volta l'estro di Shakespeare nel precorrere i tempi.

Nell'opera Shakespeare ritrae la figura di un *estraneo* che si trova in occidente, mentre nel momento in cui lo scritto viene recepito dagli arabi, essi scorgono un'immagine distorta, poiché è descritta in base alla concezione che l'occidente ha di loro. Come sostiene la studiosa

Ferial Ghazoul nel saggio *The Arabisation of Otello*:

Othello offers a special case of relations among literatures. It is the product of an acculturation involving a double circulation of the Other and a complex intertwining that combines the effect of an African/Arab [...] on European imagination and, in a reversed way, its impact on Arab/Africans. This exchange in both directions is necessarily modified by the perception of the Other and the modes of literary production of the time⁵.

Essenzialmente sussistono due questioni sulle quali i critici letterari arabi indugiano maggiormente: la prima è costituita dall'immagine del protagonista concepito come *outsider*, la quale va a definire l'identità dell'arabo. La seconda è una questione ben più complessa, poiché si pone l'obiettivo di ridefinire l'identità dell'arabo all'interno dell'opera, affinché sia rappresentato in modo più autentico.

Da questo doppio binario si sviluppa una produzione letteraria multiforme, con l'intento di esprimere il proprio punto di vista riguardo l'*altro*, influenzato dalla storia, dalla cultura e dalla visione del singolo autore. In entrambi i casi ci si trova dinnanzi alla propria figura vista attraverso gli occhi dell'altro; ed ecco da dove scaturisce l'impulso di riformulare e in alcuni casi di *correggere* il proprio ritratto, a partire dall'opera shakespeariana, con il proposito di fornire un'idea più veritiera di se stessi. Inoltre, da parte degli scrittori del Novecento, vi è l'intento di rivelare la propria sensibilità e abilità artistica, intessute di complesse ideologie.

Nel mondo arabo, l'attenzione verso l'opera shakespeariana assume talvolta modalità polemiche nei confronti dell'Occidente, a causa dell'egemonia del potere di quest'ultimo sul Medio-Oriente. Altre volte, si manifesta la volontà di instaurare un dialogo per porre rimedio alle divergenze; è evidente quindi che sono eterogenei e complessi i punti di vista emersi nel panorama arabo nati dal capolavoro shakespeariano. In modo più dettagliato, vi è una produzione letteraria che in una prima fase manifesta la propria soddisfazione per l'attenzione dedicata alla sua etnia. Diversamente, a seguito dei conflitti politici e della colonizzazione, essa esprime la propria indignazione per aver ricevuto un ritratto ingannevole. Bisogna sottolineare che l'obiettivo di questo breve scritto non è quello di delineare la pluralità delle reazioni scaturite dallo studio dell'*Otello*, né quello di prendere in considerazione i numerosi testi fioriti ispirandosi ad esso o illustrare delle molteplici traduzioni e riadattamenti teatrali, che meriterebbero uno studio a se. Questo lavoro si prefigge semplicemente di analizzare uno dei percorsi di comunicazione letteraria tra il mondo arabo-islamico e quello europeo. Nello specifico analizzando le opere di alcuni autori di rilievo, che nel Novecento, attraverso romanzi e in altri casi racconti, hanno donato dei nuovi contenuti all'*Otello*.

Alcune rielaborazioni dell'*Otello* shakespeariano nel mondo arabo-islamico

Nel mondo arabo-islamico, a seguito di una prima fase di apertura verso l'occidente, vi è un periodo di stasi tra le due guerre mondiali. Al termine della seconda guerra mondiale i rapporti fra queste diverse realtà si deteriorano ulteriormente, una crisi che raggiunge l'apice con l'inasprirsi dei conflitti arabo-israeliani. Ne consegue che il Medio-Oriente individua nell'Occidente la causa dei propri conflitti politici, dell'arretratezza economica, e per questo auspica di salvaguardarsi mediante l'impegno politico. Una frustrazione che si riscontra anche nel panorama culturale e che si traduce con una rielaborazione nei confronti proprio dell'*Otello* di Shakespeare. A partire dagli anni Sessanta, vi è un'ondata di reinterpretazioni, che descrivono

il Moro non più come la rappresentazione del mondo arabo, piuttosto egli diviene il simbolo delle ansie politiche e culturali in corso nel Medio-Oriente⁶.

È interessante l'interpretazione dell'autorevole critico palestinese Edward Said, il quale sostiene che,

In Shakespeare's *Othello* ('that abuser of the world'), the Orient and Islam are always represented as outsiders having a special role to play *inside* Europe⁷.

Edward Said individua nell'*Otello* la presenza dell'Islam e dell'Oriente, percepiti come 'outsiders', al fine di mettere in scena un determinato ruolo che gli è stato attribuito dall'Occidente.

Negli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta vi sono numerose rappresentazioni teatrali della tragedia, con interpretazioni piuttosto distanti dal testo originale. Sono riadattamenti caratterizzati da uno stile tipico del periodo e da un forte richiamo alle problematiche e alle conflittualità in atto, senza per questo perdere lo spirito shakespeariano originario.

Nel teatro, un esempio rilevante da ricordare è l'opera dello scrittore marocchino 'Abd al-Karim Birshid⁸, intitolata *'Utayl wal-khayl wal-barud (Othello, Horses and Gunpowder)* e messa in scena a Casablanca, fra il 1975 e il 1976, dalla compagnia teatrale *Dramatic Avantgarde*. In essa emerge l'interpretazione di forte impatto modernista dell'*Otello*, dove la riflessione si concentra sulle modalità di recitazione degli attori e sulla rappresentazione scenica. L'utilizzo di maschere nere africane e musica sub-sahariana come accompagnamento fa emergere l'impronta pirandelliana, soprattutto nel ricorso al teatro nel teatro, accanto al *nouveau roman* francese e alle *Mille e una notte*. Quella di 'Abd al-Karim Birshid costituisce un'interpretazione di rilievo, nella quale vi è il richiamo ad antichi miti della letteratura. Vi sono riferimenti alla realtà dell'epoca a lui contemporanea e in essa il dramma non trova conclusione, affinché non cessi mai di essere reinterpretato.

Secondo il parere del drammaturgo e narratore egiziano 'Abdul Mun'im Salim⁹, nelle molteplici riscritture dell'opera, vengono sottolineate in maggior misura le differenze generazionali tra la giovane Desdemona e Otello, l'abuso di potere e la corruzione, in luogo dei conflitti razziali. I contrasti si presentano sotto forma di divari tra le differenti classi sociali nel mondo arabo-islamico, tra poveri e ricchi, oppure sotto forma di dissidi fra i generi. La maggior parte delle performance teatrali sono riconducibili al contesto sociale nel quale esse vengono rappresentate, ponendo in risalto le problematiche del periodo. In queste performance, vi è inoltre la volontà di rendere partecipi gli spettatori, affinché siano stimolati a suggerire soluzioni verosimili alle conflittualità in atto¹⁰. Nel complesso, è lecito affermare che questi autori hanno avuto il merito di rivelare la continua possibilità di reinterpretazione del testo shakespeariano.

Nel riadattamento di Mahmud Isma'il Ğad, intitolato *'Atallah¹¹ (Otello)*, databile alla fine degli anni sessanta, Otello (nominato Atallah) incarna la classe agiata proveniente dalla città, mentre Desdemona (nominata Fatima) è il simbolo del ceto contadino, che a stenti sopravvivere nella misera provincia egiziana. Anche l'*Otello* di Mahmud Isma'il Ğad indossa le vesti del *diverso*, in quanto egli è l'unico borghese a trovarsi in quest'ambientazione rurale, interpretando così una differente tipologia di disuguaglianza sociale. Analogamente all'*Otello* originale, in questo contesto ricorre il motivo della gelosia di Iago (nominato Dahi) e la benevolenza di Cassio (Hassan)¹². La rivisitazione di Mahmud Isma'il Ğad nel 1983 viene adattata anche al cinema, ad opera del regista egiziano 'Atif al-Tayyib¹³.

Oltre alle rivisitazioni teatrali dell'*Otello*, sono stati redatti numerosi romanzi, tra i quali compare quello dell'insigne scrittore palestinese Emile Habibī (1920-1996), intitolato *Al-Wakāi*

*al gharībah fī ikhtifā Saīd Abī al-Nash al-Mutasāil*¹⁴ (*Il Pessottimista*, 1974), già dal titolo viene percepito l'umorismo dell'autore, nel quale pessimismo e comicità convivono. È uno scritto concepito in un contesto politico, ideologico e sociale conflittuale, dimostrazione che anche in tali circostanze la letteratura non cessa di trovare nuovi modi d'espressione. In questo romanzo, il protagonista, un palestinese di nome Sa'id, collabora con il governo israeliano in veste di informatore segreto. Sa'id viene fatto infiltrare in una prigione israeliana tra gli arabi, con il proposito di scoprire i piani di attacco di questi ultimi. Si ritrova così ad impersonare il ruolo di Desdemona, manifestando debolezza ed arrendevolezza; ma contrariamente a quest'ultima lo spirito di Sa'id si trasforma, e da vittima sottomessa agli israeliani, diviene combattivo con il desiderio di riscatto. Una rilettura brillante dell'opera inglese, che ha come scenario il conflitto palestinese e israeliano, a seguito della guerra del 1967.

Le opere appena delineate sono soltanto alcuni esempi della letteratura araba del Novecento influenzate dall'*Otello* di Shakespeare: ve ne sono numerose altre che meriterebbero di essere analizzate, ma per motivi di spazio sono state scelte soltanto alcune, ritenute rilevanti per vari aspetti.

Influssi dell'*Otello* nella letteratura araba del Novecento

In questa sezione saranno presi in esame due romanzi e un racconto, fortemente influenzati dall'*Otello*. In questi scritti il dramma di Shakespeare viene riadattato al contesto storico e culturale arabo del Novecento, nel quale viene accentuato il tema del conflitto. In essi viene colto lo spirito dell'opera a volte ispirandosi, altre attingendo pienamente alle figure e ai dialoghi dell'*Otello*, a cominciare da uno dei più autorevoli studiosi del mondo arabo-islamico, il sudanese Tayyib Sālih, con *Mawsim al-hijrah ilā al-shimāl* (1966), (*La stagione della migrazione a Nord*). Un romanzo o un *bildungsroman*, grazie al quale Tayyib Sālih è stato acclamato da un numero di critici di spicco, come esponente acuto della letteratura araba moderna¹⁵. L'opera appartiene a una vasta serie di scritture novecentesche che trattano del rapporto tra Oriente e Occidente e della complessa interazione tra cultura tradizionale e moderna. Inoltre, il romanzo di Tayyib Sālih è considerato un riadattamento novecentesco dell'*Otello*, con il quale lo studioso sudanese ha un rapporto complesso, dove esercita un ruolo preminente l'identità post-coloniale e i rapporti interrazziali. La studiosa Jyottsna Singh sostiene che a partire dal testo originale e le sue novecentesche riscritture, vi è il proposito di porre al centro le diversità di vario genere e i conflitti razziali, un tema ancora attuale¹⁶.

Il protagonista della storia Mustafa Sa'id, *alter ego* di Otello, racconta la propria vita al narratore. Mustafa nasce nel Karthum (1898), localizzato nel Sudan dove si insedia la colonizzazione degli inglesi; ben presto i 'bianchi' riconoscono l'acuta intelligenza di Mustafa e per questo gli offrono una borsa di studio all'estero. Come Otello, Mustafa è un uomo arabo che in Occidente riscuote grande successo. A Londra Mustafa si svela come 'seduttore', con il suo 'fascino esotico' analogo a quello di Otello. Quest'ultimo conquista Desdemona rievocando le sue avventure, lo si può evincere anche da un dialogo nel quale lo sostiene esplicitamente: 'She lov'd me for the dangers I have passed'. Nell'opera Tayyib Sālih ha il proposito di suggerire l'avvelenamento di Desdemona, conquistata da Otello con la narrazione delle sue gesta eroiche; ma a differenza di Mustafa il suo è un amore sincero come lo sono i suoi racconti. Mustafa invece inventa storie di pura fantasia, grazie alle quali seduce tre donne; alla domanda di una di loro che desidera sapere di che razza è, Mustafa risponde che è come Otello, arabo Africano, facendo leva sul fascino che l'uomo nero esercita sulle donne occidentali¹⁷. Con le sue menzogne il protagonista ha il proposito di 'infettarle' con il 'germe fatale' da cui

egli stesso è stato contagiato dall'Occidente, insinuandosi nelle loro menti. Egli inscena uno stereotipo orientale per farle prima innamorare per poi vendicarsi, facendo così giustizia contro il colonizzatore occidentale, il quale dall'Europa va in Africa per piantare il suo seme. Nei suoi racconti e astuzie analogamente a Iago, la mente di Mustafa si rivela acuta e tagliente come la lama di un coltello¹⁸.

Come Otello, Mustafa indossa le vesti dell'uomo esotico, tuttavia c'è una sostanziale differenza tra i due: per il protagonista di Shakespeare esse costituivano delle virtù, mentre per il personaggio di Tayyib Sālih diventa un'arma. In realtà, Mustafa inscena un esotismo che esiste solo in parte, perché in lui è profondo il legame con un altro personaggio del dramma: Iago. Quest'ultimo è un cinico e freddo manipolatore, i cui stratagemmi hanno lo scopo di placare la sua furia nei confronti di Otello, infettando la sua mente con la menzogna.

Mustafa costituisce un ibrido tra un soggetto coloniale e un soggetto post-coloniale. È differente da Otello, ma al contempo si serve della sua figura per raggiungere i propri scopi¹⁹. Il colonizzatore è simboleggiato dalle donne del nord, le quali una volta abbandonate finiscono per togliersi la vita. Mustafa stesso afferma:

I, over and above everything else, I am a colonizer, I am the intruder whose fate must be decided [...] Yes, my dears, I came as an invader into your very homes: a drop of your poison which you have injected into the veins of history²⁰.

Il veleno e l'infezione sono temi che ricorrono di frequente in *Season*²¹, analogamente a quanto avviene nell'*Otello*, in quest'ultimo anche con il proposito di rievocare l'immagine dell'avvelenamento del pensiero del Moro indotto dall'intrigo di Iago²².

Di notevole interesse è l'incontro fra Mustafa e la donna di nome Jean Morris, quest'ultima non è interessata ai suoi racconti e lo respinge, attirando in maggior misura le sue attenzioni. Il gioco continua tra di essi fino al loro matrimonio; nella loro coppia la donna assume il ruolo dell'Occidente che combatte contro 'l'invasore nero', e fa sì che l'uomo si pieghi al suo volere, fino a trasformarlo in un omicida. Come afferma Mustafa: 'It was as though I were a slave Shahriyar you buy in a market for a dinar'²³. Jean attua una nuova *colonizzazione* sul *sud*, invadendo il territorio di colui che vuole conquistare il suo; essa distrugge i simboli del falso esotismo di Mustafa, come afferma Maurizio Calbi: 'Jean transforms Mustafa himself into a stranger in his own home'²⁴.

La donna lo tradisce facendosi volutamente scoprire, lasciando indizi nella loro casa, tra i quali appare un 'fazzoletto', evidente eco all'*Otello* di Shakespeare. Jean tenta di provocare la gelosia di Mustafa, finché un giorno egli non la ucciderà, rievocando la storia di Otello e divenendo come lui, solo che questa volta Jean-Desdemona è realmente colpevole. In un gioco perverso tra i due, lui finisce per cedere alla richiesta di lei di essere uccisa. Il personaggio di Mustafa è affine a Otello per l'amore che prova per la sua consorte, d'altra parte rivela la propria natura maligna come Iago, in quanto la sua mente ha insinuato in sé stessa il pensiero dell'omicidio e in seguito del suicidio. L'omicidio diventa simbolo dei conflitti tra Oriente e Occidente, tra uomo e donna, tra nord e sud.

Mustafa viene processato per aver assassinato Jean Morris e per aver spinto al suicidio altre tre donne. La sua difesa sostiene che è stato devastato dalla civiltà occidentale; non è stato lui ad uccidere, piuttosto 'the germ of deadly disease that assailed them a thousand years ago'²⁵.

Ed è questo il momento nel quale il protagonista individua il proprio errore, analogamente a quanto aveva compiuto Otello, al contempo egli nega di essere come Otello, riconoscendo in lui un personaggio falso: 'I am no Othello, Othello was a lie'²⁶. Mustafa respinge l'idea secondo la quale egli avrebbe assimilato la nozione che il *nord* ha di lui, sottolineando la sua concezione

di Otello come un prodotto della mente degli occidentali:

It occurred to me that I should stand up and say to them: This is untrue, a fabrication. It was I who killed them. I am a desert of thirst. I am no Othello. I am a lie. Why didn't you sentence me to be hanged and so kill the lie?²⁷.

Egli dichiara di essere colpevole in quanto certo di non essere un'innocente vittima delle macchinazioni degli europei, così avvicinandosi al senso di giustizia che pervadeva l'animo di Otello. In un secondo momento affermerà che è un angelo venuto in Occidente per vendicarsi dell'invasore; perciò inietta il suo veleno attraverso l'omicidio e il suicidio, come strumento di rivalsa; al contempo il suo personaggio incarna una vittima, frutto dei conflitti in atto fra Occidente e Oriente, così come lo è stato Otello.

Tayyib Sālih attraverso il suo romanzo comunica che dai tempi di Shakespeare la situazione socio-culturale non è mutata, la discriminazione razziale, la repulsione e l'attrazione verso l'uomo esotico ancora pervade l'animo dell'uomo occidentale. Mustafa viene condannato e dopo aver scontato la pena fa ritorno nel paese d'origine, vivendo in incognito in un villaggio. Si sposa con una donna del luogo di nome Hosna Bint Mahmud. Nel villaggio il narratore fa la conoscenza di Mustafa, l'unico nel quale non riconosce i tratti di un agricoltore dalle umili origini. A seguito di vari incontri e scontri tra i due uomini, Mustafa rivela al narratore la propria reale identità e decide di togliersi la vita. Si getta nelle acque del Nilo per non essere più ritrovato, poiché non può più convivere con la propria falsità; come nell'*Otello* il motivo del suicidio si presenta al termine dell'opera come uno strumento di autopunizione. A seguito della morte di Mustafa, si scopre che egli aveva conservato un pezzo di Occidente, una stanza segreta che conteneva libri e oggetti condotti con sé dall'Inghilterra. Mustafa dimostra che in fondo nonostante lo scontro con il colonizzatore, egli aveva ancora bisogno della sua presenza culturale. Era un ibrido: non era più il sudanese partito tanti anni addietro, e nemmeno un inglese, sentendosi estraneo ad entrambe le culture.

Nello scritto di Tayyib Sālih viene introdotto un altro capitolo rilevante, incentrato sulle conflittualità presenti in una società patriarcale, un tema che sul finire dell'opera diviene centrale. A seguito del suicidio di Mustafa, sua moglie Hosna si trova ad essere costretta a sposarsi con un uomo in età avanzata. Non potendo convivere con questa condizione, Hosna decide di uccidere il promesso sposo, per poi togliersi la vita. Non si è a conoscenza delle reali motivazioni che l'hanno spinta a compiere il suicidio, se lo ha compiuto per il senso di colpa verso l'uomo al quale ha tolto la vita, oppure per la disperazione di dover vivere in una società che l'avrebbe isolata e umiliata.

È lecito affermare che mediante questa storia Tayyib Sālih ha il proposito di denunciare la grave condizione femminile nel Sudan, tutt'ora ancorato a tradizioni appartenenti al passato. Esaminando più a fondo, anche nell'*Otello* scorgiamo le conflittualità di genere, attraverso l'immagine della donna che è subordinata rispetto alla supremazia maschile. Il discorso di Desdemona proferito in presenza del senato di Venezia ne costituisce un valido esempio²⁸.

Tornando a Tayyib Sālih, il narratore, un uomo vissuto a lungo in Inghilterra, mediante i racconti di Mustafa comprende quanto in realtà la sua terra avesse assorbito la cultura occidentale. Nel suo animo avviene una lacerazione, egli si sente perduto tra il nord che ha lasciato e il sud che tenta di ritrovare; un dolore acuitizzato dalla perdita di Hosna della quale si era innamorato e che egli non ha avuto il coraggio di proteggere. Emulando Mustafa, il narratore ha intenzione di togliersi la vita gettandosi nelle acque del Nilo: 'I found I was half away between north and south. I was unable to continue, unable to return.'²⁹. Quest'esperienza gli fa comprendere che non è pronto a rinunciare alla vita, perciò chiede soccorso salvandosi all'ultimo.

Sul finire del romanzo il linguaggio è fortemente ispirato all'espressività teatrale; in realtà questo tipo di narrazione è presente lungo tutta l'opera, e si ripropone verso il termine, creando un ulteriore nesso con l'*Otello* di Shakespeare. La presenza del teatro è anche una riflessione sull'arte, sull'artista e sulle sue possibilità. Per avviarsi verso la conclusione, nella *Stagione della migrazione a Nord* trovano raffigurazione i conflitti razziali, di genere e tra Oriente e Occidente. I rapporti tra nord e sud sono basati sull'illusione di conoscere l'altro, analogamente a quanto avviene nei rapporti tra uomo e donna. Viene illustrato un favoloso Oriente che nella realtà non esiste, accolto dal protagonista e inscenato per l'Occidente, così sostituendo l'esotico presente nell'*Otello* shakespeariano³⁰.

Altra scrittrice considerevole che subisce l'influenza dell'opera shakespeariana è Samar Attar, di origine siriana, la quale rielabora l'*Otello* nel suo romanzo di formazione dal titolo *Lina: Lawhat fatat dimashqiyyah* (1982)³¹. Lo scritto viene tradotto in lingua inglese nel 1994 con il titolo *Lina: a Portrait of a Damascene Girl*. Mediante l'opera di Samar Attar l'*Otello* viene rivisitato dalla prospettiva femminile di Desdemona, il cui personaggio è impersonato da Lina. Attraverso quest'ultima sono rappresentate le conflittualità fra uomo e donna radicate in una società fortemente patriarcale, dove vi è il desiderio di emancipazione da parte delle giovani generazioni femminili. Un'ulteriore collegamento con l'opera del drammaturgo inglese è la gelosia morbosa del fidanzato di Lina, simbolo di oppressione maschile.

Lina è una giovane donna che in una recita scolastica ricopre il ruolo di Desdemona, in un certo senso incarnando il suo personaggio anche nella realtà, quale emblema di femminilità aggredita dalla prepotenza maschile³². Nell'inscenare la rappresentazione Lina ha un monologo interiore, in cui ripercorre con la mente l'esperienza dolorosa vissuta da Desdemona, confrontandola con la propria e infine identificandosi con essa. Lina immagina il suo fidanzato nelle vesti di Otello, il quale esercita su di lei attrazione e al contempo repulsione; quest'ultimo raffigura l'alterità del Moro, rievocando la sua figura lungo tutto il romanzo.

[...] his jealous eyes haunted her again. Distorted reflections of his image poured on her like small moons, the boy who followed her on the stairs with a bunch of daisies in his hand begging her for a kiss, the boy who told the neighbourhood boys that she was his beloved and stood under her balcony in the sun, in the rain, in the wind as if he were a statue, the boy who threatened to strangle her and to strangle himself if he saw her on the arm of another man and wrote her broken poems, the boy who sent her a bad translation of Othello and once in a while gave her yellow books³³.

Desdemona diviene simbolo di una donna tenace che si ribella al potere maschile. Un'opposizione che ha luogo in un contesto sociale che non concede libertà alla figura femminile e che come punizione la isola per la sua ribellione. Attraverso il monologo interiore, Lina esplora il sentimento di amore e odio verso il fidanzato. Nella sua mente viene dipinta un'immagine che li raffigura come animali, dove lei incarna 'a white ewe' (un agnello bianco) e lui 'a black ram' (un ariete nero); nel testo le descrizioni animali e umane dei due personaggi sono fuse assieme, richiamando di nuovo l'*Otello*. Un esempio concreto è il discorso di Iago in cui afferma: 'You'll have your daughter cover'd with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you; you'll have coursers for cousins, and gennets for Germans'. (I. i. 110-113)

Lina adotta il monologo interiore per riflettere, visto il suo estremo isolamento. Si immedesima nel ruolo di Desdemona proiettando la sua storia nella propria vita, così riuscendo a cogliere le ingiustizie sociali che la circondano. Ripensa alle donne di sua conoscenza, anche loro costrette a subire la prepotenza maschile. Lina medita sull'ipotesi avanzata dallo studioso arabo Nasib Nashawi³⁴, secondo il quale sussistono analogie tra l'*Otello* e un componimento del

poeta siriano Dik al-Gin (IX secolo circa). Quest'ultimo racconta di un arabo che si innamora della sua schiava cristiana, il quale la uccide dopo averla sposata, accecato dalla gelosia causata da un perfido intrigo. Ironicamente Lina sostiene che la comunanza tra i testi dei due autori è 'l'appartenenza etnica', ovvero entrambi sono figure maschili riconducibili a culture che pongono al centro l'uomo e il suo volere, con le sue ossessioni, diffidenze e gelosie.

Quando Lina riflette sulla gelosia morbosa del fidanzato, rievoca le parole di Otello prima di uccidere Desdemona, ripercorrendo la scena nella mente³⁵. Questo pensiero lo paragona con la storia-cornice delle *Mille e una notte*³⁶, della quale Lina rammenta l'ingiusta gelosia del sultano Shahriyar verso la fedele consorte Shahrazad. A questa meditazione si aggiunge un'altra riflessione, il ricordo della poesia Udhri³⁷, che ha radici antiche nella tradizione letteraria araba, e come è ben noto celebra l'amore platonico. Tematica presente anche nella prosa araba classica, che ha suggestionato numerosi mistici e filosofi islamici. Del genere poetico Udhri la protagonista ritiene ironicamente che gli amanti non si strangolino soltanto perché non si presenta loro l'opportunità³⁸.

La scrittrice Samar Attar aveva impersonato il ruolo di Desdemona in una rappresentazione teatrale all'università di Damasco, condizione che le aveva fatto riflettere sul ruolo della donna nella società. Anni dopo avrebbe catturato l'essenza di quei momenti, inserendoli nel suo romanzo. In sottofondo vi è la critica alla media borghesia degli anni cinquanta, alla quale essa appartiene e di cui disapprova i valori morali. Inoltre Attar non tollera la violenza in qualunque forma si manifesti, non ammette l'inautenticità dei valori dei quali la società e il sistema politico del suo paese sono permeati. Questo dissenso è espresso anche dalla protagonista del romanzo, Lina-Desdemona, che si allontana dalla famiglia e dalle amicizie, per emigrare in Occidente (Parigi), alla ricerca di un luogo utopico nel quale potersi esprimere liberamente³⁹.

L'opera di Samar Attar tratta della vita di Lina dalla nascita fino all'età adulta, fornendo dettagliate descrizioni di carattere etnografico e ponendo in rilievo non solo le conflittualità di genere, ma anche le problematiche politiche, nello specifico sull'assenza di libertà e di democrazia nel suo paese. Sono posti in evidenza così i conflitti religiosi in atto, le disuguaglianze fra le varie classi sociali e in ambito più ristretto i contrasti familiari. Per questa ragione il testo non è stato edito in Siria fino al 1997, mentre era stato già pubblicato e tradotto negli altri paesi. Samar Attar ha delineato non solo le problematiche di una donna nel corso della sua vita, ma quelle di un'intera era storica, focalizzandosi sugli anni cinquanta e sessanta, su conflitti tuttora presenti in Siria. Ha ricevuto prestigiosi riconoscimenti letterari, come il premio internazionale Gibran conferito a Sidney, come miglior romanzo dell'anno 1986.

L'ultima scrittrice araba presa in considerazione è Salwa Bakr, di origine egiziana, che attraverso le sue opere ha saputo creare un'autentica voce fuori dal coro. È riuscita ad emergere nel panorama intellettuale egiziano, dominato dalle figure maschili che marginalizzano le scrittrici. Non di rado la critica letteraria egiziana e in modo più ampio quella araba, etichetta le opere redatte da donne come letteratura femminista, oppure femminile, non analizzando gli scritti in termini oggettivi e critici⁴⁰. Da qui il passo verso la comprensione delle conflittualità di genere che sono impresse nei componimenti di Salwa Bakr è breve, ed è questa prospettiva che assume la sua acquisizione dell'*Otello* Shakespeariano. Nel suo riadattamento l'accento viene posto sul personaggio femminile di Desdemona, analogamente a quanto è stato compiuto da Samar Attar, con la quale ha molte corrispondenze. Salwa Bakr nella raccolta di brevi scritti *The Wives of Men and Other Stories*, include la storia *The Sorrows of Desdemona*, tradotta in inglese nel 1992. Questa narra di una giovane ragazza di nome Muna, che in una recita teatrale scolastica dell'*Otello*, sostiene il ruolo di Desdemona. Muna viene istruita dalla sua professoressa la Signora Inayat, che le espone gli stati d'animo di Desdemona e la istruisce

affinché interpreti fedelmente la sua parte:

Mrs. Inayat came up to her and touched her head with the palms of her hands, causing her to bend forward, and said in her English that seemed as though it had been running in her blood for generations, 'No, not like that, Muna. Desdemona couldn't be like that in this situation. Be more frightened, more submissive and miserable, with your head like this - bend forward'⁴¹.

Nel monologo interiore di Muna, traspare il conflitto con l'autoritarismo maschile e patriarcale, e si rivela mediante la contrapposizione tra la sua personale visione di ciò che sostiene debba essere la condotta naturale per una donna, e quello che le viene indicato dalla Signora Inayat. Quest'ultima la ragguaglia su come sottomettersi all'uomo, rievocando nella mente della giovane ragazza la sottomissione della madre al marito. Pertanto Muna riflette sul rapporto che intercorre tra i suoi genitori, una relazione di disparità simile a quella tra Otello e Desdemona. Nella recita la maestra di Muna le consiglia di seguire Otello come un cane che segue il padrone, esponendo quello che secondo lei è il sentimento di Desdemona verso il marito:

She exclaimed in a loud, excited voice, 'That was what Desdemona's feelings were - a mixture of fear, pain and contempt. She was suffering just like a sparrow that is incapable of battling against the wind. Do you understand? Listen: human beings can express such pain in many ways. Now close your eyes and for three minutes think about Desdemona's sorrows and how you'd express such a pain'⁴².

Attraverso il monologo interiore di Muna, la sua mente viene trasportata altrove, dove ha l'opportunità di riflettere, e associare le ingiustizie perpetuate da Otello verso Desdemona al modo in cui la sua famiglia non ripone fiducia in lei, rendendola una vittima e mortificandola. È chiaro quindi come Muna s'identifichi con il personaggio di Desdemona, immaginando di essere come lei:

Muna too closed her eyes and thought about Desdemona's sorrows, saying to herself that her young brother would open the door and scream "Muna come!" He would point to his throat with a quick gesture as though someone were cutting the throat of a chicken and would stick his tongue out gloatingly. As soon as the door closed her mother would be in the hallway, meeting her with abuse, and she would say that she had been at school in the group taking coaching in physics, and her father would shout out that he had the curriculum of the group and that there were no classes on Tuesday. She would go on swearing to him that she was telling the truth, and he would shout and say he wasn't a liar, then he would go up to her and give her two slaps across the face. Of course as usual she wouldn't cry; she would look at him with contempt and her mother would drag her away by the hand, weeping and cursing fate which had afflicted her with daughters. In a histrionic movement her father would approach her in an attempt to strike her again, but her mother would entreat him by the beloved Prophet and his own virtuous mother not to do so, and she would heap more abuse on Muna, reminding her that her father was a sick man and that she'd bring about his death by such behaviour⁴³.

L'atteggiamento oppresso di Muna corrisponde al comportamento che la Signora Inayat le indica come conforme al sentimento di Desdemona. Muna trova nel proprio animo le stesse emozioni che Desdemona aveva percepito di fronte al rancore ingiusto di Otello.

Rispetto all'opera di Tayyib Sālih, dove l'accento viene posto sui conflitti razziali, di identità nazionale, dove ricorrono le opposizioni sorte fra 'nord' e 'sud', in Salwa Bakr viene posta in rilievo l'*alterità* della donna, prendendo in esame le conflittualità di genere, a cui Muna tenta di dare risposta, in una società fortemente patriarcale⁴⁴. Attraverso questa storia privata, mediante la figura simbolica di Desdemona, Salwa Bakr delinea un conflitto pubblico tutt'oggi di grande rilevanza in Egitto e in modo più vasto nel mondo arabo-islamico. La scrittrice approfondisce il tema della dominazione della donna da parte dell'uomo, mediante l'acquisizione del personaggio shakespeariano di Desdemona. Secondo il suo parere l'*Otello* rappresenta perfettamente il rapporto che intercorre tra uomo e donna nella società araba. In risposta all'oppressione dell'autorità maschile, vi è la sottomissione femminile, logica conseguenza del ruolo assegnatole dalla società. Analogamente alla madre della protagonista, la quale non ha la forza di ribellarsi, perciò induce la figlia a sottomettersi ai costumi e ai ruoli sociali prestabiliti.

In conclusione problematiche e conflitti di varia natura stimolano gli scrittori arabi del Novecento ad acquisire e rielaborare l'*Otello* shakespeariano. In particolar modo gli autori presi in considerazione sono spinti dal proposito di rivisitare i personaggi di Otello e di Desdemona facendone lo specchio delle conflittualità in atto ai nostri tempi, mettendo in "scena" problematiche politiche, approfondendo il complesso rapporto tra oriente e occidente e illustrando lo scontro tra culture e quello tra i generi. Gli scrittori arabi sottolineano la grande attualità delle tematiche presenti nel capolavoro shakespeariano e le infinite possibilità di rielaborazione e di sviluppo dell'opera, che tutt'oggi suscita un vivo interesse.

Per motivi editoriali non è stato possibile utilizzare sistemi di trascrizione scientifica per i nomi e termini in lingua araba.

(Endnotes)

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8 L'*Otello* ad opera di 'Abd al-Karim Birshid è intitolato *Othello, Horses and Gunpowder*. Il titolo originale è: 'Utayl wal-khayl wal-barud, Casablanca, Al-Thaqafah al-Jadidah, 1975

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18 Tayyib Sālih, *ibid.*, 22

19 Desirée Pasa, "'Io non sono Otello, Otello era una bugia': scritture interculturali Shakespeariane nell'Africa nel Novecento", in *Scorci improvvisi di altri orizzonti, Sguardi interculturali su letterature e civiltà di lingua inglese*, USA, Lulu Enterprises, 2008, 258

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21 I seguenti passi ne sono un esempio: 'You, my lady, may not know, but you, like Carnarvon – when he entered Tutankhamen's tomb – have been infected with a deadly disease which has come from you know not where and which will bring about your distruction, be in sooner or later.'. Tayyib Sālih, *Idem.*, 39

22 *Othello*, Scena II, i, 304.

23 Tayyib Sālih, *op. cit.*, 34

24 Maurizio Calbi, *op. cit.*, 349

25 Tayyib Sālih, *op. cit.*, 32-33

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27 Tayyib Sālih, *op. cit.*, 33

28 *Othello*, I, iii. 179-187.

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32 Simone Rovida, *op. cit.*, 258

33 Samar Attar, *op. cit.*, 163

34 Lo studioso Nasib Nashawi negli anni ottanta aveva avvalorato l'idea secondo la quale un componimento di Dik al-Gin (IX sec.) aveva influito sull'opera shakespeariana, dove effettivamente si riscontrano numerose analogie con l'*Otello*. Nasib Nashawi, "Utayl Shakespeare wa-Dik al-Jinn al-Humsi: Liqa' al-Ahdath wal-shakhsiyyat", In *Colloque International de littérature comparée dans les pays arabes*, Alger, Office des Publications Universitaires, 14-15 mai, 1983, 161-185

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42 *Ibid.*, 30-31

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The Roman Civil Wars in the Anonymous *Caesar's Revenge*

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The anonymous *Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey or Caesar's Revenge* (hereafter *Caesar's Revenge*) was entered in the Stationers' Register on 5 June 1606, published in the same year and reprinted one year later, but probably written in 1595.¹ Although the title page claims it to have been 'Privately acted by the students of Trinity College in Oxford', no record of performance survives. The play grimly chronicles the events of the Roman civil wars from Pharsalus to Philippi. It must be included in that class of Elizabethan plays about the Roman civil wars, which

exude a specific ideological content, bordering on didactic ostentation. Ancient history is offered as an epitome of *exempla execranda*, aptly distanced by virtue of their remote origin but effective as unequivocal warnings for the future of England against possible relapses in the internecine struggles which had preceded the establishment of Tudor monarchy.²

This conforms to the patently conservative ideological framework that informed Elizabethan historiography. One of the main goals of most Elizabethan historians was the censure of civil war and rebellion, both seen as extremely pernicious fruits of unbridled ambition, 'the root of all vices, and mother of all mischiefs'.³ This conservative ideological agenda was inevitably influenced by the fear—which tormented the English people for the entire duration of Elizabeth I's reign—that a new war of succession might erupt at the death of the childless queen, repeating the horrors of the Wars of the Roses. These anxieties obviously worsened as the queen aged, still obstinately persisting in not naming an heir. For the Elizabethans, order and peace had to be protected at all costs. To this effect, history was invested with a clear symbolic and didactic function, following Cicero's definition of *historia* as 'testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis'.⁴ This approach to history obviously placed far more importance on the lessons that could be drawn from the past than on historical truth.

The demonization of internecine conflicts also permeates—as a glance at their titles reveals—two popular Elizabethan compilations dealing with Roman history written by Richard Reynoldes⁵ and William Fulbecke⁶ as well as William Barker's translation of Appian's *Civil Wars* (the main source of *Caesar's Revenge*), published in 1578. Its English title reads as follows:

*An Ancient History and Exquisite Chronicle of the Roman Wars Both Civil and Foreign
... in Which is Declared: Their Greedy Desire to Conquer Others. Their Mortal Malice*

*to Destroy Themselves. Their Seeking of Matters to Make Wars Abroad. Their Picking of Quarrels to Fall out at Home. All the Degrees of Sedition and All the Effects of Ambition. A Firm Determination of Fate Through All the Changes of Fortune. And Finally an Evident Demonstration That People's Rule Must Give Place and Princes' Power Prevail.*⁷

This title leaves no doubt about the message Barker meant to convey through his translation. His perspective was almost completely shared by the author of *Caesar's Revenge*, even though he had probably read Appian in Greek or, perhaps, in Latin and not English translation.⁸ Many times the characters of the tragedy deplore the internecine conflict and its ruinous consequences on their country. Cicero enters the stage complaining about 'how civil broiles have torn our State: / And private strife has wrought a public woe'.⁹ Far more surprisingly, even Caesar, the winner of Pharsalus, later gives vent to his regret about the conflict. Left alone on stage, the Roman general hears 'a hoarse and heavy doleful voice' (1.2.222): it is the voice of Rome, his country, his beloved mother shedding bitter tears. This suffuses Caesar's soul with a deep sense of sadness, arousing his bitter repentance: every blow delivered against the enemy was actually a wound inflicted upon the tender womb of his country; his triumph is in fact her ruin. This fratricidal struggle has perversely trampled on every bond, even the sacred one of blood: 'Here lieth one that's butchered by his sire / And here the son was his old father's death: / Both slew unknowing, both unknown are slain' (1.2.227-29), complains Caesar in his monologue—echoing a passage from William Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part 3*¹⁰—reaching the painful awareness that the only actual source of all this suffering was ambition: 'O that ambition should such mischief work / Or mean men die for great men's proud desire' (1.2.230-31).

However, there exists a crucial difference between the perspective implied in the title of Barker's translation and the one informing *Caesar's Revenge*. The future coming of an absolute monarch, an emperor capable of appeasing civil turmoil and restoring peace, is not even remotely hinted at in the play, in line with what happens in other Elizabethan plays about the Roman civil wars, but in contrast with what generally happens both in many Elizabethan chronicle plays¹¹ and, curiously, in John Lydgate's *The Serpent of Division* (1422, aptly reissued in 1590), his only prose work as well as the most detailed treatment of the figure of Caesar in medieval English literature.¹² The absence of a positive prospect in the happy and peaceful Augustan empire is a crucial element adding to the atmosphere of profound pessimism permeating the play.

The tragedy is dominated by the allegorical and choric figure of Discord, the supreme puppet-master in the microcosm of the play. Its speeches between acts clearly seek to underline the scope of the uncontrollable chaos brought about by this series of intestine conflicts. The extraordinary abundance of images of violence, blood, death and destruction with which the tragedy is interspersed also contributes to the same effect. Discord opens the play with the Lucan-like description of the plain of Pharsalus reddened by Roman blood and covered with corpses to the extent that 'The earth that's wont to be a tomb for men / Is now entombed with carcasses of men' (1.1.4-5).¹³ Discord's first monologue closes with the exhortation to the Furies to urge Rome's self-destruction (1.1.34-38). Basically, Discord has abandoned the infernal abysses with the unique purpose of enjoying the fratricidal conflict and the subsequent collapse of Rome, as if that war was just an amusing puppet-show:

O how it joys my discord-thirsting thoughts
To see them wait, that whilom flowed in bliss,
To see like banners unlike quarrels have

DOMENICO LOVASCIO

And Roman weapons sheathed in Roman blood.
For this I left the deep infernal shades
And passed the sad Avernus' ugly jaws
And in the world came I being Discord hight,
Discord the daughter of the grisly night,
To make the world a hell of plagues and woes. (2.1.626-34)

The idea that the Roman Republic, impenetrable to external threats, could only fall by turning her weapons against herself had been a *topos* much loved by Roman historians, which perfectly suited the Elizabethan ideological agenda as a *caveat*, a meaningful precedent to be constantly kept in mind.

Discord does not just conjure up images of devastation: it is, in fact, the ultimate origin of the paroxysm of violence that permeates the play, urging Romans to revenge, bloodshed and massacre through what resembles a demonic possession.¹⁴ The cases of Cassius on one side and Antony on the other are emblematic. The latter openly expresses his longing for the destruction that will follow before the battle of Philippi (4.4.2110-25) and during the fight he asks Nemesis to make his sword the instrument of his 'furious baleful ire' (5.1.2389-94). Cassius, on the other hand, is even more obsessed than Antony. His sadistic enjoyment of violence and his thirst for blood unequivocally make him the armed wing of Discord (5.1.2201-5). As a consequence of Discord's demonic influence, the world becomes, as Andrew Hadfield observes, an earthly version of hell,¹⁵ where violence breeds violence and no divine justice seems to be operating: 'They lie that say in heaven there is a power / That for to wreck the sins of guilty men, / Holds in his hand a fierce three-forked dart' (1.4.345-47), Cato's broken-hearted son cries out after the Pompeians' final defeat.

The atmosphere is made even grimmer by the awareness that the only instance of pacification in the play (between Antony and Octavian) is a mere temporary truce, instrumental in the following vengeance exacted on Brutus and Cassius for Caesar's murder, and by the patent failure of Stoicism to face the situation.¹⁶ Cato himself, traditionally regarded as an unparalleled symbol of Stoicism, decides to commit suicide, deploring 'that black and cursèd day, / When Caesar conquered in Pharsalia' (2.5.1083-84). His act exudes acquiescence (2.5.1129-35), joined with an ill-concealed desire for personal glory: this can be construed as the sign of an unavowable obsession with his public image, which inevitably invalidates the scope and value of Stoicism as a way to cope with chaos. Before stabbing himself, he cries out: 'Yet will not I his conquest glorify: / My overthrow shall ne'er his triumph grace, / For by my death to the world I'll make that known, / No hand could conquer Cato but his own' (2.5.1086-89). Not even his son understands or approves of his father's choice: at first he deems him a coward, then he explains his action only as a consequence of his desire not to be forced to suffer the shame of Caesar's triumph (2.5.1137-43). But Cato's son later also discredits any chance of redemption offered by Stoicism once and for all. While dying from the wounds received on the battlefield of Philippi, he violently rails against virtue, accusing it of being nothing more than a beautiful lie at the mercy of Fortune, the only entity actually controlling human events:

O virtue, whom philosophy extols,
Thou art no essence but a naked name,
Bond-slave to fortune, weak, and of no power
To succour them which always honoured thee:
Witness my father's and mine own sad death
Who for our country spent our latest breath. (5.1.2338-43)

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Later, a similar feeling of impotence in the face of Fortune and fate is experienced by Cassius: 'In vain, in vain, O Cassius all in vain! / 'Tis heaven and destiny thou strivest against' (5.1.2405-6). Any invocation to heaven is useless, which necessarily heightens the deep sense of pessimism emanating from the tragedy.

No shelter can be found from the horrors unleashed by this endless succession of struggles between countrymen, friends, brothers: even the sun must look for a hiding place to avoid witnessing such a spectacle (5.1.2396-2403). Nobody can emerge a winner from this grim and ceaseless sequence of battles: no light comes to shine through this night of massacres. The only winner, the only one who accomplishes its goal—the deflagration of an entire world—is Discord, who at the end of the play stands gloating over the massacre it has produced:

Ay, now my longing hopes have their desire.
The world is nothing but a messy heap
Of bodies slain, the sea a lake of blood. . . .
Hell and Elysium must be dug in one,
And both will be too little to contain
Numberless numbers of afflicted ghosts
That I myself have tumbling thither sent. (5.1.2531-33, 2541-44)

Discord is completely indifferent to human affairs. It does not support any of the parties and its only, blood-curdling goal is the creation of a state of total disorder and permanent carnage. As a consequence, there is no reason why it should applaud the ultimate revenge of Caesar's ghost:

Caesar, I pitied not thy tragic end:
Nor tyrant's daggers sticking in thy heart,
Nor do I that thy death's with like repaid;
But that thy death so many deaths hath made!
Now cloyed with blood, I'll hie me down below
And laugh to think I caused such endless woe. (5.1.2549-54)

It is quite clear that Discord does not believe in the existence of any principle of justice or ultimate goal in human events. These just repeat cyclically, always identical to themselves: 'Though Caesar be as great as great may be, / Yet Pompey once was e'en as great as he' (2.1.617-19), Discord sneeringly remarks.

Therefore, history in *Caesar's Revenge* is bound to end in tragedy, being depicted as nothing more than a cyclical and endless sequence of civil wars in a world reduced to 'nothing but a messy heap' (5.1.2532). The attention is not on individuals as much as on the pattern traced by the succession of their destinies: the dreary series of their rises and falls generates a painful feeling of pessimism, which is in turn intensified by the heavy stress on the influence of Fortune on human affairs and on the vanity of earthly conquests, which reveals the play's affinity to the *de casibus* literature,¹⁷ whose most emblematic English examples are Lydgate's *The Fall of Princes* (1431-39) and the *Mirror for Magistrates*.

The widespread fatalism of *Caesar's Revenge* constantly permeates and ultimately blurs its political message. The Pompeians are obsessed with the centrality of Fortune in earthly matters. The emblem of their resigned submission to Fortune¹⁸ is surprisingly their leader and inspirer himself. Despite his *cognomen* (Magnus), he seems to possess very little greatness in the play: his behaviour shows, if anything, that he managed to be 'Great' only 'while Fortune

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did him raise' (1.1.22).¹⁹ Dejected at the unavoidability of his destiny and the sudden reversal of his condition (2.1.727-28), discouraged at the overwhelming power of Fortune and crushed by the insufferable shame of defeat, he never seems able to react: every word, every gesture of his is suffused with an excruciating sense of resignation and bitterness. His first desire after Pharsalus is to escape 'into some desert place, / Some uncouth, unfrequented craggy rock, / Where . . . [his] name and state was ne'er heard', in order to hide 'from face and view of men' (1.1.62-82). More than once he just wails about the repercussions this defeat will have on his reputation rather than on the disastrous consequences of the war (1.1.57-66) and he is devastated by the awareness that 'Reproach is death to him that lived in fame' (1.1.94).

Pompey's insistence on the actions and cruelty of Fortune and the 'envious heavens' (1.5.447), which he repeatedly blames for his unhappiness (1.1.163-64), is almost morbid. His aggrieved description of the unexpected change in his relationship with Fortune almost inspires a feeling akin to tenderness in the reader:

Fifty-eight years in fortune's *sweet soft lap*
Have I been *lulled asleep* with *pleasant joys*.
Me hath she *dandled* in her *folding arms*
And fed my hopes with prosperous events.
She crowned my *cradle* with success and honour:
And shall disgrace await my hapless hearse? (1.1.131-36, emphasis mine)

The concentration in only three lines of several words and phrases pertaining to the semantic field of maternity reveals a great deal about the personality of Pompey, clearly wrong-footed by the repudiation of his once solicitous, nurturing mother.

The microcosm of the play appears, if possible, even gloomier since conflicts are shown to spring mainly from personal rather than political motivations. This is the case, for instance, of Cassius, who is thirsty for Caesar's blood:

I'll be the man that shall this task perform.
Cassius hath vowed it to dead Pompey's soul;
Cassius hath vowed it to afflicted Rome:
Cassius hath vowed it: witness heaven and earth! (3.1.1191-94)

The obsessive and solemn anaphora of the mantra 'Cassius hath vowed it' clearly underscores his personal desire for revenge: the bloody smugness which Cassius and all the Pompeians exhibit first in their fantasising on the tyrant's death and then in the acting out of their purpose (3.3.1427-28, 3.5.1535-41, 1544, 1563-66) obviously weakens the legitimacy of their claims. In Cassius's view, Caesar is a tyrant who has gone so far as to suck his fellow countrymen's blood like a sort of vampire. In lines which seem to borrow the central image of Caesar's stony heart either from Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia* (1594) or from the *Mirror for Magistrates*,²⁰ Cassius ragingly expresses his violent desire to stab Caesar in order to make him spit all that blood back:

If it be true that furies' quenchless thirst
Is pleased with quaffing of ambitious blood,
Then all you devils whet my poniard's point
And I will broach you a bloodsucking heart
(Which full of blood, must blood store to you yield)
Were it a pierce to flint or marble stone.

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Why so it is, for Caesar's heart's a stone,
Else would be movèd with my country's moan. (3.5.1577-84)

The 'bloodsucking heart' Cassius attributes to Caesar stands in stark contrast to the image Decius Brutus will use in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599) to interpret Calpurnia's dream as meaning that 'from you great Rome shall suck / Reviving blood',²¹ which casts on Caesar those traits commonly associated with the sovereign in the Tudor age 'as both father and nursing mother of the people'.²² Cassius's thirst for blood is absolutely inextinguishable, as is demonstrated by the playwright's decision to appoint him (and not Decius as the sources would have it) as the man instructed to go to Caesar's house and bring him to the Senate. His obsession borders on the grotesque in the stabbing scene—opened by the general and feverish cry 'Hold down the tyrant, stab him to the death' (3.6.1694)—when Cassius reveals how the silent penetration of the daggers in Caesar's defenceless flesh is transfigured in his ear as a sweet melody he had been desiring to hear for a very long time:

Now doth the music play, and this the song
That Cassius' heart hath thirsted for so long:
And now my poniard in this mazing sound
Must strike that touch that must his life confound.
Stab on! Stab on! Thus should your poniards play
A loud deep note upon this trembling key. (3.6.1695-1700)

As regards Brutus, an excessive desire for personal glory motivates him, deeply clashing with his republican claims. He conceives the assassination as a watershed between his former and future lives (3.3.1420). His selfish desire to see his name associated with this grim enterprise, this unspeakable 'deed',²³ will end up overshadowing any other possible reason underlying his decision to murder Caesar. However, more than his yearning for glory, it is Brutus's ingratitude towards Caesar that chiefly throws a dark light on him. Although Caesar spared his life, Brutus is so convinced of having acted for the good of Rome and with the gods' blessing that he feels no doubt or guilt and kisses his own hand after the assassination, thereby foregrounding the accomplished enterprise. He obsessively insists on an etymological figure based on words derived from the Germanic root associated with action: 'I, that before feared not to *do* the *deed*, / Shall never now repent it being *done*. . . . / I kiss thy hand for *doing* such a *deed*' (4.2.1943-44, 1947, my emphasis). He will begin experiencing the first hesitations and ominous presentiments only a few moments before the battle of Philippi (5.1.2276-80).

Besides, as concerns the murders of both Pompey and Caesar, the main focus is not on their political motives or consequences but on the ingratitude that caused them: 'What, Brutus too? Nay, nay, then let me die; / Nothing wounds deeper than ingratitude,' (3.8.1727-28) cried Caesar while being stabbed. Brutus's is therefore here as in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* 'the most unkindest cut of all'.²⁴ Octavian will later refer to Caesar's unworthy assassins as to a few 'thankless men' (4.1.1884) who, in return for the appointment as proconsuls, repaid him with death. Caesar's ghost will later add to it, accusing the 'ungrateful Brutus' (5.1.2282) face to face and calling him 'Accursèd traitor! Damnèd homicide!' (5.1.2294). This widespread insistence on the concepts of betrayal and ingratitude, already alluded to in relation to Pompey's homicide—a 'most unworthy and ungrateful act' (2.4.990) in Trebonius's words—, mirrors a political world where personal bonds are the real foundation of the political and social hierarchy, thereby making loyalty to a leader a political virtue and ingratitude a serious threat to the *status quo*.²⁵ The sharp censure of ingratitude roots the play even further in its historical context, since

ingratitude was for the Elizabethans—in Thomas Elyot’s words—‘the most damnable vice and most against justice’,²⁶ in a view inherited from both the classical and the medieval tradition. At the same time, the insistence on this theme inevitably results in a reduction of the internal politics of Rome to a series of private vendettas: ‘Roman history becomes belittled’²⁷ and the atmosphere of the tragedy becomes even gloomier.

What is more, the Pompeians’ ideals are never completely clear, in that they seem to focus more on the demonization of the enemy—in a disturbing atmosphere of self-exaltation—than on the legitimacy of their own claims. On the whole, references to politics and freedom turn out to be vague and poorly convincing; this necessarily makes the conspirators’ ideals appear confused, if not hollow, and the claims underlying Caesar’s assassination rather weak. What emerges from the meetings of the Pompeians is little more than hazy references to the loss of honour and liberty and the sense of shame provoked by the military defeat at Pharsalus (1.1.39-41). It is mainly the ‘loss of Roman liberty’ (3.1.1190) that proves to be intolerable for Pompey’s followers. The concept widely penetrates the speeches of all the anti-Caesarians, from Trebonius (2.4.1021) to Cato (2.5.1039, 1052), from Cato’s son (5.1.2215-16) to Titinius (5.1.2412), but the features of this liberty are never clearly stated. One must probably agree with Warren Chernaik when he maintains that ‘though Brutus, Cassius, and Cato all claim to be defending “the Romans’ liberty”, the rapidity of the action makes their protests seem hollow’.²⁸ To crown it all, they never define themselves as republicans, preferring to call each other *princes* and *lords*.²⁹

The major consequence of this loss of freedom and of the military defeats seems to be for the Pompeians that sense of ‘shame’ (3.5.1561) and ‘baseness’ (2.4.1024) which distresses their party and appears to be the mainspring of Brutus’s action. His extreme resolution will be triggered by Cassius, who will cunningly appeal to his fellow’s ill-concealed desire not to be outdone in the comparison with his forefathers, the legendary founders of the Republic, and to earn everlasting glory with the future generations (3.3.1414-17). The opacity and narrowness of the conspirators’ motives and their political tunnel vision reaches fever-pitch in the words of Pompey’s wife Cornelia, who oddly regards herself as responsible for her husband’s defeat: ‘’Tis I, ’tis I, have caused this overthrow! / ’Tis my accursèd stars that bode this ill, / And those misfortunes to my princely love’ (1.5.396-98).

The haziness and limitations of the republicans’ ideals and the motives underlying their actions, together with the stress on their personal ambition, makes it difficult to interpret the play as an unequivocal defence of either republicanism or tyrannicide.³⁰ First of all, it is hard to share Hadfield’s opinion that Caesar is blatantly the villain of the play, responsible for unleashing Discord in the Roman world:³¹ it rather seems that in the Rome portrayed in *Caesar’s Revenge* ‘[n]either Caesar, nor Pompey, nor Brutus has clean hands politically’.³² Secondly, the twofold outcome of the tragedy adds to the impression of its lacking an unequivocal stance on the matter. On the one hand, Brutus’s descent into hell confirms the iniquity of his action; on the other hand, Caesar’s descent into Elysium makes it even more problematic to construe the play as unequivocally supporting tyrannicide. If Hadfield is right in stating that ‘obtaining grace in a pagan universe is not necessarily a secure achievement or an unmixed blessing’,³³ it is also true that in the description which closes the play Elysium seems a real heaven, where Caesar will be able to enjoy the sweetest pleasures,

And walk those fragrant flowery fields at rest
To which nor fair Adonis’ bower so rare,
Nor old Alcinous’ gardens may compare.
There, that same gentle father of the spring,

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Mild Zephyrus, doth odours breathe divine,
Clothing the earth in painted bravery
The which nor winter's rage, nor scorching heat,
Or summer's sun can make it fall or fade;
There, with the mighty champions of old time
And great heroes of the golden age,
My dateless hours I'll spend in lasting joy. (5.5.2560-70)

Caesar's destiny cannot completely absolve him: his katabasis to Elysium does not entail a monarchist vision on the author's part and his fall at the apex of his delusion of grandeur must be interpreted as a clear condemnation of his ambition, despite his military qualities and Cicero's sincere and meaningful praise (2.4.1025-35, 3.6.1818-23). The stress on the conspirators' punishment³⁴ seems to be rather related to the medieval view that Caesar's assassination was in any case morally unjustifiable, having led Rome to civil war and to the brink of the precipice.³⁵ In this respect, *Caesar's Revenge* looks similar to Fulbecke's *Collection*. Fulbecke was highly critical of Caesar, as demonstrated by his decision to carefully select in his narration those episodes of Caesar's life which would be the most suitable in making him appear arrogant, deceitful and cruel.³⁶ Though believing that Caesar as an individual had received the deserved punishment for his excessive pride, on an institutional level Fulbecke regarded the conspirators' act as an indefensible regicide, since Caesar, notwithstanding the unlawful means through which he had seized power, had now *de facto* become head of State: this made any attack on him illegitimate.³⁷ Moreover, in the play the populace is portrayed as an irrational, amorphous and too 'wavering' (4.2.1924) mass, who reacts to Caesar's murder exactly in the opposite way as the conspirators had expected:

The frantic people and impatient,
By Anthony's exhorting to revenge,
Run madding through the bloody streets of Rome
Crying 'Revenge', and murdering they go,
All those that caused Caesar's overthrow. (4.2.1919-23)

This is a crucial passage: according to most Renaissance political treatises, a tyrannicide could have been regarded as legitimate if the killers had acted with God's and/or the people's implicit or explicit consent.³⁸ And since Brutus is sent to hell and the populace abhors Caesar's murder, it is very hard to see the play as blatantly defending tyrannicide.

The tragedy does not therefore seem to be merely intended either as an apology or a condemnation of tyrannicide. It appears, if anything, rather meant to open a space to meditate on the various and intricate implications of a deed as terrible as Caesar's murder was: the play fiercely censures ambition and civil war but does not clearly pass judgment regarding the more delicate issue of tyrannicide, though evidently expressing more than a few reserves on it. This can be interpreted as a further demonstration that that *ensemble* of political ideas circulating in Elizabethan England which scholars sometimes classify under the generic label of republicanism was quite unstable and that, though republican notions certainly already circulated in the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, they were probably not yet part of a systematic 'political agenda'.³⁹ As a matter of fact, although the *terminus a quo* of the penetration of republican ideas into England is probably earlier than proposed in the 1970s by J.G.A. Pocock, it must be kept in mind that, as Hadfield remarks,

[i]f republicanism stood for any clear and coherent doctrine in late sixteenth-century England, it was the intellectual conviction that it was necessary to control the powers of the crown by establishing a means of ensuring that a coterie of virtuous advisers and servants would always have the constitutional right to counsel the monarch, and so influence and control his or her actions within the limits of the law.⁴⁰

It was a completely aristocratic ‘movement’ (or, rather, ‘a series of related, overlapping and sometimes contradictory points’), which, far from proposing an egalitarian utopia, demanded more relevance for the nobility in political decisions.⁴¹

(Endnotes)

1 On the date of composition, see Thomas Marc Parrott, ‘The “Academic Tragedy” of *Caesar and Pompey*’, in *Modern Language Review*, 5, 1910, 441; W.W. Greg, ‘Notes on the Society’s Publications’, in *Malone Society’s Collections*, 1, 1911, 291-92; Wilhelm Mühlfeld, *The tragedie of Cæsar and Pompey or Cæsars reuenge: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der englischen Caesardramen zur Zeit Shakespeares*, Wagner, 1912, xxxii-xxxiii, xlvii-lv; Frederick S. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age*, Oxford University Press, 1914, 270; Harry Morgan Ayres, ‘*Caesar’s Revenge*’, in *PMLA*, 30, 1915, 783-84; Jacqueline Pearson, ‘Shakespeare and *Caesar’s Revenge*’, in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 32, 1981, 101-3; Rene J.A. Weis, ‘*Caesar’s Revenge*: A Neglected Elizabethan Source for *Antony and Cleopatra*’, in *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft West*, 1983, 179-80; William Poole, ‘*Julius Caesar and Caesar’s Revenge Again*’, in *Notes and Queries*, 49, 2002, 227-28.

2 Vanna Gentili, *La Roma antica degli elisabettiani*, Mulino, 1991, 12-13. Translation mine.

3 John Jewel, *An Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion: Part I*, s.n., 1570, Ai’.

4 Cicero, *L’Oratore*, ed. Emanuele Narducci, Rizzoli, 1999, 2.9.36.

5 *A Chronicle of All the Noble Emperors of the Romans from Julius Caesar Orderly to This Most Victorious Emperor Maximilian That Now Governeth, with the Great Wars of Julius Caesar and Pompeius Magnus, Setting forth the Great Power and Divine Providence of Almighty God in Preserving the Godly Princes and Commonwealth*, Marshe, 1571. On Reynoldes, see Freyja Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic in Early Modern England*, Brill, 2012, 219.

6 *An Historical Collection of the Continual Factions, Tumults and Massacres of the Romans and Italians During the Space of 120 Years Next Before the Peaceable Empire of Augustus Caesar*, Ponsonby, 1600 (already completed in 1585). On Fulbecke, see Daniel R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and ‘The Light of Truth’ from the Accession of James I to the Civil War*, University of Toronto Press, 1990, 178-81; Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic*, 155-57.

7 Early modern spelling and punctuation are silently modernised throughout, following the guidelines established by Stanley Wells, *Modernizing Shakespeare’s Spelling: With Three Studies of the Text of Henry V* by Gary Taylor, Oxford University Press, 1979, 3-36.

8 Mühlfeld, *Beitrag*, xxxvi.

9 *The Tragedy of Caesar’s Revenge*, ed. Frederick S. Boas, Malone, 1911, 2.4.950-51, hereafter cited in text.

10 William Shakespeare, *Henry VI Part 3*, 2.5.55-113, in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2005. See Trevor Allen Owen, ‘Julius Caesar in English Literature from Chaucer through the Renaissance’, PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1966, 249n56.

11 See George K. Hunter, ‘A Roman Thought: Renaissance Attitudes to History Exemplified in Shakespeare and Jonson’, in *An English Miscellany Presented to W.S. Mackie*, ed. Brian S. Lee, Oxford University Press, 1977, 102: ‘the notion that the [Roman] Empire was the goal of the historical process and a safe haven for political virtue seems . . . to have had little effect on sixteenth-century playwrights’ writing about the Roman civil wars.

12 Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic*, 127.

13 Ayres, ‘*Caesar’s Revenge*’, 775.

14 ‘All Stygian fiends now leave whereas you dwell, / And come into the world and make it hell’ (5.1.2148-49), Discord aptly exclaims.

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- 15 Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, rev. ed., Cambridge University Press, 2008, 74.
- 16 Despite Hadfield's view (*ibid.*) that the tragedy shows how 'the only viable course of action is to retreat into private life and learn to practice the dictates of Stoic philosophy'.
- 17 That is, those non-dramatic works modelled on Giovanni Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* (1355-74) and very popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth century which gathered 'large numbers of biographies, all of which depict a life that moved from a good situation to a bad, with the purpose of demonstrating by the weight of the accumulated example that a falling pattern is typical of the lives of great persons' (Paul Vincent Budra, *A Mirror for Magistrates and the de casibus Tradition*, University of Toronto Press, 2000, 18).
- 18 The only one who believes Fortune can be opposed is Brutus: 'By industry do wise men seek release, / If that our casting do fall out amiss, / Our cunning play must then correct the dice' (1.1.174-76).
- 19 *Pace* Brutus, in whose opinion not Fortune but Pompey's brave spirit made him worthy of such title (1.1.126-28).
- 20 See Domenico Lovascio, 'Julius Caesar's "stony heart": Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia* and the *Mirror for Magistrates*', in *Notes and Queries*, 59, 2012, 52-53.
- 21 William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniell, Nelson, 1998, 2.1.87-88. All references to the play are to this edition.
- 22 Daniell, notes to *Julius Caesar*, 224n88.
- 23 'The sacred Senate doth commend the deed; / Your country's love incites you to the deed; / Virtue herself makes warrant of the deed: / Then, noble Romans, as you have begun / Never desist until this deed be done' (3.5.1530-34), cries out Trebonius.
- 24 Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, 3.2.181.
- 25 Martine Jeanine Gary, 'The Theme of Caesar and Brutus in Sixteenth-Century Tragedy', PhD Dissertation, University of Denver, 1979, 252-53.
- 26 Thomas Elyot, *The Book Named The Governor* (1531), ed. Stanford E. Lehmberg, Dent, 1962, 2.13. See also Catherine E. Dunn, *The Concept of Ingratitude in Renaissance English Moral Philosophy*, Catholic University of America Press, 1946.
- 27 Gary, 'Caesar and Brutus', 260.
- 28 Warren Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, 87.
- 29 Gary, 'Caesar and Brutus', 252; Clifford J. Ronan, 'Antike Roman': *Power Symbolism and the Roman Play in Early Modern England: 1585-1635*, University of Georgia Press, 1995, 75.
- 30 Caesar in the play is a tyrant: it is Cleopatra's emasculating influence that catalyses his transformation. See Domenico Lovascio, "'How many lets do hinder virtuous minds": intemperanza ed effeminazione in *Caesar's Revenge*', in *Quaderni di Palazzo Serra*, 23, 2013, 381-399. Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, p. 73, also states that Caesar 'is spurred on to tyranny in part through his affair with Cleopatra, whose "tyrannizing" eyes inspire him', but he does not develop the argument. This characterisation reflects Renaissance statecraft theory, which posed the existence of a clear link between effemination and tyranny: as Rebecca W. Bushnell, 'Tyranny and Effeminacy in Early Modern England', in *Reconsidering the Renaissance: Papers from the Twenty-First Annual Conference*, ed. Mario A. Di Cesare, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992, 339, points out, '[i]n [early modern] statecraft rhetoric, the king is the man of reason, while the tyrant is one driven by passion, and desire for sex'. In *Caesar's Revenge* Caesar is a tyrant because he is prey to the disordered sexual impulses which deeply contaminate his reason, giving way to his unlimited ambition. This unequivocal identification of Caesar as a tyrant—more precisely, as a *tyrannus ex defectu tituli*, since the play does not depict any concrete tyrannical action on his part, aside from a few vague allusion to his despotic behaviour in a brief conversation among three minor figures of the Pompeian party (3.5.1567-72)—fully places the tragedy in the Renaissance debate on tyrannicide.
- 31 Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 73-74.
- 32 Pearson, 'Shakespeare and *Caesar's Revenge*', 103.
- 33 Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 74.
- 34 Albert H. Tricomi, 'Shakespeare, Chapman, and the Julius Caesar Play in Humanist Renaissance Drama', in *Reconsidering the Renaissance*, 401.
- 35 See Jeffrey J. Yu, 'Renaissance Caesars and the Poetics of Ambiguity: Dramatic Representations of Julius Caesar in the English Renaissance', PhD Dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1995, 26; Gentili, *Roma antica*, 27.
- 36 Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic*, 142.
- 37 See Woolf, *Idea of History*, 181; Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic*, 155-57.
- 38 Robert S. Miola, 'Julius Caesar and the Tyrannicide Debate', in *Renaissance Quarterly*, 38, 1985, 284.

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39 Curtis Perry, 'The Uneasy Republicanism of Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia*', in *Criticism*, 48, 2006, 550.

40 J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton University Press, 1975; Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 17, 51.

41 Perry, 'Uneasy Republicanism', 536. See also Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640*, Cambridge University Press, 1995; David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660*, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, esp. 50-53. But see also the more sceptical position expressed by Blair Worden, 'English Republicanism', in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought*, ed. J.H. Burns and Mark Goldie, Cambridge University Press, 1991, 443-75; 'Republicanism, Regicide, and Republic: The English Experience', in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 1:307-27. For an excellent outline of the state of the art, see Perry, 'Uneasy Republicanism', 538-42.

French Political Thinking During the Religious Wars and the Notion of Conflict in Marlowe's *Edward II*

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Introduction

Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* (1591-1592) stages the history of the medieval English King Edward II (1284-1327), whose reign was doomed by heavy financial problems, civil disorders and overseas menaces. After some clashes with the ambitions of the aristocracy, Edward was imprisoned and finally sentenced to death in January 1327.¹ Marlowe's version of the King's history proves to be surprisingly interesting due to the stress given to the protagonist's behaviour, described as sodomitical by the rest of the characters. This sounded quite contradictory at the end of the sixteenth-century, since at the time the concept of sodomy implied the overthrowing of an established order² that the Monarch had to guarantee. Marlowe's peculiar characterization of the King has been frequently traced back to some hypothetical attention the dramatist gave to the future James I's behaviour.³ Lawrence Normand, for example, notes that some similarities occur between the so-called 'James-Lennox affair' and the plot in *Edward II*.⁴ However, this hypothesis sounds weak in some aspects, since, as Curtis Perry points out, 'as King of Scotland, James VI was seen as a strong and effective ruler, hardly an analogue for the monarch of Marlowe's play'.⁵ Moreover, Marlowe does not specifically focus on the homoerotic affair in his play, rather he dramatises a larger political conflict between a highly ambitious aristocracy on the one hand, and an inept King who promotes his humble friend, on the other. In the last act of the tragedy, the King's overthrowing takes place, and although in the end Edward's son manages to affirm his right to the Crown, the representation of a regicide appears highly transgressive in a period doomed by political uncertainties, as the end of the Elizabethan age was. Furthermore, the inextricable intermingling of the personal and the political in the methods of access to the sovereign staged by the tragedy, dangerously leads the audience to question the nature of monarchy itself and its division of public offices. This issue, in particular, seems to recall the French political ideas spreading under Henri III's reign (1551-1589). More precisely, I am going to argue that many of the conflicts shown in Marlowe's play derive from the influence of some specific political ideas, that first developed in France during the religious wars, and then in the rest of Europe. Even the justification of regicide may come from this source. The play also seems to anticipate the constituting of a kind of 'public opinion' that more than a century later will dangerously lead the subjects to question the absolutist methods of the monarch.

Christopher Marlowe and his hypothetical political service in France

In order to demonstrate the influence of French political ideas on Marlowe's *Edward II*, I will show how its king stunningly resembles the image of Henri III (1551-1589) of France, as he was stigmatised by the negative political propaganda in the last decade of his reign. It is very probable that Marlowe was informed about French political affairs, especially the gossip surrounding the king. Marlowe's interest in French politics is easily demonstrable. First of all, *The Massacre at Paris* – probably written immediately after *Edward II* –⁶ presents a punctual chronicle of the violent historical episodes ranging from St Bartholomew's night in 1572 to the assassination of Henri III in 1589. Marlowe was just eight years old when the massacre took place. However, the play surprisingly 'includes details that were not available from printed sources'.⁷ The play's representation of French historical events appears to be reported by 'an impartial observer of the time'.⁸ It is possible then, that the dramatist knew about St. Bartholomew's massacre through hearsay. There is nowadays no doubt about the dramatist's involvement with Francis Walsingham's diplomatic service in Paris. Soon before Marlowe's political engagement, Walsingham was sent to France as English ambassador in the 1570s and witnessed the bloodshed of St Bartholomew's night. Marlowe, then, could have heard about the murder of the Huguenots through his acquaintance with Walsingham and his circle. Moreover, Philip Sidney was also in Paris during St. Bartholomew's eve⁹. The recollection of this terrible episode followed the English poet for the rest of his life, as one can infer from his correspondence with French diplomats. It is possible that Marlowe heard it from Sidney himself, or read part of the poet's letters, finding some of the details about the massacre he so brilliantly describes in his play¹⁰. As already stated, the play also demonstrates some precise knowledge of 'the explosion of polemic and sheer vituperation' aimed at Henri III in the 1580s.¹¹ David Riggs and John Bakeless¹² follow the hypothesis that the English dramatist himself was sent by Walsingham to Rheims, from approximately 1584 until 1586, the same years of the spread of the negative political propaganda against Henri III. In this time, indeed, inexplicable absences of the dramatist from the University of Cambridge were recorded. Riggs, however, also cites the ambiguous letter to Queen Elizabeth, sent on 29 June 1587 by the Privy Council.¹³ The official report stated that Marlowe 'had done her Majesty good service', but denied that he had intended to 'remain' in Rheims.¹⁴ In any case, 'without embarking on the difficult question of how much time, if any, Marlowe spent in France',¹⁵ let alone the fact that Francis Walsingham was related to the dramatist's literary patron Thomas Walsingham,¹⁶ one can assume that he had the chance to hear about the French political affairs at the end of the century. For example, the dramatist could also have read or heard about the letters between Francis and his correspondents in France. Here, peculiarly, Henry III was described as a 'wanton king', in the same way as Edward II in Marlowe's play was supposed to be in a 'wanton humour'.

French sources

Henri de Valois is perhaps one of the most controversial kings in French history. Though a gifted sovereign, he was much hated by his subjects and finally stabbed to death by the Dominican friar Jacques Clément in 1589. The authority of his role was undermined by several problems upsetting the country in the last decades of the sixteenth century, for instance, serious religious and financial divisions. He fashioned himself as a fervent Catholic. However, the question of succession became quite tantalizing for the Catholic subjects after the death of the Duke of Anjou (1584), who was the only legitimate Catholic successor to the throne of the heirless

royal couple. Faced with these circumstances, Henri III had to face the menace of an influent Catholic group, the League, whose leader, the Duke of Guise, had acquired much popular favour among the powerful aristocratic families of the time. In order to preserve his power, the King increased his absolutistic methods, surrounding himself by political auxiliaries of his own. Anne de Batarnay de Joyeuse and Jean Louis de Nogaret de la Valette, best known as Joyeuse and Epernon, gained high political duties over other aristocrats who had served the crown for centuries. For these reasons, a general popular resentment against the King and his functionaries grew throughout the country. This already unstable situation was hastened by Guise's murder (1588), supposedly plotted by the king himself. Because of the loss of their leader, and the deprivation of financial revenues due to a tax revolt, the League and other aristocratic families began to spread very negative propaganda against their King.¹⁷ His opponents, in particular, aimed at instructing the people about the idea that the Catholic Henri III could not be the Lord's anointed, because of his presumed heretical behaviour. So, in the 1580s, many pamphlets enjoying wide international circulation, informed the people about the King's lasciviousness. Among the most representative, for instance, was André de Rossant's *Les meurs humeurs et comportements de Henri de Valois* (1589), which describes the French Monarch in terms of a 'Machiavellian' tyrant and heretic: '*il exige, il tyrannize, il sacrilege, il simonie, il charge et appauvrit les Eglises, il destuit tout son peuple*'.¹⁸ Jean Boucher too, who is one of the most passionate propagandists against the King, described Henri's conduct negatively in *La vie et faits notables de Henri de Valois* (1588), and *Histoire tragique et memorable de Pierre de Gaveston* (1588). The latter was possibly one of Marlowe's main sources for *Edward II*,¹⁹ since the pamphlet draws an explicit comparison between Henri III and the English Edward II.²⁰ Their behaviour appears to be similar, especially as far as the ambiguous relationship with the 'mignons' is concerned. If Rossant describes the royal favourites as bad political counsellors and opportunists,²¹ Boucher describes them as guilty of manoeuvring their Kings through lascivious acts, especially of the homoerotic type. In this pamphlet, Edward II is said to have dissipated the State's financial resources and extirpated the Church's possessions in order to enrich his beloved Gaveston. Rossant also specifies that Edward fell in love with his favourites. Both Edward and Henri are driven by '*un amour infame*'²² towards their men, causing the Queen and the rest of the aristocracy to be jealous. As one can infer from the examples already provided, the Leagues's propaganda was aimed at the desecration of the image of Henri III in terms of sodomy. It is in particular the intimacy of the King with his *mignons* which is perceived as problematic. If 'gossip arises in response to more complex and political concerns',²³ it was political access to the sovereign which was contested, since the new Gentlemen 'created' by the king had also exclusive access to his Private Chamber, and led important administrative tasks. It is not by chance that one of the most scabrous pamphlets about the King's heretical acts – the anonymous *Les choses horribles contenues en un lettre envoyée à Henry de Valois, par un enfant de Paris, le vingt-huitiesme de Janvier 1589* – not only insinuates that the King had some sexual relationships with Epernon in his 'Cabinet', but also that the latter cast a spell on him.²⁴

Boucher finally reports that the English barons and the Queen arose against the lascivious King, and '*le fairent mourir d'une broche rouge de feu, laquelle ils luy lancerent par le fondement*'.²⁵ The 'red hop spit' as a punishment inflicted on the king symbolically refers to his implied sodomy.²⁶

The homoerotic bond between the King and his 'favourites' even animates the literature of the time. For example, Agrippa d'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques* (1589) sparks the audience's attention on the ways in which the 'favourites' negatively influenced the King by damaging his relationship with the Queen: '*Ils appelloyent putain une femme d'amour*'.²⁷ His poem also alludes to the French monarch's effeminate manners:

Le geste efféminé, l'œil d'un Sardanapale:
 (...) De cordons emperlés sa chevelure pleine,
 Sous un bonnet sans bord fait à l'italienne,
 (...) Son menton princeté,
 Son visage de blanc et de rouge empâté,
 Son chef tout empudré, nous montrèrent ridée,
 En la place d'un Roy, *une putain fardée* [my italics]²⁸

The writings already mentioned contributed to spreading all over the country a kind of sinister climate that forewarned of Henri's murder. The League's pamphleteers even explicitly instigated the French subjects to rebel against their lascivious kings, as Boucher's *La vie et faits notables* and Rossant's *Meurs humours* clearly show.²⁹ Keith Cameron notes that the theory of regicide was not unknown to the French subjects in the 1580s. Nevertheless, since Henri III was a Catholic, in order to justify his deposition, it was necessary to demonstrate that he had deceived his faith.³⁰ As a matter of fact, these popular writings justified their desecration of the image of the King by appealing to doctrines expressed in some influential political treatises of the time, like *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* (1579) deriving from Aristotle's idea of the organic unity of society. This doctrine conferred on the French citizens the right to depose their King in case he sacrificed his monarchical duties for the sake of his own dark desires.³¹ So the League's desecrating propaganda, as well as Catholic literary works, stigmatised the King from sexual and political points of view. In any case, it is crucial to highlight here, that these works all aimed at the conclusion that it is the subjects' divine right to depose a heretical King for the country's sake. However, as Arlette Jouanna³² relates, the appeal to such doctrines only occurred when the clashes between the ambitious aristocrats and the absolutist methods of the Monarch were heightened.

As for the specific influences of French political ideas on English culture, Salmon believes that the events upsetting the French Monarchical assessment were certainly well known to the English, but the underlying political theories already described could not be wholly understood until the 'open breach'³³ between Crown and Parliament in the following century. However, Marlowe's *Edward II* shows the subversive potential of the political ideas behind some sources, probably assimilated by the dramatist thanks to his contacts with English personalities living in France. I am therefore going to show how the political principles implied in the French political works I have already mentioned are reflected in Marlowe's play.

French political thinking and Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*

The stress given by *Edward II* to the conflict between the King's duties and his 'deviant' desires seems to echo the historical French sources I have already discussed. Marlowe's main source for his play, Holinshed's chronicles, did not explicitly mention any homosexual relationship between Edward and Gaveston. Moreover, as Alan Bray and Stephen Orgel³⁴ have pointed out, homoerotic desire during the Elizabethan Age tended to pass unobserved unless it was accompanied by 'crimes' of violence. What is peculiar to *Edward II*, however, is that the close relationship between the King and his 'favourite' is depicted in a negative light by the Queen and the barons. Moreover, the homoerotic bond turns out to be one of the main causes of the other wider conflict in the play, the one between the Crown and the aristocracy. The first part of *Edward II*, then, seems to follow the French pamphleteers' characterization of Henri III, as

far as his effeminacy is concerned, and especially his ‘dangerous relationship’ with Gaveston. Edward’s appearance on the stage seems to reflect the French authors’ descriptions of how Henri III dressed, for the English King ‘wears a short Italian hooded cloak larded with pearl, in his Tuscan cap a jewel of more value than the crown’.³⁵ However, the barons rather look at the political effects of the King’s effeminacy, since his relationship with his favourite seems to displace their traditional position. Mortimer clearly affirms that it is not the King’s ‘wanton humour’ that annoys him, namely ‘that one so basely born should by his sovereign’s favour grow so perth and riot with the treasure of the realm’.³⁶ In order to underline Gaveston’s political ascent, Marlowe even lowers his origins in the play. He appears to have ‘paesant’ and obscure origins, whereas he was actually the son of a Gascon family of Chevaliers, as Holinshed’s chronicles point out.³⁷ Marlowe’s reworking of the historical reality serves thus to stress the conflict between the peers’ political interests and Edward’s personal attitudes. The King disregards the implicit law of bloodline regulating access to power, and promotes his ‘night-grown mushroom’³⁸ to ‘Lord High Chamberlain, Chief Secretary to the state and me, Earl of Cornwall, King and Lord of Man’, thus infringing the rights of the astonished barons.³⁹ It is for this reason that they begin to emphasize the Monarch’s tyranny. This happens especially after Edward’s refusal to pay the ransom to release Mortimer Senior, who has been captured by the Scottish enemies.⁴⁰ Instead, Edward goes on favouring his minions. For example, he promotes the Spencers because they are introduced to him by Gaveston.⁴¹ Because of his relationship with his favourite, he even neglects his marriage duties to Queen Isabella. Not only does she surrender to aching monologues for her unrequited love, but Gaveston even dares to insinuate to the King that a dangerous relationship between the Queen and Mortimer Junior is taking place.⁴² Gaveston’s behaviour reflects thus Henri’s *mignons* in Agrippa d’Aubigné’s poem.⁴³ He appears to be extremely ambitious and manipulative. As the League’s members in France insinuated that some kind of spell had been cast on the King by his minions, so in Marlowe’s play the barons believe that he is ‘bewitched’ by Gaveston.⁴⁴ The relationship between the King and the minion is clearly cast as homoerotic, as Queen Isabella’s speech overtly shows:

For my lord the king regards me not,
But dotes upon the love of Gaveston.
He claps his cheeks and hangs about his neck,
Smiles in his face and whispers in his ears,
And when I come, he frowns, as he would say
‘Go whither thou wilt, seeing I have Gaveston’⁴⁵

Later on, Mortimer Junior explicitly says that ‘The King is lovesick for his minion’.⁴⁶ Compared to the reckless political behaviour of the monarch, the reasons given by the Queen and the barons – most notably by Mortimer Junior – seem politically sound. The King looks extremely irresponsible and easily corruptible by his favourite. Completely blinded with passion for Gaveston, he even makes some dangerous assertions, as when he orders the barons to ‘make several kingdoms of this monarchy and share it equally’ among them all, so that he may enjoy Gaveston’s company.⁴⁷ The baron’s arguments are also significantly made to resonate with the ones subscribed to by French Catholics during Henri III’s reign. As specified, the French pamphleteers aimed to instil in the French people the idea that the political irresponsibility of the King ‘bewitched’ by his minions leads to the ruin of the whole reign; it is therefore necessary to depose the tyrant to avoid divine revenge. Edward’s political adversaries in Marlowe’s play seem to sustain the same ideas. In the second Act, scene ii, for example, the barons enumerate the King’s weak methods of governance, pointing out how his lascivious behaviour dangerously

resonates all over the reign.⁴⁸ They look for the Church's support, asking for help from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who significantly affirms that 'God himself is up in arms when violence is offered to the Church'.⁴⁹ Kent clearly foresees that Edward's love for Gaveston will be the ruin of the whole reign and of the King himself.⁵⁰ Following thus the French political ideas spreading during Henry III's reign, Marlowe lets Mortimer Junior declare that he will not fight against the King only 'if words will serve; if not [he] must'.⁵¹ This affirmation sounds quite strange in Marlowe's drama, written during the Elizabethan reign, when any allusion to overthrowing the Monarch was still considered a crime of high treason against the Crown. Again, French libels asserting the necessity of overthrowing a heretical King seem to echo throughout the peers' motivations in Marlowe's play.

In the second part of the tragedy, however, after Gaveston's murder, the nature of the Marlovian conflict assumes a more problematic role, in both political and moral terms. It is at this point of the tragedy that the French sources appear to be reworked in a surprisingly original way by Marlowe. First of all, through the powerful speeches he creates,⁵² the dramatist lets both factions disclose before the audience the deepest reasons for their actions. As Normand shows,⁵³ the conflict is now between the *public* discourse over homoerotic desire set up by Mortimer Junior, who *deliberately* assigns Edward the disparaging role of the sodomite, and the *private* discourse within which the relationship between the King and Gaveston is inscribed. Edward sees this relationship as an exclusively private bond, and expresses the impossible desire to 'have some nook or corner left to frolic with (...) Gaveston'.⁵⁴ The King thus subverts the dynamics of his public duties. Nevertheless, the relationship between Edward and Gaveston reveals itself to be the only authentic bond in the play. In the last act, the real sodomites turn out to be, unexpectedly, Mortimer Junior and Isabella. They end up killing the King, who is, ironically, the top representative of the very public order they are fighting for. They surrender to their own mean ambitions, epitomised by Mortimer Junior's dramatic expression of his satisfied greed, after the King's imprisonment:

The prince I rule, the queen do I command,
 And (...)
 The proudest lords salute me as I pass;
 I seal, I cancel, I do what I will.
 Feared I am more than loved; let me be feared,
 And when I frown, make all the court look pale.
 (...)
 And to conclude, I am Protector now.
 Now is all sure: the queen and Mortimer
 Shall rule the realm, the king, and none rule us.
 Mine enemies will I plague, my friends advance,
 And what I list command who dare control?⁵⁵

It is clear now that Mortimer Junior does not act for the country's sake, rather his only aim is to satisfy his political and personal ambition.⁵⁶ Instead, the apparently ambitious Gaveston just expresses his true desire to see Edward for the last time before dying.

No sense of justice is restored at the end of the tragedy, because the cruel revenge of Edward III, who orders the head of the tyrant Mortimer Junior to be laid on his father's coffin, proves all but innocent, as he otherwise argues. This violent act does appear as the prelude to other civil wars in the history of the English monarchy, rather than a way of restoring peace in the country.

Conclusions

Marlowe's *Edward II* brilliantly comments on some important political issues that first arose in France during Henri of Valois's reign. Two conflicting ideas of power are presented on the Marlovian stage. On the one hand, there is king Edward II's absolutist methods based on a politics of intimacy, and his promotion of his ambitious friend, the upstart Piers de Gaveston. On the other, there is the barons' idea of politics, based on rank and hierarchies. In the second part of the tragedy, however, the barons' motivations for overthrowing the politically unjust King appear to be driven exclusively by their own political greed. Their designation of the King's relationship with his favourite as homoerotic, surprisingly resembles the League's stigmatisation of Henri III as a sodomite, and clearly shows its darker goal, i.e. to overthrow the King. In the history of France the last of the Valois Kings has finally been stabbed to death, and the restoration to the throne of his legitimate successor, the Protestant Henri de Navarre has been extremely painful.

Marlowe's tragedy seems to offer to the Elizabethan audience a farseeing comment on the absolutist methods of access to the Monarchy. It shows that when the politics of access is limited to the lucky-few, the King's decisions are seriously questioned by some other aspirants to administrative duties. This could be the first step in the process of the constituting of a kind of 'public sphere' that dangerously questions the sovereign's methods and precludes the King's murder, as happened earlier in France.⁵⁷ Equally, *Edward II's* cruel ending demonstrates that 'the Elizabethan reception ensures that the French conflicts would not be forgotten in later periods of English political dissension. Moreover, it had provided a wealth of English and French comment ready to the hand of future controversialists'.⁵⁸ French political thinking would indeed begin to enjoy widespread political currency only during the English revolutions of the following century. In this respect, then, Marlowe's tragedy proves to be a surprisingly forward-looking work with a lasting resonance for future generations.⁵⁹

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(Endnotes)

1 On Edward II's reign, Gabriele Baldini, 'Breve ragguglio storico sul regno di Edoardo II', in *Edoardo II*, di Christopher Marlowe, testo riveduto, studio introduttivo, commento e versione italiana a fronte di Gabriele Baldini (Firenze: Sansoni, 1954), XXIII-XXXIII.

2 For a study about homoerotic desire in the sixteenth century see Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), and Stephen Orgel, *Impersonation: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

3 At the end of the Elizabethan period, indeed, some increasing interest developed towards the Scottish monarch. The designation of a successor to the aged heirless Queen had become a matter of the utmost urgency, and the Scottish succession appeared to be a reasonable one. The Lords of the English Parliament, however, began to fear the prospect of a foreign sovereign who might favour his own court over the English one, thus menacing their political role. This situation might have had some influence on Marlowe. The hypothesis is held among others by Constance B. Kuriyama, *Hammer on Anvil: Psychological Patterns in Christopher Marlowe's Plays* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 209-10, Orgel, *Impersonations*, 48, and Lawrence Normand, "'What Passions Call You These?'" Edward II and James VI,' in *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture*, eds. Darryl Grantley and Peter Roberts (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 172-197.

4 The 'James-Lennox' episode happened about twelve years before Marlowe wrote his tragedy. It involved the fourteen years old Scottish King and his beloved friend, the Catholic French Lord Esmé Stewart, who became the King's 'favourite'. The latter gained so much political favour that he soon attracted the suspicion and hatred of the political institutions and the Protestant faction. A plot was organised to imprison the King, who, however, finally managed to escape and restore his own power (See Normand, 'What Passions', 175-176).

5 Curtis Perry, 'The Politics of Access and Representations of the Sodomite King in Early Modern England', *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no.4 (Winter 2000): 1056.

6 The play is difficult to date. Its earliest recorded performance was in 1593, and its date of composition must of course be later than Henri III's date in 1589: see Vivien Thomas and William Tydeman eds., *Christopher Marlowe: The Plays and their Sources* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 251.

7 David Riggs, 'Marlowe's Life', in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 37.

8 Julia Briggs, 'Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*: A Reconsideration', *The Review of English Studies*, 34, no. 135 (August 1983): 259.

9 His father Sir Henry Sidney, indeed, set military arrangements for the English intervention in the French Religious Wars. The poet was then recommended to Francis Walsingham and travelled to France in May 1572. He also met the French diplomat Hubert Languet and they started a correspondence. See R. Kuin ed., *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), xiv, and J.H.M. Salmon, *The French Religious Wars in English Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 184-185.

10 Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* demonstrates to be a play of great historical interest. The first part consists of several sketches which show a perfect awareness of the abrupt and cruel methods of extermination of the French Huguenots in August 1572. The same abruptness, for instance, emerges from the report in one of Languet's letters to Sidney: 'The Pope (...) was the deviser of that notable plan for making away with the poor remains of our friends (...). The Admiral was killed, and many good men perished with him (...). What was the result? Instantly war burst forth in various quarters of France, and even reached the dominions of the Pope himself' (Languet to Sidney, 13th February 1574, in *The Correspondence*, Pears ed., 44). In Marlowe's play it is the Catholic Duke of Guise who plots the murder of the Protestants, similarly resembling Languet's image of the Pope. The killing of the Huguenots' Lord Admiral is also represented in Marlowe's play, Scene IX, as well as the killing of many common Huguenots. There is no direct proof of Marlowe's and Sidney's acquaintance. However, the two writers at least heard about each other. They had attended the same school – see John Bakeless, *The Tragicall History of Christopher Marlowe* (Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1964), 45- and also had contacts with Walsingham's circle. Sidney even married Walsingham's daughter in 1583, and Marlowe, if not directly engaged in political affairs, 'at the very least, (...) may have been a confidential messenger carrying secret dispatches of importance' (Bakeless, *Tragicall History*, 84).

11 David Potter, 'Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* and the Reputation of Henry III of France', in Grantley and Roberts, *Marlowe and Renaissance*, 88.

12 See David Riggs, 'Marlowe's Life', in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 37, and *ibid.*, 82-84.

13 Privy Council to the Authorities of Cambridge University, 29 June 1587, Public Record Office, London, *Privy Council Registers*, PC 2/14 / 381.

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14 Riggs, 'Marlowe', 29.

15 Potter, 'Marlowe's *Massacre*', 88.

16 Thomas Walsingham also worked for the Crown in 1588, see Bakeless, *Tragicall History*, 84.

17 For a general survey over Henri III's reign and an analysis over the Ligue's political pamphlets see Potter, 'Marlowe's *Massacre*', and David Potter, 'Kingship in the Wars of Religion: The Reputation of Henry III of France', *European History Quarterly* 25, no.4 (October 1995).

18 André de Rossant, *Les Meurs, Humeurs et comportements de Henry de Valois, representez au vray, depuis sa naissance* (Paris: A. Le Riche, 1589), 88.

19 Curtis Perry, 'Politics of Access', 1054-1083.

20 England as a term of comparison with the French political situation is one of the main topics in the Ligue's propaganda. See for instance, Louis Dorléans's *Advertissement des catholiques anglois, au françois catholiques, du danger où ils font de perdre leur religion et d'expérimenter comme en Angleterre les crautex des ministres s'ils reçoivent à la couronne un roi qui soit hérétique* (Paris: 1586); the pamphlet is contained in Jean Lous Félix Danjou et L. Cimber eds., *Archives curieuses de l'Histoire de France* (Paris: Beauvais, 1812-1866), stored in the British Library.

21 Specifically, De Rossant writes: 'larrons, fnciers & tresoriers, mignons, ambitieux, faux iusticieurs, traistres à la France, Officieurs de la Courone, Politiques à leur profit, Machiavelistes sans loy, & pour dire en deux mots sorciers & Atheistes'. Rossant, *Meurs, humeurs*, 37.

22 Ibid., 117.

23 Perry, 'Politics of Access', 1058.

24 'Henry vous sçavez bien, que tout aussi tost que vistes Terragon, vous l'appellaistes vostre frere, en l'accolat, & la nuit suyuate il coucha dans vostre chambre, seul avec vous dans vostre lit. Vous sçavez bien, q toute la nuict, il tin sur vostre ventre, droict au nôbril, un anneau, & sa main liee dans la vostre, & fut le matin vostre main truovee comme toute cuitte' (*Les choses horribles contenus en un lettre envoyée à Henry de Valois, par un enfant de Paris, le vingt-huitiesme de Janvier 1589*, in Danjou et Cimber, *Archives*, 5-6).

25 Jean Boucher, *Histoire tragique et memorable de Pierre de Gaveston* (Paris: 1588), in *ibid.*, 14. There is much debate about Boucher authorship of the pamphlet, see Frederic J. Baumgartner, *Radical Reactionaries: The Political Thought of the French Catholic League* (Geneva: Droz, 1973), 108-9.

26 The same reference to the English King's mortal punishment appears in André de Rossant's *Les meurs humeurs*. Here, too, Henri III is explicitly compared to the sodomite Edward II. In the final lines of his pamphlet Rossant describes the 'punition future de Henri de Valois, semblable à celle d'Edouard (...) embroché par le fondement d'un fer tout rouge' (p.115).

27 Théodore Agrippa D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, chronologie, introduction et glossaire par Jacques Bailbé (Paris: Garnier- Flammaron, 1968), 101.

28 Ibid., 776-779. Among the literature of the time, it is worth citing Pierre Matthieu's tragedy too, *La Guisiade* (1589). The tragedy focuses on the contrasting figures of Henri III and the Duke of Guise. The latter is designed as the good Catholic who acts exclusively for the country's sake, whereas the sovereign's politics appears to be driven by his irresponsible acts. Similarly, in the first scenes of Marlowe's *Edward II*, the main opponent to the King, Mortimer *Junior*, appears in a positive light, because he wants to re-establish political order.

29 For instance, Boucher's *La vie et faits notables* describes the King's irresponsible behaviour as wholly driven by his mignons. The latter are labelled as 'flatteurs'. In this way the author wants to demonstrate that it is the subject's right to depose the heretical King, because he doesn't respect divine law, from which his right to rule derives. Rossant also writes that 'Il est licite de mettre à mort par autorité publique celuy qui enfreint cette loy de Dieu' (*Meurs, humeurs*, 43).

30 Keith Cameron, 'Introduction', in Jean Boucher, *La vie et faits notables de Henry de Valois*, édition critique établie et annotée par Keith Cameron (Paris: Champion, 2003), 16.

31 Salmon attributes the treatise to Philippe de Mornay, seigneur du Plessis, and Hubert Languet, the latter corresponding with Philip Sidney, as stated above (Salmon, *French Religious Wars*, 181-185). However, there has been much critical debate about the authorship of the treatise; critics today tend to attribute it to Languet only (See M. Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555-1590* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.270, especially note 12).

32 See Arlette Jouanna, *Le devoir de révolte: la noblesse française et la gestation de l'État moderne, 1559-1661* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 1-38.

33 Salmon, *French Religious Wars*, 12.

34 See Alan Bray, 'Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England', *History Workshop*, no. 29 (Spring 1990), and Orgel, *Impersonations*, 49.

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35 Marlowe, *Edward II*, I,iv,p.182, lines 412-414.

36 Ibid.,I,iv,p181, lines 402-404.

37 See 'Appendix B', *ibid.*, p.327.

38 Ibid., I,iv, p.173, line 284.

39 Ibid., I,i, p.151, lines 153-55.

40 See *ibid.*, II,ii, p.197, lines 139-153. Perry also remarks that 'Mortimer Senior's capture is an invention of Marlowe's' (Perry, 'Politics of Access',1068). Edward's refusal to accomplish his duties and pay for his soldier's release stresses the irresponsibility of the sovereign as it is staged in the first part of the play.

41 Ibid., II,ii, p.204, lines 248-252.

42 See *ibid.*,I, iv, p.167, lines 146-48.

43 As Forker points out, Gaveston's insinuation at this point of the play looks quite incongruent: 'Holinshed gives no hint of a sexual liaison between Mortimer and the Queen until very late in his account' (Forker, 'Introduction', 53). The anachronism confirms the hypothetical influence of the French sources on Marlowe.

44 See, for instance, Marlowe, *Edward II*, I, ii, p.157, line 55.

45 Ibid., I,ii, p.157, lines 49-54.

46 Ibid., I,iv,p.164, line 87.

47 Ibid., I,iv, p.163, lines 70-71.

48 See *ibid.*, pp.199-200,lines 174-194.

49 Ibid., I,ii, p.156, lines 40-41. Earlier in the play (I,i, line 178), Edward humiliates another representative figure of the Church, the Bishop of Coventry, whose vestments are stripped. As Forker points out ('Introduction', 55), this detail is totally invented by Marlowe. The effect is to underline the outrageous behaviour of the King in front of the Church. This contrast with the Catholic side seems again to echo the French political conflicts of the 1580s.

50 Ibid., II,ii,p.201, lines 207-208: 'My lord, I see your love to Gaveston will be the ruin of the realm and you'.

51 Ibid., I, ii, p.158, line 82.

52 On Marlowe's powerful and prophetic style see Judith Weil, *Christopher Marlowe's Merlin Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

53 Normand, "'What Passions?'" , 172-197.

54 Marlowe, *Edward II*, I, iv, pp.163-64, lines 70-73.

55 Ibid., V, iv, pp.299-300, lines 46-66.

56 The disparaging role of the sodomite assigned by Mortimer Junior and Isabella to the King is also symbolised by the almost parodic mortal object of the red hot spit that 'penetrates him'. This reference could derive from the French pamphleteers narration of Edward's history: see *ibid.*, the end of scene vi, Act V, p.312.

57 As far as the concept of 'public sphere' is concerned, I refer to Jürgen Habermas's definition: 'A realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body'(J. Habermas, S. Lennox, F. Lennox, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)", *New German Critique*, 3 (Autumn 1974): 49.

58 Salmon, *French Wars*, 38.

59 A century and a half later, James I's favouring of renowned personalities such as the Duke of Buckingham over other aristocrats was seriously questioned. The stigmatisation of Edward II as a sodomite, then, uncannily anticipates the innuendo spread over James I, and demonstrates that accusations of sodomy to the King arise in response to perceptions of the politics of patronage as corrupt. *Edward II* was significantly republished in 1622 (see Forker, 'Introduction', p.99), which confirms that the dangerous questioning of the politics of access that first arose in France spread later on in the rest of Europe.

Shakespeare Graduate Conference 2013

The Italian Connection

‘That Rare Italian Master’
Shakespeare and Giulio Romano

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The only explicit reference to a living artist in Shakespeare’s work is to be found in *The Winter’s Tale*, where the ‘statue’ of queen Hermione – unjustly accused of infidelity by her husband, having collapsed during her public trial, and universally believed to be dead – is said to be ‘newly performed by that rare Italian master, Giulio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape: he so near to Hermione hath done Hermione, that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer’¹. This passage has always been central to critical debate: how had Shakespeare become acquainted with the name and reputation of the Italian artist? And again, why did the poet decide to name, as creator of a statue, an artist who was in fact both a painter and an architect, but never a sculptor?

The first part of my work will comprise a general survey of the possible sources through which the name and reputation of Giulio could have reached Shakespeare, while in the second part I will briefly discuss the main scholarly views about his mistake. Finally, I will suggest a possible new source for the name of the sculptor in *The Winter’s Tale*; a source that could cast new light on Shakespeare’s reasons for choosing Giulio Romano as creator of Hermione’s statue.

I.

How Shakespeare became familiar with the name of Giulio Romano – the famous Italian artist employed first in Rome, as a pupil of Raphael, and later at the Gonzaga court in Mantua – has been a problem that many critics have tried to solve. The hypothesis that Shakespeare had travelled in Italy, and therefore could have seen Giulio’s works directly, though maintained by Lytton Sells², appears to be unverifiable. On the other hand, as both Sir Sidney Lee³ and Mario Praz⁴ emphasize, it was not difficult for an Englishman living in the Elizabethan age to be well-informed about Italy and Italian art. Not only, as Stephen Orgel points out, ‘there was a good deal of information circulating in Shakespeare’s England about who were the right artists to invest in’⁵, but Italian merchants and travellers were frequent in London, and many Englishmen travelled to Italy, returning full of tales and new ideas from a much remarked upon land. Those merchants and travellers, such as Thomas Coryate⁶ and Inigo Jones, who was in Italy before 1603 and who seemed to be aware of Giulio’s architectural style⁷, could have brought news of Romano’s fame to London. Moreover, Shakespeare could have heard Giulio praised by John

Florio, the disciple of Italian culture in England and part of that same Southampton circle to which Shakespeare was linked; or by Ben Jonson, who must have been well aware of Giulio's reputation, as he mentions him both in his *Timber*⁸ and in the epigram dedicated to the Lord of the Treasury⁹. All of these conjectures are, however, based on unsubstantiated verbal exchanges, and are therefore not verifiable. The case is different with the written sources available to us.

The richest source of information about Giulio's life and artistic production is surely Vasari's *Vite*. This work was not published in English until 1850, and the part re-elaborated by Peacham in *The Compleat Gentleman* not only was not published until 1622, but did not include any reference to Giulio. Nevertheless, many critics, such as Maria del Sapio, Stephen Orgel, Ernst Gombrich and Leonard Barkan¹⁰, believe that Shakespeare could have read the *Vite* in the original language, and based his knowledge of the Italian artist on it¹¹.

Another Italian writer through whom Giulio's name could have reached Shakespeare, as Sokol, Lothian, Corradini and Gombrich¹² point out, is Pietro Aretino, whose influence in England should not be underestimated¹³. Aretino's *I Modi*, a volume composed of his *sonetti lussuriosi* and highly erotic images based on Giulio Romano's drawings, though banned in Italy¹⁴, seems to have circulated, or at least to have been much spoken of, in England, becoming the work most frequently associated with Aretino. In *Volpone*, for instance, Jonson mentions only this work in connection with the Italian writer – 'for a desperate wit, there's Aretine! / Only, his pictures are a little obscene'¹⁵ –, and the same reference appears in *The Alchemist* (1610)¹⁶, while John Donne satirically declares that 'Aretine's pictures have made few chaste'¹⁷. Shakespeare then, could have seen Giulio's images in London¹⁸, or at least could have heard of them, or he could have found Giulio Romano's name in Aretino's works. In fact, not only does Aretino repeatedly praise Giulio in his letters¹⁹ – published in Italy in 1537, in France before 1608, and announced by Aretino's publisher in London, John Wolfe, since 1586 –, but refers to him in the dramatic work *Il Marescalco*, published in London in 1588. In this piece, set in Mantua, Messer Jacopo invites the *Pedante* to see Giulio Romano's stunning creations in the *Palazzo Te* – 'Andiamo, maestro, in fino a San Bastiano, volli dire al Te, ché forse Iulio Romano averà scoperto qualche istoria divina'²⁰ – and the same *Pedante*, to prove himself erudite, affirms: 'Si pictoribus, un Tiziano emulus naturae immo magister, sarà certo fra Sebastiano de Venetia divinissimo. E forse Iulio Romanae curiae, e de lo Urbinate Raffaello alumno'²¹.

Other possible sources for Shakespeare's knowledge of Giulio are, as Rita Severi points out²², the two architectural treatises by Sebastiano Serlio and Paolo Lomazzo, both translated into English²³, in which the name of Giulio Romano appears more than once; the engravings by Giorgio Ghisi, reproducing a large part of Romano's frescoes, that, as Claudia Corti²⁴ points out, had a wide circulation in Renaissance Europe; and *The Necessarie, Fit, and Convenient Education of a yong Gentlewoman* – the English translation of a work by Giovanni Michele Bruto, published in London in 1598 – in which the author advises Lord Cataneo to choose his daughter's teacher as he would choose a painter for his chamber, showing him 'the patterns of Albert Dure, Raphael Vrbini, Michel Angell, or Iules Romain'²⁵.

Those are the main sources critics have so far suggested as a possible *medium* between Shakespeare and Giulio Romano's fame. But the other problem, connected with Shakespeare's 'erroneous' choice of the painter and architect Romano as an example of a great sculptor, is more difficult to explain.

II.

Some critics believe that Shakespeare consciously decided to consider Giulio as a sculptor,

either because, as Praz²⁶ and Severi argue, he knew of Giulio's ability in projecting funeral monuments – such as those of Federico Gonzaga and Baldassarre Castiglione – that actually made of him a 'sort of sculptor', or because, as Elisabetta Cori²⁷ points out, he was referring to the *trompe l'oeil* effect of Giulio Romano's paintings. Moreover, as Farrand Thorpe²⁸ highlights, painting and sculpture were considered in the Renaissance as effectively interchangeable,

Other critics, such as Barkan, Del Sapio, Gombrich and Orgel²⁹, link Shakespeare's 'confusion' to the two epitaphs in Vasari. Not only, they argue, the epitaph contained in both the editions of the *Vite* (1550 and 1568) could have suggested to the poet the idea that Giulio Romano was also a sculptor – 'ROMANUS MORIENS SECUM TRES IULIUS ARTEIS / ABSTULIT (HAUD MIRUM) QUATTUOR UNUS ERAT'³⁰ –, but the second epitaph, present in the 1550 edition only, could have been the source of Shakespeare's description of Giulio as a sculptor able to create, as we shall see, a seemingly breathing statue, and who 'would beguile Nature of her custom':

VIDEBAT IUPPITER CORPORA SCULPTA PICTAQUE
 SPIRARE ET AEDES MORTALIUM AEQUARIER COELO
 IULII VIRTUTE ROMANI. TUNC IRATUS
 CONCILIO DIVORUM OMNIUM VOCATO
 ILLUM E TERRIS SUSTULIT. QUOD PATI NEQUIRET
 VINCI AUT AEQUARI AB HOMINE TERRIGENA.³¹

Other critics believe instead that Shakespeare's decision was the result of an actual mistake, due to the poet's scant knowledge of Italian art, as is argued by Warburton and Cust³², or to the confusion of Giulio Romano's name with that of another artist: a second Giulio Romano operating in Bologna, as Hartt suggests³³, the madrigalist Giulio Caccini, as pointed out by Spencer³⁴, or the sculptor Giancristoforo Romano, a leading figure of fifteenth century Roman sculpture, and perfect example of 'court artist', as recently defined by Pierluigi Leone de Castris³⁵.

This last hypothesis deserves, in my opinion, more consideration than the others. Giancristoforo Romano's name could have easily reached Shakespeare, through one of the most famous books of the entire Renaissance, Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, in which Giancristoforo is a character. In the text the Conte di Canossa explicitly celebrates Romano's great ability in carving marble, and enters into a debate with him about the specific nature of different arts, which could have captured the attention of a poet always interested in the comparison between different artistic forms. Moreover, some of Giancristoforo's statements in affirming the supremacy of his sculpture over painting, an art defined as an 'artificial following of nature' giving birth to figures 'as nature her selfe shapeth them'³⁶, suggest to us Shakespeare's description of Romano as perfect imitator of Nature. But why then the wrong name, why Giulio for Giancristoforo? Baughan, who is the only critic to have suggested, in 1937, the possible confusion of the two Romanos, explains this curious situation by referring to Shakespeare's reading habits:

Only two pages back of the [debate between Giancristoforo and Canossa] Shakespeare could have seen the name *Julian*, almost certainly written in capitals. With this name so nearly identical with *Julio* in mind, the hurried reader, who already had a smattering of knowledge of Giulio Romano, might easily find himself either overlooking the name *Johnchristopher* or forgetting it when he came to the situation in *The Winter's Tale* where a sculptor was indispensable to the plot.³⁷

This explanation seems plausible, but before settling on this very intriguing and intricate set of hypotheses, I would like to propose a new possible source for Shakespeare's usage of Giulio Romano and for his mistake; a source not previously suggested by critics, as far as I am aware, which I discovered accidentally, and which provided the stimulus for this study.

III.

Even though his name is rarely mentioned today, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries few poets were more famous than Tebaldeo: teacher of Isabella d'Este, first poet in the splendid Este and Gonzaga courts, Lucrezia Borgia's secretary, Leone X's favourite, and close friend of Bembo, Castiglione, and the same Raphael, master of our Giulio Romano. His extensive poetic output includes more than 700 vernacular rhymes, mostly sonnets, 309 of which were published in Modena in 1489. This work was so successful that, after just 50 years, 41 reprints and new editions had been published and read all over Europe, part of that great stream of Italian lyric poetry that so strongly influenced their English counterparts in the sixteenth century.

Examining this volume, I came across a cycle of seven sonnets celebrating the wondrous statue of a dead woman beloved by a man called Leone. To detail the moving story behind these sonnets is not the focus of this paper³⁸. Suffice it to say that Ambrogio Leone, humanist doctor and philosopher, was so passionately in love with the young Beatrice de Notariis that he had her sculpted in marble by the renowned artist Malvito; and that this statue was the only thing left to him after her tragic death. Leone, in his grief, wrote to almost every poet in Italy³⁹, begging for a poem to celebrate Beatrice's statue, and many contributed, among whom were Ercole Strozzi⁴⁰, Caracciolo, Bendedei, and his friend Tebaldeo, with some Latin epigrams and the seven sonnets, later included in the *Rime*.

Reading these sonnets we discover many elements that seem to suggest a link between them and the statue scene in *The Winter's Tale*. Firstly there is the coincidence of the names: Leone, that in four cases out of five is reduced to 'Leon', an abbreviation that can easily be interpreted in various ways, obviously reminds us of the king *Leontes*, weeping in front of the statue of his dead beloved in *The Winter's Tale*. A name, incidentally, whose origin has always been a mystery to the critics, as it neither appears in any of the drama's sources nor in Plutarch, from which Shakespeare drew many of the *The Winter's Tale*'s names⁴¹.

There is then the central importance given in both texts to the rivalry between Nature and Art, connected to the astonishing *verosimiglianza* (verisimilitude) of the statue, which causes a series of similar reactions in the spectators: from the wonder and the confusion generated by the deceiving nature of the work of art, to the impulse of kissing and holding the statue, and the subsequent feeling of shame; from the nostalgia for the once living 'original' and the resulting desire of vivification of the statue, associated with the motif of the breathing sculpture, to the recourse to myth and religion for solutions.

The theme of the conflict between Nature and Art is central in *The Winter's Tale*, in which the debate between Perdita and Polixene – the first rejecting an art which competes 'With great creating nature'⁴², the second favourable to 'an art / Which does mend nature – change it rather'⁴³ – is somehow renewed in the statue scene, where Hermione's sculpture is described as so similar to the real woman that the spectators, overwhelmed by wonder and 'mocked with art'⁴⁴, will 'think anon it lives'⁴⁵, also because, this creature of an artist who, 'could put breath into his works, would beguile nature of her custom'⁴⁶, seems actually to be breathing: 'What was he that did make it? [...] Would you not deem it breathed?'⁴⁷, they ask, and again: 'Still

methinks / There is an air comes from her. What fine chisel / Could ever yet cut breath?’⁴⁸. It is because of this extraordinary *verosimiglianza* that Leontes feels an irresistible impulse to kiss the statue, even though he knows that he will be mocked for it⁴⁹.

In the same way, the artificial challenges Nature’s power in Tebaldeo’s sonnets. The statue is described as so perfectly sculpted that not only Death and the god of Love believe it to be alive, but Nature itself cannot distinguish its creation from the artistic one: ‘Natura, e non tu sol, crede ch’io viva / e qual sia l’opra sua dubia diventa’⁵⁰. The spectator is struck in wonder and imagines the statue to be living, also because, as in *The Winter’s Tale*, it seems to be breathing: ‘marmo in cui tua donna expressa *spira*’⁵¹. And again, because of this striking similarity to the once living original, Leone, although ashamed, feels the necessity of a physical contact: ‘corro ad abbracciarte forte / poi di vergogna in viso me scoloro’⁵².

We could continue describing the many parallels between the two texts, but I hope that what has been argued has at least shown the possibility that Shakespeare had read Tebaldeo’s sonnets and might have had them in mind while writing of a situation so similar to that found in them. Accepting this possibility and turning a few pages further in Tebaldeo’s *Rime*, we find another sonnet on sculpture and very peculiar statues:

Firmar non te potei in loco dove,
 Romano mio, più marmo ritrovassi,
 ché Isabella trasmuta in freddi sassi
 gli homin’ col sguardo, e tu vedrai le prove.
 Ma tu dirai: “Se qualora gli occhi move
 po’ statue far che a pena cum mano fassi
 da gli altri, a che vòl me?”. Vòl che tu cassi
 se fia che ulla de tristo in lor se trove,
 ché raro fa Natura un corpo bello;
 scia Isabella che arà cose eccellenti,
 se acompagna al suo lume il tuo martello.
 Ma guarda, se al suo viso te apresenti,
 de chinar gli occhi e non spechiarte in ello
 che pietra de sculptor tu non diventi.⁵³

Shakespeare, looking for a name for the creator of Hermione’s statue, could have remembered this celebration of an excellent sculptor, probably associated in his mind with the wonderful statue loved by Leone, able not only to equal Nature, but endowed with ‘an art / Which does mend nature’⁵⁴, as Polixenes would say. An art that, moreover, appears embedded in a magical atmosphere in which, exactly as in the previous sonnets and in *The Winter’s Tale* – where a living woman is paradoxically⁵⁵ said to be sculpted by Giulio Romano, and stands like a statue until she miraculously wakes up – the boundary between what is natural and what is artificial, between flesh and stone, becomes very confused. Shakespeare could have remembered the name Romano and, having already heard, though maybe confusedly, of Giulio Romano’s fame, associated the two things, and chosen this name as a prime example of an excellent Italian sculptor. But, ironically, the Romano whom Tebaldeo is addressing is not Giulio Romano, but Giancristoforo Romano, on the occasion of his coming, in 1497, to that same court of Mantua in which Giulio became famous only a few years later. Isabella d’Este, after having admired the splendid bust with which Giancristoforo had celebrated her sister Beatrice⁵⁶ (a bust that Tebaldeo had probably seen and that, partly due to the coincidence of the names, might have in mind while writing of the other Beatrice’s statue), had written to the court of Milan, where her

sister lived as wife of Ludovico il Moro, asking Giancristoforo to come to Mantua in order to sculpt her in marble. To this event Tebaldeo's sonnet refers. But this, through a simple reading of the sonnet, could not be guessed.

Conclusions

In conclusion, I would say that this hypothesis could help us to understand Shakespeare's choice, especially as many of the previous attempts to explain it present further difficulties. Those critics linking Shakespeare's confusion to the epitaphs in Vasari should not forget not only the very scarce circulation of the volume in England, but also the fact that in the *Vite* Giulio Romano is unequivocally classified among the painters and architects. If Shakespeare had consulted Vasari's work for a name of an excellent Italian sculptor, he would have much more probably chosen Michelangelo, whose skill in carving marble Vasari acclaims. The same can be said of those referring to Aretino's *Il Marescalco* as a possible source for Shakespeare, bearing in mind that the *Pedante* quite clearly specifies the field to which Giulio's art pertains – '*Si pictoribus, [...] Iulio Romanae curiae*'⁵⁷ –, and that immediately after he adds: '*E ne la marmorea facultate [...] un mezzo Michel Angelo, un Iacopo Sansavino speculum Florentiae*'⁵⁸.

As for the treatises by Lomazzo and Serlio, it is difficult to imagine why Shakespeare would have been diligently studying two technical architectural works. In any case, in these works too, Giulio is clearly defined as an architect and painter, exactly as in the other sometime quoted source, *The Necessarie, Fit, and Convenient Education of a yong Gentlewoman* – in which Giulio is numbered among those who 'alwayes shall be esteemed most excellent painters'⁵⁹ –, and in Ben Jonson, who counts him among the 'six famous painters in Italy who were excellent and emulous of the ancients'⁶⁰.

To those critics who explain Shakespeare's use of Romano by enlisting the idea of sculpture and painting as interchangeable in the Renaissance, it should be noted, with Baughan, that, though there was sometimes confusion in artistic technical terminology, 'yet the fact remains that Hermione's likeness was a statue, not a painting, and, despite the possible confusion of terms in sixteenth-century England, Romano would have to be a sculptor in order to carve a statue'⁶¹.

Finally, the hypothesis according to which Shakespeare's choice should be ascribed to direct observation of Romano's works, seems completely lacking in any actual evidence. Not only is there nothing in the text that should lead us to suppose a knowledge of Giulio's work superior to that obtainable through any other source, but, if Shakespeare had really seen Giulio's creations in Mantua, he would have never mistaken him for a sculptor.

In my opinion then, Shakespeare, looking for a famous name that at least some part of his public might recognize, thought firstly of a name to be found in contemporaneous writing, known to the noblemen, the travellers and to the artists who had visited the continent. Giulio Romano seemed then a good choice, since Shakespeare could have heard him mentioned in his circle of friends and patrons, or through one of the many sources quoted in the first part of this work. Moreover, the name itself, Giulio Romano – being so emblematic of Italian greatness, with its reference both to the capital of the state and to its most celebrated and famous emperor – must have been particularly appealing to Shakespeare, because of its capacity to suggest in a most immediate way the ambiguous power of Italian artistic hegemony. On the other hand, the erroneous idea of Romano being a great sculptor could have derived from confusion generated in general conversation – some of those same travellers speaking of Giulio Romano could have also recounted the sculptures of the other Romano – or from a quick reading of Castiglione's

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Cortegiano, the only mentioned source that Shakespeare had most likely read. And, perhaps, from the recollection of an excellent sculptor called Romano, carving amazing statues for a famous Isabella, discovered in Tebaldeo's sonnets; an artist whose chisel perfected Nature's creatures, connected in Shakespeare's mind with the image of the breathing and wonderfully life-like statue of a dead woman, desperately beloved by a man called Leone. A man continually praying for it to awaken.

(Endnotes)

1 William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, Oxford Shakespeare, 2005, V.ii, 95-101.

2 Arthur Lytton Sells, *The Italian Influence in English Poetry from Chaucer to Southwell*, Indiana University Press, 1955.

3 Sir Sidney Lee, *Shakespeare and the Italian Renaissance*, Oxford University Press, 1915.

4 Mario Praz, 'Shakespeare e l'Italia', in *Caleidoscopio Shakespeariano*, Adriatica Editrice, 1969, 105.

5 Stephen Orgel, *Imagining Shakespeare. A History of Text and Vision*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 121.

6 Thomas Coryate's journey in Italy, started on the 14th of May 1608, is recounted in his *Coryat's Crudities*, probably circulating in London before its publication in 1611.

7 Inigo Jones' knowledge of Giulio's style is suggested by his gloss on a copy of Palladio's *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura*.

8 Jonson counts Romano among the 'six famous painters in Italy who were excellent and emulous of the ancients': 'Raphael de Urbino, Michel Angelo Buonarroti, Titian, Antonio of Correggio, Sebastian of Venice, Julio Romano, and Andrea del Sarto'. Ben Jonson, *Timber, or Discoveries*, Syracuse University Press, 1953, 35.

9 'I would, if price or prayer could them get, / Send in what or Romano, Tintoret, / Titian, or Raphael, Michelangelo, / Have left in fame to equal, or outgo / The old Greek hands in picture, or in stone'. Ben Jonson, *To the Right Honourable, the Lord Treasurer of England an Epigram*, in *Poems*, Oxford University Press, 1975, 250. Both these works were published after Shakespeare's composition of *The Winter's Tale*, therefore can not be considered as direct sources of Shakespeare's mention of Giulio, but they are prove of Ben Jonson's knowledge of the Italian artist, and consequently of the possibility that Shakespeare became acquainted with Giulio's fame through his colleague.

10 See: Maria del Sapio Garbero, 'Plica Ex Plica: Ermione e Perdita', in *Le Forme del Teatro. La Posa Eroica di Ofelia. Saggi sul Personaggio Femminile nel Teatro Elisabettiano*, vol. 7, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003; Orgel, *Imagining Shakespeare*; Ernst Gombrich, "'That rare Italian Master...'" Giulio Romano, Court Architect, Painter and Impresario', in *Splendours of the Gonzaga*, 1981; Leonard Barkan, "'Living Sculptures": Ovid, Michelangelo and *The Winter's Tale*', in *ELH*, 48, 4, 1981, 639-667.

11 In regards to Shakespeare's Italian, see: Jason Lawrence, "'Who the Devil Taught Thee so Much Italian?'" *Italian Language Learning and Literary Imitation in Early Modern England*, Manchester University Press, 2011.

12 See: Barnett Jerome Sokol, *Art and Illusion in The Winter's Tale*, Manchester University Press, 1994; John M. Lothian, 'Shakespeare's Knowledge of Aretino's Plays', in *Modern Language Review*, 25, 1930, 415-424; Claudia Corradini Ruggiero, 'La Fama dell'Aretino in Inghilterra e alcuni suoi influssi su Shakespeare', in *Rivista di Letterature Moderne e Comparate*, 29, 1976, 182-203; Gombrich, "'That rare Italian Master...'"

13 See for instance: Maria Palermo Concolato, 'Aretino nella Letteratura Inglese del Cinquecento', in *Pietro Aretino nel Cinquecentenario della Nascita. Atti del Convegno di Roma-Viterbo-Arezzo (28 settembre-1 ottobre 1992), Toronto (23-24 ottobre 1992), Los Angeles (27-29 ottobre 1992)*, Salerno Editrice, 1995.

14 The indignation with which the volume was received in Italy is well expressed in Vasari's 'Vita di Marcantonio Raimondi', the engraver responsible for the publication and circulation of Giulio's drawings:

Fece dopo queste cose Giulio Romano in venti fogli intagliare da Marcantonio in quanti diversi modi, attitudini e posture giacciono i disonesti uomini con le donne e, che fu peggio, a ciascuno modo fece messer Pietro Aretino un disonestissimo sonetto, intantoché io non so qual fusse più brutto lo spettacolo

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dei disegni di Giulio all'occhio, o le parole dell'Aretino agl'orecchi: la quale opera fu da papa Clemente molto biasimata; e se, quando ella fu pubblicata, Giulio non fusse già partito per Mantova, ne sarebbe stato dallo sdegno del Papa aspramente castigato; e poiché ne furono trovati in questi disegni in luoghi dove meno si sarebbe pensato, furono non solamente proibiti, ma preso Marcantonio e messo in prigione: e n'avrebbe avuto il malanno, se il cardinale de' Medici e Baccio Bandinelli, che in Roma serviva il Papa, non l'avessero scampato. E nel vero non si dovrebbero i doni di Dio adoperare, come molte volte si fa, in vituperio del mondo et in cose abominevoli del tutto.

Giorgio Vasari, 'Vita di Marcantonio Bolognese e d'altri Intagliatori di Stampe', in *Le Vite de' più Eccellenti Pittori Scultori e Architettori. Nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, vol. 5, S.P.E.S., 1984, 13.

15 Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, in *Ben Jonson*, Oxford University Press, 1985, III.iv, 96-97.

16 Jonson describes the oval room imagined by Sir Epicure Mammon as 'Filled with such pictures as Tiberius took / From Elephantis, and dull Aretine / But coldly imitated'. Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, in *Ben Jonson*, II.ii, 43-45.

17 John Donne, 'Satire 4', in *The Complete English Poems*, Penguin, 1996, v. 70.

18 Some sources, such as John Marston's satires and the manuscript *The Newe Metamorphosis* (1600-1615), seem in fact to suggest the idea that Giulio's drawings were imported from Italy and even publicly sold.

19 In this letter, for instance, Aretino's good opinion of Giulio Romano is very eloquently expressed:

Voi sete grato, grave e giocondo ne la conversazione; e grande, mirabile, e stupendo nel magistero. Onde chi vede le fabbriche e le istorie uscite de lo ingegno e de le mani vostre, ammira non altrimenti che s'egli scorgesse le case degli Iddii in essempli, e i miracoli de la natura in colori. Proponvi il mondo, ne la invenzione e ne la vaghezza, a qualunque toccò mai compasso e pennello. E ciò direbbe anche Apelle e Vitruvio, s'eglino comprendessero gli edifici e le pitture che avete fatto e ordinato in cotesta città, rimbellita, magnificata da lo spirito de i vostri concetti anticamente moderni e modernamente antichi.

Pietro Aretino, *Lettere*, vol. 2, Salerno Editrice, 1998, letter 380.

20 Pietro Aretino, *Il Marescalco*, in *Pietro Aretino. Teatro*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1971, IV.v, 13.

21 Aretino, *Marescalco*, V.iii, 8.

22 Rita Severi, 'What's in a Name. La Fortuna di Giulio Romano nel Periodo Shakespeariano', in *Giulio Romano. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi su "Giulio e l'Espansione Europea del Rinascimento"*, 1989. The critic underlines the fact that there might be some passages, in the treatises, echoing some verses from *The Winter's Tale*. In the English translation of Lomazzo's *Trattato* we read that 'Painting is an arte; because it imitateth naturall thinges most precisely, and is the *Counterfeiter* and (as it were) the very *Ape* of nature', and, in a passage devoted to those painters who imitate marble forms 'as neere the nature of the things as was possible', we find Giulio Romano's name. Richard Haydocke, *A Tracte Containing the Artes of Curious Paintinage, Carvinge and Buildinge written first in Italian by Jo. Paul Lomatius painter of Milan and Englished by R. H. Student in Physik*, 1598, II, 202.

23 Giovan Paolo Lomazzo's *Trattato* was translated by Richard Haydocke in 1598, and the treatise by Sebastiano Serlio was translated by Robert Peake in 1611, but was already circulating in England before this date.

24 Claudia Corti, 'The Winter's Tale tra «Speaking Pictures» e «Dumb Poesies»', in *Il Teatro Inglese tra Cinquecento e Seicento. Testi e contesti*, CLUEP, 2011.

25 STC 3947, sig C4v.

26 Mario Praz, 'Su un passo del "Riccardo III"', in *Caleidoscopio Shakespeariano*.

27 Elisabetta Cori, *La messa in scena dell'inganno. Iconografia e retorica manieristica nel The Winter's Tale*, Pàtron, 2000.

28 'The sixteenth century regarded painting and sculpture as handmaidens of architecture. A man who had one skill would very likely be credited with the others. [...] The disturbed critics overlook, too, it seems to me, the loose way in which the sixteenth century interchanged the technical terms of the two arts. A statue was a picture; a statue was painted – they were of course literally painted as often as not; both statues and pictures were counterfeits and shadows of the life'. Margaret Farrand Thorp, 'Shakespeare and the Fine Arts', in *PMLA*, 46, 3, 1931, 672-693 (686).

29 Orgel argues that Shakespeare's choice could be based not only on Vasari's epitaphs, but also on the erotic nature of Giulio Romano's art, as described in some passages of Vasari's *Vite*.

30 'In dying, Julius Romanus took away with him three of the arts, (no wonder), he himself was the fourth', translation mine. Giorgio Vasari, 'Vita di Giulio Romano', in *Le Vite*, vol. 5, 82.

31 'Juppiter saw sculpted and painted bodies breathe, and the houses of mortals made equal to those in heaven,

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through the skill of Giulio Romanus. Therefore, being angry, he summoned the council of all the gods, to take him away from Earth, because he could not stand being defeated or equalled by a mortal', translation mine. Vasari, 'Vita di Giulio Romano', 82.

32 William Warburton was probably the first critic to notice Shakespeare's mistake, stating that: 'He makes of this famous Painter, a statuary; but, what is worst of all, a *painter of statues*'. William Warburton, in *The Winter's Tale. A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*, Lippincott, 1898, 284. At the beginning of the twentieth century Lionel Cust denounced the same ignorance, by writing: 'Shakespeare cannot be safely credited with real acquaintance with Continental art. His solitary allusion to an Italian artist is to the aforesaid Giulio Romano [...] There is no evidence of his skill in sculpture outside an epitaph quoted by Vasari'. Lionel Cust, *Shakespeare's England: An Account of the Life and Manners of His Age*, vol. 2, Clarendon Press, 1916, 10.

33 Frederick Hartt, *Giulio Romano*, Yale University Press, 1958.

34 Terence Spencer, 'The Statue of Hermione', in *Essays and Studies*, 30, 1977, 39-49.

35 Pierluigi Leone de Castris, *Studi su Gian Cristoforo Romano*, Paparo, 2010.

36 Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby, J. M. Dent & Sons, 1975, 79.

37 Denver Ewing Baughan, 'Shakespeare's Probable Confusion of the Two Romanos', in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 36, 1937, 35-39 (39).

38 For a biography of Ambrogio Leone, see: Luigi Ammirati, *Ambrogio Leone. Nolano*, Scuola Tipo-Litografica 'Istituto Anselmi', 1983.

39 See: Ambrogio Leone, 'Letter to Iacopo Sannazaro', in Iacopo Sannazaro, *Opere Volgari*, Laterza, 1961.

40 Ercole Strozzi contributed with six epigrams, later included in his *Epigrammatum Libellus*.

41 See: Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 3, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958.

42 Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, IV.iv, 88.

43 Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, IV.iv, 95-96.

44 Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, V.iii, 68.

45 Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, V.iii, 70.

46 Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, V.ii, 97-98.

47 Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, V.iii, 63-64.

48 Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, V.iii, 77-79.

49 'Let no man mock me, / For I will kiss her'. Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, V.iii, 79-80.

50 Antonio Tebaldeo, *Rime*, Franco Cosimo Panini Editore, 1992, 223, vv. 5-6.

51 Tebaldeo, *Rime*, 229, v. 2.

52 Tebaldeo, *Rime*, 225, vv. 1-3.

53 Tebaldeo, *Rime*, 251.

54 Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, IV.iv, 95-96.

55 The entire statue scene revolves around the paradox of a living being, believed to be a seemingly living statue. This paradox is central to the discussion about the conflict between art and nature which, as we have seen, is one of the play's main themes. In fact, the celebration of the Italian artist's skill in carving the marvellous statue of the queen is eventually reversed by the discovery of the real nature of the statue: not artificial, but natural. As John Kerrigan writes: 'she is indeed, as Paulina warns, freshly painted, yet painted with Nature's own hand'. John Kerrigan, *On Shakespeare and Early Modern Literature*, Oxford University Press, 2001, 40.

56 The marble bust of Beatrice d'Este was probably sculpted by Giancristoforo Romano in Ferrara, before her marriage, or in Milan, a short time after it. Venturi was the first scholar to individuate in the bust of Beatrice now in the Louvre the sculpture mentioned by Isabella d'Este in her letter. See: Marc Bormand, in *Mantegna, 1431-1506*, Hazan, 2008, 328.

57 Aretino, *Marescalco*, V.iii, 8.

58 Aretino, *Marescalco*, V.iii, 8.

59 STC 3947, sig C4v.

60 Jonson, *Timber*, 35.

61 Baughan, 'Shakespeare's Probable Confusion', 36-37.

The ‘old fantastical duke of dark corners’. The Tradition of the Italianate Disguised Ruler and
Measure for Measure’s Questioning of Divine Kingship

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In February 2008 the appeal lying in the news leak of Prince Harry’s secret deployment in Afghanistan showed the topicality of the royal disguise motif, in real-life situations as in literary works. In effect, in his recent contribution, Kevin A. Quarmby has revealed that the fascination with the royal disguise is a timeless literary pattern which may be traced back to the Shakespearean *Henry V* (IV, 1) or even earlier to the classical Odysseus.¹

Remarkably, the aftermath of James’s I ascendancy to the throne of England saw a concentration of plays, generally regarded as a synchronic commentary on James’s regime, revolving around a disguised male authority figure.² Within this cluster of works a ‘theatrical vogue’³ developed, in which typically an Italianate disguised duke – moving undetected among his subjects to wield his power once again – was deployed in order to engage in domestic debates about national social disorder and the identity of sovereignty.⁴ This group of Italianate plays includes Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* (performance recorded in 1604; published 1623), Marston’s *The Malcontent* (published 1604) and *The Fawn* (published 1606), Middleton’s *The Phoenix* (published 1607), and Sharpham’s *The Fleire* (published 1607).

Interestingly however, Shakespeare’s play deviates from the norms of the so-called Italianate ‘disguised ruler plays’⁵ for at least two reasons. Firstly, Shakespeare’s disguised ruler play, set in Vienna, does not deal with the disorder of an Italian city state. Nevertheless, Shakespeare’s version employs Italian names for its main characters and draws its plot from an Italian source.⁶ More significantly, Shakespeare’s conspicuous Duke does not undergo any self-educating process, while, on the contrary, the other Jacobean disguised rulers achieve domestic formation through their surreptitious observation of Italian dukedoms at risk. In other words, the Italian negative examples of failed leadership, drawn from the sixteenth-century political writings of Machiavelli, Guicciardini and Castiglione, provided the Jacobean dramatists with historical types, offering them the opportunity to investigate the identity of national monarchy.⁷

As a result, if the development of the disguised ruler plays may be understood as a response to James’s accession,⁸ Shakespeare adopts and adapts such a theatrical vogue neither to flatter nor to despise James I.⁹ What I shall attempt to demonstrate, through a close reading of the last speech of the third act and a linguistic analysis of the final act, is that the disguised duke of *Measure for Measure* goes beyond a fictional representation of the King. Rather, Shakespeare’s version challenges Tudor assumptions about the legitimacy of the ruler as God’s representative on earth, as set forth by James’s works *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598 in Scotland, republished in 1603, London) and *Basilicon Doron* (1599, 1603).

In order to achieve this aim, Shakespeare provides the disguised role with a meta-

theatrical function through which the Duke can create a comedy-within-the-comedy, and consequently manipulate his subjects, starting from the very beginning of the play. As Agostino Lombardo explains, ‘Nel momento in cui affida ad Angelo il proprio ruolo, la propria “parte”, egli inventa una situazione teatrale e dà l’avvio a uno spettacolo che è sì quello che noi vediamo ma è anche il *suo* spettacolo [...] la *sua* rappresentazione’.¹⁰ However, the Duke’s staging skills will be continuously put at risk by the other characters’ actions, thus impeding a fully-fledged assimilation between the disguised duke and his directing role. As a result, not only does the Duke’s thwarted plan provide the audience with meta-theatrical insight about how a play works in itself, but it also generates a dialectic between the represented authority on stage and the actual kingship.¹¹ The references to James I should not be considered, however, as a direct critique of the King himself; the parallel between the Duke and the new monarch aims at questioning the concept of divine kingship instead.

To better determine how Shakespeare’s meta-theatrical duke problematises the divine attribute of sovereignty, I will first examine the connection between the Italianate disguised duke in *Measure for Measure* and his counterpart in Machiavelli’s anecdote, in order to show the complexity of the Shakespearean Duke, who intertwines the Italian influence with James’s sources. Consequently, I shall discuss the extent to which the Duke is actually Jamesian and how the parallel does challenge James’s political and theological ideology. Taking my cue from Jonathan Hope’s recent contribution, I will then contend that the Duke’s speech at the end of the third act is a challenging and imperfect meta-theatrical embodiment of the Jamesian model. Finally, within the critical framework of stylistics and drawing on the concept of foregrounding, I propose a close analysis of the fifth act, focusing on the marked usage of the topic termed *grace* as a dubious formula for eventually entitling the Duke a divine-like ruler. In terms of a historical investigation into the linguistic disproportion between uttered words and titles, and between expected and achieved social and theatrical roles, I intend to argue that Shakespeare’s quasi-divine duke aims at putting into question the divinely ordained nature of monarchy. More generally, it foreshadows the gradual removal of the divine presence from the political and social sphere of human actions on the threshold of early modernity.

The Machiavellian Duke

In nineteenth- and twentieth-century criticism the influence of Machiavelli on Shakespeare has been a topic of much debate,¹² and also the object of misleading interpretations and oversimplification, depicting the ‘Tudor Machiavel’ as ‘a pantomime demon who is easily attributed responsibility for all kinds of wrongdoing on the part of fallible and easily led rulers’.¹³

In the light of a less ideological approach,¹⁴ I would like to focus on Remirro’s episode in *Il Principe*, which bears some similarities to Angelo’s appointment in *Measure for Measure*, as first spotted by Norman N. Holland.¹⁵ In chapter 7 Machiavelli relates how Cesare Borgia, after taking the dukedom of Romagna, resolved to rule more firmly and put in charge of it Messer Remirro de Orco:

a cruel and unscrupulous man [...] the fullest authority there. In no time at all Remirro reduced the territory to a peaceful and united state, and in so doing, the Duke greatly increased his prestige. Afterwards, the Duke judged that such excessive authority was no longer required, since he feared that it might become odious, and in the middle of the territory he set up a civil tribunal with a very distinguished president, in which each city had its own advocate. Because he realized that the rigorous measures of the past

had generated a certain amount of hatred, in order to purge the minds of the people and to win them completely over to his side he wanted to show that, in any form of cruelty had occurred, it did not originate from him but from the violent nature of his minister. Having found the occasion to do so, one morning at Cesena he had Messer Remirro's body laid out in two pieces on the piazza, with a block of wood and a bloody sword beside it.¹⁶

In no other cases in the accepted Shakespearean canon does such a detailed and precise parallel to Machiavelli emerge, and I agree with Bawcutt's claim that 'we are obliged to conclude that Shakespeare could not have written what he did without the stimulus of Machiavelli'.¹⁷ Nevertheless, though the judgment scene of *Measure for Measure* forms the counterpart to Borgia's act, the Duke's episode produces a different outcome. In effect, though Angelo's appointment is intended to restore order in Vienna, as in Remirro's case, the deputy's incident gradually turns into a test for his rectitude. By the same token, if on one level the Duke's merciful pardon saves Angelo from his execution, on another level the favourable result does leave the issue of Vienna's immorality unsolved.

Given the importance of the Borgia story in modelling the Shakespearean Duke, Machiavelli should not be considered in isolation as if he was 'the only sixteenth-century political writer of any importance',¹⁸ but as Alessandra Petrina suggests 'in order to make a fair estimate of Machiavelli's influence in sixteen-century England the scholar must investigate many areas which at first sight may seem to have little connection with Machiavelli'.¹⁹ For this reason, I would like to explore the similarities between James's I political model and the Shakespearean Duke, whose first recorded performance was on St Stephen's Night 1604,²⁰ only a year after the King had republished both *The True Law of Free Monarchies* and *Basilicon Doron* with great success in London. As Lever has commented, 'Shakespeare and his company, honoured and patronized by the new king, could hardly have been impervious to the political atmosphere of the time or quite uninfluenced by the most widely discussed book of 1603'.²¹

The Duke as Jamesian

As far as James's I attitude is concerned, some historical events are particularly relevant to the assimilation of the Duke as 'very Jamesian'.²² Firstly, the Shakespearean Duke expresses the same distaste for the noisy crowds as the King did against the unruly London mob: 'I love the people, / But do not like to stage me to their eyes: / Though it do well, I do not relish well / Their loud applause and *Aves* vehement (I, 1, 68-70)'.²³ In another passage, the Duke restates his willingness to keep the over-enthusiastic crowds at a distance when he declares to have 'ever lov'd the life remov'd' (I, 3, 8).

In addition, on more than one occasion, James suspended a death sentence in order to demonstrate that justice should be combined with mercy, as the Duke with Angelo in the fifth act.²⁴ Accordingly, James had recommended temperance in the administration of justice to his son Henry, to whom his best-selling book *Basilicon Doron* was dedicated:²⁵

make [...] Temperance [...] but I meane of that wise moderation, that first commanding your selfe, shall as a Queene command all the affections and passions of your mind; [...] euen in your most vertuous actions, make euer moderation to bee the chiefe ruler. For although holinesse be the first and most requisite qualitie of a Christian, [...] yet yee remember how in the conclusion of my first booke, I aduised you to moderate all your

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outwarde actions flowing there-fra. The like say I now of Justice, which is the greatest vertue, that properly belongeth to a Kinges office.

Vse Justice, but with such moderation, as it turne not in tyrannie: otherwaies *summum ius is summa iniuria*.²⁶

Much as James showed his public interest in the close relationship between justice and mercy, so the Duke suggests to use both ‘mortality and mercy’ (I, 1, 44), when committing his government to Angelo. But another principle from *Basilicon Doron* is given even more prominence in *Measure for Measure*, that of displaying virtue in action:²⁷ ‘Remember then, that this glistring worldlie glorie of Kings is giuen them by God, to teach them to preasse so to glister and shine before their people, in al works of sanctification & righteousnes, that their persons as bright lampes of godlines and vertue may, going in and out before their people, giue light to al their steps’.²⁸ And also: ‘For it is not enough that yee haue and retaine (as prisoners) within your selfe neuer so many good qualities and vertues, except yee employ them, and set them on worke, for the weale of them that are committed to your charge: *Virtutis enim laus omnis in actione consistit*’.²⁹

Likewise, using the same metaphor of the lamp when appointing Angelo, the Duke advises his deputy to actively practise his virtues, drawing from the biblical parable of the candlestick (Luke VIII, 16):

Thyself and thy belongings
Are not thine own so proper as to waste
Thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee.
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, 29-35 – my emphasis)

Not only does the Duke suggest that his substitute should promote his own virtues, but he also effectively embodies James’s advice on how to be an efficient monarch when, disguised as a friar, he sets up his comedy-within-the-comedy at the end of the third act.

He who the sword of heaven will bear
Should be as holy as severe:
Pattern in himself to know,
Grace to stand, and virtue go:
More nor less than others paying
Than by self-offences weighing. (III, 2, 254-59)

The sententious Duke’s rhyming speech provides a respite from the action, thereby marking the point in which the disguised Duke embraces a double role. On one level, he simultaneously assumes the role of director of his comedy, so that the play switches in tone from a tragic beginning towards the final happy conclusion – thus its definition as tragicomedy.

On another level, he takes the King’s advice on virtue in action and absorbs the Jamesian model of the divine-like ruler by referring to several passages of his works. The notion of the king as God’s representative on earth had notoriously already been asserted in James’ tract *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, in which he compared the sovereignty to a ‘forme of gouernement, as resembling the Diuinitie’ (ll. 5-6, 59) and asserted the king to be ‘Gods lieutenant in earth’ (ll.

17-8, 69; see also ll. 37-38, 61).³⁰ The first section of the soliloquy, in which the Duke states the pattern of conduct to be followed by a ruler, is a distinct echo from James's *Basilicon Doron*, 'And as your company should bee a *paterne* to the rest of the people [...] living light to your servants *to walke in the path of vertue*' (my emphasis).³¹ Moreover, when using the expression 'by self-offences weighing' the Duke is again referring to James's *Basilicon*, specifically to the opening sentence in Book I 'As he cannot be thought worthy to rule and command others that cannot rule and dantone [subdue] is owne proper affections and appetites'.³²

Though the Duke seems to agree fully with the monarch's statements on kingship, the legitimacy of the Jamesian theological and political pattern will soon be put to question when the disguised Duke is forced to change his theatrical plans, and improvise his divine-like actions, because of his subjects' unexpected reactions to his design.³³ Therefore, if Shakespeare explicitly compliments the King, modelling the Duke's character on his figure, on the other hand, in his meta-theatrical role, he implicitly questions the notion of divine kingship and the pattern for achieving the monarch's supposed example.

Moreover, the gradual demeaning of the godly model is already anticipated by the Duke's impersonal and indefinite approach to his Jamesian declaration. In his soliloquy, he wishes for the possibility of a just government – hence the presence of future forms such as *will* and *shall* – but, simultaneously, the remarking occurrence of modal verbs – *must*, *should*, *may* – is evidence of the fact that his wish lingers in the field of volition and possibility.³⁴ The uncertainty expressed in the frequency of modals is stressed also by an abundance of non-finite verbs, often rhyming with each other (*to know*; *to stand*; *paying/weighing*, *striking/linking*; *to weed*; *making*; *to draw*; *exacting/contracting*). Non-finite verb forms lack any subjects or tenses, therefore they underline, once again, the ambiguity implied in the Duke's asserting formula.³⁵

Foregrounded grace: a questioning on power and language

As I have attempted to demonstrate so far, by the deployment of the imperfect comedy-within-the-comedy, *Measure for Measure* reflects the anxiety and the expectations for political renewal after Queen Elizabeth, whose death was felt as the end of an age. More interestingly, Shakespeare shifts the attention from an explicit political approach to the issue of national divine sovereignty to a meta-literary investigation into the fragmentation of the late-medieval, divine-like structured world, the Elizabethan chain of being.³⁶ Through the disproportion between the embodiment of James's political theorization in the Duke's utterance (and his failed efforts in performing both his divine role and his staging task), the playwright foreshadows the epistemological change which saw the gradual removal of the divine presence from the political and the social sphere of human actions. To do so, the tragicomedy undertakes a linguistic survey which highlights a mismatch between words and actions, and between expected and achieved social and theatrical roles.³⁷

For this reason, I would like to present my conclusions from a linguistic analysis of the fifth act of *Measure for Measure* in order to provide further evidence of my interpretation of the play, and particularly I will concentrate on the term *grace*. The relevance of the term *grace* in *Measure for Measure* depends on its semantic relationship between its dominant meanings as 'virtuous propriety' and 'divine favour' and the characterization of the virtuous and merciful Duke as stated by the Jamesian model. More specifically, I will focus on the foregrounded, marked usage of this term in the final act against a semantic variation, or an otherwise less marked, use of *grace* in the other Acts.³⁸

With the support of a number of concordance programmes, I conducted a rough survey of the frequency of the term *grace* in *Measure for Measure*, which indeed pointed out a semantic ambiguity and multiplicity of this word throughout the entire play, except for the fifth act.³⁹ Despite the semantic variety of *grace* between the first and the fourth acts,⁴⁰ the fifth act presents a unique usage of this word when referring to the Duke as *your (royal) grace*. In effect, the term can serve as a complimentary periphrasis, together with ‘his, her, your, my lord’s, the king’s grace’ (OED), for addressing a king or queen, a duke or duchess, or an archbishop. Interestingly however, this is the only occurrence of the word *grace* in the fifth act used to address the Duke alone – 8 concordances out of 24, except for line 371. In linguistic terms, this internal technique of foregrounding is defined by the expression ‘more of the same’ and its deployment in *Measure for Measure* is confirmed by a closer examination of the clusters of words surrounding the term *grace*. Within a selection of a double-sized range enclosing the word *grace*, the possessive *your* is the highest rated – 7 out of 24 occurrences, 5 of which are in the fifth act – followed by *royal grace* with 2 hits in the fifth act. Hence, the repetition of the flattery expression *your (royal) grace* towards the Duke prevails against an internal backdrop of semantic variation in the rest of the play. In other words, the internal foregrounding in the fifth act consists in the absence of the same semantic variety of the term *grace* which characterized the previous textual sections. These are the occurrences of the term in the entire fifth act:

Happy return be to *your royal grace!* (l.3)
 That’s I, and’t like *your Grace* (l. 78)
 Heaven shield *your Grace* from woe (l. 121)
 For certain words he spake against *your Grace* (l. 132)
 Bless’d be *your royal Grace!* (l. 140)
 Did, as he vouches, misreport *your Grace* (l. 150)
 When I perceive *your Grace*, like power divine (l.366)
 Is all the *grace* I beg (l. 371)

I have space for only a few observations on the semantic variation of *grace* in the first four acts. According to the OED, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the word *grace* encompassed three main clusters of meaning: (i) pleasant quality, gracefulness; (ii) favour; (iii) thanksgiving,⁴¹ which are all displayed simultaneously in Lucio’s pun at the beginning of the play: ‘Grace is grace, despite of all controversy; as for example, thou thyself art a wicked villain, despite of all grace’ (I, 2, 24-26).⁴² With regard to the first two clusters of meaning of *grace* as ‘pleasant quality’ and ‘favour,’ the first four acts mainly intend the term as either *virtuous propriety* – generally referring to Isabella (and her ‘prosperous art’ of speech in I, 2, 174) and to the Duke (I, 1, 23 as ‘honourable virtue’; IV, 3, 134-6 as ‘favourable or benignant regard’) – or *divine favour* as in the disguised Duke’s assertion ‘grace to stand, and virtue go’ (III, 2, 257). Therefore, the final complimentary expression *your (royal) grace* addressed to the Duke appoints him as a *virtuous ruler displaying his divine favour* and, ultimately, defines him by those Jamesian qualities on which he modelled his authority.

Due to the accepted notion of arbitrariness in Renaissance linguistic theory, the correctness of a linguistic utterance was not judged in terms of its coherence to a unique and exact meaning, but it depended on *decorum*, or the capability of properly fitting words, within a given context, in an artful style.⁴³ Given that, the Duke’s entitling formula *your (royal) grace* fits perfectly in the given context in which the Duke attempts to assume the model of divine-like ruler. Unfortunately, however, the complimentary phrase does not entirely measure up to its expected actions. From a linguistic perspective, therefore, the discrepancy between uttered

words and their resulting actions is generated by confusion between what is said and what is meant – the signifier and its possible significance lose their inner coherence – they are, in fact, ‘out of joint’ (*Hamlet*, I, 5, 188).⁴⁴ If it is true that Angelo eventually perceives the Duke *your grace, like power divine* (l. 367), it is even more evident that the disguised duke succeeded in his plan by virtue of the real divine providence, that in the previous Act provided him with a solution to Claudio’s death.

Thereby, on the one hand, the disguised Duke declares that he behaves as if he had pattern in himself, to be in other words the kind of authority set forth in James’s *Basilicon*, that is a ruler displaying active virtue and mercy, whose sovereignty derives from God. On the other hand, though in his noble intentions the Duke is Jamesian, his actions are another matter, as demonstrated by the other characters’ threatening behaviour. More than mighty actions, the Duke is bound to improvise his initiatives in a quixotic project,⁴⁵ whose beneficial result is eventually yielded by the actual divine Providence through Ragozine’s head. Therefore, the Duke’s divine embodiment as *your grace* during the scene of the final theatrical judgement is not entirely convincing; in other words, the shadow of Lucio’s epithet, the ‘old fantastical duke of dark corners’ (IV, 3, 156), still looms over the Duke’s character. For this reason, Louise Schleiner noted how the plot structure of the play goes continuously on ‘Tit for tat, measure for measure,’⁴⁶ so that the controversy over the figure of the Duke ‘may never end. For every critic who wants to emphasize grace, mercy, and the undoubted moral improvement of the major characters, there will be another who finds the duke a meddler, the humor rancid, the marriages hollow’.⁴⁷

In conclusion, the dialectical questioning of the Duke, by his imperfect imitation of the Jamesian virtuous model of the godlike ruler, prevents any interpretations of his character either as a flattering reflection of James I or, on the contrary, as simply a parody of the King. Neither should the Duke’s disguised performance be regarded as an educational process through the study of his failed attempts to behave as a Jamesian ruler, unlike Marston’s or Middleton’s plays, in which their disguised rulers increased their political awareness. Analogously, the Duke’s comedy cannot parallel a Christian parable, as Stephen Marx recently asserted, drawing from a well-established scholarly tradition which understands the play as an expression of the main principle of Christianity.⁴⁸ Rather, the disguised Duke’s meta-theatrical play highlights a historical fracture in the supposed divine-right authority and a more profound epistemological shift into the fragmented early modern world, which is the setting of Shakespeare’s great tragedies. Hence, the Duke’s play-within-the-play does not merely represent life on stage, but, simultaneously, it encompasses the decline of an era.⁴⁹ Though the comedy constantly attempts to stem such decline, the tensions remain. Thus, tit for tat, measure for measure.

(Endnotes)

1 Kevin A. Quarmby, *The Disguised Ruler in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, Ashgate, 2012, 2.

2 As Beatrice Groves notes, ‘Middleton *Phoenix* (1604), Marston’s *Malcontent* (1604) and *Fawn* (1604), Day’s *Law Tricks* (c. 1604), Dekker and Webster’s *Westward Ho!* (1605), the anonymous *London Prodigal* (1605), Edward Sharpham’s *The Fleire* (1607), Dekker’s *Honest Whore Part II* (1608), and Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* (1604). Samuel Rowley’s *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1604) has a section in which the king disguises himself (Scenes 5-7) and Middleton’s *Your Five Gallants* (1607) also has a disguised protagonist’ in Beatrice Groves, *Text and Traditions: Religion in Shakespeare 1592-1604*, Clarendon Press, 2007, 168n.

3 Thomas A. Pendleton, ‘Shakespeare’s disguised duke play: Middleton, Marston, and the sources of *Measure for Measure*’, in ‘*Fanned and Winnowed Opinions*’: *Shakespearean essays Presented to Harold Jenkins*, ed. John W. Mahon and Thomas A. Pendleton, Methuen, 1987, 82. See also Vito Amoroso, ‘In a Time of Unrest: A Role for the Theatre in *Measure for Measure*’, in *Italian Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, ed. Michele Marrapodi and Giorgio Melchiori, University of Delaware Press, 1999, 97-108; Michael J. Redmond, *Shakespeare*

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and *Intertextuality: The Transition of Cultures Between Italy and England in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Michele Marrapodi, Bulzoni, 2000, 193-214; Michael J. Redmond, "'Low Comedy' and Political Cynicism: Parodies of the Jacobean Disguised-Duke Play," *Renaissance Forum* 7 (2004), accessed April 18, 2013. <http://www.hull.ac.uk/renforum/v7/redmond.htm>.

4 Michael J. Redmond, *Shakespeare, Politics, and Italy: Intertextuality on the Jacobean Stage*, Ashgate, 2009, 1-3.

5 Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display. The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres*, Methuen, 1986, 154.

6 Redmond, *Shakespeare and Intertextuality*, 196.

7 Id., *Shakespeare, Politics, and Italy*, 3. In this regard, I do not completely agree with Ivo Kamps, who considers Middleton's *The Phoenix* and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* both a positive attempt to soothe the historical and cultural anxiety. See Ivo Kamps, 'Ruling Fantasies and the Fantasies of Rule: *The Phoenix* and *Measure for Measure*', in *Studies of Philology* 92 2, 1995, 248-273.

8 Quarmby, *The Disguised Ruler*, 3.

9 See J. W. Lever, 'Introduction', in William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, ed. J. W. Lever, Arden Shakespeare, 2008, xlviii.

10 Agostino Lombardo, 'L'onesto Duca', in *Measure for Measure: dal testo alla scena*, ed. Mariangela Tempera, Clueb, 1992, 11.

11 Ivi, 12.

12 See Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity From Richard II to Hamlet*, Oxford University Press, 2002, 26-57; N. W. Bawcutt, 'Shakespeare and Machiavelli: A Caveat', *Shakespeare Survey* 63, 2010, 237-238.

13 Alessandra Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles: Two Early Modern Translations of The Prince*, Ashgate, 2009, xi-xii.

14 See Bawcutt, 'Shakespeare and Machiavelli', 237-48; Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles*, xii.

15 Norman H. Holland, 'Measure for Measure: The Duke and The Prince', *Comparative Literature* 11, 1959, 16-20.

16 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated and edited by Peter Bondanella, Oxford University Press, 2005, 27. 'uomo crudele et espedito, al quale dette pienissima potestà. Costui in poco tempo la ridusse pacifica et unita, con grandissima reputazione. Di poi iudicò el duca non essere necessario sí eccessiva autorità, perché dubitava non divenissi odiosa; e preposevi uno iudicio civile nel mezzo della provincia, con uno presidente eccellentissimo, dove ogni città vi aveva lo avvocato suo. E perché conosceva le rigorosità passate averli generato qualche odio, per purgare li animi di quelli populi e guadagnarseli in tutto, volle monstrare che, se crudeltà alcuna era seguíta, non era nata da lui, ma dalla acerba natura del ministro. E presa sopr'a questo occasione, lo fece mettere una mattina, a Cesena, in dua pezzi in sulla piazza, con uno pezzo di legno e uno coltello sanguinoso a canto.' Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, ed. Luigi Firpo, Einaudi, 1961, 25.

17 Bawcutt, 'Shakespeare and Machiavelli', 248.

18 Ivi, 239.

19 Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles*, 3.

20 Edmund K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, Clarendon Press, 1930, vol. II, 331. As Lever claims: 'Taking the various allusions together, there are good grounds for supposing that *Measure for Measure* was written between May and August 1604. The theatres, closed throughout 1603 on account of the plague, re-opened on 9 April 1604; and the play was probably performed for the first time in the summer months of that year' Lever, Introduction, xxxv.

21 Lever, Introduction, xlviii. The idea of the Duke of Vienna modelled on the King was first suggested at the end of the eighteenth century by Edward Chalmers, and later supported by Louis Albrecht, who regarded *Basilicon Doron* as a direct source of Shakespeare's play, and by other scholars, such as Ernest Schanzer and David L. Stevenson, see Lever, introduction, xlviii. Interestingly, D. L. Stevenson even suggests that the title of *Measure for Measure* could be itself a hint to the last part of *Basilicon Doron*, 'And aboue all, let the *measure* of your loue to euery one, be according to the *measure* of his vertue' (*Basilicon Doron*, 161 – my emphasis), see David Lloyd Stevenson, *The Achievement of Shakespeare's Measure for Measure*, Cornell University Press, 1966, 134-166.

22 Stevenson, *The Achievement of Shakespeare's Measure for Measure*, 134.

23 All the quotations from *Measure for Measure* are taken from William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, ed. J. W. Lever, The Arden Shakespeare, 2008.

24 The most well-known episode saw the King amnestying the prisoners accused of conspiracy a moment before the execution at Winchester at the end of 1603, see Lever, Introduction, 1; also Stevenson, *The Achievement of Shakespeare's Measure for Measure*, 155; see also C. A. Bernthal, 'Staging Justice: James I and the Trial Scenes of *Measure for Measure*', *Studies in English Literature* 32 2, 1992, 247-269.

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25 Lever, Introduction, xlix.

26 All the quotations from *Basilikon Doron* are taken from *A Miscellany, containing Richard of Bury's Philobiblon, The Basilikon Doron of King James I, Monks and Giants by John Hooxiam Frere, The Cypress Crown by De La Motte Fouqué, and The Library A Poem by George Crabbe*, Routledge, 1888, 139.

27 Lever, Introduction, xlvi.

28 *Basilikon Doron*, 101.

29 Ivi, 128.

30 All the quotations from *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies* are taken from the edition of *Minor Prose Works of King James VI and I. Daemonologie, The True Lawe of Free Monarchies, A Counterblaste to Tobacco, A Declaration of Sports*, ed. James Craigie, Scottish Text Society, 1982, 57-82.

31 *Basilikon Doron*, 102.

32 Ivi, 100.

33 In the following IV act, the sex drive in Angelo will change his decision of saving Claudio's life despite his sister's accepting the bribe (IV, 2), likewise, the urge for drinking on Barnardine will make him refuse his death execution because he ironically feels 'not fitted for't' (IV, 3, 43), and thus it will impede the Duke to supply a substitute head for Claudio; and, finally, the urge for slandering on Lucio will drive him to accuse the disguised ruler of being 'the old fantastical duke of dark corners' (IV, 3, 156).

34 Hope, *Shakespeare's Grammar*, Arden Shakespeare, 2003, 106.

35 For the syntactic analysis of the last speech in the III act and the linguistic survey of the V act of *Measure for Measure*, I benefited from the recent original studies by Jonathan Hope, who approaches Shakespeare's style and grammar from a linguistic perspective. Important scholarly accounts on the distinctiveness of Shakespeare's use of language have emerged in the past few years. See Jonathan Hope, *Shakespeare's Grammar*; Jonathan Hope, *Shakespeare and Language: Reason, Eloquence and Artifice in the Renaissance*, Arden Shakespeare, 2010; and also Norman Francis Blake, *A Grammar of Shakespeare's Language*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001; *Shakespeare and Language*, ed. Catherine M.S. Alexander, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

36 See E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, Pimlico, 1998. Franco Moretti defines *Measure for Measure* a "restoration drama" insofar as the tragicomedy encourages a late-medieval utopia with which reconciling the disrupted divine-like political and social structure into the theatrical world, see Franco Moretti, *Segni e stili del moderno*, Einaudi, 1987, 76.

37 Lombardo, 'L'onesto Duca', 16.

38 The technique of foregrounding, argued by the Prague School linguistic poetic theorists Jan Mukařovský and Roman Jakobson, derives from the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky. As defined by Roger Fowler, foregrounding occurs 'whenever some item or construction appears in a text with unusual or noticeable frequency and apparently for some valid reason, then cumulatively a distinctive effect emerges' Roger Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism*, Oxford University Press, 1996, 5. This remarkable standing out of an item or construction is intended against a determinate background either external or internal to the text, see Paul Simpson, *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*, Routledge, 2004, 51.

39 At this early stage, my linguistic survey on *grace* focuses on the word frequency and its concordances within this single play. At a further point, I would like to extend my research on the saliency of the term to the entire Shakespearean corpus and to the other Jacobean plays. The frequency survey on the term *grace* was conducted on *Measure for Measure* 1623 Folio text using a freeware concordance programme called "AntConc 3.2.4," developed by Laurence Anthony of Waseda University, Japan, which can generate wordlists, concordance lines and plots, collocations and clusters of words. For other primitive concordance applications on the web, accessed April 18, 2013. <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org>; <http://rp-www.cs.usyd.edu.au/~matty/Shakespeare/>. The analysis has been based on the 1623 Folio text: accessed April 18, 2013. <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/ShAMMF.html>.

40 The term frequency concentrates in the first act (9), while minor frequencies occur in the others (between 2 and 3).

41 I will not examine the meaning of *grace* as thanksgiving, because it only occurs once in the play. According to the OED, *grace* as thanksgiving referred to 'a short prayer either asking a blessing before, or rendering thanks after, a meal'. For a detailed investigation of the term *grace* during the Reformation see Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of Reformation: Grammar and Grace*, Oxford University Press, 2002. For the meanings of *grace* in *Measure for Measure*, see C. T. Onions, *A Shakespeare Glossary*, Clarendon Press, 1958; also Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare lexicon and quotation dictionary: A Complete Dictionary of All the English Words, Phrases, and Constructions in the Works of the Poet*, revised and enlarged by Gregor Sarrazin, Dover Publications, 1971, vol. I.

42 Recent studies on Renaissance language theory, especially those conducted by Jonathan Hope, have demonstrated

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that Shakespeare's ability to play with linguistic and semantic variation drew from the dominant Aristotelian idea of arbitrariness. As a result, polysemy, variation, puns, and even errors, were positively regarded as intrinsic facts of language and means of linguistic enhancement. At that time, the prevailing Aristotelian formula was in contrast to Plato's, which saw rather a direct correspondence among the essence of things, their images and the words expressing them. Nevertheless, commentators aimed at a common linguistic standard for communicative purposes, though they were not following an ideology of standardization. Indeed they were simply concerned that linguistic variation would limit language's primary function, that of a public oral performance. To Renaissance writers, language was essentially speech whose social role could not be prevented by linguistic differences; see Hope, *Shakespeare and Language*, 1-39.

43 See Hope, *Shakespeare and Language*, 95.

44 As also Agostino Lombardo noticed, Hamlet is the first modern character in his acknowledging the duplicity of language. To him, the world is sharply divided between deceitful and seeming words ('Words, words, words' *Hamlet* II.ii.192) and words expressing the truth, the real thing. However, Othello is the authentic tragic hero insofar as he is not able to distinguish between the two kinds of words. Othello, Lear, and Macbeth cannot read, nor understand, the book of Nature and, consequently, the modern tragedy turns into a linguistic tragedy. Language is a deceitful means which leads each hero to his catastrophe. See Agostino Lombardo, *L'eroe tragico moderno: Faust, Amleto, Otello*, Donzelli, 2005, ch. 2-3.

45 Louise Schleiner, 'Providential Improvisation in *Measure for Measure*', *PMLA* 97 2, 1982, 227-236.

46 Ivi, 232-233.

47 Ivi, 233.

48 For a Christian interpretation of *Measure for Measure* see Roy W. Battenhouse, 'Measure for Measure and Christian Doctrine of Atonement', *PMLA* 41, 1946, 1029-1059; Muriel C. Bradbrook, 'Authority, Truth, and Justice in *Measure for Measure*', *English Studies* 68, 1941, 385-399; G. Wilson Knight, 'Measure for Measure and the Gospels', in *Twentieth century interpretations of Measure for measure: a collection of critical essays*, ed. George L. Geckle, Englewood Cliffs, 1970, 27-49; Stephen Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*, Oxford University Press, 2000, 79-102.

49 Moretti, *Segni e stili del moderno*, 91.

DIEGO PASSERA

Elementi di Spettacolarità Italiana per Elisabetta I.
Riflessioni intorno ai *Princely Pleasures* di Kenilworth (1575).

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I *Princely Pleasures* organizzati da Robert Dudley a Kenilworth nel 1575 sono stati analizzati in modo approfondito, ma in generale si è data poca attenzione alla documentata presenza di un artista italiano, che è stato catalogato forse troppo in fretta come semplice acrobata. Specialisti del settore hanno negato più volte e in modo risoluto la possibilità che si sia trattato del membro di una compagnia di comici dell'arte, eppure sentiamo la necessità di mettere in discussione tali posizioni e tentare di percorrere nuove vie investigative. Una serie nutrita di evidenze inspiegabilmente tralasciate e nuove acquisizioni storiografiche danno senso alla nostra ipotesi. Se ad oggi mancano riscontri precisi che possano accertare la presenza di un comico dell'arte a Kenilworth nel 1575, nessuno ne è però emerso a sostegno del contrario. In questo scritto non si troverà alcuna soluzione al problema e le riflessioni condotte intendono essere uno spunto per un futuro lavoro di ricerca, in relazione a una questione spinosa che, proprio per la sua importanza, merita indagini ulteriori e più approfondite. Se nei *Princely Pleasures* si fosse davvero esibito un artista dell'improvvisa, l'occasione diventerebbe infatti un momento capitale per la storia dei contatti tra la spettacolarità inglese e la performatività italiana, in quanto si tratterebbe di una tra le primissime esibizioni di comici dell'arte oltremarina.

Le feste in onore della *Virgin Queen* vennero organizzate nel solco della tradizione arturiana tanto cara a sua Maestà e ai sudditi, ma dai documenti emerge in modo evidente una massiccia presenza di elementi italiani. Leicester fece giungere Federico Zuccari e gli commissionò il ritratto suo e quello di Elisabetta. Le due tavole a grandezza naturale – di cui si conservano solo i disegni preparatori – furono affisse in posizione privilegiata nella grande galleria del palazzo e circondate da più di cinquanta altre in cui erano raffigurati i membri della famiglia e della cerchia politica di Leicester, le figure dei più illustri uomini europei e altri personaggi del mondo antico. Dudley cercava disperatamente di dare nuovo credito alla propria immagine per riguadagnare il potere a corte e il favore della regina, in un momento per lui molto difficile.¹ Anche il curatore dei mirabolanti giochi pirotecnici, la cui identità è a tutt'oggi ignota, era italiano. La notizia si apprende da due documenti. Il primo è una lettera di Henry Killigrew:

The man that desired me to present this enclosed unto your Lordship would gladly know your pleasure therein for it will ask two months' work. If therefore you like his device, it may please you to take order with Mr. Dudley or some other for the furnishing of him with money. By his account the charges will draw to 50*l.*, which sum he desires not to have in his own hands, but that he may receive it by 4*l.* or 5*l.* at a time, and would gladly

also that some by your Lordship's appointment may see how he doth employ the same. The man is honest and I think will serve your turn very well and far better in deed than in words. The 7l. which he had of me is employed about a fountain which he mindeth to present unto the Queen's Majesty – a singular piece of work, whereof the like was never seen in these parts. I beseech your Lordship to let him know your pleasure by my brother or some other, for that I think to go over myself this journey with my Lord of Honsden, if he obtain leave for me as I think he will.²

Il secondo è il progetto dell'italiano:

La prima sera ne'l prato. Si faranno certi artificii dove si vedranno discorrere a torno certi serpenti di fuoco. Il che sara cosa molto piacevole. *Item* otto o dieci pignate con inventioni di cose meravigliose & piacevoli. *Item* de le avi [*sic*] vive volare atorne ne'l aria le quali getteranno fuoco da per tutto. *Item* due cani & due gatti vivi li quali artificiosamente combattranno. La seconda sera ne'l cortile del palazzo. Si vedrà un fonte dal quale scorrera vino acqua & fuoco sette o ott'hore continue. Qual fonte sara cosa degna di vedere per gli suoi meravigliosi artificii quali per essere tanti si lascia di scrivere. *Item* tre ruote di fuoco mirabili & odorifere, & di diversi colori.

La terza sera nel fiume. Si vedrà un dragone grande come un bue, quale volera due o tre volte più alto che la torre di San Paolo, e stando si alto si consumerà tutto di fuoco, & indi usciràn subito da tutto'l corpo cani, e gatti & uccelli li quali voleranno, & getteranno fuoco da per tutto che sarà cosa stupendissima.

Vi sono molte altre cose in questi artificii le quali per la lor difficoltà non scrivo minutamente. Io le farò tutte benissimo secondo il danaro che per le spese mi sarà mandato.³

Leicester provvide poi a un complesso e costoso riassetto del giardino, ancora oggi considerato il primo esempio di *italianate garden* inglese, che nel 2009 è stato completamente ricostruito.⁴

Possediamo due resoconti dei festeggiamenti organizzati per Elisabetta I, *The Princely Pleasures at the Court of Kenelwoorth* di George Gascoigne e una lunga lettera la cui paternità è ancora fonte di dibattito: la maggior parte degli studiosi la attribuisce a Robert Langham, laddove altri propendono per William Patten.⁵ Penny McCarthy ha addirittura proposto il nome di William Shakespeare, ma la sua interpretazione è stata oggetto di aspre critiche.⁶ Tale variabile non è determinante ai fini del nostro discorso e per questo ci associamo alla maggioranza. Nel 1557 Langham entrò a far parte della Company of Mercers, una delle *Livery Companies* di Londra, dove fu ammesso dopo aver svolto il necessario apprendistato sotto la guida di William Leonarde.⁷ Dal 1573 iniziò a lavorare a corte e il suo nome venne registrato negli *Acts of the Privy Council* accanto alla qualifica di 'Keper of the Councill Chamber'.⁸ Nella sua lettera descrisse tutto quello che ebbe modo di vedere, senza tralasciare niente e anzi abbondando spesso in particolari a volte anche eccessivi.⁹ Il motivo di una tale enfasi sarebbe da rintracciare nell'identità del destinatario – Humphrey Martin – un membro della Company of Mercers molto più importante del mittente: la stesura e l'invio della lettera avrebbero rappresentato un gesto di deferenza verso un superiore, soprattutto con l'intento di sbalordirlo.¹⁰ Gascoigne peccò invece per mancanza di esaustività sebbene il motivo fosse più che lecito. *The Princely Pleasures at the Court of Kenelwoorth* fu donato infatti a Elisabetta durante la cerimonia del *New Year's Gift* del 1576: tentando di guadagnarsi la protezione reale per difendersi dall'accusa di filo-cattolicesimo mossagli da alcuni nemici, Gascoigne mise insieme un regesto dei testi da lui stesso scritti per i *pageant* rappresentati a Kenilworth. Così facendo documentò le sue

eccelse doti intellettuali, ma tralasciò tutti i *popular shows*, che rappresentarono invece una parte cospicua delle performance, sia per numero che per importanza. Dato però che questi ultimi sono al centro del nostro interesse, nella ricostruzione degli spazi del giardino e degli spettacoli li tenuti prenderemo in considerazione quanto scrisse Langham.¹¹

La sera di giovedì 14 luglio, dopo gli strabilianti giochi pirotecnici, la regina assistette all'esibizione dell'acrobata italiano, che

sheawed before her highness [...] such feats of agilitee, in goings, turnings, tumbings, castings, hops, Jumps, leaps, skips, gambauds, soomersaults, caprettyez and flights: forward, backward, sydewyze, a doonward, upward, and with such wyndyngs gyrings and circumflexions: al so lightly and with such eazyness, as by me in feaw woords it iz not expressibl by pen or speech I tell yoo playn. I bleast me by my faith to behold him, and began to doout whither a waz a man or a spirite: and I ween had doouted me till this day: had it not been that anon I bethought me of men that can reazon and talk with too [*sic*] toongs, and with two parsons at onez, sing lyke burds, curteiz of behavioour, of body strong and in joynts so nymbly withall, that their bonez seem as lythy and plyaunt as syneusz. They dwell in a happy lland (az the Book termz it), foor moonths sayling Southward beyond Ethiop. Nay, Master Martin, I tell you no jest: for both *Diodorus Siculus*, an auncient Greek historiographer in his third booke of the olld Egipcians: and also from him, *Conrad Gesnerus* a great learned man, and a very diligent writer in all good arguments of oour tyme (but deceased) in the fyrst Chapter of hiz *Mithridates*, reporteth the same.¹² Az for this fello I cannot tell what to make of him, save that I may gess hiz bak be metalld lyke a lamprey that haz no bone but a lyne like a lute-string.¹³

In relazione a questa testimonianza vogliamo riferirci a un dipinto tanto intrigante dal punto di vista iconografico quanto controverso per attribuzione e interpretazione, perché crediamo che sia stato messo da parte troppo in fretta. La tavola, un olio su tela, misura 116,5 x 251,5 cm e, stando a quanto indicato su una targhetta apposta sopra la sua cornice, dovrebbe ritrarre *Queen Elizabeth and Her Court at Hunsdon House. An Early Representation of the Virginals*.¹⁴ La storia della sua circolazione viene qui ricostruita per la prima volta. Nel 1940 si trovava presso la residenza di Lord James Fountayne Montagu (1887-1971) a Cold Overton Hall – Oakham.¹⁵ Il 1 febbraio 1946 è stata venduta da Christie's (lotto 22) con una attribuzione a un ignoto pittore fiammingo e acquistato da George William Lawies Jackson, 3° barone Allerton (1903-1991). Alla morte di quest'ultimo gli esecutori testamentari hanno provveduto alla vendita tramite Sotheby's.¹⁶ Purtroppo l'attuale collocazione è sconosciuta. Per quanto ne sappiamo, il primo a pubblicare la tavola è stato Albert C. Sewter nel 1940, attribuendo il lavoro a Marcus Gheeraerts il vecchio (1520-1590) e vedendo nell'occasione rappresentata i *Princely Pleasures* di Kenilworth del 1575. Sarebbe troppo semplice prendere per assodata la teoria di Sewter per avvalorare la nostra ipotesi. Siamo però convinti che le conclusioni dello studioso inglese abbiano una qualche ragione di essere state formulate. Per questo motivo discuteremo una serie di questioni fondamentali quali la presenza degli attori della Commedia dell'Arte in Europa – e in Inghilterra – nella seconda metà del Cinquecento, gli spostamenti della compagnia di Tristano Martinelli nei primi anni 1570, i riferimenti della testimonianza di Langham e alcuni particolari del dipinto in relazione ai *Princely Pleasures*. Come si vedrà, dall'analisi comparata di questi contesti emergono dati molto significativi da cui non si può più prescindere.

La presenza di un italiano in Inghilterra nel 1575 non ci colpisce affatto. Gli anni settanta del Cinquecento rappresentarono infatti il periodo d'esordio dei cosiddetti *viaggi teatrali* dall'Italia all'Europa.¹⁷ A luglio del 1573 a Londra si esibirono alcuni burattinai

provenienti dalla penisola¹⁸ e a settembre a Nottingham venne concesso un pagamento ‘to the Italyans for serteyne pastymes that they shewed bifore Maister Meare and his brethren’¹⁹. L’anno successivo si registrò la presenza di alcuni non meglio specificati ‘Italian players that ffollowed the progresse and made pastyme fyrst at Windsor and afterwardes at Reading’.²⁰ Per le performance di Windsor (11-12 luglio) e Reading (15 luglio) si richiese l’uso di bastoni, ganci e pelli di agnello per i pastori, frecce per le ninfe, una falce per Saturno, e code di cavallo per gli abiti dei selvaggi. È probabile addirittura che questi attori rappresentassero l’*Aminta*, un dramma pastorale andato in scena per la prima volta l’anno precedente a Ferrara.²¹ Quello che colpisce in relazione all’italiano di Kenilworth è il fatto che si sarebbe esibito da solo, perché a quell’epoca i viaggi per il continente erano un’impresa piena di rischi e di norma gli attori si spostavano con la loro compagnia. Dunque, la possibilità che un acrobata avesse affrontato un viaggio in solitaria fino in Inghilterra appare alquanto remota.²²

Nell’ottobre del 1574 a Dover vennero pagati 10 scellini ‘to the Italian tumblers or players’.²³ Sembra che il compilatore sentisse la necessità di associare alle qualità recitative degli italiani quelle acrobatiche, percependole come reciprocamente dipendenti. La compresenza di grande pathos recitativo e di mirabolanti abilità ginnico-funamboliche rappresentavano in effetti lo specifico della performatività dei comici dell’arte, e la possibilità che gli italiani esibitisi a Dover fossero professionisti dell’improvvisa non è da escludere. Se si considera poi la prossimità cronologica tra quella data e i *Princely Pleasures* organizzati da Robert Dudley, non appare così insensato che l’italiano esibitosi a Kenilworth potesse essere uno dei membri di quella formazione.²⁴ Non è certo corretto ridurre la performatività dei comici dell’arte alle componenti acrobatiche, ma è normale che le prime volte in cui gli inglesi ebbero modo di vedere in azione i nostri connazionali rimanessero affascinati proprio da tali capacità, a discapito di tutto il resto. Evidenza sia il fatto che nel corso del Seicento, e cioè durante la fase della sua diffusione e stabilizzazione nei diversi paesi del continente europeo, la Commedia dell’Arte divenne sempre più una forma di intrattenimento comico e acrobatico, diversificandosi molto da ciò che era stata in origine e vivendo quello che gli specialisti del settore riconoscono come un processo di abbassamento stilistico (esemplificativo il caso della Comédie Italienne).²⁵ È plausibile che anche Langham vedendo per la prima volta le strabilianti capacità di un comico dell’arte italiano sentisse la necessità di relazionare soltanto su quelle abilità. Ma può anche darsi che al performer fosse stato richiesto di mettere in scena salti, capriole e altre acrobazie del genere, dato che di ‘spettacoli drammaturgici’ ne erano stati organizzati in gran numero. Peraltro questo giustificerebbe il motivo per cui si esibì da solo. Comunque sia, è certo che la descrizione di Langham rispecchia pienamente quelle capacità sceniche delle maschere della Commedia dell’Arte, per come ci sono pervenute attraverso l’ingente mole di fonti letterarie e iconografiche, e rispecchia in particolare le peculiarità di Arlecchino, uno dei più scalmanati Tipi dell’improvvisa, che a quella altezza cronologica era impersonato solo dal suo inventore Tristano Martinelli. Quest’ultimo aveva un repertorio fatto di danze sfrenate, battaglie, acrobazie e cascate e mantenne inalterate le sue eccellenti capacità fino alla vecchiaia.²⁶

Il primo documento di una tournée dei Martinelli in Inghilterra risale al 13 gennaio del 1578 ed è una annotazione negli *Acts of the Privy Council* in cui si legge di una lettera inviata al Lord Mayor ‘to geve order that one Dronsiano (*sic*), an Italian, a commediante and his companye, may playe within the Cittie and the Liberties of the same’.²⁷ Con una tale autorizzazione la compagnia di Arlecchino poté lavorare fino alla prima settimana di Quaresima ed è probabile che si esibisse anche al Blackfriars e a corte.²⁸ In precedenza la presenza dei Martinelli è registrata ad Anversa: il 7 settembre 1576 furono convocati con la loro compagnia in un ufficio di polizia per firmare un verbale alla presenza di due mercanti italiani residenti nella città, che si fecero garanti dell’identità dei loro connazionali perché li conoscevano molto

bene e li avevano più volte visti in azione sul palco. Da queste informazioni deduciamo che la troupe si trovava ad Anversa da tempo, probabilmente già da gennaio, e si era esibita in varie occasioni riscuotendo grande successo.²⁹ Nella loro carriera i Martinelli dimostrarono sempre di possedere grandi doti imprenditoriali, una estrema lungimiranza, e l'innata capacità di sfruttare il massimo vantaggio da qualunque situazione. Dato che non si conoscono i loro spostamenti prima del gennaio 1576, non possiamo escludere che passando per Dover (ottobre 1574), si fossero recati a Kenilworth (luglio 1575) per giungere infine ad Anversa (gennaio 1576) e tornare poi una seconda volta a Londra tra il 1577 e il 1578.³⁰ Sarebbe stato un modo come un altro per implementare l'esperienza e i guadagni.

Tornando al dipinto *Queen Elizabeth and Her Court at Hunsdon House* abbiamo già accennato al fatto che la teoria secondo cui potrebbe essere in realtà la testimonianza della presenza di comici dell'arte italiani a Kenilworth nel 1575 è stata più volte attaccata. Delia Gambelli sostiene che in una serie di disegni settecenteschi il lago si trovi a destra e non a sinistra, come invece si vede nel dipinto.³¹ La studiosa purtroppo non ha indicato le sue fonti, ma possiamo dire che almeno due elementi la contraddicono. Innanzitutto nel quadro lo specchio d'acqua è visibile anche a destra del castello: Kenilworth Castle si trova sulla sommità di un colle che una volta era completamente circondato da un lago ormai prosciugato.³² In secondo luogo, ma non certo per importanza, una non perfetta aderenza tra una immagine dipinta e i luoghi reali che rappresenta non dovrebbe essere presa in alcun modo come prova inconfutabile. Margaret Katritzky è tornata più volte sul medesimo problema, per giungere alla conclusione che l'esegesi proposta a suo tempo da Sewter rappresenterebbe il caso di un errore interpretativo che continua a perpetrarsi nel tempo. In merito al dipinto, Katritzky ha proposto l'attribuzione a Lucas Van Valckenborch (1530-1597) e ha visto nella situazione rappresentata una festa in un territorio dell'impero asburgico. È curioso però che nel 2006 pubblicando ancora una volta la tavola abbia lasciato il nome di Marcus Gheeraerts il Vecchio accanto a quello di Van Valckenborch e abbia mantenuto il titolo di *Elizabeth and Her Court at Kenilworth Castle*.³³ Nel 1997 la studiosa aveva sentenziato che 'there are strong historical grounds for rejecting a dating earlier than around 1584 for any named depictions of Harlequin',³⁴ ma nel 2006 Siro Ferrone ha contribuito a confermare l'inesattezza di quella affermazione, evidenziando l'alta probabilità che il quadro conservato presso il Musée Baron Gérard e tradizionalmente intitolato *Commedia dell'Arte à la cour de Charles IX* possa rappresentare in realtà l'esibizione della troupe dei Martinelli presso una casa di banchieri genovesi ad Anversa nel 1576 e dunque ben otto anni prima del limite *post quem* indicato da Katritzky.³⁵ L'ultima notizia di *Queen Elizabeth and Her Court at Hunsdon House* si trova sul catalogo delle aste di Sotheby's del 1991 dove si propone una generica e non documentata attribuzione alla cerchia di Louis de Caulery e il titolo ancora più sommario di *Elegant Figures in the Grounds of a House*.³⁶ Solo attraverso ulteriori ricerche sulle fasi della committenza si potrebbe giungere a informazioni più sicure. Nel frattempo possiamo soffermarci su alcuni elementi iconografici a sostegno della nostra teoria.

Ciò che spinge a dubitare che la location rappresentata sia Hunsdon House è la totale mancanza di pertinenza tra gli esterni rappresentati nel dipinto e quelli reali. La proprietà donata da Elisabetta I a Henry Carey al momento della sua nomina a primo barone Hunsdon (1559) non si trovava vicino a un bacino d'acqua mentre nel dipinto una tale presenza è preponderante. Già Sewter ipotizzava una tale possibilità e d'altra parte non possiamo che notare le rilevanti somiglianze tra la conformazione del meraviglioso giardino all'italiana che fa da sfondo al dipinto e quello reale della proprietà di Leicester.

Innanzitutto al centro del giardino si trovava (e si trova ancora),³⁷

a very fayr Foountain, cast into an eight square, reared a four foot hy: from the midst whearof a Column up set in shape of too *Athlants* joined together a backhallf, the toon looking East, thooter west: with theyr hands, upholding a fayr formed boll of a three foot over: from wheans sundry fine pipez, did lively distill continuall streamz into the receyt of the Foountain.³⁸

Ciascuna faccia della base ottagonale della fontana presentava decorazioni di stampo mitologico: vi si potevano vedere tra gli altri Nettuno in trono trainato dai suoi cavalli marini, Teti e Tritone ognuno sul proprio carro tirati l'una dai delfini e l'altro dai pesci, Doride e una delle sue sorelle intente a giocare sulla spiaggia. In piena concordanza con i dettami rinascimentali, l'elemento mitologico ebbe un ruolo importante nella decorazione del giardino di Kenilworth Castle, così come nell'organizzazione degli intrattenimenti.³⁹ La fontana che si vede nel dipinto ha alcuni elementi che la avvicinano molto a quella descritta. Sulla sua sommità sono ritratti Ercole e Anteo in una posizione che non si discosta molto da quella dei due Atlanti di cui parla Langham. Sotto la piattaforma che regge i due corpi avvinghiati si vedono altre figure che potrebbero benissimo essere gli dei e i semidei menzionati nella lettera. Si può obiettare che i punti di contatto siano pochi, ma non si può negare che rappresentino un'evidenza e come abbiamo già detto un piccolo comune denominatore può essere molto significativo in casi come questo.

Il secondo elemento che attira la nostra attenzione è il ponte che si vede sulla sinistra, sopra lo specchio d'acqua. A Kenilworth vennero costruiti due ponti effimeri:⁴⁰ il primo permetteva di passare dalla *tilt-yard* al cortile interno e fu progettato per far rimanere Elisabetta sola in posizione privilegiata al di sopra di tutti gli altri; l'altro fu sistemato a nord-ovest nella zona esterna al perimetro murario, vicino al piccolo giardino privato. Questo secondo ponte si trovava sopra l'acqua e fu utilizzato da Leicester come luogo di maggiore privacy in cui intrattenersi con la regina e assistere agli spettacoli, mantenendo una completa visuale del giardino.⁴¹

Un altro elemento significativo che giustifica la possibilità di connettere il dipinto alla descrizione di Langham è il fatto che nel gruppo posizionato in primo piano sulla destra e che viene invitato da una figura femminile ad assistere all'esibizione della compagnia di Arlecchino, si trovano tre personaggi evidentemente di alto rango che, per le fattezze fisiognomiche e quelle degli abiti indossati, potrebbero essere benissimo Elisabetta I, Robert Dudley (alla sua destra) e Philip Sidney (alla sua sinistra).⁴² Il nipote di Leicester, allora ventenne, fece il suo ritorno in Inghilterra il 31 maggio 1575 dopo un tour europeo di due anni, e si unì al *progress* fin dall'inizio.⁴³

A questo punto bisognerebbe tirare le somme, ma come abbiamo già detto, non ci si avvierà alle conclusioni. Il nostro obiettivo era infatti quello di smentire alcune posizioni storiografiche alla luce di nuove acquisizioni critiche e proporre una serie di riflessioni per aprire nuovi percorsi di ricerca che potrebbero chiarire questioni ad oggi lasciate in sospeso. Sarebbe senza dubbio affascinante poter dimostrare che *Queen Elizabeth and Her Court at Hunsdon House* rappresenti in realtà un consuntivo dei *Princely Pleasures* di Kenilworth; in questo modo si dovrebbero aggiornare i dati sulla presenza della compagnia dei Martinelli in Inghilterra. Ma anche se dovessero emergere documenti a riprova del contrario, rimaniamo convinti della necessità di riconsiderare l'esibizione dell'artista italiano di cui parla Langham, perché potremmo davvero essere di fronte al primo incontro tra la Commedia dell'Arte e la corte inglese.

Questo contributo è la rielaborazione e l'integrazione di una piccola parte della tesi di dottorato dal titolo Gli Italiani in Inghilterra. Migrazione di Saperi Artigianali dello Spettacolo al tempo dei Tudor (1485-1603) (tutor Prof. Siro Ferrone) discussa presso la Scuola Dottorale in Storia dello Spettacolo dell'Università di Firenze nell'aprile 2013. Ringrazio vivamente la Prof.ssa Claudia Corti per i preziosi consigli, il forte sostegno e l'incoraggiamento, la Prof.ssa Isabella Bigazzi per il colloquio in merito alle fattezze degli abiti nel dipinto Queen Elizabeth and Her Court at Hunsdon House e la Prof.ssa Alessandra Petrina per aver sciolto alcune questioni problematiche. Un grazie di cuore a Elena Franchi.

(Endnotes)

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2 E. K. Purnell ed., *Report on the Pepys Manuscripts, Preserved at Magdalene College. Cambridge*, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911, 178-79.

3 Magdalene College, Cambridge: MS. Pepys II. 609; Robert Langham, *A letter*, edited by R. J. P. Kuin, Brill, 1983, 124.

4 Elisabeth Woodhouse, 'Kenilworth, the Earl of Leicester's Pleasure Grounds Following Robert Laneham's Letter', in *Garden History*, XXVII, 1, Summer 1999, 127-44; —, 'Propaganda in Paradise: The Symbolic Garden Created by the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth, Warwickshire', in *Garden History*, XXXVI, 1, Spring 2008, 94-113. 'Elizabethan Garden at Kenilworth Castle', English-Heritage, accessed July 5, 2013, <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/kenilworth-castle/elizabethan-garden>. Mentre questo scritto è in fase di stampa è annunciata l'uscita di Anna Key and John Watkins eds., *The Elizabethan Garden at Kenilworth Castle*. Nella prima parte si affrontano le questioni connesse con *The Garden in Its Historical Context* e *The Sources* e tra le fonti di riferimento particolare rilievo è dato alla lettera di Robert Langham. (http://www.english-heritageshop.org.uk/mall/productpage.cfm/EnglishHeritage/_51474/288653/TheElizabethanGardenatKenilworthCastle).

5 Elizabeth Goldring, "'A mercer ye wot az we be": The Authorship of the Kenilworth Letter Reconsidered', in *English Literary Renaissance*, XXXVIII, 2, 2008, 245-69.

6 Penny McCarthy, *Pseudonymous Shakespeare: Rioting Language in the Sidney Circle*, Ashgate, 2006, 1-49; Gary Waller, 'Review of Penny McCarthy, *Pseudonymous Shakespeare: Rioting Language in the Sidney Circle*', in *Comparative Drama*, XLI, 1, 2007, 119-22.

7 Langham, *Letter*, 13. Si vedano anche —, *A Letter wherain Part of the Entertainment unto the Queenz Majesty at Killingwoorth Castl in Warwick Sheer, in this Soomerz Progreest 1575, iz signified: From a freend Officer attendant in the Coourt, unto his freend a Citizen and Merchant of London*, J. Sharp, 1784 e Frederick James Furnivall ed, *Robert Laneham's Letter: Describing a Part of the Entertainment unto Queen Elizabeth at the Castle of Kenilworth in 1575*, The Shakespeare Library, 1907.

8 John Roche Dasent ed., *Acts of the Privy Council* (da ora in poi *APC*) vol. 8, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1894, 98, 219, 369; —, *APC* vol. 9, Kraus Reprint, 1974, 102, 326; —, *APC* vol. 10, Kraus Reprint, 1974, 203; —, *APC* vol. 11, Kraus Reprint, 1974, 445.

9 Langham, *Letter*, 7-9; Eleonora Oggiano, "'The Greatest Feast and Ioye that Euer Eye Sawe': George Gascoigne's *The Princely Pleasures* and the Kenilworth Festivities (1575)", in *Proceedings of the 'Shakespeare and His Contemporaries' Graduate Conference 2009, 2010, 2011*, I, winter 2012, 97-98. Per quanto riguarda il *progress* nel suo complesso si rimanda a John G. Nichols ed., *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth (...)*, 3 voll., John Nichols and Son, 1823, 417-84.

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11 Gabriel Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments: from George Gascoigne to Ben Jonson*, Oxford University Press, 2010, 7; Langham, *Letter*, 8-10; Oggiano, 'Kenilworth Festivities', 97-106. Per quanto riguarda le finalità politiche degli intrattenimenti offerti a Elisabetta I si vedano Jean Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth: Studies in Elizabethan and Renaissance Culture*, Brewer, 1980 e Susan Doran, 'Juno versus Diana: the Treatment of Elizabeth I's Marriage in Plays and Entertainments, 1561-1581', in *The Historical Journal*, XXXVIII, 2, June 1995, 266-68.

12 Il riferimento è a quanto si narra nel secondo libro della *Bibliotheca Historica* di Diodoro Siculo (ca. 44 d. C) e nel *Mithridates: de Differentiis Linguarum (...)* di Conrad Gesner (1555). Il lavoro originale dello storico romano

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- è andato perduto e l'*editio princeps* è la traduzione in latino di Poggio Bracciolini, pubblicata a Bologna nel 1472. Nel 1559 tutte le parti sopravvissute sono state raccolte da Henry Estienne e pubblicate a Genova. Gesner segue molto da vicino quanto aveva già scritto Diodoro Siculo. Si veda Langham, *Letter*, 93, nn. 478 e 480.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 48-49. La presenza dell'acrobata italiano era già stata riportata in Raniero Paulucci di Calboli, *I girovaghi Italiani in Inghilterra ed i Suonatori Ambulanti: Appunti Storico Critici*, Lapi, 1893, 16. Gascoigne ovviamente non ne fa il minimo accenno.
- 14 Albert C. Sewter, 'Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth', in *The Burlington Magazine* LXXVI, 444, March 1940, 70-6.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 71. Il nome completo di Lord Montagu è indicato in Charles Mosley ed., *Burke's Peerage, Baronetage & Knightage*, 3 voll., Genealogical Books, 2003, I, 446. Si veda anche 'The Entrance of Queen Elizabeth into Kenilworth Castle', in *The Illustrated Magazine of Art*, II, 8, 1853, 65-7.
- 16 Sotheby's, *Old Master Paintings*, 1991, 90-1.
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- 18 *APC vol. 8*, 131-32.
- 19 John Tucker Murray, *English Dramatic Companies, 1558-1642*, 2. voll., Constable & Co., 1910, II, 374.
- 20 Albert Feuillerat ed., *Documents relating to the Office of the Revels in the Time of the Queen Elizabeth*, Uystpruyst, 1963², 225.
- 21 E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Clarendon Press, 1923-1965, II, 262. *Aminta*, una favola boschereccia, venne rappresentata forse per la prima volta a Ferrara il 31 luglio 1573 e probabilmente non dalla compagnia dei Gelosi, facente capo a Francesco Andreini, come più volte si è sostenuto, ma da una formazione guidata da Stefanello Bottarga. A questo proposito si veda Roberto Alonge, 'La Riscoperta Rinascimentale del Teatro', in *Storia del Teatro moderno e contemporaneo*, edited by — e Guido Davico Bonino, Einaudi 2008², 104-05.
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- 24 Recuperiamo questa suggestione non priva di fondamento da Philip Butterworth, *Magic on the Early English Stage*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, 48: 'It is possible that one of the tumblers from this company [the one in Dover] played before Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575'.
- 25 Sulla storia della fase europea della Commedia dell'Arte si vedano: Ferrone *Attori Mercanti Corsari*; Renzo Guardenti, *Gli Italiani a Parigi. La Comédie Italienne, 1660-1697*, Bulzoni, 1990; Delia Gambelli, *Arlecchino a Parigi: dall'Inferno alla Corte del Re Sole*, 2 voll., Bulzoni, 1993; Myriam Chiabò e Federico Doglio eds., *Fortuna Europea della Commedia dell'Arte. Atti del XXXII Convegno Internazionale. Roma, 2-5 ottobre 2008*, Torre D'Orfeo, 2008.
- 26 Ferrone, *Attori Mercanti Corsari*, 210 e , *Arlecchino: Vita e Avventure di Tristano Martinelli Attore*, Laterza, 2006, pls. 5-26
- 27 *APC vol. 10*, 144; Ferrone, *Arlecchino*, 30-41.
- 28 Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, II, 262; —, *Arlecchino*, 34-41.
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- 30 Per la ricostruzione degli spostamenti della troupe dei Martinelli da Anversa fino a Londra si veda *Ibid.*, 30-41.
- 31 *Arlecchino a Parigi*, I, 142-3.
- 32 Woodhouse, 'Leicester's Pleasure Grounds', 129.
- 33 M. A. Katritzky, 'Performing-Arts Iconography: Traditions, Techniques, and Trends', in *Picturing Performance: the Iconography of the Performing Arts in Concept and Practice*, edited by Thomas F. Heck, Rochester University Press, 1999, 72-4; —, *A Study in the Commedia dell'Arte 1560-1620. With Special Reference to the Visual Records*, Rodopi, 2006, 142-50 e 478.
- 34 Katritzky, 'Performing-Arts', 77; —, 'Harlequin in Renaissance Pictures', *Renaissance Studies*, 11, 1997, 381-419.
- 35 Ferrone, 'Ritratto di gruppo', in *Arlecchino*, 24-30. La documentazione che attesta la presenza della compagnia dei Martinelli ad Anversa, cui fa ricorso anche Ferrone, è stata pubblicata per la prima volta in Willem Schrickx, 'Commedia dell'Arte Players in Antwerp in 1576: Drusiano and Tristano Martinelli', in *Theatre Research International*, I, 2, February 1976, 79-86.
- 36 Sotheby's, *Old Master Paintings*, 90-1.

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37 'Elizabethan Garden at Kenilworth Castle'.

38 Langham, *Letter*, 71.

39 *Ibid.*, 64-73.

40 Woodhouse, 'Leicester's Pleasure Grounds', 130.

41 *Ibid.*, 127: 'the most important fact that has been overlooked is that the whole landscape at Kenilworth in the late sixteenth century was involved in the pleasures that were appreciated by the queen and her court. This site both natural and created with art, provided the perfect canvas for symbolic, theatrical, earthly and spiritual enjoyment'.

42 Il condizionale è d'obbligo perché in casi come questo bisogna procedere con la massima cautela, specialmente in relazione all'analisi fisiognomica di Elisabetta. Comunque sia, gli abiti indossati dai tre personaggi sono in piena concordanza con i dettami della moda inglese della metà degli anni settanta del Cinquecento. Per Elisabetta si veda Janet Arnold ed., *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd: The Inventories of the Wardrobe of Robes Prepared in July 1600 Edited from Stowe MS 557 in the British Library, MS LR 2/121 in the Public Record Office, London and MS V. b. 72 in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC*, Maney, 1988. Per i due uomini si veda ———, *Patterns of Fashion: The Cut and Construction of Clothes for Men and Women c.1560-1620*, Macmillan, 1985.

43 "Sir Philip Sidney," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25522>; Goldring, 'Portraiture, Patronage, and the Progresses', 171.

‘A Stranger, and Learned, and an Exile for Religion’:
Alberico Gentili, Shakespeare and Elizabethan England

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After decades of wars of religion, in 1598 a voice was raised in Europe forcefully affirming that religion could no longer be invoked as a just cause of war. That voice belonged to the *Regius Professor* of civil law at Oxford: the Italian-born Alberico Gentili. The first part of my paper will be devoted to a brief introduction to the biography of this scholar who – although known as one of the most brilliant jurists and intellectuals of his age – is nowadays rather unfamiliar outside the Departments of Law. I shall then focus, in the second part, on two of the most important events in Gentili’s life: on the one hand, his bitter contention against the Oxford Puritan faction of the time; and on the other hand, the 1598 publication of his treatise on war and international law, the *De Iure Belli*. I shall also try to place these two events against the historical and cultural background of Elizabethan England, and late-16th-century Europe in general. In the third part, I should like to conclude by underscoring the probable influence of Gentili’s theories on three of William Shakespeare’s works, the history plays *Henry IV* and *Henry V* and the ‘problem play’ *Troilus and Cressida*.

Alberico Gentili was born in 1551 in the little town of San Ginesio, near Ancona, in a family of doctors and jurists. He studied at the University of Perugia from 1569 to 1572, from which he graduated as Doctor of civil law. After that, he first worked as a judge in Ascoli and then as a lawyer in San Ginesio. He had soon to flee from Italy, however, because of his family’s sympathies for the Protestant faith. Together with his father Matteo and his younger brother Scipione, Alberico first settled down in present-day Slovenia, but soon set forth once again for Germany, where his brother decided to stay and begin his studies at the Universities of Tübingen and Wittenberg. Alberico and his father continued their peregrinations and, after a short stay in the Low Countries, they arrived in London in 1580. Here they were welcomed by the small but influential reformed Italian community, which had been established some years before by Michelangelo Florio, father of the more famous John Florio. Thanks to their intervention, Alberico made acquaintances with some of the most important personalities of the English cultural and political context of the time, such as the vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford – Toby Matthew and the Italian teacher of the Queen – Giovan Battista Castiglione, not to mention Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Francis Walsingham and most of all, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. It was actually the Earl himself who wrote to the board of the Oxford University, where he was Chancellor, to support Alberico’s position as a valid Reader in civil law. In his letter, written on 24th November 1580, we can read as follows:

CRISTIANO RAGNI

The gentleman the bearer heare of Albertus [*sic*] Gentilis an Italian borne is, as I ham informed, by profession a Doctor of the Civile Lawes, and being forced as I ham so informed to leve his country for religion [...] Because he is a stranger, and learned and an exile for religion I have thought good to commend him and these his honest requestes unto you... It shall be well dunne and I will thank you for it.¹

Once appointed, Alberico found himself in repeated contrast with the extremism of the influential exponents of the Oxford Puritan faction, led by the eminent theologian John Raynolds. This strict opposition made Alberico decide to leave England in 1586, as secretary to Orazio Pallavicino. It was once again the intervention of the Earl of Leicester and, this time, of Francis Walsingham himself, which called Alberico back to Oxford, where he was finally appointed *Regius Professor* in 1587. During his 'English period', Alberico wrote several important treatises, such as his *De legationibus* (1585), a treatise on diplomacy dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney, in which the latter was celebrated as a model of the perfect courtesan and ambassador; or the *De Iure Belli* (1598), to which part of the second section of this paper will be devoted. While holding his position in Oxford, in 1603 he also started practising at the High Court of Admiralty in London and became advocate to the Spanish Embassy until his death in 1608².

I would now like to turn to two significant – and related – events of his English career: his involvement in the famous controversy on drama, which broke out in Oxford at the beginning of the 1590s, and the publication of his *De Iure Belli* in 1598. The Oxford controversy originated from the intensification, after the 1570s, of the well-known Puritan attacks on the increasing success of theatre, which had brought about publications such as John Northbrooke's *Treatise Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays and Interludes* (1577) and Stephen Gosson's *The School of Abuse* (1579), just to name a couple. The Puritans especially criticised the immorality and unholiness of the plays represented on the London stages and, in so doing, also implicitly demonstrated their firm opposition to the politics of the Crown, which was among the most important supporters of the theatre itself³. As for the Oxford case, the *casus belli* can be found in the representation in 1591 of a comedy by the jurist William Gager, in which he, not too covertly, mocked some of the ideas previously expressed by the aforementioned John Raynolds. The latter started then a tight and heated correspondence with Gager, particularly underscoring the potential threat hidden under the cross-dressing. When two years later Gager gave up replying, Alberico Gentili stood out as a supporter of Gager's same ideas. He did so not only because he was one of Gager's dearest friends, but also because he himself had just published a short treatise on the legitimacy of the theatrical representations: his *Commentatio ad Legem Codicis de professoribus et medicis*. In this work, Gentili admitted the 'scurrilitas' of some plays, but underlined how this was not the case of academic plays, such as Gager's, which could rather be used as an educational means – education being the end of poetry itself. By reading this *Commentatio*, one can clearly understand then how Gentili shared the same opinions on drama previously expressed – among others – by Thomas Lodge in his *A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse* (1579) or Sir Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poetry* (1580s)⁴. This same position was held by the Italian Professor in his correspondence with Raynolds⁵, where he however added – as further justification of the contingent use of even morally questionable plays – the ancient concept of *mendacio officioso*, that is the official falsehood which even doctors sometimes said to their patients so as to better cure them. To such statements, Raynolds bitterly replied scorning Gentili's idea that 'this abuse of which you speak [namely, the use of morally questionable plays] is good and not evil [...] I urgently beg you to throw at us no longer principles of this kind of impiety and evil'⁶. The bitterness of Raynolds's replies however seemed to have less to do with the controversy on drama, rather than with other issues already expressed by Gentili in the circulating drafts of what would later become his *De Iure Belli*. The

fact that Raynolds actually had other questions in mind was made clear when he wrote in one of his last letters to Gentili: ‘the most crucial of all [your opinions], namely, that the abuse of evil is not evil but good, you indicate you will defend again in your books on war’⁷. The truth was that Raynolds had clearly understood what lay beneath this statement: by saying that evil doing could be used for good, Gentili was implicitly making reference to the well-known phrase ‘the end justifies the means’ attributed to the notorious political thinker Niccolò Machiavelli, the same he had already celebrated in his *De Legationibus*⁸. And the fact that Gentili aimed to discuss this principle further on in his treatise on war meant that he would deal with a more important issue than morally acceptable or unacceptable academic plays: that is, the moral principles regulating warfare theories and, by consequence, the relationship between theology and jurisprudence in this field.

In this fortunate treatise, published in 1598 and which is generally considered one of the first treatises – if not *the* first – on modern international law⁹, Gentili actually proposed some extremely innovative ideas about how to wage a war. This was indeed an issue of anything but secondary importance at that time in Europe, torn to pieces, as it was, by centuries of civil and religious strife. The problem of the so-called ‘just war’ was indeed crucial at the end of the 16th century and it is striking that this treatise was published the same year of the famous Edict of Nantes, which put an end to the French wars of religion. First of all, in his *De Iure*, Gentili stated that war is a ‘*iusta contentio publicorum armorum*’, that is a just contest between civil powers¹⁰. Secondly, the Italian scholar also admitted – as no one else before him – that a war may be just on both sides involved, since a sovereign would never drag his people into a war knowing he was in the wrong. These statements were revolutionary, because they presupposed another extraordinary innovation which, by 1598, Gentili had already made clear in the correspondence with Raynolds: that is, that religion had nothing to do with warfare, because it only dealt with the intimate relationship between God and man, and not with civil powers. ‘But what is a matter of religion?’ – Gentili had asked Raynolds in one of his letters – ‘Not every, or everyone’s, interpretation of scripture is a matter of religion. Theology is the teacher of faith and of life, but not of all life. Nor is every part of the word of God completely yours.’¹¹. This already clear position was then strengthened in the *De Iure Belli*, where we can read one of Gentili’s most famous quotations: ‘*Silete theologi in munere alieno*’, be silent – theologians – in a field which is not yours. The originality of these theories should be kept well in mind since in the Europe of that age religion was still being used as one of the just causes to wage a war. Gentili strongly affirmed, instead, that wars should rely on juridical principles, not religious ones. There were other ‘just causes’ of war according to Gentili: among which, the excessive expansionism of some states, the vengeance of some wrongdoing and – most of all – the defence of one’s nation, which again aligned Gentili together with the supporters of the preventive war already celebrated by Machiavelli. The influence of such theories can be easily detected in the contemporary English foreign politics against Spain, which was at that time the principal enemy in Queen Elizabeth’s reign. Gentili’s theories were the same which eminent members of Elizabeth’s establishment, such as Walsingham or the Earl of Essex, were campaigning to support their willingness to wage war against the Catholic Philip II. Their opposition to Spain, however, together with Gentili’s, was diametrically opposed to that claimed by the Puritans. While the latter thundered in their pamphlets that Spain had to be defeated on religious grounds, these politicians underlined the greediness and the excessive expansionism of the Spanish people. For the ‘internationalist jurist’ Gentili it was the Spanish threat to the *ius gentium*, the law of the nations, which was the real problem, not their religion¹². That was the reason why the English nation had to be protected, especially with the deep geopolitical transformations taking place in the late 16th-century Europe, when the country was still struggling to affirm its own position at the international level. Threatened by the scheming of the Spanish crown

and by the inner conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, England – with its ageing and heirless Queen – was indeed engaged in the effort of quickly building a strong, new national identity, an identity which could unite around the sovereign all the different local identities and centrifugal interests which prevented the birth of a powerful and unified nation. Many of the members of the political establishment chosen by Elizabeth I greatly contributed to this effort, Alberico Gentili no less than the more famous Walter Raleigh and Richard Hooker. All of them played a crucial role in the political and religious propaganda which was being forged to support the nation. A propaganda which was also carried out by the most important means of communication of the age: the theatre.

In those very years, William Shakespeare had begun to write down his own contribution to the reconstruction of the national history of England: his series of history plays. Even though one cannot prove that the playwright had actually read Gentili's works, it is highly likely that he had come to know the jurist's modern theories, both because the latter was an important exponent of that very establishment supporting the theatre, and, more probably, because of his involvement in the famous controversy on drama. Furthermore, Gentili's ideas on warfare and religion are to be placed within a heated international debate at that time in Europe and this one could hardly be ignored by a playwright such as Shakespeare. In fact we can infer the influence of some of the ideas expressed by the Italian on warfare and the just causes of war both in *Henry IV* and in *Henry V*¹³. In his history plays as a whole, Shakespeare particularly focuses on the cruelty of the civil war – an 'intestine shock', a 'butchery' as Henry IV laments in 'his' play¹⁴. This was actually a reality that the English people knew all too well after a century dominated by the bloody War of the Roses, not to mention the struggle between Catholics and Protestants, which continued up to the present day. What is truly striking is the fact that in the second part of *Henry IV*, Shakespeare brings us to understand that his ideas were not too far from those expressed by Gentili, when the jurist stated that religion had nothing to do with waging wars, and how it was rather invoked to hide other personal and entirely unholy interests. It is one of the very opponents of Henry IV who admits this fact, while talking about the strategies of his ally, the Archbishop of York: '[...] But now the Bishop | turns insurrection to religion. | Supposed sincere and holy in his thoughts... [he] derives from heaven his quarrel and his cause.' [2HIV, I, i, 200-206]. The causes of this war are not religious, but obviously political: in this case, it is the reaction to the usurpation of Richard II's throne by Bolingbroke, that is Henry IV. And the King actually admits his political crime in one of his last conversations with his son and heir, the soon-to-be Henry V: 'God knows, my son, | by what bypaths and indirect crooked ways | I met this crown, and I myself know well | how troublesome it sat upon my head.' [2HIV, IV, v, 183-186]. At this point, to dissolve the memory of this act, Henry IV not accidentally suggests that his son should 'busy giddy minds | with foreign quarrels.' [2HIV, IV, v, 212-214].

One year later Shakespeare actually brought these ideas to the scenes of the new Globe Theatre, with his own hypothesis of a heroic nation in *Henry V*. In this play, not only does he openly favour the present-day reign of Elizabeth I¹⁵, but he also shows once more, by bringing together poetry and foreign politics, his apparent alignment with Gentili's modern theories on how to engage in a just war. The war Henry V wages against France is not at all a holy war. On the contrary, it is waged to defend English dynastic law and the honour of the nation. In his declaration of war to the King of France, the English Ambassador, the Earl of Essex, says:

[King Henry V] wills you, in the name of God Almighty,
That you divest yourself and lay apart
The borrowed glories that by gift of heaven,
By law of nature and of nations, longs
To him and to his heirs.
[II, iv, 76-81]

The name of God appears of course in this speech and in many other speeches performed by Henry, because what Shakespeare and Gentili seem to have in mind is not the radical expunction of religion from all aspects of life, but rather what appears to be an instrumental, Machiavellian use of the same¹⁶. And Henry demonstrates to be perfectly able – later on in the play – to manipulate religion at will, when he realizes how deep the doubts are, worrying his soldiers on the eve of the final battle. While he wanders *incognito* among his army, Henry has to face the harsh reality of a soldier who, despite the brilliant rhetoric of his king, bitterly states: ‘[...] we have no great cause to | desire the approach of day.’ [HV, IV, i, 88-9]. At this point, the disguised Henry reaffirms that the King’s cause ‘[is] just and his quarrel honourable’ [HV, IV, i, 117-128] and he also firmly replies to the doubts of his soldier about the moral responsibilities of the king in a war. To Williams, who claims that if the King’s cause was wrong he would have a ‘heavy reckoning’ to pay for the deaths of his soldiers, Henry firmly replies: ‘[...] the King is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers [...] Every subject’s duty is the King’s, but every subject’s soul is his own.’ [HV, IV, i, 147-179]. Shakespeare expresses here once again ideas not dissimilar to Gentili’s, and clearly stands in complete opposition to what Puritans were forcefully claiming instead. While they preached the total coincidence between interiority and exteriority in any individual, in this work a clear intention emerges to separate them. In other words, Shakespeare and Gentili seem to align with the opinion expressed by Richard Hooker in his famous *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. In this monumental work, which is considered the ideological basis of the Anglican Church, not only did Hooker underline the importance of the sovereign as a remedy against anarchy and all kinds of extremism, but he also affirmed that what lay in the depth of everyone’s conscience only concerned the private relationship between God and the individual. Or to put it in Shakespeare’s words: ‘Every subject’s soul is his own’¹⁷. It is only at this point that the audience is briefly admitted to look into the king’s conscience when, at the eve of the battle, being left alone, he asks God not to think ‘upon the fault | my father made in compassing the crown.’ [HV, IV, i, 286-291]. Henry knows that what is at bay is not only the legitimacy of his war, but also that of his own succession to the throne. However, this private preoccupation is something which must be kept separate from the public issue of war. Henry’s dynasty’s tainted conscience does not matter in this conflict and at last, the English actually win. It is only *after* the unexpected victory at Agincourt that Henry explicitly thanks God: ‘Praised be God, and not our strength, for it.’ [HV, IV, vii, 83-84]. Again, Shakespeare seems to make reference here to Machiavelli’s thought and, in particular, to his *Discorsi*, where he had written about the behaviour of the Roman king Numa Pompilius: ‘[Egli] si volse alla religione come cosa del tutto necessaria a volere mantenere una civiltà [...] E vedesi, chi considera bene le istorie romane, quanto serviva la religione a comandare gli eserciti, ad animare la Plebe, a mantenere gli uomini buoni, a fare vergognare i rei. [...]’¹⁸. A good king knows how to rightly use religion for his kingdom’s good, because religion – as Gentili too had admitted at some point in his *De Iure Belli* – can be extremely powerful and make an appeal to the ‘viscera’ of men. Just as Elizabeth I had been doing. As Rosanna Camerlingo has written: ‘Henry knows well that God has not taken side for England. And yet he also knows that he must reply to his soldiers’ doubts about the predicament of their souls in the other world. He knows, in other words, that he must adopt the religion of his soldiers for the nation to be born.’¹⁹. However, as it has been shown, religion is only exploited *after* the battle, not before. What underlies the famous Saint Crispin’s speech performed by Shakespeare’s Machiavellian Henry at the eve of the battle is rather the idea of national unity. Even though Henry’s kingdom is a fragmented mosaic of people and dialects, just like Elizabethan England, the charismatic king, brave soldier and persuasive leader, creates a ‘rhetoric of the brotherhood’ to unite his soldiers and overcome their scepticism.

[...] If we are marked to die, we are enough [...]
 We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.
 For he today that sheds his blood with me
 Shall be my brother.
 [HV, IV, iii, 20-62]

It appears evident at this point how Shakespeare's king is completely different from the champion of Christianity, Goffredo of Buglione, who had been celebrated only some twenty years before by Torquato Tasso. To him, before assembling the Christian princes headed to Jerusalem, Archangel Gabriel himself had announced: '*Dio per lor duce già t'elegge, ed essi, | supporran volentieri a te se stessi*' [I, xvi, 7-8]²⁰. The English 'band of brothers', kept together by a shared faith in the honour of their nation, represented instead the summit of that unifying strategy of the 'giddy minds' that Henry IV had recommended to his son. A strategy which had to 'waste the memory of the former days'²¹. Not only king and soldiers then, but 'brothers', all united together in what Claire MacEachern defines 'a fantasy of national bondedness'²². Utopia, rhetoric, political strategy: whatever the definition, it resulted in being the winning move. As Laura Tosi has written: 'National building inevitably entails a desire to impose a utopian notion of unified feeling onto a fragmented tableau'²³. Within the evidently celebrating frame of *Henry V*, however, one cannot but admit that the unified nation this play celebrates is, just as the Shakespearian character, a myth. As for this, not to be forgotten is the fact that, in the Epilogue, Shakespeare actually concludes on notes which stand in clear opposition to the exaltation of the Prologue: the two 'mighty monarchies' which fought at Agincourt find themselves united in the marriage between Henry and Catherine of France, but the future foresees an infant Henry VI on the throne and the beginning of a new war which would eventually lead to the loss of France and of many human lives.

Before reaching a conclusion therefore, it is worth saying a few words about the historical context within which the following Shakespearean works were written, by briefly focusing in particular on the inner problems the English nation had to face at the beginning of the 17th century. Those were indeed the years of the not easy passage from Elizabeth I to the first Stuart king, James. Under his reign, the increasingly drastic opposition between the Crown and the Puritans would end up exacerbating those contrasts that would lead, in a few years, to a new, cruel civil war. Contrasts that were proving also how the efforts made during Elizabeth's reign to hold the nation together had not been enough. All these socio-political tensions characterizing the first years of James' reign can be inferred from Shakespeare's plays and, in particular, from *Troilus and Cressida*, written and performed in 1603-4. This is a play of difficult classification, which is once again focused on a war of doubtful causes, and where an echo of Gentili's ideas can still be found as well. The pessimistic tone pervading this play – and Shakespeare's tragical period as a whole – is indeed a clear reflection of those contrasts which have been mentioned before. In this new historical context, it comes as no surprise that, after the 'Machiavellian optimism' of *Henry V*, Shakespeare brings to the stage 'princes orgulous', engaged in what is immediately referred to as a 'cruel war'. Although the idea of a new, actual war, at the time of representation of *Troilus and Cressida*, was not that impending, the grotesqueness of this play does not foresee a bright future. What is true, however, is the fact that here Shakespeare seems still to make a last plea to the political leaders. The well-known speech pronounced by Ulysses on the order of the universe, with the 'glorious planet Sol' firmly in the middle, is a clear invitation to James I, the new 'Sol' recently come to the throne of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Without order and without control, 'plagues',

‘portents’ and ‘mutiny’ come to ‘deracinate the unity and married calm of states.’ [TC, I, iii, 85-101]. Only a resolved king-Sol firm on his throne can dispel – or at least so the playwright seems to suggest – the centrifugal forces threatening the State. Once again, in this play too Shakespeare appears to have well understood the lesson of Gentili’s *De Iure Belli*, which had become widely known by that time, after its publication in London. To begin with, the whole work displays a series of battles, truces, ambushes and ransoms which anachronistically reflect the code of behaviour in war that the new Gentilian law was releasing. Furthermore, the young Trojan prince Troilus cites Gentili almost textually when he states: ‘O virtuous fight, | when right with right wars who shall be most right!’ [TC, III, ii, 169-70]. In this war, two ‘rights’ fight to assert which is more right, but being both ‘rights’, this also means that both could virtually have their share of reason, of legitimacy, just as Gentili had written: ‘*Haec natura bellorum, ut pars utraque praetendat, se fouere iustam causam. [...] At uero si dubium sit, a qua parte stet iustitia, hanc si et utraque quaerit pars, iniusta esse neutra potest*’²⁴.

These technical questions aside, what seems to have been understood in this play is the core of Gentili’s thought: that is, the separation between jurisprudence and theology. The Greeks, for example, act as if they perfectly know that these two spheres should be decidedly separated. In war, the sphere of intimacy cannot carry any weight, what really counts is only the law of war and cunning Ulysses consequently asserts: ‘There is a mystery, with whom relation | durst never meddle, in the soul of state...’ [TC, III, iii, 200-1]. The ‘arcana’ of the sovereigns are mysteries which should never be revealed, which only concern the single individuals, just as Alberico Gentili had advised and as Shakespeare had already shown when focusing on Henry V’s conscience. All this is also linked to the idea of the superiority of a neutral law, embodied by a king, who can keep at bay men’s passions and guarantee order and justice: ‘[...] there is a law in each well-order’d nation | to curb those raging appetites that are | most disobedient and refractory.’ [TC, II, iii, 181-3]. As in *Henry V* before, in *Troilus and Cressida* too a further attempt emerges to propose a way to follow, so as to ward off new bloodshed in the name of extreme passions or of God, and rather preserve national order and unity. The same ideas which would later lead to Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*.

To conclude, with his plays Shakespeare seems to have actively taken part in that process known as ‘the writing of England’ – to put it in Richard Helgerson’s words – and to have tried to give voice both to a modern idea of Europe and to a new kind of politics, based on the supremacy of the law and freedom of conscience. These ideas were very similar to those expressed by the Italian *Regius Professor* of Civil Law at Oxford, Alberico Gentili, in his famous treatise on international law, *De Iure Belli*. Even though direct evidence cannot be given, one can easily suppose that Shakespeare was acquainted with the theories of a famous personality of that age such as Gentili. While in *Henry V*, doubts and uncertainties about the effective success of a similar politics are interpreted by the playwright in a celebrating frame, in *Troilus and Cressida*, the situation is instead turned upside down. In the period of the greatest tragedies of the early 17th century, this last appeal for unity and order made by Shakespeare resulted in being an isolated beacon in a ‘sea’ of pessimism. Far more thundering and forceful than the claims of the heroes, the sharp lines of the cynical Thersites actually reveal the grotesqueness of this story: no longer two ‘mighty monarchies’ engaged in a new battle of Agincourt, but ‘fools’ on both sides who slaughter themselves in a trivial war ‘for a placket’.

(Endnotes)

1 Part of this letter can be found in Diego Panizza, *Alberico Gentili, giurista ideologo nell’Inghilterra elisabettiana*, La Garangola, 1981, 42n.

2 For a detailed biography of Alberico Gentili, see among others Panizza, *Alberico Gentili*.

3 For a detailed analysis of the Puritan opposition to the theatre, see for example Jonas A. Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, University of California Press, 1981; Pietro Spinucci, *Teatro elisabettiano. Teatro di Stato. La polemica dei puritani inglesi contro il teatro nei secc. XVI e XVII*, Leo S. Olschki, 1973; and Paola Pugliatti, and Donatella Pallotti, *La guerra dei teatri*, ETS, 2008.

4 Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poetry* was published posthumously in 1595, but it had been written in the 1580s and we know that it circulated among the intellectuals of the age. In his treatise, Sidney for example writes as follows about Norton and Sackville's play, *Gorbuduc*: '[it is] full of notable morality, which it doth most delightfully teach, and so obtain the very end of poesy'. See Philip Sidney, *Defence of Poetry*, OUP, 1997, 65.

5 The content of this correspondence will be later partially published by John Raynolds himself in his famous treatise *Th'Overthrow of the Stage-Playes* (1599).

6 Leon Markowicz, *Latin Correspondence by Alberico Gentili and John Rainolds on academic drama*, University of Salzburg, 1977, 29. For a detailed analysis of the correspondence between Raynolds, Gager and Gentili, see also Panizza, *Aberico Gentili*.

7 Markowicz, *Latin Correspondence*, 85.

8 In opposition to the negative opinion on Machiavelli spread by Gentillet's *Discours contre Machiavel*, in his *De Legationibus* Gentili celebrates him as a supporter of democracy and of liberty and defines his *Discorsi* as 'aureas in Livium observationes'. For a further analysis of the influence of Machiavelli in Gentili's political thought, see Diego Panizza, 'Il pensiero politico di Alberico Gentili', in *Alberico Gentili: Politica e religione nell'età delle guerre di religione*, Giuffrè Editore, 2002.

9 Gentili shares his title of 'Father' of the International Law with other two eminent jurists, such as the Spanish Francisco de Vitoria (1483/86-1564) and the Dutch Hugo Grotius (1583-1645). Scholars have studied in particular the influences between Gentili and Grotius and, with this regard, see Hedley Bull et al., *Hugo Grotius and International Relations*, Clarendon Press, 1990. Among the supporters of the leading position of Alberico Gentili, we find instead the German jurist Carl Schmitt. With this regard, see Carl Schmitt, *Il nomos della terra*, Adelphi, 1991.

10 Albericus Gentilis, *De Iure Belli Libri Tres*, Clarendon Press, 1872, 10.

11 Markowicz, *Latin correspondence*, 39.

12 'Turcis illinc, Hispanis hinc, meditantibus ubique dominatum, et molientibus, non obsisterent omnes iustissime?'. 'Should not everyone rightly oppose the Turks there and the Spaniards here, who are both plotting and trying to expand their power?', translation mine. Gentilis, *De Iure Belli*, 61.

13 For further details see also Paola Pugliatti, *Shakespeare and the just war tradition*, Ashgate, 2010.

14 All references to Shakespeare are from *The Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works*, OUP, 2005.

15 In 1599, the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, after the publication of certain satires, provoked a famous order prohibiting other such works – and history plays too – to be printed unless they had been allowed by the Privy Council. This episode is quite interesting because in that very year 1599 the Lord Chamberlain's Men brought to the stage *Henry V*. The fact that the Privy Council allowed this play to be represented means that the censors perfectly understood the advantages that its representation would have brought to the Crown, which was among the greatest supporters of the theatre itself. For further details see Michael Hattaway, 'The Shakespearean history play', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, CUP, 2002.

16 The character of Henry V has been widely analyzed and interpreted by a well-established series of critics, who tend to divide into two groups. On the one hand, those critics who celebrate Henry V as a 'providential ruler' (see, among others, Eustace M.W. Tylliard, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, Penguin, 1969) and, on the other hand, those who conversely highlight his 'hypocrisy' and his ruthlessly Machiavellian behaviour (see, for example, Harold C. Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, University of Chicago Press, 1951). A division which is summarized by Norman Rabkin in his 'Rabbits, Ducks, and *Henry V*', in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 28, 1977, 279-296, where he argues that: 'Shakespeare creates a work whose ultimate power is precisely the fact that it points in two opposite directions, virtually daring us to choose one of the two opposed interpretations it requires of us' (279). The first not to see Henry's Machiavellian politics only in a derogative way is Stephen Greenblatt in his *Shakespearean Negotiations*, University of California Press, 1988, 21-65.

17 For a detailed analysis of Richard Hooker's work, see Christopher Morris, introduction to Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, vol. 1, Everyman's Library, 1965.

18 Niccolò Machiavelli, 'Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio', in *Opere*, 1, Einaudi-Gallimard, 1997, 229-230.

19 Rosanna Camerlingo, 'Henry V and the Just War. Shakespeare, Gentili and Machiavelli', in *Machiavellian Encounters in Tudor and Stuart England*, Ashgate, 2011, 131.

20 It is worth quoting the whole speech performed by Archangel Gabriel to Goffredo, so as to underscore the

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differences with the situation represented instead by Shakespeare: ‘Goffredo, ecco opportuna | già la stagion ch’al guerreggiar s’aspetta: | perché dunque trapor dimora alcuna | a liberar Gierusalem soggetta? | Tu i principi a consiglio ormai raduna, | tu al fin de l’opra i neghittosi affetta. | Dio per lor duce già t’elegge, ed essi | supporran volentieri a te se stessi’ [I, xvi, 1-8]. Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata*, Meridiani Mondadori, 1995, 7.

21 For a detailed analysis of the crucial role of memory in relation to the legitimacy and the exercise of power, see Jonathan Baldo, ‘Wars of Memory in *Henry V*’, in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 47, 1996, 132-159. In this essay, the author states, among other things, that: ‘National memory is so selective that it may be more justly characterized as national amnesia, as Shakespeare himself would have experienced first-hand. [...] *Henry V* seems the product of a keen awareness that the unity of a nation or a play may be not only precarious but specious and the result of sometimes brutal campaigns of forgetting.’ (158-159).

22 Catherine MacEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood*, CUP, 1996, 44.

23 Laura Tosi, ‘A Map of Dis-unity. *Henry V* and the Making of “England”’, in *Paper Bullets of the Brain. Experiments with Shakespeare*, Cafoscarina, 2006, 162.

24 ‘It is in the nature of wars that both parts pretend to be in the right. [...] In truth, if it is uncertain who in the right is, when both parts pretend that their causes are just, neither can be in the wrong.’, translation mine. Gentilis, *De Iure Belli*, 29.

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