

# “Shylock is Dead”: Shakespeare In and Beyond the Ghetto

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**Abstract** This essay relates the genesis of the project that led to the first performance of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Ghetto of Venice in 2016, the year of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death and the 500th anniversary of the foundation of the Ghetto, the site that provided the world with the concept of the 'ghetto'. The essay puts the relationship between Shakespeare and the Ghetto in historical perspective, starting from W.D. Howells's visit to the Ghetto in the 1860s, through the point of view of a young Jewish Italian admirer of Shakespeare before and during Fascism, to the post-War transformations of the Ghetto and the present day.

**Keywords** Ghetto. Shylock. Venice. Antisemitism. Heritage. Holocaust. Memory.

**Summary** 1 Part 1. 1861-1866. – 2 Part 2. 1916-1945. – 3 Part 3. 2013-2016. – 4 Conclusion. 2021 and Beyond.

## 1 Part 1. 1861-1866

Our story begins some time in the early 1860s. Italy had just become an independent nation and Venice was still under Austrian rule when the American consul William Dean Howells visited, by chance, the Jewish Ghetto. In the dedicated section of his book *Venetian Life* (1866), a lively account of the city and its society, he declared it “extremely questionable whether I could get through a chapter on this subject without some feeble pleasantry about Shylock” (189, 151). *The Merchant of Venice* does not mention the Ghetto, and yet the anonymous Jewish moneylender that Shakespeare had found in Ser Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il pecorone* did not live in Venice; as prescribed by the Republic he

resided in its mainland domain of Mestre. By moving the newly named Shylock to the heart of the city, working and interacting with Christian merchants on a daily basis, Shakespeare was indirectly registering the new urban reality sanctioned by the Venice Senate on 29 March 1516. The city had lost the Battle of Agnadello against the League of Cambrai a few years earlier, and many Jews were among the refugees who had flocked to Venice in the aftermath. Protests arose, in the midst of a political and religious climate of anger and guilt for the recent defeat; many senators argued that the infidels had to be expelled. After long deliberation, it was decreed that the Jews could remain because they benefited the local economy but had to be confined in a large peripheral campo that took its name from the abandoned foundry, the *getto* (Calabi 2017). The Ghetto remained a segregated area until the fall of the Republic in 1797, and by the time Howells set foot there, it was a dilapidated neighbourhood inhabited by impoverished Jews. In previous centuries it had also been a very permeable contact zone that had attracted English travellers such as Thomas Coryat, curious to observe a living Jewish community at a time when Jews were still officially barred from England (Shapiro 2016). For Howells, the obvious association with his readers was the literary myth created by Shakespeare rather than any historical record. *The Merchant of Venice*, as James Shapiro has remarked, was part of a "mini-canon of works most frequently staged, parodied, and updated" that preoccupied American writers regularly between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century (Shapiro 2014, xxvii). Having paid his tribute, Howells was quick to comment on the altered social scenery:

Shylock is dead; [...] if he lived, Antonio would hardly spit upon his gorgeous pantaloons or his Parisian coat, as he met him on the Rialto; [...] he would far rather call out to him, *Ciò Shylock! Bon dí! Go piaser vederla*.<sup>1</sup> (1989, 151-2)

By proclaiming Shylock's demise, the consul meant that "the present social relations of Jew and Christian in this city render *The Merchant of Venice* quite impossible" (152). The vignette of two respectable bourgeois Venetians exchanging pleasantries in the local dialect was a vivid way of marking the fading of the prejudice that had drawn the boundaries of early modern society:

The Catholic Venetian certainly understands that his Jewish fellow-citizen is destined to some very unpleasant experiences in the next world, but *Corpo di Bacco!* that is no reason why he should not be friends with him in this. (152)

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<sup>1</sup> 'Shylock, old fellow, good-day. Glad to see you'.



Figure 1 Shylock #2 (Adriano Iurissevich) and Jessica (Michelle Uranowitz). © Andrea Messana

By this time, in fact, the social composition and geographical distribution of the Jewish community had been significantly altered. A majority of destitute families had remained in or around the Ghetto, now a comfort zone rather than a forced domicile, while a minority of affluent citizens had become a prominent class of dynamic modernisers eager to fashion a new social and cultural identity for themselves. This ‘modern’ Jew, writes Howells,

is gathering into his own hands great part of the trade of the city, and has the power that belongs to wealth. He is educated, liberal, and enlightened, and the last great name in Venetian literature is that of the Jewish historian of the Republic, Romanin. The Jew’s political sympathies are invariably patriotic, and he calls himself, not Ebreo, but Veneziano. He lives, when rich, in a palace or a fine house on the Grand Canal, and he furnishes and lets many others (I must say at rates which savor of the loan secured by the pound of flesh) in which he does not live. (152)

As Howells’s frivolous tone subtly changes, some fairly accurate social notions of Jewish upward mobility become entangled with deep-seated prejudices of hyperbolic financial hegemony and traditional usury. The antisemitism that the American consul had disavowed in his opening scene comes back with a vengeance only a few lines below, with a direct reference to the *Merchant’s* most tenacious trope, the ‘pound of flesh’. Stereotypes thrive on repetition: while on the one hand Howells was safely consigning theological anti-Judaism

to the recesses of the historical past, on the other he was contributing to the continuity and dissemination of the discourse of economic antisemitism. Moreover, he was rehearsing more 'modern' theses. His main focus was not Jewish society, but the Ghetto itself, which he went to explore with the intention of showing his readers "something of the Jewish past, which has survived to the nineteenth century in much of the discomfort and rank savor of the dark ages" (153). In his perspective, a visit to the Ghetto was not just a movement in space but a descent in time, in line with new discourses of racial degeneration. He started visiting the place with a "picturesque" and inept guide: "his long, hooked Hebrew nose caught my idle fancy, and his soft blue eyes excused a great deal of inefficiency" and

the manner in which he shouted to the heads of unctuous Jessicas thrust out of windows, and never gained the slightest information by his efforts, were imbecilities that we presently found insupportable. (157)

Howells was ironically revising another old cliché, that of the *belle juive* (Sicher 2017), which had traditionally produced a polarisation of gender in the portraits of physically ugly Shylocks, reflecting externally their spiritual inferiority, vis-à-vis beautiful Jessicas, who could still be saved by their conversion. He concluded on a note of doubt:

I do not understand why any class of Jews should still remain in the Ghetto, but it is certain, as I said, that they do remain there in great numbers. It may be that the impurity of the place and the atmosphere is conducive to purity of race. (159)

Howells's ostensibly liberal approach seems to place antisemitism safely in the dark past of the segregated Ghetto, but his racialised worldview is a clue to why modernity and emancipation did not bring full equality to the Jews of Venice but instead eventually created the conditions for their discrimination under Fascism and deportation to the Nazi death camps, at a time when they had never felt so integrated into Italian society, as our next story illustrates.



**Figure 2**  
Gino Bassi, *Nel terzo centenario della morte di Guglielmo Shakespeare* (Venice, 1916)

## 2 Part 2. 1916-1945

In 1916 a young Venetian Jew enamoured of English culture wrote an essay on the third centenary of Shakespeare's death, published by an Italian periodical whose agenda was moderately conservative and Catholic. At that time, Shakespeare was far from a defining presence in the national cultural canon; he had been read and commented upon by some of the makers of unified Italy, he had been adapted into opera and ballet by major composers, and he had been staged successfully by famous actors, but he was not as indispensable as he is today, where no main Italian theatre goes a season without a Shakespeare (Bassi 2016). A few months later, the young man's father, a rabbi and beloved teacher, died, leaving Gino Bassi as the only son of a widowed mother. It is not clear if this premature death spared the 24-year-old the trenches of World War I, which, not too far from Venice, were slaughtering Italian youth in the hundreds of thousands. In that climate, Gino Bassi offered a survey of the life and works of

Shakespeare for the educated reader, praising the ecumenical and universal spirit of the English playwright, a view that was made the mainstream position by the most prominent Italian philosopher of the day, Benedetto Croce. A public intellectual and former liberal senator who had opposed the military enterprise, Croce had isolated himself from the war and concentrated on a humanistic worldview that could reconcile in the realm of literature the European countries that were spilling each other's blood, some of them symbolically recruiting Shakespeare to their ranks (Engler 1991). In 1920 Croce published *Shakespeare, Ariosto and Corneille*, and his publisher testified to a new attention paid to the English author by excerpting his Shakespeare chapter for a monographic volume that came out in 1925, the same year Croce signed the Manifesto of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals. Croce based his reading on his long-established aesthetic theory of the autonomy of poetry defined as pure 'intuition' devoid of any moral and political aims.

Shakespeare did not toy with ideals of any kind and least of all with political ones; and although he represents magnificently political struggles too, he always supersedes them in their specific character and objective, always reaching, through them, the only thing that profoundly attracts him: life. (Croce 1925, 25)

His countermodel was the 'identity politics' of German critics and their use of *Richard II* as a doctrinaire assertion of the divine right of kings, of *The Tempest* as an apology for European colonialism and particularly of *Othello* as a warning against mixed marriages. The truth of the matter, in Croce's opinion, was that Shakespeare could neither agree nor disagree with "external reality" because he was intent to "create his own spiritual reality" (163). At first sight, Gino Bassi would seem to subscribe to these aesthetic principles, placing Shakespeare at a safe distance from any political involvement:

The personality of the poet abstracts and detaches himself from his creations; he cannot identify with any of his characters, whether tragic or comic; we feel that the Author can be neither the jealous Othello, nor the evil Jago, nor the avaricious Shylock [*sic*], nor Falstaff the cynical glutton, nor Romeo the ardent lover, nor any of the other characters who populate his scenes. (1916, 10; Author's translation)

Looking closer, he was also trying to portray a subject who could be a model obedient citizen without being xenophobic or indulging in flattery to power:

Indubitably Shakespeare was and was supposed to be by race, upbringing, and the environment in which he was writing, a good

patriot, a loyal subject of the Queen; however in his historical dramas we find no chauvinism, no low adulation, no attempt to veil those historical episodes that could have displeased the audience; among the numerous noble figures of Kings or warriors, for instance, we encounter Richard III, one the most cynical, evil and hideous men who ever existed in real life or depicted in a work of art. (10)

For this young Jewish intellectual, to write about Shakespeare was part of a cultural effort to subscribe to the script of the Italian nation while promoting moderate versions of pluralism and tolerance. However, when it came to providing an example of Shakespeare's neutrality, the choice fell on *The Merchant of Venice*:

The same could be said about Shakespeare's attitude towards the Jews. How many discussions, how many disputes about the figure of the merchant of Venice! Was Shakespeare meaning to describe in him the prototype of the money-grubbing man saturated with hatred for the Christian that corresponded to the traditional figure of the Jew in theatre and fiction? Or was not our Author trying to demonstrate that Shylock's character is the natural outcome of persecutions. (10-11)

Falling into a not untypical fallacy of confusing Shylock with the titular merchant, Gino made a specific point about the Jewish minority, without making his personal involvement in the matter explicit. His ancestors arrived in the Ghetto from some German-speaking territory some time in the late 1790s, and his grandparents may have bumped into Howells when he visited there. In his writing he was trying to negotiate a sort of middle ground where one could simultaneously aspire to be recognised as part of the cultural mainstream while using the symbolic capital of Shakespeare to advocate a more egalitarian and inclusive agenda. Gino would never openly thematise his own identity. His name was not recognisably Jewish. The unrecorded, probably Ashkenazi, surname had been Italianised upon arrival in Venice. He had a Hebrew name (Shlomo) to be used in ritual contexts and turned his own given name Girolamo (that in his ex libris he had anglicised to Jerome) into Gino, and named his three children with, respectively, a Greek (Paolo), a Latin (Luciana) and a Germanic (Roberto) name - the youngest, my father, after Robert Browning. Socially located somewhere between the indigent Jews of the Ghetto and the new aristocracy living on the Grand Canal, his was an educated middle-class family that cherished its religious tradition at home and at the Levantine synagogue in the Ghetto while embracing a secular, national, liberal Italian cultural identity in the public sphere. This was at the time when the Jews called themselves 'Israelites' (to

avoid all the negative connotations that had accrued over the word 'Jew' and its cognates, witness Shakespeare) and vigorously debated the new ideology of Zionism, seen by some as a necessary national affirmation and by others as a threat to Jewish integration in Europe.

In 1931, Gino Bassi, now a married lawyer and hardly an admirer of Mussolini, became a card-carrying member of the Fascist Party. For some Jews the same gesture was the ultimate act of allegiance to the homeland, the demonstration that they had indeed become like all other Italians. In this case, like that of many fellow citizens, his affiliation was entirely opportunistic: he wanted to improve his professional prospects upon the recent arrival of a third child. When that son wrote his own memoirs seventy years later (Bassi 2004), he provocatively put on the book's front cover a picture of the father and the three children donning the black Fascist uniforms, decked out for the customary Sunday parade. He did this for two reasons: first, to acknowledge the problematic relationship of Italian Jews with Fascism before the Race Laws, difficult to understand vis-à-vis the better-known condition of Jews in Nazi Germany and in Eastern Europe; second, as he told friends: "so some neo-Fascist will buy the book thinking it is a tribute to Mussolini and will learn something about his crimes instead".

Those black shirts did not help. In 1938, the Bassi family was in the list of Italian Jews abruptly stripped of their civil rights, a shock for most of them. The eldest son moved to France and then to Palestine, where he would become the founder of a kibbutz, trying to combine his socialist and religious ideals, while the younger siblings continued a now socially segregated life in Venice, going to a newly formed Jewish school following their expulsion from the public educational system. They were patiently waiting for Fascism to go and for better times to come. But when Mussolini capitulated in 1943, much worse times came and the whole family fled to Rome, unaware that the relatives who were supposed to give them shelter had been arrested and deported to Auschwitz on a transport that had left the very day the Venetians arrived in Rome. Gino and his wife Lina acquired fake identities while their children spent almost a year in a Catholic orphanage under false names until the war was over and they all returned to Venice. Their Roman family had all died in Auschwitz. In 1916, Gino had written in the final paragraph of his essay: "Let us approach Shakespeare's oeuvre and let us quench our thirst at the pure fount of his genius, not with the reverential awe with which we approach a Sanctuary, but with the joyful desire of knowing ourselves better - and our kin [*i nostri simili*]" (1916, 12), a conclusion that emphasised the powers of identification and empathy that he found in the plays. Shakespeare was the bridge that allowed Gino Bassi to connect his (Venetian) Jewish identity to his Italian and European identity, a connection that had to remain implicit. Twenty years later, that bridge collapsed.





**Figure 3** Shylock #5 (Ned Eisenberg) preparing to cut the pound of flesh from Antonio (Stefano Scherini). © Andrea Messina

### 3 Part 3. 2013-2016

William Dean Howells may have been the first to bring Shakespeare and the Ghetto together in print, endorsing deep-seated antisemitic stereotypes while ostensibly dismissing others. Gino Bassi brought Shakespeare and the condition of Italian Jews together implicitly, without mentioning the Ghetto or his own personal investment. He died long before I was born and his English library was silent decoration in the background of my childhood. But somehow English literature became my vocation. I first wrote about *The Merchant of Venice* in a mimeographed newsletter produced by the Venice Jewish Community youth group in the late eighties. Typically, I had not read the whole play, not just because the Italian school system encourages reading only extracts that can be applied to teaching broad historical contexts but also because of my personal inclination to bluffing. What I did not know yet was that in praising Shakespeare's tolerance, I was unwittingly rehearsing my grandfather's position, probably because it still represented the received wisdom on the play. I read his essay as a university student and later I recognised in it an attitude that I had myself internalised over half a century and two world wars after him: to be Jewish in private and within the comfort zone of the Jewish community, and Italian in public. Italy was – and still is – a country that is secular in its constitution but culturally and anthropologically Catholic, even as church attendance has plummeted. After the war, the agnostic Croce had titled his influential essay in praise

of humanism "Why We Cannot Help Calling Ourselves Christians" (1949). Even to be secular, he maintained, meant to be a secularised Christian. Then and now, as old debates about the presence of the crucifix in Italian classrooms and courthouses re-emerge, Jews are still testing the limits of citizenship and secularisation, their history having paved the ground for a discussion of minority rights that now concerns more recent migrant communities. This explains why, even as I entered the professional world of Shakespeare, I initially kept at a safe distance from *The Merchant of Venice*.

In the meantime, the Ghetto was becoming both a public site of memory with the rise of the civic culture of Holocaust remembrance and a security-sensitive area after a Palestinian terrorist attack mortally targeted Rome's main synagogue in 1982, a condition of permanent surveillance aggravated by 9/11 and unchanged since (Bassi, di Leonardo 2015). The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was a turning point in the altered Italian mainstream perception of Israel and made Middle Eastern politics more and more entangled with Jewish public discourse. In the same decade, while a renewed Jewish Museum attracted thousands of visitors to the Ghetto, the campo was partially colonised by Chabad, the entrepreneurial group of ultra-orthodox Jews who settled there, fashioning themselves as the authentic local Jews. Their outreach tactics – button-holing passersby and accosting them with their 'mission' – were a far cry from the traditionalist and local and private orientation of our community steeped in nostalgia for a fading past.

By the early 2010s the historic Jewish community had never been smaller – nor the Ghetto more popular. Twenty-five years after my first naive engagement with the play, my professional interests and the Jewish cultural activism that I had inherited from my family aligned, fortified by a visceral attachment to our own embattled Jewish community. The forthcoming quincentennial inspired me to propose the first staging of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Ghetto: I was privileged to receive almost unconditional enthusiasm from fellow Shakespeareans and the Jewish community leaders. In order to translate the idea into a solid project there were many challenges, but I strongly felt we should start from a fundamental premise. Precisely because the play was going to be staged in the place where Jews had lived real lives in the sixteenth century, we had to steer clear of the illusion of time travel. Since my early encounter with *Merchant*, I had enjoyed more than once the role of extempore guide to the Ghetto. As Howells's example shows, the site has long been an important source of inspiration for Shakespeare readers, actors and directors wishing to recreate more 'authentic' *Merchants* and redemptively reduce the distance between the stereotypical Shylock and the historical reality of Venetian Jews. Sometimes I felt I played the part of the native informant, the insider entrusted with explaining local culture to the

dominant group and somehow colluding with it, halfway between my passionate grandfather and Howells's sleazy guide. This experience made me realise the central ambiguity of such an ethnographic approach. Making Shylock putatively more authentic warrants the interpretation that cutting off Christian pounds of flesh might have been historically plausible. This alone made a philological or archaeological reconstruction undesirable. There are intelligent applications of this practice. The Globe production by Jonathan Munby (which symbolically ended its world tour in Venice) definitely pursued the line of a realistic Shylock. But it also included his forced conversion in an added scene that disrupted the comic and idyllic denouement in Belmont and made Jessica regret her own abjuration when she recited the daily Hebrew prayer addressed to the God who 'forgives abundantly' (an obvious refutation of the theological stereotype of the vengeful Old Testament God, a subtlety surely lost on the vast majority of the spectators). But in most cases, the reality effects builds an apparatus of verisimilitude that risks validating Shylock's grotesquely fictional pound-of-flesh violence as a 'Jewish' act.

Envisioning a site-specific production in the Ghetto in 2016 we did not know what to expect - that was precisely the point - but for sure we did not want to turn Shylock into a decent human being to honour the memory of the Jews who were ghettoised and later persecuted here. At no point did we intend to recreate the illusion of voyaging back into the sixteenth century: the production was programmatically expected to go precisely against the grain of the antiquarian, nostalgic drive that led Howells and some of his contemporaries to look for historical traces of Shakespeare's passage through Venice. In sum, bringing Shakespeare to the Ghetto was not meant as a redemptive or restorative operation aimed at aligning fiction and history; on the contrary, it was a dialectical gesture made at a specific geopolitical juncture in the history of Europe when the most sophisticated awareness and development of critical multicultural thinking coexists with the resurgence of populism, antisemitism, and racism as major political vectors. The project was about owning Shakespeare, coping with his disturbing legacy, participating in that fascinating history of Jewish appropriations of the play that Edna Nahshon and Michael Shapiro have aptly defined "wrestling with Shylock" (2017). It meant recognising the public and civic function of the Ghetto as a paradigmatic site. The bold choice made by Coonrod of assigning the iconic role of Shylock to five different actors, of different genders, nationalities and ethnicities to play each of his five scenes (discussed by many chapters here and in Pellone, Schalkwyk 2017), emphasised that he was not just the archetypal Jew but a more complicated figure of alterity.

#### 4 Conclusion. 2021 and Beyond

Many years after his visit, William Dean Howells met Shakespeare 'in person'. In *The Seen and Unseen at Stratford-on-Avon: A Fantasy* (1914), they discussed, among other things, the rapid ascent of the motion picture and the decline of theatre: "I was down in Venice, last night, at the little theater where you used to see them, and they were doing a Wild West movie piece just as you saw to-day; and it's the same everywhere in Italy" (93). Today he may be surprised to see there is an Old Wild West restaurant not far from the Ghetto, and everywhere shops are more likely to sell international brands or cheap knick-knacks than to offer any local product. *The Merchant 'in' Venice* was a symbolic gesture connecting the local community with theatre visitors, Venetian artistic traditions (such as the beautiful costumes of Stefano Nicolao, one of the few artisans who resists the commodification of Venetian culture and enjoys an international reputation) with the company styles and repertoires, Italian actors with international actors. Since then, the production has travelled abroad, demonstrating that its artistic merit outlives the occasion of its genesis. The fact that the only 'set' reutilised for its American debut at Montclair State University were the metal barricades used to demarcate the performing space in the Ghetto is a revealing detail. What was imported from Venice was not some reconstructed historical artefact but testimony of the compromise accepted by the director (who would have loved for the actors and spectators to merge seamlessly with the casual passersby) to comply with safety and security restrictions. And perhaps those imported barricades operated in performances beyond the Ghetto as a sad reminder of ghettoisation.

By forming, over two summers of rehearsal and performance, a temporary 'heritage community' - "a group of people committed to sustaining and transmitting to the future generations cultural heritage through public actions" (Council of Europe, Faro Convention, 2005), Colombari reactivated the tradition of cosmopolitanism in the Venice Ghetto and made of the 2016 anniversary a moment to reflect on the past, present and future of the site. Looking back to the production now in 2021 as we enter a new decade in the millennium, the historical distance feels much greater. The political orientation of the production and its prestigious collateral event - the 'Mock Appeal' presided by the late US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (and discussed in detail elsewhere in this volume) - embodied the spirit of a very particular era, symbolised by the presidency of Barack Obama and a simultaneous sweeping victory of progressive parties in Italy. Only a few years later, antisemitism is once again a common political currency in Hungary; it is a controversial matter in progressive forces such as British Labour; it has resurfaced in government forces in Italy and in popular movements in France; it provokes Neo-Nazi



Figure 4 Shylock #3 (Jenni Lea-Jones) howls. © Andrea Messana

violence in Germany and the United States; it shows different faces in white supremacists and poisons the rhetoric of some anti-Zionist leftwingers; it informs conspiracy theories on the Coronavirus pandemic; it generates rival definitions by international institutions and academics; it is mobilised by some Jewish and Israeli leaders, sometimes willing to side with right-wing movements and governments against the spectre of Muslim enemies. Old theological debates and knots reappear, showing their uncanny topicality. Overt racism is on the political agenda in many countries worldwide, and new ghettos are created in the form of detainment camps or ships full of hopeful migrants arrested on the seas. The one lesson I certainly took from my grandfather's involvement with *Merchant* is never to allow incidental moments of political optimism to cloud our judgment on the pernicious ability of antisemitism to be reanimated as a persistent cultural temptation and an expedient political weapon in times of crisis.

At the end of his revised edition of his history of the Ghetto, the book that contributed to putting this district back on the cultural map in 1987 and that was reissued on the occasion of the quinquennial, Riccardo Calimani proclaimed, once again, the death of Shylock (2016, 488). Like Howells, he had opened his original text with Shakespeare's character to give his readers a familiar point of reference. Thirty years later, his description of the Ghetto sounded more disillusioned and melancholic, an unsurprising perspective for an author who was witnessing his own version of Jewish Venice receding into the past.

But Shylock is not dead. As long as the theological-political-economic entanglements that Shakespeare distilled in this unruly *dramatis persona* resurface in the present, this character who manifests extreme hate and extreme love will continue to haunt us under ever new circumstances. My grandfather Gino probably attended the famous staging of *The Merchant of Venice* that Max Reinhardt brought to Venice in 1934. I had the chance to discuss that famous production with another member of the family, then a young 17-year-old spectator. What she remembered in her nineties was not the lavish scenography still praised by theatre historians but a harrowing cry from Shylock. The relation between this recollection and her later experience as a persecuted Jew under Fascism must remain the subject of speculation. But it certainly informed my thinking about our project to stage *The Merchant in Venice* in 2016. Eighty years after Memo Benassi cried out in Reinhardt's production, Jenni Lea-Jones, the woman who, as Shylock #3, spoke "Hath not a Jew eyes?", cried out again, in one of the most arresting moments of the production. Shylock is not dead; (s)he is still screaming.

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