Reproducing Shakespeare

New Studies in Adaptation and Appropriation

Series Editors

Thomas Cartelli
English Department
Muhlenberg College
Allentown, Pennsylvania, USA

Katherine Rowe
English Department
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts, USA

Reproducing Shakespeare marks the turn in adaptation studies toward recontextualization, reformatting, and media convergence. It builds on two decades of growing interest in the "afterlife" of Shakespeare, showcasing some of the best new work of this kind currently being produced. The series addresses the repurposing of Shakespeare in different technical, cultural, and performance formats, emphasizing the uses and effects of Shakespearean texts in both national and global networks of reference and communication. Studies in this series pursue a deeper understanding of how and why cultures recycle their classic works, and of the media involved in negotiating these transactions.

More information about this series at
http://www.springer.com/series/14505

Shaul Bassi

Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare

Place, "Race," Politics

palgrave
macmillan

Shaul Bassi
Ca'Foscari University of Venice
Italy

Reproducing Shakespeare
ISBN 978-1-137-50285-8 ISBN 978-1-137-49170-1 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1

Library of Congress Control Number: XXXXXXXXXX

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author 2016
This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.
The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.
The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made.

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Nature America Inc. New York

To Susy and Samuel P.K.

Acknowledgments

In writing this book, I have been inspired by many friends, colleagues, and students, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge their help and support. My greatest debt is to Thomas Cartelli, Gilberto Sacerdoti, Carol Chillington Rutter, Julia Reinhard Lupton, Stephen Greenblatt, Janet Adelman, Alessandro Serpieri, Kent Cartwright, Murray Baumgarten, Armando Pajalich, Gil Anidjar, and Susanne Franco. I also wish to thank Keir Elam, Paola Pugliatti, Laura Tosi, Michael Neill, Anthony Marasco, Werner Sollors, Hayden White, Margaret Brose, Martin Procházka, Goran Stanivukovic, Larry Wolff, Rocco Coronato, Alessandra Petrina, Roberta Cimarosti, Nicoletta Tirinnanzi, Alide Cagidemetrio, Alessandra Marzola, Giovanni Levi, Michele Marrapodi, James Hirsh, Alessandra Di Maio, Karina Attar, Giulio Marra, Albert Ascoli, Jonathan Gil Harris, Stuart Sillars and the Bergen Shakespeare Research Group; Masolino D'Amico, Simona Corso, Enno Ruge, Stephan Laque, Paul Kottman, Alberto Toso Fei, Flavio Gregori, Maurizio Calbi, Tobias Döring, Ramie Targoff, Luisa Accati, Fernando Cioni, Loretta Innocenti, Valerio de Scarpis, Silvia Bigliazzi, Paola Bottalla, Annalisa Oboe, Eva Bassi, Patricia Parker, Graham Bradshaw, Stanley Wells, Paul Edmondson, Jerry Brotton, Michael Shapiro, David Scott Kastan, Karin Coonrod, David Schalkwyk, B. J. Sokol, Simon Levis Sullam, John Moore, Maria Ida Biggi, Deanna Shemek, Katherine Rowe, Andrea Messana the students of my Shakespeare courses in 2013/14 and 2014/15, and all the participants to the Shylock Project in summer 2015. My sincere thanks to the editors at Palgrave Macmillan.

All translations from Italian are mine unless otherwise noted.

Thanks to the publishers and editors for permission to print revised and expanded versions of the following essays:

"The Moor(lacco) of Genoa: Ethnicity and Loyalty in an Illyrian *Othello*". In *Shakespeare's Illyrias: Heterotopies, Identities (Counter)histories*, edited by Martin Procházka, *Litteraria Pragensia* 12.23 (2002).

"Country Dispositions. Ethnic Fallacies in Shakespeare Criticism". In *The Shakespearean International Yearbook III*: *Where are we in Shakespearean Studies*, edited by Graham Bradshaw, Angus Fletcher and John Mucciolo, 59–76. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2003. Copyright © 2003.

"Shakespeare Theocon and Neoprog. Political Criticism in the New Machiavellian Moment". In *Paper Bullets of the Brain. Experiments with Shakespeare*, edited by Shaul Bassi and Roberta Cimarosti, 201–215. Venezia: Cafoscarina, 2006.

"Guglielmo and Benito: Shakespeare, Nation, and Ethnicity in Fascist Italy". In *The Shakespearean International Yearbook XI: Special issue: Placing Michael Neill*, edited by Tom Bishop, Alexa Huang, Jonathan Gil Harris, and Graham Bradshaw, 199–216. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011. Copyright © 2011.

"Hamlet in Venice. An Anthropology of Italian Theory". In *Renaissance Shakespeare: Shakespeare Renaissances. Proceedings of the Ninth World Shakespeare Congress*, edited by Martin Procházka et al., 270–278. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2013.

Contents

1 Introduction: Country Dispositions 1

Part I Race 19

2 Iago's Race, Shakespeare's Ethnicities 21

3 Slav-ing Othello 43

4 Shakespeare, Nation, and Race in Fascist Italy 63

Part II Politics 81

5 Neocon and Theoprog: The New Machiavellian Moment 83

6 Infinite Minds: Shakespeare and Giordano Bruno Revisited 99

7 Hamlet in Venice 121

Part III Place 137

8 The Grave and the Ghetto: Shakespearean Places as Adaptations 139

9 Fixed Figures: The Other Moors of Venice 159

10 The Prison House of Italy: *Caesar Must Die* 181

Bibliography 203

Index 223

List of Figures

Fig. 8.1	Juliet's balcony, Verona. CCL	147
Fig. 8.2	Compagnia de' Colombari rehearsing *The Merchant of Venice* in the Ghetto (2015)	156
Fig. 9.1	Campo dei Mori, Venice	160
Fig. 9.2	The Tetrarchs	165

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Country Dispositions

In the heart of the temptation scene, planting what may be his most poisonous seed in Othello's mind, Iago warns his general: "look to your wife", "observe her well", "wear your eye not jealous nor secure". The reason for such hypervigilance is that

> I know our country disposition well;
> In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks
> They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
> Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.
>
> 3.3.204-7

As E.A.J. Honigmann glosses, Iago means "I know, *but you cannot know…*".[1] Othello is confident that his religious conversion, his service to the state, his command of oratory, and the intimacy of marriage have sanctioned his admission and assimilation into Venetian society; Iago intervenes to conjure up a "country disposition", an ethnic/national factor which by its (feminine) nature eludes knowledge, rendering the Moor an irreducibly flawed stranger. According to this new, unofficial script of Venetian identity, Othello discovers himself the simultaneous victim of a double cognitive deficiency, as a foreigner and as a husband. Iago has convinced his general that while Desdemona may still be a faithful wife, he is not yet a

[1] William Shakespeare, *Othello* (Arden 3), edited by E. A. J. Honigmann (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997), 221.

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016

S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1_1

Venetian. Othello will be ready to commit the most extreme acts, murder and suicide, out of the desperate desire to master this disposition and, in the same breath, his wife. But of course his efforts will be vain, because the inner sanctuary of Venetian identity, as envisioned by Iago, is empty.

Even though a sexual pun akin to that of Hamlet's "country matters" (3.2.108) might be intended—nationalist and racist ideologies typically exploit women while claiming to defend them from some enemy—it is indicative that the word "country" derives from the Anglo-Norman *contré*, *countré*, or *cuntré*, stemming in turn from classical Latin *contrā*, that is, "against", "opposite", lit. "that which lies opposite or fronting the view, the landscape spread out before one".[2] Ethnic and national identities have a number of positive values (language, beliefs, traditions), but they often require someone who is opposite, an "other", to affirm themselves.[3] In Iago's advice, we may see the mechanism operating at its most literal: his country is an imagined community, created through his masterful use of hypotyposis,[4] defined mostly by the simultaneous deprecation of women ("they") and the exclusion of the Moor: Venice is a closed cultural text because its women are unreadable, and it is "our" country because it is emphatically not Othello's. In Iago's picture, a "country disposition" is made to function as a "cognitive or moral island",[5] the state to which incline those versions of radical relativism advocating the intrinsic validity (and hence impermeability) of each and every cultural formation; as the ensign would put it, "what you know, *you* know" (5.2.300, my emphasis). It is, in contemporary terms, a fundamentalist view of identity, which presupposes an unbridgeable gap between "us" and "them" and informs racist and xenophobic discourses. But, as Hayden White cautions us, "communities or societies … may regard themselves as related by opposition or negation to some other community or society and indeed may act in such a way as to become merely an 'other,' but in reality they are only different from one another".[6]

[2] A "country disposition" first and foremost operates in and through language; to underline this aspect, I include in every chapter of this book a brief etymological or linguistic analysis of an Italian word that exists in some sort of tension with its English cognate.

[3] Chapter 2 will analyze this point in detail.

[4] Hypotyposis, the "vivid description of a scene, event, or situation, bringing it, as it were, before the eyes of the hearer or reader" (OED), is one of Iago's rhetorical weapons of choice. Alessandro Serpieri, *Otello: l'eros negato* (Napoli: Liguori, 2003), 21.

[5] Sen, *Reason Before Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 31.

[6] Hayden White, *The Practical Past* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 3.

This book investigates the cultural difference of Italy *in* and *through* Shakespeare. It looks at the encounter, collision, and intermingling of the "country dispositions" represented respectively by Shakespeare and Italy, both understood as vast constellations rather than fixed stars. The obvious premise is that several plays by Shakespeare are adaptated from Italian sources; the additional context is the constant presence of Shakespeare in Italian culture from the mid-nineteenth century on. The classical topic "Shakespeare and Italy" is here revisited from a new perspective, focusing on the playwright's Italian afterlife through the lens of the three categories that structure this book: place, "race", and politics. My twofold and chiastic objective is to ask how Italy explains Shakespeare and how Shakespeare explains Italy, seeking possible answers in various texts, events, and sites: a Victorian racialist interpretation of Shakespeare that casts Iago as the archetypal Italian specimen, a Romantic adaptation of *Othello* written in Venice under Austrian rule, the Fascist appropriations of Shakespeare, the disparate uses of Machiavelli in recent Shakespearean criticism, the absence of Giordano Bruno in Shakespeare studies after Frances Yates, an essay on *Hamlet* by a prominent Italian philosopher and politician, monuments and sites associated with Shakespeare in Verona and Venice, and the Taviani brothers' filmic version of *Julius Caesar*.

These repositionings of Shakespeare share some inspiring analogies with the postcolonial appropriations analyzed by Thomas Cartelli. Agreeing with Jonathan Bate that "Shakespeare" is best understood as "a body of work that is refashioned by each subsequent age in the image of itself",[7] Cartelli adds a key geopolitical factor: "[T]his tendency becomes even more pronounced when 'Shakespeare' is 'refashioned' outside the national boundaries of British culture and society "in the image" of cultures and societies seeking either to establish their independence from imperial influence or to identify, define, and assert their own national values or priorities."[8] In applying this notion outside of the Anglosphere (a concept analyzed below), I try to capitalize on his specific examination of the American case. Although my main interest in the book is in the differences between the two "country dispositions" as regards Shakespeare, I find a productive parallelism between Italy and the USA as former

[7] The reference is to Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3. See also Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare. A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (London: Vintage, 1991).

[8] Thomas Cartelli, *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 2.

colonial spaces turned into nation-states with imperial ambitions.[9] Some chapters will then examine the role of Shakespeare in the Italian process of national self-fashioning, some will focus on Fascist and racist appropriations of his plays, and others will deal with more recent Italian transactions with Shakespeare in the age of globalization.

Italy has been for centuries less a stable national and political entity than a work in progress, with all its internal contradictions and dissonances, an ideal aspiration troubling, obsessing, and frustrating its advocates and supporters as well as its opponents. Situated at the borders of East and West, Europe and Africa, struggling for centuries to define itself, always oscillating between freedom and oppression, experiencing democracy and tyranny, enforcing and suffering colonialism, negotiating modernity and tradition, Italy is marked by a history of political fragmentation, haunted by the memory of its ancient Roman past, strongly identified with the Catholic Church and yet striving to distinguish itself from it. Occupied for centuries by several foreign regimes, when it acquired independence, it turned in succession into a parliamentary monarchy, a fascist dictatorship that established a short-lived empire, and eventually into a democratic republic. Today it is the southernmost frontier of Europe in a geopolitical crisis characterized by unprecedented mass migrations from Africa and Asia. The various stories told in this book analyze the reverberations of these various political circumstances in the coeval appropriations of Shakespeare. These peripheral events may both illuminate singular potentialities of the plays activated by these specific Italian circumstances and simultaneously turn Shakespeare into a special guide to a nation's changing ethos and political unconscious. This particular case is more compelling insofar as most of the plays under scrutiny are derived from Italian sources, making of each new Italian staging, edition, and interpretation of Shakespeare *an adaptation of an adaptation*, an act of translation that brings a text and a set of meanings back to their "original" context, creating in turn new texts and new meanings.

The territory is vast and there is no attempt at a comprehensive survey. This book deals with criticism, adaptations, performance, and film, but hardly mentions opera and, in most cases, it looks at the margins rather than at the center. In my analysis, I am guided by Slavoj Žižek's insight:

> We effectively understand a foreign culture when we are able to identify with its points of failure: when we are able to discern not its hidden positive

[9] Cartelli, *Repositioning Shakespeare,* 6.

> meaning, but rather its blind spot, the deadlock the proliferation of meaning endeavors to cover up. In other words, when we endeavor to understand the Other (another culture), we should not focus on its specificity (on the peculiarity of "their customs," etc.), we should rather endeavor to encircle that which eludes their grasp, the point at which the Other is in itself dislocated not bound by its "specific context".[10]

The specificity of Italian culture has been a constant theme and preoccupation for Italians and foreigners alike. Italians have interrogated themselves and their collective identity as part of their long struggle for national unity, and, more recently, in their longing for an accomplished democracy. For foreign observers, especially citizens of the Anglosphere, Italy has long been a real and imaginary place, a mirror and a refuge, and a screen where a wide array of negative and positive stereotypes is projected. Italophobia and Italophilia have ancient roots and sometimes coexist in the same viewer, as is probably the case with Shakespeare.[11] Many precious studies have been devoted to the "hidden positive meaning", the "specific context", and the "peculiarity of customs" of Italy as constructed by Shakespearean and other early modern texts.[12] This book, on the other hand, is more interested in Žižek's "blind spots" and "points of failure", which I read as a way to interpret Shakespeare's "country dispositions". For Iago, a "country disposition" is a virtual reality aimed at excluding Othello. In its less extreme version, a "country disposition" is the milieu and habitus in which we grow up and live, often unaware of its cultural and anthropological assumptions. As Giordano Bruno, one of the protagonists of this book, reminds us: "[H]ow great is the impact of the habit of believing and of being nourished from childhood with certain persuasions, on blocking

[10] Slavoj Žižek, *The Abyss of Freedom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 50.

[11] Attilio Brilli, *Il viaggio in Italia: storia di una grande tradizione culturale*. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006); Joseph Luzzi, *Romantic Europe and the Ghost of Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008); Manfred Beller, "Italians". In *Imagology. The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters: a critical survey*. Edited by Manfred Beller and Joseph Theodoor Leerssen, 194–200 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007).

[12] Michele Marrapodi, A. J. Hoenselaars, Marcello Cappuzzo, and Lino Falzon Santucci, eds., *Shakespeare's Italy: Functions of Italian Locations in Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Michele Marrapodi, ed., *Shakespeare, Italy and Intertextuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Michael Redmond, *Shakespeare, Politics, and Italy* (Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

the understanding of most evident things."[13] A "country disposition" is the norms we take for granted, and that we take for granted other people take for granted; a bias, a horizon within which we operate undoubtingly until we cross a different disposition, which may generate tension, friction, anxiety, hostility, sometimes admiration, and which, at best, may lead to questioning our own prejudices. Against Iago's fundamentalist approach, this is the hermeneutic potential of Othello's "unhoused free condition" and Desdemona's "divided duty", their willingness to open their own experiences to a radically different country disposition.

The hypothesis of this book is that if we productively put in mutual tension Shakespeare and Italy, certain "points of failure" of Italian culture may come into relief. To quote Žižek, I will be looking for what the proliferation of Shakespearean meaning in the Italian context covers up, seeking what may elude our grasp; as a corollary, this view on/from the margins may also evidence some "blind spots" of mainstream Shakespeare criticism.

Sasper in Italy

"Sasper [sic] is the English Corneille"[14]—the eccentric, defamiliarizing view attested by the first critical appraisal of Shakespeare in Italian (1726) is the vantage point from which I address some lesser known episodes in the critical and theatrical history of plays such as *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. The relationship between Shakespeare and Italy has produced a wealth of critical work. The main scholarly approach is summarized by Michael Redmond: "[D]espite all the claims about the death of traditional source criticism, the focus of most research about early modern English drama's engagement with Italian culture is still the identification of more or less specific parallels with Cinquecento verse, prose narration, and theatre."[15] More recently, Julia Lupton and Paul Kottman have suggested a more original agenda, suggesting that the nexus can be also studied "in relation to

[13] Giordano Bruno, *The Ash Wednesday Supper,* edited by Stanley L. Jaki (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 69–70.

[14] Antonio Conti, *Il Cesare. Tragedia del Sig. Ab. Antonio Conti nobile veneto con alcune cose concernenti l'opera medesima* (Faenza: Gioseffantonio Archi, 1726), 54.

[15] Redmond, *Shakespeare, Politics, and Italy*, 1.

the political and dramatic writings of Machiavelli and the critical theory of modern Italian writers on sovereignty, republicanism, and the multitude, including Agamben, Gramsci, and Virno. This experimental set of readings aims to ask what special relations might obtain between the Italy of Shakespeare and the Italy of a certain line of modern thought, as mediated above all by the work of Machiavelli."[16] Capitalizing on these critical orientations, *Italy's Shakespeare and Shakespeare's Italy* examines aspects that have remained largely unexplored, arguing that the productive dialogue between the early modern and the postmodern advocated by Lupton and Kottman can be usefully supplemented by a consideration of key moments of the long pre- and post-independence history of Italy, a country that at the time of Shakespeare was a mosaic of disparate political entities and that only in the nineteenth century, when Shakespeare was first imported into Italian culture, became a unified state.

The history of Shakespeare's reception in Italy is one of multiple displacements and dislocations. "Don't you know that the very word Shakespeare is hard for us to pronounce?…Those blessed rules of Aristotle are firmly fixed in every head. Try to get outside them… capers and somersaults …."[17] lamented the actor Gustavo Modena to his younger colleague Ernesto Rossi, reminiscing about his own failed attempt to stage *Othello* in Milan in 1842. Shakespeare in Italy was for a long time primarily a crux of literary debates on "those blessed rules of Aristotle" (the unities of time, place, and action), a weapon to use in the battle between ancients and moderns, classics and Romantics, a critical means rather than a theatrical end. A minor detail speaks eloquently: the very name Shakespeare remains difficult to pronounce for Italians. From its first occurrence in the notes of Lorenzo Magalotti (1668) as "Shakespier", to the earliest record in print in Antonio Conti as "Sasper" (1726), down to a string of "Sachespar", "Jhakespeare", "Sakespir", and the unsurpassable "Seckpaire" of Abate Gaetano Golt, emended in the errata to "Seckspaire"—Italians can compete only with him and his contemporaries in misspelling Shakespeare.[18] These quirky minutiae reflect a more consequential phenomenon: in spite of limited pockets of admiration and periods

[16] Panel proposal for the World Shakespeare Conference (Prague, 2011).

[17] Ernesto Rossi, *Studii Drammatici e Lettere Autobiografiche* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1885), 83–5. Partial translation in Lacy Collison-Morley, *Shakespeare in Italy* (Stratford: Shakespeare Head Press, 1916), 153.

[18] For this and rich historical overviews of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, cf. Collison-Morley, *Shakespeare in Italy* and Attilio Nulli, *Shakespeare in Italia* (Milano: Hoepli, 1918).

of anglophilia, Italy has never seen English language and literature as central to its culture, and Shakespeare was initially received through translations and critical interpretations made in France and, to a lesser extent, Germany. In a case like Modena's, reworking Shakespeare for Italian culture meant retranslating an Italian plot, heavily editing a French text considered unsuitable, and performing in an Italian city that belonged to the Austrian Empire.

The most elusive and yet decisive factor in the reception of Shakespeare may be a general cultural disposition toward the *tragic*. Italy's collective identity is based on a shared Catholic religion and a literary canon that has a (Divine) "comedy" as its centerpiece. As Giorgio Agamben writes, Dante Alighieri's decision to "abandon his own "tragic" poetic project for a "comic" poem" was epochal and is still exerting its influence today: "The turn registered by these words is so little a question internal to Dante scholarship that it can even be said that here, for the first time, we find one of the traits that most tenaciously characterizes Italian culture: its essential pertinence to the comic sphere and consequent refutation of tragedy."[19] Tragedy is the genre that most has registered the tension between ancient Greek and Roman values and a Christian worldview (that in post-Reformation Italy became a strictly policed cultural code), and it may be argued that Dante's monumental masterpiece in fact hybridizes tragedy with comedy. Agamben clarifies that for Dante "tragedy" was a matter of style and content rather than of dramatic form, and it entailed a specific theological and anthropological paradigm still underlying Italian culture, even in its contemporary secularized configuration: "It is [a] 'comic' conception of the human creature, divided into innocent nature and guilty person, that Dante bequeathed to Italian culture."[20] This is not to suggest that Italian literature has produced just an endless series of redemptive plots and happy endings, but that tragedy as a theatrical genre and as a vision of cosmic suffering of extraordinary individuals has been relegated to the margins; the Italian literary tradition "has remained … obstinately faithful to the antitragic intention of the Divine Comedy".[21] While Shakespeare and his contemporaries were filling up theaters in London, in Italy, tragedy remained mostly a matter of intellectual debate on Aristotle's theories and a source of entertainment for an

[19] Giorgio Agamben, *The End of the Poem. Studies in Poetics*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1.

[20] Agamben, *The End of the Poem*, 21.

[21] *The End of the Poem*, 132.

aristocratic elite. There was indeed a revival of the genre after centuries of neglect, but theory held sway. The most famous author was Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio, destined to become one of Shakespeare's sources. The predominance of theory imprisoned the plays in rigid patterns, which, among other things, banned everyday speech in favor of "magniloquent oratory". Tragedy was too much of a challenge for the small and embattled courts of a politically fragmented country, courts that were the only patrons of theater and favored the inside jokes of comedy (much as it could also convey harsh political satire)[22] over the foreboding plots of tragedy and its representation of beleaguered rulers.[23] Moreover, to quote Marzia Pieri: "On the plane of ideology, the concept of sin, with which the age of counterreformation tends to identify tragic fault, does not agree with the pagan presuppositions of the genre, and the times do not allow to speculate on stage about the evils of Power."[24]

In this light, we may better appreciate why the vicissitudes of Shakespeare's tragedies in Italy (as opposed to his comedies, which significantly, are very little represented) are part of, and maybe play a key role in, a larger struggle between the comic and the tragic in Italian culture. The paradox is that Shakespeare built many of his tragedies on Italian material that the Italians had articulated either in the prose tales of Giraldi Cinzio or in the philosophical speculations of Niccolò Machiavelli and Giordano Bruno. The playwright made Italian tales and ideas into successful plays for the stage; Italians took the plays, and before they were convinced they could applaud them in their own terms, they had already acclaimed Rossini's opera *Otello* (1816), praised Salvatore Vigano's ballet *Otello* (1820), and celebrated Francesco Hayez's painting *Romeo and Juliet's Last Kiss* (1823). The gradual rise of Shakespeare's fortune in the second half of the nineteenth century is interwoven with the rising influence of French and German Romanticism and with the Risorgimento, the movement for Italian independence, and it is no coincidence that some of the most prominent political and cultural protagonists of this watershed age (Francesco De Sanctis, Giuseppe Mazzini, Alessandro Manzoni, Tommaso Salvini, Giuseppe Verdi) were passionate Shakespeareans.

[22] I thank Kent Cartwright for this observation.

[23] Marzia Pieri, *La nascita del teatro moderno in Italia tra XV e XVI secolo* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1989), 155.

[24] Pieri, *La nascita del teatro*, 147.

Today, Shakespeare's success in Italy appears to be unconditional. The postwar era has witnessed a steady rise of Shakespeare performances, scholarship, and translations.[25] There is a Globe Theatre in Rome; a musical version of *Romeo and Juliet* attracts thousands of people, matching the thriving Shakespearean tourism in Verona under Juliet's balcony; almost every permanent theater company features a Shakespearean play in their season; theatrical experiments continue on the fringes, and Shakespeare is taught in nearly every literature department, at least those which resist the attack on the humanities. "L'Italia di Shakespeare" (Shakespeare's Italy) is the recent headline of a major magazine, the subtitle suggesting that "[i]n his tragedies is the key to understand what is happening to us".[26] The image on the cover showed a fine caricature of Shakespeare with a gorget decorated with a line of clasp knives, a bloodstained doublet, and a tiny chair with a smiling skull on its back. The tantalizing but ephemeral analogies between contemporary Italian politicians and Shakespearean characters offered by a major philosopher in the magazine are less relevant here than the red clown nose that the artist Manuela Bertoli placed on Shakespeare's face. Shakespeare may have performed a compensatory function in Italy, providing iconic tragic plots to a culture traditionally recalcitrant to the genre; on the other hand, the prevailing "comic" country disposition has often been able to subdue the unsettling energies of tragedy, as the many parodies, adaptations, and deconstructions of the plays seem to indicate.

The Anglosphere

A "country disposition" is often an intractable issue, generally relegated to the realm of ethnic humor and haunted by the risk of sweeping generalizations and national clichés, and yet it operates unwittingly in many cultural gestures and usually comes back with a vengeance at critical points. At the time of completing this book, Europe was shaken by its worst economic and political crisis, a continental emergency that was nevertheless mostly framed, often to the point of caricature, in a face-off between Greece and Germany. The pressure of global neoliberalism and mass migration, the confrontation

[25] Michele Marrapodi, "Introduction: Shakespeare Studies in Italy Since 1964", *Italian Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Newark: University of Delaware Press and London: Associated University Presses, 1999), 7–18.

[26] "L'Italia di Shakespeare", *Sette* del *Corriere della Sera*, 9, 28 February 2014.

between rival economic models, and the need for cultural and political unification as opposed to the fetish of a single currency—no discourse was as compelling as that of national stereotypes, the lazy Greek and the intransigent German, or the civilized Greek and the Nazi German, often worthy of Iago's drinking jokes. Not only did these populist tropes overshadow any analysis of larger political and economical issues, but they also foreclosed any alternative serious examination of a country's ethos and anthropological matrix. In that respect, William Shakespeare, who may become in 2016, on the 400th anniversary of his death, the first poet laureate of Europe and who can claim the record of the most attempts by other countries to appropriate him as one of their own, becomes an extraordinary guide. The ways in which a certain nation reads, misreads, translates, selects, and claims Shakespeare and his works are key to that nation's political unconscious, not excluding the country that begot him and those who speak his language.

While the main focus of the different essays in this book is the multiple ways in which Italy has appropriated Shakespeare, an important corollary is the productive tension between the country disposition of Italy and those of what I will call the "Anglosphere". I use this term, coined in the realm of fiction and later adopted into the discourse of political science and international relations, to signify a loose consensus and interconnectedness of English-speaking culture that is inevitably reflected in Shakespeare criticism.[27] With all its national and individual variations, the Anglosphere probably carries some tacit assumptions that resist even the

[27] "Australia, Canada, and New Zealand established their special relationships with the United States more gradually, as they gain more and more sovereignty from Britain. Together, these special relationships are said to constitute "core" of a distinct international, transnational, civilizational, and Imperial entity within the global society, currently known as the "Anglosphere". … The processes of secession, dedominonization and decolonization destroyed the British Empire but left behind distinct yet loosely bounded community of peoples, who are fiercely committed to, among other items, freedom, democracy, the rule of (common) law, and English language. This community's lack of formal institutional actorness merely disguises its exceptional longevity and power…. Centered first on London and then on Washington DC, the Anglosphere has dominated international politics for the world for the past 200 years, perhaps longer. Its agents—companies, empires, states, as nations—colonized and industrialized large swathes of the planet and moved millions of its inhabitants, often by force. …The origins of the Anglosphere are racial. The turn-of-the-20th-century rapprochement between the expanding United States and declining Britain was closed by a discourse of identity that implied natural unity and moral superiority of the "Anglo-Saxon race."…The Anglosphere is a product of its racial past, a past that the may not have receded.", Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 2–4.

tireless metacritical and self-reflexive work of the most metacritical and self-reflexive epoch of literary critics.

In one of his sporadic mentions of Shakespeare, Antonio Gramsci comments on the exchange between Alessandro Manzoni and his English translator Charles Swan, who took issue with a passage from *The Betrothed*, Italy's foundational novel, where the narrator repeats Voltaire's notorious definition of Shakespeare as "a barbarian not deprived of genius".[28] The Romantic Manzoni championed the cause of Shakespeare against neoclassical poetic in a national debate initiated by Giuseppe Baretti's *Discours sur Shakespeare et sur Monsieur de Voltaire* (1778), appropriately considered "the first serious and extensive critical study of Shakespeare in Italy".[29] His quotation of Voltaire was ironic, but Swan warned him that "the phrase is calculated to draw upon you the anathema of every admirer of our bard".[30] The issue was relevant enough to invite a caveat by Manzoni in the appendix of Swan's translation, and the expedient omission of the quotation from other English versions of Italy's most famous novel. Curiously enough, Gramsci was using this example to decry the tendency of Italian intellectuals to nod at provincial family quarrels, speaking only to the initiated. But who was being provincial? Manzoni was alluding to a pan-European debate, while Swan was reacting defensively to the *lèse majesté* against "our" bard. This episode shows how a dialectical tension between different "country dispositions" (academic traditions, political frameworks, cultural priorities, theoretical preoccupations, or even single words) set off against each other can provide important insights into the way we read Shakespeare in a global perspective.

This book, written in English, is structured around three words ("race", politics, place) and their specific use in the Anglosphere. Yet, when these concepts are applied in the Italian context, their meaning is subtly modified. Nowhere is this dynamic more perceptible than in the deployment of the category of "race". While actively engaged in a painstaking historicization and deconstruction of this charged term, anglophone Shakespeare critics, I suggest, have paradoxically "naturalized" *race* with

[28] Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni dal Carcere*. Volume 3, edited by Valentino Gerratana (Torino, Einaudi, 2014), 1792. *Prison Notebooks: Three volumes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). Franco Marenco, "The Rise and Fall of Irony". *World Literature Today* 71, No. 2, "Italian Literature Today" (Spring 1997): 303–8.

[29] Agostino Lombardo, "Shakespeare in Italy." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 141, n. 4, (December 1997): 455.

[30] Gramsci, *Quaderni*, 1792.

a distinct North American inflection. Without a doubt, the benefits of such an introduction of "race"—actually, a reintroduction, as I argue in Chap. 2—for the study of Shakespeare have been invaluable, especially as a corrective to an older color-blind but tacitly racist criticism. Reading "race" in Italian Shakespeare tells us a lot about the largely repressed colonial and racist past of the nation. On the other hand, a wholesale import of Anglo-American raciologies may create disturbing collateral effects that need to be evaluated if we pursue a real transnational and cross-cultural understanding of Shakespeare, or, even more ambitiously, if we want to enroll Shakespeare as an ally in the building of a real transnational and cross-cultural consciousness.

"Race", Politics, Place: The Structure of the Book

The following chapters form three conceptual triptychs, the first dealing with issues of "race" and ethnicity, the second with political philosophy, and the third with the notion of place. This subdivision is more a matter of emphasis, since the different dimensions interact and overlap throughout the book.

"Iago's Race, Shakespeare's Ethnicities" is the most theoretical contribution in the book and the first of three "race" chapters. Beginning from Giuseppe Verdi's musings on his opera *Otello*, I discuss the genealogy of Shakespeare "race" studies to argue that racial thinking is quintessentially a nineteenth-century product and a powerful ethnic fiction which aims at appropriating symbolic capital, phenomena which are dangerously underestimated in contemporary criticism. I compare a little known Victorian work, *A New Exegesis of Shakespeare: Interpretation of His Principal Characters and Plays on the Principle of Races* (1859), that purports to demonstrate that the whole of Shakespeare is just a demonstration of how "race" is no less than the main key to human knowledge, to some recent studies of Shakespeare under the agenda of race. The analysis of these discursive strategies endorses Paul Gilroy's controversial claim that the category of "race" should be dropped altogether or, at the very least, supplemented, in my opinion, by the largely underutilized notion of *ethnicity*.

This criterion is promptly applied in the chapter "Slav-ing Othello", where I analyze a minor Italian adaptation of the tragedy written in the early nineteenth century. Carlo Federici's *Otello ossia lo slavo* (*Othello, or the Slav*) moves the action to Genoa and radically alters the ethnic identity of all the main characters, departing from the traditional dialectics of

whiteness and blackness. This alteration demonstrates how Othello's ethnicity has always been a more complicated matter than his skin color and that it depends on specific geopolitical dynamics. It is precisely because it simplifies the "domestic" and psychological elements that have dominated *Othello*'s theatrical and critical history that this text illuminates the interplay of politics and ethnicity that continues to be one of the most topical aspects of the Shakespearean tragedy. By inventing a Slavic hero who assimilates into an Italian city, Federici's text epitomizes a model which has remained dominant in Italian culture to this day, where consent may be more important than descent but equality requires ethnic homogeneity and minorities are more imagined than accepted in their real outlook.

"Shakespeare, Nation, and Race in Fascist Italy" investigates the impact of the cultural politics of Fascism on Shakespeare, particularly on the criticism and performance of his "Italian" (Venetian and Roman) plays. The names of Carlo Formichi or Piero Rebora are hardly remembered in Italian literary studies, let alone in Shakespearean criticism, but they were prominent intellectuals in an academic milieu where university professors were requested to sign an oath of allegiance to the Fascist Party and only 12 out of 1250 refused. Their interpretations were pervaded by a self-conscious, militant "presentism", aimed at a celebration of Shakespeare's Italian characters and plots functional to the consolidation of ethnic and nationalist pride. However, as the case of *Julius Caesar* (rewritten by Mussolini himself) demonstrates, some characters and plots proved recalcitrant to Fascist appropriations, requiring elaborate and ultimately unconvincing reading strategies.

The three chapters that follow focus on the relationship between Shakespeare and Italian political theory, ranging from early modernity (Machiavelli and Bruno) to postmodernity (contemporary Italian philosophy).

"Neocon and Theoprog: The New Machiavellian Moment" offers a comparative analysis of recent critical studies that read Shakespeare in the light of Machiavelli, producing radically divergent interpretations. By mapping their different preoccupations and styles onto the Hobbesian classic division of political theory into *libertas*, the space of "natural" relationships between individuals, *imperium*, the domain of the monarchy and the state, and *religio*, the realm of God and the Church, I suggest that the seven authors under scrutiny have produced multifaceted, prismatic Shakespeares with disparate and incompatible political profiles reminiscent of twenty-first-century trends: a moderate Shakespeare, a neoconservative

Shakespeare, a theoconservative Shakespeare, a neomarxist Shakespeare, a Nietzschean Shakespeare, a neoprogressive Shakespeare, and a theoprogressive Shakespeare. While new historicists and cultural materialist critics of the Anglosphere have privileged *libertas* (or, in Foucauldian idiom, the microphysics of power), and more traditional readers have focused on either religion or political theory, some critics have eclectically combined different elements, ushering in a distinctly new Machiavellian moment in Shakespeare studies.

In "Infinite Minds: Shakespeare and Giordano Bruno Revisited", I interrogate the puzzling absence of Giordano Bruno from contemporary Shakespearean criticism. Part of the explanation lies in the monopoly created by the idiosyncratic studies by Frances Yates, whose highly influential portrait of the Italian philosopher as an esoteric figure has been long questioned in Brunian scholarship but has remained by and large unchallenged in Shakespeare studies, making the former irrelevant for the latter. The ensuing paradox is that in the heated debates on Shakespeare's religious orientation, there is hardly any trace of the most audacious thinker on religious issues in Elizabethan England; and where Shakespeare is hailed as the inventor of the modern conception of the human, the first proponent of an infinite universe, with an unshackled man heroically struggling in it, is ignored. It is only at the margins that we find new attempts to correlate the works of Bruno and Shakespeare, in particular in the works by Gilberto Sacerdoti, who reads, according to a well-known Renaissance strategy of dissimulation of dissident ideas, Bruno's radical thought between the lines of *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *The Tempest*.

In "Hamlet in Venice", the Danish prince becomes a special guide to contemporary Italian theory, a philosophical constellation that has generated a good deal of international interest in political and cultural studies through the works of Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri, and others. This case study examines the political praxis of a major Italian theorist, Massimo Cacciari, in the mirror of his analysis of Shakespeare. After surveying Cacciari's political career and philosophical trajectory, I analyze his recent essay on *Hamlet* and read it in the light of Luisa Accati's seminal book *Beauty and the Monster*. Accati argues that Catholicism in Italy is to be understood less as religious institution or belief than as an anthropological situation that has produced a patriarchal society with weak *natural* fathers and strong *spiritual* fathers, hinged on the cult of the Virgin Mary. Her cogent theory helps us to contextualize the uncanny analogies between Cacciari's interpretation of Ophelia and the feminine ideal still

promoted by the Catholic Church. The essay ends with a look at Cacciari's more recent reading of *King Lear* against the backdrop of the latest developments on the Italian political scene.

The third and final group concentrates on the nexus between Shakespeare and place, analyzing Italian sites linked to his works and asking what set of meanings is generated by this connection.

"The Grave and the Ghetto: Shakespearean Places as Adaptations" considers the motivations underlying the continuing fascination with the notion that Shakespeare really may have visited Italy, as many amateur scholars and thousands of visitors like to believe. The unending Anglo-American fascination with Italy through the Shakespearean lens has reconfigured the meaning of places that carry the memory of Shakespearean plays and characters, from Romeo and Juliet's Verona to Shylock and Othello's Venice. By taking the reader to different locales, directly or indirectly connected with Shakespeare, I wonder whether we can consider a physical place as an adaptation of his plays, or to consider how a place appropriates and "remembers" Shakespeare. In the case of Verona, Shakespeare has inspired a whole Romeo and Juliet industry, which greatly contributes to the tourist economy. In the case of Venice, a city already overloaded with symbols and plaques, the most controversial characters of Othello and Shylock remain ghostly presences.

"Fixed Figures: The Other Moors of Venice" shows how the several Venetian toponyms and artifacts that refer to "Mori" give unexpected indications on the meaning of this famously ambiguous ethnic designation. "Mori" in Venice are associated with squares, streets, inns, statues, sculptures, jewels, door knockers, and even with patisserie. Showing how each name changes its significance from place to place, and the same "moors" elicit different stories in different times, this "moor tour" does not insinuate any direct link between these sites and the play, but suggests on the other hand that the historical shiftings of these monumental texts and their projective powers may find a correspondence in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Highlighting how various Venetian Moors have inspired stories of petrification, I read this anecdotal evidence through modern interpretations of the myth of Medusa (from Fanon to Agamben), arguing in conclusion that they offer precious insight into the ways in which Western culture constructs stereotypes and dehumanizes its "others".

The final chapter "The Prison-House of Italy: *Caesar Must Die*" returns to *Julius Caesar* to discuss, by way of an epilogue to the whole book, the 2012 prizewinning film by Italian cinema doyens Paolo and Vittorio

Taviani. Documenting a production of the play realized by director Fabio Cavalli in the prison of Rebibbia in Rome, *Caesar Must Die* is also used as a litmus test for the current "country disposition" of Italy, a nation that has often represented its own cultural, political, and social situation by reinventing classical Rome and has produced important reflections from within a prison cell (from Silvio Pellico to Antonio Gramsci). By looking at the treatment of gender, place, and ethnicity in the film, I suggest that the Taviani's cinematically transfigured prison becomes a heterotopia, a mirror image of neoliberal Italy and a paradoxical refuge from its political and cultural impasse.

"Even in Spite of Ourselves"

Having given the opening word in this Introduction to the malign genius of Venice, Iago, and his toxic interpretation of a "country disposition", I want to grant the last word to a symbolic descendant of Desdemona, a woman whose life and work reminds us that a country disposition is not an unavoidable destiny, that a nation can change its course and open up its horizons. Giustina Renier Michiel was a Venetian noblewoman who lived and worked in the dramatic years of the downfall of the millenary Republic swept by Napoleon, was fascinated by the values of the French Revolution, and hosted in her literary salon the likes of Byron, Foscolo, and Madame de Staël. She translated in prose *Ottello*, *Macbet*, and *Coriolano*, published between 1798 and 1800, at the dawn of Venice's new era. Giustina Renier Michiel's translations were primarily read by high-ranking aristocrats of her circle and never staged, at least in Venice, thwarting her ambitions to produce further versions. Her prose translation was guided by a clarifying impulse that led her to paraphrase and oversimplify some of the most pregnant passages. Iago's "I am not what I am" was rendered as "assicuratevi che non sono qual sembro essere" [be assured I am not what I appear to be].[31] Yet her pioneering effort is made more innovative by her pugnacious preface, where her critical approach is consciously associated with her gender. Asserting a privileged relationship between Shakespeare and women (on the grounds of "tenderness" and "admiration"), Giustina Renier Michiel explains that she intended to describe the "sensations" provoked by drama and "the dominant feeling in each tragedy", seen as

[31] Giustina Renier Michiel, *Opere drammatiche di Shakespeare volgarizzate da una dama veneta*, Volume I (Venezia : eredi Costantini, 1798), 89.

"possibly the only subject a woman could reflect upon without fearing men's accusations". On the other hand, she felt she had first to relate the authoritative positions of leading critics (notably Samuel Johnson), whose omission would not have been forgiven to a woman.[32] She portrays a democratic Shakespeare, "a painter of humanity" who "extended his look at the whole humankind" and saw the "lowest classes of Society at the same level of the most eminent were able to provide a crowd of interesting characters. Everything human was sacred to him, and every man of whatever condition was worthy of being admitted with the Kings". Wavering between eighteenth-century ideals of decorum and new Romantic impulses, Giustina Renier Michiel affirms that "Shakespeare takes possession of us, he moves us, he interests us even in spite of ourselves".[33] In that perspective, Shakespeare's violation of the Aristotelian unities was necessary to imitate nature and truth through the mediation of art. Her polemical conclusion was that in Italy, motherhood had been reduced to little more than a "sweet title", since women were deprived of the prerogative of educating their daughters. As the only available alternative, she offered Shakespeare to young women as reading that could entertain, educate, and "contribute to their happiness by regulating their budding passions".[34] Unsurprisingly, this maternal Shakespeare had no following, but the vision of a democratic poet and playwright, the effort to read him in order to challenge existing cultural boundaries, and the intuition that his works interest us, "even in spite of ourselves", have inspired this book.

[32] Renier Michiel, *Opere drammatiche*, 9–10.
[33] *Opere drammatiche*, 17.
[34] *Opere drammatiche*, 24.

PART I

Race

CHAPTER 2

Iago's Race, Shakespeare's Ethnicities

Many studies that reference "race" as a critical category generally trace its etymology to the Latin *generatio*, "generation" or *ratio*, "nature, quality".[1] More recent analyses of the Italian cognate *razza*, from which the English term is derived probably via French, point to a different origin, the old French word *haraz* or *haras*, which still means "stud farm".[2] These rival etymologies signal a crucial bifurcation: if the former places "race" squarely in the domain of biology, the latter refers to a human manipulation of nature, an artificial selection of animal types. To this day, the Italian *razza* is primarily applied to animals, and its use in relation to humans is to be found either in connection with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century racial thinking or, in a revealing time leap, with translations of North American race studies and with Italian publications influenced by North American academia.[3] It is fitting that a proto-racist like Iago would precisely employ the language of animal husbandry to denigrate Othello and inflame Brabantio's rage:

[1] The classic study is: Leo Spitzer, "Ratio>Race." In *Essays in Historical Semantics* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1948), 152.

[2] Manlio Cortellazzo and Paolo Zolli, *Il Nuovo etimologico. DELI—Dizionario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1999).

[3] Cornel West, *La razza conta* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1995); Barack Obama, *Sulla razza* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2008); Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh and Anna Sacchi, eds., *Parlare di razza. La lingua del colore tra Italia e Stati Uniti* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2012).

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016

S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1_2

> …you'll
> have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse;
> you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have
> coursers for cousins and jennets for germans!
> 1.1.108-111

But what goes around in terms of animalizing people may come around. On 24 September 1881 the composer Giuseppe Verdi, the author of a successful *Macbeth*, sketched his ideal portrait of the protagonist of his next Shakespearean opera in a letter to his friend Domenico Morelli:

> [I]f I were an actor, and had to play Jago [sic], I would have a rather long, slender figure, thin lips, small eyes close to the nose like a monkey, a high receding forehead, the head well developed at the back. An absent-minded air, nonchalant, indifferent to everything, skeptical, a cutting manner, speaking good and evil lightly.[4]

Only five years later did Verdi resolve to entitle the opera *Otello* rather than *Jago*, in an act of substitution that once more confirms the eternal damning of the ensign to be passed over for promotion.[5] Yet, it was this character that occupied Verdi's creative mind for most of the period in which he and the librettist Arrigo Boito worked on the "chocolate" project (as they nicknamed it) up until the triumphant première of 1887. I would like to read this marginal note in the rich history of Shakespearean adaptations of the tragedy of the Moor of Venice in the light of Michael Neill's observation that:

> *Othello* is a work that trades in ethnic constructions that are at once misleadingly *like* and confusingly *unlike* the twentieth-century ideas of 'race' to which they are, nevertheless, recognizably ancestral.
>
> Just as the modern vocabulary of 'race' continues to be inflected by the pseudo-biological thinking of the nineteenth century, so the early modern language of colour was indelibly marked by primitive fears that associated darkness with evil and death.[6]

[4] Giuseppe Verdi, *Letters of Giuseppe Verdi*, edited by Charles Osborne (London: Victor Gollancz, 1971), 227.

[5] The reference here is to Michael. Neill, "His Master's Ass: Slavery, Service and Subordination in *Othello*." In *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean*, eds. Tom Clayton, Susan Brock and Vicente Forés (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 215–229.

[6] Michael Neill, "Introduction," in William Shakespeare, *Othello* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 125–126.

In his letter, Verdi seems to be using the language of positivist criminology popularized by Cesare Lombroso, which held that the psychological abnormalities of the "born criminal" corresponded to visible and measurable physical "anomalies".[7] As far as Verdi was concerned, race was a decisive factor for Iago even more than for Othello. The thematization of "race" has been a welcome innovation in Shakespeare studies, but it is often forgotten that such practice did not suddenly materialize in the late twentieth century with an antiracist agenda. In fact, it originated in the nineteenth century as a powerful cultural construct aimed at appropriating the cultural and symbolic capital of Shakespeare for nationalistic and ethnocentric purposes.[8] Shakespeare and "race" is now primarily understood as an analysis of tropes of blackness/whiteness and non-European cultures in the plays, and as a study of the circulation and appropriation of Shakespeare's works in the colonial and postcolonial world, in terms dictated primarily by North American critical debates. However, scholars have left largely unexplored an earlier critical body where the operative dichotomies were Celtic/Saxon, Germanic/Mediterranean, and Slavic/Roman or where the shape of the skull or the position of the eyes was a revealing signifier. If there is a "recognisably ancestral" relationship between modern ideas of "race" and early modern "ethnic constructions", the groundbreaking work undertaken by Neill and others, who emancipated Shakespeare from an ostensibly color-blind but often latently racist criticism, needs to be supplemented by an analysis of all the raciologies in which Shakespeare has been implicated between his time and our own. And if we agree with Neill that our modern vocabulary is still conditioned by the "pseudo-biological thinking of the nineteenth century", we should seriously consider Paul Gilroy's daunting proposition:

> However reluctant we may feel to take the step of renouncing 'race' as part of an attempt to bring political culture back to life, this course must be considered because it seems to represent the only *ethical* response to the conspicuous wrongs that raciologies continue to solicit and sanction.[9]

Neill has indeed cautioned us that "[l]ike *Othello* itself, we may resist [racial] discourse, but (as the play's reception and performance histories

[7] Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man*, edited by Mary Gibson and Nicole Hahn Rafter (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[8] See for an overview Catherine Alexander and Stanley Wells, eds., *Shakespeare and Race* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, eds., *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* (London: Routledge, 1998).

[9] Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps. Race, Identity and Nationalism at the End of the Colour Line* (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane. The Penguin Press, 2000), 41.

demonstrate) learning to think outside its parameters is a much more difficult matter".[10] In order to move once and for all beyond the irredeemable "pseudo-biological" legacy attached to race, we first need to thoroughly map out the territories demarcated by that concept. With that objective in mind, it may be useful to quote the observation made by Bill Ashcroft, Hellen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths in their analysis of the key concepts of postcolonial studies: "It is significant that academic debate during these decades sustained *race* rather than *ethnicity* as the centre of discussion."[11] By way of analogy, I would argue that in analyzing issues of Shakespeare and human diversity, critics have made too much of *race* and too little of *ethnicity*.

Shakespeare and Race

In order to sustain Gilroy's bold and largely unheeded proposal, let me offer a quick Shakespearean quiz:

1. When did "race" enter Shakespearean studies?
2. Which Shakespearean plays are more relevant for a racial study?
3. Who is the subject of the quotation: "This famous character is still alone, in the long gallery of Shakespeare, to be fully recognized as the expression of a race?"

Browsing recent literature, we gather that as late as the 1990s, "race" as an analytical category was still conspicuous by its absence in Shakespearean criticism,[12] that *Othello*, *The Tempest*, and *The Merchant of Venice* are the topical plays,[13] and that bibliographic databases indicate Othello as by far the most widely racialized character.

The "famous character" of our quote, in fact, is Shylock, as we learn from *A New Exegesis of Shakespeare: Interpretation of His Principal*

[10] Michael Neill, "Othello and Race", "Looking into the colour of Othello" seminar University of Bergamo, 22 May 2006.

[11] Bill Ashcroft, Hellen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths, *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts* (London New York: Routledge, 2007), 186.

[12] Ania Loomba, "Shakespeare and Cultural Difference." In *Alternative Shakespeare 2*, ed. Terence Hawkes (London: Routledge, 1997), 164.

[13] Sukanta Chaudhuri, "Shakespeare and the Ethnic Question." In *Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions*, edited by T. Kishi et al. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 155.

Characters and Plays on the Principle of Races (1859), a book whose date, title, and table of contents suggest quite different answers to our questionnaire:

Chap I—IAGO, as Type of the Romano-Italic Race
Chap II—HAMLET, as Type of the Teutonic Race
Chap III—MACBETH, as Type of the Celtic Race
Chap IV—SECONDARY CHARACTERS, respectively confirmatory–Ophelia, the Queen, Polonius, the King, etc.–Ladies Macbeth and Macduff, Banquo, Macduff, Lennox, etc.–Othello, Desdemona, etc.
Chap V—SHYLOCK, as Type of the Hebrew Race
Chap VI—CONCLUSION, respecting the Race of Shakespeare himself.[14]

The purpose of this long-winded critical juggernaut, as its anonymous author explained,

> is by no means to furnish a complete exegesis of the writings of Shakespeare, but to establish and exemplify a new instrument for that purpose and must be sufficient to test the leading pieces of the poet. These are held to be *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and the part of Shylock, in *The Merchant of Venice*. And the thesis, in fine, is that the subject of these plays is the Italian, the Teutonic, the Celtic, and the Hebrew races.[15]

If not a complete exegesis, the critic did construct a rigid hierarchy of characters, reducing Shakespeare to the massive *explanans* of a single principle. Four main characters emblematized two inferior and two superior races, and all the others (including Othello) amounted to marginal figures and expedient extras.

The fragility of the intellectual edifice was quickly noticed by contemporary commentators. A British reviewer remarked that to nail characters to their races deprived them of their individuality, and that characters of the same race had different attitudes in the plays. He also challenged odd claims such as that "the Jews had no distinct notion of either soul or immortality", volunteering to find counterevidence in a certain book, "if [the author] will admit that the Bible is to be held a trustworthy witness

[14] *New Exegesis of Shakespeare. Interpretation of his principal characters and plays on the principle of races* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1859). Quotation on Shylock is on page 229.

[15] *New Exegesis*, 19–20.

on this point".[16] A particularly relevant moment is when the same, equally anonymous, reviewer commented on the primacy granted to the Celtic Macbeth: "We judge, from internal evidence, that the author is himself a Celt … while he brings [all his qualities] to bear upon Macbeth, we constantly see that the Celtic idiosyncrasy influences him in their application."[17] No surprise, then, that even Shakespeare was enlisted as a Celt, and his universality attributed to his membership of "the highest of the races concerned". Those were the years of fierce "race wars" between a rampant Anglo-Saxonism celebrating Britain's Teutonic roots and the efforts to integrate Celtic elements into English culture, reinventing, for instance, the origins of King Arthur.[18]

Such a systematic application of "race" to Shakespeare was, in other words, immediately suspected of having a clear identity politics agenda.[19] "Celtic idiosyncrasy" may be another name for what we have called a "country disposition", as the reviewer was quick to spot in his conclusions: "We have looked at his work with the eyes of a Scottish Lowlander, and, therefore, as one who, in the estimate of the author, is more Celt than Saxon, though we never knew it before; and this may account for our mingled praise and blame."[20] In short, in individuating the probable ethnic identity of the author, he was alert to the fact (which he dismissed with remarkable irony) that a "country disposition" could always be turned as a weapon against a given opinion, in an endless recriminatory cycle—you say that because you are Irish, but I think this because I am Scottish,

[16] "*New Exegesis of Shakespeare*." Book Review. *North British Review*, 31 (1859): 489.

[17] *North British Review*, 481.

[18] Hugh MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1982); Inga Bryden, "Reinventing origins: the Victorian Arthur and Racial Myth", in *The Victorians and Race*, ed. Shearer West (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 141–155. The Celtic Shakespeare had an interesting story destined to continue well into the twentieth century, with distinguished protagonists such as Matthew Arnold, William Butler Yeats and Wyndham Lewis. Lewis' unpalatable racial politics did not prevent him from concluding that "Race is for the most part too obscure a force for us to be able to organize it into anything coherent, so it is perhaps rightly ignored. […] A man's *race* is the most interesting thing about him, usually. […] But Shakespeare's race (not his nation), if we knew it, would *not* be the most interesting thing about him." *The Lion and the Fox* (1927) (London: Methuen, 1951), 295.

[19] The debate on races has always been a debate over ethnic supremacy. A. Orsucci (1998) "Ariani, indogermani, stripi mediterranee: aspetti del dibattito sulle razze europee (1870–1914)", *Cromohs-Cyber Review of Modern Historiography* 3 (1998). http://www.fupress.net/index.php/cromohs/article/view/15749/14635, accessed 3 September 2015.

[20] *North British Review*, 491.

and so forth—that precludes any rational consensus and confines people to irreconcilable ethnic or racial truths.

This long-forgotten, eccentric debate reminds us that racial thinking is quintessentially a nineteenth-century product, a powerful fiction almost invariably aimed at establishing some sort of ethnic hierarchy and, in this specific case, at appropriating the enormous symbolic capital granted by Shakespeare.

Let us then jump to the twenty-first century to observe a contemporary use of the same category:

> When I teach Shakespeare in my university classes, when I see a contemporary Shakespearean production on film, the stage …, or the Internet, when I hear and see allusions to Shakespeare in commercials, television shows, and the popular media, I see race: whiteness, blackness, Hispanic-ness, Asian-ness, the normatively raced, and the deviantly raced. It is always there; it is always present; it always impacts the way Shakespeare is being employed. And … I am always surprised when others don't mention it–the good, the bad, and the ugly—because race is the giant elephant in the room.[21]

Ayanna Thompson's passionate exposition is a good example of some central issues faced in this book. Both she and our anonymous Victorian author see "race" as an element permeating the whole of Shakespeare, even though their understanding of the concept, their racial classification, and their political agenda could not be more divergent. Thompson demonstrates the importance of the field of inquiry opened up in the last 30 years by Shakespeare "race" critics.[22] They have described the rise of a national and imperial English ideology fashioned in part through the real and symbolic exploitation of many exotic aliens; they have shown how certain plays are far more global than "domestic" and they have mapped a complex semiotic of blackness. Sidelining the misleading question of whether Shakespeare was a racist or not, they have shown how his plays can be put to racist as well as antiracist theatrical and pedagogical uses. My claim is that to the detriment of all these achievements, "race" critics have promoted a diffusion and naturalization of "race" that is not immune

[21] Ayanna Thompson, *Passing Strange. Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

[22] The bibliography is by now immense, and one could also distinguish between studies that deal with the topic directly and the far more numerous studies and editions of the plays that use "race" casually.

from perilous side effects, derived from older and pernicious uses of the category. So the consequent question is: can we promote the same political and critical agenda without recourse to "race"? Or is any erasure of "race", as Thompson warns us, just an omission or a form of disavowal?

Shakespeare Without Race

Having shown that the meaning of "race" changes with time and place, I wish to suggest here that there are two ways *not* to talk about it. The first can be exemplified by Jonathan Miller's characteristic remarks on *Othello*: "I do not see the play as being about colour but as being about jealousy… When a black actor does the part, it offsets the play, puts it out of balance. It makes it a play about blackness, which is not."[23] We witness a rhetorical gesture of dissociation that is recurrent in Shakespearean criticism: a culturally or ethnically specific element is disconnected from a literary or psychological category; Othello is not about color, but jealousy; Shylock is not about anti-Semitism but about a tyrannical father. The implication is that ethnicity is something of limited, specific interest as opposed to a putatively broader, unmarked, universal theme such as passion, comedy, and so on. We may call this a *repression fallacy*, an approach that presupposes a culturally homogeneous and abstract space in which literature and theater exist blissfully untouched by base things like racism or colonialism.[24]

In our comparative perspective, a quick survey here and many later chapters show that this fallacy has constituted the chief "country disposition" of Italy. While our Celtic Shakespearean pontificated on race, the critic Jarro ironized on the "rivers of inks" spilt in Europe to ascertain the exact shade of Othello's skin.[25] Verdi and Boito did not make much of it. Scientists, in the climate of positivist criminology, diagnosed Othello's uxoricide as a "crime consumed by an epileptic", fully indifferent to his ethnicity.[26]

[23] Quoted by H. R. Coursen, "The Case for a Black Othello" in *Watching Shakespeare on Television* (London: Associated University Press, 1993), 157.

[24] The most explicit illustration I know is Charles B. Lower, "Othello as Black on Southern Stages, Then and Now", in *Shakespeare in the South. Essays on Performance*, ed. C. Kolin (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983), 199–228.

[25] Jarro [Giulio Piccini], *L'Otello di Guglielmo Shakespeare* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1888), 10.

[26] Luigi Lugiato, *Pazzi, squilibrati e delinquenti nelle opere dei letterati*. Vol. 1: *Guglielmo Shakespeare e le sue "masterpieces"* (Bergamo: C. Conti & c., 1926), 221.

The philosopher Benedetto Croce asserted, against "the superciliousness of Germanic critics", that "poetry originates only from itself and not outside, from nation, race, or something else", ridiculing the notion that *Othello*'s message was in "the fate that strikes unequal marriages, between people of different race, social condition or age".[27] Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa even argued that the play had suffered from a bad translation of its source, which had made a Moor of a plain Mr. Moro, "a most common surname (like Moroni and Moretti) in the region of Bergamo".[28]

Repressed whether in the name of positivist anthropology, abstract universalism, Catholic cosmopolitanism, or plain provincialism, the ethnic element came back with a vengeance in the 1930s, when the Fascist regime enforced racist laws against its Jewish citizens and its African colonial subjects. The organ of Fascist racism *La difesa della Razza* published a "Racist Interpretation of *Othello"* where the irony is that while insisting that the play dispensed an unmistakable warning against miscegenation, the writer was also keen to demonstrate that such a racist message was not to be credited to Shakespeare the Englishman, a son of that Perfidious Albion which was Italy's arch enemy, but to the pure Italian Giraldi Cinzio.[29]

The second way of liquidating "race" is based on the recognition that this specter still haunts our world and divides many societies, but that it is possible to imagine both a politics of antiracism and a cultural criticism that work without resorting to this scientifically untenable concept. Once again, Paul Gilroy is our guide:

> To renounce 'race' for analytical purposes is not to judge all appeals to it in the profane world of political cultures as being formally equivalent. Less defensively, I think that our perilous predicament, in the midst of a political and technological sea-change that somehow strengthens ethnic absolutism and primordialism, demands a radical and dramatic response. This must step away from the pious ritual in which we always agree that 'race' is invented but are then required to defer to its embeddedness in the world and to accept that the demands for justice require us nevertheless innocently to enter the political arenas it helps to mark out.[30]

[27] Benedetto Croce, *Shakespeare* (Bari: Laterza, 1925), 167, 154.

[28] Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Letteratura inglese*. Vol. I: *Dalle origini al Settecento* (Milano: Mondadori, 1990), 83–84.

[29] D.[?], L.[?], "Un'interpretazione razzista dell'*Otello*", *La difesa della razza*, 3, 24, 20 October 1940.

[30] Gilroy, *Between Camps*, 52.

The "pious ritual" criticized by Gilroy counts many celebrants in Shakespeare studies, who denounce "race" as a social construction, choose to wrestle with the concept, and almost invariably fail to extricate themselves from its lethal coils. In Arthur Little Jr.'s *Shakespeare Jungle Fever*, a book that "maps … how gender, race, and sexuality shape early modern England's national-imperial vision",[31] the conventional disclaimer is soon introduced: "It is worth noting from the outset that "race" in the early modern era, *perhaps this book's most conspicuous topic*, works less as a stable identity category than as a semantic field, one *as infinitely varying* as the cultural discourses constituting what we have come to identify as the early modern era" (emphasis added). The scare quotes relativize what is then indicated as the book's most *conspicuous* topic, which in turn is described as something liable to *infinite* mutation. "Even in a single text, depictions of race can draw from mythology, the Bible, the voices of classical authorities, the humors, the physiognomy, and one's cultural location and habits." This definition may well apply to virtually any cultural phenomenon of early modernity, suggesting that it is a modern perspective that singles out disparate elements and leads them to cluster around a single signifier, "race", a word of quite restricted and still vague use in Shakespeare's vocabulary. He then continues: "None of this, however, should be taken to argue that race in Shakespeare's day is less stable or real, that is, any less a discursive device, than it is in our own cultural moment." Stable or infinitely varying? Real or fictitious? In what sense is a discursive device more or less "real"? Just as in the Munchausen syndrome where mothers poison their children to make them dependent upon their cures, critics inject a noxious agent into their discourse and later strive to subdue it. They evoke a certain "thing" only to insist that it is not a "thing" at all, as Iago likes to do with his favorite figure of speech, *praeteritio*. "We come up short, I would argue, when we fantasize that our contemporary constructions of race–through our well-honed technologies of racism–offer us proof of a real racial ontology more truly embedded in individual subjects than arbitrarily embodied in and across an infinite number of our cultural discourses. Race then and now is not a discrete subject."[32] It is precisely because I subscribe to this statement that I remain unconvinced of the expediency of "race". If *we* are not sure what "race" is, if *they* did not employ it, if not remotely, why use it in the first place?

[31] A. Little, Jr., *Shakespeare Jungle Fever. National-Imperial Re-Visions of Race, Rape, and Sacrifice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 1.

[32] Little, *Shakespeare Jungle Fever*, 1.

While studies such as Thompson that focus on contemporary American Shakespeare may more legitimately adopt race in its current sociological definition, phrases such as "our own" and "then and now" demonstrate how Little, along with many other race critics who focus on Shakespeare's texts, establishes a privileged axis between early modern England and postmodern, multicultural USA, disregarding important geo-historical variants. Let us go back to the problem of the subject's "idiosyncrasy" highlighted by the Victorian reviewer. Little is perfectly aware of the critic's personal investment in his topic and positions himself as African American and gay, reading Shakespeare in the light of racial events occurring in his own time and place. However, this is an incomplete positioning, because such autobiographical gesture neglects the broader national context of its ethnic situatedness. Little is a marginal subject within a hegemonic academic paradigm, taking for granted his "country disposition", which entails certain methodological tendencies and uses hermeneutical categories of cultural difference favored in the American context: the somatic, the visual, and the sexual, with anxiety, warning, and fear as privileged tropes of cultural response.[33] Thompson, as we saw, has no hesitation in equating race with the standard US classification of racial groups (White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, etc.).

To avoid any rigid determinism, it is not superfluous to clarify that I do not wish to single out American critics qua American, but all critics working in the Anglosphere, where debates on race are largely dictated by American academia.[34] Other examples are postcolonial contexts such as South Africa and India, where Martin Orkin and Ania Loomba have documented the racist and imperialist appropriations of Shakespeare under Apartheid and colonialism.[35] In these instances, the starting point is the pedagogical moment in which *Othello* (the exemplary text) is taught either in favor or regardless of the brutal reality of racism that surrounds the classroom in New Delhi, Cape Town, or Memphis. What usually follows is a genealogical reconstruction, starting with the African presence

[33] On the American ethnic gaze, see William Boelhower, *Through a Glass Darkly: Ethnic Semiosis in American Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[34] The sources are certainly more international (Fanon, Derrida, Bhabha, etc.) but it is undeniable that America is the critical laboratory where contemporary theories of ethnicity have been molded with poststructuralist instruments. See also the introduction to this book.

[35] Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); Martin Orkin, "*Othello* and the Plain Face of Racism", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38 (1987), 166–188.

in early modern England followed by a census of all real and dramatic Moors and an analysis of black/white tropes in the coeval literature.[36] Subsequently, the history moves from England to America and/or the British colonies, concentrating on the reiterated attempts to reduce the scandal of a black African hero. The narrative ends in the age of multiculturalism with a liberated Shakespeare finally taught with a new antiracist agenda and critical discourse. This emplotment is reminiscent of some recent literary histories which, in Stephen Greenblatt's description, offer "a teleological, developmental narrative of progress—in order to confer authority on an emergent group",[37] replicating the Romantic impulse of traditional historiography which fetishises origins and originality. It is an archaeological operation in which too many of the excavated strata that separate the present from the past are cast aside and left unscrutinized. Even subscribing to the "broad modernist position", which locates the origins of European racism in the fifteenth century,[38] a continuist view focusing primarily on the fact of blackness tells a very partial story in the sadly dense history of European racism.

Equating race with color takes us into that critical territory dubbed by Terry Eagleton as "new somatics", a strong Foucauldian shift "from the body as subject to the body as object", from the body as "where there is something to be done" to the body as "where something—gazing, imprinting, regulating—is being done to you".[39] Shakespeare race criticism has become more and more new somaticist in its anatomy of the ethnic body, an approach which, when pushed to its extreme, tends to a systematic and indiscriminate racialization of the field of vision, as when any reference to the color black is read as covertly racial.[40] Running the risk, as Fanon put it, of locking the black man in his body, some critics involuntarily replicate another nineteenth-century racial hierarchy, that of

[36] I plead guilty of the very same operation in my *Le metamorfosi di Otello. Storia di un'etnicità immaginaria* (Bari: Graphis, 2000), in which I suggested a different emplotment for the history of Othello's ethnicity.

[37] Stephen Greenblatt, "Racial Memory and Literary History", *PMLA*, 116 (2001): 54.

[38] Pierre-André Taguieff, *Le racisme* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997).

[39] Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 71.

[40] Graham Bradshaw, *Misrepresentations. Shakespeare and the Materialists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 211. While I agree that Western conceptualizations of culture have embodied ethnic (and sometimes racial) hierarchies, as shown in Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), I object to the notion that the whole of culture is permeated by racial claims.

the "natural philosopher" Lorenz Oken who classified "five kinds or varieties of Men, according with the development of the sensorial organs", whose extremes were "The Skin-Man is the *Black*, African" and "The Eye-Man is the *White*, European".[41]

New somaticism, as noted by Keir Elam, was initially marked by "its lack of reference to performance. … Most Shakespearean corporeal criticism is altogether removed from our own theatrical culture, and thus, in a sense, from our own historical moment. The history of Shakespeare's bodies is also and above all the history of their embodiment on stage."[42] Although the situation has changed, especially in studies of Shakespeare in film and other visual media, in race criticism Othello's stage history is often reduced to a survey of chromatic gradation, one that often culminates in redeeming prescriptions:

> [T]he role of Othello should be played by a black actor … any effort to dodge the racial issue in the script, will, indeed, either haunt or subvert the production of the script, either by calling attention to the inevitable and perhaps intentional stereotype that the actor will create (e.g. Olivier) or by creating the vacuum that a white Othello imposes on the script (e.g. Hopkins).[43]

Coursen's view can be agreed with only with reference to his specific negative examples. Laurence Olivier's Othello represents the ultimate claim to omnipotence of the white impersonator, whereby a black-faced white man was supposed to be a mimetic prodigy, whereas a white-faced black man was a figure of ridicule. Anthony Hopkins, as noted above in the view of his director Jonathan Miller, represents the (attempted) repression of the ethnic element. But the general claim that Othello has to be performed only by a black person raises a new problem: Just how black? Stuart Hall recalls how his grandmother was able to distinguish dozens of different shades of "blackness", the latter category not being part of her ethnic lexicon.[44] This viewpoint reifies the Shakespearean character in such a way as to completely reduce him to his look and make blackness coincide with

[41] Lorenz Oken, *Elements of Physiophilosophy* (London: Ray Society, 1847).

[42] Keir Elam, '"In What Chapter of His Bosom?": Reading Shakespeare Bodies' in *Alternative Shakespeares 2*, edited by Terence Hawkes (London: Routledge, 1997), 160.

[43] Coursen, "The Case for a Black Othello", 126.

[44] Quoted in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (1995) eds. B. Ashcroft et al. (London: Routledge), 225.

and exhaust the ethnic issue. The tattoos on the baldhead of Lawrence Fishburne's filmic Othello corroborate Gilroy's observation that the black body needs continuous (literal) reinscription to contrast the blurring of racial boundaries in an aesthetic domain where black beauty has been finally authorized.[45] It may be premature, at least in the Anglosphere, to cast Othello as just another role in the salutary practice of color-blind casting, allowing a more diversified representation of his difference (without recourse to the compromised black face), but on the other hand, we need to be divorced from Coursen's uncompromising position. It is surprising that Loomba, analyzing a Kathakali version of *Othello* in India, concludes that it "does not offer a significant new interpretation of the play. It is not anticolonial. It does not play upon or transgress colonial histories of the play, or of colonial Shakespeare in India, *except at the very level of its existence"* (emphasis added).[46] In other words, since the play does not fit the critic's political agenda, she refuses to recognize any signification where there is a different ethnic grammar. The two Indian films *Kaliyattam* (1997) and *Omkara* (2006) are powerful versions of *Othello* in which the fact of blackness is absent without being repressed, and the mechanisms of discrimination are manifested in different, culturally specific, but not less excruciating fashions.

It is comprehensible that in a historical and political context where black people have been discriminated against for so long, the taking away of the most iconic black role in theater may sound like adding insult to injury. I have discussed elsewhere the desire to produce more historically *authentic* Othellos and Shylocks as a compensatory gesture toward blacks and Jews.[47] This has produced a genuine ethnographic effort on the part of actors and directors willing to pay homage to the (supposed) ethnic and cultural identities of the African and Jewish minorities. However, Julia Reinhard Lupton has aptly remarked that such impulse to determine, reconstruct, and celebrate a previously marginalized identity suffers from certain limitations:

> It is precisely the particularism of culture, set against a universalism presumed bankrupt, that neohistoricist readers of Shakespeare have attempted

[45] Gilroy, *Between Camps*, 22–23.

[46] Ania Loomba, "Local-manufacture-made-in-India Othello fellows", in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, edited by Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1998), 162.

[47] Shaul Bassi, "Barefoot to Palestine: The Failed Meetings of Shylock and Othello." In Tosi and Bassi, *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, 232–233 (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011).

> to salvage, whether in the guise of Othello's blackness, Shylock's Judaism, or Caliban's indigenous claims. In the process however, the religious foundations of the play's conceptions of these positions are necessarily occluded, reduced, or secularized.[48]

In other words, by projecting contemporary configurations of race onto the past, other basic components of cultural difference are lost in translation. As Gilroy puts it in his recent preface to the new edition of his book:

> US-derived specifications of what racial conflict entails are being projected worldwide as non-specific outcomes. Those the North American contingencies become widely understood as intrinsic to the general workings of racial division. … My essential point is that accepting this salience of the social and political processes that the US knows and accepts as a nature of phenomenon called "race", does absolutely nothing to address the multiple mystifications wrought by racism either in US political culture or elsewhere.[49]

Iago as a "Type of the Romano-Italic Race"

Let us return to our Victorian opus in order to ponder over the role of Iago as a "Type of the Romano-Italic Race" and the concurrent relegation of Othello to the rank of secondary character. If Coleridge famously described Iago's actions as guided by "motiveless malignity", our anonymous author could not disagree more:

> To wade deliberately through all crime in prosecution of selfish ends could excite only disgust or horror, and would at best be merely monstrous. But to do so with a latent sentiment of the legitimacy of the course, and under influence of a particular view of morals, is full of interest. … the special interest of this play becomes a proof, that the true import of the character can only be a type of race; that is to say, not a perverted individual, which

[48] Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Citizen-Saints. Shakespeare and Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 177.

[49] He also adds: "I welcome the chance to emphasize that it was never my intention to overlook the undoubted sufferings of US blacks at the hands of white supremacy but rather to say clearly to them and to the emergent formation of black Europeans, that we should not forget our historic responsibility to act in solidarity with the post-colonial movements for justice and human rights that are flowing out of the global "south" and composing a new planetary network in pursuit of a more thoroughgoing democracy than was offered earlier in color-coded forms." Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (New York: Routledge, 2013), *xiii*.

> suggests nothing, but a cast of organization and a stage of social progress that reveal to different races a latent phase of the common species.[50]

The lieutenant was not then invented by Shakespeare to demonstrate metaphysical evilness or individual perversion but to epitomize the quality of an entire race, interpreted in a strict developmental or rather degenerative nexus with the ancient Roman civilization. Our exegete then piles up an impressive collection of stereotypes, which range from early modern clichés on Machiavellianism to more recent tropes typical of Gothic tales and Victorian novels set in Italy. Iago "is void of all reasoning, nay, reflection in the proper sense… is merely pragmatic and perspicacious. He proceeds always upon habits, not on principles of conduct"; "The Italians are …the modern confectioners of potions and poisons"; "the Italian conceives power in all its mysteries to lurk in the interior of physical bodies and the earth, as with the Teuton this fount of magic or of miracle is within man"; "Iago shows directly and expressly the Romano-Italian contempt for theory"; "There is no feature of Italian manners more peculiar or important than their faculty of secrecy."[51]

Even when the author turns out to be a perceptive reader, as when he identifies Iago's rhetorical ability to evoke vivid concrete images to impress his interlocutors (*hypotyposis*[52]), his single-minded mission is to refer every quality to a racial essence: "[E]very abstract operation is presented to his mind, but in the guise of a laborious percolation through a mass of matter–this slow and subtle penetration being the mode of action of the national intellect."[53]

Elsewhere the argument is less far-fetched and resonates with more sophisticated ethnographies. "The Moral principle of the race was determined to be tradition; it is the *family* morality, as opposed to the *personal*"; "Shakespeare was fully conscious of that national *esprit de tribu*, to which Napoleon charged the failure of his efforts for Italian unity."[54] Both his jealousy and his pursuit of military rank are read as driven by Iago's need to provide for his family, an argument that will be given sociological dignity in Edward C. Banfield's classic study *The Moral Basis of*

[50] *New Exegesis*, 41.
[51] *New Exegesis*, 46–47, 49, 62.
[52] Alessandro Serpieri, *Otello: l'eros negato* (Napoli: Liguori, 2003), 21.
[53] *New Exegesis*, 48.
[54] *New Exegesis*, 51, 56.

a Backward Society (1958), which introduced the controversial but still serviceable concept of "amoral familism" to describe Italian society.[55] Like Verdi, the exegete also weighed the importance of the play's two characters and pondered on who deserved to be the titular hero:

> Othello would be laughed at on an Italian stage. But if wept at on an English, the fact is no less consonant. His soldier bluntness, his blustering honesty, and simple-mindedness were here intelligible, while the calm and keen intriguer inspired the opposite antipathy. It was this contrast that obliged Shakespeare to give the personage its prominence, and led him also (if not the managers, who know their public) to name the piece from it.[56]

Othello was evidently a recalcitrant presence in this racialist cathedral, and the author simply dismissed him. As for Iago, who knows how our exegete would have responded to the modern critic's view that this character, as his name would seem to indicate, is more Spanish than Italian?[57]

From Race to Ethnicity

It is impossible to summarize the vastness and complexity of the sociological and cultural studies debate on race and ethnicity, let alone the countless ramifications of these concepts in other disciplinary and discursive domains. Stuart Hall has aptly commented that race and ethnicity play hide and seek with each other.[58] In Shakespeare studies, ethnicity is still in hiding, and race has provisionally won the game. Certainly, ethnicity should not be seen as a euphemism for race, not as the domain of more innocuous cultural differences, say Iago's drinking jokes on the Germans and the English versus his dehumanizing of Othello to be understood as "race". Ethnicity, to have a working definition, is "a *symbolic construct* by means of which a group produces a definition of *the collective self and/or the collective other*".[59] An ethnic group is typically defined by a name, a myth of origin, a historical memory, a symbolic link with a territory,

[55] Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1958).

[56] *New Exegesis*, 45.

[57] Barbara Everett, "'Spanish" Othello: The Making of Shakespeare's Moor.' *Shakespeare Survey*, 35 (1982), 101–112.

[58] Cited in Werner Sollors, ed., *Theories of Ethnicity. A Classical Reader* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), xxxv.

[59] Ugo Fabietti, *L'identità etnica* (Roma: Carocci, 1998), 21.

and a sense of solidarity, and common cultural elements (phenotype, language, religion, customs, but not necessarily all of them).[60] But often, as Fabietti "and/or" implies, a definition of the ethnic self also depends on a definition of the ethnic others. In a quote that fits particularly well our Shakespearean case, Werner Sollors remarks that

> it makes little sense to define "ethnicity-as-such", since it refers not to a thing-in-itself but to a relationship: ethnicity is typically based on a *contrast*.… A canonical text illuminates the symbolic processes that help to constitute ethnic contrasts. While ethnic matter is often associated only with works by writers whose descent makes them members of the respective ethnic groups, the processes of generating feelings of dissociative belonging inform (and are themselves supported by) many literary texts.[61]

Race can be then understood as the most extreme form of this symbolic process, one that may (or may not) focus on the phenotype (the somatic difference) and that, as in our Victorian case, sanctions a hierarchy and irreducible difference between human types. In that sense, ethnicity subsumes race, without singling out or isolating certain characters. The painstaking construction of Iago as an Italian racial type is, in its absurd generalizations, an articulated ethnography, a symbolic process in which the profiling of an imagined Italian collective self is instrumental to the formulation of a positive Celtic identity, presumably that of the author. Advocates of "race" may correctly point out that the racialization of Othello, Shylock, and Caliban has had far more profound and tragic consequences than that of Iago or any other European character, but it is precisely because the ethnic factor in a play can become suddenly relevant in a determined place and time that we should include ethnicity as a critical category potentially useful for any Shakespearean text and recognize that "race" ends up isolating a small number of characters according to contemporary logic. An ethnic identity, to make another obvious point, includes and implies a religious component, one that cannot be separated from the discussion of any Shakespearean character. More generally, the following chapters will show how many Shakespearean texts include and produce explicit and implicit definitions of the Italian collective self and of

[60] John Hutchinson, John and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6–7.

[61] Werner Sollors, "Ethnicity." In *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 288, 303.

several collective others that can illuminate the Italian self. Shakespeare race criticism has made a precious contribution to that "new cultural politics of difference"[62] that has challenged an abstract—but inherently Eurocentric—universalism and that has yet to catch on in a country like Italy, rapidly becoming multiethnic in practice but lagging behind in the conceptualization of this new forming identity. In the long run, though, such approach risks being wrecked by a form of sectarian identity politics where rigid racial identifications are invited and country dispositions become inviolable country truths. Just as I am aware that part of my critique could be appropriated by conservative critics nostalgic for the times when Othello was just a jealous guy, race critics should be alert to the risk of their being appropriated by ethnic supremacists in different cultural scenarios. Racism is too entrenched an evil to delude oneself that it will go away by simply erasing race. We should continue to insist that race is less a property of an individual or group than a cultural and political process with no basis in science (pace the current obsession with genetics). As a consequence, there is no contradiction in dropping "race" as a noun while keeping all its morphological variants that point to it as a process and a relation: racism, racist, racial, racialization, and raciology. Concurrently, to investigate human difference in Shakespeare, we may start making a better use of the less compromised and more nuanced category of ethnicity.

Othello in Monomotopa

Ethnicity is not just an element awaiting authentication or a tool to promote exclusivist identity politics. It is also a potential site for thinking otherwise, a space of indeterminacy in which critics and actors can continue the author's creation and experiment new cultural and even political options. Ernst Honigmann has argued that "the play prompts us to speculate about [Othello's] mysterious past and its effect on his multi-layered personality".[63] I suggest that speculations on Othello's identity can be divided into those that seek a racial ontology and those that produce an ethnic semiosis. In the former case, "race" is a burden, an irreducible

[62] Cornel West, "The New Cultural Politics of Difference", in *Out There: Marginalizations and Contemporary Cultures*, edited by Russell Ferguson and Martha Gever (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 19–36.

[63] Introduction to Shakespeare, *Othello*, 23.

fact, something to pin down or repress. This is the tradition of Coleridge, Lamb, Mary Preston, our anonymous Victorian author, and most Italian critics. The archetypal example is Thomas Rymer's much quoted tirade: "With us a black-amoor might rise to be a Trumpeter; but *Shakespear* would not have him less than Lieutenant General. With us, a *Moor* might marry some little drab, or Small-coal Wench: *Shake-spear* would provide him the Daughter and Heir of some Great Lord."[64] Rymer had his detractors even before the late twentieth century, and notably the critic Charles Gildon, who asserted that to believe that "the Colour of a Man alters his Species and turns him into a *Beast* or *Devil* 'tis such a vulgar Error, so criminal a fondness of our Selves, to allow nothing of Humanity to any but our own Acquaintance of the fairer hew".[65] He also observed that white women did not disdain the "Amorous Dalliances" of "Sable Lovers", both in the Indies and Britain, bearing witness to the fact that "Nature and Custom have not put any such unpassable bar betwixt Creatures of the same kind because of different colors."[66] Yet the moment we wish to call attention to, the act of ethnic semiosis, came when Gildon tried to envisage Othello's existential itinerary:

> Supposing him therefore the Son or Nephew of the Emperor of Monomotopa, Æthiopia or Congo, *forc'd to leave his Country for Religion (or any other occasion),* coming to Europe by the convenience of the Portugueze Ships, might several Fortunes serve first as a Voluntier till he had signaliz'd himself and prov'd himself worthy of Command; *part of this may very reasonably be drawn* from what the Poet makes him say. (Emphasis added)[67]

The point here is not only to retrieve a more progressive history of *Othello* as an alternative to the prevailing, racist one—Gildon was anti-Italian, class-conscious, and in later years abjured all his views, aligning himself with Rymer. What this passage yields is an imaginative reconstruction of Othello's biography, *partly* based on a *reasonable* interpretation of the text, which allowed the Deist Gildon a celebration of religious dissidence

[64] Thomas Rymer, *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693) in *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer*, edited by C. A. Zimansky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), 134.

[65] Charles Gildon, "Some Reflections on Mr. *Rymer*'s *Short View of Tragedy* and an Attempt at a Vindication of *Shakespeare*" (1694). In *Shakespeare. The Critical Heritage*. Vol. 2: *1693–1733*, edited by Brian Vickers (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 74.

[66] Gildon, "Some Reflections", 75.

[67] "Some Reflections", 72.

and, possibly, a partial identification with the Moor cutting across the ethnic divide.

We can and indeed should read *Othello* and the other plays as seminal documents of European racism, and analyze the figures of Iago, Brabantio, Emilia, Gratiano, Bassanio, and Antonio as the prototypical racists.[68] But reading with/through ethnicity may also be a vehicle for thinking differently about the past, present, and the future of human relations. We should insist that partial identifications and political allegiances extend across somatic and genetic differences in order to challenge social barriers and fight racisms old and new: I dread the day when Italian students may decide to reactivate an old lexicon and identify themselves with any *razza* other than the human race. The option of cultural pluralism was not available to Shakespeare, but he opened spaces in which we can glimpse and (re)create new, alternative, communities.

[68] B.J. Sokol says than I am "less than attentive" in bracketing some of these characters as "racists", insisting that Emilia's phrases "dull Moor" or "cruel Moor" are "more descriptive than racial" (*Shakespeare and Tolerance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 207–208, n83). While I am convinced that not all forms of racisms are equivalent, I find equally problematic to find these descriptions, where Othello is significantly no longer called by his proper name, neutral.

CHAPTER 3

Slav-ing Othello

There are a handful of words that originated in Venice and have spread internationally, also entering the English lexicon. The most consequential are certainly *Arsenal*, *Ballot*, and *Ghetto*, all thematically linked to the world of Shakespeare's Venetian plays. The same may be true of the best-known and the most seemingly innocent word of the list, *ciao*, which hides a tricky etymological paradox. As the OED tells us, 'the model informal' greeting is a "[Venetian] dialect alteration of *schiavo '(I am your) slave'*, from medieval Latin *sclavus 'slave'*", a very ceremonial form of address. This refers back to the better-known fact that "the Slavonic peoples had been reduced to a servile state by conquest in the 9th century" (OED) and that the ethnic designation ended up becoming synonymous with bondage. The Shakespearean connection lies in the fact that in the early nineteenth-century rewriting of *Othello* this chapter deals with, the Italian Carlo Federici turns the previously enslaved Moor into a Slav.[1] *Otello ossia lo Slavo (Othello, or the Slav)* would easily disappoint admirers of the original. It is an *Othello* with all but conventional jealousy, no handkerchief, a third-rate Iago, no seduction worthy of its name; a play without raging storms or military outposts; it is, shockingly, a tragedy with a happy ending. And there is no reason indeed to exaggerate its literary merits, since its author knew better himself. The son of a magistrate turned playwright, Federici took the opposite direction, and after his juvenile forays

[1] This chapter is dedicated to my mother and my Istrian family.

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016

S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1_3

into theater, he went on to become a lawyer at the service of the Austrian regime in Venice.

Yet it is precisely because it simplifies the "domestic" and psychological elements that have dominated *Othello*'s theatrical and critical afterlife that this minor text illuminates the interplay of politics and ethnicity that is one of the most compelling aspects of the Shakespearean tragedy today. As Maurice Aymard has written: "Europe needs its minorities and makes use of them, when it does not create them on purpose to gain self-consciousness, and at the same time to mark fixed points, to express and solve its own contradictions."[2] The whole history of *Othello* can be read from this perspective, with its eponymous character as representative of an always reinvented minority onto which different interpretive communities have projected their identity dilemmas and anxieties. Federici's creation of a Slavic Moor is a peculiar, if marginal, intervention in this history; a rare departure from the traditional dialectics of whiteness and blackness which demonstrates how Othello's ethnicity has always been a more complicated matter than his skin color.

From Venice to Genoa, via France

Carlo Federici (1778–1849) was precociously schooled in theater by his father Camillo, a prolific and successful playwright, forced in his last years by poor health conditions to dictate his works to his wife and children.[3] Camillo Federici's vast production is considered as an important document of the theatrical taste of the late eighteenth century. He wrote high-flown comedies drawing his subjects from ancient and medieval history and seasoning them with deep pathos and surprise finales.[4] Born in Piedmont, Camillo made his fortunes in Padua and Venice; his son was born in Genoa and attended the University of Padua, in the midst of an eventful period.

In 1797, the Most Serene Republic of Venice (of which Padua was part) had surrendered to Napoleon, ending its millenary history. During

[2] Maurice Aymard, "Le minoranze", in *L'Europa e gli europei*, edited by Fernand Braudel (Bari: Laterza, 1992), 204.

[3] Mate Zorić, "Croati e altri Slavi del Sud nella letteratura italiana dell'800," *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagrabiensa* 33-34-35-36 (1972–73): 126–127.

[4] Giorgio Pullini, "Il teatro fra scena e società", in *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. 6: *Dall'età napoleonica alla Prima Guerra Mondiale*, edited by Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1986), 256 ff.

a short-lived democratic season, the theater became an important political arena in all the territories of the Republic. The arrival of the French army in Padua in 1797 caused a visible turn of the dramatic production in the direction of the new values of freedom, virtue, and equality.[5]

In the same time and place, Italy was discovering a hitherto-neglected English playwright. In Padua, Pierantonio Mereghelli published his *Dissertazione sopra la tragedia cittadinesca* (1795), a summa of the theatrical debate of the late eighteenth century in which Italian theater, in search of a model capable of marrying the ancient to the modern, found it in Shakespeare.[6] In 1798, as we mentioned in the introduction, the Venetian noblewoman Giustina Renier Michiel signed the first published Italian translation of *Othello*, prefacing it with these words: "Shakespeare takes possession of us, he moves us, he interests us even in spite of ourselves."[7]

The most reliable edition of *Otello, ossia lo Slavo* dates from 1805.[8] In the scant biographical information on Carlo Federici provided by an account of his father's life, we learn that "he had scarcely reached four lustres of age when he composed his first plays which were favourably welcome by the public".[9] Since an endnote to the play presents it as the first published work of its author, born in 1778, the date of composition has been pushed back to 1798.[10] It was in January of that year that the Austrian hoisted their two-headed-eagle flag on San Marco, putting an end to the short and instrumental regime of Napoleon, who would rule again from 1806 to 1814.

Complicated as it is to pin down the exact date of composition—and the relevant 7-year span (1797–1805) constitutes the most turbulent epoch of Venetian history—it is more productive to abandon the microscope of

[5] Carmelo Alberti, "La scena delle metamorfosi. Il teatro negli anni della municipalità democratica di Padova," in *La Municipalità democratica di Padova (1797). Storia e cultura*, edited by A. Balduino (Venezia: Marsilio, 1998), 154.

[6] Alberti, "La scena delle metamorfosi," 145.

[7] Giustina Renier Michiel, "Prefazione della traduttrice," in *Opere drammatiche di Shakespeare volgarizzate da una dama veneta*, 1 Vol. (Venezia: eredi Costantini, 1798), 15.

[8] Carlo Federici, *Otello, ossia lo Slavo* in *Capricci teatrali*, volume 3 (Roma: Gioacchino Puccinelli, 1805). A different edition appears in an undated miscellany housed at the Marciana national library in Venice. All quotations from the text refer to the Rome edition and its relative page numbers. Translations are mine.

[9] Antonio Neu Mayr, *Notizie biografico-letterarie sul commediografo Camillo Federici* (Venezia: tipografia Alvisopoli, 1838), 38.

[10] For this hypothesis, see Mate Zorić, "Croati e altri Slavi del Sud," 128.

the philologist for the telescope of the cultural historian. This suggests that the main elements wherewith Federici shaped his play were the new political ideals of the French Revolution mediated by the Italian experience, the theatrical vicissitudes of Othello's ethnicity, and the European vogue of Morlacchismo.

The beginning of the debate on Othello's ethnicity coincides with the beginning of Shakespeare's criticism itself (and notably with Thomas Rymer), but for our purpose, it is interesting to focus on the controversies that ensued the first productions of *Othello* in France, a country that was the main source for Italian culture throughout the eighteenth century. Voltaire, who loosely adapted the Shakespearean play in his *Zaire* (1732), moved the scene to Jerusalem at the time of the Crusades, making the central ethnic conflict one between French Christians and Muslims.[11] The first true version of *Othello* came with *Le more de Venise*, written in 1773 by M. Douin, who tried to tailor his translation to suit the demanding conventions of French classicism. Having received 14 objections from "certain modernes Aristarques", the first of which targeted precisely Othello's color, Douin just replied that Shakespeare had found a black Moor in Cinzio and had left him like that.[12] The problem was literally removed by the Genève lawyer Jean-François Butini, who, in his *Othello* (1785), replaced the ethnic difference between lovers with a social barrier: "Un soldat de fortune, un homme sans naissance/Peut-il mêler son sang au sang d'un sénateur?"

The most influential French *Othello*, authored by Jean-François Ducis, was premiered in 1792 at the Théâtre de la République, with the star actor Jean-François Talma in the title part. Othello was the only character who maintained the original name in an adaptation that substituted the handkerchief with a jewel and toned down the Moor's color. Ducis' was a deliberately republican and libertarian play in which the Moor was a child of nature, maker of his own fortunes and master of his own freedom. Ducis sent a copy of the text to a friend, with the inscription "Receive, illustrious fellow citizen, the sans-culotte Otello", but at the same time he explained in an "avvertissement" that out of respect for his audience, particularly the

[11] Voltaire, *Zaire* (1732). In *Théâtre 1*, *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, 50 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1877), vol. 2.

[12] Margaret Gilman, *Othello in French* (Paris: Libraire Ancienne Edouard Champion, 1925), 36.

women, he had chosen a "yellow-copper hue … still suitable to an African but advantageously not offensive to the eyes of the spectators".[13]

A few days before the debut, the *Journal de Paris* published a letter in which a citizen Flins reassured Talma: classical tragedy was gone with the monarchy and, after the *mulâtres* had been granted the rights of citizenship, the revolutionaries would not sneer at a young white lady marrying a Moor.[14] They were incensed instead by the scene of the killing of Hèdelmone (Desdemona), and Ducis was forced to write an alternative finale in which Othello was stopped moments before the lethal action and, having acknowledged his mistake, married the girl.[15]

The change of names (except Othello's), a jewel instead of a handkerchief, a happy ending—all these elements return in Federici's text, suggesting that he may have been familiar with these rewritings. Above all, the French precedent shows how a black Othello was deemed undignified, in this not too strange combination between *egalité* and racism. The next step is to investigate why Federici decided to keep the ethnic difference, but opted for a Slavic Moor.

Mapping Illyria

Otello, ossia lo Slavo is set in Genoa, which was Federici's birthplace.[16] But more than sentimental reasons, the recent events in Venice may have made a play that depicts a civil strife an obvious candidate for censorship. In any event, this Genoa is a Venice in thin disguise. Larry Wolff observes that "with a doge and a senate already written into the drama, just the change of a name would have sufficed to restore *Othello* to Venice for any particular performance".[17] Maybe even that change of name (mentioned only twice in the whole play) would have been unnecessary, since

[13] Claudia Campanelli, "J. F. Ducis: *Othello* come spunto per una tragedia neoclassica," in *Il libro del teatro*, edited by Roberto Ciancarelli and Silvia Carandini (Roma: Bulzoni, 1996), 141. Marion Monaco, *Shakespeare on the French Stage in the Eighteenth Century* (Paris: Didier, 1974), 162.

[14] Quoted by Julie Hankey in William Shakespeare, *Othello*, edited by Julie Hankey (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1987), 76.

[15] Campanelli, "Ducis", 147.

[16] Genoa, it might be added, was another ancient oligarchic republic with historical relations with Eastern Europe. Renato Risaliti, *Gli slavi e l'Italia: viaggi e rapporti dal Quattrocento al Novecento* (Moncalieri: Centro interuniversitario di ricerche sul Viaggio in Italia, 1996), 155.

[17] Larry Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs. The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 224.

the translation of setting must have sounded like a Parisian story moved to a London with the Tour Eiffel. *Otello, ossia lo Slavo* is ultimately an Adriatic play, its setting Venetian, and its eponymous character an Illyrian.

Illyria was a mutable and disputed territory in European culture, "a relatively flexible term used to designate a large area of land stretching from the eastern coast of the Adriatic sea to modern Croatia in the west and sometimes even as far east as the Pannonian plain in the east".[18] In the second half of the eighteenth century, a specific Illyrian discourse originated in Venice, when Dalmatia became the focus of the final imperial fantasies of the declining Republic, the last site where the Serenissima could still imagine itself as that military and political power which had long ceased to be. Venetian claims to those regions dated back to the millennium, and the colonization of the country was indeed presented as nothing less than a love story, since, in the words of the city's official historian Marco Foscarini, "The manner of the Venetian government has usually been to enamor peoples."[19] The semicolonial regime founded in Dalmatia turned out to be of quite little economical profit, but was richly rewarding as symbolic capital. The ethnology of that period worked out a distinction between the coastal Dalmatians, who were Catholic, and the inland peoples, largely Orthodox, who were called Morlacchi. Initially constructed as ferocious and intractable barbarians, they were later turned into noble savages, in an exotic discourse, Morlacchismo, which became very fashionable in Venice and then propagated to Europe, acquiring a nostalgic aftertaste following the end of the Serenissima. It was in this cultural climate that Federici came to write *Otello*, not long before the Morlacchi vanished as a recognizable cultural icon and ethnic groups were redefined according to new political agendas.[20]

Dalmatia was also important as a liminal space, the easternmost border with the Turks, with which Venice had been at war for centuries. Such

[18] Goran Stanivukovic, "Illyria Revisited: Shakespeare and the Eastern Adriatic," *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean*, edited by Tom Clayton, Susan Brock, Vicente Forés (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 402; see also Martin Procházka, "Shakespeare's Illyria, Sicily and Bohemia: Other Spaces, Other Times, or Other Economies?", *Litteraria Pragensia* 12, no. 23, special issue on "Shakespeare's Illyrias: Heterotopies, Identities, (Counter) histories" (2002): 130–149.

[19] Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs,* 45.

[20] Larry Wolff, "The Enlightened Anthropology of Friendship in Venetian Dalmatia: Primitive Ferocity and Ritual Fraternity Among the Morlacchi," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 2 (1998–1999), 158.

strategic position had made the political sympathies of the Dalmatians a sensitive issue and their loyalty to Venice the cultural cornerstone of Morlacchismo. The ground was paved by Carlo Goldoni with his play *La Dalmatina* (1758) set in Morocco. It was in this African scenario, which oddly resonates with *Othello*, that the Dalmatian characters could attest their loyalty to Venice and declare that they would carry its winged Lion in their breast, and their country in their heart, according to a new model of patriotism that Rousseau would canonize for the Enlightenment a decade later.[21] This reversed a tradition inaugurated by Ariosto, who in his *Orlando Furioso* had identified Slavic soldiers with a brutal and unchivalric warfare conduct.[22] In Goldoni, the "cruelty of the Slavs", invoked by previous authors and historians, became the "valor of the Slavs".

> In illirica terra nacqui, non lo nascondo,
> Ho nelle vene un sangue noto e famoso al mondo.
> Sangue d'illustri eroi, d'eterna gloria erede,
> Che alla sua vita istessa sa preferir la fede.
>
> In Illyrian land I was born, I do not conceal it,
> I have in my veins blood well-known and famous in the world.
> The blood of illustrious heroes, heir to eternal glory,
> That knows to prefer loyalty over even one's own life.[23]

This Illyrian pride cum Venetian patriotism culminated in Giovanni Greppi's *L'Eroe dalmate* (*The Dalmatian Hero*, 1793), in which the protagonist, once again served his chosen country in as far a place as Siam.[24] As Larry Wolff observes, "[in] the final decade of the Serenissima Repubblica, dramatic Dalmatian heroes had to travel even further afield to affirm their devotion to Venice and to represent the true glory of Europe".[25] Ironically, Genoa would become in Federici's play another faraway place where a Slavic soldier could demonstrate his unfaltering loyalty to Venice.

[21] Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs*, 68–69.

[22] Mate Zorić, *Italia e Slavia. Contributi sulle relazioni letterarie italo-jugoslave dall'Ariosto al D'Annunzio* (Padova: Antenore, 1989), 1–24. As G. Stanikunovic observes, quoting Cicero, the association of Illyria with violence is much older. "Illyria Revisited", 402.

[23] Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs*, 64.

[24] *Venice and the Slavs*, 75.

[25] *Venice and the Slavs*, 75.

This loyalty was anthropologically justified in the seminal text of Morlacchismo, Alberto Fortis' *Viaggio in Dalmazia* (1774), a rich scientific and ethnographic account that launched the Morlacchi on the European scenario. In particular, it was the chapter devoted to the "Costumi de Morlacchi", which gained the admiration of Goethe, Herder, and Mérimée.[26] Fortis (born and educated in Padua) set out to disprove the deep-seated conviction that the Morlacchi were "a race of ferocious men, unreasonable, without humanity, capable of any misdeed".[27] In his apologetic study, the Morlacco was depicted as "a moral man much different from ourselves" who had an incomparably high consideration of friendship and enmity, the individual correspondents of political loyalty and war. In Wolff's words, Fortis "recogniz[ed] the structural anthropological connection between *amicizie* (friendships) and *inimicizie* (enmities), and insisted that they formed a complementary, customary coherence of personal relations, that constant friendship was the inseparable counterpart of the undying vendetta".[28]

On the wake of Fortis, Giustiniana Wynne published her successful anthropological novel *Les Morlaques* (1788), which in turn was the source of Camillo Federici's *Gli antichi slavi ossia le Nozze dei Morlacchi* (*The Ancient Slavs, or the Wedding of the Morlacchi*, 1793). In this play, on the background of the age-old struggle against the Turks, Elena is contended by two men who embody the ambivalent feelings on Morlacchi harbored by Italians. Dusmanich is an austere and valorous despiser of Italian civilized manners and a supporter of Morlacchi's customs for which women's main purpose is to generate new prospective warriors; Serizca is, on the contrary, a more modern and enlightened soldier, who values equality among the sexes.[29] This may well have been one of the comedies that the seriously ill Camillo dictated to an adolescent Carlo, who a few years later would alchemize these Morlacchi elements with the Shakespeare he could know through Italian or French versions. The young playwright's imagination may also have been struck by a curious detail mentioned dismissively by his fellow citizen Fortis:

> [T]he etymology of the name Morlacchi imagined by the famous historian of Dalmatia Giovanni Lucio and awkwardly copied by his editor Freschot,

[26] Wolff, "Enlightened Anthropology", 157.
[27] Quoted in Wolff, "Enlightened Anthropology", 157.
[28] "Enlightened Anthropology", 163.
[29] Zorić, "Croati e altri Slavi del Sud", 116–117.

> deserves no reflection whatsoever, because it is far-fetched. He claimed that Moro-Vlassi, or Moro-Vlaki, means Black-Latins; despite in good Illyrian language the word moro does not correspond to black, and our Morlacchi are possibly whiter than Italians.[30]

For his short four-act play, written in the classic Italian hendecasyllabic verse, Federici, like Ducis, kept Otello as the only Shakespearean name in a considerably reduced number of characters. For Desdemona, he chose Elena, a name that, along with its Croatian equivalent Jela, was strikingly recurrent in Italian and Dalmatian works of analogous themes, including Wynne's novel and Camillo Federici's *Gli antichi Slavi*.[31] The fact that such female figures are often at the center of a contest, conjures up the Homeric Helen of Troy. Curiously enough, in 1797 Fortis' Dalmatian friend Giulio Bajamonti published in Venice his essay "The Morlacchismo of Homer", which strengthened the typical Enlightenment analogy between ancient Greeks and Romans and modern exotic societies.

The Iago figure is Guelfo, a name which had been standing since the Middle Ages for a supporter of the Church against the secular power of the Emperor and that Federici may have used as an anticlerical allusion. Finally, Brabantio's role is assigned to Rambaldo, and Renato is a character in which Roderigo and Cassio are basically conflated.

In a Venice-like Genoa, the play is opened by the Doge's address to the Senators in a magnificent hall:

> Dal subito terrore, ond'era scossa,
> La patria alfin respira. Omai periglio
> Per noi non v'è. Di cittadino sangue
> Il Cittadin non tingerà più il brando.
> Vinse il valor d'Otello. Appena sorto,
> Spento è il rapido incendio, che parea
> Lo stato minacciar, ne più produsse
> Danno che orror; contro i ribelli il Cielo
> Si spiega, e sol per noi stà la vittoria. (3)

> The country is finally relieved from the sudden terror which shook her. We are no longer in peril. Citizens will never again stain their swords with the blood

[30] Alberto Fortis, *Viaggio in Dalmazia*, ed. Eva Viani (Venezia: Marsilio, 1987), 38 [my translation]. See Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs*, 176, for a discussion of this passage.

[31] Zorić, "Croati e altri Slavi del Sud", 4.

> of citizens. The valour of Othello prevailed. No sooner started, the rapid fire which appeared to threaten the state is extinguished, and produced no more damage than fear; against the rebels Heaven unfolds and victory is only with us.

In an incipit, which is curiously reminiscent of *Macbeth* (another Shakespearean play translated by Giustina Renier Michiel), where the Scottish warrior is hailed as savior of the country against the traitor Thane of Cawdor, Otello is celebrated as the leader of the loyalist faction in what was a rapidly consumed civil war. There are no Turks here, nor other external enemies but two rival factions of citizens. In a typical Italian interpretation of the ideals of the French Revolution, citizenship is a quasi-egalitarian condition that puts itself under the double aegis of monarchy/oligarchy (the Doge) and religion (Heaven).

Unlike in Shakespeare, where the Moor appears on stage only after Iago and Roderigo have constructed him as a monster, Otello is here cast in a positive role for the outset, and when his ethnicity is first mentioned is associated with bravery and loyalty:

> Era lor guida
> L'intrepido suo volto, in cui brillava
> La nativa fierezza, e gían lo Slavo
> Eroe seguendo alla vittoria. (4)
>
> They were guided by his intrepid face, where his native pride shone, and they were following the Slavic hero towards victory.[32]

The triumphal atmosphere is disrupted by the old Senator Rambaldo, whose mood and opinion are very different. While he was trying to marry his daughter off to a "virtuous youth, educated far from the corrupt homeland":

> Un traditore
> Nato in barbari climi, un vile amico
> Me deludea frattanto, e con segreto
> Perfido nodo…(5)
>
> A traitor, born in barbaric climes, a vile friend deluded me in the meantime, and with secret and perfidious knot….

[32] This speech seems to be delivered by Guelfo, even though it is assigned to one GAL, an abbreviation which corresponds to no other character and is probably a misprint.

When the outraged Doge has granted to Rambaldo the right to revenge, the culprit is revealed to be none other than Otello. Rambaldo then adds to his invective, calling the celebrated hero "Vile Slav", "an evil friend" and "untrustworthy guest", "le cui gesta/Pari sono ai natali" (whose feats are equal to his native country) (5). The word "natali" means at once social rank and native country; where Guelfo has praised Otello and cast his ethnic identity in a positive light, Rambaldo throws the same identity in the soldier's face:

> Come osasti all'innocenza
> Attentar di mia figlia? Come a un nodo
> Per me già scelto, tu nato dal fango,
> Tu barbaro, tu figlio d'una selce
> Delle Illiriche rupi, ond'hai la culla. (6)
>
> How dared you attempt my daughter's innocence? And a bond I had already chosen, you born out of mud, You barbarian, you son of a flint of the illyrian cliffs, where your cradle is.

This is the crucial passage to identify Otello as a Morlacco.[33] Illyria is not connected here with its coastal territories, as in Shakespeare and other early modern texts, but with its mountains, or rather inhospitable cliffs, inhabited by the Morlacchi. Fortis had praised their natural and geological beauty, but he also described the Haiduks, the fearsome Dalmatian bandits "who customarily find refuge in grottoes, rough woods, and the desolate mountains of the border".[34] But he reassured that one could safely travel there precisely by employing some of them as escort, a fact that bore witness to their trustworthiness. Giulio Bajamonti, celebrating in 1796 the last Provveditore Generale of Dalmatia Andrea Querini who had stopped a threat of plague, wrote hyperbolical words that fuse a taste for the natural sublime with the usual Venetian longing for loyalty:

> At the new sound of his lordly voice
> The high cliffs tremble with sacred horror
> Turks and Morlacchi cross themselves
> In wonder, and even the wolves admire him.[35]

[33] Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs*, 225.
[34] Quoted in Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs*, 152.
[35] Quoted in *Venice and the Slavs*, 306.

In short, Rambaldo represents an antiquated aristocratic order that stresses the importance of ethnic filiation, identifying patriotism with it. Otello will respond with a pride of affiliation that is remarkably different from that of his Shakespearean prototype. Their two self-defenses are best analyzed in comparison:

> My services which I have done the signiory
> Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know,—
> Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,
> I shall promulgate—I fetch my life and being
> From men of royal siege, and my demerits
> May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
> As this that I have reach'd: for know, Iago,
> But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
> I would not my unhoused free condition
> Put into circumscription and confine
> For the sea's worth.
>
> 1.2.17-28

> Il Ciel nel darmi vita
> Femmi a mio danno un cor sensibil troppo.
> Ecco mia colpa. Ma quella, che accusi
> Bassa origine in me, mi toglie forse
> Dritto a servir lo stato, e a farmi grande?
> Non gli avi miei, ma l'opre mie racconta;
> Vedi le mie ferite, il sangue, ch'io
> Per la patria versai, oblìa per sempre
> Qual'io mi fui, qual'io mi sia rammenta;
> Aggiung'in fin, che vincitor ritorno,
> Che per me solo oggi lo stato è salvo…
> Questi sono i miei vanti, e gli avi miei. (6)

> In giving me life, Heaven, to my prejudice, made me too sensitive a heart, This is my fault. But does that low origin of mine that you blame take away my right to serve the state and to make me great? Speak not of my ancestors, but of my deeds; See my wounds, the blood that for our country I shed, forget forever what I was, remember who I am; add, finally, that I am coming back victorious, that only because of me the state is saved today… these are my merits and my ancestors.

The decline of aristocratic ethos in favor of individual merit is a topos of this time. Zorić notes that Otello "cannot boast ancestors of royal blood, but

he compensates such lack with the motivated pride of the loyal and worthy citizen".[36] He does not observe, though, that such democratic spirit entails a complete effacement of the soldier's ethnic identity, as if that filiation was detrimental to his new condition. In Shakespeare, Othello's services were linked to his status. In Federici, Otello's services are presented as a compensation for his status. The Illyrian is a faithful servant to the state, and yet his being Illyrian needs forgetting. In Shakespeare, Othello is a loyal servant and a faithful husband, but he is constructed as a "wheeling stranger of here and everywhere". Inversely, Federici's Otello is eager to put his unhoused free condition into the circumscription of the Genoese/Venetian state. The fact of being a loyal servant and a faithful husband is consubstantial with his desire as a foreigner to be an ideal citizen.[37]

Love in Times of Revolution

This different relationship between ethnicity and citizenship corresponds to a new perspective on interethnic love. During the short Jacobin season, Padua saw the staging of plays that embodied that "ethical exoticism" which projected onto the "good savage" the values of liberty and morality.[38] Melchiorre Cesarotti's *Alzira* or Giuseppe Foppa's *Le nozze dei Sanniti* was hinged on love stories in which socially mismatched unions were made possible by the advent of new libertarian regimes. "In this pre-Romantic and sentimental drama, … marriage with a foreigner is not one of the premises of catastrophe but the indispensable motif for the conventional happy ending."[39] It is thus ironical that in 1803, a Napoleonic law forbade black/white intermarriage. A few years later, the lawyer Federici could have followed in Venice the case of Pierre Cotin, a young black servant from Haiti, who had killed his white lover, pregnant with his child, because he was not allowed to marry her.[40]

[36] Zorić, "Croati e altri Slavi del Sud", 128

[37] It is also to be noted in passing that if divine assistance is invoked throughout the play, no specific mention of religion is ever made. Here, the distinction between Catholic Dalmatians and Orthodox Morlacchi seems irrelevant. Giustina Renier Michiel had suggested, echoing Charles Gildon, that the Moor's tumultuous and wandering life had prevented him from studying any religion in depth and choosing a definite one: his faith must have been at once Christian and Muslim, with a smack of magic. See Anna Busi, *Otello in Italia (1777–1972)* (Bari: Adriatica, 1973), 24.

[38] Alberti, "La scena delle metamorfosi", 156–157.

[39] Zorić, "Croati e altri Slavi del Sud", 128.

[40] Giovanni Scarabello and Veronica Gusso, *Processo al Moro. Venezia 1811. Razzismo, follia, amore e morte* (Roma: Jouvence, 2000).

Elena's account of how she fell in love with Otello is probably the closest to the Shakespearean original:

> Amo questo guerrier, nol niego. Amato
> Chi non l'avrà. Di sue vittorie il grido
> Echeggiava dovunque. Celebrarle
> Te stesso udij, me sua virtù più ch'altro
> M'abbagliò. Stimai l'uom, che il mondo stima,
> Amai l'eroe, che la mia patria onora. (8)
>
> I love this warrior, I don't deny it. Who has not? The cry of his victories echoed everywhere. I heard you yourself celebrating them, but his virtue dazzled me above all. I esteemed the man that the world esteems, I loved the hero whom my country honours.

Desdemona's famous line "I saw Othello's visage in his mind" had gradually lost their ethnic innuendos and disappeared, as we can note in two versions of the Shakespearean play that Federici may have consulted:

> c'est lui seul que j'aime et que j'ai l'avantage
> de trouver dans son coeur les traits d'un beau visage;
> D'être liée au sort d'un héros verteux;
> Et de lui consacrer ma fortune et mes voeux![41]
>
> In Ottello [sic] non ho veduto che la sua anima, e consecrai me stessa alle sue virtù militari, e al suo onore.[42]
>
> In Othello I saw but his soul, and consecrated myself to his military virtues and honour.

Leaving irate the presence of his daughter, Rambaldo points at a diadem on Elena's head, which is Otello's gift, and will play the role of the handkerchief, considered throughout the eighteenth century an indecorous object for the stage. Against the wrath of the Senator, Otello one more time pitches his ethics of action, which, like in Goldoni and Bajamonti, represents a (Venetian) patriotism manifested far from the elective homeland:

> Io sceso
> Dagli Illirici gioghi, e all'armi avvezzo
> Nacqui uom, son soldato, altro retaggio
> Non'ebbi che l'onore, e la mia spada.

[41] William Shakespeare, *Le theatre anglois*, vol. 1 (London, 1746), 39.

[42] Giustina Renier Michiel, *Ottello* [sic], in *Opere drammatiche di Shakespeare*, 118.

> Qual siasi a niun lo debbo, ed è sol mio.
> Io son per voi felice. E qual potrei
> Servigio oprar, che il beneficio eguaglj?
> Io corro, io torno sulle curve prore;
> Quindi spiegando a' più remoti lidi
> Vostre gloriose insegne a cercar volo
> Fra periglj del mar vittoria o morte.
> Son questi i voti miei. (11)

> I, descended from the Illyrian yokes, and accustomed to arms, I was born a man, am a soldier, I had no other legacy than honour and my sword. Whatever I am I owe to nobody except myself. I am happy because of you. And what service could I do to equal this benefit? I run, I return to the curved ship-bows; so waving in the farthest shores your glorious banners, I fly to seek victory or death amidst the perils of the sea. These are my vows.

Shakespeare's Duke had praised Othello's oratory and instrumentally dismissed Brabantio's complaints in order not to lose the Moor's services. Federici's Doge is a nobleman who paradoxically minimizes the importance of descent and lineage in favor of patriotism:

> Amor fu sempre
> L'anima degli eroi. Esaltin gli altri
> D'alti natali, e de' grand'avi il vanto.
> Sia in te sol la tua gloria, e sian tuoi vanti
> L'onor, la patria, la virtude, il Cielo. (11)

> Love was always the soul of heroes. Let others praise the boast of high birth and great ancestors. Let only in yourself be your glory, and be your merits honour, country, virtue and Heaven.

In the second act, the play radically departs from the Shakespearean plot, focusing on the issue of civil war. Renato (a curious combination of Roderigo and Cassio) informs Elena that her father, out of sorrow, is rumored to have expatriated and joined the rebel forces. Questioned on his life, Renato explains how his own father had sent him abroad to spare him "the sad example of the lacerated homeland where we were born". In his exile, he had led a blissful life until the feats of Otello had moved his heart; gone to Genoa to attend the triumph of the hero, he was struck by a woman with whom he fell in love. To her shock, Elena learns that she is the object of such love.

In the following scene, an incognito Rambaldo confronts her daughter and begs her to follow him, to listen to the call of honor of "cent'avi eroi", "hundred heroic ancestors". He then asks her to subscribe a declaration in

which she consents to marry Renato. Elena refuses in the name of Nature, love, and conjugal fidelity. Rambaldo leaves, and when Renato returns to warn Elena that her father is going into exile, she is persuaded to sign the letter to bring him back. The letter is entrusted with Renato, along with Otello's diadem which will serve to relieve Rambaldo's indigence. The spurned lover accepts his mission but upon the condition that Elena will not wed Otello on that very day.

As Otello and Guelfo come on stage, they see the couple and the short "seduction scene" begins. Guelfo warns Otello to hasten the wedding given the uncertain political situation. But when Otello proposes to Elena, she wavers before finally consenting.

In the third act, Guelfo capitalizes on Elena's hesitation, and insinuates doubts into Otello's mind. But unlike in Shakespeare, neither he ("Haply, for I am black…") nor Guelfo invokes ethnic difference as a reason for division:

> Rozzo soldato, all'armi
> Sol'uso, non ha in sé gli allettamenti
> Di un'amator leggiadro. (27)
>
> A rough soldier, solely accustomed to arms, has not the lures of a graceful lover.

At this point, Guelfo convinces Otello that he should leave Genoa with Elena, but she refuses to abandon her homeland. The argument that follows ends with a prostrated Otello once more defeated and conquered by Elena's amorous flatteries. At this point, Guelfo openly accuses her of infidelity by showing Otello the letter and the diadem. A discomfited Otello proclaims that he will recommend Guelfo as the new captain of the army, and then will take his own life. But no sooner has he wished a happy life for Elena and her new lover, that in a sudden reversal of mood he resolves to kill both of them instead.

In the last act, when Otello faces Elena producing the evidence of her betrayal and letting her believe that he has killed Renato, she bursts out: "Barbaro! e qual sangue versasti!"(Barbarian, what blood did you shed!) (42). Like in Shakespeare, it is in the moment of crisis that the ethnic factor surfaces dramatically, but there it was Emilia who accused the murderer Othello of being a "blacker devil" and a "cruel Moor"; here, it is Otello's wife herself. Her death is near when, *deus ex machina*, Renato walks in with the Doge and the guards who disarm Otello and, in melodramatic fashion, Guelfo is given away as the traitor. In a final oversimplification of

Iago's impenetrable psychology ("Demand me nothing: what you know, you know"), Guelfo spells it all out: he was motivated by "Ambizione, invidia/Della grandezza tua… Geloso amore … per Elena" (Ambition, envy of your greatness, and jealous love … for Elena) (45). After all, he concludes, shamelessly avoiding any responsibility, "Tutti siam rei. È la fortuna, / Che ci cangia in eroi, o in traditori" (We're all guilty. It is fortune that makes us heroes or traitors) (45).

The final scene stages the predictable reconciliation with Rambaldo, and Otello is consolidated as both the legitimate bridegroom of Elena and the defender of the homeland:

> Ch'a lei sposo, esser tu dèi
> Dello stato l'appoggio, e la difesa.
> *Otello*. Il giuro a te. Elena avrà mai sempre
> Di questo cor la più sensibil parte,
>
> Ma la patria il mio braccio, e la mia spada. (46)
> Besides her bridegroom, you must be support and defense of the homeland.
> *Otello*. I'll swear it to you. Elena will always have the most sensitive part of my heart, but the country will have my arm and my sword.

Fortis' book had singled out the Morlacchi as a paragon of friendship, suggesting that ethnic difference was no obstacle to political allegiance. Federici pre-Romantic text pushed the argument even further, envisioning a Morlacco who is more loyal to an Italian city than some of its native citizens (the rebels but also the double-dealer Guelfo), and who can even marry into an aristocratic family. Federici's Illyria is, after Shakespeare, another heterotopia that allows the Italian playwright, in a time of unprecedented political turmoil, to represent a model of unity and stability.[43] His Slavic *Otello* envisages a sort of enlightened monarchy or oligarchy where, under the protection of Heaven, all citizens are considered equals, regardless of their lineage. The downside of this progressive message is the erasure of ethnicity: the Slav can be a model citizen but he himself is made to demand complete assimilation into his adoptive society.

[43] I refer to the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia as applied by Martin Procházka in his essay "Shakespeare's Illyria". Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16, No. 1 (Spring 1986): 22–27.

Making the Visible Invisible

That Otello's ethnicity be made invisible is a wishful thinking that has had an interesting analogy in Italian criticism of the play, where Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa was to argue that the Moor was in fact a Signor Moro, and Benedetto Croce that color was simply a nonissue in the tragedy.[44] More importantly, we can find the same logic, pushed to its violent extreme in the subsequent political history of the Adriatic area. Otello and Elena lived happily ever after. Who knows if, during sleepless nights, his mind ever returned to that crucial moment in which his beloved wife had called him a "barbarian"? Admitting that their Genoa is a thinly veiled Venice, we can hazard that the offspring of this ethnically mixed family would have lived through endless political vicissitudes, passing through the war of independence, the annexion to Italy, World War I, after which victorious Italy was rewarded with Istria and Dalmatia, long lost by Venice to Austria. The aggressive policy of italianization of the Fascist regime, which attempted to eradicate Slavic ethnicity in those territories, was followed, when they were annexed to Yugoslavia at the end of the World War II, by a revanchist anti-Italian persecution which ended up affecting Fascists and non-Fascists alike.[45] Thousands were killed and hundreds of thousands of Italians had to abandon their towns, villages, and houses generating a massive Istrian and Dalmatian diaspora. Their cause was later sacrificed to the demands of Italian Realpolitik and culpably left to be exploited by rabidly anti-Slavic, neo-Fascist movements. This bloody history is explained among other factors by an essentialization of ethnicity that excludes recognition.

By inventing an Illyrian hero who assimilates into an Italian city, Federici's play foreshadows a model that has remained hegemonic in Italian culture to this day, where consent is more important than descent but equality requires ethnic homogeneity and minorities are more imagined than accepted in their real outlook. Two possible conclusions can be drawn here. The first is methodological: in postcolonial studies, there is a tendency to challenge Eurocentrism by constructing a Europe which is too monolithical, unitary, homogeneous, obliterating its profound internal contradictions, the ethnic and ideological fault lines that have traversed and torn it. The Illyrian scene outlined here presents many of the mechanisms—colonization,

[44] Bassi, *Le metamorfosi di Otello*, 165–168. See also Chap. 4.

[45] Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani brava gente?* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2009).

deterritorialization, orientalism, and mimicry—that are usually observed in non-Western scenarios. These concepts, on the other hand, can be of precious use even when we look postcolonially very close to home. This brings us to our second conclusion: along the borders of the Europe of nation-states, all the virtual children of Otello and Elena, ethnically and culturally mixed, were bound to choose one side of their identity at the expense of the other, which had to be suppressed. Statistics suggest that in Italy, almost a million young men and women were born to or raised by immigrant parents, and 12.6 % of babies born in the country have non-Italian parents. Unlike the main European countries and the USA, Italy does not apply any kind of Jus soli law, denying these individuals Italian citizenship and resulting in 42 % of them remaining aliens when they turn 18. Nothing demonstrates Italy's inability in thinking of itself as a multiethnic nation better than this legislative gap with ancient cultural roots. In the meantime, the world is facing now its biggest refugee crisis since World War II, and Italy is the first resort for hundreds of thousands of displaced and uprooted people, many of whom drown in the Mediterranean while desperately trying to reach the shores of Europe, in search for a better life—or just a life. Could a united Europe grant them—us—a different condition, without inventing new enemies, inside or outside the new borders?

CHAPTER 4

Shakespeare, Nation, and Race in Fascist Italy

In our effort to map out the cartography of Shakespearean raciologies, the Fascist era is a pivotal point. While a thorough cultural history of Shakespeare's reception in Italy remains to be written, the last few years have witnessed a new effort to uncover the racist components of post-unification Italian culture and literature.[1] This chapter looks at the small intersection of these two apparently unrelated phenomena in order to investigate the impact of the cultural politics of Fascism on Shakespeare, particularly on the criticism and performance of his "Italian" (Venetian and Roman) plays.

Escapes

"I can but thank God for the chance that he granted me … to evade more and more from 'time' to that higher sphere of Art unreachable by the stench and racket of the most barbarous or most foolish—I don't know which—century that the so-called human civilization has hitherto recorded."[2] Thus wrote Vincenzo Errante, professor of German literature and translator of Goethe and Rilke, in his dedicatory letter, dated 23 June 1947, to his verse translation of *The Merchant of Venice*, one of the

[1] Riccardo Bonavita, *Spettri dell'altro. Letteratura e razzismo nell'Italia contemporanea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).

[2] Vincenzo Errante, "Introduzione." In William Shakespeare, *Il Mercante di Venezia* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1948), ix–x.

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016
S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1_4

Shakespearean plays he had worked on in his hermitage in Riva del Garda since 1944. Riva del Garda is not very far from another small lakeside town, Salò, where the new Repubblica Sociale Italiana, the Nazi-Fascist regime that replaced the old order after the 1943 armistice, was founded. It is then a minor irony of history that the most famous fictional Jew of Venice was given a new Italian garb a few miles from the place where it was decided to deport and kill the real Jews of Venice and Italy.

Some 30 years earlier, one of those real Venetian Jews of Venice confidently integrated into Italian society, an amateur Shakespearean and devoted anglophile, authored a short essay to celebrate the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death. Praising his ability to soar above the superstitions of his times and criticizing the view that *The Merchant of Venice* was a celebration of a merciful interpretation of the law against a literalist, inflexible, sometimes inhuman *strictum jus*, he concluded that Shakespeare "created works of pure art and did not use the theatre as a means to disseminate a faith or to fight a political party or a nation; his genius is eminently eclectical and by virtue of this universal".[3] In that same year, as Balz Engler has shown, Shakespeare was fighting in the trenches of the Great War, with Germany and England both waving his banner on their respective sides, the former arguing that if the Bard was undeniably born on English soil, his countrymen had abdicated his values, now inherited by the German.[4] The amateur Shakespearean also served his country in the War: as an orphan, he was lucky enough not to have to fight at the front, and his name does not appear on the list of Italian Jews fallen for their homeland. However, such manifestation of patriotism did not help when the Fascist regime, bearer of a bellicose nationalism nurtured by the consequences of the war, officially decreed in 1938 that Jews were not Italian after all and belonged to an altogether different "race" (a notion corroborated by the Italian scientific establishment). The exclusion from the public sphere and the withdrawal of most civil rights were only the beginning, and it paved the way for the mass arrests and deportations of the last years of World War II. In 1944, while Errante was translating Shylock, the real Venetian Jew Gino Bassi was hiding under a fake Catholic identity in Rome, where

[3] Gino Bassi, "Nel terzo centenario della morte di Guglielmo Shakespeare," *Rassegna Nazionale*, 16 April 1916, 11.

[4] Balz Engler, "Shakespeare in the trenches." In *Shakespeare and Race*, edited by Catherine Alexander and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 107.

he had escaped toward the allies only to discover that his wife's family had all been rounded up there and deported to Auschwitz, never to return.[5]

This essay tries to sketch out a trajectory that analyzes the representation of Shakespeare from the moment in which, six years before the advent of Mussolini, the playwright was seen to embody a set of liberal, universalistic values (as in my grandfather's minor contribution), to the postwar episode of a distinguished professor who translates *The Merchant of Venice* as an escapist enterprise.

I, Caesar

In the intense historiographical debate of the last decades,[6] the relevance of racism as a component of Fascist ideology is one of the most controversial aspects, and in the larger arena of contemporary Italian politics this issue has become the real watershed between an unconditional condemnation of the totalitarian regime and a more lenient view that is inclined to redeem its achievements prior to the racist turn of the late 1930s, explained as an injudicious concession to Hitler. Had Mussolini not embraced anti-Semitism in 1938—say the apologists—we would all be praising land reclamations and punctual trains. This "self-exonerating vulgate",[7] which is the backbone of a more extensive "myth of the good Italian",[8] is not only blind to the racist ideology that sustained the colonial ventures of the regime in Africa and the Balkans (suffice it to mention the war in Ethiopia, where Italy used chemical weapons that killed over 250,000 Ethiopians) but also ignores the much older genealogy of Italian racial thinking.

Racializing Italy, far from being an act of compliance with Hitler, was a more complex and vaster cultural strategy aimed at overcoming, in Mussolini's own words, a national "inferiority complex". As Ruth Ben-Ghiat puts it, "among Italians, who were haunted by the specter of backwardness, the racial laws may have had a vindicatory as well as a unifying function".[9] Ironically, when the anti-Semitic laws were promulgated in 1938, a leading Italian newspaper ran the headline "Italian racism was born in 1919",

[5] Roberto, Bassi. *Skirmishes on Lake Ladoga,* translated by Jeremy Scott (New York: CPL Editions, 2014).

[6] Emilio Gentile, *Il fascismo in tre capitoli* (Bari: Laterza, 2004).

[7] Alberto Burgio, *Nel nome della Razza. Il razzismo nella storia d'Italia, 1870–1945* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), 10.

[8] David Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1994).

[9] Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 155.

trying to prove an old pedigree. But how old was it in fact? Two years after remarking that race "is 95 % a feeling",[10] Mussolini issued racial laws against Italian Jews, declaring that "we are not Camites, we are not Semites, we are not Camites, Semites, or Mongols. … We are therefore Aryans of the pure Mediterranean type."[11] Recalling such identification of the Italians as Mediterranean Aryans, Mauro Raspanti has remarked that Aryanism is a subterranean cultural myth that was politicized under fascism. Carlo Formichi, Indologist, vice president of the Italian Academy (whose work on Shakespeare shall be explored later), advocated in 1921 "a great revolution …, a return to the genius of the noble Aryan race, which is after all our race, but that has been overcome by the Semitic civilization and mentality".[12] Formichi was capitalizing on the work of Angelo De Gubernatis (1840–1913), the first graduate in the humanities in united Italy, orientalist, and extempore Shakespearean critic, whose theorization of Italian Aryanism was used also to draw a boundary between a supposedly Aryan Northern Italy and a Mediterranean Southern Italy, an argument supplanted by Mussolini's synthesis and revived today in the ideology of the Lega Nord party. In summary, the historical record indicates at once the persistence of certain racial myths from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, as well as their metamorphosis. Particularly during Fascism, Italians were hardly of one mind regarding the meaning of "race". As Valentina Pisanty has demonstrated in her analysis of *La difesa della Razza*, the mouthpiece of Italian racism, the approach to the subject was far from univocal, with continuous oscillations and conflicts between a purely biological racism of the Nazi type, and a more politically malleable 'esoteric' racism that conveniently located 'race' in the 'spirit' rather than in the body. This intellectual gambit countenanced the existence of a distinct Italian race while conceding that Italy had been an ethnic melting pot since time immemorial.[13]

The attitude toward the English is characteristic of the ideological and rhetorical somersaults that the ideologues had to perform to rationalize their political hostility, given the racial contiguity of the Perfidious Albion with Italy's German ally. The convenient explanans was the

[10] Emilio Ludwig, *Colloqui con Mussolini* (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1932), 73.

[11] Quoted in Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 157.

[12] Mauro Raspanti, "Il mito ariano nella cultura italiana fra Otto e Novecento," in Alberto Burgio, *Nel nome della Razza. Il razzismo nella storia d'Italia, 1870–1945* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), 84.

[13] Valentina Pisanty, *La difesa della razza. Antologia 1938–1943* (Milano: Bompiani, 2006).

"psychical atavism of the English race", which was manifest in the superiority complex of the British and in their hypocritical condemnation of Italian colonialism and racism.[14] In the last analysis, the British were secretly controlled by the Jews, in a logical alliance between capitalistic religions, Judaism and Calvinism. The Jews were also behind communism, but there was no need to accentuate their contribution to Soviet brutality, since the Slavic races were barbarians only thinly covered by a veneer of civilization. *La Difesa della Razza* eventually dissolved when the biological racists accused the esoteric racists of having succumbed to—what else?—the Anglo-Judeo-Masonic conspiracy.[15]

As for the Italians, they formed a 'Roman-Italic race', a subset of Aryans at whose core was the 'progeny of Rome' that remained the main point of reference for all racists.[16] This was the privileged meeting point between Shakespeare and Mussolini, since both somehow appropriated and gave contemporary readings of the history and mythology of classical Rome. The values of power and discipline, the military prowess, the imperial enterprise, the transition from republic to dictatorship in times of crisis, the outstretched saluting arm, and the title of *dux*—they all meant for Mussolini the strong identification with a great animating myth that, in a cyclical vision of time, irradiated energy across the epochs.[17] Looking at ancient Rome, said Mussolini, "is not nostalgic contemplation, but hard preparation for the future",[18] as amply demonstrated by the valorization of the archaeological vestiges of the capital and the construction of new monuments in a grandiose imperial style, including that whole Esposizione Universale Roma (EUR) complex where Julia Taymor appropriately set her filmic version of *Titus Andronicus*. In this pervasive Roman cult, Mussolini had a special predilection for Julius Caesar ("A great school for rulers", he declared to his interviewer Emil Ludwig, while leafing through a French edition of Shakespeare's play[19]), who "united in him the will of the warrior and the ingenuity of the wise".[20] Jane Dunnet reminds us that there were dissonant voices in this "veritable Caesarian

[14] Pisanty, *La difesa della razza*, 193.

[15] *La difesa della razza*, 59.

[16] *La difesa della razza*, 226.

[17] Giovanni Belardelli, *Il Ventennio degli intellettuali. Cultura, politica, ideologia nell'Italia fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 2005), 211.

[18] Andrea Giardina and André Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma. Da Carlo Magno a Mussolini* (Bari: Laterza, 2000), 219.

[19] Ludwig, *Colloqui con Mussolini*, 190.

[20] Giardina and Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma*, 247.

mania", and quotes the example of the young anti-Fascist critic Piero Treves, who wrote in 1934:

> Today's exaltation of Caesar celebrates in him the victor, the founder of an autocratic Empire, "the man of the Rubicon." But the word that is repeated most often is, alas, equivocal … : [the word is] revolution. Caesar, crossing the Rubicon illegally, setting himself against Rome and the Senate, accomplished a revolutionary action: he destroyed with arms a state that was republican and representative; in its place he put another that was reconciliatory and dictatorial: "the strong state," as it is generally referred to. This is the thesis that is now in fashion.[21]

The thinly veiled allusion to Mussolini's illegal takeover was clear enough. Shortly after, the journal was shut down, most of its contributors arrested, and the Race laws of 1938 also pushed Treves into exile in England. In the meantime, Mussolini even decided to "imitate" Shakespeare and commissioned to the popular playwright Giovacchino Forzano a play devoted to Caesar that was performed abroad under the names of both authors.[22] Jane Dunnet aptly describes the play "hagiographic to the point of being grotesque" and Forzano's attitude to the Duce as an "exercise in sycophancy", as this letter testifies:

> Excellency, I have been studying your *Caesar* for the past two days and I feel I must let you know the extent of my admiration. Yours is a superb synopsis, on account both of its clarity and its effectiveness. In but a few typewritten pages you have carved a series of bas-reliefs which, once they are set in motion, will bestow upon the world the entire view of a most glorious world.[23]

The play was just a parade of Mussolini's triumphs disguised under Caesar's military and literary achievements. Unsurprisingly, it enjoyed great success when it premiered in 1939, and only the outbreak of the war thwarted the plans for a filmic version.[24]

[21] Quoted in Jane Dunnet, "The Rhetoric of Romanità: Representations of Caesar in Fascist Theatre", in *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, edited by Maria Wyke (Oxford, Blackwell, 2006), 250–251.

[22] Giovacchino Forzano, *Mussolini autore drammatico. Con facsimili di autografi inediti. Campo di maggio—Villafranca—Cesare* (Firenze: Barbera, 1954).

[23] Dunnet, "The Rhetoric of Romanità", 257.

[24] "The Rhetoric of Romanità", 257–258.

Guglielmo from Sondrio

In 1936, a sensational experiment took place in Venice. Luigi Bellotti, "the best known Italian medium", shared with a reporter from *La Stampa della Sera* an astonishing discovery.

> "Shakespeare communicated with me psychographically, talking about his life, revealing a secret that has been ignored for four centuries: his Italianness […] his real name was Crollalanza, from the Valtellina region, born near Sondrio […] persecuted by the inquisitors, had already changed his name in Italy, publishing books of poetry under the pseudonym Michelagnelo [sic] Florio."[25]

The communication had taken place through the sudden materialization of a parchment scroll inside a special casket, and this source of information was indeed privileged since the same Bellotti had used it to receive from "the entity that was once Beethoven" a juvenile song of his composition that was donated to Mussolini and authenticated by the Museum of the Philharmonic Academy of Rome. In 1943, Luigi Bellotti made the findings of his paranormal experiment popular by way of a short pamphlet titled "L'italianità di Shakespeare. Guglielmo Crollalanza grande genio italiano" ("The Italianness of Shakespeare. Guglielmo Crollalanza, great Italian genius"), a conveniently short entry to be used by "encyclopedias, dictionaries, anthologies, general histories, archives, universities, libraries, academies, etc."[26] Nobody remembers Luigi Bellotti nowadays, and his entry rests deservedly on the crowded shelf of the Shakespeare-was-not-himself industry, but his supernatural appropriation of Shakespeare had more sophisticated counterparts in the official culture of Fascist Italy. We are going to explore some of these texts after a necessary reference to Benedetto Croce, the most authoritative Italian contribution to Shakespeare studies and the benchmark of all future interpretations in the first half of the century.

William (or rather Guglielmo, given the tradition of Italianizing foreign names) Shakespeare occupied a marginal position in Italian culture, where England was not a main cultural point of reference comparable

[25] G.[?]O.G.[?], "Sensazionale esperimento medianico a Venezia," *La Stampa della Sera*, 8 April 1936.

[26] Luigi Bellotti, *L'italianità di Shakespeare. Guglielmo Crollalanza grande genio italiano* (Venezia: Opera D.N. Sezione Lettere, 1943).

to France or Germany. In undertaking the major effort of a new translation of Shakespeare's complete works, Alessandro Muccioli complained in 1922 that "the diffusion of the great English poet among us is still in a primordial state" adding that he had found his works lying untouched on the shelves of the library of a major Italian city.[27] Mario Praz reiterated in 1938 that Italians knew Shakespeare "from the stage adaptations of few plays […] or from the French and Italian translations",[28] making clear that he thought very little of any practice other than *reading* him in the original (in our second epigraph, we see Mussolini drawing inspiration from a French *Julius Caesar*). This leads in the direction of a constellation of minor Shakespeare scholars who were writing in the age of the great modernist criticism of T.S. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis,[29] secondary figures whose importance for an understanding of twentieth-century culture is nevertheless underscored by De Graef et al.:

> [R]esearch into common or garden literary criticism pledging allegiance (often implicitly) to fascism seems to lead one into a dreary wasteland of trivial mediocrity. Yet it is precisely this apparently unsurprising textscape that the study of fascist aesthetics must also explore, for it is through the compulsive reproduction of the components of fascist belief *as* banalities that fascism summons the People whose palingenesis as a Nation it claims to represent.[30]

Benedetto Croce, the leading Italian intellectual, had published *Shakespeare, Ariosto and Corneille* in 1920. His publisher Laterza acknowledged a renewed attention paid to Shakespeare in schools by excerpting the chapter on the English playwright for a monographic volume that came out in 1925, the year Croce broke his association with Giovanni Gentile, now the official philosopher of fascism, and signed the Manifesto of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals. Croce based his reading of Shakespeare on his long-established and influential aesthetic theory of the autonomy of

[27] Alessandro Muccioli, *Guglielmo Shakespeare nella vita e nelle opere* (Firenze: Battistelli, 1922), 178.

[28] Mario Praz, *Caleidoscopio Shakespeariano* (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1969), 135.

[29] Richard Halpern, *Shakespeare Among the Moderns* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[30] Ortwin De Graef, Dirk De Geest, and Eveline Vanfraussen, "Fascist politics and literary criticism," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Vol. 9: Twentieth-Century Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, edited by Christa Knellwolf and Christopher Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 76.

poetry defined as pure "intuition" devoid of any moral and intellectual—let alone 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."[31] At the receiving end of his criticism were German critics, and his specific targets were the 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 of all kinds. The truth of the matter was that Shakespeare neither agrees nor disagrees with "external reality" because he seeks to "create his own spiritual reality".[32] It was a further disgrace that Shakespeare had been elevated to the status of representative of Germanic poetry in contrast with Latin poetry, an operation championed by German critics, enthusiastically adopted by English minds such as Coleridge and Hazlitt, and endorsed even by French and Italian critics who had then quickly changed their mind during the Great War. And although Croce emphasized that Shakespeare had been considerably influenced by the Italian Renaissance, he forcefully maintained that

> poetry originates only from itself and not from the outside, from nation, race, or something else … therefore the divisions and contradictions between Germanic and Latin poetry and similar dyads shaped by material criteria has no foundation. Shakespeare cannot be a Germanic poet for the simple reason that he, as a poet, is nothing but a poet, and does not obey to his people's laws, to *lex salica, wisigothica, langobardica, anglica* or some other *barbarorum*—and not even to *romana*—but to the only and universally human *lex poetica*.[33]

States of Exception

Apolitical poetry versus racialized nationalism—the critics that we are going to discuss next could not have disagreed more with Croce. The names of Carlo Formichi and Piero Rebora are hardly remembered in Italian literary studies, let alone in Shakespearean criticism, but they were prominent intellectuals in an academic milieu where university professors

[31] Benedetto Croce, *Shakespeare* (Bari: Laterza, 1925), 25.
[32] Croce, *Shakespeare*, 163.
[33] *Shakespeare*, 167–168.

were requested to sign an oath of allegiance to the Fascist Party and only 12 out of 1250 refused.[34] We have already encountered Formichi as an advocate of Aryanism, and his racial preoccupations come up early in his profile *Guglielmo Shakespeare*, published in 1928. The greatest English poet combined within himself two racial elements: a Celtic "vivacity of imagination" and a Saxon "profound sense of reality". Add to this another essential component: "[N]inety-nine percent of the great men are born of superior women … For Shakespeare … even the rogues cannot imagine anything more venerable than the mother."[35] Gathering great quotes on mothers from the plays, Formichi conveniently omitted references to Gertrude and Lady Macbeth, in the selective blindness that characterizes all ideological readings of Shakespeare. But the cornerstone of Formichi's theory was that "Romanness appeared to Shakespeare the most wonderful product of history, he exalted it every time he could, and desired it as a model for his country, whose high destinies were coming of age precisely in those times. For Shakespeare, everything that is virile, righteous, civil and noble is expressed in the epithet of *Roman*."[36] In this case, the critic was so thorough and zealous that he specified that the only "superficial critique" of Rome is put by Shakespeare in the mouth of the "idiot and braggart" Cloten in *Cymbeline*, and even rectified Ben Jonson's famous assessment of Shakespeare's "small Latin and lesser Greek" by suggesting that the playwright in fact had a lot more of the former and even less of the latter.

The next step was a theory of the state that resonates with the "state of exception" elaborated by Carl Schmitt in that decade. According to Formichi, certain historical conditions of crisis prompt citizens to express their patriotism; after 1588, the Elizabethan state found itself needing to defeat its enemies, increase its public wealth, consolidate its position in the world, hence the "ineluctable necessity to limit the freedom of its citizens, demand and maintain the utmost public order and eliminate elements of discord".[37] Scratch Elizabeth and you will find Mussolini: *crisis* is a key word here, because Fascism conceived itself as the salvific force

[34] Giorgio Boatti, *Preferirei di no. Le storie dei dodici professori che si opposero a Mussolini* (Torino: Einaudi, 2001).

[35] Carlo Formichi, *Guglielmo Shakespeare* (Roma: Formiggini, 1928), 9–10.

[36] Formichi, *Guglielmo Shakespeare*, 14.

[37] *Guglielmo Shakespeare*, 44.

that, even at the price of sacrifices, would redeem a nation on the verge of catastrophe:

> When you read Shakespeare's plays, you don't receive the impression of tyrannical times, but rather of a boundless freedom of thought and speech. Yet it happens that for somebody freedom means only pouring scorn on their own government and there are no boundless fields where imagination and thought can roam with not a shade of the barriers imposed by political contingencies. Shakespeare immediately looked at worldly matters *sub specie aeternitatis*, he intuited the higher reasons that demanded of the State an iron fist policy, saw in them the greatness and glory of the British nation, and was above all a man of order, implacable scourger of Communist subversive theories, of tribunitial rhetoric, of the ambitious goals of false patriots who sow discord for personal ends behind the mask of the defense of freedom.[38]

Croce's theory of transcendental art is here married to an implacable raison d'état and to an unambiguous classism. Shakespeare loved the customs and simple life of the good, silent, hardworking people as much as he hated the unruly masses that aspired to power; he abhorred "their ignorance, the stench of their own filth, their vandalic instincts, their mad bestiality". Formichi highlights the rebellion of Jack Cade in *2 Henry VI* as Shakespeare's most explicit indictment of communism, along with Antonio's view in *The Tempest* that the utopian, egalitarian commonwealth envisioned by Gonzalo would be ruled by "whores and knaves". By contrast, the Italian critic champions Julius Caesar and Coriolanus as representatives of his political principles, and to his credit, he does not finesse the elements that seem to contradict his theories, especially the stature of Brutus, the republican hero who was a constant thorn on the Fascist side. Formichi's explanation is that Shakespeare had made of Brutus the example of the tragedy of political idealism, inconclusive, conducive to crime, and harbinger of a worse tyranny.

Piero Rebora was an English professor whose most memorable achievements are the compilation of the *Cassell's Italian–English/English–Italian Dictionary* and the dismissal of the future Nobel laureate Eugenio Montale from the prestigious literary institution of the Gabinetto Viesseux for his insufficient Fascist loyalty. The noteworthy aspect of Rebora's book titled *Civiltà italiana e civiltà inglese* (1936) is that it was conceived as a series of lectures to be delivered in England for an English audience.

[38] *Guglielmo Shakespeare*, 45–46.

Unlike Formichi's uncomplicated propaganda, this was a serious intellectual attempt at cultural rapprochement between nations by an Italian anglophile. His explicit intent was to debunk some "fallacious myths" about Italy (such as the dark amorality and corruption of the Italian Renaissance) in the eyes of the British, even though "the art of misunderstanding between great nations, that is great personalities makers of civilizations, is—within certain limits—a fatal necessity of struggle". By discussing writers and episodes of the Cinquecento, Rebora declared he was operating in the live present.[39] The first essay of the collection was devoted to "Shakespeare and Caesarism" and analyzed the dichotomy between Caesar and Brutus, as fundamental as that between good and evil, God and Satan. With all its erudite quotes and philological acumen, the essay soon becomes a straightforward national apology: "It is no rhetorical amplification that Italy has never been able to appease itself in a narrowly peninsular life, closed and limited to its economical matters, in pursuing its material welfare."[40] The paradox was that Italy's "fanatically cosmopolitan" attitude had ended up weakening its national identity, a condition that called for a strong antidote:

> Those who wonder at such propensity of the Italian people to affirm continuously the principle of authority, to exalt a leader [DUCE], almost to deify a heroic chief, and who rant about despotism and even of Oriental vestiges, of a dark Asian spirit in our psyche and in our political customs, seem to forget, along with the fundamental spirituality of the Italian people, the tragic reality of our history as a martyr people, bestower of civilization but threatened by the violence of aggressive and physically strong peoples always in ambush.[41]

Rebora polemicized against Croce's belief in a nonpolitical Shakespeare: "That he was not a statesman and a politician, we have just said it; but the national ideal he felt it indeed, intense, vigorous, complete; and this also is a political ideal that sustains and informs the life of a man."[42] Having set this general principle, the Italian critic attacked the notion that Shakespeare had belittled the figure of the greatest Roman hero and

[39] Piero Rebora, *Civiltà italiana e civiltà inglese. Studi e ricerche* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1936), xi.

[40] Rebora, *Civiltà italiana*, 7–8.

[41] *Civiltà italiana*, 8.

[42] *Civiltà italiana*, 27.

had expressed his Republican sympathies through Brutus: "Shakespeare is politically 'Caesarean' certain of the greatness of that genius that was Caesar [...] Nobody more than Shakespeare was repelled by the humanistic and republican exaltation of regicide."[43] The main obstacle to this reading, the early elimination of the eponymous character from the play, was itself eliminated with a rhetorical stratagem: "Caesar as a politician and military hero is out of the question for Shakespeare, but he was not poetically interesting for him", since the real protagonist of the play was neither Brutus nor Caesar but "the spirit of Caesar". Like Dante before him and Mussolini after him, Shakespeare had understood that Caesar, as every great personality, is indeed a frail and mortal man but his ideals are superior and transcend his worldly existence. As for the fact that Shakespeare had mocked Caesar's boastful manner in his most famous proclamation of victory, Rebora admitted the British's preference for sober speech: "Caesar should have more modestly telegraphed: 'we came, we saw, we overcame'. The live and sincere affirmation of the Roman personality sounds to English ears, all resonant with Biblical echoes and impersonal discipline, as a revelation of unbearable 'egotism'."[44]

Live Theaters

If the Germans loved Shakespeare, the Nazis tried to exploit Shylock, who was a constant, if still problematic, presence on stage in the years of the persecution of the Jews.[45] We might have expected something similar in Italy, with two plays such as *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* that would have been ideal dramatic supports for the African campaigns of 1935–1936 and the anti-Semitic laws of 1938. Indeed, *La difesa della Razza* published a "Racist Interpretation of *Othello*", whose irony is that, while insisting that the play dispensed an unmistakable warning against miscegenation, it tried to demonstrate—quite correctly—that the racist message was not to be credited to Shakespeare the Englishman, being a trademark of the purely Italian Giraldi Cinzio.[46] But an overview of the criticism and stagings of these plays during Fascism evinces neither a particular interest for

[43] Rebora, *Civiltà italiana*, 31.

[44] *Civiltà italiana*, 42.

[45] John Gross, *Shylock: Four Hundred Years in the Life of a Legend* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992), 293–298.

[46] L.[?]D.[?] "Un'interpretazione razzista dell'*Otello*," *La difesa della razza* 3, no. 24, 20 October 1940.

them nor a substantial discontinuity with the past. An analysis of three Shakespearean productions of the 1930s may lend a partial explanation to this lack of emphasis and perhaps attest to the extent to which the critical discourse that we have sketched was reflected in the theater, or more accurately, outside of it.

Julius Caesar was staged in Rome in 1935, some 30 years after the previous Italian production. The *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro*, the institution created by the regime to organize and discipline the leisure activities of the masses, chose as the backdrop for this grandiose staging the Basilica of Maxentius, which in the words of a contemporary reviewer was "the site that maintains more than any other the monumental signs of the ancient imperial greatness".[47] The state censor Leopoldo Zurlo was concerned about the prominence given to the tyrannicide and the central role of Brutus, but the influential undersecretary for press and propaganda Galeazzo Ciano cleared the performance.[48]

A large and varied audience of ministers, undersecretaries, various *gerarchi*, foreign ambassadors as well as ordinary people treated to inexpensive tickets admired a show whose centerpieces were the mass scenes with hundreds of extras. The other focus of the reviews, that had very little to say about the actors, were once again the political implications of the play. Along the lines of Formichi and Rebora, journalists were eager to discredit the republican reading attributed to Victor Hugo and to Giuseppe Mazzini. Against "the champion of abstract freedom and uncompromising republican" Brutus, who fails to recognize that "the Roman republic is dead and putrefied", the supreme intuition of Shakespeare was to eliminate physically Caesar in the middle of the play in order to represent "the gloriously invincible immanence of [his] spirit, [...] that invests the whole tragedy with a powerful and suggestive aura". So at the end of the play, "the effect is one and only: the soul of the spectator is in awe of the founder of the Roman empire".[49] Two years later, an American director took this interpretation to its logical conclusion: in Orson Welles, New York production of *Julius Caesar*, the Roman soldiers were dressed in brown shirts.[50]

[47] "*Giulio Cesare* di Shakespeare alla Basilica di Massenzio," Gazzetta del Popolo, 2 August 1935.

[48] Dunnet, "The Rhetoric of Romanità", 252.

[49] Osvaldo Gibertini, "*Giulio Cesare* alla Basilica di Massenzio," *La Tribuna*, 3 August 1935.

[50] Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare. A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (London: Vintage, 1991), 271.

The only major productions of the two Venetian plays under Fascism also took place outside the theater, and in their "natural" setting, Venice. The *Othello* staged at the Palazzo Ducale in 1933 by Pietro Scharoff and the famous outdoor production of *The Merchant of Venice* by Max Reinhardt in 1934, in the square of San Trovaso, have both gone on record for the wealth and flamboyance of their scenographies. A leitmotif of the reviews is that the setting overshadowed the acting and the drama. As a witness to the *Merchant* put it: "The hero, the centre, the heart and essence of the performance was–Venice. Not Shylock, but Venice. That ever-singing, ever-buzzing Venice. A city which rejoiced in the joy of life, its pleasure, delight and exuberance. Which felt like the capital and centre of the world."[51] Admittedly, the tone of Reinhardt's production, which had been on stage since 1905, did not depend much on the contingencies of Italian politics and as early as 1921 a German Jewish commentator had remarked that "the Venetian joy of living is the dominant note of the performance; Jewish suffering is only a dissonant note".[52] As for the *Othello* directed by Scharoff, a reviewer pointed out that the splendid courtyard of the *Palazzo Ducale* was "the true protagonist, ravishing and despotic" and all the scenographic devices that were then supposed to carry the spectators to Cyprus "failed to break the spell to which the crowd loved to feel delightfully subdued" and the grandiose and majestic scenery "did not only humble the characters, but also subjugated the tragedy".[53] Today's critics seem to strike the same note, and Erika Fischer-Lichte is even willing to draw broader conclusions about the power of theater to overcome politics: "Reinhardt's method of casting Venice as the protagonist and centre of the performance worked as a most effective means of reducing and subduing its referentiality and, instead, foregrounding and strengthening its performativity."[54] But what referentiality and performativity are here alluded to?

It is interesting to remark that a revaluation of the Renaissance artistic legacy was another milestone of Fascist cultural politics. Rebora's effort to dispel negative myths about Machiavelli and Lucrezia Borgia had far more visible analogies in the widespread politics of restoration of the early

[51] John L. Styan, *Max Reinhardt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), xx.

[52] Siegfried Jacobsohn, cit. in Styan, *Max Reinhardt*, 62.

[53] Cit. in Anna Busi, *Otello in Italia (1777–1972)* (Bari: Adriatica, 1973), 262–263.

[54] Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Theatre as Festive Play: Max Reinhardt's Production of *The Merchant of Venice*," in *Venetian Views, Venetian Blinds. English Fantasies of Venice*, edited by Manfred Pfister and Barbara Schaff (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 172.

modern architectural and artistic patrimony of cities such as Ferrara and Verona,[55] or in the cinematic celebration of Renaissance Venice as the setting of historical films where torrid tales of love and conspiracy functioned as thinly veiled contemporary political allegories.[56] Curiously enough, Shakespeare did not participate in this Venetian vogue: after a spate of *Othellos* (and a single *Merchant*) in the first two decades of the century, Shakespeare vanished from Italian screens. So the sumptuous theatrical celebration of Venetian or Roman cityscapes was hardly nonreferential, and even if devoid of overt political intentions (Reinhardt and Scharoff were both foreign directors), it chimed well with the exaltation of the state and of the glories of Italian history championed by the Fascist. A French reviewer, pointing out that the mission of the Biennale (the international festival in which Reinhardt's production was presented) was to promote amity among the peoples, wryly observed that the Italian reason of state was so firm that any ideal of an "international art" was impossible at the present and in this edition everyone was simply concerned with creating "beautiful shows".[57]

Continuities

Two tentative conclusions can be offered here. The first is that Shakespearean criticism of the Fascist period was pervaded by a self-conscious, militant "presentism",[58] the enrollment of Shakespeare for current political purposes. The celebration of Shakespeare's Italian characters and plots was functional to the creation of ethnic and national pride, even though, as in the case of *Julius Caesar*, some characters and plots proved recalcitrant to Fascist interpretations, requiring elaborate and ultimately unconvincing reading strategies. Was there any anti-Fascist criticism? Mario Praz, the greatest Italian Anglicist of the century, wrote in 1938 an essay called "Come Shakespeare è letto in Italia" ("How Shakespeare is read in Italy").[59] There he criticized Croce for his abstract and unproductive

[55] Ilaria Pavan, *Il podestà ebreo. La storia di Renzo Ravenna tra fascismo e leggi razziali* (Bari: Laterza, 2006). For Verona and the Shakespearean connection, see Chap. 8.

[56] Luca Giuliani, *Venezia nel cinema italiano. Allegorie storiche a cavallo degli anni Quaranta* (Udine: Campanotto, 2003).

[57] Lucien Dubech, "*Le Marchand de Venise* à Venise," Newspaper clipping, Biblioteca Casa Goldoni, Venezia, 1936.

[58] Robin Headlam Wells, "Historicism and "Presentism" in Early Modern Studies," *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 29, no. 1 (2000), 37–60.

[59] Reprinted in Praz, *Caleidoscopio Shakespeariano*.

reading of Shakespeare and offered an impeccable philological reading of several plays to demonstrate how current Italian translations had mangled the originals. There was nothing overtly political in his intervention, but his professional correctness could be read as a response to the many ideological misreadings and appropriations of Shakespeare.

The second conclusion has to do with the substantial continuity in the Italian interpretation of Shakespeare's ethnicities. In Chap. 3, I have argued that the invention of a Slavic Othello foreshadows a model where consent is more important than descent but equality requires ethnic homogeneity and minorities are more imagined than accepted in their real outlook. A few decades later, another minor librettist, Giorgio Tomaso Cimino, rewrote *The Merchant of Venice* as a melodrama, imagining that Shylock is banished from Venice with all the Jews, with the chorus singing "È di Shylock—l'empia tribù: / Vada in esilio—né torni più" (Shylock's wicked tribe / be sent in exile never to return).[60] So while only the most naive wishful thinking or bad faith can deny the racism of Mussolini and the Fascist regime, one has to analyze a more widespread Italian "allergy" to ethnic and religious difference that one can find even in Croce and Gramsci. The liberal Croce, who acknowledged that "Shakespeare (and the same is to be said of each individual play) had a history, but he no longer has it … because what has happened after him, and still happens today, is someone else's history, our history and no longer his",[61] responded to World War II and the devastation of Europe with a celebrated essay titled "Why We Cannot Help Calling Ourselves Christian".[62]

The last word goes to two old acquaintances. Piero Rebora eventually devoted a whole volume to Shakespeare, where he argued, against Croce, that the playwright was not a "pure artist" because no pure art could be so vast as to fulfill the function of all great tragedy, that of "building a homogeneity of customs and moral criteria, an organic sense of national and social community", something Shakespeare had done "in his glorious Englishness" by perform[ing] a miraculously real synthesis of two fruitful germs of Western civilization: Roman and German spirituality".[63] This was

[60] Giorgio Tomaso Cimino, *Il Mercante di Venezia. Melodramma in 4 atti da Shakespeare* (Milano: Ricordi, 1878).

[61] Croce, *Shakespeare*, 169.

[62] Benedetto Croce, *My Philosophy: And Other Essays on the Moral and Political Problems of Our Time*, translated by E. F. Carritt (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1949), 37–50.

[63] Piero Rebora, *Shakespeare. La vita, l'opera, il messaggio* (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1947), 11.

published two years after the war, and Rebora, one of the countless university professors who smoothly transitioned into the new republican order, must have been aware of what had been recently accomplished in Europe in the name of national homogeneity and of Roman and German spirituality.

And what about Giovacchino Forzano, the man who had written to Mussolini to "let [him] know the extent of [his] admiration"? The three plays on which they collaborated were published in 1954, with a prolix preface by Forzano. There he reminisced about the numerous important politicians he had met in his lifetime, from Lenin to Ribbentrop, and his first encounter with Mussolini, whom he considered challenging to a duel for the harsh words with which the then young socialist militant had attacked a satirical play by Forzano during a party congress. A lengthy description of their collaboration and correspondence ensued, showing Forzano in very cordial terms with the Duce and standing up to him on several occasions. In particular, we learn that at the onset of the anti-Semitic campaign Forzano wrote a comedy where he put "all the best and most patriotic lines in the mouth of a Jew".[64] When the play was vetoed by the censors, Forzano sent it to Mussolini, who asked him about that exemplary Jewish character and reminded the author that many Jews were anti-Fascist. In this very jovial conversation, Forzano replied that there were proportionately more Christian anti-Fascists, and Mussolini decided to settle the matter by asking Forzano to leave three quarters of the lines to the Jew and give one quarter to a Christian character. Mussolini, Forzano assures us, hated the German more than the Jews. His memoirs end on the note that his proximity to the Duce gave him knowledge of many war secrets, allowing him "to save many people and many things".[65] The court poet, indeed, had been a Good Samaritan; the Fascist bard had always been anti-Fascist at heart. The cultural continuities between the Fascist and the long post-Fascist era have no doubt contributed to the "myth of the good Italian".[66]

[64] Forzano, *Mussolini autore drammatico*, xl.

[65] *Mussolini autore drammatico*, xlii.

[66] On the Italian as "willing executioners" of the Jews and on the self-exculpatory narrative that has characterized the transition from Fascism to the postwar era, see Simon Levis Sullam, *I carnefici italiani. Scene dal genocidio degli ebrei* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2015).

PART II

Politics

CHAPTER 5

Neocon and Theoprog: The New Machiavellian Moment

The Italian language possesses no less than three different adjectives derived from the name of Niccolò Machiavelli. If *machiavelliano* means neutrally "of or relating to Niccolò Machiavelli" (as in the more generic definition of the English Machiavellian), *machiavellico* (like its more antiquated equivalent *machiavellesco*) refers specifically to the first and more common definition associated to Machiavellian: "cunning, scheming, and unscrupulous, esp. in politics or in advancing one's career".[1] This linguistic doubling (duplicity one is tempted to call it) has a long tradition, and traces of this semantic tension can be found both in ancient sources ("I feare me you will be politick wyth Machavel" writes Thomas Lodge in his reply to *Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse*) and in modern culture ("The only way, for me to come back, is by Makaveli. That's it!" sings the poet and rapper Tupac Shakur).[2] The quote from Thomas Lodge shows how, as soon as his works began to circulate in England, the term "politic", which for Machiavelli meant "in conformity with sound rules of statecraft", acquired the sinister connotation of "scheming, crafty".[3] On the other hand, as Alessandra Petrina has observed in her history of the circulation

[1] *Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana. Il Conciso* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 1998), 879.

[2] Thomas Lodge, A *Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse* (London 1579), http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/lodge.html, accessed 3 September 2015.

[3] Mario Praz, "The Politic Brain: Machiavelli and the Elizabethans" (1928). In *The Flaming Heart. Essays on Crashaw, Machiavelli and Other Studies in the Relations between Italian and English Literature from Chaucer to T.S. Eliot* (Gloucester MA: Peter Smith, 1966), 104.

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016

S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1_5

of Machiavelli's texts in early modern England and Scotland, we owe to nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics the fundamental misreading of the "Tudor Machiavel" and its metamorphosis from "the (admittedly controversial) political writer" into "a pantomime demon who is easily attributed responsibility for all kinds of wrongdoing on the part of fallible and easily led rulers".[4] In scholarly circles, Carlo Ginzburg observes, "in the last decades the stereotypical negative image of Machiavelli has been turned into its opposite, especially in English speaking countries, … the model of the virtuous citizen pointing to contemporary democracies the importance of Republican values".[5] Victoria Kahn complicates the picture by suggesting that "[t]he most insightful readers of Machiavelli in the Renaissance are those who, like Milton, do not simply reject the rhetorical Machiavel for Machiavelli the republican, or the diabolical Machiavel for the theorist of mixed government, but rather see the inseparability of these two aspects of Machiavelli's thought".[6] However, as Adriano Sofri has eloquently and wittily demonstrated, appropriations of Machiavelli in other domains where power relations are at stake continue to be ubiquitous.[7] Whether they are straightforward applications to contemporary politics, as in Michael A. Leeden's *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership: Why Machiavelli's Iron Rules Are as Timely and Important Today as Five Centuries Ago*, or testaments of the shift of relevance to the world of finance as in Ian Demick's *The Modern Machiavelli: The Seven Principles of Power in Business* or Simon Ramo's *Tennis By Machiavelli*, down to a test that measures "how Machiavellian you are" (no doubt in the sense of *machiavellico* rather than *machiavelliano*), we continue to be fascinated by the prospect of learning from the Florentine *segretario*.[8]

[4] Alessandra Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles: Two Early Modern Translations of The Prince* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), xi–xii. For Machiavelli on stage see Michael J. Redmond, *Shakespeare, Politics, and Italy. Intertextuality on the Jacobean Stage* (Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 81–89.

[5] Carlo Ginzburg, "Machiavelli, l'eccezione e la regola. Linee di una ricerca in corso", *Quaderni storici*, XXXVIII, no. 1 (2003), 195–213.

[6] Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric From the Counter-Reformation to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 12.

[7] Adriano Sofri, *Machiavelli, Tupac, e la Principessa* (Palermo: Sellerio, 2013). See also John M. Najemy, "Introduction." In *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

[8] Michael A. Leeden, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership: Why Machiavelli's Iron Rules Are as Timely and Important Today as Five Centuries Ago* (New York: Truman Talley Books/ St. Martin's Press, 1999); Ian Demack, *The Modern Machiavelli: The Seven Principles of Power in*

A New Machiavellian Moment

The first decade of the new millennium marked a new Machiavellian moment. I borrow the title of J.A.G. Pocock's classic study of Florentine political thought to indicate the intensity with which, in the global turmoil of the early 2000s, a major role was attributed to the influence of the Renaissance political theorist on contemporary US policy-makers.[9] The argument, disseminated in countless books, essays, editorials, and online forums, was so insistent that it stopped short of suggesting that some time in the sixteenth century the author of *The Prince* had ordered the invasion of Iraq. Sofri aptly glosses: "In the United States Machiavelli is a hit [*va fortissimo*] and is often treated as if he were alive and was a liberal or neocon opinion maker; more often a neocon, unfortunately."[10]

A new Machiavellian moment can also be observed in Shakespearean criticism. As Hugh Grady reminds us, "[o]ne of the most venerable but discontinuous traditions of Shakespeare studies has been the view that Machiavellian ideas were a prime ingredient in the Elizabethan theatre, particularly for Marlowe and Shakespeare, and this is a point of view which has been revived in recent years".[11] If the early studies on the subject were mainly concerned with the representation of pseudo-Machiavellianism in Elizabethan literature, a number of Shakespeare scholars have recently returned to Machiavelli, proving to be more sophisticated—if less consequential—readers than White House advisors.[12] Alessandra Petrina, Michael J. Redmond, and Viktoria Kahn, in particular, have contributed important studies to the analysis of the actual circulation of Machiavelli texts in Britain.[13]

Business (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2002); Simon Ramo, *Tennis By Machiavelli* (New York: New American Library, 1985). The Machiavellian test can be found at: https://www.blogthings.com/howmachiavellianareyouquiz/, accessed 3 September 2015.

[9] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[10] Sofri, *Machiavelli*, 337.

[11] Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne. Power and Subjectivity From Richard II to Hamlet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 43.

[12] Edward Meyer, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama* (Weimar: Literarhistorische Forschungen, 1897); Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli. A Changing Interpretation 1500–1700* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964); Praz, "The Politic Brain", 90–145; Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles*.

[13] Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles*; Redmond, *Shakespeare, Politics, and Italy*; Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*.

The aim of this chapter is to chart the different theoretical and ideological orientations of this new wave of studies, using as a practical frame of reference a fourfold articulation of the relationship between Shakespeare and politics.

First, this relationship may be seen as a contradiction in terms by those who, maintaining a circumscribed notion of politics and an unconditional belief in a transcendental Shakespeare, consider any political interpretation of his works as a stifling straitjacket. Fredric Jameson has described this largely discredited and yet widely popular approach as the "Genius" ideology of the bourgeois era.[14]

Second, it may refer to the analysis of the political views and ideological constituents inscribed in Shakespeare's texts, considering the playwright as a political witness or even a political actor in a turbulent age where the crucial issues were "when one could resist a tyrant; whether hereditary monarchy was the best form of government; what were the effects of the rule of queens; who could and should occupy political offices; how exactly the people at large should be represented by their rulers".[15]

Third, it may be the investigation of the political implications of Shakespeare's afterlife, in the criticism, performance, and pedagogy of his plays. Random examples are the use of Shakespeare in Karl Marx's philosophy, the trope of Hamlet in the conceptualization of modern Albanian politics, the staging of *Othello* in South Africa as a challenge to Apartheid, or the debate over *The Tempest* and colonialism in the American "culture wars".

Fourth and last, it may take the nonacademic form of straightforward analogies between Shakespeare's plots and contemporary political scenarios, from the oft-quoted anecdote of Elizabeth I declaring "I am Richard II. Know ye not that?" in the wake of Essex's rebellion, to the uncanny parallels between George W. Bush and Henry V, two hard-drinking playboys who rediscover their Christian faith, follow their fathers into office, and are urged by senior advisors to invade a foreign country under the twin banners of God and Country.[16] Blair Worden argues that "there has

[14] Fredric Jameson (1995) "Radicalizing Radical Shakespeare: The Permanent Revolution in Shakespeare Studies." In *Materialist Shakespeare: an Introduction*, edited by Ivo Kamps (London: Verso, 1995), 320.

[15] Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12; cf. Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (London: Arden, 2004).

[16] Alan Stonem "For God and Country", *Boston Review*, February/March 2005, https://www.bostonreview.net/stone-god-and-country, accessed 3 September 2015.

not been an age so sympathetic as the present to the study of the political content and the political context of Shakespeare's plays".[17]

Students will not find "political criticism" listed in literary handbooks as a distinct category, and although the term "politics" itself is "ubiquitous in Renaissance literary criticism, […] it is clear that there is no consensus which provides the word with a relatively stable definition".[18] We may observe, for example, a semantic gulf between an extensive use of the term to describe the power relations in any social realm (the politics of reading, the politics of gender, etc.) characteristic of the Anglosphere academic discourse, and a more conventional use in its primary definition of "political science" still prevailing in Europe. Political criticism is then best understood as a pervasive practice informed by different ideological outlooks, based on a selective use of the Shakespearean canon, and performed in different styles of reasoning. To draw a more detailed map of the contemporary Machiavellian moment and the different styles in which it manifests itself, a useful instrument is to be found in Thomas Hobbes' classic division of political theory into *libertas*, the space of "natural" relationships between individuals, *imperium*, the domain of the monarchy and the state, and *religio*, the realm of God and the Church, which turn out to be very helpful organizing principles for the present state of Shakespeare political criticism.[19]

Late Twentieth-Century Machiavelli

A turning point in the field of modern political criticism was the publication of *Political Shakespeare* (1985), the anthology that marked the rise of American new historicism and British cultural materialism.[20] This landmark book polarized the debate around the opposition between a past where Shakespeare was seen as the conservative upholder of order and degree portrayed by E.M.W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943)—a book that may have been far less hegemonic than his

[17] Blair Worden, "Shakespeare and Politics." In *Shakespeare and Politics*, edited by Catherine Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 22.

[18] Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 12.

[19] Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive. The Latin Version* (1642) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[20] Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, eds. *Political Shakespeare* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

critics submitted[21]—and a new, radical vision in which Shakespeare was the recorder (if not necessarily the advocate) of subversive and dissident ideologies. Machiavelli played a key role in the new historicist and cultural materialist refashioning of Shakespeare. In Stephen Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets" (first published in 1981), arguably the most influential essay in contemporary Shakespearean criticism, Machiavelli was evoked as the demystifier of religion, the direct inspirer of the atheistical voices of Shakespeare's place and time, Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Harriot. Focusing on Harriot's *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588), Greenblatt suggested that by applying to the North Carolina Algonquians, the Machiavellian notion of religion as "a set of beliefs manipulated by the subtlety of priests to help instill obedience and respect for authority",[22] Harriot was implicitly admitting an analogous debunking of his own religion, Christianity. But in a crucial interpretive gesture, Greenblatt defused the disruptive political implications of this hypothesis: "[T]he project of evangelical colonialism is not set over against the skeptical critique of religious coercion but battens on the very confirmation of that critique. In the Virginia colony, the radical undermining of Christian order is not the negative limit but the positive confirmation of that order."[23] This is the formulation of the subversion/containment theory, the cornerstone of new historicist politics, whereby a dissident opinion is given voice only to be neutralized: "Like Harriot in the New World, the Henry plays confirm the Machiavellian hypothesis that princely power originates in force and fraud, even as they draw their audience toward an acceptance of that power."[24] Greenblatt was even criticized for projecting the political inaction of the American intellectuals of the Reganite 1980s onto the supposed powerlessness of their Renaissance equivalents.[25]

Across the Atlantic and during the Thatcher era, in his likewise influential *Radical Tragedy* (first published in 1984), Jonathan Dollimore set cultural materialist decentering against new historicist containment. The book

[21] E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943) (London: Penguin Books, 1988). Graham Bradshaw, *Misrepresentations. Shakespeare and the Materialists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[22] Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" (1981; 1985). In *Shakespearean Negotiations. The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 26.

[23] Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets", 30.

[24] "Invisible Bullets", 65.

[25] Alan Liu, "The Power of Formalism: the New Historicism", *English Literary History*, 56, 4 (1989): 721–771.

aimed at demonstrating how Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, far from being conservative, generated "a critique of ideology, the demystification of political and power relations and the 'decentring of man'".[26] Machiavelli was crucial in this critique as the thinker who had paved the way for a modern philosophy of praxis: "Whether or not Gramsci's claim that Machiavelli was the most important precursor of Marx is conceded, it is surely correct that the thought of this period was potentially, and in certain respects actually, revolutionary."[27] Criticizing previous conservative narratives that proposed a telos of harmonic integration into the social order, Dollimore offered a telos of liberation locating in Shakespeare's age the seeds of that deconstruction of anthropocentrism that would culminate in Marx. In this emplotment, Renaissance philosophy was not understood primarily in its own internal dynamics and terms but as a laboratory for future hopes of emancipation, and neither Shakespeare nor his contemporaries were described as in the least embroiled in coeval political events, with the paradox that the book which targets Tillyard's Elizabethan world picture carries in its index of names an entry on Elizabeth II but no single mention of Elizabeth I.

The invaluable theoretical contribution of materialist criticism (new historicism, cultural materialism, feminism, postcolonialism) was to broaden the field of political criticism of Shakespeare by squarely placing *libertas* at its center. The title page of Hobbes' *De Cive* represents *libertas* as a "savage" woman with bow and arrow against a background of primitive warfare,[28] a perfect epitome of the emphasis on women and colonized subjects, on the body and sexuality, and, in more general terms, on "race", class, and gender as the new guiding critical categories. Running the risk of oversimplification, we may say that this innovative focus on a Foucauldian microphysics of power, along with the new historicist commitment to "the value of the single voice, the isolated scandal, the idiosyncratic vision, the transient sketch",[29] had the paradoxical side effect of pushing to the margins of political interpretation the grand ideological narratives and debates of early modern *imperium* and *religio*.

[26] Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy. Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (1984) (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 4.

[27] Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, 174.

[28] Hobbes, *De Cive*, xiii.

[29] Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 16.

Religion came back with a vengeance in the 1990s, making the debate of the day Shakespeare the Catholic versus Shakespeare the Protestant (to the expense of too hazardous options such as Shakespeare the atheist), a gesture that prompted feminist critic Dympna Callaghan to state polemically and simplistically that "the vogue for Shakespeare and religion is a reactionary move designed to clear away all those recent issues that have so troubled the traditional critical paradigm".[30] And while literary critics were pitting *libertas* versus *religio*, the study of Shakespeare as an analyst of *imperium* remained predominantly the province of a number of American political scientists influenced by the teachings of Leo Strauss and associated, sometimes too hastily, with the neoconservative turn in American politics.[31] The exemplary figure is Allan Bloom, the author of *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), a book where all post-structuralist approaches to literature are condemned as a symptom of a broader crisis of culture. Works such as Bloom's *Shakespeare's Politics* (1964 and 1981) and John Alvis and Thomas West's collection *Shakespeare as a Political Thinker* (1981) were significantly republished in the 1990s as a challenge to the hegemony of the various forms of materialist criticism spawned by the rebellious 1960s.[32]

In the New Millenium

In the early 2000s, several new studies on Shakespeare and Machiavelli appeared against this contentious background, negotiating these rival critical tendencies; while it is impossible to do justice to their complexity and sophistication, we can compare them to illustrate the rich variety of this new Machiavellian moment. We begin with a short summary of contributions that follow the traditional view of Shakespeare as a critic of Machiavellian ideas. An essentially literary approach is offered in John Roe's *Shakespeare and Machiavelli*, which represents a nonmilitant attempt to find thematic and literary correspondences between the two

[30] Dympna Callaghan, "Shakespeare and Religion", *Textual Practice* 15, 1 (2001), 3.

[31] An important exception is the aforementioned book by Viktoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*.

[32] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), Allan Bloom, *Shakespeare's Politics*, with Harry V. Jaffa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981; 1st ed. New York: Basic Books, 1964). John E. Alvis and Thomas G. West, eds., *Shakespeare as a Political Thinker* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2000; 1st ed. Durham NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1981).

authors on the assumption that "Shakespeare may illuminate Machiavelli as much as Machiavelli may illuminate Shakespeare".[33] According to Roe, the comparison must begin with the awareness that Machiavelli is not the producer of systematic and monolithic theories but, like Shakespeare, also a dramatic writer whose concepts evolve continually throughout his works. Each author "makes use of rhetoric far more than logic for his portrayal of reality […] and in each of them strictness of argumentative procedure will often give way to an opportunistic seizure of the moment".[34] What ultimately divides them is that confronting the threat of the amoral in his plays, Shakespeare resists Machiavelli "by producing at the height of the crisis, a strong counter-trust, which affirms his belief in the efficacy of the traditional ethical scheme".[35]

A more conservative conclusion is to be found in Stephen Hollingshead, an American scholar who reads Shakespeare as a Christian corrective to Machiavelli's immoral will of power. In his book emblematically titled *Shakespeare's Answer to Machiavelli*, he argues that the playwright opposes Machiavellian politics as the cause of feuds and bloodshed which prevent England from achieving peace and greatness. "Shakespeare upholds the value of the virtues of classical natural right, yet goes further to suggest that only their perfection in the Christian virtue of mercy can transcend the politics of worldly glory and bind the political community together."[36]

Shakespeare's Political Realism by the political scientist Tim Spiekerman inscribes itself in the Straussian and Bloomian tradition. Where for post-structuralist critics the Shakespearean text is an unstable arena of competing meanings, the prestructuralist Spiekerman sees the plays as a straightforward encapsulation of their author's political beliefs: "Shakespeare is politically orthodox for his time, […] he is a supporter of hereditary monarchy, a believer in the divine right of kings, and comfortable with a large role for religion in politics."[37] The comparison with Machiavelli is instrumental to this clear-cut view: "Both men address the question of how political power is acquired and maintained; both scrutinize the relation between morality, particularly Christian morality, and political practice; and both criticize the

[33] John Roe, *Shakespeare and Machiavelli* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), x.

[34] Roe, *Shakespeare and Machiavelli*, 206.

[35] *Shakespeare and Machiavelli*, x.

[36] Stephen Hollingshead, *Shakespeare's Answer to Machiavelli* (Durham NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2005), press release.

[37] Tim Spiekerman, *Shakespeare's Political Realism. The English History Plays* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 15.

Roman Catholic church in its capacity as a political actor."[38] Spiekerman argues that Shakespeare's history plays offer support for the Machiavellian thesis that self-interest can be politically more beneficial for both ruler and ruled than morality, leading to peace and stability. However, Shakespeare remains more sensitive to the moral concerns of the rulers, even though from a radically different perspective than Roe's ethical counter-thrust or Hollingshead's Christian virtues. If Machiavelli lays bare all the ugliness of politics aiming at a reconstruction of politics on a more realistic basis, Shakespeare seems skeptical that such honest exposure will be propitious. By showing all his political actors coping with self-doubt, remorse, pangs of guilt *after* their misdeeds, he seems to indicate that their conscience ultimately fails to restrain their ambitions. This, for Spiekerman, leads to the paradoxical conclusion that "Shakespeare is gentler than Machiavelli because he is more pessimistic than Machiavelli".[39]

Moving toward the left side of the political spectrum, Hugh Grady, a sympathetic critic of new historicism influenced by the Frankfurt School, tries to rearticulate the relationship between *imperium* and *libertas*. He traces an early phase of Machiavellian influence in Shakespeare's career characterized by the use of a popular discourse of Machiavellianism inherited from Kyd and Marlowe, a second phase in which the political theories of Machiavelli come to constitute the implied intellectual framework or discourse of the *Henriad*, and a final phase of disillusionment where "political power is neither an invigorating positive force nor a completely evil destroyer of human society; rather it is amoral and merely human".[40] Shakespeare's most intense Machiavellian moment coincides with Essex's glory years, and Grady delves into the unresolved problem of how a '"Machiavellian" treatment of power of the early phase leads into new "Montaignean" explorations of self identity where "[t]he discourse of princes produces a counter-discourse of subjectivity, of a distinctly modern valorization of a subjective flux which is not exhausted by interpellation into pre-established social roles".[41] The concern with subjectivity, derived

[38] Spiekerman, *Shakespeare's Political Realism*, 25.

[39] *Shakespeare's Political Realism*, 165.

[40] Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne*, 47. Grady has recently expanded his argument in "The End of Shakespeare's Machiavellian Moment: *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare's Historiography, and Dramatic Form", in, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Literary Theories: Anglo-Italian Transactions*, edited by Michele Marrapodi (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 119–136.

[41] Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne*, 26.

from Montaigne, is seen not as alternative but as dialectically shaped by its confrontation with *imperium*, but the two remain somehow opposed as if the ultimate modernity of Shakespeare rested, like in new historicism, on the achievement of a space of unassailable autonomy for the individual self.

"It is certain that, without Machiavelli, Shakespeare's tragic theatre would not have been the same"[42]: for Franco Ferrucci, Machiavelli and Shakespeare are the towering figures of the Renaissance, the seismographers of an age of political and cultural cataclysms. The American-based Italian scholar, typically uninterested in dialoguing explicitly with current Anglo-American criticism, rehearses well-known topics such as the theatricality of power, the struggle between providence and fortune, and the transition from a sacred to a secular order. Like Grady, he charts a definite trajectory in Shakespeare's use of Machiavelli ("the bard's 'Machiavellianism' comprises at least three phases and his tragedies of evil, particularly *Macbeth*, belong to his last, resolutive season".), but unlike him Ferrucci does not discern any fractured or decentered subjectivity or any false consciousness but, on the contrary, a heroic achievement of individual autonomy. Like Dollimore, Ferrucci sees Shakespeare and Machiavelli as precursors of a modern, secular conception of the individual, but he sees them as leading to Nietzsche rather than Marx. So the political relevance of their work has less to do with the contingency of their specific historical moment than with the profound anthropological change that they herald. According to Ferrucci, both Shakespeare and Machiavelli are beyond their age, *posthumous*, ironically unaware of the fame to which they were destined. Underlining the troubling parallels between the Elizabethan past and the present, particularly the peremptory role of theatricality in contemporary politics, Ferrucci's book has the odd flavor of an old-fashioned Renaissance historiography of Great Men, and his Shakespeare appears as the individualist philosopher whose relationship with power is eventually one of disillusionment and skeptical distance, pointing more toward *libertas* than *imperium*.

Imperium Strikes Back

The last two examples, arguably the most innovative voices in the new Machiavellian moment, reclaim *imperium* for a nonconservative point of view. For British scholar Andrew Hadfield, a return to Machiavelli is emphatically a return to republicanism. In *Shakespeare and Republicanism,*

[42] Franco Ferrucci, *Il teatro della fortuna. Potere e destino in Machiavelli e Shakespeare* (Roma: Fazi, 2004), 3.

he argues that "a more careful analysis of the political options open to Shakespeare, and his use of them in his plays and poetry, will reveal a highly politicized and radical thinker, interested in republicanism".[43] Criticizing new historicism and cultural materialism for "foregrounding the problem of subjectivity … at the expense of an analysis of politics", Hadfield remarks that their approach has been pedagogically very appealing because an emphasis on the construction of the self has a wider appeal for students and creates a "sturdy bridge between present and past".[44] Hadfield's republican agenda includes a reassessment of classical sources, from Tacitus to Livy, and a more inclusive definition of republicanism which takes into account the role of the citizen and the promotion of virtue as much as the form of the state. Shakespeare appears as the writer who engaged most consistently with the Roman sources of republican thought in order to probe the limits of monarchy. *The Rape of Lucrece*, in particular, is Shakespeare's version of the foundational narrative of the Roman republic, given that the rape of Lucrece by Tarquinius Sextus provoked the revolt led by Lucius Junius Brutus that brought to an end the dynasty of the first kings of Rome, a story told by Livy and commented upon by Machiavelli in the *Discourses on the First Decade of Livy*. Hadfield notes how the study of patriarchal violence against women in the poem has overshadowed its republican theme, in a clear example of *libertas* displacing *imperium*.[45] The other end of the parable, the fall of the republic and the onset of the empire, was the subject of *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. The literature and theater had an active function in political life and Shakespeare was a primary actor, at least until the death of Elizabeth I, which for Hadfield marks the end of Shakespeare's republican moment, if not of his republican interest, hardly limited to his Roman works. *Hamlet* "stands as distinctly republican play"[46] in its dire reflection on the issues of continuity, change and political form, and the Prince of Denmark is another avatar of Lucius Junius Brutus, who, as Machiavelli related in the *Discourses*, simulated his madness to exact his revenge against brutal rulers. Hadfield does not make much of Machiavelli as a possible direct source of Shakespeare's Roman themes, but the *Discourses* were an obvious point of reference in his milieu, even though overshadowed by the sinister celebrity of *The Prince*.

[43] Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 12–13.
[44] *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 9, 11.
[45] *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 133.
[46] *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 189.

Gilberto Sacerdoti's book *Sacrificio e Sovranità* (*Sacrifice and Sovereignty*) weaves together *imperium* and *religio* and is characteristically silent on the issues of *libertas* privileged by Anglo-American criticism.[47] The novelty of his approach is twofold. First, he posits a relationship between Shakespeare and Machiavelli that is not simply analogical but genealogical, accounting for the 80 years that separate the two writers. Here it is no longer the simple case of Shakespeare reading Machiavelli in its numerous circulating versions, but of both of them participating in a philosophical tradition concerned primarily with the role of religion in politics. Sacerdoti is the most explicit advocate of a view of Shakespeare as a self-conscious political actor in the sphere of the court. Following the lesson of Quentin Skinner, for whom Renaissance political texts less as abstract, theoretical commentaries than as performative speech acts in an age where the role of counsel was crucial, Sacerdoti reads *Love's Labour Lost* as a topical intervention in the theological–religious dispute that involved Elizabeth I and Henry IV of France in the 1590s.

Interestingly enough, Sacerdoti takes us back where we started: *Sacrificio e Sovranità* resonates with the issues of subversion and containment of Greenblatt's "invisible bullets"; same characters (Shakespeare, Machiavelli, Thomas Harriot), same themes (religion and imagination), a different, if not mutually exclusive, emplotment. Sacerdoti brings back in the picture the name of Giordano Bruno, the most conspicuous absence in recent political criticism. Monopolized by the hermetic interpretations of Frances Yates, the master subverter of his time has been totally obliterated by theorists of subversion. For Sacerdoti, who capitalizes on Leo Strauss' strategy of esoteric reading (too often caricatured as a Machiavellian strategy of deception), Bruno deployed in fact the ancient language of hermeticism to protect his radically modern cosmological and philosophical speculations on the infinity of the universe, shared by Thomas Harriot. If for Greenblatt heteroglossia, the coexistence of divergent languages and ideologies within the same text is a means of containment, Sacerdoti, via Strauss, explains heteroglossia as covert propaganda. In an unambiguously old historicist approach based on a model of direct influence, Sacerdoti inserts Machiavelli and Shakespeare in a lineage of European thinkers interested in the relationship between religion and politics, which originates in Plato and Aristotle, continues with Dante,

[47] Gilberto Sacerdoti, *Sacrificio e sovranità. Teologia e politica nell'Europa di Shakespeare e Bruno* (Torino: Einaudi, 2002).

Averroes and Maimonides, Machiavelli, Bodin, and Bruno, and ends with Spinoza and the modern separation between the Church and State. In Sacerdoti's reconstruction, Machiavelli is not an isolated, cunning proposer of atheism, because his instrumental view of religion as social glue has philosophical roots in Averroes and Maimonides, and he tackles the central problem of religion as an instrument of consensus and pacification versus religion as producer of division and violence.

> That dangerous teaching of the ancients, revealed to the moderns by Machiavelli, is then applied by Giordano Bruno to the capital problem faced by the Christian princes in the second half of the XVI century: the conquest and preservation of "superiority", that is *sovereignty*. … It is no small success that in 1598, that huntress queen [Elizabeth] was present, in a Shakespearean comedy [*Love's Labours Lost*], at a praise of hunting and sovereignty that faithfully repeats the praise of hunting and sovereignty that Bruno had addressed to her fifteen years earlier.[48]

In a moment in which Shakespeare is claimed by Catholics and Protestants alike, and in which from many fashionable philosophical quarters we hear the rings of a revolutionary multitude modeled on early Christianity, Sacerdoti gives us an elitist Shakespeare who promotes the use of religion as an instrument of control of the masses in order to bring peace and allow the free philosophical labor of a few, enlightened minds. Paradoxically, the humanistic bard influenced by Bruno is far more subversive than any cultural materialist has ever dared to imagine him: he is a "theoprogressive" who belongs in a philosophical tradition of Averroism, which, among other things, highlights that the roots of Europe are Islamic, as well as Christian and Jewish. In conclusion, in both Hadfield and Sacerdoti, Machiavelli occupies a pivotal position in a complex cultural mosaic that is historically far more nuanced than in any other study taken into consideration.[49]

Machiavelli's Smile

The foregoing survey points to two possible (in)conclusions. One suggests resignation to the two authors' legendary elusiveness: Machiavelli's enigmatic smile, compared to Mona Lisa's,[50] which has had generations

[48] Sacerdoti, *Sacrificio e sovranità*, 328, 365.

[49] Sacerdoti's works will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter.

[50] Praz, "The Politic Brain", 145.

of exegetes puzzling over the real intentions of the author of *The Prince,*[51] and Shakespeare's "astonishing capacity to be everywhere and nowhere, to assume all positions and to slip free of all constraints",[52] which has been variously interpreted as Machiavellian dissimulation, Jesuitic equivocation, Pauline proteanism, Straussian esotericism, or artistic detachment. Should we simply admit with John Joughin that "any attempt to tie Shakespeare's plays to a particular historical or political explanation is *consistently* thwarted"?[53] While we may agree that making him a card-carrying member of any party tends to be a combination of foregone conclusions and wishful thinking, it is equally incongruous to say that all interpretations of Shakespeare are *consistently* inconsistent.

Our second open conclusion follows Hugh Grady's observation that "[h]istoricism itself necessarily produces an implicit allegory of the present in its configuration of the past".[54] We may say, accordingly, that through readings variously informed by Machiavelli, Roe has produced a moderate Shakespeare, Spiekerman a neocon Shakespeare, Hollingshead a theocon Shakespeare, Grady a neomarxist Shakespeare, Ferrucci a Nietzschean Shakespeare, Hadfield a neoprog Shakespeare, and Sacerdoti a theoprog Shakespeare. If many critics envision "presentism" as a disabling historical fallacy[55] and Alessandra Petrina usefully reminds us that "in the complex history of the reception of his works, Machiavelli appears to play a passive role, as he is often used to validate hypotheses that belong elsewhere, both historically and geographically",[56] instead of seeking an illusory neutral vantage point of analysis we concur with Terence Hawkes that "[t]he present ranks, not as an obstacle to be avoided, nor as a prison to be escaped from. Quite the reverse: it's a factor actively to be sought out, grasped and perhaps, as a result, understood."[57] An important corollary of presentism is localism, inasmuch as in the same present Shakespeare

[51] Giulio Procacci, *Machiavelli nella cultura europea dell'età moderna* (Bari: Laterza, 1995); Davide De Camilli, *Machiavelli nel tempo. La critica machiavelliana dal Cinquecento a oggi* (Pisa: ETS, 2000).

[52] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will of the World. How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2004), 242.

[53] John J. Joughin, "Shakespeare and politics: an introduction", in Alexander, *Shakespeare and Politics*, 3, emphasis mine.

[54] Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne*, 2.

[55] Robin Headlam Wells, "Historicism and 'Presentism' in Early Modern Studies", *The Cambridge Quarterly* 29, 1 (2000): 37–60.

[56] Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles*, 6.

[57] Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare in the Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.

is read differently in different geopolitical contexts, as this book argues. This politically myriad-minded Shakespeare is then more revealing of our own disorientation, at a transitional time in which early modern issues (changing theories of sovereignty and citizenship, the theatricality of politics, the use of powerful fictions to influence public opinion, the rising influence of small elites of counselors in decision-making, the impact of religion on the public sphere) are once again topical. J.G.A. Pocock glossed his title *The Machiavellian Moment* as "a name for the moment in conceptualized time in which the republic was seen as confronting its temporal finitude, as attempting to remain morally and politically stable in a stream of irrational events conceived as essentially destructive of all systems of secular stability",[58] a definition that, in my own presentist and localist view, bears ominous resonances for our own current condition. Julia Reinhard Lupton has advocated a "literature of citizenship" that may counter the crisis of the humanities and the generalized disengagement of public audiences from academic discourse in "the increasingly fractured and uncivil settings of our classrooms, hallways, and meeting places".[59] It is also in this light that we should continue to read Shakespeare with Machiavelli, comparing different positions to illuminate the respective preoccupations, geopolitical contingencies, and hermeneutical fallacies of every single analysis, while imperatively addressing in the same breath *libertas*, *imperium*, and *religio*.

[58] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, viii.

[59] Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Citizen-Saints. Shakespeare and Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 206.

CHAPTER 6

Infinite Minds: Shakespeare and Giordano Bruno Revisited

"Many years ago,—wrote the late Frances Yates—moving along the Strand with Giordano Bruno as I tried to translate his *Cena de le ceneri* and began to realize what his great *impresa* was—the dissemination of a magical philosophy which should do away with all religious differences on a level of love and magic—Shakespeare seemed to come join that journey to the Supper Party."[1] The British scholar experienced a similar epiphany on contemplating the gaping face of Shakespeare's funerary bust in Stratford-on-Avon, and fathoming occult implications in its "trance-like expression".[2] Reviewing the book that carried Yates' esoteric interpretation of the monument, William Empson agreed that a supper was involved, but of a different kind: a "city banquet, with a series of grand courses and a round of wines", with the poet "wondering whether he will keep it down".[3] Conjuration or constipation? Shakespeare has been frequently constrained within these antipodal positions: the philosophical artist versus the mundane playwright, with echoes of the modern dialectics of highbrow versus lowbrow (in which Shakespeare has been often implicated).

This chapter is based on a different polarity, that of two interrelated but fundamentally different meanings of the adjective "hermetic", one

[1] Frances A. Yates. *Shakespeare's Last Plays* (London: Routledge, 2013), 3.

[2] Frances A. Yates. *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 206.

[3] William Empson. *Essays on Renaissance Literature. Volume Two: The Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 168.

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016

S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1_6

"of or pertaining to Hermes Trismegistus or the theosophical etc. writings ascribed to him" (à la Yates), the other "fig. protected from outside agencies, esoteric, recondite" (OED). This polarity, I argue, has had a decisive impact on the way in which the relationship between Shakespeare and Bruno has been investigated or, more frequently, has *not* been investigated: the lingering influence of Yates still monopolizes and simultaneously inhibits the very association of the two names.

Brunomanias

Frances Yates has been the most illustrious intermediary between the infinite universe of Giordano Bruno and the infinite theater of William Shakespeare. Her idiosyncratic appraisal of the Italian heretic and his link with Shakespeare's plays has been highly influential, spurring controversy in Brunian scholarship and gaining within Shakespeare criticism a status which could be defined as of visible eccentricity. Her works continue to be read and published, but even a cursory look at the studies that have recently rendered Shakespeare's religious and philosophical preoccupations a central critical topic demonstrates how the Brunian connection championed by Yates is simply disregarded. In the arena where a hard contest is fought between Shakespeare the Catholic and Shakespeare the Protestant, there is hardly any trace of the most audacious thinker on religious issues in Elizabethan England. The several strands of philosophical criticism of Shakespeare are likely to reference Hegel, Nietzsche, Derrida, maybe Montaigne, Bacon, and Machiavelli, and frequently Shakespeare as an isolated genius; Bruno barely makes it to the footnotes.[4] Political criticism is no exception: if Machiavelli is interpreted in multiple ways, as we saw in Chap. 5, Bruno is by and large not read. Even the province of political theology, revitalized by contemporary interpretations of Carl Schmitt, remains insusceptible to Bruno's bold political and theological arguments.

The baffling effect of the most sustained effort to connect the works of Shakespeare with any intellectual of his time and place is that once Yates' interpretation was marginalized, or rather left to float in a dimension of its

[4] Recent telling examples include: John Joughin, ed. *Philosophical Shakespeares* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), A.D. Nuttall. *Shakespeare the Thinker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Jennifer Bates and Richard Wilson, eds. *Shakespeare and Continental Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

own, no alternative theory of the nexus between Shakespeare and Bruno has been offered in mainstream anglophone criticism. The Italian heretic is the proverbial philosophical baby thrown away with the dirty water of Frances Yates. Bruno, a philosopher *and* playwright, is arguably the most conspicuous absence in contemporary Shakespeare studies.

Born in Nola, near Naples, Giordano Bruno, suspected of heresy, spent two years in England (1583–1585) where, in spite or because of his conflicts with some academic "pedants", he wrote and published his major works in Italian.[5] In these richly literary dialogues, he expounded a radical philosophy which is variously interpreted as a reformed antipapal Catholicism, a moderate Protestantism or an utter dismissal of Christianity, and advocated a policy of alliance between the moderate monarchs of France and England against the religious extremism of Spain and Rome. Guardedly welcomed as a religiously dangerous thinker and scorned in Oxford by orthodox Aristotelian professors, Bruno grew very close to several influential English courtiers and to Queen Elizabeth herself, who owned his dialogues bound in a black leather volume carrying her royal arms on the cover. This same volume was bought in 1698 by John Toland, who translated the texts, published them in 1713, and circulated them in libertine intellectual circles: "The Queen's copy is then the source of the first effective divulgation of Bruno's thought in modern Europe."[6] In the nineteenth century, Bruno was read, among others, by Schelling and Hegel, but his rising fame as a martyr of free thinking and anticlerical icon grew at the expense of a serious engagement with his works, whose impervious and enigmatic style remains a challenge for the modern reader. The term "Brunomania" was coined to define the enthusiasm for Bruno that led to the erection of a famous monument in Campo dei Fiori, the Roman square where the philosopher was burned alive at the stake in 1600.[7] As Hilary Gatti reminds us, even the connection between Bruno and Shakespeare has a long history and is marked by national idiosyncrasies, patriotic chauvinisms, and ultimately fatal misunderstandings. It was in the same period, however, that two German scholars in particular, Benno Tschischwitz and Wilhelm König, advanced the notion that Shakespeare

[5] For Bruno's English years see Fabio Raimondi. *La repubblica dell'assoluta giustizia. La politica di Giordano Bruno in Inghilterra* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2003).

[6] Gilberto Sacerdoti, 'Giordano Bruno in England'. In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Anglo-Italian Renaissance Literature and Culture*, edited by M. Marrapodi, forthcoming.

[7] Massimo Bucciantini. *Campo dei Fiori. Storia di un monumento maledetto* (Torino: Einaudi, 2015).

had been influenced by the Italian philosopher, one that Benedetto Croce termed dismissively as the "Bruno hypothèse".[8] After several conjectures and rebuttals played out predominantly in the Italo-German arena, this hypothesis developed into an ambitious intellectual edifice in the works of Frances Amalia Yates. Spanning forty years of research and publications, this independent and highly original scholar associated with the Warburg Institute became the champion of a renewed interest in Giordano Bruno and the advocate of his intellectual kinship with William Shakespeare. In particular, it was her landmark book *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964) that gave center stage to the subject of magic, hitherto marginalized in Brunian studies. The book also launched the enormously influential figure of Bruno as interpreter and restorer of an ancient doctrine, attributed to the legendary Hermes Trismegistus, made public in the Renaissance by Marsilio Ficino, and present as an important undercurrent in Western culture from Tommaso Campanella to the Rosicrucians.[9] Yates made the esoteric exoteric: the hermetic tradition became the *explanans* of the entire Brunian experience, at the expense of what is now recognized as his more original and relevant philosophical contributions. Even the project of political and religious reform relentlessly pursued by Bruno in different European countries was identified by the British scholar as an attempt to restore the ancient hermetic wisdom, developing Ficino's more moderate formulation in radically anti-Christian terms.

As Nicoletta Tirinnanzi explains, Yates did indeed capture the political dimension of Bruno's writings but gave it a very biased interpretation.[10] Paradoxically, it was precisely the magic works of Bruno, of which Yates made very limited and selective use, that were refractory to her reading. This corpus of so-called magic works was published for the first time only in the late nineteenth century and its first critical edition appeared as late as 2000.[11] Unlike in the Italian dialogues (from *The Ash Wednesday Supper* to *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*), which were Yates' main source, in these later Latin texts the references to Hermes and the Egyptian tradition

[8] Hilary Gatti. *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge. Giordano Bruno in England* (London: Routledge, 2013), 179.

[9] Frances Yates. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1964).

[10] The following paragraphs derive from conversations and exchanges with Nicoletta Tirinnanzi before her premature death.

[11] Giordano Bruno. *Opere magiche*, edited by Simonetta Bassi, Elisabetta Scapparone, and Nicoletta Tirinnanzi (Milano: Adelphi, 2000).

are few and far between, as rare as those to the Neoplatonic imagery of the magus who performs wonders by virtue of the ties produced by a universal chain of being pervaded by the *anima mundi*. One could even argue that Yates had no choice but to minimize the relevance of the magic works in order to uphold her thesis of Renaissance magic as a more or less radical revival of Hermes' philosophy.

Recent Brunian criticism has departed from a genealogical reading connecting the philosopher to increasingly remote sources and has shifted toward a more rewarding investigation into the efforts he made to proceed autonomously and develop a notion of operational magic seeded in the doctrine of a single living matter from whose womb infinite worlds and individuals are generated.[12] This reading's prelude is to be found in *Lampas triginta statuarum* (*The Lamp of the Thirty Statues*, 1587), a text where Bruno theorizes a universe whose foundation is a living matter which desires to be, and out of this desire gradually achieves, at different times, infinite forms which coexist simultaneously in divine fullness. In this emphatically anti-Aristotelian universe of dynamic, mutable, and modifiable entities, the human being is radically decentralized but, through the work of his hands and intellect, he can overcome his limits and become, through self-awareness and hard labor, wise and "heroic". In sum, Bruno's magic works do not constitute a monolithic system aimed at disseminating a radical version of the ancient canons of hermetic magic as Yates argued, but are complex, stratified texts where elements of tradition and innovative ideas coexist and challenge each other. What remains constant is Bruno's privileging of the operational aspect of magic, which allows one to interact with and remodel the cycles of nature. Moreover, this explains the role of the early modern philosopher as an engaged political agent.

In his analysis of the unruly place of esoteric thinking in the Western intellectual tradition, W. Hanegraaff suggests that the vast success of Yates' findings, which extended far beyond the professional field of Renaissance scholars, may have been provoked by the singular coinciding of the passion

[12] Michele Ciliberto. *Giordano Bruno. Il teatro della vita* (Milano: Mondadori, 2007); Saverio Ricci. *Giordano Bruno nell'Europa del Cinquecento* (Roma: Salerno Editrice, 2000); Ingrid D. Rowland. *Giordano Bruno: philosopher/heretic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Paul Richard Blum. *Giordano Bruno: an introduction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012). For an overview of recent interpretations: *Bruno nel XXI secolo. Interpretazioni e ricerche*, edited by Simonetta Bassi (Firenze: Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento, 2012).

of a British independent researcher born in 1899 with the spirit of the revolutionary decade in which she published her best-known book:

> this passionate historian who seemed to have burst on the scene almost out of nowhere at the age of sixty-five, … was challenging some of the most basic assumptions of mainstream science and scholarship, *and* happened to do so at the very moment when the scientific establishment and its basic values were coming under attack from the rebellious generation of the 1960s. Yates' book hit the *Zeitgeist* at exactly the right moment, and continued it to ride the wave of countercultural dissent within the academy and outside it.[13]

Yates evoked an alternative system dominated by magic and imagination, and a worldview where human beings had potential access to secret lore and invisible forces capable of influencing the world, making it a better and more peaceful place.[14] As Hanegraaff remarks, "[a]ll of this made 'the Hermetic Tradition' look like a kind of traditional counterculture, inspired by beliefs and aspirations that seemed very similar to those that animated the post–World War II generation in its revolt against established science and religion".[15] The fact that the protagonist of this cultural revolution was an intellectual rebel executed for his ideas reactivated the tradition of Bruno as a martyr and powerfully resonated with the many ant-iestablishment minds of that generation.[16]

Old and New Directions

Hanegraaff's contextual interpretation seems to be corroborated by the fact that the new critical trends emerging in Shakespeare studies in the 1980s were more likely to be influenced by the French theorists of the late twentieth century than by the French academies of the sixteenth century, to which Yates had devoted her early studies. But curiously, while making ever rarer appearances in the index of names of Shakespearean trendsetters, Yates has never lost her presence on the shelves, and some of her titles remain bestsellers in their field.[17]

[13] Wouter J. Hanegraaff. *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 325.

[14] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism*, 326.

[15] *Esotericism*, 326.

[16] *Esotericism*, 378.

[17] Routledge has recently published her Selected Works in a ten-volume series.

On the other hand, even a cursory look at the main Shakespearean companions and encyclopedias quickly reveals that Giordano Bruno is not a vital presence, if he appears at all. Since Yates, very little has been produced in terms of his relationship with Shakespeare, either by scholars who continue in the wake of Yates' interpretation or by others who acknowledge her pioneering contribution but depart from her univocal vision.[18]

The most notable exception is the Italian critic Gilberto Sacerdoti, who over the last three decades has been gradually constructing a new paradigm to recontextualize and connect the worlds and works of Shakespeare and Bruno, superseding the Yatesean model. In a number of studies published (mostly in Italian) since the 1990s, he has provided new interpretive keys by concentrating on a few specific works where he detects unmistakable references to Bruno's philosophical and political project. Sacerdoti has written two seminal books on *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, an annotated edition of *Venus and Adonis*, several essays on Raleigh, Bacon, Toland, and has more recently produced a number of essays on *The Tempest*. While his two main monographs remain regrettably untranslated, a number of essays in English permit the reader to trace his career while allowing them direct access to Sacerdoti's thesis.[19]

[18] Aside from the studies that are discussed here, see Gatti. *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge*; Rosanna Camerlingo. *Christopher Marlowe, Teatro e teologia. Marlowe, Bruno e i Puritani* (Napoli: Liguori, 1999); Gabriela Dragnea. *Shakespeare: ermetismo, mistica, magia* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2003).

[19] *Nuovo cielo, nuova terra. La rivelazione copernicana di «Antonio Cleopatra» di Shakespeare* (Bologna, il Mulino, 1990; new edition Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2008); '"What means this?" An "odd trick" in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.' In *Counting and Recounting. Measuring Inner and Outer Space in the Renaissance*, edited by Paola Bottalla and Michela Calderaro (La Mongolfiera: Trieste, 1995), 209–231; "Three Kings, Herod of Jewry, and a Child: Apocalypse and Infinity of the World in *Antony and Cleopatra*." In *Italian Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, edited by Michele Marrapodi and Giorgio Melchiori (Newark and London: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 165–184; William Shakespeare, *Poemetti*, edited by Gilberto Sacerdoti (Milano: Garzanti, 2000); *Sacrificio e sovranità. Teologia e politica nell'Europa di Shakespeare e Bruno* (Torino: Einaudi, 2002); "La tempesta della *Tempesta*." In *Con le ali dell'intelletto. Studi di filosofia e di storia della cultura*, edited by Fabrizio Meroi (Firenze: Olschki, 2005), 185–208; "*Antony and Cleopatra* and the overflowing of the Roman measure." In *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome*, edited by Maria Del Sapio Garbero (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 107–118; "Calibano: post-colonial, precolonial o post-post-colonial?" In *Postcolonial Shakespeare*, edited by Masolino D'Amico and Simona Corso (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2009), 267–277; "Spontaneous Generation and New Astronomy in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*." In *Questioning Bodies in Shakespeare's Rome*, edited by Maria Del Sapio

The Unbounded Love of Anthony and Cleopatra

> *Cleopatra* If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
> *Antony* There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.
> *Cleopatra* I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd.
> *Antony* Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.
> 1.1.14-17

Why does Shakespeare's tragedy open with a Roman general quoting the Apocalypse while courting an Egyptian queen? Sacerdoti's seminal study of *Antony and Cleopatra* is based on an extended close reading of Antony's opening words "then thou must find a new heaven, a new earth", an interpretive *tour de force* running for several hundred pages and written in a sophisticated and elegant argumentative style. Most commentators recognize the biblical allusion, but do not make much of it; Sacerdoti reads in this anachronistic and slightly blasphemous quote a veiled reference to the infinite universe theorized by Bruno. He suggests that if the play is "observed from the side … it reveals a second, unsuspected surface, one that is not so much Roman as 'Egyptian', and that has everything to do with … a 'discovery' Giordano Bruno had presented in England as a return to the light of the true ancient Egyptian philosophy after the 'darkness' of Christianity".[20] His revolutionary cosmology, in its philosophical interpretation, was believed to herald a new era of which Bruno was the self-styled prophet. In stark contrast to Yates, Sacerdoti argues that hermeticism was simply a rhetorical stratagem whose purpose was to shield a radical philosophical and political project by means of a spellbinding tradition. This might set alarm bells ringing in the ears of the consummate Shakespearean. Any mention of a "code" or "secret" language in this age of ours where popular culture and political discourse are obsessed with enigmas, riddles, and conspiracy theories of various kinds, may automatically conjure up those wild theories that deny Shakespeare's authorship and existence (see Chap. 8) or,

Gerbero, Nancy Isenberg, Maddalena Pennachia (Goettingen, V&R unipress, 2010), 327–339; '"Self-sovereignty" and Religion in *Love's Labour's Lost*: From London to Venice via Navarre.' In *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, edited by Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 83–104; "La presenza di Bruno nei drammi di Shakespeare e nella cultura inglese del'600." In *L'uomo, da vicino. Sei lezioni intorno a Giordano Bruno e Claude Lévi-Strauss*, edited by Giuliano Martufi (Il Prato: Saonara, 2012), 51–67.

[20] Sacerdoti, "Three Kings, Herod of Jewry, and a Child", 183. The thesis is fully developed in Sacerdoti, *Nuovo cielo, nuova terra*.

at best, John Bossy's more scientifically grounded hypothesis that Bruno was a spy.[21] Nothing could be more alien to Sacerdoti's rationalistic and historicist approach. As he makes it clear in every text, the technique he singles out is a recognized feature of the various early modern strategies of simulation and dissimulation that were indispensable in political and religious contexts where dissidence and heresy, as the case of Bruno sadly testifies, could send individuals to torture and death.[22] In *The Ash Wednesday Supper*, Bruno warns the reader: "But have no doubt even if on occasion you see less grave propositions which may seem to come justly under the strict censure of Cato: for these Catos are very blind and idiotic, if they cannot discover that which is hidden inside these Silenic statues."[23] The *sileni alcibiadis*, a Platonic genre made popular in the Renaissance by one of Erasmus' adagia and named after statuines whose monstrous exterior concealed a divine image, allowed precious truths to be dissimulated behind grotesque and seemingly unimportant imagery: "Sileni were certayn Images karuen and grauen and made after suche a fasshion that they might be opened & closed agayne / which when they were close had a scorneful and monsterous shape / & when they were opened sodenly thei shewid as godes."[24] The dangerously subversive potential of the inward meanings was of an importance directly proportionate to their outward absurdity. Its main examples are to be found, among others, in Erasmus, Rabelais, and Bruno. In *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, Sofia herself warns us that "[y]ou see then, Saulino, how *Egyptian Metaphors* can agree to other Histories, Other Fables, and Other figurative Sentiments, without contradiction".[25] The ancient fables and lore evoked by Bruno are, pace Yates, not to be seen as an end to ancient doctrines, but as means to attain new truths in the present.

With his formidable ability to read microscopically (but not catachrestically, since he always keeps post-structuralist hermeneutics at arm's length), Sacerdoti also knows how to look at the bigger picture.

[21] John Bossy. *Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

[22] Jon R. Snyder. *Dissimulation and the culture of secrecy in early modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

[23] It is the theme of the Fifth Dialogue of Giordano Bruno. *The Ash Wednesday Supper,* edited by Stanley L. Jaki (The Hague: Mouton, 1975).

[24] Erasmus, Desiderius, "Sileni alcibiadis" (London 1543). http://people.virginia.edu/~jdk3t/SileniAlcibiadis.html, accessed 3 September 2015.

[25] Giordano Bruno, *Spaccio della bestia trionfante. Or the Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, translated by William Morehead (London, 1713), 271.

Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus* had appeared in 1543, over sixty years before *Antony and Cleopatra*. Yet England was particularly hospitable to the astronomer's theories and English was the first modern language into which the text was translated, with Thomas Digges' version running to seven editions from 1576 to 1605.[26] The crucial event of this period was the shift of the Copernican revolution from the astronomical and scientific plane to a brand-new physical and philosophical dimension, proposed in the 1580s by Bruno:

> Of all places, then, London was the strangest of all for a play beginning with the protagonist stating the necessity of finding out an infinite universe, for of all places London was precisely the one where it was not too difficult to find it—and in print. For Bruno's *Dialogues* had been printed in London in 1584 either by John Charlewood, or by Thomas Vautrollier, who was also the publisher of North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, which is, of course, the source of *Antony and Cleopatra*.[27]

For Sacerdoti the link is not accidental. He envisions a circle of like-minded intellectuals, who trod perilous ground and exchanged ideas with profound political consequences. Bruno had left a Paris torn apart by religious conflict and joined the retinue of the French ambassador to London, Michel de Castelnau de la Mauvissière, a member of the *politique* group which advocated a compromise between rival religious camps. Bruno attended Elizabeth's court with the ambassador and lived in his house, as he himself told the Venetian inquisitors who arrested him in 1592.[28] It is in this new intellectual environment, where he became a close friend of John Florio and Philip Sidney, that he published his main cosmological and moral works, hailing the "new heaven", the infinite universe which would necessarily displace the Judeo-Christian cosmogony and its center of gravity, the existence of a transcendent God.

> Christianity was for him, strictly speaking, a fable—which in no way means that he was unaware of the Platonic importance of such kind of fables. And if, in the best case, Christian religion could only be, for him, an *instrumentum*

[26] Francis R. Johnson, Sanford V. Larkey, and Thomas Digges "Thomas Digges, the Copernican System, and the Idea of the Infinity of the Universe in 1576." *The Huntington library bulletin* (1934): 69–117.

[27] Sacerdoti, "*Antony and Cleopatra* and the overflowing of the Roman measure", 111.

[28] Ricci, *Giordano Bruno*, 498.

> *regni* of a Machiavellian-Averroistic kind that had nothing to do with any truth concerning God or nature, he was also keenly aware that the different fables told by the different Christian churches had different political value, and fitness for the times.[29]

Sacerdoti's overall conclusion is that the opening lines of *Antony and Cleopatra* encapsulate the four tenets of Giordano Bruno's revolutionary idea of an infinite universe with all its philosophical and religious consequences. First, Bruno's new universe, just like the one of the two lovers, is an infinite *field* without any "bourn"; second, the necessity of discovering a new infinite universe is inferred from the principle that an infinite love, in order to be recognized as such, must produce some infinite physical effect—a measurable effect would entail a measurable, and therefore "beggarly" love; third, in his *De l'infinito*, Bruno, like Antony and Cleopatra, 'deduces the necessary infinity of the universe with "a couple of syllogisms" which demonstrate that "whoever says that the effect is finite, he also assumes that the divine power is finite"'[30]; fourth, Bruno, just like Antony, identifies the discovery of a new infinite universe with the fulfillment of the prophecy of *Revelation* XXI. By making the Christian Apocalypse coincide with the mundane discovery of the physical reality of the world, as he argues in his Latin poem *De immenso*, printed in Frankfurt in 1591, Bruno rejects the canonical Aristotelian universe that had always informed the Christian hierarchical order of the cosmos, and with it the idea of a supernatural Creator: "A God producing a finite universe is … either an impotent God, or an idle God, or, worst of all, an "envious" God: a miser who in his stinginess chooses "scarcity" and "sterility" rather than communicating his superabounding infinity to an equally infinite and superabounding nature."[31]

Love's Labour's Lost *and Self-Sovereignty*

After testing his hypothesis in the introduction and notes to his Italian translation of *Venus and Adonis* (2000), Sacerdoti expanded upon it in his scintillating book *Sacrificio e sovranità*, devoted to *Love's Labour's Lost* and very well received among Brunian critics.[32] This comedy

[29] Sacerdoti, '"Self-Sovereignty" and Religion', 95.
[30] Sacerdoti, "*Antony and Cleopatra* and the overflowing of the Roman measure", 113.
[31] "*Antony and Cleopatra* and the overflowing of the Roman measure", 112.
[32] Shakespeare, *Poemetti*, xxxvii–lvii; Sacerdoti, *Sacrificio e sovranità*.

famously contains an obvious allusion to Bruno in the character of Berowne, a fact that is tellingly ignored or underrated in the majority of studies and editions of the play, with the exception of Yates'. While agreeing with her on this reference, Sacerdoti departs from Yates even more radically than in his previous work in order to demonstrate, through a far-reaching argument to which no summary can do full justice, that Shakespeare derived from Bruno less an esoteric lore than a full-fledged political theory. We know from the *First Quarto* that *Love's Labour's Lost* was presented before Queen Elizabeth and the diplomatic corps at Christmas in 1598—a few months after Henri of Navarre, having discovered in 1593 that Paris was well worth a mass, had converted to Catholicism and had issued the Edict of Nantes, which for the first time granted Protestants substantial rights in a Catholic state, thus opening a path to secularism, tolerance, and freedom of conscience.

Like in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Sacerdoti focuses on a detail overlooked by most editors and produces an extensive interpretation.

PRINCESS
See see, my beauty will be saved by merit!
O heresy in fair, fit for these days!
A giving hand, though foul, shall have fair praise.
But come, the bow: now mercy goes to kill,
And shooting well is then accounted ill.
Thus will I save my credit in the shoot:
Not wounding, pity would not let me do't;
If wounding, then it was to show my skill,
That more for praise than purpose meant to kill.
And out of question so it is sometimes,
Glory grows guilty of detested crimes,
When, for fame's sake, for praise, an outward part,
We bend to that the working of the heart;
As I for praise alone now seek to spill
The poor deer's blood, that my heart means no ill.

BOYET
Do not curst wives hold that self-sovereignty
Only for praise sake, when they strive to be
Lords o'er their lords?

4.1.21–38

It is the deer-hunting scene, where the hunter is a French princess who has quite a lot in common with Elizabeth of England, herself a passionate deer-huntress. So "unnecessarily elaborate" is the scene that most editors agree on its being just an obsequious reference to the Queen's favorite sport. But this is far from making it *less* disconcerting.

> the relation between the act of spilling a poor deer's blood and the fact of holding a "self-sovereignty" that allows certain "curst" ladies to "subdue" their lords and become "Lords o'er their lords" may well be a *mystère horrificque*, but it most certainly deals with *nostre religion* and *l'estat politicq*. For *self-sovereignty* is an exquisitely *technical* political term, and its practical conquest has been, indeed, the greatest problem of the early modern state, which in order to get and hold it had, first of all, to get rid of *ecclesiastical* superiority, or overlordship.[33]

Taken by most contemporary commentators as an innocent conceit in an overelaborate text, self-sovereignty turns out to be a loaded concept which defines the need for the monarch to be independent of religious control. From Bartolo da Sassoferrato down to Jean Bodin (whose *De Republica* was a textbook both in Cambridge and London, and had been printed *cum privilegiis* of both the "Most Christian" King of France and the "Most Serene Queen of England"), that term meant, first of all, that a sovereign, in order to be *sibi princeps* (i.e. self-sovereign), had to be independent of any other power; Bodin's *souveraineté absolue*, for instance, concerns first of all the sovereign's relationship not to the subjects who were below, but to those theocratic religious powers who claimed the divine right and duty to be *above* him.[34] "In practical terms this meant that early modern princes, in order to acquire self-sovereignty, had first of all to subdue these overlords and so become lords over their lords."[35]

If we follow this thread, Shakespeare engages with a philosophical tradition spanning from Plato to the medieval philosophers Averroes, Al-Farabi, and Maimonides, to the early modern Machiavelli and Bodin: a theory in progress that advocates the strengthening of secular power over religious influence, while using religion as an instrument for the masses, breaking the ground for the modern separation of church and state.

[33] Sacerdoti, "'Self-Sovereignty' and Religion", 90.

[34] Jean Bodin, *The six Bookes of a Commonweal. A facsimile reprint of the English translation of 1606* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

[35] Sacerdoti, "'Self-Sovereignty' and Religion", 91.

> For all its mysterious strangeness, then, the hunting scene of *Love's Labour's Lost* is nothing but an emblem or hieroglyph which depicts on the stage a model of such an ideal arch-self-sovereignty as not even the English Queen, certainly the most sovereign of European sovereigns, was entitled to have. This model, of course, was utterly blasphemous and unacceptable to both Catholic and Calvinist authorities.[36]

Unlike radical Protestantism, in fact, Catholicism can coexist with monarchy, especially if the sovereign subdues the Roman Lord and takes his religious prerogatives in his own hands. For in such a way it can become a most powerful and efficient *instrumentum regni*, granting the Monarch *all* powers, both civil and ecclesiastical. According to Sacerdoti, the Shakespearean scene is both a specific encomium of the royal huntress's actual sovereignty and a subtly emblematic way of hinting at an even greater self-sovereignty and *plenitudo potestatis*. Making use of the same tropology of blood deployed by Shakespeare, Bruno first mocks the Catholic sacrifice of the mass and then obliquely suggests that, for merely outward and political reasons, the Queen, and princes in general, would do well to accept the compromise and celebrate with their own hands that same sacrifice that has been mocked.

At the time of its composition, Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* may well have been a deliberate intervention in a topical political debate, a plea to Queen Elizabeth (who, as we mentioned, owned a precious edition of Bruno's works) to follow the example of Henry IV of France or even to go *plus ultra*: if Henry has to attend mass in order to become king, the princess of *Love's Labour's Lost* is the one who officiates it.

The effacement of Bruno from Shakespearean debates is made thus even more striking because even if one may dispute any interpretation of his philosophical opinions, his proximity to the Elizabethan court, and its intellectual elite is undeniable.

In the Eye of The Tempest

In more recent years Sacerdoti has turned his attention to *The Tempest*, with a series of compelling essays in which the scope of the analysis is slightly different. In this case, close scrutiny is given to no single passage or concept as much as to a comprehensive thematic pattern informing the whole play. Sacerdoti reminds us that Shakespeare typically articulates an important

[36] "'Self-Sovereignty' and Religion", 93.

trope at different levels, and through different characters and styles, inviting a comparison which illuminates implications not immediately accessible in the events taken individually. The opening scene of *The Tempest* presents the theme of the insurrection of subordinates toward their superiors in a very dramatic fashion ("What cares these roarers for the name of king?", 1.1.16–17); the same situation is repeated in a comical key on the island where Caliban rises against Prospero and recruits the "drunken butler" Stephano. This attribute seems to reference the "evil cupbearer" of Plato's Republic (Book VIII), the leader who brandishes liberty but ultimately leads his people to tyranny and not democracy. How can a true leader respond to the rabble-rouser? By being a magus, like Prospero.

> The play … begins with a storm in the midst of which a boatswain, called "bawling, blasphemous, incharitable dog!" (1.1.39–40), challenges a king to stretch his royal hand and placate the waters, performing an act capable of demonstrating *de visu* his connection to God. It continues with a magus who, thanks to his "secret studies" (1.2.77) and his incomparable knowledge ('for the liberal arts / Without a parallel', 1.2.73–74), produces a series of magic "tricks" [fn: "I must use you in such another trick" (4.1.37)] that provoke "wonder, and amazement" (5.1.104) in those who are unaware of their cause and interpret them as 'miracles' [fn: "miracle" (2.1.6); "A most high miracle!" (5.1.177)] and supernatural events [fn: "These are not natural events" (5.1.227)] caused by a "heavenly power" (5.1.104). This allows the magus to pursue his political project of restoring to his progeny his lost power and expanding it, after which he can abjure magic and withdraw to private life.[37]

Once more, the interpretations of Yates and Sacerdoti could not be further apart. In line with recent Brunian criticism that focuses on the operational aspect of magic, the magus is the heroic individual who knows how to interact with and remodel the cycles of nature. He is also the one who can use his secrets as special effects to mesmerize the ordinary people and pursue his political agenda. Sacerdoti points out in *Sacrificio e sovranità* that the first magus was Moses, who used miracles for his own political ends and who is the founder of all revealed religions.[38] In this light *The Tempest*, staged in the presence of King James I, affords less the vision of a weary duke aspiring to art and isolation than another direct political intervention by Shakespeare.

[37] Sacerdoti, "Shakespeare e l' Infinito libro di segreti della natura", unpublished.
[38] Sacerdoti, *Sacrificio e sovranità*, 229–273.

Sacerdoti and Political Theologies

Sacerdoti's Shakespeare is disorienting. To read *Nuovo cielo, nuova terra* in 1990 was an uncanny experience for the reader immersed in critical debates and culture wars of the Anglosphere, in which Shakespeare was fully implicated. The translator who will hopefully be entrusted with the fascinating task of rendering Sacerdoti's elegant and idiosyncratic Italian prose may have the impression that the author was shipwrecked on Prospero's island at least two decades before the field of Renaissance studies was changed by invisible bullets and postcolonial Tempests. Even an Italian reviewer noticed the oddness of a book which references Theodore Spencer rather than Foucault to explain the role of analogy, whose tutelary spirits are Edgar Wind, Erwin Panofsky, Frances Yates, and whose "favourite, and inexorably applied, mode of reasoning is that of logical demonstration" versus "a criticism dominated by linguistic epiphany".[39] Clearly reluctant to align himself with the current debates of contemporary criticism and deaf to the sirens of the post-structuralist turn (to which the dynamics of Italian academia were not in themselves conducive), Sacerdoti has remained an eccentric even in the world of Italian criticism of Shakespeare.[40] By postulating that Bruno's philosophy had an ascendency on Shakespeare, among other English intellectuals, Sacerdoti bypasses the precepts of new historicism, favoring influence over circulation, quotation over resonance, direct reference over metaphor, philosophy over popular belief, an elitist Shakespeare over a demotic one, the macropolitics of kings and cardinals over the micropolitics of class, gender, and race. The most paradoxical difference, though, lies in the fact that Sacerdoti implicitly describes a model of intellectual intervention into politics wildly discordant with that of new historicists, who, according to Alan Liu, projected onto the supposed powerlessness of their Renaissance equivalents their political inaction.[41] Sacerdoti's Shakespeare is humanistic in contrast to the dialectical playwright preferred nowadays; he is the herald of a definite political message rather than the mobilizer of several discourses and he is far more subversive than any cultural materialist has ever dared to imagine

[39] Franco Marenco. "Shakespeare in Italia." *L'Indice* 10 (December 1991): 10.

[40] In Michele Marrapodi, "Introduction: Shakespeare Studies in Italy Since 1964." In *Italian Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, edited by Michele Marrapodi (Newark: University of Delaware Press and London: Associated University Presses, 1999), 7–18.

[41] Alan Liu. "The Power of Formalism: the New Historicism." *English Literary History*, 56.4 (1989): 721–771.

him. In characteristically (old) historicist fashion, Sacerdoti links him to a definite worldview, not to the waning "order and degree" philosophy of Tillyard's Ulysses but to the new, radical philosophy of Giordano Bruno.[42]

If the connection between Bruno and Shakespeare was first suggested in the nineteenth century, when the philosopher became a symbol of the newly born secular state of Italy against the despotic Church of Rome, and if Yates embodied the zeitgeist of the 1960s, what do we make of the background of Sacerdoti's writing since the 1990s, without the advantage of historical distance? The end of the Cold War in Italy and the decline of the strongest Communist Party in Western Europe brought about various political and cultural issues—the collapse of an entire political system in Italy saw the ascent of the magus Silvio Berlusconi and the return of religion and theology at the center of the political debate, both on the right and the left. Before the rhetoric of the multitude was reworked by Antonio Negri and others to confront the new global scenarios of the twenty-first century, any concept of mass movement was monopolized by the society of the spectacle and by the charismatic figure of John Paul II, himself a protagonist of that society. The bold and isolated philosopher who takes up arms against dominant ideologies and cleverly manipulates the collective imaginary is a powerful figure mirroring both the antipopulist intellectual and the numerous modern-day courtiers who flock to the service of the new rulers. However, such presentist reading of Sacerdoti's work does not take us very far, because his works demand refutation before they invite deconstruction. What is the potential and what are the limits of Sacerdoti's interpretive framework? We can answer by raising a number of methodological questions and objections. Does Sacerdoti's hypothesis of Shakespeare as a self-conscious agent in a political debate hold? Was the encoded Bruno a cue by other courtiers and political actors or just another piece of philosophical and political material that Shakespeare was absorbing and dramatizing with his protean talent for appropriation? Can this new Bruno hypothesis be tested in other plays? Are these simply Shakespeare's sporadic interventions or is there a sustained and consistent engagement with Bruno's ideas, especially in his major plays, and in particular in those which were written near the crucial date of 1603, when the accession of James I changed the political expectations of Bruno's English friends?[43]

[42] The reference is to E.M.W. Tillyard. *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943; London: Penguin Books, 1988).

[43] It is the case of *Hamlet*, as Hilary Gatti argues in *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge*.

If Bruno manifests himself at both ends of Shakespeare's career, with *Love's Labour's Lost* written during the reign of Elizabeth and *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest* written in the reign of James I, both coinciding with political periods where new possibilities of reform were opening up, shall we surmise that other texts may at least contain meditations on Brunian themes? And what are the general consequences of assuming that Sacerdoti imagines, *à la* Skinner, Shakespeare's plays as speech acts targeting a specific political context?

Some more general objections to Sacerdoti's approach may come from Tzachi Zamir's recent suggestion that there are three reasons why it is ill-advised to place Shakespeare's works in dialogue with thinkers from his age.[44] Quoting Montaigne, Bodin, Hooker, More, and Calvin (but not Bruno), Zamir argues that it is first of all impossible to distill Shakespeare's thoughts or philosophical positions from his plays, which offer too many rival and mutually contradictory opinions. Second, an obstacle is the relationship between the locutionary and illocutionary force that any philosophical statement acquires in the dramatic context. The third point is more problematic: "Finally, to historicize Shakespeare's philosophical relevance means to relegate his philosophical significance to the history of philosophy (and not to one of its grander moments at that) rather than making him a partner to contemporary thought."[45]

Sacerdoti successfully resists the first two types of criticism. His critical paradigm does not rely so much on the choice of a specific political spokesperson in the plays as on a thematic web and pattern which, especially in the case of his reading of *Love's Labour's Lost*, contains a specific hypothesis concerning the illocutionary function of the play at the court of Elizabeth. As for the third objection, it is not clear why historicizing Shakespeare's philosophical relevance should deplete attempts to align him with contemporary thought (even assuming that the present moment is "grander" than the early modern period, as Zamir maintains). A Brunian reading of Shakespeare does not and should not exhaust the philosophical potentialities of the plays and it is in fact self-defeating to suggest that proving a link between two coeval intellectuals should disenfranchise Shakespeare in terms of any further productive tension with later thinkers. By the same

[44] Tzachi Zamir. "Shakespeare and Philosophical Criticism." In *Thinking with Shakespeare*, edited by Rosy Colombo and Nadia Fusini. *Memoria di Shakespeare. A Journal of Shakespearean Studies* 1 (2014): 33–56.

[45] Zamir. "Shakespeare and Philosophical Criticism", 35.

token, Sacerdoti's "Platonic" reading of the *Tempest* is at variance with both the postcolonial paradigm and the subtle "creaturely" interpretation offered by Julia Lupton.[46] Caliban as a philosophical icon may jar with contemporary psychological and political visions of the character and the critical and creative efforts to recognize his agency. But once again there is no fundamental contradiction between the two perspectives, and one could argue on the contrary that it would be productive to investigate the influence of such early modern philosophical threads in the afterlives of Caliban and other characters.

Another area of debate where it is logical to situate Sacerdoti's work is that of the renewed and growing interest in religion and political theology in Shakespeare and early modern studies. If Bruno was an utterly anti-Christian thinker whose Catholic leanings were purely instrumental, the Brunian connection would add an unsettling *tertium* to the burning controversy over Shakespeare's religion (which, incidentally, is very similar to that involving Bruno himself). As the editors of a recent collection usefully put it: "We take the phrase 'political theology' to identify the exchanges, pacts, and contests that obtain between religious and political life, especially the use of sacred narratives, motifs, and liturgical forms to establish, legitimate, and reflect upon the sovereignty of monarchs, corporations, and parliaments."[47] Political theology, as we will see in further detail in Chap. 7, is also a central preoccupation of the "Italian theory" of Roberto Esposito, Giorgio Agamben and Massimo Cacciari, among others. "Theology and politics" is the subtitle of Sacerdoti's second book, and the use of the conjunction may be a telling signal of his idiosyncratic approach.

> Art and literature … have a role to play in freeing the hardened notes of political theological fantasy so that they can be someone to perform new cultural and psychic work. We might speak here of a *political theology 1* (inveterate, entrenched, phantasmatic, and reactionary, the stuff of Nazism, racial panic, and the arcane imperii), and a *political theology 2* that would rework and re-figure those disturbing and cores of psychic life, not only in order to create an easement from their tenacious claim, but also to recover and repurpose whatever it is that makes them so resilient.

[46] Chantal Zabus. *Tempests After Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Julia Reinhard Lupton. *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

[47] Graham Hammill, and Julia Reinhard Lupton, eds. *Political Theology and Early Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 1.

> Political theology, then, is not itself a politics so much as it sees the condition for a range of modern political positions and socio-poetic experiments.[48]

Given that Bruno is never taken into account in these debates, Sacerdoti becomes a strong candidate for a *political theology 3*. Concurrently, he also problematizes the standard liberal position of Italian critics and their attempt to neutralize religion as a separate component that can be easily marked out and defused so as to produce an impartial, fully secularized area, a position that seems to be held by the major Italian scholars of Bruno, Eugenio Garin, Giovanni Aquilecchia, and Michele Ciliberto.[49] On a related but different note, it is important to record alternative historical positions, such as that of Hilary Gatti, who, unlike Sacerdoti, associates Bruno with moderate Protestant stances.[50] Last but not least, it would certainly be productive to read Sacerdoti alongside other contemporary critics, notably Andrew Hadfield, who have been exploring Shakespeare's interest in republican themes.[51]

In conclusion, whether we accept or reject Sacerdoti's point of view that Shakespeare was an active Brunian who deliberately encoded some of the philosopher's subversive ideas in his poetical and dramatic works, it appears that this perspective poses certain ineludible questions to a number of critical positions and possibly illuminates some of the biases and blind spots of mainstream Shakespeare criticism and its identity politics.

[48] Hammill and Lupton, *Political Theology*, 5.

[49] "We may indeed consider Bruno to be a 'philosopher of the Renaissance' in that he occupies the middle position in a line which if towards the past it reaches back to classical and pre-classical positions concerning natural philosophy and cosmological intuitions, as to the future it would be impossible to deny that he anticipates positions which are scientifically supported in our own days." Giovanni Aquilecchia, "Giordano Bruno as philosopher of the Renaissance." In *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher of the Renaissance*, edited by Hilary Gatti (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 13.

[50] "[T]he nucleus of ideas which Weber brought together under the heading of The Protestant Ethic can be found again and again in key passages of Bruno's philosophical texts … And it was through an energetic dedication to the new science, combining for Bruno as for Weber, both a Platonic moment of imaginative inspiration and an empirical or practical outcome in terms of a communal endeavour to attain the sommo bene on earth, that, for better or for worse, the doorway of the Pythagorean Academy would eventually open, leading into the modern world"; Hilary Gatti "Giordano Bruno and the Protestant Ethic" in *Giordano Bruno: philosopher of the Renaissance*, edited by Hilary Gatti (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 166.

[51] Andrew Hadfield. *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

In the year 2000, a symposium in Venice marked the 400th anniversary of Bruno's execution in Campo dei Fiori in Rome, and a sober plaque was placed on the façade of Palazzo Mocenigo, where the philosopher was arrested in 1592. No public controversy ensued, nothing that could even faintly echo the long battle fought over Bruno's monument a century earlier in Rome.[52] However, a few days later the plaque was mysteriously gone, and only four black bolts on the white marble now frame its ghostly presence. "Even if *Antony and Cleopatra* was the only Shakespearean play in which a specific secret of nature was specifically communicated as such,—writes Sacerdoti—we may not exclude that other plays may carry the traces of that secret's implications."[53] The rest cannot be silence.

[52] Bucciantini, *Campo dei Fiori*.
[53] Sacerdoti, "Shakespeare e l'Infinito libro."

CHAPTER 7

Hamlet in Venice

The adjective *amletico*, meaning "of Hamlet …, with reference to his personality, irresolute and full of contrasts", is the codified tribute that the Italian language has paid to Shakespeare and his best-known character.[1] In this chapter, *Hamlet* is enrolled as a special guide to contemporary Italian theory, a philosophical constellation that has generated a good deal of international interest and suggested a new perspective on the classic question of Shakespeare's Italy.[2] "Hamlet has … provided, over the

[1] "Di Amleto, proprio di Amleto, personaggio dell'omonima tragedia di Shakespeare, con riferimento al suo carattere irresoluto e pieno di contrasti", *Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana. Il Conciso* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 1998), 67.

[2] As Paul Kottman and Julia Lupton argue: "In recent years, the writings of Giorgio Agamben on sovereignty, bare life, and states of exception have become a touchstone in recent Shakespeare criticism. In a different quarter, Italian neo-Marxists such as Antonio Negri and Paolo Virno identify life with the generative capacities, the 'constituting power,' of creative social arrangements that emerge from 'the multitude'—understood as a protean, increasingly globalized collectivity that overlaps with but is not fully identical with the sovereign 'people' of the modern nation-state. The term multitude itself stems from Machiavelli's *Discorsi*, which traveled north via Hobbes and Spinoza, and then returned to Italy in the past century through Gramsci. Thus, Machiavellian inquiry, born in the permanent emergency of the Italian city-states, loops through northern Europe—coloring both the republicanism of England and Holland and the authoritarian liberalism of Hobbes—in order to find its way to a uniquely Italian modernity. Reversing this itinerary invites us to review the traditions of republicanism and civic humanism associated with Venice and Florence through the frameworks of both biopower (Agamben) and constituent power (Negri). By emphasizing the extent to which these intellectual imports from contemporary thought are in fact built from

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016

S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1_7

centuries,—writes David Bevington in his cultural history of the play—a kind of mirror, a touchstone, a key to understanding the collective and individual self."[3] Italian theory is generally acknowledged to be a philosophy of praxis; this case study examines the political praxis of a major Italian theorist in the mirror of his analysis of *Hamlet*. An Italian philosopher and erstwhile member of both the Italian and European parliaments, as well as mayor of Venice for twelve years, Massimo Cacciari left his office in 2010, a year after the publication of his book *Hamletica*, a philosophical triptych on Shakespeare, Kafka, and Beckett.[4]

As Lorenzo Chiesa and Alberto Toscano have remarked in *The Italian Difference: Between Nihilism and Biopolitics*, the "theoretical 'laboratory Italy' [has had] a remarkable capacity to speak—frequently through the medium of radical misunderstanding—to a bafflingly disparate set of situations. It is all too easy to imagine a Reading Agamben in Bogotà, a Reading Negri in Tehran, a Reading Vattimo in Beirut, a Reading Esposito in Seul."[5] These displaced readings and radical misunderstandings imply a detachment from the cultural and political contexts where these theories were originally formulated, and an obliteration of the political practices to which they are sometimes directly associated. My focus here is then the sociology of philosophy that Chiesa and Toscano consider beyond their remit, as I propose a "Reading Massimo Cacciari *as* Hamlet in Venice", against the political background of the city that he guided for over a decade.

If Shakespeare is a language in which we continuously translate ourselves, I propose to read traces of Cacciari's political practice in his interpretation of the Shakespearean text that has traditionally garnered the

materials native to the Renaissance itself, we hope to suggest an approach to Shakespeare and Italy that is both responsive to contemporary concerns and fully oriented by the landmarks and neighborhoods of the plays themselves." Paul Kottman and Julia Lupton, "Shakespeare's Italy, from Machiavelli to the Present", Panel proposal to the International Shakespeare Association, Ninth World Shakespeare Congress, Prague, 2011.

[3] David Bevington, *Murder Most Foul. Hamlet Through the Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), viii. Cf. Margreta de Grazia: "one of the great sources of Hamlet's cultural prominence is his free-standing autonomy. Existing independently of the play in which he appears, he glides freely into other texts, both fictional and theoretical", *"Hamlet" without Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4.

[4] Massimo Cacciari, *Hamletica* (Milano: Adelphi, 2009). All subsequent quotes, in my translation, are from this edition.

[5] Lorenzo Chiesa and Alberto Toscano, eds., *The Italian Difference: Between Nihilism and Biopolitics* (Melbourne: re.press, 2009), 5.

most critical attention from philosophers.[6] While trying not to reduce the text to the context and not to confound the reader with the conundrums of Italian politics, I hope to show that Cacciari's approach to Shakespeare may provide some insights into certain blind spots of Italian theory and into the Italian "collective and individual self".

The Mayor-Philosopher

It is impossible to summarize in brief the multifaceted career of Massimo Cacciari, who, if less known abroad than his colleagues Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri, or Gianni Vattimo, has been very influential for them and the Italian Left, and far more active in institutional politics.[7] The intellectual path of this *enfant prodige,* born in Venice in 1944, ideally began in Prague, since he credits Kafka for opening up the philosophical horizons that he has been pursuing for fifty years now, and it is significant that *The Castle* is the text that Cacciari reads alongside *Hamlet* in the book under consideration.

After a brief affiliation with Potere Operaio, a radical left-wing worker's party, Cacciari joined the Italian Communist Party (PCI); he was elected to the national Parliament, where he served from 1976 to 1983. Those were the years where the PCI, the largest Communist party in Western Europe, reached its political zenith with 34 % of the votes, the year of Cacciari's election, at a time where it was gradually distancing itself from the Soviet sphere of influence and was challenged by a host of more radical fringes.[8] But as he was representing the communists and occupying himself with their industrial politics, Cacciari was busy dismantling the grand narratives of classical Marxism and especially its progressive historicism, by theorizing a "negative thought" inspired by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger.[9] Another key aspect of his formation,

[6] Paul Kottman, ed., *Philosophers on Shakespeare* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 8.

[7] An excellent introduction to and selection of Cacciari's work is to be found in Massimo Cacciari, *The Unpolitical: on the Radical Critique of Political Reason*, edited and with an introduction by Alessandro Carrera, translated by Massimo Verdicchio (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009).

[8] These fringes were the breeding ground of Italian theory, producing many influential intellectuals and politicians still active today.

[9] Massimo Cacciari, *Krisis. Saggio sulla crisi del pensiero negativo da Nietzsche a Wittgenstein* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1977). Cf. Cacciari, *The Unpolitical.*

relevant to frame his interpretation of *Hamlet*, is that Cacciari collaborated with other important Marxist intellectuals and artists such as the composer Luigi Nono, the painter Emilio Vedova, and the architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri, who became close friends and paternal figures. To this day Cacciari continues to invoke them as ghostly presences whose wisdom and authority remains unsurpassed. A professor of aesthetics since the late 1970s, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the metamorphosis of the PCI into a series of ever-new political avatars, Cacciari became the protagonist of a new political phase.

In 1993 he was elected mayor of Venice, at a critical juncture when a corruption scandal had wiped out most traditional parties and Italian citizens were able for the very first time to vote for a specific candidate instead of leaving the business to byzantine negotiations between factions. The *polis* seemed the ideal place to reconstruct a renewed sense of politics, literally annihilated by the collapse of twentieth-century ideologies and utopias: Cacciari's election evoked for many the Platonic model of the city-state ruled by the philosopher kings. Becoming the only progressive leader in a conservative region otherwise dominated by the Christian Democrats and later by the media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi's newfangled party Forza Italia, Cacciari campaigned more and more vocally at a national level for an alliance between the progressive components of the Catholic and socialist/communist traditions, which constituted the political basis of his city council. During this intense phase, he also managed to publish his most ambitious theoretical works, *Dell'Inizio* (1990/2001) e *Della cosa ultima* (2007) as well as two important essays on the concept of Europe, *Geofilosofia dell'Europa* (1994/2003) and *L'arcipelago* (1997/2005).[10] At the same time, his marked interest for theology became increasingly manifest, making the atheist Cacciari the most sought-after interlocutor for Catholic intellectuals and church representatives, almost invariably less versed in trinitarian arguments than him. In 2000 he unsuccessfully tried to become governor of the Veneto region, a defeat that may have thwarted his national ambitions. The prince did not become king and returned to teaching, but in a surprise move he ran again for mayor of Venice in 2005, in an unprecedented run-off between two left-wing candidates. This last-minute decision led to a

[10] Since the 1980s all the most important works by Cacciari have been published by Adelphi press in Milan. As their double publication dates indicate, he frequently revisits and revises them.

hairbreadth victory, and the support he won from conservative circles scared by his rival (a communist magistrate) forced Cacciari to form a city government controlled by Catholic moderates. An initially very popular mayor, despite his proverbial haughty and dismissive attitude, Cacciari gradually lost his consensus while his intellectual appeal steadily grew. In 2010, after successfully supporting the election of a Catholic moderate mayor, Cacciari retired from active politics, devoting himself to his position as dean of the department of philosophy that he had cofounded at a private Catholic university in Milan.[11]

Hamletica

Cacciari's incursion into Shakespeare recapitulates simultaneously the main tenets of his political philosophy and the politics of literary criticism in mainstream Italian culture. Impatient of the subtleties and family quarrels of Shakespearean criticism, his bibliography is characteristically limited to grand thinkers available in Italian translation (Auden, Bloom, Girard, Florenskij). In the classic dispute between Hamlet as the icon of modern subjectivity and Hamlet the political actor, Cacciari stands squarely with one of his guiding thinkers, Carl Schmitt.[12] Through the intriguing mediation of Giordano Bruno's concept of *actuositas*, he translates Hamlet's classic dilemma on being into a dilemma on doing.[13] "Hamlet is the pivotal figure who calls into question the possibility that to do means to accomplish, to fulfill, to bring to completion, to terminate, to dispose, *to decide*" (21). To act against Claudius would not be a real decision, but the achievement of an objective pursued by someone else, the Ghost. "The ghost demands the pure decision. But what kind of decision is an imposed decision?" (16). As the reading continues, it becomes clearer that Hamlet is not our contemporary, *à la* Jan Kott, but, like Nietzsche and all of Cacciari's intellectual heroes from turn-of-the-twentieth-century Vienna, he is *posthumous*, condemned to be misunderstood or ignored in the present; he is not political

[11] The institution itself, singlehandedly created by a charismatic Catholic priest and entrepreneur, was shaken by a major embezzlement scandal at his death in 2011.

[12] Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of the Time into the Play*, trans. David Pan and Jennifer R. Rust (New York: Telos Press, 2009).

[13] Cacciari, who has always been interested in Renaissance philosophy, draws here on Gilberto Sacerdoti's pathbreaking, post-Yatesean inquiry into the relationship between Shakespeare and Bruno, *Sacrificio e sovranità. Teologia e politica nell'Europa di Shakespeare e Bruno* (Torino: Einaudi, 2002). See Chap. 7 of this book.

but *unpolitical*. Unpolitical, a conceptual term that has defined Cacciari's philosophy for thirty years, means the opposite of its literal definition of "not concerned with politics".[14] On the contrary, being unpolitical means facing and embracing politics in all its factuality, without legitimizing it through values, considering it as a naked struggle for power divorced from all theological and moral implications. To begin with, Hamlet feels he has no real access to the past, to the grounds of his father's conduct and of his manifestation as a ghost (who, pace Stephen Greenblatt, Cacciari locates in Hell).[15] "If the past is venerable, why is it deferring to us, how can it be foundational if its 'presence' is constrained to appeal to us, to our wretchedness, to implore us to be 'carried on'"? (25). Cacciari follows Nietzsche's parallel between Hamlet and the Dionysian man: "Both have truly seen to the essence of things, they have understood, and action repels them; for their action can change nothing in the eternal essence of things."[16] He maintains that "[t]he apparition of the Ghost opens Hamlet's eyes not to a horrendous crime that provoked the crisis of a kingdom, but to the total decay of the values that appeared to sustain the kingdom" (26). However, this nihilistic prince is ineffectual in a Nietzschean transvaluation of all values: "Hamlet finds himself to be a stranger to all the systems that surround him, that of the courtier and that of the Machiavellian politician, that of philosophy and that of honour. And yet he is incapable of 'overcoming' them. He coexists with them, thinking about their disintegration; he sees them with the eyes of the fool at the graveyard" (32).

What then distinguishes the unpolitical Hamlet from a merely antipolitical Hamlet, disgusted with the rottenness of Denmark? The fact that he is everything but inert: "Hamlet does indeed act. But his actions cannot proceed according to the order he had received—and not even by contradicting it. In order to contradict it he would require new values replacing the ones that unhinged the world" (31). The unpolitical man cannot risk entering into a dialectical relationship with the past, offering an antithesis to its thesis: "To piece the world together one would have to *think* a new beginning, that presupposes a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate" (30). This prince, in conclusion, is not a *Princeps,* he who—as Julia Lupton

[14] See Alessandro Carrera's excellent introduction in Cacciari, *The Unpolitical*, 1–43.

[15] Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[16] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, translated by Michael Tanner (London: Penguin, 1994), 39.

reminds us—“makes a beginning in a new constitutional order that will subsume him”.[17] Hamlet’s actions will then proceed “undecidedly”:

> they will be Machiavellian like those of a king when he gets rid of his “friends” Rosencrantz and Guilderstern; they will be domineering like that of a sovereign “outside of the law” in the terrible scene of the killing of Polonius; he will be caught in his own ploys in the scene of the pretended madness and the play at court; down to his last exploits, weaker and weaker, almost longing for an end, any end … Hamlet is the opposite of the victor as a “pure and innocent soul”. He intervenes, he acts, he kills but “occasionally”. The impossibility of finding a ground for his own purpose does not lead to inaction, but to the inability to *cut* the continuity of time, to fulfill an epoch and to start a new one. (31–33)

Hamlet does not shy away from the political stage: while always striving for a moment of constitutive power, he is actually reduced to playing a set of roles that can even have lethal consequences, and finds his own performance invariably inadequate.[18]

How to break this vicious circle then? Cacciari’s crucial move is to turn to a different character: “Ophelia is the authentic stranger … the only figures that is worth her own death … Ophelia is as stranger in the theatre of the world as is her own god: unconditional love, that demands nothing and fulfills its own figure precisely in its being misunderstood and unrequited” (36). Subordinate to the roles enforced on her by her father and Hamlet, “she ‘obeys’ her violence as if she turned the other cheek … While everyone is left with the shame of having still *to act*, she, the weakest person, has demonstrated the power to de-pose her own spirit … Her figure is fulfilled; fulfilled is the judgment that she expressed in the only form of purity: silence” (37–38). Cacciari is anxious to ward off a religious interpretation of Ophelia’s behavior, reminding us that she does not pray and that her death may have been blasphemous. Ultimately, no salvific message may be drawn from the play: “In the world of Hamlet, the only hope is that of a negative theology” (39).

[17] Julia Reinhard Lupton, “Hamlet Prince, Tragedy, Citizenship, and Political Theology,” in *Alternative Shakespeares 3*, edited by Diana E. Henderson (New York: Routledge, 2007), 185.

[18] Borrowing Auden’s definition, Cacciari believes that for Hamlet the only option is “to play at possibilities” (W.H. Auden, *Lectures on Shakespeare* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000], 164), always finding his own performance insufficient. “What I play cannot be what I am and what I do. As much as he struggles, Hamlet cannot identify with his roles to the point of making of them his own life” (Cacciari, *Hamletica*, 34).

Beauty and the Monster

The temptation to draw a biographical parallel between Hamlet and Cacciari, two melancholic and irascible princes well versed in German philosophy, haunted by the ghosts of their fathers and capable of playing many roles, is irresistible but would be of very limited import. The personality and trajectory of this idiosyncratic thinker are less relevant than a certain socio-anthropological configuration that seems to reproduce itself at various levels in Italian culture, including a sophisticated system such as that of Cacciari.

In her seminal book *Beauty and the Monster: Discursive and Figurative Representations of the Parental Couple from Giotto to Tiepolo* (2006), early modern historian Luisa Accati has argued that Catholicism in Italy should be understood less as religious institution or belief than as a long-term anthropological situation.[19] In a fascinating iconographic analysis that traces the gradual disappearance of St. Joachim and St. Joseph (the father and husband of Mary) from Italian religious painting, Accati argues that Italy is a patriarchal society with weak fathers. It is a Catholic culture defined by the cult of a Virgin increasingly removed from her physical embodiment, and finally declared by the Church "exempted from any personal or hereditary sin", thanks to the doctrines of her immaculate conception and perpetual virginity. As a corollary, the paternal figure in Italy is doubled into a strong spiritual father, the celibate priest representing the Church, and a weak natural father, connected to the secular power and constructed as morally inferior. In Accati's astute psychoanalytic reading, this doubling makes it seriously difficult for the son to identify with this diminished father. The authority of the Church, based on the pure, unsullied relationship between mother and son, is contrasted with the imperfect relationship between father and son that characterizes civil authority. Accati usefully elucidates that this configuration is peculiar to Italian Catholicism, where the presence of the Church and the absence of a strong centralized state have created a different balance (or lack thereof) between the spiritual and the temporal power than in other Catholic states such as France or Spain. The elevation of a divine woman to supreme cultural icon has paralleled the constant and enduring marginality of actual women in society, culture,

[19] Luisa Accati, *Beauty and the Monster: Discursive and Figurative Representations of the Parental Couple from Giotto to Tiepolo* (Florence: European Press Academic Publishing, 2006), 9–15.

and politics. The social and individual identity of women is dissolved in the collective subject of the quintessential Mother, controlled by the ecclesiastical authority. This sharpens the conflict between father and son, making it insoluble. In Italy, Accati contends, we all claim to be the children of the same mother, so we are all brothers, and nobody is bold enough to define himself as an adult and challenge the Church.[20]

Bearing in mind that "there is no story of Ophelia that is not properly the history of her representation, reflecting each era or culture's characteristic construction of women's role, madness, and essentialized notions of femininity".[21] Accati's interpretation leads us back to Cacciari. While longing for an ultimate decision that can separate itself from all the specters of the past, moving even beyond Schmitt's decisionism, Cacciari projects this ideal of transvaluation onto the image of a silent woman who has been forced to choose between speaking the words of others, getting to a nunnery, or giving birth to sinners. Nun, harlot, mystic—Cacciari's vertiginous speculations aimed at a nihilistic overcoming of all foundations end up chiming with the rigid symbolism of the most dogmatic institution in Italy.

By contrast, the other contemporary Italian philosopher who has engaged with *Hamlet*, the feminist Adriana Cavarero, finds in Ophelia echoes of a pagan figure whose autonomy lies outside of the Christian matrix.[22] While she agrees on the diagnosis of Ophelia as Hamlet's (and *Hamlet*'s) "other", who "thrives on deep estrangement from the political context",[23] Cavarero locates Ophelia's alterity not in her silence, but in her corporeality and in the words she pronounces in her fits of madness.[24] While construed by the male gaze of the other characters as a typically ambivalent, contradictory object of worship and desire, she appears to elude the discursive structures in which she has been constrained: "[A] side of Ophelia's icon seems to be produced that exceeds the control of the text.

[20] This may also explain why major Italian feminists extol the papal views on gender and the happy life of mystics and nuns, and radical theorists favor St. Francis over Marx. In Accati's opinion, this tenuous paternal authority invites always negative identifications and it is a well-documented fact that Italian ideological configurations, from progressive antifascism to old and new forms of anticommunism, have been the only effective ideological cement.

[21] Kaara L. Peterson and Deanne Williams, "Introduction: the Afterlives of Ophelia." In *The Afterlife of Ophelia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

[22] Adriana Cavarero. *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy, and the Question of Gender*, translated by Robert de Lucca and Deanna Shemek (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

[23] Cavarero, *Stately Bodies,* 155, 122.

[24] *Stately Bodies*, 149.

The icon proves able to migrate, so to speak, toward an autonomous history."[25] Contrary to Cacciari's "mariological" reading of the character, Cavarero evokes a different mythological context:

> The point is that in Ophelia as nymph, mermaid, siren, Shakespeare cannot help alluding to an originary *sign* of the female sex in its natural connection to water. Even Shakespeare, it seems cannot resist citing this association, in a sort of poetic surrender to the autonomous power of the ancient image. The enduring tradition of water-bound women points constantly to the seductive power of an image that, perhaps more than any other, evokes the enigma of a different sex. For thousands of years, an unresolved alterity based on the female *monstrum* of that liquid element has left traces within the androcentric universe that has dominated texts.[26]

The realm of the unpolitical is then accessible through a different route than the one suggested by Cacciari:

> In the image of the mermaid, briefly located outside temporal and historical logic, the body of Ophelia is saved. Her female body lies outside the political ruin whose metaphor is the worm-eaten body; it moreover takes no part in the clearly masculine substance of the metaphor itself. The millennial and foundational expulsion of women from politics, which is disturbing enough when a queen sits on the throne, cannot help but leave its traces in a body employed as the metaphor for politics itself.… In one sense her body is received as a corpse, for the customary funeral belonging to the social order. In another sense, however, her body gains immortality with an aquatic image, which expresses both her estrangement from a political history of crime and ruin, and her resistance to the patriarchal codes of the world.[27]

Cavarero's figuration of the immortal body of Ophelia offers a powerful feminist alternative to Cacciari's philosophical autopsy. According to the male philosopher, by sending Ophelia to the grave Hamlet may have enabled a sudden irruption of the political in the rotten state of Denmark, but his dark and gloomy understanding of procreation also precludes any hope for the future: the Prince will not become a father. Alongside the

[25] *Stately Bodies*, 152.

[26] *Stately Bodies*, 152–153.

[27] *Stately Bodies*, 158–159. For a feminist reading of Ophelia's death and burial, especially in film adaptations, see Carol Chillington Rutter, *Enter the Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare's Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 27–56.

marginalization of women in politics, a second socio-anthropological factor comes into view. Catholic Italy is the country with one of the lowest birthrates in the world and behind the stereotype of the "mama's boy" lies a tenacious social configuration in which women are urged to become mothers (or showgirls) and children are reluctant to become adult and inhibited from becoming socially and professionally independent. This also translates into a remarkably slow turnover in politics, society, and culture: Italy is not a country for young men (let alone women). The attendant irony lies in the fact that power was—and still is—by and large held by Cacciari's generation, that envisioned a social revolution in the 1960s. Some of them still advocate progressive views, others have crossed to the other side and, with the zeal of the convert, have become the most uncompromising conservatives; others seek new existential grounds. But whatever their position, they share a surprising generational solidarity. Haunted by their ghostly fathers, they are loath to pass down their legacy to their children, often blaming them for not being able, in turn, to rebel against their fathers. These contemporary Italian Hamlets are far from inert and they "occasionally" strike lethal blows, almost invariably at the wrong adversary, especially women. While making a titanic effort to break the symbolic order of the system, many radical thinkers often replicate its more reactionary formations. Since Italy is a conservative country where the Church holds phenomenal influence, it is more realistic to curry favor with it or court its supposed representatives rather than to oppose it in the name of alternative values (since values are "bad conscience" anyway). Negative theology may be antithetical to the official theology, but it oddly reaffirms the same social matrix. While longing for a new constitutional order, Italian Hamlets *à la* Cacciari engage in an endless series of ruthless *realpolitik* acts, without ever offering resignation, in both meanings of the word.

Hamlet, Prospero, Lear

There are certainly more things in Cacciari's philosophy that can be accounted for here, and any reductionist reading of Italian theory should be resisted. However, the coincidence between the most radical meditations of some Italian philosophers and their position vis-à-vis the role and representation of women and younger generations should not be dismissed as irrelevant. In the 1970s and 1980s, a generation of aggressive and exceptionally bright young *men* defied a stagnant Italian society and occupied many key positions of power. Thirty years later, this

army of determined Fortinbras has been turned into a host of aging Hamlets who have not yet exorcized their ghostly fathers, have silenced their Ophelias, and have not been able to open new space for their children. No surprise that while Hamlet wavered, Prospero ruled. A figure with uncanny Shakespearean connotations, the contemporary Duke of Milan Silvio Berlusconi stole the stage for two decades by subduing his people with the "rough magic" and mesmerizing spectacles of his media empire. The crisis, indecision, and internal feuds of the political left were crucial factors for the long political and cultural hegemony of Berlusconi, who cultivated Renaissance philosophy and published a series called "The Utopian Library", where next to his favorite Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* he included Machiavelli, Bacon, Marx, Engels, Erasmus, and Giordano Bruno. Massimo Cacciari was himself the editor of Thomas More's *Utopia*.

In early 2014, Italy experienced a major turning point when its parliament elected the 39-year-old Matteo Renzi as the youngest prime minister the country ever had. A member of the Democratic Party with a solid Catholic background, Renzi had a precocious political career at an administrative level and then built his national reputation as "rottamatore" ("the scrapper") of old and long-standing politicians and administrators. The first secretary of the Democratic Party not to hail from the Communist tradition, this mayor of Florence has gained the national success that always eluded the mayor of Venice, creating both widespread enthusiasm and deep resentment, especially on the part of the traditional left. However, the transition to Renzi (and his short-lived predecessor Enrico Letta, another young and moderately progressive Catholic) took place without direct recourse to popular vote, leaving this new generation enmeshed in the old political machinations. It may not be a coincidence that during this turbulent phase of Italian politics, Massimo Cacciari returned to Shakespeare with an unpolitical reading of *King Lear*, where the themes of abdication, inheritance, and transmission are central.[28] Its characteristically apodictic incipit immediately invites an analogy with

[28] Massimo Cacciari, "Considerazioni 'impolitiche' sul *Re Lear*." In *Thinking with Shakespeare*, edited by Rosy Colombo and Nadia Fusini, *Memoria di Shakespeare. A Journal of Shakespearean Studies* 1 (2014): 129–138, http://ojs.uniroma1.it/index.php/MemShakespeare/article/view/11789, accessed 3 September 2015). Reginald Foakes reminds us that Hamlet and Lear have vied throughout the twentieth century for Shakespeare's "most topical play". *Hamlet versus Lear: Cultural Politics and Shakespeare's Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

the present Italian situation: "[T]he world is sick: 'it smells of mortality' (4.6.129). It stinks in its own flesh: the son is a disease for the father. Any agreement is impossible—every 'pact' is violated" (129). For Cacciari the play presents an apocalyptic scenario that yet denies the eschatological fulfillment of the Apocalypse, turning instead in its grotesque, carnivalesque reversal where all the characters become "masks of excess". The dissolution of twentieth-century political ideologies, which Cacciari has always openly acknowledged and that underlay his reading of *Hamlet*, seems to be accompanied here by an allusion to the contemporary society of the spectacle. The obsessive intervention of Berlusconi on his own body to maintain an image of vigor and energy, or the wholesale import of American-style political campaigns focused almost exclusively on the candidates' "image" at the expense of content, lend themselves to the definition of "masks of excess", in stark contrast with a political culture dominated for most of the past century by professionals deliberately producing an esoteric and numbing political jargon.

The fundamental nucleus of *King Lear* in the Italian philosopher's opinion is the *secessio* (withdrawal, separation, secession) "of Lear himself from his own being-the-king [*essere-re*]" (133). Once again what concerns us here is less a possible autobiographical subtext of the contemporary philosopher reflecting on his failed political succession strategies than a more general and symptomatic debate on the laborious generational turnover taking place in Italy. "As the King se-cedes nothing withholds the *anomy*" (134) and the "kingdom becomes the scene of the struggle between its children … the kingdom becomes the prey that in their struggle the children want to seize. Fratricide…, not parricide, is *King Lear*'s great theme" (135). Interestingly enough, at this point of the argument Cacciari changes the grammatical subject, making this dramatic situation not the exclusive responsibility of the King. It is the "Old ones" (Cacciari's own definition) who have not been able to construct "a different 'harmony' between *auctoritas* and *potestas*", with the consequence that "their impotence turns into the power *sine auctoritate* of the children" (135). Divested of the symbolic power of kingship (*auctoritas*), the new generation of rulers is left to manifest a naked will of power (*potestas*) that brings about only internecine violence and mutual destruction. Lear is to be blamed for abdicating from his essential function, *regere*, that is, "shouldering the burden of contradictions and bring them back to unity" (135). Cacciari's indictment of the king takes one final twist, which resonates with our own critical interpretation of *Hamletica*. The conflict in *King Lear* manifests,

"the inexorable decline of the *pater-potens* … the death of the Father-King, of paternal lordship, of *patria potestas*—of the political theology hinged on his figure" (136). This demise has been decreed by the *female heirs*, because "the father is the *orphan* of a 'natural' male heir" (137). Only love could bind Lear to his daughters, but he is incapable of comprehending love outside the paradigm of power and command. He has no biological male heirs, he does not acknowledge any other putative male heirs, and his daughters rebel against him. Cordelia, "herself the negation of the heir" (138), is the daughter who pushes the mutual contradiction of love and power to its logical extreme: "[I]f you want me to love you, give up your power over me." In this light "Cordelia and Ophelia are spiritually antithetical figures", because while Ophelia embodies unconditional love, Cordelia represents the "radical *secessio* from the idea of *agape*" (133). In a curious reminiscence of his interpretation of Ophelia, Cacciari attributes to Lear's favorite daughter an oxymoronic "silence-speech" that leaves no way out to the king.

In conclusion, no real inheritance or succession is possible in either play, in part because of the fatal mistakes of the fathers but mostly for a structural inability of the children to reconstruct a world fallen apart. In a radically different reading of *Hamlet*, Julia Reinhard Lupton has suggested that:

> Hamlet's final words announce not his accession to some form of kingship in the moment of death, but rather his passage into the chain of friendship that will survive Hamlet and take up his story: "Horatio, I am dead. / Thou liv'st. Report me and my cause aright / To the unsatisfied". (5.2.280-282)[29]

While for Cacciari both *Hamlet* and *King Lear* focus on the impossibility of transmission, Lupton envisions a future where the rest is *not* silence (especially that of women) and those who come next are not ineluctably condemned to fratricidal strife. On the contrary, the "cause" can and must be reported to "the unsatisfied", and ideas and values can and must be handed down. No such promise is admissible for Cacciari, whose disenchanted verdict is that in *King Lear*'s catastrophic scenario "*No* faith founds here the hope that a day of the Lord may follow one day" (138, emphasis added). Toscano and Chiesa have called attention to "the increasing

[29] Julia Reinhard Lupton. "Tragedy and Psychoanalysis." In *A Companion to Tragedy*, edited by Rebecca Bushnell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 102.

significance of Christian and Catholic thematics" within Italian theory, but its full import, a real return of the repressed, has remained underexamined.[30] By taking his leave with a note of *absent* faith, obsessively evoked and denied in its metaphysical import, Cacciari responds to the crisis by rejecting the possibility of a religious redemption, as he had done in his judgment of Ophelia's death. Does this repeated disavowal betray psychoanalytically a deep nostalgia for a symbolically reassuring world? Once more the ghostly presence of an absent God/father is haunting a world with very little chance for women and children.

[30] Chiesa and Toscano, *The Italian Difference*, 5.

PART III

Place

CHAPTER 8

The Grave and the Ghetto: Shakespearean Places as Adaptations

The scene is familiar. It may take the form of an email, a phone call, or even a knock at the office door. The person is usually very deferential, a tone that is curiously at variance with the fact that he or she is here to tell you that you have got it all wrong, that your career is based, at best, on a macroscopic oversight or, at worst, on a malicious plot to hide the truth. This is what everyone agrees upon: William Shakespeare was not himself and his works came from somebody else's quill. The consensus stops there simply because the candidates for the authorship are the most disparate and each proponent comes along with the strongest credentials and the most conclusive evidence for the name each of them champions. I continue to be struck by the seeming contradiction between the cordial tone and the utter contempt for your intellectual position, as if they paid tribute to your academic standing and simultaneously considered it the major stumbling block to the final revelation. The various conjectures made by Shakespeare deniers have been brilliantly refuted by Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson, and historicized by James Shapiro.[1] What interests me here, however, is the fact that for many of these literary detectives, Italy is a key place for unveiling the enigma of Shakespeare. They represent an extreme and eccentric version of a larger phenomenon that inspires many people, mostly with more serious agendas and epistemologies, to seek some sort

[1] Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); James Shapiro, *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010).

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016

S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1_8

of Shakespearean truth or authenticity in different Italian locales, from ancient Rome to contemporary Venice. Much attention has been paid to how Shakespeare appropriates and adapts various Italian cities; the focus of this chapter is the way in which Italian cities appropriate and adapt Shakespeare, participating to his myth and industry.

Archaeology Versus Allegory

There are two antithetical viewpoints concerning the status of Shakespeare's settings, which we may call, respectively, the archaeological and the allegorical position. With the archaeological position, the Verona of Romeo and Juliet is a real place that Shakespeare authenticates by way of accurate historical and geographical details. Some are so fascinated with this possibility that, contrary to all the evidence, they try to prove that such realism necessarily points to a firsthand experience, making the author closer to the adventurous lives of his characters and enabling the modern tourist to follow in his wake. Some use these hypotheses even to deny that Shakespeare was who he was, a fact discredited scientifically but worth mentioning because it remains a very popular discourse when Shakespeare is associated with Italy and accompanies many modern-day travelers to Verona, a city where fact and fiction, as we will see later, blend most interestingly. The most exhaustive example of this is Richard Paul Roe's *The Shakespeare's Guide to Italy: Retracing the Bard's Unknown Travels*, a book which its prestigious mainstream publisher describes variously as "Equal parts literary detective story and vivid travelogue", a "thirty-year quest to find the locations in which Shakespeare set his ten Italian plays", a text that will "irrevocably alter our vision of who William Shakespeare really was" and a "meticulous study [that] reveals the secrets that have eluded scholars for centuries".[2] For the author, an American lawyer who devoted the last 25 years of his long life to this opus, Shakespeare's Italian plays were basically their author's Baedeker, the faithful chronicle of an actual journey, revealed in countless details that Roe teases out by following in the playwright's footsteps. It takes a less than skeptical reader to show that what the book conveys is primarily an irresistible desire to be proven right, an admirable devotion for Shakespeare as a repository of riddles, and a genuine self-satisfaction at solving them.

[2] Richard Paul Roe, *The Shakespeare's Guide to Italy. Retracing the Bard's Unknown Travels* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011). The quote is on the publisher website: http://www.harpercollins.com/9780062074263/the-shakespeare-guide-to-italy, accessed 3 September 2015.

With the opposite, allegorical position, an Italian setting is merely a conveniently distant and exotic locale that allows the author to comment about his own time and place—London—without running the risk of censorship or slander. In this sense, Shakespeare could have set the same plot in any other location not too close to home, as if printing the disclaimer "any resemblance to actual persons and events is purely coincidental". In 2007, I found myself involved in a debate between the archaeological and the allegorical. I co-authored a book called *Shakespeare in Venice: Exploring the City with Shylock and Othello* with Alberto Toso Fei, a writer specializing in Venetian myths and folklore.[3] We were blessed with a review in *The Times*, were mentioned in the opening paragraph of an important academic book on the same subject, and were featured in a popular documentary on Shakespeare's Italy. Gratification aside, we were slightly amused that two of the authors reported that we had made Shakespeare's presence in Venice a fact, while the third was most insistent that we should openly confirm it. As it happens, nowhere in that book did we make such claim nor, in our opinion, did we leave room for ambiguity. We believe, that when there is no evidence for a fact (in this case that Shakespeare came to Venice) and there is a simpler explanation for the alternative hypothesis (he had easy access to many books and stories on a very famous city), there is no reason to change your mind. So what is striking is the *desire* to imagine that Shakespeare did visit Venice, a wish—witness Roe—devoutly held for various reasons. What we did do was imagine an itinerary for a fictional visit by Shakespeare to Venice, describing many wonderful sites with a view not to demonstrate the power of reality to influence art but rather to emphasize the opposite, meaning the power of art to influence both the reality and the long tradition of passionate Shakespeareans who have come to Venice to visualize *their* Shylock, Othello, Desdemona, Jessica, or Portia. Ironically, this makes us even more naively proud of our city (at a time of unprecedented social and civic crisis), for its ability to travel and strike the imagination of Shakespeare at a distance, without the aid of films and websites. Graham Holderness' commentary, after citing us as supporters of the hypothesis of Shakespeare's Italian trip, makes a connection between our fantasy about Shakespeare walking the streets of

[3] Shaul Bassi and Alberto Toso Fei, *Shakespeare in Venice. Exploring the City with Shylock and Othello* (Treviso: Elzeviro, 2007). It is quite curious that according to Graham Holderness's *Shakespeare and Venice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), we make the claim that Shakespeare actually visited the city; he seems to have needed that point to make a more effective counterpoint.

Venice and the various anti-Stratfordians who fill the inevitable gaps in Shakespeare's biography with wild speculations about his life and identity.[4] My original statement that "there is no evidence that he did, but no doubt he visited it with his mind over and over again" seems to me to go in that direction, and to be more epistemologically solid than Holderness' firm conviction that "Shakespeare never did visit Venice". Not because I believe that he *did* but for two other important reasons. First, the fact emphasized by Holderness that Shakespeare lived in Cripplegate when writing *Othello* is an interesting piece of information, but hardly a proof that he was not in some other place some other time. It seems to me that the struggle against conspiracy theorists cannot be won by accumulating more and more biographical details in the face of a barrage of weird conjectures—gaps will always remain—but rather by insisting that the burden of evidence lies solidly with them, not with those who maintain that Shakespeare was Shakespeare. More importantly, it is most certainly not productive to leave the ambiguity and indeterminacy in the hands of the deniers. On the contrary, I want to reclaim that ambiguity and uncertainty as a wonderfully exciting space for fiction. No other city, I believe, has attracted more actors, directors, scholars, and readers wishing to provide visual details to support their stagings, adaptations, or, simply, personal readings of Shakespeare. Our own fantasy of the poet getting lost in the Venetian maze is exactly that: a fiction, a humble addition to a distinguished tradition of daydreamers such as Charles Dickens, who wrote in *Pictures of Italy*:

> There, in the errant fancy of my dream, I saw old Shylock passing to and fro upon a bridge, all built upon with shops and humming with the tongues of men; a form I seemed to know for Desdemona's, leaned down through a latticed blind to pluck a flower. And, in the dream, I thought that Shakespeare's spirit was abroad upon the water somewhere: stealing through the city.[5]

In sum, both the archaeological and allegorical approaches paradoxically concur to deny any place the power to signify beyond itself. Writing on Shakespeare's Verona, Angela Locatelli defines it "as a cultural space…in which meanings are created, values established, and both are constantly

[4] http://bloggingshakespeare.com/shakespeare-out-of-venice, accessed 3 September 2015.
[5] Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), 84.

negotiated, inside and can be outside the space itself".[6] There is no doubt that *Romeo and Juliet* can be adapted to other contexts while still maintaining its dramatic power, but the multiple meanings associated with Italy by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the spoken and unspoken assumptions, risk being lost in translation: the more we understand of Shakespeare's Verona (or Venice), the more we can adapt the findings to another locale. Conversely, though, some modern stereotype of Italy is too often written into the scenes and costumes of productions of the play, potentially fostering the impression of a timeless country unchanged since the Middle Ages. Moving within the spectrum of allegory and archaeology, we will now consider, with a comparative aim, the different cases of Shakespeare's two most Italian cities.[7]

In Verona, Romeo and Juliet are a crucial and recognized component of "their" city and its tourist industry. The two lovers are ubiquitous in the urban landscape, from dedicated tourist sites to stores and merchandize capitalizing on their reputation. The famous balcony is a prime pilgrimage destination. Weddings are celebrated at Juliet's grave and public employees respond on her behalf to the letters she receives from all over the world. Many local residents are convinced that Romeo and Juliet were historical characters.[8]

By comparison, Shakespeare is almost invisible in Venice. Other than a few scattered references, no museum or monument references the liaison between the writer and the city. Admittedly, Venice has an inordinate number of tourist attractions, and Othello and Shylock are no Romeo and Juliet (who, on the other hand, have a hotel named after them here, given after all that we are only a couple of hours away from Verona), for the Jew and the Moor are unsettling figures, not romantic icons. The city that eventually rejects them in their respective plays remains silent

[6] Angela Locatelli, "The fictional world of Romeo and Juliet: cultural connotations of an Italian setting." *Shakespeare's Italy: Functions of Italian Locations in Renaissance Drama*, edited by Michele Marrapodi, A.J. Hoenselaars, Marcello Cappuzzo, and Lino Falzon Santucci (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 69.

[7] Statistically Rome is the setting of more plays but it is clearly the Rome of the classical past.

[8] Paola Pugliatti, "The True History of Romeo and Juliet: A Veronese Plot of the 1830s." In Tom Clayton, Susan Brock, and Vicente Fores, eds. *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean: the Selected Proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress, Valencia, 2001.* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 388–399.

about these former citizens who lose their citizenship, identity, and life; the society that has exploited them seems not to require their services anymore.

Verona: Over Her Dead Body

Verona was not even where it all started. The first modern source of *Romeo and Juliet* is a novella by Masuccio Salernitano, where Mariotto and Ganozza's tale of love and death develops in a back-and-forth trip from Siena to Alexandria.[9] It is in Luigi Da Porto's "Hystoria novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti" (1524) that the action moves to Verona, in the early fourteenth century. The family names are derived from Dante: "Vieni a veder Montecchi e Cappelletti" ("Come and see the Montecchi and Cappelletti"), *Purgatory* (VI, 106), and we owe to Da Porto the names Romeo and Giulietta (imagine the lines "But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? / It is the east, and Ganozza is the sun"). The same plot was expanded by Matteo Bandello and translated into French by Pierre Boaistuau, whose *Histoires tragiques* (1559) became the source of two English versions used by Shakespeare. Nicole Prusner reminds us that all these texts were part of a larger cultural system and web of references: "Verona, as it is represented in these three novellas [Da Porto, Bandello, Boaistuau], appears as a synecdoche for the broader political situation against which Dante rails so vehemently in the Purgatorio."[10] Prusner also suggests the "wish to elevate the love of Romeo and Juliet to the ranks of Dante's love for Beatrice" and argues that these specific references "help to explain the common confusion between historical fact and fiction where the Romeo and Juliet tale is concerned", a "misconception" that accounts for the visits of tourists to the balcony and grave of Juliet in Verona.[11]

[9] "Mariotto from Siena, in love with Ganozza, flees to Alexandria after becoming a murderer. Ganozza pretends to be dead and, having been taken out of her tomb, goes in search of her lover. Mariotto, having heard of Ganozza's death, seeks his own death by returning to Siena. He is recognized, captured, and his head cut off. Not finding Mariotto in Alexandria, Ganozza returns to Siena where she learns her lover has been beheaded. She dies of grief embracing his body" (Nicole Prusner, *Romeo and Juliet Before Shakespeare: Four Early Stories of Star-crossed Love* [Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2000], 19).

[10] Prusner, *Romeo and Juliet*, 11.

[11] *Romeo and Juliet*, 15, 11.

However, there is probably more than Dante and an "archaeological" interest in the city. It can be safely argued that Verona itself is the most successful adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. A literary myth can break the banks of the aesthetic and spill over into other domains such as onomastics, tourism, industry, and advertising. Verona is an important center in one of the richest regions of Italy and Europe, and when the Englishman Richard Lassels described it in his *Voyage of Italy* (1670), he recommended a visit to "the famous tomb of the Signori della Scala, who once were Masters here, and from whom Joseph and Julius Scaliger pretend to have come".[12] Little could he suspect that one day, thanks to his countryman Shakespeare, the tomb of Escalus would be far less famous than another sepulcher, as recorded in 1817 by Lord Byron:

> I have been over Verona. The amphitheatre is wonderful—beats even Greece. Of the truth of Juliet's story, they seem tenacious to a degree, insisting on the fact—giving a date (1303) and showing a tomb. It is a plain, open, and partly decayed sarcophagus, with withered leaves in it, in a wild and desolate conventual garden, once a cemetery, now ruined to the very graves.[13]

A process which began in the early nineteenth century has now turned Romeo and Juliet into a landmark and trademark of Verona: the tomb is still a popular destination and Juliet's house, with its famous balcony, is visited by a million people every year. The paradox is that the place that promises the illusion of the closest contact with the reality of Romeo and Juliet is also the most self-consciously fictional. In 1831, a book written by a political exile made the claim that Romeo and Juliet had been real historical characters and that their story was based on fact. Verona and the whole of Northern Italy were under Austrian rule at the time and, as Paola Pugliatti shows, the factuality and originality of the plot signified "the vindication of local identity and the pride of one's own traditions and history".[14] A century later, in 1935, the Hollywood producer Irving Thalberg sent a troupe to Verona to research the city's libraries and photograph several locations for George Cukor's film *Romeo and Juliet* (1936). After ruling out the possibility of shooting in Italy due to the political

[12] Richard Lassels, *Voyage of Italy, or a complete Journey through Italy* (Paris: Vincent de Moutier, 1670), 437.

[13] George Byron, *Byron's Letters and Journals, vol. V: "So late into the night", 1816–1817* (Cambridge, Ma: The Belknap Press, 1976), 126.

[14] Pugliatti, "The True History", 395.

uncertainties of Europe, "an imaginary Verona was built on MGM's largest back lot",[15] less a realistic version of the city than an idealized setting that would eclectically combine several styles and motifs to fit the dramatic action of the play. The balcony, in particular, was modeled after the exterior pulpit of the Cathedral of Prato, decorated by Donatello in the fifteenth century. The international success of the film rekindled curiosity over the sites linked to the story, unmarked for a long time, and Antonio Avena, director of the city museums, opened the house. The first floor was redesigned on the model of Francesco Hayez's painting *Romeo and Juliet's Last Kiss* (one of the many artifacts that had made Romeo and Juliet popular in Italy before Shakespeare's play was accepted in its own terms)[16] and although the English Shakespeare and the American Hollywood epitomized Fascist Italy's sworn enemies, "[t]he literary prestige of the Romeo and Juliet play was harnessed by the regime as a manifestation of Verona's great cultural tradition and evidence of its Italian genius".[17] The additional irony is that the balcony is in fact a tomb, a medieval sarcophagus that was previously held at the museum of Castelvecchio. Today, Juliet's tomb is the site where many couples come from all over the world to crown their dreams of love and tie the knot in the place where Romeo and Juliet saw their hopes shattered. Ramie Targoff has suggested that the play expresses a new sense of marital intimacy that continues after death into the grave.[18] Clearly, the bond of love that kept the two lovers together until the very end continues to be stronger than any bad omen related to their violent death (Fig. 8.1).

When Paola Marini, director of Verona's city museums, describes in the official guide to the site the "ritual-like experience of one's pilgrimage to this special site in fair Verona",[19] she acknowledges that the pilgrim lovers have given way to the pilgrim tourist, the traveler who seeks "the

[15] Maria D'Anniballe, "Redefining Urban Identity in Fascist Verona through the Lens of Hollywood's Romeo and Juliet." In *New Perspectives in Italian Cultural Studies: The Arts and History*, vol. 2, edited by Graziella Parati (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson, 2012), 224.

[16] Maria Grazia Messina, "Da Romeo e Giulietta a Otello: melodramma shakespeariano nell'immaginario visivo del romanticismo italiano." *Memoria di Shakespeare* (2000): 1000–1014.

[17] D'Anniballe, "Redefining Urban Identity", 234.

[18] Ramie Targoff, *Posthumous Love: Eros and the Afterlife in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

[19] Anna Villari, *The House and the Tomb of Juliet* (Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2011), 3.

Fig. 8.1 Juliet's balcony, Verona. CCL

security of pure cliché".[20] This is where the popular lapses into the kitsch, transforming the story into an assortment of commodities that can be acquired inexpensively and are supposed to provide quick and easy access to the highbrow world of Shakespeare. Over the dead body of Juliet, her father celebrates the uniqueness of art as an antidote to mortality: "For I will raise her statue in pure gold, / That whiles Verona by that name is known, / There shall no figure at such rate be set / As that of true and faithful Juliet" (5.3.299-301). Popular culture (a category to which Shakespeare belonged to some extent) tries to make art more accessible; the function of kitsch is to completely erase the distance, a mechanism that can be seen literally at work in *Juliet's Statue*, a sculpture made in 1972 and placed in the museum's courtyard. A tradition that cannot be any older than that suggests that touching Juliet's right breast brings good luck in love, meaning that the body part is "worn shiny by contact with so many hands"[21] and forcing the city to commission a replica of the statue

[20] Paul Fussell, quoted in Joseph Luzzi, *Romantic Europe and the Ghost of Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 219.

[21] Nick Squires, "Verona commissions replica "Juliet" statue after one too many brushes with tourists." *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 February 2014. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/

to remedy the wear and tear. A whole wall behind the statue is covered with constantly removed pasted love notes and padlocks, the result of a "padlock craze" started in 2004 by the blockbuster novel of teenage love *Three Meters above Heaven* by cult author Federico Moccia. Kitsch provides instant gratification and the impression of having experienced the love of Romeo and Juliet without any need to read or see the play. One may agree with Paola Marini's tongue-in-cheek remark that "[b]ecause of their immaterial quality, the values at stake here can hardly be threatened by mass tourism".[22]

Pop and kitsch most likely intermingle in another famous phenomenon. Inside the museum there is an area called Juliet's Desk where you can choose whether to contact your heroine by ordinary mail or by email. Corresponding with Juliet is made possible by the *Juliet Club*, a group "in charge of a very unique task: replying to the thousands of letters that are addressed to 'Juliet' from everywhere in the world. A team of experienced volunteers read all the letters and reply in all different languages." Volunteers are actively sought, with a preference for "candidates with backgrounds in foreign languages, psychology, sociology, literature and journalism" who must be fluent in written English. "Particularly welcome are skills like psychology, creativity and empathy, meaning the ability to transmit messages of love and hope on behalf of Juliet" (www.julietclub.com). Conceived in the 1930s by Ettore Solimani, after he collected the first letters that people left at the feet of Juliet's tomb where he worked as an attendant, the group acquired its present form in 1991, when Giulio Tamassia enlisted university students to help with the translation and replies. The club was made famous by Lise and Ceil Friedman's book *Letters to Juliet* (2006), and by Gary Winick's film adaptation (2010).[23] If *Romeo and Juliet* is about adolescent love challenging social and political obstacles, and if the book pays tribute to the writers' ability to discern and respond to genuine desires and troubles, in the American film the parallel romance between two elderly widowers who had fallen in love in their youth and two younger people who try to reunite the old couple celebrates passion without impediment, rivalry, or strife. With the scene

worldnews/europe/italy/10660642/Verona-commissions-replica-Juliet-statue-after-one-too-many-brushes-with-tourists.html, accessed 3 September 2015).

[22] Villari, *The House and the Tomb of Juliet*. 3.

[23] Lise and Ceil Friedman, *Letters to Juliet. Celebrating Shakespeare's Greatest Heroine, the Magical City of Verona, and the Power of Love* (New York: Abrams, 2006).

rapidly shifting from Verona to the stereotypical Tuscan countryside beloved by foreign visitors, the old and new lovers are happily (re)united in no time and everybody else is happy too. Paul Kottman has argued that *Romeo and Juliet* foreshadows a distinctly modern sense of individualism.[24] The movie envisions a society of liquid love where individualism is becoming more and more a matter of unhindered satisfaction without any social obligation. All the elements of Shakespeare's comedy, where the happy ending is predicated on the overcoming of a number of obstacles, are absent in this contemporary comedy. The political laboratory of early modern Italy has given way to the picture postcard country where under the Tuscan sun, love and pleasure (always with delicious fare on offer) can be consumed *à la carte* with no hindrance or hurt feelings.

In Juliet's house, Shakespeare's play is represented in a truly postmodern way through a seamless juxtaposition of artifacts of different epochs and genres, mixing fact and fiction, history and myth. Some of the signs of Romeo and Juliet have become floating signifiers, loosely connected to their original sources but taking on a life of their own in the culture of global consumerism. The "timeless" love of Romeo and Juliet also seems to say something about who we are in the here and now.

Venice: "*indirectly to the Jew's house*"

> LANCELOT
> Turn up on your right hand at the next turning,
> but at the next turning of all, on your left, marry at
> the very next turning, turn of no hand but turn down
> indirectly to the Jew's house.
> GOBBO
> By God's sonties, 'twill be a hard way to hit.
> 2.2.37-41

If one thing may convince Venetians that Shakespeare had firsthand knowledge of their city, it is the mischievous directions Lancelot gives to his blind father Gobbo: instructions that evoke the labyrinthine design of the city and the marginal position of the Jewish quarter where Shylock

[24] Paul Kottman, "Defying the Stars: Tragic Love as the Struggle for Freedom in *Romeo and Juliet*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63.1 (2012): 1–38.

would have lived, called the Ghetto.[25] Shakespeare does not mention the Ghetto, but the Ghetto is presupposed in *The Merchant of Venice*. We may argue that this specific site originates the Shakespearean text as an indispensable, nonliterary *source*, since the social and cultural dynamics of the play, compared to those of the tale by Ser Giovanni Fiorentino that provided Shakespeare with the pound-of-flesh plot, are enabled by that new space legally constituted by the Republic of Venice in 1516. The social interaction between Shylock and the Christian merchants, his ambivalent relationship with conviviality (the much discussed contradiction between "I will not eat with you, drink with you", of Act 1, Scene 3 and the invitation to dinner he accepts in Act 2, Scene 5), and above all the romance between Jessica and Lorenzo are all the result of the creation of a defined and sanctioned space where Jews were simultaneously included in and excluded from the city.

"Ghetto", the word that has become synonymous with ethnic segregation, originated here. In 1516, the city Council decreed the removal of the Jews, who had fled to the city after the rout of Venice at the battle of Agnadello, *e corpore civitatis* ("from the body of the city"). It was decided to confine them to the former "Public Copper Foundry" (*Geto del rame del nostro Comun*) used in the past to manufacture ordnance, securing their services but keeping them safely at the margins. It is not clear whether it was the early German foundry workers or the incoming German Jews who, by gutturalizing the initial "G", turned the Getto into the Ghetto.[26] In 1555, Pope Paul IV decided to model new segregated Jewish quarters located in papal territories after the Venetian area; from there its name spread in space and time to other ethnic enclaves and countless other physical, psychological, and metaphorical forms of limitation and confinement. Today millions of people worldwide feel that they live in a "ghetto". Constrained within the narrow limits of an island, surrounded by water and multiethnic and multilingual, thanks to the various ethnic groups of Jews who had arrived in different waves from Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the Ottoman Empire, the Ghetto became at once a place of segregation and a safe haven for refugees, possibly the best compromise for the incomers at that time. The new arrivals were

[25] I reference here the text *The Ghetto Inside Out* (Venice: Corte del Fontego, 2013) that I co-authored with Isabella di Lenardo, to whom I owe specifically the urban history of the area.

[26] It is a curious fact that even the OED can accept alternative etymologies in the face of evidence.

given permission to build their places of worship as long as they were not immediately recognizable from the outside, which explains why the older Venetian synagogues are incorporated into residential buildings. When the Jews entered the Ghetto, where rents immediately rocketed, they had to make a virtue of necessity. Blocks became taller and the headroom in apartments much lower: six- or seven-story buildings had to accommodate as many as ten apartments. Despite the strict regulations which forbade Jews to leave the area from sunset to sunrise and prescribed the wearing of a yellow badge during daylight excursions, the Ghetto saw considerable incoming and outgoing traffic and became a vivacious social and cultural melting pot. An incisive account by Arnold Zable summarizes the salient features of the society residing there:

> The ghetto was isolated, yet its isolation protected its residents. And they took their chances. They created a mini civilisation, a city within the city, invested it with its own myths, its subtle glories. Some came to see it as a biblical camp of the Hebrews, a miniature Jerusalem, a way stop for scholars and pilgrims. There were five synagogues, one each for the German, Italian, Spanish, French and Levantine communities that settled here, each community with its history of dispossession, its journey in search of a new way to scrape a living. They made the ghetto a centre of culture, complete with literary salons, an academy of music, a theatre, and a place of commerce with inns for merchants and travellers. The main street was lined with bookshops, second-hand dealers, printing works, pawnbrokers and banks, tailors' workshops. Venetians were drawn to the district as soon as the gates were unlocked at dawn. In time the boundary between ghetto and city became more fluid.[27]

The Ghetto was indeed a mini civilization that provided, among other things, a positive theological response to Henry VIII during his divorce, helped the rabbis of Amsterdam construct a community that dared expel Spinoza, and enabled the publication in Venice of one-third of all the Hebrew books printed in Europe—including the first edition of the Talmud; it was the cosmopolitan home of intellectuals such as Leone Modena, Sara Coppio Sullam, and Simone Luzzatto. Many of these cultural achievements, like the Hebrew books printed by Christians or the synagogues designed by Christians, were collaborative enterprises. In a city like Venice, known internationally for its architectural and artistic beauties, the Ghetto still presents itself as the only large square in the city without

[27] Arnold Zable, *Violin Lessons* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2012).

a church or any arresting façade, making of it more a source of curiosity than admiration. It is a singular coincidence that studying the form and everyday life of the typical Venetian campo, Suzanne H. Crowhurst Lennard defines it as "an enlarged Shakespearian theatre".[28]

Interestingly enough, the Ghetto was initially a coveted destination for foreign travelers, including Shakespeare's contemporary Thomas Coryat and the above-mentioned inventor of the Grand Tour, Richard Lassels. A contemporary Jewish community was a matter of curiosity for early modern English visitors who did not have the possibility to witness any on their national soil. Coryat visited a synagogue in the Ghetto in 1608: his initial impression was that the Jews themselves were wanting in respect of the sanctity of their temple, their rabbi "pronouncing" from the Torah "not by a sober, distinct, and orderly reading, but by an exceeding loud yaling [=yelling], undecent roaring, and as it were a beastly bellowing of it forth", and prayers conducted neither kneeling nor with heads uncovered, as would be proper in a holy place. In fact for a Jew to kneel is an act of blasphemy and covering the head is a sign of respect. His visit, however, also gave him the opportunity of confronting his other prejudices, typical, of an England that had long since expelled its own Jews:

> I observed some few of those Jews especially some of the Levantines to be such goodly and proper men, that then I said to myself our English proverb: To look like a Jew (whereby is meant sometimes a weather beaten warp-faced fellow, sometimes a frantic and lunatic person, sometimes one discontented), is not true. For indeed I noted some of them to be most elegant and sweet-featured persons, which gave me occasion the more to lament their religion.[29]

Later Coryat engages in a theological dispute with "a certain learned Jewish rabbi" and is astonished that the latter seems unwilling to be converted. Indeed the discussion becomes heated and the unfortunate Englishman finds himself surrounded by a pack of hostile "unchristian miscreants" and is rescued only by the timely intervention of the ambassador Sir Henry Wotton who happens to be passing in his gondola.

[28] S. H. Crowhurst Lennard, *The Venetian Campo. Ideal Setting for Social Life and Community* (Venice: Corte del Fontego, 2012).

[29] Thomas Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities*, London, 1611. Modern edition: *Most Glorious & Peerless Venice*, edited by David Whittaker (Charlbury: Wavestone Press, 2013; Venetian chapters only).

Recounted by a man who in the same pages expresses his alarm at the idea of Jewish circumcision "with a stony knife", this testimony offers a curious mixture of censure and admiration, curiosity and polemic, deeply rooted prejudice and profound respect. It highlights, in any event, the role of the Ghetto as a place of cross-cultural exchange and misunderstanding (with no contradiction between the two aspects), a contact zone that stimulates interrogation, translation, comparison, reflection, even perhaps dialogue.

But when the days of the Serenissima were over, the Jews emancipated, and a new literary and mythical Romantic Venice grew out of the vestiges of the old empire, the Ghetto was erased from the cultural heritage of the city and one finds no trace of it in the high canon of Venetian literature, from Byron to Ruskin, Henry James to Thomas Mann, or even in writers with Jewish roots such as Marcel Proust or Joseph Brodsky. The few exceptions are at the margins and reveal contrasting orientations. The French Théophile Gautier stumbled upon the now dilapidated Ghetto and projected onto its dilapidation an elaborate racial fantasy:

> Probably if one were to penetrate into those cracked and rotten houses streaked with filthy ooze, one would find there, even as in the ancient Jewrys, Rebeccas and Rachels of an orientally radiant beauty, rigid with gold and precious stones as a Hindoo idol, seated upon the most precious of Smyrna rugs, in the midst of dishes gold and of incalculable riches amassed by paternal avarice; for the poverty of the Jew is only on the outside.[30]

The superficial poverty is read on the one hand as the urban analogue of a process of racial degeneration, and on the other hand as a cunning stratagem to conceal a disproportionate wealth. Although Gautier probably alludes to the Rachel of Jacques Halévy's popular opera *La Juive* (1853) and Walter Scott's Rebecca, two of the best-known examples of the nineteenth-century stereotype of the beautiful Jewess, the references to the paternal avarice and the imprisoned daughter are reminiscent of Shylock and Jessica.

Gautier was misguided, among other things, because the more affluent Jews had long since left the Ghetto behind to become active members of Venetian society, as testified by another writer. The American consul in

[30] Théophile Gautier, *The Travels of Théophile Gautier* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1912), 265.

Venice, William Dean Howells, also visits the Ghetto in the early 1860s and seems to be the first to explicitly read the area in the light of the Shakespearean connection:

> As I think it extremely questionable whether I could get through a chapter on this subject without some feeble pleasantry on Shylock, and whether, if I did, the reader would be at all satisfied that I had treated the matter fully and fairly, I say at the beginning that Shylock is dead; that, if he lived, Antonio would hardly spit upon his gorgeous pantaloons or his Parisian coat, as he met him on the Rialto; that he would far rather call out to him, "*Ciò Shylock! Bon dì! Go piaser vederla* [Shylock, old fellow, good day. Glad to see you]."[31]

The illusion of the integration of Jews into broader society in an era of bourgeois equality was shattered in 1938, when the Fascist regime declared that the Jews were not only unworthy of Italian nationality but were an altogether different "race". Exclusion from the public sphere and the withdrawal of most civil rights paved the way for the mass arrests and deportations of the final years of World War II, with approximately 8,000 Italians and 243 Venetians deported to Auschwitz, many of whom being the elderly who lived in the Old Age Home in the Ghetto. This is the only publicly visible narrative offered today to the casual tourist, thanks to two Holocaust memorials installed in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Ghetto was a key place for the literary and political vision of the Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill, but this just confirms its non-canonical status. In the 1980s, Jewish writers such as Erica Jong and Marek Halter included the Ghetto in their fiction, as the place was becoming a more visible tourist destination, the former putting Shakespeare at the center of her novel. However, the most original reinterpretation of the Ghetto comes arguably from a postcolonial angle. Caryl Phillips visited the area in the early 1980s and that experience inspired in him an essay ("In the Ghetto") which later grew into a novel entitled *The Nature of Blood* (1997).[32] While contemporary rewrites of *The Merchant* have by and large maintained the Shakespearean plot within Eurocentric cultural coordinates even when addressing issues of discrimination and anti-Semitism, Phillips' bold adaptation of *Othello* also reactivates the global dimension of *The Merchant*, a

[31] William Dean Howells, *Venetian Life* (Marlboro, VT: The Marlboro Press, 1989), 151–152.

[32] Caryl Phillips, *The Nature of Blood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 143.

play that designs a complex intercontinental map of commerce, venture capitalism, migration, and slavery.[33]

I have offered this fairly long overview as a necessary premise to the remark that, contrary to Romeo and Juliet's ubiquitous presence in Verona as endlessly reproduced simulacra, Shakespeare is invisible in Venice, where Shylock and Othello have that phantasmatic existence evoked by Dickens. If we ever see them, it is "in the errant fancy of [a] dream". While a specific discussion of Othello's presence/absence is offered in the next chapter, I would like to conclude by wondering whether it makes sense to conjure up the ghost of Shylock. The year 2016 marks five hundred years since the establishment of the Jewish Ghetto of Venice and four hundred years since the death of William Shakespeare. Different projects have been developed to connect these anniversaries, since both Venice and the Ghetto are calling for new narratives and representations to demystify the stereotypes that have accrued implacably around them. This quarter still remains the most misunderstood and misrepresented monument of Venice: because of its semiotic opacity and ambivalence, it is a palimpsest and a battleground, where competing narratives and ideologies, political, religious, and social, are continuously reinscribed, some originating locally, others projected from outside, under widely different, often pressing, political circumstances. While Venice presents itself in fixed images of eternal beauty (or in its mirror image, of decadence and moribundity), the Ghetto fully depends on its historicity. It is a space where key values and concepts are constantly renegotiated: inclusion versus exclusion; ownership versus lease; Christian versus Jew; secular versus Jew; secular versus sacred; tolerance versus intolerance; global versus local; empty versus full; majority versus minority; exile versus home; visible versus invisible; retrospective versus prospective; real versus fictional; authentic versus fake; stable versus precarious; separation versus interaction; understanding versus misunderstanding. It is also a powerful reminder that many European spaces were crossed by multiethnic and multireligious migratory currents long before the global revolution of the present day. Many contemporary authors, are currently "rewriting the Ghetto", in the light of surging interest in the role of arts, culture, and creativity in the production and reconfiguration of urban space. Caryl Phillips has been invited to revisit his essay thirty years on, and various adaptations of *The Merchant*'s are coming from

[33] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

Fig. 8.2 Compagnia de' Colombari rehearsing *The Merchant of Venice* in the Ghetto (2015) (© Andrea Messana)

writers such as Naomi Alderman, Howard Jacobson, and Clive Sinclair.[34] The most site-specific intervention is the first ever promenade production of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Ghetto, planned to honor the overlapping anniversaries. The project was launched in the summer 2015 by way of the "Shylock Project", a month-long symposium where scholars, students, and the international cast of the Colombari theater company, explored the play and its contexts from multiple perspectives, grappling with the cultural, political, and ethical implications of bringing to the "first" Jewish Ghetto its more controversial denizen (Fig. 8.2).

As the project unfolds, it is safe for now to propose questions rather than answers. Can the *Merchant* add another narrative, a new critical layer to the Ghetto of Venice? Is the project violating or infringing a sacred space? Does it impose the presence of the most hideous stereotypical alien? Is it forcing a global product on a local site? Or, conversely, is it reconnecting two narratives that have existed on parallel levels for too long? Is it adding to the reputation of the best-known Venetian Jew who never lived at the expense of the biographies of some real individual such as Leon

[34] Clive Sinclair, "Shylock Must Die", in *Death & Texas* (London: Halban Publishers, 2014); Howard Jacobson, *Shylock Is My Name* (London: Hogarth Press, 2016).

Modena, Sara Coppia Sullam, and Simone Luzzatto? Finally, such a production may end up being irrelevant or even impact negatively upon the Ghetto, where almost no Jews live anymore, but where the Jewish community, involved in the project, maintains its religious and cultural center and a moral authority recognized by the city as a whole. Whatever the prospects are, the *Merchant* in the Ghetto cannot be a philological or archeological gesture aimed at a sanitized and politically correct version of the play. The best way for the production to honor the place is to provoke a creative collision, one that addresses the ambivalence of the play and the place, one that unsettle its audience with Shylock's own words: "I am not bound to please thee with my answers." (4.1.64).

Some years ago, Gary Taylor called the opening of a New Globe in Rome a form of cultural imperialism.[35] Ironically, in his intention of defusing the colonialist import of Shakespeare, he was implicitly denying an Italian city the possibility of a genuine meaningful connection to the playwright, so reaffirming the hegemony of the Anglosphere over him. In Chap. 4, I discussed a liberal interpretation of Shakespeare in early twentieth-century Italy, where the author–my grandfather–attempted to carve out a small public space for a Jewish identity discourse that, according to the nationalistic script of young independent Italy, was to be relegated to the private sphere. Talking about Shylock provided the narrow cultural window through which Gino Bassi could present to a secularized Christian audience a basic tenet of Judaism and debunk the theological cliché of the vengeful God of the Old Testament. That window was violently shut by Fascism. In the early twenty-first century, with the emergence of a new cosmopolitan awareness and the simultaneous resurgence of anti-semitism and xenophobia, *The Merchant of Venice* could contribute to a renewed civic dimension of the Ghetto, based on a cross-cultural conversation that uses Shakespeare as a shared language.

[35] Gary Taylor, "Welcome to McBard's", *The Guardian*, 8 October 2003.

CHAPTER 9

Fixed Figures: The Other Moors of Venice

An authoritative etymological dictionary of Italian underscores the oscillation of the term "Moro" between the poles of ethnicity and religion: "Della Mauritania, dell'Etiopia, dell'Africa", or "Saraceno, Musulmano", spanning an immense cultural range. But as he delves deeper, the lexicographer admits that the derivation of the Greek archetype *mauros* is itself unknown, inspiring in him a revealing comment: "No wonder, since it referred to 'phantoms' difficult to recognize, and in general to the vague concept of darkness."[1]

Walking toward the northern limit of Venice, a labyrinthine city where the cardinal points abandon their meaning, you reach a quiet and hospitable corner where you are met by four enigmatic statues. From their history, or rather from their legend, derives the name of this place: *Campo dei Mori*, Moor square (Fig. 9.1).

What happens if we juxtapose these simulacra of stone with the more illustrious, and no less enigmatic, Moor of Venice, Othello? To survey an actual site in Venice through a Shakespearean lens always entails the risk of being cemented in the tradition of those romantic explorers for whom Shakespeare's Italian locations are not imaginative spaces but clues to a mystery, one whose foregone conclusion is that *he was there*.[2] The goal

[1] *Il Nuovo Dizionario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana*, eds. Manlio Cortellazzo and Paolo Zolli (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1999), s.v. "Moro", 1008–1009.

[2] In this chapter I often reference the research work that Alberto Toso Fei and I carried out and collected in *Shakespeare in Venice. Exploring the City with Shylock and Othello* (Treviso: Elzeviro, 2007).

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016

S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1_9

Fig. 9.1 Campo dei Mori, Venice. © Flavio Gregori

of this chapter, conversely, is to move in the opposite direction, not looking at the coincidences between text and place, but analyzing the cultural energy released by their distance, by the gap between the historical factuality of various Moors in the Venetian artistic landscape and the mythopoeia triggered by their spatial and temporal dislocation. Like Othello, the other Moors of Venice have undergone migrations and conversions, shedding their original identities and puzzling their spectators with their opaque past and mysterious present; like Othello, the less we know about their genesis, the more stories we weave around them.

Our point of departure is the master move of new historicist criticism: "[C]anonical works of art are brought into relation not only with works judged as minor, but also with texts that are not by anyone's standard literary."[3] The Moors analyzed here are minor and marginal urban texts, artifacts that do not warrant many pages in art history books and yet are

[3] Catherine Gallagher—Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 10.

endowed with the singular power of generating legends. The related methodological question is "how [can we] identify, out of the vast array of textual traces in a culture, which are the significant ones, either for us or for them, the ones most worth pursuing", a question that comes with the caveat that "it proves impossible to provide a theoretical answer, an answer that would work reliably in advance of plunging ahead to see what resulted".[4] The key phrase "either for us or for them" acknowledges the fact that the matter is as much hermeneutical as it is archaeological, foregrounding the contingency of every interpretive act. As they guide the reader into ever more remote and peripheral cultural territories, estranging her from a homogeneous and luminous notion of the "Renaissance", new historicists recognize their contemporary investments and often implicate their own individual and collective identities in their analysis to disavow the illusion of a neutral, objective exposition. It is through this fascinating and insidious dialectics between the familiar and the uncharted, the early modern and the postmodern, that Shakespeare scholars have followed the multiple genealogies and ambiguous traces of one of the exemplary strangers of Western civilization. Othello is a cryptic figure who comes from an uncertain beyond, reaches the upper echelons of the Venetian army and society, and then catastrophically spirals down to the destruction of himself and his most beloved creature. In the last 30 years, scholars have provided an unprecedented historical, geographical, and ethnographic depth to an identity that originates as the vague and generic mention of a "Moor" in a mid-sixteenth-century Italian tale.[5] Having analyzed real and fictional Moors represented in narrative, poetical, and pictorial texts, an archive that extends from the ruthless Aaron of *Titus Andronicus* to Muly Mehmet of Peele's *Battle of Alcazar*, from the Black Magus to the warrior Saint Maurice, from the Barbary ambassador to Queen Elizabeth I to the black slaves that she expelled as infidels—postcolonial and new historicist critics have redeemed Othello from his isolation, unpacking the multiple connotations and prejudices lying in the traditional analyses of the Shakespearean play and its rich afterlife. However, the only consensus they have reached is that the "Moor", in Emily Bartels' definition, is "first

[4] Gallagher—Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism,* 15 (my emphasis).

[5] Karina F. Attar, "Genealogy of a Character: A Reading of Giraldi's Moor." In *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, edited by Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 47–64.

and foremost a figure of uncodified and uncodifiable diversity".[6] Adding to the oscillations recorded by most dictionaries, John Tolan has shown how the continuous semantic shifts and false equivalence in the use of terms Saracen and Moor, Saracen and Pagan, made it possible for medieval writers from Spain to use "Moro" even in reference to pagans of antiquity.[7] Since the Middle Ages, the Moor has continuously re-presented itself as a phantasmatic figure, in the dual meaning of imaginary creature and spectral presence haunting the cultural memory of the West.

It is crucial to clarify at this point, precisely to avoid the often implied and misleading equation between "Moor" and "black" suggested by the Shakespearean text among others, that I am not concerned here with the representation of blackness in Venetian art, a subject that has been investigated by scholars such as Paul Kaplan and Kate Lowe and elaborated upon by contemporary artists such as Fred Wilson.[8] While some interesting overlappings will be also discussed below, the focus of this chapter is on artifacts where the term "Moor" is generally applied to figures that have no necessary relation to sub-Saharan Africa or to conventional representations of blackness in Western art.[9]

A different but not secondary caveat comes from Julia Reinhard Lupton, who alerts us to "recent readings of *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* [that] use scriptural references in these plays as a means of grasping *the particular*".[10]

[6] Emily C. Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor: from Alcazar to Othello* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 5. See also Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991); Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570–1630* (New York: Palgrave, 2003).

[7] John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 127.

[8] Paul H. D. Kaplan, "Black Turks: Venetian Artists and the Perception of Ottoman Ethnicity." In *The Turk and Islam in the Western Eye, 1450–1750: Visual Imagery before Orientalism*, edited by James Harper, 41–66 (Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011); "Local Color: The Black African Presence in Venetian Art and History", in *Fred Wilson: A Critical Reader*, edited by Doro Globus, 186–198. (London: Ridinghouse, 2011); Kate Lowe. "Visible Lives: Black Gondoliers and Other Black Africans in Renaissance Venice." *Renaissance Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2013): 412–452.

[9] The obvious reference here is to the multivolume opus *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (http://www.imageoftheblack.com/, accessed 3 September 2015).

[10] Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Job in Venice: Shakespeare and the Travails of Universalism," in *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, edited by Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 245.

These culturalist readings seek specific references to cultures that have been traditionally marginalized in Western civilization as a way of explicitly or implicitly vindicating them. These sophisticated probes into the early modern risk replicating some rigid forms of postmodern identity politics, where the affirmation and representation of the singular are more important than the effort to envision new political and social configurations of cultural pluralism different from the often falsely egalitarian Western liberal model. Questioning the "actual" Moors still present in Venice, armed with these questions and cautions, means to trace an itinerary that interlaces the afterlife of Othello, the history of Venice, and our early twenty-first-century standpoint.

Fixed Figures

Venice is a city with relatively few monumental statues, most of which hail from the time of Italian unification in the late nineteenth century and stand now in peripheral gardens after briefly occupying the center of the civic squares. In the times of the Serenissima, no individual deserved to rise above the collectivity, obstructing the public spaces of the city, which were intended rather for civic parades and intense social and commercial intercourses.[11] The glaring exception is the condottiero Bartolomeo Colleoni, a captain of the Venetian army (and, like Othello, a non-Venetian military leader) whose equestrian statue, a masterpiece by Andrea Del Verrocchio and Alessandro Leopardi, towers in Campo SS. Giovanni e Paolo. In fact Colleoni had aspired to no less than Piazza San Marco, but the city government was adamant in not encouraging any cult of the individual. However, looking to the margins rather than to the center, the city also offers, starting with its civic heart in San Marco, "a population of statues … a dense and tumultuous crowd".[12] Excluding other figures that reference Africa or Asia and limiting ourselves to statues identified as such, in the Piazza itself we can locate three different and equally exemplary Moors. The most visible are the bell-jacks on the summit of the Clock Tower built by Mauro Codussi between 1496 and 1499. These colossi constitute "[t]he first, large-scale, functional work of art in bronze to be commissioned in Renaissance Venice" and even though contemporary

[11] Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

[12] Renzo Salvadori—Toto Bergamo Rossi, *Venezia. Guida alla scultura dalle origini al Novecento* (Venezia: Canal & Stamperia Editrice, 1997), 9.

documents identify them as *Ziganti* (giants), for at least three centuries they have been popularly referred to as "Moors", probably as a result of the dark brown color of the bronze or the patina that formed on the surface.[13] According to Victoria Avery "the nickname is misleading as they were not intended to be regarded as Moors, but rather as savages or wild men of the woods, as indicated by their Caucasian physiognomy, ignoble features, skimpy tunics of animal pelt, unshod feet, sinewy limbs and exposed genitalia".[14] The problem of this explanation is that before you assess what *is not* a Moor, you need to know what a Moor *is*, and this is a far from straightforward issue. What is misleading for the art historian's sensibility to attribution and philology is in fact relevant for the cultural historian, who is interested in the reason why to this day many Venetians refer to the Clock Tower as Torre dei Mori rather than Torre dell'Orologio. Before we return to the phenomenon whereby moorishness is less in the intentions of the artist than in the eyes of the beholder, we may observe another Moor inhabiting the same site. Looking up at the tower from the square, the traveler of four centuries ago would have seen what nowadays we can admire only twice a year, during the week following Ascension Day (in Venetian dialect *Sensa*) and on the Feast of Epiphany; from one of the two doors at the sides of the dial, where normally we see the hours and minutes, the Three Magi emerge in procession and bow before the Virgin. One of them, the dark-skinned king often identified as Balthasar, echoes the "fixed figure for the time of scorn / To point his slow unmoving finger at" (4.2.54–56) which Othello fears he has become. Moving then toward the corner between the Basilica and the Doge's Palace, we find the group of the Tetrarchs, four figures of warriors embracing each other, probably sculpted in Egypt in the fourth century from a single block of porphyry (Fig. 9.2).[15]

[13] Victoria Avery, *Vulcan's Forge in Venus' City: The Story of Bronze in Venice, 1350–1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 93. Avery says that the designation has been known "since at least the early eighteenth century" but the nickname is already attested by Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare* [1581] (Bergamo: Leading Edizioni, 2002), 117.

[14] Avery, *Vulcan's Forge*, 93.

[15] *L'enigma dei Tetrarchi*, Quaderni della Procuratoria (Venezia: Marsilio, 2013). Otto Demus, *Le sculture esterne di San Marco* (Milano: Electa, 1995), 222–226. Cf. the political reading by Paul Veyne, *L'Impero greco romano. Le radici del mondo globale* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2009), 696–697.

Fig. 9.2 The Tetrarchs (© Flavio Gregori)

This ancient artifact was part of the rich spoils that the Venetians captured from Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204). Appropriated as legitimate booty justified by the medieval *ius belli*, many of these treasures went to decorate the renovated Basilica as part of an elaborate symbolical operation of *translatio imperii*, meant to signify the transfer of the rule of Byzantium to Venice, or at least a politics of "emulation/surpassing of Byzantine models".[16] Wedged at the side of the religious edifice and at the boundary with the Doge's palace, the embracing figures embody the conjunction of spiritual and temporal powers that the Serenissima built its own imperial myth upon, under the aegis of Saint Mark, the Evangelist. Archaeologists and historians have long puzzled over the statues, whose broken foot was found in Istanbul. Whether they depict the Emperor Diocletian and the other members of the tetrarchy, or the successors of Constantine, they were certainly meant to symbolize *fraternitas*, *concordia*, *similitudo*, powerful political allegories that would be supplanted by antithetical narratives. Because these liminal figures, positioned at the threshold of the sacred and the secular, of the East and the West (Egypt, Turkey, and Venice—a Mediterranean geography oddly reminiscent of *Othello*), have been radically changed through history, whatever their originary identity and function, their dislocation allowed Venetians to weave ever-new narratives around them. This is how Thomas Coryat, the author of the most extensive account of Venice given by a contemporary of Shakespeare, described them in 1608, bearing witness to their enduring prominence:

> Also, there is a third thing to be scene in that place, which is very worthy your observation, being neare to the foresaid gallowes, and pourtrayed in the corner of the wall as you goe into the Dukes Palace. The pourtraitures of foure Noble Gentlemen of Albania that were brothers, which are made in porphyrie stone with their fawchions by their sides, and each couple consulting privately together by themselves, of whom this notable history following is reported. These Noble brothers came from Albania together in a ship laden with great store of riches. After their arrivall at Venice which was the place whereunto they were bound, two of them went on shore, and left the other two in the ship. They two that were landed entred into a consulation and conspiracy how they might dispatch their other brothers which remayned in the ship, to the end they might gaine all the riches to themselves. Whereupon they bought themselves some drugges to that purpose,

[16] Ennio Concina, "*Spoliae ac manubiae* a San Marco", in *L'enigma dei Tetrarchi*, 99.

> and determined at a banquet to present the same to their other brothers in a potion or otherwise. Likewise on the other side those two brothers that were left in the shippe whispered secretly amongst themselves how they might make away their brothers that were landed, that they might get all the wealth to themselves. And there upon procured means accordingly. At last this was the final issue of these consultations. They that had beene at land presented to their other brothers certaine poysoned drugges at a banquet to the end to kill them. Which those brothers did eate and dyed therewith, but not incontinently. For before they died, they ministred a certaine poysoned march-pane or some such other thing at the very same banquet to their brothers that had been at land; both which poysons when they had throughly wrought their effects upon both couples, all foure dyed shortly after. Whereupon the Signiory of Venice seised upon all their goods as their owne, which was the first treasure that ever Venice possessed, and the first occasion of inriching the estate; and in memoriall of that uncharitable and unbrotherly conspiracy, hath erected the pourtraitures of them in porphyrie as I said before in two severall couples consulting together. I confesse I never read this history, but many Gentlemen of very good account in Venice both Englishmen and others reported it unto me for an absolute truth.[17]

This version, where the plunderers are punished by reciprocal poisoning and their statues remain as a warning against future attempts at violating the precious relics, seems to be supported by the late thirteenth-century sculpted frieze below; this depicts two *putti* emerging from the mouths of two dragons bearing a cartouche inscribed with one of the earliest examples of vernacular language in Venice: "L'om po far e die in pensar—E vega quelo che gli po inchontrar" (which loosely translates as: "Men may do and say whatever they feel like—and then they'll learn the consequences"). In an ironical twist of history, a symbol of political fraternity and concord becomes a parable of greed and betrayal; the brothers become enemies, the hunted becomes the hunter. However a further twist is that while early variants of the anecdote describe the culprits as Albanians or Greeks, later versions make of them four Saracens (or Moors) who were turned to stone as they tried to steal the Treasure of St. Mark's. A late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century Greek poem refers to them as "quattro insanguinati e allora prendono la deliberazione di rubare .... E quelli furono impietrati e rimasero come pietre" ("four bloodstained individuals who, having deter-

[17] Thomas Coryat, *Most Glorious & Peerless Venice. Observations of Thomas Coryate (1608)*, edited by David Whittaker (Charlbury: Wavestone Press, 2013), 39–41.

mined to steal, were petrified and remained there as stone").[18] The red coloration of the porphyry suggesting the image of blood, acquired in a later version of the myth a very different meaning, well summarized by an eighteenth-century commentator: "Volgarmente vien detto che questi fossero Mori i quali volessero rubare il Tesoro [di San Marco]" (It is commonly said that these were the Moors who wanted to steal the Treasure [of Saint Mark's]).[19] Yet the anonymous Greek poet, who according to Lionello Levi had heard the story from "qualche Cicerone indigeno di quei tempi" (some native Cicerone of those days),[20] added a detail that made the admonition even more ominous: these are not the effigies of the criminals, but the criminals themselves turned into stone on account of their impious act.

This first gallery of Saint Mark's Moors confirms the semantic elasticity and ambiguity of the term "moro", applied both to recognizable ethnic and religious identities and to imaginary creatures born of legend. Moving temporarily from the center back to the periphery, we return to the Campo dei Mori, where the situation gets even more complicated. This is how the classical repertoire of Venetian urban lore, Giuseppe Tassini's *Curiosità veneziane* (1863), describes the place, linked to the vicissitudes of a family of merchants who came to Venice in the early twelfth century:

> Here stands an ancient body of constructions, largely modified and remodelled, that extends from the *Rio [=canal] della Sensa* to that of *Madonna dell'Orto*. In its walls are embedded three statues dressed in Oriental style (one of which is very well known by our people under the name of *Sior Antonio Rioba*) … All the authors have hitherto believed that these are the remains of the ancient Fondaco of the Moors, or Saracens, but it is certain, on the contrary, that the above-mentioned buildings were erected by the Mastelli family, whose members were the three brothers Rioba, Sandi and

[18] Lionello Levi, "Una curiosa leggenda veneziana in un carme neogreco." *Ateneo Veneto*, 34 (1911): 125–140. Levi probably refers to a footnote in Giovanni Palazzi's *Sacrae ac profanae inaugurationes Venetiis* (Venice, 1707, 73), where the author dismisses as fiction ("fabula") the popular identification of the statues "vulgo creditae Aethiopum imagines" ("believed by the people to be images of *Ethiops*"). Since the "people" would not have used Latin for their "fabula", it is quite probable that they used the term "mori". Palazzi's translation is yet another demonstration of the endless semantic slippage of the term "Moor". Carlo Campana, "I Tetrarchi: documentazione storica e storie a Venezia", in *L'enigma dei Tetrarchi*, 123.

[19] Levi, "Una curiosa leggenda", 130.

[20] "Una curiosa leggenda", 133.

> Afani, come from Morea, and accordingly called Moors (mori); that the statues are images of them, and hence the name of the adjacent streets.[21]

The historian himself warns us against unfounded beliefs in the existence of a Muslim community residing in Venice—there was elsewhere a headquarters for Persian and Ottoman merchants, the Fondaco dei Turchi—and directs us to an unexpected etymology that associates "Moor" to Morea, the ancient name of the Peloponnese, with tenuous links to either Africa or the Orient strictly speaking. More recently, the Venetian connoisseur Franco Filippi, for whom "Moor" means generically Muslim, has proposed a different view of the statues: "their dress makes the hypothesis very plausible that they were Ottoman or Jewish merchants".[22] Carla Coco, on the other hand, describes them as "dressed in a Greek style", referencing a source already used by Tassini who, however, had spoken of "Oriental" clothes.[23] In her more cautious academic perspective, Ottoman historian Maria Pia Pedani concludes:

> Apart from legends, one can notice that the clothes of two of the statues are not those worn by merchants but those of lawyers, with their broad turbans and the thin shawl falling on the shoulders. One of them even carries a little box that resembles that used by Dervishes to collect alms. The third character, on the other hand, wears clothes that are more Venetian than Turkish, and an unauthentic turban. Who really are the personages of Campo dei Mori? It is yet to be discovered.[24]

The plot thickens if we bring in textual evidence from the comedy *Il moro* (1607) by Giovan Battista Dalla Porta, where the protagonist Pirro devises a singular masquerade to test the intention of his old betrothed Oriana: *"La barba cresciuta, & l'habito di Moro, & l'hauer ancor tinto di macchia il volto, e le mani, e quasi tutto mutato da me stesso"*. "Having grown a beard and donned a Moor's garb and having blackened up [lit. smeared] my face and hands, and almost entirely different from myself."[25] In spite of

[21] Giuseppe Tassini, *Curiosità veneziane* (Venezia: Filippi Editore, 1970), 428–429.

[22] Franco Filippi, *Anche questa è Venezia* (Venezia: Filippi Editore, 2005), 323.

[23] Carla Coco, *Venezia levantina* (Venezia: Corbo e Fiore editori, 1993), 154.

[24] Maria Pia Pedani, *Venezia porta d'Oriente* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), 220.

[25] Giovan Battista Della Porta, *Il Moro* (Viterbo: Girolamo Discepolo, 1607), 37, 46. Giuseppe Boerio's *Dizionario del dialetto veneziano* defines the "Moro di Morea" as "qualunque persona di color nero, sia egli di Etiopia o di altra parte" (Venezia: Andrea Santini, 1829), 427.

the pedantic explanation given by Amusio in his comical dog Latin "maurus, maura, maurum, huomo" which means "female or thing from Mauritania, that is Arabia", when Pirro introduces himself to the family of Oriana he says "I come from Morea", reinforcing the connection between Moors and Morea and showing how even this toponym is not so univocal. Is the Mastelli brothers' Morea then to be interpreted as "land of the Moors" or as Peloponnese, a territory that was under Ottoman control for two centuries and was, in any event, one of the many Mediterranean areas where ethnic and religious groups lived side by side?

If history and art history cannot resolve our doubts, but rather complicate the polysemy of "Moor" against any monolithic (pun intended) interpretation, once again it is the domain of myth that offers us inviting clues. As Alberto Toso Fei tells us, popular tradition fantasized about these bizarre statues, creating a legend where the sly and greedy Rioba, who had already bankrupted many artless customers, tries to swindle a widow out of her last savings by palming her off with plain cotton as if it were precious Flanders lace. To guarantee the quality of the merchandise, Rioba swears by the name of the Almighty:

> 'May the Good Lord turn this hand into stone on the spot, if what I say is not true! Brothers, you swear too.' 'I accept your offer, messere—answered the woman spilling her coins into his hand—and may God himself be witness to your honesty. May your fate be that which you yourself have chosen.' The coins instantly turned into stone, and with them the hand and arm of the man. The other Mastelli brothers, paralyzed with horror, looked on as their own limbs slowly began to turn to stone. 'Villains, liars, hypocrites. You will become the whited sepulchers that you have proven to be in your lifetime.' The woman was Saint Mary Magdalen, who had come to give them one last chance for redemption. Thus the merchants were transformed into statues, the same statues that are now walled onto the façades of the house they once lived in, in Campo dei Mori.[26]

We witness here an interesting recurrence. Both Saint Mark's Tetrarchs and the Mastelli brothers are represented in/by the popular imaginary as "petrified Moors". The former case is a flagrant example of projective identification; not only were the Tetrarchs themselves removed from Constantinople, but also the anecdote grotesquely reverses the actual theft,

[26] Alberto Toso Fei, *Misteri di Venezia* (Venezia: Studio LT2, 2011), 57–58.

the famous, ingenious stealing of the body of Saint Mark from Alexandria.[27] According to the legend, which the Republic of Venice adopted as its own political and religious founding myth, two Venetian merchants smuggled the remains of the Evangelist out of Egypt by concealing them under a layer of pork, prohibited and repugnant to the Muslim custom officers.[28] Even in the case of Rioba and his brothers, one can hypothesize that a dishonest conduct in commerce, hardly a rarity in a rich trading community such as Venice, is conveniently projected onto foreign merchants, coming from the distant Orient. In both cases, undoubtedly, statues that have historically little in common are represented by the *vox populi* as Moors turned into stone on account of crimes and sins perpetrated against the Christian faith and community. Hence, while philology and archaeology show how the signifier "Moor" mutates in time and place, the popular Venetian myths seem to fossilize meaning in solid stone, recalling that intense moment of the Shakespearean text where Othello manifests his anxiety at becoming the target of his new fellow citizens' derision and contempt: "The fixed figure for the time of scorn / To point his slow and moving finger at!" That this image, as we noticed already, corresponds almost literally to the Black Magus that in his slow parade on the Clock Tower must have the hands of the dial pointed at him, is just a tantalizing coincidence. Two centuries after Shakespeare, the alliterative phrase "fixed figure" would be translatable with a new word of Greek derivation: *stereotype*. Othello's apprehension is the mirror figure of Roderigo's, who denounces the elusive nature of the Moor as an "extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere" (1.1.134–135), a feeling that Zygmunt Bauman has termed, as regards a different minority which has traditionally perturbed Western society, *proteophobia*.[29] Where Othello is afraid of being fixed in an immutable form, Roderigo fears precisely his shapelessness, the absence of a stable and hence

[27] Sansovino reports an attempted robbery of the sacred relics by a Greek man called Stamatti. *Venetia, città nobilissima*, 39. Cf. Levi, "Una curiosa leggenda veneziana", 134.

[28] Reinhard Lebe, *Quando San Marco approdò a Venezia: il culto dell'evangelista e il miracolo politico della Repubblica di Venezia* (Roma: Il Veltro, 1981). Interestingly, in one of the internal mosaics, one of the evangelists' dark-skinned persecutors is designated as a "saracen" in the captions and as a "Moor" by Otto Demus (*The Mosaics of Saint Mark in Venice 2*, Vol. 1, Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 186–187). By an irony of fate the mosaics were damaged by an ill-advised nineteenth-century restoration of one Giovanni Moro (Demus, *Mosaics*, 75).

[29] Zygmunt Bauman, *Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern* in *Modernity, Culture and "the Jew"*, edited by Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 148.

controllable identity. To fix, appropriately enough, means both to "fasten (something) securely in a particular place or position" and to "direct one's eyes, mind, or attention steadily or unwaveringly towards" (OED). Othello is *fixed* in every sense of the word: scrutinized by others with curiosity and fear, fastened in manageable figures; he also becomes *fixated*, obsessed by the gaze, keen to see at all cost even that which is not there (Desdemona's adultery), and horrified by the prospect of being regarded with contempt.

Venice, Head of Medusa

"Venice, head of Medusa, with its many blue snakes with their pale, sea-green eyes, where the soul is engulfed and exalts the infinite" wrote the painter Amedeo Modigliani in a letter to a friend.[30] All the main meanings of "fixing" come together in the archetype of petrification, the myth of Medusa, a creature whose adventures unravel between Northern Africa and its European borders.[31] In her "intrinsic doubleness, at once monster and beauty, disease and cure, threat and protection, poison and remedy",[32] the Gorgon appears as an instrument of offense and defense, lethal weapon and shield against the enemy, "a representation of the Other by virtue of her absolute and terrifying difference".[33] As a frequently represented subject, it epitomizes the "apotropaic dimension of art" and celebrates "the strategic taming of … uncivilized forces to civilizational ends".[34] In our case study, the petrifying gaze is invoked in its defensive function, that which leads Perseus to lay the severed head of Medusa on his shield. As Ovid recalls in *The Metamorphoses*, this weapon was used to punish the giant Atlas, who had tried to drive Perseus away from his domain:

> At that, he turned his back to Atlas—and held up Medusa's head with his left hand. Great Atlas now became a mountain mass as huge as he had been; his beard, his hair were changed to woods; his shoulders and his arms, to

[30] Cited in Meryle Secrest, *Modigliani: A Life* (New York: Knopf, 2011), 78.

[31] In the tentacular bibliography on the subject, a useful companion is *The Medusa Reader*, edited by Marjorie Garber and Nancy J. Vickers (New York-London: Routledge, 2003). In the Bible, Lot's wife is related to our petrified Moors in their common fate of being punished for transgressing God's orders.

[32] Garber—Vickers, *Medusa*, 1.

[33] Pierre Brunel, *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 779.

[34] Hal Foster, *Prosthetic Gods* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 260.

> ridges; what had been his head was now a mountaintop; his bones were changed to stones. (Book 4)[35]

And this is how Petrarch evokes the myth in sonnet 197 of his *Canzoniere*, in one of his numerous analogies between the power of Laura and that of Gorgo: "pò quello in me che nel gran vecchio mauro / Medusa quando in selce transformollo" ("has power like Medusa's when the old and famous Moor she transformed into rock"), (ll. 5–6).[36] In some European cults, the figure of the Gorgon is literally superimposed on the Virgin Mary, in an interesting parallel with the anecdote of Mary Magdalene as the instrument of petrification.[37] Many important exegetes have grappled with the myth of Medusa, singling out as a key problem the "the power of the gaze and the capacity of representation to control it".[38] According to Jean-Pierre Vernant, the Medusa and the spectator engage in a biunivocal relationship, a "crossing of gazes": "[W]hat the mask of Gorgo lets you see, when you are bewitched by it, is yourself, yourself in the world beyond, the head clothed in night, the masked face of the invisible that, in the eye of Gorgo, is revealed as the truth about your own face."[39] As Hal Foster glosses: "[W]e project the power of our gaze onto her gaze, as her gaze, where it becomes other—intense, confused, wild—and subjugates our gaze in turn."[40] A gaze of fascination that in his reflections on alterity, Jacques Derrida describes in these terms:

> *fascination:* fixed attention of the gaze transfixed, as if petrified [*médusé*] by something that, without being simply a visible object, looks at you, already concerns you, understands you, and orders you to continue to observe, to respond, to make yourself responsible for the gaze that gazes at you and calls you beyond the visible: neither perception nor hallucination.[41]

[35] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1995), 135.

[36] Francesco Petrarca, *Rime* (Milano: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1976), 362. Petrarch, *The Canzoniere, or Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, edited and translated by Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 289. "Laura as Medusa is the punitive agent who teaches the poet the errors of his cupiditas", Elliott M. Simon, *The Myth of Sisyphus: Renaissance Theories of Human Perfectibility* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 233.

[37] Sara Damiani, ed., *I volti di Medusa* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2006), 72.

[38] Foster, *Prosthetic Gods*, 262.

[39] Cited in Foster, *Prosthetic Gods*, 263.

[40] Foster, *Prosthetic Gods*, 263.

[41] Jacques Derrida, *Psyche. Inventions of the Other*, edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, vol. 2 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 71.

In Freud's reading, the decapitated Medusa embodies the fear of castration, but petrification simultaneously represents, in its correlation with the erect phallus, the reassurance of preserved virility face to the feminine threat posed by the snake-haired monster. In this vein, Freud sees Medusa as the "originary fetish, both a 'memorial' to castration and a 'protection' against it".[42]

If we apply these categories to our situation, the Moor presents himself as the threatening Other, coming from territories situated outside of the Christian *oikumene*[43] and yet dangerously contiguous, threatening to make spoils of Venice riches. Venice as Medusa (in the felicitous insight of Amedeo Modigliani that opens this chapter) petrifies the preying Moor, keeping him in the form of a fetish as a reminder of his sacrilege and as a shield against future aggressions. But the Moor *regards* us, his gaze reveals ourselves, our own anxieties, and our own crimes. Do these folktales harbor unwittingly the dark side of a civilization that has too often petrified its others in comfortable and reassuring stereotypes? Do they enact the same mechanism of projection operating in the colonial and imperial discourse, where the invasion and occupation of foreign lands is justified as a defensive act? With a further space–time leap, we find the notion of petrification, probably under the influence of the Sartrian interpretation of the myth of Medusa,[44] in two classics of postcolonial thought. In *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957), Albert Memmi writes: "the only possible alternatives for the colonized are assimilation or petrifaction".[45] The same metaphor is echoed by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961): "The arrival of the colonist signified syncretically the death of indigenous society, cultural lethargy, and petrifaction of the individual."[46] For both Memmi and Fanon, the colonized are petrified insofar as they are stuck in cultural immobility, caused both by the regime of control of the colonizer and by the defensive reaction that drives them to adhere to

[42] Foster, *Prosthetic Gods*, 272.

[43] John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[44] "The Other by rising up confers on the for-itself a being-in-itself-in-the-midst-of-the-world as a thing among things. This petrifaction in in-itself by the Other's look is the profound meaning of the myth of Medusa", Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, cited in *Medusa Reader*, 93.

[45] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized,* translated by Howard Greenfeld (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 102.

[46] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2005), 50.

rigid and ossified forms of their own traditions, used as an identitarian stronghold and as an outlet for their anger, yet ultimately distracting them from the reality of colonization and thus serving the colonizer's aims.[47] The same logic is still at work in contemporary Europe, a continent that is increasingly multiethnic but also socially deteriorating and fragile, where the foreigner, especially if her religion or skin color is different from the majority, is liable to become a convenient scapegoat.

An alternative reading is provided by Hal Foster:

> more than a terror of castration, of lack or difference, might the Gorgon figure be a terror of a lack of difference, of a primal state in which all differences (sexual, semiotic, symbolic) are confounded or not yet established? But if this is the case—that is, if Medusa figures the horrific real as radical other to the symbolic order—then this very figuring is also a first move in the mitigation of this real, a primordial act of civilization.[48]

It is no paradox, then, if Othello will end up being the one desperate to turn Desdemona into a "fixed figure", not of scorn but of dead adoration. "Sir, she can turn, and turn, and yet go on / And turn again" (4.1.253-254) says Othello of her transgressive nature, projecting onto his wife the same unpredictability and shapelessness that Roderigo had ascribed to him. She must be neutralized, but whereas in Cinzio's tale, Disdemona is sandbagged and mangled to death, Shakespeare's Othello rejects the disfiguring gesture in favor of a petrifying act of smothering:

> Yet I'll not shed her blood,
> Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow
> And smooth as monumental alabaster
> 5.2.3-5[49]

With his murderous action, too often interpreted as the irruption of primitive violence through the veneer of civilization rather than as a distorted and extreme enactment of the principles of that same civilization, Othello

[47] Douglas Ficek, "Reflections on Fanon and Petrification", in *Living Fanon. Global Perspectives*, edited by Nigel C. Gibson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 76.

[48] Foster, *Prosthetic Gods*, 265.

[49] Desdemona's whiteness, it has been noted by Taylor, is not a fully racialized trope, and is connoted by paleness as the female aesthetic ideal. Gary Taylor, *Buying Whiteness: Race, Culture, and Identity from Columbus to Hip-Hop* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 39–45.

redirects the xenophobia of which he was the target toward the female other. However, far from reinstating him in the Venetian symbolic horizon of restored honor, the uxoricide makes him fall back ruinously into the stereotype of the evil foreigner, as Emilia is quick to remind him: "Moor, she was chaste, she loved thee, cruel Moor" (5.2.247).

The myth of Medusa has been revisited several times to thematize gender, but it also lends itself to reflecting on ethnic difference. The gaze of the Venetian people, accustomed as they are to seeing their piazza teeming with people from every ethnic and religious grouping, petrifies the criminal Moor into the stereotype. This may betray the guilt of a civilization often bent on the acquisition, not always lawful, of foreign treasures. The Moors analyzed here *regard* us, they remain as fetishes of the memory of past iniquities/transgressions that stain the luminous myth of Venice and still carry ancient stories, which are as marvelous and captivating as those that persuaded Brabantio to make of Othello a welcome guest at his aristocratic abode.

Venice has probably been less tolerant and multiethnic than his mythographers have claimed. Not far from the Campo dei Mori, in Shakespeare's times, one could find other "fixed figures", immobilized in space and kept under careful surveillance: the Jews of the Ghetto, the residence of Othello's secret sharer Shylock.[50] In one of his most often quoted passages, Primo Levi writes

> We survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority; we are those who by their prefabrications or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell us about it or have returned mute, but they are the 'Muslims,' the submerged, the complete witnesses, the ones whose deposition would have general significance. They are the rule, we are the exception.[51]

In a surprising superimposition of Jews and Muslims, about which revealing pages have been written by Giorgio Agamben and Gil Anidjar,[52] the extreme form of dehumanization is to be found in those deportees

[50] On the Ghetto of Venice as a space of containment of Jewish difference, see Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone. The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (London-Boston: Faber and Faber, 1994), 212–251.

[51] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, translated by Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Summit Books, 1989), 83–84.

[52] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 41–86; Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab. A History of the Enemy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

reduced to the condition of "non-men who march and labour in silence"[53] and defined in Auschwitz with the etymologically uncertain term *Muselmänner*.[54] After the massacre, Agamben remarks, not even the SS could bear the spectacle of their victims "that under no circumstances were they to be called 'corpses' or 'cadavers,' but rather simply *Figuren,* figures, dolls".[55] Can one hazard that these "fixed figures", petrified by the Nazi Gorgo that in turn cannot tolerate directing its gaze at them, is the extreme outcome of the process of stigmatization and demonization identified and dreaded by the Moor Othello?

> Auschwitz is the site of an experiment that remains unthought today, an experiment beyond life and death in which the Jew is transformed into a *Muselmann* and the human being into a non-human. And we will not understand what Auschwitz is if we do not first understand who or what the *Muselmann* is—if we do not learn to gaze with him upon the Gorgon.[56]

Agamben's reading has been criticized for its lack of historical perspective and its apodictic argument, but the emergence of this designation in Auschwitz, whatever its etymology, is in itself significant, since it reinforces the association between two religious outsiders of the Christian West and in turn with a dehumanized person.

Juxtaposed to Othello, the other Moors of Venice turn out to be complex and ambivalent artifacts, texts that deny us objective historical conclusions but also prove to be powerful storytelling machines. In our age, where everything is representation and tends to paralyze itself in reassuring stereotypes, in which the psychoanalytic perspective witnesses "the tendency of the subject to autistic, to petrification, to narcissistic solidification as extreme reactions to the generalized liquefaction of social relations",[57] the Venetian Moors, like their more illustrious relative Othello, function as a palimpsest and as a mirror.

[53] Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, translated by Stuart Woolf (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 96.

[54] One of the basic critiques of Agamben's hypothesis is based on the fact that the term was employed only in Auschwitz that has itself become the paradigmatic camp.

[55] Agamben, *Remnants*, 51.

[56] *Remnants*, 52. On the myth of Medusa and the representation of the Shoah see Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 164–180.

[57] Massimo Recalcati, *L'uomo senza inconscio. Figure della nuova clinica psicoanalitica* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 2010), XIV (my emphasis).

"Where should Othello go?"

"Where should Othello go?" asks Othello in Act 5, Scene 2. Our final stop is once again at San Marco, back to our present. "Where should Othello go?" is the title of the inaugural exhibition at the Espace Louis Vuitton, a luxury art gallery that occupies the top floor of a store which the fashion brand opened near St Mark's Square in 2012. Here the large-scale painting entitled *The Death of Othello* (1879) by Pompeo Molmenti, restored by Louis Vuitton, was put into dialogue by curators Adrien Goetz and Hervé Mikaeloff with the site-specific work commissioned to contemporary American artist Tony Oursler entitled "Strawberry-Ecstasy-Green", an audiovisual installation inspired by *Othello*. The Shakespearean play, glosses Oursler, "has a special relevance to us in the USA with all the returning veterans. The subplot is the impossible reconciliation of disparate forces masculine and feminine, the 'beast with two backs': Violence and Peace."[58] The politically committed work cleverly (and somehow predictably) uses the idiom of contemporary American culture while playing on the theme of glass, as a homage to Venetian craft. An overtly political American artwork enabled by a French corporation embodies the ambivalence of the political economy of contemporary art, including the unspoken relationship to its exhibition space. Reading beyond the good intentions and excellent output of this philanthropic operation, there is a more opaque dimension to this marriage between the classic and the contemporary. The space was previously occupied by a bookstore and cultural center that itself had replaced a movie theater and a small playhouse that had been closed for many years. If throughout the 1980s Venetians came here to watch movies and plays, in the 2000s, they came here to buy books and attend cultural and political events. Even though the two spaces were themselves owned by the largest Italian media and publishing corporation, they were probably the only business in the historical heart of the city not primarily targeting a tourist audience and leaving at the same time some room for civic debate. The vicissitudes of this building exemplify the direction that the whole city has taken under the pressure of global tourism and in the absence of any strategic planning. It was highly symbolic that Othello became the banner of the French multinational's first homage to Venice, a nod to the local in the midst of another nonplace

[58] Tony Oursler, "Strawberry-Ecstasy-Green", Exhibition Catalogue, Espace Louis Vuitton, (Venice, 2013), 40.

(à la Augé) of luxury consumerism. Meawhile, downstairs at street level, the building remains often surrounded by African street vendors who sell cheap imitations of Luis Vuitton bags. These modern-day Othellos are the "lucky ones" that have made it into "Fortress Europe", while their less fortunate companions are drowned in the heavily patrolled waters of the Mediterranean, brutally exploited by human traffickers and frequently meeting their tragic deaths while trying to get around the operations of Frontex, the European Union agency for external border security. The question "Where should Othello go?" in this *site-specific* work, then, ironically speaks the global lingua franca of contemporary art but fails to engage with the local situation of the Africans serving the modern needs of Venice's tourist economy.[59] At least since the times of Byron, the mundane and commercial hustle and bustle of Shakespeare's Venice has been supplanted by the notion of a magic, epiphanic city: "I saw from out the wave her structures rise / As from the stroke of the Enchanter's wand" (*Childe Harold*, Canto IV). As Tony Tanner glosses:

> To see Venice as a 'fairy city' conjured into existence by the wand of some unidentified 'Enchanter' is at once to forget the 'mortal hands' that 'reared' her, and occlude and overlook the contemporary inhabitants who are having somehow to eke out a non-magical existence there: to dematerialize it thus is also to dehistoricize and un-people it. To have (to see, conceive) Venice in any way autonomously, magically, 'rising' from the sea is, supremely, to 'naturalize' it and thus to beg (elude/elide) every political/historical, cultural question. And just such a vaporized and de-substantiated 'Venice' has been purveyed by thousands of empty texts and pictures from the end of the eighteenth century to the present day.[60]

The year 1842 saw the publication of the first modern tourist guide to Venice, *Murray's Handbook of Northern Italy*, which in Tanner's words, "treats the city as *frozen spectacle* and turns it into a list of separate consumable items".[61] Venice itself, then, has gradually become a *fixed figure*. It may be impertinent to end a journey that has touched on some of the most atrocious acts of our civilization by talking about the politics of tourism. But it may not be so absurd to seek important ethical knots in our

[59] For an original perspective on Venice as global city of migrants see Wolfgang Scheppe, *Migropolis. Venice / Atlas of a Global Situation*, vol. 1 (Ostfildern: Hatje/Cantz, 2010).

[60] Tony Tanner, *Venice Desired* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1992), 20.

[61] Tanner, *Venice Desired*, 75, my emphasis.

spaces of aesthetic gratification and leisure. As the art historian Angela Vettese writes: "Venice could exploit its immense potential—symbolic, international and global by vocation—to become, or rather to return to, existence as an incubator of knowledge and thinking. The development of cultural activities is the only antidote."[62] In this context, the Moors of Venice could continue to play an important role. A myth traversing the ages, Othello continues to "do the state some service", from soldier to fixed figure, from metamorphical character to luxury icon. Shakespeare's Moor famously ends his life with the plea "speak of me as I am", asking to define an identity that continues to elude us. Analogously, the other Moors of Venice leave us less with definite answers than with urgent questions. Can we have a production of knowledge that is not dependent entirely on compensatory philanthropic gestures? Can we utilize the immense popularity of the city to inscribe in the tourist narratives, which understandably privilege the romantic and aesthetic aspects of Venetian history, some of the more unpalatable facets of its cosmopolitanism? Can Venice, with the help of Shakespeare, also give lessons in the dynamics of both prejudice and toleration? Can the stories of its Moors create some space for a less fixed understanding of the stranger?

[62] Angela Vettese, "Learning Venice", in Scheppe, *Migropolis*, 13.

CHAPTER 10

The Prison House of Italy: *Caesar Must Die*

The reception proper of Shakespeare in Italy began with a long account and adaptation of *Julius Caesar* by Antonio Conte in 1726; the first complete Italian translation of a Shakespearean text was Domenico Valentino's *Giulio Cesare* in 1756; Mussolini's engagement with the play was outlined in Chap. 4. The Roman tragedy punctuates Italian history, bearing witness to "the lasting immediacy of Julius Caesar".[1] I wish to conclude my narrative with a version of the play that the early Italian translators could hardly have imagined, and which adds a new layer of literal meaning to the oft-quoted lines "How many ages hence/Shall this our lofty scene be acted over/In states unborn and accents yet unknown!" (3.1.111–113).[2] Filmed inside the maximum security prison of Rebibbia in Rome, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's movie (*Cesare deve morire*) *Caesar Must Die* (2012) dramatizes the making of a performance of *Julius Caesar* by the inmates, under the

[1] Christopher Pelling, "Judging Julius Caesar." In *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, edited by Maria Wyke (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 3. For an overview of the afterlife of the play in Italy, see Marisa Sestito, *Julius Caesar in Italia: 1726–1974* (Bari: Adriatica, 1978), and Mariangela Tempera, "Political Caesar: *Julius Caesar* on the Italian Stage." In *Julius Caesar: New Critical Essays*, edited by Horst Zander, 333–343 (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[2] I thank Thomas Cartelli for guiding me toward *Caesar Must Die* as an apt conclusion to the book. The lines are used by Maurizio Calbi in the title of his essay "'In States Unborn and Accents Yet Unknown': Spectral Shakespeare in Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's *Cesare deve morire* (*Caesar Must Die*)." *Shakespeare Bulletin* 32.2 (2014): 235–253, to which I am greatly indebted.

© The Author(s) 2016

S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1_10

direction of Fabio Cavalli.[3] I choose the verb "dramatize" because I read *Caesar Must Die* less as a *docudrama* on prison Shakespeare, already a rich subgenre of its own,[4] than as an artistic interpretation of this special event, an aesthetic vision which recapitulates the poetics of two recognized masters of European cinema and which—this is the main argument of this closing chapter—offers a mirror image of Italy's current "country disposition".

I invoke the etymological affinity between "prison" and "comprehension", both stemming from the Latin *prehendere*, to suggest that *Caesar Must Die* can help us diagnose the state of contemporary Italy in its neoliberal stage. The focus here, then, is not on the impact of Shakespeare on the inmates, with all the promises and contradictions of the admirable work of over a hundred companies that perform theater in prison.[5] My inspiration is David Schalkwyk's insightful analysis of Robben Island's Shakespeare where, in discussing the function of a copy of the *Collected Works* for Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners in apartheid South Africa, he remarks: "Shakespeare is part of a process of repression, forgetting and transformation, its inscriptions constitute a form of collective and individual unconscious."[6] I argue that *Caesar Must Die* captures the Italian *zeitgeist* from a distinct authorial perspective, documenting a very special theatrical event while transforming, forgetting, and repressing some key aspects of Italy's collective unconscious.

Caesarisms

At once the foundation and counterpoint of Christian Europe, ancient Rome has long been for the Western world a paragon of political systems, epochal events, and formidable individuals. Every age and culture rein-

[3] *Cesare deve morire* (*Caesar Must Die*). Dir. Paolo and Vittorio Taviani. Kaos Cinematografica, Sternal Entertainment/Le talee. 2012. The film was awarded the Golden Bear at the 2012 Berlin film festival.

[4] "Docufiction is a horrible word!", proclaims Paolo Taviani in a stage interview included in the DVD bonus features. Shakespeare in prison is discussed in Amy Scott-Douglass, *Shakespeare Inside. The Bard Behind Bars* (London: Continuum, 2007) and Niels Herold, *Prison Shakespeare and the Purpose of Performance: Repentance Rituals and the Early Modern* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Films include *Shakespeare Behind Bars* (2005), directed by Hank Rogerson, and *Jail Caesar* (2012), directed by Paul Schoolman.

[5] Italian Ministry of Justice, "Teatro in prigione": http://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_2_3_8_6.wp, date accessed 3 September 2015.

[6] David Schalkwyk, *Hamlet's Dreams: The Robben Island Shakespeare*. The Arden Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 21.

vents its own Rome and Shakespeare is a key figure in this myth-making process. Maria Del Sapio Garbero remarks that in the age of Shakespeare "Rome was appropriated as both a script for the triumphs of a nascent empire and a setting for problematically staging questions of ancestry, influence, identity, and location" and that Shakespeare himself was "taking issue with 'Rome' and dissecting, as if from the margins of a ruined but still authoritative empire, its ghostly fatherly legacy".[7] A "ghostly fatherly legacy" that for obvious geographical and historical reasons has been haunting Italy in particular, to the extent that when Italians have not identified directly with some aspect of their ancient Roman past, they have deliberately tried to find alternative "pre-Roman" or "post-Roman" models to create a critical distance from that weighty heritage.[8] Within this framework, Julius Caesar, possibly the most debated and polarizing figure in Western history, has had a particular resonance across the political spectrum, as Luciano Canfora reminds us: "References to Caesar recur in the writings of some exponents of communism in Italy (Gramsci, Togliatti), but not in France or Russia. Similarly, Caesar is present, with varying fortunes, in the ideology and the language of Italian Fascism, but not in that of Germany or Spain."[9]

Used as an arena to discuss the merits of republicanism over monarchy, the opposite dangers of tyranny and anarchy, and the collision between a symbolic order of ceremonies and a relativistic order of new social configurations, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* "has always had a way of being highly relevant to the present, whenever the present has happened to be".[10] Even its encounter with the medium of film came as early as the 1910s, producing a mutually enriching relationship between classical education and the new emerging form: "Whereas *Julius Caesar* seemed capable of conferring popular appeal on Classics, it could in contrast confer on the motion picture industry the sheen of cultural authority and utility which it so eagerly sought."[11] However, this presentist disposition has had

[7] Maria Del Sapio Garbero, ed., *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome* (Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 8, 10.

[8] Giulio Bollati, *L'Italiano. Il carattere nazionale come storia e come invenzione* [1983] (Torino: Einaudi, 2011), 97. Andrea Giardina and André Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma. Da Carlo Magno a Mussolini* (Bari: Laterza, 2000).

[9] Luciano Canfora, "Caesar for Communists and Fascists." In *A Companion to Julius Caesar*, edited by Miriam Griffin (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 435.

[10] Pelling, "Introduction", 5.

[11] Maria Wyke, "Caesar, Cinema, and National Identity in the 1910s." In *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, edited by Maria Wyke (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 184.

unexpected collateral effects, as the one reported by Mariangela Tempera in her outline of the play's afterlife in recent Italian history:

> In 1978, the Red Brigade kidnapped and eventually assassinated the Italian Prime Minister, Aldo Moro. The shocking photographs of his bullet-ridden body encouraged parallels with Caesar's death, and put an end, for the time being, to any oversimplified interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedy. In the following years, with left wing extremists engaging in more knee-cappings and killings and right wing extremists planting bombs in public places, no mainstream director would have touched Julius Caesar with a barge pole.[12]

Caesar Must Die is anything but a straightforward political allegory. It resists "the analogical strategies employed for … recent stagings of Shakespeare",[13] and it does not invite any facile identification between its archetypal characters and the politicians of today, even if it coincides chronologically with the end of a long political era dominated by a single iconic individual often cast as a modern dictator.[14] Nevertheless, the powerful defamiliarizing context of this staging—the microcosm of the prison—can also represent Italy as a whole, both for what it shows and for what is "repressed, forgotten and transformed" in the film, far exceeding the enclosed space where the film is set and shot.

In Custody

Writing a new chapter in the long history of Italian "Caesarisms", the Taviani film runs within a second, sadly persistent tradition: the chronic presence of the prison as a site of consciousness in the country's political and cultural history. From Marco Polo to Giordano Bruno and Tommaso Campanella, from Casanova to Silvio Pellico's *My Prisons* (1832), the memoir that Metternich claimed had hurt the Austrian Empire more than a lost battle—key Italian figures have meditated on the condition of their own time and place while in detention. The three most influential Italian books of the twentieth century, Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1929–1935), Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1945), and Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* (1947) are all creative responses to different

[12] Tempera, "Political Caesar", 339.

[13] Maria Wyke, "A Twenty-First-Century Caesar", in *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, edited by Maria Wyke (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 320.

[14] Silvio Berlusconi is more Prospero than Caesar, as I suggest in Chap. 5. Maurizio Calbi suggests the Taviani may have been thinking about him. "States Unborn", 250.

forms of incarceration. The Italian constitution was written by many parliamentarians who were in Fascist custody, and the style of contemporary Italian theory has been "forged in the struggles and probed in the Nation's jails".[15] Many sites of detention have also been symbolic loci of collective self-reflection, from the Gran Sasso prison where Mussolini was detained in 1943 to the terrorist hiding place of Aldo Moro; from the brutal mental asylums that radical psychiatrist Franco Basaglia campaigned to dismantle to the infamous Diaz school in Genoa where, in 2001, antiglobalization demonstrators were tortured and beaten by police units who have remained unpunished. In recent history, political scandals have all been marked by the incarceration of prominent leaders, usually turning the formerly enthusiastic masses into angry populist mobs reminiscent of the dynamics at work in *Julius Caesar*. The paradigmatic prison of contemporary Italy is probably the CIE (Centre for Identification and Expulsion), established to verify the credentials of prospective political refugees but soon became notorious for the inhumane treatment of thousands of desperate African and Asian migrants forced across the Mediterranean by various geopolitical crises. Yet barring famous personalities and events, a comprehensive survey indicates that the Italian prison system is abysmally dysfunctional, as repeatedly denounced by Amnesty International and by the Radical Party, whose focus on civil and human rights has always recognized prison as the locus where democracy is really measured. This dire situation has also provoked radical examinations of the system and its distortions, from Cesare Beccaria's influential treatise *On Crimes and Punishments (1764)* to the recent "reasonable" but actually visionary proposal "to abolish prisons".[16]

It is at this point that I wish to formulate a crucial paradox. A long view of Italian history stresses the relentless effort to build stronger public institutions and the parallel trend of resistance to the ruling authorities, whether they be the Church, a foreign occupier, or a legitimate or illegitimate government.[17] Italians have often found themselves in the

[15] Sandro Chignola, "Italian theory? Elementi per una genealogia" In *Differenze italiane. Politica e filosofia: mappe e sconfinamenti,* edited by Dario Gentili e Elettra Stimilli (Roma: DeriveApprodi, 2015), 30. The example of leading intellectuals such as Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, and Adriano Sofri testifies to that.

[16] Luigi Manconi, Stefano Anastasia, Valentina Calderone e Federica Resta, *Abolire il carcere: Una ragionevole proposta per la sicurezza dei cittadini* (Milano: Chiarelettere, 2015).

[17] Giovanni Levi. "Dualisme et sociétés catholiques." In *Entre théologie et politique. Les origines théologiques cachées de la pensée politique contemporaine dans les pays de la Méditérranée*, edited by Paola Gandolfi and Giovanni Levi, 39–50 (Venezia: Cafoscarina, 2010).

schizophrenic condition of striving to create solid legal and public systems, especially democratic ones in the postwar era, while remaining fundamentally diffident and resistant to any form of sovereign power. The Taviani film presents a commendable side of the prison system, and this is certainly not because *Caesar Must Die* is made in cooperation with the same institute. At the same time, in one of the instances in which the actors read Shakespeare in the light of their own condition, the convict playing Brutus compares his role to Masaniello, the heroic Neapolitan fisherman who led the ultimately unsuccessful revolt against Spanish rule in 1647. Through this analogy, Brutus probably voices the quintessential myth of Italian progressive thinking and a favorite theme of the Taviani *oeuvre*: the defeated martyr of a failed revolution. Symbolically it is the scene of Brutus' death that opens the film.

It may be impertinent to invoke such a gallery of tragedies and injustices to discuss a film that celebrates a virtuous example of artistic creation and moral rehabilitation inspired by Shakespeare and disseminated to an international audience.[18] Following Maurizio Calbi's astute hauntological reading of the Shakespeare of *Caesar Must Die* as "simultaneously cure *and* poison … far removed from the incontrovertibly salvific 'Shakespeare' as catalyst of spiritual growth, reformation and redemption which emerges from previous 'prison Shakespeare' films",[19] I read the same ambivalence from a different angle, suggesting that *Caesar Must Die* cures *and* poisons contemporary Italy, offering the paradoxically successful example of a creative community that transforms itself, while forgetting and sometimes repressing certain aspects of a society in rapid transformation.

The Film as a House of Mirrors

At the basic level of plot, *Caesar Must Die* begins with the actors heartily applauded on stage at the end of their performance. The film then flashes back to the early stages of production, six months before, showing the auditions, the casting of characters, key scenes of the play alternating with discussions in rehearsal, and occasional glimpses of the harsh reality of the

[18] On the redemptive quality of the film, see Remo Bodei. "Teatro e redenzione. A proposito di *Cesare deve morire* dei fratelli Taviani." In Marco Barabotti, Remo Bodei, Roan Johnson, Bruna Niccoli, Roberto Perpignani, *Fratelli di cinema. Paolo e Vittorio Taviani in viaggio dietro la macchina da presa*, edited by Silvia Panichi, 71–82. (Roma: Donzelli, 2014.)

[19] Calbi, "In States Unborn", 236.

inmates' daily life in prison. It finally shifts from the predominantly black-and-white photography to color for the last scenes of the play, ending where it began, with the simultaneously joyful and melancholic conclusion of the adventure, following the audience on their way home and the actors back to their cells.

The small perimeters of the prison cells and courtyard create a striking contrast with the epic dimension of the events of the Ides of March as well as with the twentieth-century tradition of using actual Roman ruins and monuments as the backdrop to performances of Shakespeare's Roman plays.[20] The triumphalist Giulio Cesare beloved by Mussolini or the grandiose EUR architecture used satirically by Julie Taymor in *Titus* are a far cry from the bare, minimal, claustrophobic structure of the penitentiary.[21] This is perhaps the first and most obvious way in which the film presents certain consolidated tropes in an inverted mirror. Slow-paced, sober, and terse, photographed mostly in an intense and richly nuanced black and white, the film seems to complicate the revivers versus recyclers classification of contemporary Shakespearean adaptations on screen offered by Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe.[22] On the one hand, *Caesar Must Die* is certainly not a commercially driven, "realist" version of a play *à la* Branagh (and Zeffirelli); on the other hand, it is also emphatically not a postmodern, media-savvy, self-reflexive, campy pastiche mixing highbrow and lowbrow, or foregrounding cutting-edge digital technologies *à la* Luhrmann—the comparison with other adaptations of Roman plays such as Taymor's *Titus* or Ralph Fiennes' *Coriolanus* is even more telling in this respect. Working within the limitations imposed by its unique environment, in itself dominated by a surveillance apparatus, *Caesar Must Die* is a film where the only technology involved is that of the Tavianis' video cameras.

At a larger thematic level, *Caesar Must Die* reiterates many tropes used by the Tavianis, well known for their multiple literary adaptations (Goethe, Tolstoy, Pirandello), in a career spanning 50 years.[23] The prison was the main setting for *St. Michael Had a Rooster* (1972), based on Tolstoy and following the vicissitudes of a nineteenth-century anarchist serving a life

[20] See Chap. 4.

[21] For Taymor's *Titus* see Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, eds., *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 69–96.

[22] Cartelli and Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare*, 1–24.

[23] Vito Zagarrio, ed., *Utopisti, esagerati. Il cinema di Paolo e Vittorio Taviani* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2004).

sentence. The prisoner fights isolation by staging a debate between utopian socialism and scientific Marxism, a role-playing that saves him temporarily from insanity but ultimately drives him to suicide when he confronts the changed political conditions of the world outside. The link between the individual journey and the collective dimension, the oedipal farewell to a fatherly figure or ideology, the defeat of revolutions, the themes of disillusionment and suicide—these have been constant preoccupations for the octogenarian filmmakers. At a stylistic level, the "ceiling-gazers" scene where an inmate projects himself onto the Technicolor postcard representing a beautiful Southern Italian landscape and the several moments when the prisoners observe the theatrical action from behind the bars evoke the many "dreams" and "views from the window" that recur in the Tavianis' previous films and may express both an elementary aspiration to freedom and a utopian vision of the future. The sacrificial murder of Caesar, shot in a very stylized matter, echoes the mythical and ritual representation of history that the Tavianis famously employed in *The Night of the Shooting Stars* (1982), in their transfiguration of the Italian anti-Nazi Resistance as a Homeric battle.

One would be tempted to define *Caesar Must Die* as a belated modernist endeavor to subject the ugliness of a life of crime and punishment and the messiness of contemporary Italy to an uplifting and cathartic artistic metamorphosis, one where the carefully constructed compositions framed by the camera find an unlikely ally in the confined spaces of this prison built in 1972, the minimalism of the directors mirroring and being mirrored by the architectural minimalism of Rebibbia.[24] This very real and yet artistically transformed prison certainly creates a crushing sense of confinement but it also becomes a paradoxical space of escape from contemporary civilization and its discontents. Any treatment of prison theater, Niels Harold wryly comments, would be remiss without "at least a nod to Michel Foucault".[25] The work I want to reference to prove my point is not *Discipline and Punish* but his short essay on heterotopias:

> places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted … between

[24] I thank Martina Cincotto for some of these observations.
[25] Herold, *Prison Shakespeare*, 2.

> utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror.[26]

In his taxonomy, Foucault names the prison as an exemplary heterotopia of deviation, insofar as it incorporates individuals whose behavior is abnormal.[27] In describing how heterotopias juxtapose different spaces in a single real place, he also names the theater, which "brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another" and cinema, "a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space".[28] A film representing a theatrical stage built inside a prison makes of *Caesar Must Die* a heterotopia to the third power, magnifying the different functions ascribed by Foucault to these peculiar places:

> Either [the] role [of heterotopias] is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory … Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill-constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of *compensation* (my emphasis).[29]

"Here everything is upside down", says Fabio Cavalli early in the film, describing the messy condition of the rehearsal space but making a comment most people would extend to Italy at large. The film arguably presents the experience of prison theater as a heterotopia of *compensation*, capable of restoring order through the labor of art. Concurrently, this illusory space "represses", in my reading, certain key Italian manifestations of the "new way of the world", the cultural logic of neoliberalism described by Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval.[30] In their analysis and synthesis, the French philosophers describe Western society, in particular, as a neoliberal system that, far from concerning the economic sphere alone, has profound

[26] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16, No. 1 (Spring 1986): 24. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

[27] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", 25.

[28] "Of Other Spaces", 25.

[29] "Of Other Spaces", 27.

[30] Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society*, translated by Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2014), 430–431.

social, anthropological, and psychological effects on the individual. It is an apparatus of efficiency capable of producing a neosubject who inhabits a space of communal relations modeled on enterprise and marked accordingly by an emphasis on competitiveness. This entrepreneurial subject, moving into an open society that promises limitless freedom and where traditional value systems give way to a desymbolized world, is forced into a circuit of performance/pleasure which, far from fulfilling one's desires, generates a number of new psychic pathologies. Under this constant pressure to overcome all individual limits, the neosubject engages in multiple technologies of the self to modify his/her own body and psyche, often with the help of the paradigmatic figure of the coach.[31] This new social configuration is embedded into a society of the spectacle that encourages a narcissistic exhibition and spectacularization of the self, fueled by the unprecedented expansion of social networks and TV shows, a condition that has metastasized in Italy thanks to the long political dominance of media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi.

Just as if two twentieth-century masters tried to resist, with their polished but outmoded artillery, the weapons of the twenty-first century, *Caesar Must Die* subverts emblematic cultural forms and situations of present-day Italy, compensating for the cheap shows, the fake bodies, the artificial lives and discourses of mainstream culture, envisioning a temporary shelter from the dominant vulgarity. The film then becomes an uncanny double of several contemporary "country dispositions", and, ultimately, a nostalgic film harking back to an Italy that is no more and *not yet*, evoking forms of cultural critique that have lost their currency and grip, but still hinting at the hope for a transformative collective experience at a time of individualism and disillusionment.

Resisting implicitly the hegemony of global/American pop culture, *Caesar Must Die* is a tribute to highbrow art forms, represented by noncommercial cinema, theater, Shakespeare, and Latin literature. The stark reality of the Rebibbia prison is a counterpoint to the Rome of tourist clichés and Roman centurions posing for the visitors' selfies; or the decadent Rome represented by another internationally acclaimed contemporary Italian film, Paolo Sorrentino's *Great Beauty* (2013). At a deeper level, *Caesar Must Die* can be read as an ironic reversal of the paradigmatic cultural product of neoliberal Italy: the reality show. In this voluntary form of confinement, current or aspiring celebrities enter within

[31] Dardot and Laval, *The New Way of the World*, 307ff.

artificial prisons such as the house of Big Brother and the Island of the Famous, heterotopias of illusion where performing one's "real" self in front of millions of viewers depends on eliminating others in a ruthless competition for money and fame. Its diametrically opposed experience is that of a group of convicts who work together, for several months, to stage a Shakespearean play, seek no profit, and perform characters through hard study and strenuous identification processes, putting personal talent at the service of a common cause.[32] The real, often overweight bodies of the actors, testifying to the sedentary lives into which convicts are forced, also offer a refreshing change from the super-fit, standardized, surgically and chemically modified anatomies that the media feed obsessively into Italian visual culture. The Tavianis may thus have located in the prison a locus that paradoxically "transforms" and preserves certain ethical values that have remained at best residual in contemporary Italy. On the other hand, I argue, their film "represses" and "forgets" other key social and cultural forces that are bringing about radical changes in Italian society and are perhaps too unsettling for two artists identified with a socially conservative communist tradition.

Gender Trouble

One of the crucial directorial choices is the editing out of all female roles from the play.[33] Gone are Portia and Calphurnia: there is no resort to Shakespeare's original practice of an all-male cast taking roles for both genders, and there is no appeal to traditions of homosexuality deeply rooted in Southern Italian culture such as that of the *femminiello*, used in other prison theater programs.[34] In a stage interview included in the DVD bonus features, Paolo Taviani invokes the canons of cinematic realism: "At the theatre you can have men dressed up as women because you are far from the stage. A film is a document, it is photographically invasive, you see pimples and moustaches, and would just make people laugh." However,

[32] This communal goal differentiates this Shakespearean experience even from that slightly more content-oriented format of televised competition, the talent show.

[33] A symmetrical situation is that of the Donmar Warehouse's production of *Julius Caesar* (2012), directed by Phyllida Lloyd with an all-female cast and set in a women's prison. (http://www.donmarwarehouse.com/whats-on/donmar-warehouse/2012/julius-caesar, date accessed 3 September 2015).

[34] Another prominent prison theater director, Armando Punzo, used that tradition extensively in his performance of Jean Genet.

the deliberate constitution of this homosocial, patriarchal order is symbolically consolidated when, at the auditions, actors are asked to introduce themselves by their name, address, and *father*'s name. The patrilineality (and heteronormativity) is further reiterated when, to test their acting and improvisational qualities, each actor is asked to repeat the same information while imagining bidding farewell to the woman they love. One thinks of *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, where not only are the American convicts left to cast themselves and choose their own roles but are also willing to take up female roles (admittedly a less dispensable option in *The Tempest* than in *Julius Caesar*).[35] It is ironic that in the same years the issue of gender has entered the wider public arena in the most unexpected manner. Italian feminism has deep roots and enjoys an international reputation, but it has remained a culturally marginal phenomenon; a certain model of woman, as we saw in Chap. 8, is still hegemonic, and the situation is far worse when it comes to LGBTQ rights, Italy being the last country in Europe (way behind all other Catholic nations) to have recognized civil unions, but not same-sex marriage. The English word "gender" was imported into critical discourse in the 1990s to supplement its literal translation as "genere" (which also means "genre") to avoid confusion. It was a surprise to many that "gender" was suddenly popularized by Pope Benedict XVI and his successor Francis, both attacking "gender theory" as a severe threat to the natural order of the family. The English term instantly jumped from sociology books and academic papers to parish newsletters and Sunday sermons, becoming a shorthand for gay propaganda. While popular culture (television, magazines, Internet) is gradually moving beyond the idealized image of the typical heterosexual nuclear family, "gender" turns into a strategic battlefront for the Catholic Church, trying to close its ranks as it gradually loses its cultural hegemony. In this broad context, the Tavianis' abridged *Julius Caesar* remains emphatically a virile—Latin etymology intended—undertaking, impervious to any gender disturbance.[36]

[35] See John Champagne, *Italian Masculinity as Queer Melodrama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1. Fabio Cavalli has used external female actors for the roles of Ophelia and Miranda.

[36] The film never references sexuality, even if this is another notoriously burning issue in the prison world (Manconi, *Abolire il carcere*). It is frequently noticed by people who live across the two cultures that sexuality in Italy is very marginal in intellectual discourse and pervasive in popular mainstream culture, whereas the situation is the diametrical opposite in the anglosphere.

Didacticism and Austerity

Against the neoliberal vogue of the coach, the master chef, and the talent show judge, the Tavianis present in their film a celebration of the venerated figures of the mentor and of the organic intellectual. In a review in the *Financial Times*, Nigel Andrews writes: "*Caesar Must Die* has the smug austerity and didacticism we remember from 1960s/70s television political drama. Back then directors felt licensed to treat the screen as a blackboard and the audience as students."[37] "Austerity" is, of course, a term one is more likely to read on the front page of the same paper than in the arts section. It is the buzzword around which the debate on the present and future of the European Union revolves, frequently cast as an almost anthropological struggle between the spendthrift, law-abiding, rational, Protestant Northern Europe versus the hedonistic, profligate, parasitic Mediterranean Europe. These recurrent stereotypes overshadow far more complicated fault lines, like, for instance, that distinctly Italian tradition of "austerity" at once political, economical, moral, and aesthetic, to which the Tavianis may be said to belong. Like many Italian intellectuals, they were long-time supporters of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), whose last recognized leader and role model, Enrico Berlinguer, became a symbol of ethical rectitude and moral austerity. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the troubled transmutation of the PCI into a multitude of smaller parties, and the rise of a new type of politician whose success was not only compatible but to some extent consubstantial with a flamboyant lifestyle and a full subscription to the market economy both superseded and simultaneously magnified the figure of Berlinguer, who was nearly sanctified after his premature death at a public rally in 1984.[38] Without ever being idealized, the prison reconfigured by the Tavianis becomes the locus of the essentials: here Roman Stoicism, Catholic pauperism, and communist austerity coincide not to glorify the experience of detention but to envision a heterotopia where the dominant values of neoliberalism, consumerism, and the logic of the spectacle are temporarily suspended.

This particular setting is enabled by the double "didacticism" of Fabio Cavalli and the Tavianis. The PCI invested massively in the role of the

[37] Nigel Andrews, "Cinema reviews: *Arbitrage*, *The Bay*, *Caesar Must Die* and more." *Financial Times*, 28 February 2013.

[38] For the cultural politics of the PCI, see Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943–1991* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2000).

intellectuals (many of whom left the party at various critical junctures, particularly after 1956 and 1968, when the USSR crushed rebellions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia) and in the training of party members, both in their central school of politics in Rome and in the thousands of local sections disseminated all over the country. From the early moment in the film where the prison warden symbolically transfers his authority to the theater director for the Shakespeare program, Cavalli embodies the role of the organic intellectual. He is clearly no longer organic to a party long gone and morphed into a more postmodern structure where TV ratings and Twitter followers have replaced local roots in the community, but he certainly subscribes to the same notion of traditional national culture:

> There is on average a cultural disparity and you have to relate to people who, more often than not, have barely made it through middle school. It is necessary to mediate between what you know and your own cultural awareness, and those who can offer only their humanity and life experience. As it happens, though, my actors have accumulated, sadly for them, life experiences that I would not dream of going through or wish to have. When you face them and discuss Shakespeare, Dante, Giordano Bruno, Classic dramaturgy, the ancient Greeks, you discover that what you know of the concepts of justice, revenge, brotherhood, betrayal and conspiracy you've learned from literature while they have experimented it the hard way and at their own expense. As a result, you bring, so to speak, the high word of poetry and they bring the visceral word of life. When these two things meet, when mutual esteem is formed, the outcome augers well.[39]

Cavalli and the Tavianis have genuine respect for the prisoners and hence follow in a long Italian Catholic/communist tradition of finding in the humble, the downtrodden, and the underprivileged a source and nucleus of authenticity (from Manzoni to Verga and Pasolini). "In their mouths, certain words resound with extraordinary force, reaching an expressive depth that the academic actor cannot attain",[40] states Cavalli, in a remark that sounds quite ironical since his distinctly academic diction, purified of any regional cadence in the typical Italian acting tradition, contrasts

[39] Fabio Canessa, "Fabio Cavalli, regista di *Cesare deve morire* 'Il carcere è un teatro.'" *La Nuova Sardegna*, 18 giugno 2012, http://lanuovasardegna.gelocal.it/regione/2012/06/18/news/fabio-cavalli-regista-di-cesare-deve-morire-il-carcere-e-un-teatro-1.5284336, date accessed 3 September 2015.

[40] Canessa, "Fabio Cavalli."

heavily with the individual dialects in which the actors are invited to translate and play their parts. As Calbi aptly summarizes it: “[S]ome of the ‘accents yet unknown’ (or ‘languages yet to be invented’) are the Neapolitan, Roman, Sicilian and Apulia dialects used by the actors, which on occasion sound more ‘formal’, on others more ‘popular’ and alternate with a variety of forms of Italian spoken with a regional accent.”[41] “Not too vulgar”, Cavalli warns, in his artificial Italian, Giovanni Arcuri who is playing Julius Caesar with an excessively Roman inflection: actors must be authentic, but only just so. The neoliberal life coach’s aim is to liberate the potential of the unbridled individual and lead him or her to success without limits. Cavalli, with his diligent training, and the Tavianis, with their patient video cameras, epitomize a different type of mentorship, one that can promise limited success and even less emancipation, but which is definitely more confident in realigning the inner selves of the inmates with the high existential and philosophical truths of Western civilization. What both the stage director and the filmmakers appear to share is an adamant faith in the Canon. Nowhere is this clearer than in the scene where Arcuri is absorbed in the reading of Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico*. Shakespeare, who famously had “small Latin”, becomes here a vehicle to reclaim the classical roots of Italian culture.[42] “And to think that I found it so boring in school”, sighs Arcuri, continuing then emphatically: “Julius Caesar is great, *our* Julius Caesar!” “A genius, even Shakespeare thought so”, echoes Cavalli. The rediscovery of the joys of Latin through *Julius Caesar* may be read as part of a long tradition of Italian appropriations of Shakespeare that go hand in hand with the valorization of his Italian sources (Italians staged various local versions of *Romeo and Juliet* before they admitted to the superiority of the Shakespearean play). Yet the whole situation acquires an unwittingly ironic dimension when we follow the backstage of the scene in the documentary *I diari di Cesare*, “the making of” *Caesar Must Die* one finds as a special feature in the DVD. Here, we see Paolo Taviani prompting the actor to demonstrate his “spontaneous”

[41] Calbi, “In States Unborn”, 240.

[42] Where the core curriculum of the Liceo Classico, the elite humanities high school based on the study of Latin and Greek that is part of an educational system that places students on an academic or professional track at the age of fourteen and that constituted the backbone of a distinctly secular curriculum created to compete with and rival the hegemony of the Catholic Church. In this movie, among other things, there seems to be no trace of Catholic culture, which, on the other hand, is often thematized or displaced and translated into the language of cult and sacrifice in many forms of contemporary Italian theater.

admiration for the literary skills of the Roman general and explaining him that he must refer to "*our* Giulio Cesare" because "*we* are making the show". But Arcuri's Roman accent seems rather to connote the exclamation as a form of national, if not municipal, jingoism: the Latin language and the Roman past, far from being the exclusive province of Fascist glorifications, have often been used to exalt Italianness and are increasingly deployed in popular contexts such as soccer and tattoo culture to flaunt a distinctly local Roman identity.

"'Since I got to know art, this cell has become a prison,' muses a convict in this film, should we not have grasped the Tavianis' lesson, repeated over and over again, that art can send to us the invigorating breeze of spiritual and intellectual freedom."[43] This edifying conclusion has elicited very different responses; some find it to be refreshingly straightforward praise of art at a time of postmodern cynicism and irony; some, as the reviewer demonstrates, find it an unnecessarily condescending moral of the story. Whatever the case, Cavalli and the Tavianis come across as old-fashioned, progressive twentieth-century intellectuals, ready to teach to the masses and to demonstrate that some genuine truth is to be found even in former criminals. Where they probably differ is in their interpretation of the audience. Cavalli has expressed a patent disdain for the bourgeois playgoers: "a share of men not inappropriately considered the dregs of the city, a few curious intellectuals, some well-meaning lady and some filled with prudery… adolescents more interested in the opposite sex than in the show".[44] On the contrary, the Tavianis, in their choral, symbolic coming together of actors, guards, and audience, silently marching away from the stage at the end of the film, seem to conclude on a more hopeful note: art can change people.

Codes of Honor and Nostalgia

Calbi has called attention to "the reciprocal contamination of the languages of mafia culture and the languages of republican freedom, and in particular the violence that inheres in both".[45] The moral ambiguities played out in *Caesar Must Die* begin with the title, which echoes the translation of Brutus' lines "It must be by his death" (2.1.10) into the

[43] Andrews, "Cinema reviews".

[44] Fabio Cavalli, "Shakespeare in carcere", 20 June 2013, http://www.stratagemmi.it/?p=4759, date accessed 3 September 2015.

[45] Calbi, "In States Unborn", 241.

Neapolitan "*adda murì*", superimposing the workings of the Mafia on the logic of tyrannicide:

> the language of mafia culture informs the whole film, from the conspirators' greeting of Brutus with "*Baciamo le mani*" (a typical mafia-coded form of greeting) to the highlighting of the notion of "respect" to the identification of the would-be dictator with a *capo*. In Antony's "Friends, Romans, countrymen" speech, the translation of "honourable men" as "*uomini d'onore*" (in both Italian and dialect), an expression invariably used to refer to members of the *mafia*, and its ironic reiteration throughout the scene, are perhaps the most emblematic examples of the extent to which notions of Roman honour resonate with the codes of honour of organized crime associations. But perhaps the most trenchantly ironic aspect of the film is that it intimates that no matter which party one takes sides with—Caesar's or the conspirators'—there is no escape from the criminal violence of a masculine notion of "honour".[46]

I wish to suggest another possible, highly idiosyncratic reading of this "citational environment".[47] By appropriating Mafia discourse, the film reinscribes the narrative in a reassuringly national tradition that deflects the pressures of globalization. As Roberto Saviano's international bestseller *Gomorrah* has vividly demonstrated, organized crime may still be deeply entrenched in specific local enclaves but it has become a far more globalized and glamorized phenomenon, its bosses conducting business in pinstripe suits and with top-notch lawyers, and its young affiliates learning to shoot from Hollywood movies.[48] Maybe, in the desymbolized society described by Dardot and Laval, *Caesar Must Die* seeks unconsciously to anchor itself in the "ghostly fatherly legacy" of a highly recognizable, if morally despicable, *Italian* tradition. After Caesar's murder, Salvatore Striano/Brutus relates the events to his cellmates while casually adjusting his pillowcase, in an interesting moment where the Shakespearean plot and the everyday life in the prison overlap seamlessly. For the only time in the film, we see an African convict, lying in bed, who reacts to Brutus' reports of the violent backlash against the conspirators by commenting: "like in my home, Nigeria". This token appearance is a helpful reminder that over 30 % of the Italian prison population is composed of foreign

[46] Calbi, "In States Unborn", 242.

[47] Cartelli and Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen*, 9.

[48] Roberto Saviano, *Gomorrah* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

nationals, many of whom are recent African migrants who reach this first European frontier illegally and are often sucked into criminal activity. However, this African voice is still separated from the main Shakespearean action and made to occupy the standard role of the passive victim of a violent country. Adding that we learn in the auditions that two of the Italian actors are themselves former migrants, Italy is marked in the film quite anachronistically as a country of *emigration* rather than *immigration*. The artistic venture remains not only an all-male business but also an all-Italian one, with a touch of provincial cosmopolitanism demonstrated by the actor who ironically describes himself as "a citizen of the world" and starts performing a traditional Maori haka during rehearsal.

Italy is gradually becoming a multicultural country, with many different groups making crucial contributions to its social fabric, and the first generation of Italian African intellectuals questioning the consensus of an ethnically homogenous nation oblivious of its colonial legacy and neocolonial entanglements. As Del Sapio remarks: "It is not hard to imagine that interest in rethinking the Roman Shakespeare will increase as a consequence of globalization. The Roman Shakespeare of an emerging early modern empire asks questions of our present as well as of our past."[49] The reinvention continues, but *Caesar Must Die* seems to resist globalization by retreating into a societal configuration where the ethnic diversity of Italy remains at the more manageable level of regional identities.

Victims

"In *Cesare deve morire* the Shakespearean script *does* raise ghosts from the convicts' past.—Maurizio Calbi points out—Yet the film also suggests that coming to terms with ghosts is an *interminable* process."[50] In the 1990s, a landmark television program, Sergio Zavoli's *La notte della repubblica* (*the Night of the Republic*), turned the public confession of the "repented" political terrorist into a powerful genre. To this day, heated controversy accompanies any public appearance or public appointment of former terrorists who served all their time in jail. The values of redemption and rehabilitation are pitted against the unwarranted exhibitionism of people whose crimes cannot be undone. Either way, the direct and indirect victims are marginalized and silenced, even though a few of the

[49] Del Sapio Garbero, *Identity, Otherness and Empire,* 103.
[50] Calbi, "In States Unborn", 244.

survivors—the children of assassinated journalists, politicians, judges, union members, and workers—have successfully entered the public arena and poignantly discussed their traumatic experiences. When questioned about the friendly relationships with the convicts during the making of the film, Vittorio Taviani responded:

> A prison guard, seeing how intimate we had become with the actors, told us: "I also happen to have feelings of pity and friendships for these convicts, but I only reach a certain point and I stop, because the pity must go the victims and their families". This thing struck us deeply and our feelings were contradictory, but we felt that through the show, through Shakespeare, we managed to obtain from them emotions that purified what they had done. When they played dramatic and tragic moments, their strength came not just from their simple talent but from the fact that they were conscious of what they were saying; there was a dramatic past, a truth, that came out of their expression, and at that moment you felt they were human beings whom we all have to respect.[51]

The film does not play down the crimes the actors committed. Immediately after the selection of the parts, a sequence of close-up shots—mug shots?—of the actors is accompanied by captions that list their real names, crimes, and the duration of their sentence, as to remind us (and them) that their illegal activities, which include homicide, drug dealing, and organized crime, cannot be erased. The Tavianis stand with Aristotle in their faith in the cathartic power of tragedy and express a profound belief in the redemptive power of art, but their position contains an irreducible contradiction: like any representation of rehabilitated criminals, it cannot avoid "forgetting and repressing" their victims, who are ultimately denied any identity or role like the dismembered citizens killed in the civil wars of Rome.

S.O.B.S

Caesar Must Die is a powerful artistic intervention in the domain of Shakespearean film adaptations and the Italian cultural scene. It confronts key issues that have marked the history of a country still grappling with

[51] Daniela Catelli, "Cesare deve morire, incontro con i fratelli Taviani", 29 February 2012, http://www.comingsoon.it/news/?source=cinema&key=12082, date accessed 3 September 2015.

its own identity, especially the relationship with public institutions and the question of civic values and virtues.

In Dino Risi's *The Star Actor*, whose original title *Il mattatore* evokes the nineteenth-century players like Ristori and Salvini who made Shakespeare popular in Italy, Vittorio Gassman is an aspiring comedian who lands in jail for a small-time scam. In an impromptu performance, his character entertains a large group of convicts with a vibrant rendition of Mark Antony's speech, where he exaggerates to the point of parody the grandiloquent style of Shakespearean acting of which Gassman himself was one of the last great proponents.[52] The show is so riveting that when a guardian announces to one of the inmates that his wife is paying a visit, he gets the reply: "Tell her I'm not in." At the end of the scene, the prisoners break into roaring applause, and one of them comments in Roman dialect: "That Brutus was a real son-of-a-bitch." The outcome is that Gassman's talent makes him the right person to be involved in a bigger scam. In the quintessential Italian form of comedy, which as we described in our introductory chapter has always prevailed over tragedy, this prison *Julius Caesar*, far from having any redemptive effect, generates more creative crime and more depraved individuals. The film dates from 1960, when Italy was laughing a lot about itself but also developing socially and economically and producing internationally acclaimed art and culture.

Half a century later, the Tavianis' *Julius Caesar* in prison strikes a markedly different tone, as solemn and melancholic as the music that accompanies the film. The directors pay a tongue-in-cheek homage to Risi's film when Antony's speech is preceded by a dialogue between three prison guards who follow the scene from above. One of them would like to interrupt the rehearsal because the *ora d'aria* is finished, but the magic of theater prevails and the two other guards start commenting on the peroration. The first one likes Antony's attitude and calls him "obliging", while the second holds a very different feeling: "[H]e is a real son-of-a-bitch." With intense close-up shots alternating with medium shots, we now see Antony deliver his famous speech and are called as viewers to decide which prison guard we agree with. The prisoners, hanging from the bars of the high windows overlooking the courtyard where Caesar's body lies inanimate, have just finished acclaiming Brutus and now they lend their ears to Antony. The astute populist quickly wins the day, and two damning traditions of Italy are honored: Italian demagoguery and the instinct of

[52] Tempera, "Political Caesar", 334.

the population to adjust rapidly to the changing political climate. Antony is a son of a bitch, and the people are ready to follow him.

Avoiding any easy parable, in a circularity that Calbi identifies as key to the hauntological aspect of the Shakespearean text, "a play that often situates itself as part of a structure of reiteration with no beginning or end, or at least with no definite temporal boundaries",[53] *Caesar Must Die* ends as it begins, with the actors embracing on stage and the spectators soberly and orderly leaving the prison. On the cover of the DVD, the black-and-white picture of the close rank of convicts seen in profile is juxtaposed to the mirror image, in color, of their appearance on stage as ancient Romans. In a deeply fragmented, uncertain, and disillusioned country that has shed the mass ideologies of the past century and is still looking for new directions, the film starts and ends with the glimpse and vision of a community.[54]

[53] Calbi, "In States Unborn", 238.

[54] "If immunity tends to shut our existence up into non-communicating circles or enclosures, community is not so much a larger circle that contains them as it is a passage that cuts through their boundary lines and mixes up the human experience, freeing it from its obsession with security." Roberto Esposito, "Community, immunity, biopolitics." *Angelaki* 18, no. 3 (2013): 85.

Bibliography

1859. *New exegesis of Shakespeare. Interpretation of his principal characters and plays on the principle of races*. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black.

1998. *Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana. Il Conciso*. Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani.

Accati, Luisa. 2006. *Beauty and the monster. Discursive and figurative representations of the parental couple from Giotto to Tiepolo*. Florence: European Press Academic Publishing.

Agamben, Giorgio. 1999. *The End of the Poem. Studies in Poetics*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Agamben, Giorgio. 2002. *Remnants of Auschwitz. The witness and the archive*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. New York: Zone Books.

Alberti, Carmelo. 1998. La scena delle metamorfosi. Il teatro negli anni della municipalità democratica di Padova. In *La Municipalità democratica di Padova. 1797. Storia e cultura*, ed. Armando Balduino, 143–161. Venezia: Marsilio.

Alexander, Catherine, and Stanley Wells (eds.). 2000. *Shakespeare and race*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alvis, John E., and Thomas G. West (eds.). 2000. *Shakespeare as a political thinker*. Wilmington: ISI Books; 1981. 1st ed. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.

Andrews, Nigel. 2013. Cinema reviews: Arbitrage, the bay, Caesar must die and more. *Financial Times*, February 28.

Anidjar, Gil. 2003. *The Jew, the Arab. A history of the enemy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Aquilecchia, Gaetano. 2002. Giordano Bruno as philosopher of the renaissance. In *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher of the renaissance*, ed. Gatti Hilary, 19–52. Aldershot: Ashgate.

© The Author(s) 2016

S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1

Ashcroft, Bill, Hellen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths. 2007. *Post-colonial studies. The key concepts*. London/New York: Routledge.
Attar, Karina F. Genealogy of a character: A reading of Giraldi's Moor. In *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, ed. Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi, 47–64.
Auden, W.H. 2000. *Lectures on Shakespeare*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Avery, Victoria. 2011. *Vulcan's forge in Venus' city: The story of bronze in Venice, 1350–1650*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Aymard, Maurice. 1992. Le minoranze. In *L'Europa e gli europei*, ed. Fernand Braudel, 177–204. Bari: Laterza.
Banfield, Edward C. 1958. *The moral basis of a backward society*. Glencoe: The Free Press.
Bartels, Emily C. 2008. *Speaking of the Moor: From Alcazar to Othello*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Bassi, Gino. 1916. Nel terzo centenario della morte di Guglielmo Shakespeare. *Rassegna Nazionale*, April 16.
Bassi, Roberto. 2014. *Skirmishes on Lake Ladoga*. Trans. Jeremy Scott. New York: CPL Editions.
Bassi, Shaul. 2000. *Le metamorfosi di Otello. Storia di un'etnicità immaginaria*. Bari: Graphis.
Bassi, Shaul. 2016. The names of the rose. *Romeo and Juliet* in Italy. In *Romeo and Juliet. A critical reader*, ed. Julia Reinhard Lupton. London: Bloomsbury.
Bassi, Shaul. Barefoot to Palestine: The failed meetings of Shylock and Othello. In *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, ed. Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi, 232–233.
Bassi, Shaul, and Isabella di Lenardo. 2013. *The Ghetto inside out*. Venezia: Corte del Fontego.
Bassi, Shaul, and Alberto Toso Fei. 2007. *Shakespeare in Venice. Exploring the city with Shylock and Othello*. Treviso: Elzeviro.
Bassi, Simonetta (ed.). 2012. *Bruno nel XXI secolo. Interpretazioni e ricerche*. Firenze: Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento.
Bate, Jonathan. 1989. *Shakespearean constitutions: Politics, theatre, criticism 1730–1830*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Bates, Jennifer, and Richard Wilson (eds.). 2014. *Shakespeare and continental philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Bauman, Zygmunt. 1998. Allosemitism: Premodern, modern, postmodern. In *Modernity, culture and "the Jew"*, ed. Bryan Cheyette and L. Marcus, 143–156. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Belardelli, Giovanni. 2005. *Il Ventennio degli intellettuali. Cultura, politica, ideologia nell'Italia fascista*. Bari: Laterza.
Beller, Manfred. 2007. Italians. In *Imagology. The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters: A critical survey*, ed. Manfred Beller and Joseph Theodoor Leerssen, 194–200. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi.
Bellotti, Luigi. 1943. *L'italianità di Shakespeare. Guglielmo Crollalanza grande genio italiano*. Venezia: Opera D.N. Sezione Lettere.

Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. 2004. *Fascist modernities: Italy, 1922–1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bevington, David. 2011. *Murder most foul. Hamlet through the ages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bidussa, David. 1994. *Il mito del bravo italiano*. Milano: Il Saggiatore.

Bloom, Allan. 1987. *The closing of the American mind*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Bloom, Allan. 1996. *Shakespeare's politics*, with Harry V. Jaffa. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Bloom, Allan. 1964. 1st ed. New York: Basic Books; Bloom, Allan. 1981. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Blum, Paul Richard. 2012. *Giordano Bruno: An introduction*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Boatti, Giorgio. 2001. *Preferirei di no. Le storie dei dodici professori che si opposero a Mussolini*. Torino: Einaudi.

Bodei, Remo. 2014. Teatro e redenzione. A proposito di Cesare deve morire dei fratelli Taviani. In Marco Barabotti, Remo Bodei, Roan Johnson, Bruna Niccoli, Roberto Perpignani. In *Fratelli di cinema. Paolo e Vittorio Taviani in viaggio dietro la macchina da presa*, ed. Silvia Panichi, 71–82. Roma: Donzelli.

Bodin, Jean. 1962. *The six bookes of a commonweal. A facsimile reprint of the English translation of 1606*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Boelhower, William. 1987. *Through a glass darkly: Ethnic semiosis in American literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Boerio, Giuseppe. 1829. *Dizionario del dialetto veneziano*. Venezia: Andrea Santini.

Bollati, Giulio. 2011. *L'Italiano. Il carattere nazionale come storia e come invenzione. [1983]*. Torino: Einaudi.

Bonavita, Riccardo. 2009. *Spettri dell'altro. Letteratura e razzismo nell'Italia contemporanea*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Bossy, John. 2002. *Giordano Bruno and the embassy affair*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Bradshaw, Graham. 1993. *Misrepresentations. Shakespeare and the materialists*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Brilli, Attilio. 2006. *Il viaggio in Italia: storia di una grande tradizione culturale*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Brunel, Pierre. 1995. *Companion to literary myths, heroes and archetypes*. New York: Routledge.

Bruno, Giordano. 1975. In *The Ash Wednesday supper*, ed. Stanley L. Jaki. The Hague: Mouton.

Bruno, Giordano. 2000. In *Opere magiche*, ed. Simonetta Bassi, Elisabetta Scapparone, and Nicoletta Tirinnanzi. Milano: Adelphi.

Bruno, Giordano. 1713. *Spaccio della bestia trionfante. Or the Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*. Trans. William Morehead. London.

Bryden, Inga. 1996. Reinventing origins: The Victorian Arthur and racial myth. In *The Victorians and race*, ed. Shearer West, 141–155. Aldershot: Scolar Press.

Bucciantini, Massimo. 2015. *Campo dei Fiori. Storia di un monumento maledetto*. Torino: Einaudi.
Burgio, Alberto. 1999. *Nel nome della Razza. Il razzismo nella storia d'Italia, 1870–1945*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
Busi, Anna. 1973. *Otello in Italia. 1777–1972*. Bari: Adriatica.
Byron, George. 1976. *Byron's letters and journals, Vol. V: "So late into the night", 1816–1817*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press.
Cacciari, Massimo. 1977. *Krisis. Saggio sulla crisi del pensiero negativo da Nietzsche a Wittgenstein*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
Cacciari, Massimo. 2009a. *Hamletica*. Milano: Adelphi.
Cacciari, Massimo. 2009b. *The Unpolitical: On the Radical Critique of Political Reason*, ed. Alessandro Carrera. Trans. Massimo Verdicchio. New York: Fordham University Press.
Cacciari, Massimo. 2014. "Considerazioni "impolitiche" sul *Re Lear*." In *Thinking with Shakespeare*, edited by Rosy Colombo and Nadia Fusini. *Memoria di Shakespeare. A Journal of Shakespearean Studies* 1(2014): 129–138. http://ojs.uniroma1.it/index.php/MemShakespeare/article/view/11789.
Calbi, Maurizio. 2014. "In states unborn and accents yet unknown": Spectral Shakespeare in Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's Cesare deve morire (Caesar must die). *Shakespeare Bulletin* 32(2): 235–253.
Callaghan, Dympna. 2001. Shakespeare and religion. *Textual Practice* 151: 1–3.
Camerlingo, Rosanna. 1999. *Teatro e teologia. Marlowe, Bruno e i Puritani*. Napoli: Liguori.
Campana, Carlo. I Tetrarchi: documentazione storica e storie a Venezia. *L'enigma dei Tetrarchi*, 119–129.
Campanelli, Claudia. 1996. J. F. Ducis: *Othello* come spunto per una tragedia neoclassica. In *Il libro del teatro*, ed. R. Ciancarelli and S. Carandini, 139–150. Roma: Bulzoni.
Canessa, Fabio. 2012. Fabio Cavalli, regista di *Cesare deve morire* "Il carcere è un teatro". *La Nuova Sardegna* 18 giugno 2012. http://lanuovasardegna.gelocal.it/regione/2012/06/18/news/fabio-cavalli-regista-di-cesare-deve-morire-il-carcere-e-un-teatro-1.5284336.
Canfora, Luciano. 2009. Caesar for communists and fascists. In *A companion to Julius Caesar*, ed. Miriam Griffin, 431–440. Oxford: Blackwell.
Cartelli, Thomas. 1999. *Repositioning Shakespeare: National formations, postcolonial appropriations*. London/New York: Routledge.
Cartelli, Thomas, and Katherine Rowe. 2007. *New wave Shakespeare on screen*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Catelli, Daniela. 2015. Cesare deve morire, incontro con i fratelli Taviani. 29 Feb 2012. http://www.comingsoon.it/news/?source=cinema&key=12082. Accessed 3 Sept 2015.

Cavalli, Fabio. 2013. Shakespeare in carcere. 20 June 2013. http://www.stratagemmi.it/?p=4759. Accessed 3 Sept 2015.
Cavarero, Adriana. 2002. *Stately bodies: literature, philosophy, and the question of gender*. Trans. Robert de Lucca and Deanna Shemek. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
Champagne, John. 2015. *Italian masculinity as queer melodrama*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Chaudhuri, Sukanta. 1994. Shakespeare and the ethnic question. In *Shakespeare and cultural traditions*, ed. T. Kishi et al., 174–187. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
Chiesa, Lorenzo, and Alberto Toscano (eds.). 2009. *The Italian difference: Between nihilism and biopolitics*. Melbourne: re.press.
Chignola, Sandro. 2015. Italian theory? Elementi per una genealogia. In *Differenze italiane. Politica e filosofia: mappe e sconfinamenti*, ed. Dario Gentili and Elettra Stimilli, 30–46. Roma: DeriveApprodi.
Ciliberto, Michele. 2007. *Giordano Bruno. Il teatro della vita*. Milano: Mondadori.
Cimino, Giorgio Tomaso. 1878. *Il Mercante di Venezia. Melodramma in 4 atti da Shakespeare*. Milano: Ricordi.
Clayton, Thomas, Susan Brock, and Vicente Forés. 2004. *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean: The selected proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress, Valencia, 2001*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
Coco, Carla. 1993. *Venezia levantina*. Venezia: Corbo e Fiore editori.
Collison-Morley, Lacy. 1916. *Shakespeare in Italy*. Stratford-Upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press.
Concina, Ennio. *Spoliae ac manubiae* a San Marco. *L'enigma dei Tetrarchi*, 97–118.
Conti, Antonio. 1726. *Il Cesare. Tragedia del Sig. Ab. Antonio Conti nobile veneto con alcune cose concernenti l'opera medesima*. Faenza: Gioseffantonio Archi.
Cortellazzo, Manlio, and Paolo Zolli. 1999. *Il Nuovo etimologico. DELI—Dizionario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana*. Bologna: Zanichelli.
Coryat, Thomas. 2013. In *Most glorious & peerless Venice*, ed. David Whittaker. Charlbury: Wavestone Press.
Coursen, H.R. 1993. *Watching Shakespeare on television*. London: Associated University Press.
Croce, Benedetto. 1925. *Shakespeare*. Bari: Laterza.
Croce, Benedetto. 1949. *My philosophy: And other Essays on the moral and political Problems of Our Time*., Trans. E. F. Carritt. London: George Allen and Unwin.
Crowhurst Lennard, Suzanne H. 2012. *The Venetian Campo. Ideal setting for social life and community*. Venezia: Corte del Fontego.
D.[?], L.[?] Un'interpretazione razzista dell'*Otello*. *La difesa della razza* 3(24) 20 October 1940.

D'Amico, Jack. 1991. *The Moor in English renaissance drama*. Tampa: University of South Florida Press.

D'Anniballe, Maria. 2012. Redefining urban identity in fascist Verona through the lens of Hollywood's Romeo and Juliet. In *New perspectives in Italian cultural studies: The arts and history*, vol. 2, ed. Graziella Parati, 223–243. Madison: Farleigh Dickinson.

Damiani, Sara (ed.). 2006. *I volti di Medusa*. Milano: Bruno Mondadori.

Dardot, Pierre, and Christian Laval. 2014. *The new way of the world: On neoliberal society*. Trans. Gregory Elliott. New York: Verso.

De Camilli, Davide. 2000. *Machiavelli nel tempo. La critica machiavelliana dal Cinquecento a oggi*. Pisa: ETS.

De Graef, Ortwin, Dirk De. Geest, and Eveline Vanfraussen. 2001. Fascist politics and literary criticism. In *The Cambridge history of literary criticism*, Twentieth-century historical, philosophical and psychological perspectives, vol. 9, ed. Christa Knellwolf and Christopher Norris, 71–86. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

de Grazia, Margreta. 2007. *"Hamlet" without Hamlet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Del Boca, Angelo. 2009. *Italiani brava gente?* Vicenza: Neri Pozza.

Del Sapio Garbero, Maria (ed.). 2009. *Identity, otherness and empire in Shakespeare's Rome*. Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate.

Della Porta, Giovan Battista. 1607. *Il Moro*. Viterbo: Girolamo Discepolo.

Demack, Ian. 2002. *The modern Machiavelli: The seven principles of power in business*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.

Demus, Otto. 1984. *The mosaics of Saint Mark in Venice*, 2 vols. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.

Demus, Otto. 1995. *Le sculture esterne di San Marco*. Milano: Electa.

Derrida, Jacques. 2008. In *Psyche. Inventions of the other*, vol. 2, ed. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Dickens, Charles. 1998. *Pictures from Italy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Didi-Huberman, Georges. 2012. *Images in spite of all: Four photographs from Auschwitz*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dollimore, Jonathan. 1989. *Radical tragedy. Religion, ideology and power in the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries (1984)*. New York/London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Dollimore, Jonathan, and Alan Sinfield (eds.). 1985. *Political Shakespeare*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.

Dragnea, Gabriela. 2003. *Shakespeare: ermetismo, mistica, magia*. Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura.

Dubech, Lucien. 1936. *"Le Marchand de Venise à Venise"*, Newspaper clipping. Venezia: Biblioteca Casa Goldoni.

Dunnet, Jane. The rhetoric of Romanità: Representations of Caesar in fascist theatre, *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, ed. Maria Wyke, 244–265.

Eagleton, Terry. 1996. *The illusions of postmodernism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Edmondson, Paul, and Stanley Wells. 2013. *Shakespeare beyond doubt: Evidence, argument, controversy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Elam, Keir. 1997. "In what chapter of his bosom?": Reading Shakespeare bodies. In *Alternative Shakespeares*, vol. 2, ed. Terence Hawkes, 140–163. London: Routledge.
Empson, William. 1994. *Essays on renaissance literature*, The drama, vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Engler, Balz. 2000. Shakespeare in the trenches. In *Shakespeare and race*, ed. Catherine Alexander and Stanley Wells, 105–111. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Erasmus, Desiderius. Sileni alcibiadis. London 1543. http://people.virginia.edu/~jdk3t/SileniAlcibiadis.html. Accessed 3 Sept 2015.
Esposito, Roberto. 2013. Community, immunity, biopolitics. *Angelaki* 18(3): 83–90.
Everett, Barbara. 1982. "Spanish" Othello: The making of Shakespeare's Moor. *Shakespeare Survey* 35(1982): 101–112.
Fabietti, Ugo. 1998. *L'identità etnica*. Roma: Carocci.
Fanon, Frantz. 2005. *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press.
Federici, Carlo. 1805. *Otello, ossia lo Slavo in Capricci teatrali*, vol. 3. Roma: Gioacchino Puccinelli.
Ferrucci, Franco. 2004. *Il teatro della fortuna. Potere e destino in Machiavelli e Shakespeare*. Roma: Fazi.
Ficek, Douglas. 2011. Reflections on fanon and petrification. In *Living fanon. Global perspectives*, ed. Nigel C. Gibson, 75–84. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Filippi, Franco. 2005. *Anche questa è Venezia*. Venezia: Filippi Editore.
Fischer-Lichte, Erika. 1999. Theatre as festive play: Max Reinhardt's production of the Merchant of Venice. In *Venetian views, Venetian blinds*, ed. Manfred Pfister and Barbara Schaff, 169–180. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
Formichi, Carlo. 1928. *Guglielmo Shakespeare*. Roma: Formiggini.
Fortis, Alberto. 1987. In *Viaggio in Dalmazia*, ed. Eva Viani. Venezia: Marsilio.
Forzano, Giovacchino. 1954. *Mussolini autore drammatico. Con facsimili di autografi inediti. Campo di maggio – Villafranca – Cesare*. Firenze: Barbera.
Foster, Hal. 2004. *Prosthetic gods*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books.
Foucault, Michel. 1986. "Of other spaces", translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16(1): 22–27.
Friedman, Lise, and Ceil Friedman. 2006. *Letters to Juliet. Celebrating Shakespeare's greatest heroine, the magical city of Verona, and the power of love*. New York: Abrams.
G.[?]O.G.[?]. 1936. Sensazionale esperimento medianico a Venezia. *La Stampa della Sera* 8 April 1936.

Gallagher, Catherine, and Stephen Greenblatt. 2000. *Practicing new historicism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Garber, Marjorie, and Nancy J. Vickers (eds.). 2003. *The Medusa reader*. New York/London: Routledge.
Gatti, Hilary. 2002. Giordano Bruno and the Protestant ethic. In *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher of the renaissance*, ed. Hilary Gatti, 145–166. Aldershot: Ashgate.
Gatti, Hilary. 2013. *The renaissance drama of knowledge. Giordano Bruno in England (1989)*. London: Routledge.
Gautier, Théophile. 1912. *The travels of Théophile Gautier*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.
Gentile, Emilio. 2004. *Il fascismo in tre capitoli*. Bari: Laterza.
Giardina, Andrea, and André Vauchez. 2000. *Il mito di Roma. Da Carlo Magno a Mussolini*. Bari: Laterza.
Gibertini, Osvaldo. 1935. *Giulio Cesare* alla Basilica di Massenzio. *La Tribuna*, 3 Aug 1935.
Gildon, Charles. 1974. "Some reflections on Mr. Rymer's short view of tragedy and an attempt at a vindication of Shakespeare" (1694). In *Shakespeare. The critical heritage, vol. 2: 1693–1733*, vol. 2, ed. Brian Vickers, 63–85. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Gillies, John. 1994. *Shakespeare and the geography of difference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Gilman, Margaret. 1925. *Othello in French*. Paris: Libraire Ancienne Edouard Champion.
Gilroy, Paul. 2000. *Between camps. Race, identity and nationalism at the end of the colour line*. Harmondsworth: Allen Lane. The Penguin Press; Gilroy, Paul. 2013. 2nd ed. *Between camps: Nations, cultures and the allure of race*. New York: Routledge.
Ginzburg, Carlo. 2003. Machiavelli, l'eccezione e la regola. Linee di una ricerca in corso. *Quaderni storici* XXXVIII(1): 195–213.
Giuliani, Luca. 2003. *Venezia nel cinema italiano. Allegorie storiche a cavallo degli anni Quaranta*. Udine: Campanotto.
Giulio Cesare di Shakespeare alla Basilica di Massenzio. *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 2 August 1935.
Grady, Hugh. 2002. *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne. Power and subjectivity from Richard II to Hamlet*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Grady, Hugh. 2011. The end of Shakespeare's Machiavellian moment: *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare's historiography, and dramatic form. In *Shakespeare and renaissance literary theories: Anglo-Italian transactions*, ed. Michele Marrapodi, 119–136. Farnham: Ashgate.
Gramsci, Antonio. 2014. *Quaderni dal Carcere*, ed. Valentino Gerratana, vol. 3. Torino: Einaudi. English edition: Gramsci, Antonio. 2010. *Prison notebooks,* 3 vols., ed. Joseph A. Buttigieg. New York: Columbia University Press.

Greenblatt, Stephen. 1988. *Shakespearean negotiations. The circulation of social energy in renaissance England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Greenblatt, Stephen. 2001a. Racial memory and literary history. *PMLA* 116: 48–63.
Greenblatt, Stephen. 2001b. *Hamlet in purgatory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Greenblatt, Stephen. 2004. *Will of the world. How Shakespeare became Shakespeare*. New York: Norton.
Gross, John. 1992. *Shylock: Four hundred years in the life of a legend*. London: Chatto and Windus.
Gundle, Stephen. 2000. *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian communists and the challenge of mass culture, 1943–1991*. Durham: Duke University Press.
Hadfield, Andrew. 2004. *Shakespeare and renaissance politics*. London: Arden.
Hadfield, Andrew. 2005. *Shakespeare and republicanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Halpern, Richard. 1997. *Shakespeare among the moderns*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Hammill, Graham, and Julia Reinhard Lupton (eds.). 2012. *Political theology and early modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2012. *Esotericism and the academy: Rejected knowledge in western culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Hawkes, Terence. 2002. *Shakespeare in the present*. London/New York: Routledge.
Herold, Niels. 2014. *Prison Shakespeare and the purpose of performance: Repentance rituals and the early modern*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Hobbes, Thomas. 1983. In *De Cive. The Latin version (1642)*, ed. Warrender Howard. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Holderness, Graham. 2011. *Shakespeare and Venice*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
Hollingshead, Stephen. 2005. *Shakespeare's answer to Machiavelli*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.
Howells, William Dean. 1989. *Venetian life*. Marlboro: The Marlboro Press.
Hutchinson, John, and Anthony D. Smith (eds.). 1996. *Ethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Jacobson, Howard. *Shylock Is My Name*. London: Hogarth Press, 2016.
Jameson, Fredric. 1995. Radicalizing radical Shakespeare: The permanent revolution in Shakespeare studies. In *Materialist Shakespeare: An introduction*, ed. Ivo Kamps, 320–328. London: Verso.
Jarro [Giulio Piccini]. 1888. *L'Otello di Guglielmo Shakespeare*. Firenze: Le Monnier.
Johnson, Francis R., Sanford V. Larkey, and Thomas Digges. 1934. Thomas digges, the Copernican system, and the idea of the infinity of the universe in 1576. *The Huntington Library Bulletin* 69–117.
Joughin, John (ed.). 2003. *Philosophical Shakespeares*. London/New York: Routledge.

Joughin, John. 2004. Shakespeare and politics: An introduction. In *Shakespeare and politics*, ed. Catherine Alexander, 1–21. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kahn, Victoria. 1994. *Machiavellian rhetoric from the counter-reformation to Milton*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kaplan, Paul H.D. 2011a. Black Turks: Venetian artists and the perception of Ottoman ethnicity. In *The Turk and Islam in the Western Eye, 1450–1750: Visual imagery before Orientalism*, ed. James Harper, 41–66. Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate.

Kaplan, Paul H.D. 2011b. Local color: The Black African presence in Venetian art and history. In *Fred Wilson: A critical reader*, ed. Doro Globus, 186–198. London: Ridinghouse.

Kott, Jan. 1989. Is Shakespeare still our contemporary. In *Is Shakespeare still our contemporary?* ed. John Elsom, 10–16. London: Routledge.

Kottman, Paul (ed.). 2009. *Philosophers on Shakespeare*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kottman, Paul. 2012. Defying the stars: Tragic love as the struggle for freedom in *Romeo and Juliet*. *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63(1): 1–38.

Lassels, Richard. 1670. *Voyage of Italy, or a complete journey through Italy*. Paris: Vincent de Moutier.

Lebe, Reinhard. 1981. *Quando San Marco approdò a Venezia: il culto dell'evangelista e il miracolo politico della Repubblica di Venezia*. Roma: Il Veltro.

Leeden, Michael A. 1999. *Machiavelli on modern leadership: Why Machiavelli's iron rules are as timely and important today as five centuries ago*. New York: Truman Talley Books/St. Martin's Press.

Levi, Lionello. 1911. Una curiosa leggenda veneziana in un carme neogreco. *Ateneo Veneto* 3: 125–140.

Levi, Primo. 1989. *The Drowned and the Saved*. Trans. Raymond Rosenthal. New York: Summit Books.

Levi, Primo. 1995. *Survival in Auschwitz*. Trans. Stuart Woolf. New York: Touchstone.

Levi, Giovanni. 2010. Dualisme et sociétés catholiques. In *Entre théologie et politique. Les origines théologiques cachées de la pensée politique contemporaine dans les pays de la Méditérranée*, ed. Paola Gandolfi and Giovanni Levi, 39–50. Venezia: Cafoscarina.

Levis Sullam, Simon. 2015. *I carnefici italiani. Scene dal genocidio degli ebrei*. Milano: Feltrinelli.

Lewis, Wyndham. 1951. *The lion and the fox (1927)*. London: Methuen.

Little, jr. Arthur. 2000. *Shakespeare jungle fever. National-imperial re-visions of race, rape, and sacrifice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Liu, Alan. 1989. The power of formalism: The new historicism. *English Literary History* 564: 721–771.

Locatelli, Angela. 1993. The fictional World of Romeo and Juliet: Cultural Connotations of an Italian Setting. In *Shakespeare's Italy: Functions of Italian locations in renaissance drama*, ed. Michele Marrapodi, A.J. Hoenselaars, Marcello Cappuzzo, and Lino Falzon Santucci, 69–84. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Lodge, Thomas. 1580. *Reply to Stephen Gosson's schoole of abuse*. London.

Lombardo, Agostino. 1997. Shakespeare in Italy. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 141(4): 454–462.

Lombroso, Cesare. 2006. In *Criminal man*, ed. Mary Gibson and Nicole Hahn Rafter. Durham: Duke University Press.

Loomba, Ania. 1989. *Gender, race, renaissance drama*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Loomba, Ania. 1997. Shakespeare and cultural difference. In *Alternative Shakespeare 2*, ed. Terence Hawkes, 164–191. London: Routledge.

Loomba, Ania. 1998. Local-manufacture-made-in-India Othello fellows. In *Post-colonial Shakespeares*, ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, 143–163. London/New York: Routledge.

Loomba, Ania, and Martin Orkin (eds.). 1998. *Post-colonial Shakespeares*. London: Routledge.

Lowe, Kate. 2013. Visible lives: Black Gondoliers and other Black Africans in renaissance Venice. *Renaissance Quarterly* 66(2): 412–452.

Lower, Charles. 1983. Othello as Black on Southern stages, then and now. In *Shakespeare in the South. Essays on performance*, ed. P.C. Kolin, 199–228. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Ludwig, Emilio. 1932. *Colloqui con Mussolini*. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore.

Lugiato, Luigi. 1926. *Pazzi, squilibrati e delinquenti nelle opere dei letterati, vol. 1: Guglielmo Shakespeare e le sue "masterpieces"*. Bergamo: C. Conti & c.

Lupton Reinhard, Julia. 2005a. *Citizen-saints. Shakespeare and political theology*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.

Lupton Reinhard, Julia. 2005b. Tragedy and psychoanalysis. In *A companion to tragedy*, ed. Rebecca Bushnell, 88–105. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lupton Reinhard, Julia. 2007. Hamlet Prince, tragedy, citizenship, and political theology. In *Alternative Shakespeares 3*, ed. Diana E. Henderson, 181–203. New York: Routledge.

Lupton Reinhard, Julia. 2014. *Citizen-saints: Shakespeare and political theology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lupton Reinhard, Julia. Job in Venice: Shakespeare and the travails of universalism. In *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, ed. Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi, 105–121.

Luzzi, Joseph. 2008. *Romantic Europe and the ghost of Italy*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.

MacDougall, Hugh. 1982. *Racial myth in English history*. Hanover: University Press of New England.

Manconi, Luigi, Stefano Anastasia, Valentina Calderone, and Federica Resta. 2015. *Abolire il carcere: Una ragionevole proposta per la sicurezza dei cittadini*. Milano: Chiarelettere.

Marenco, Franco. 1991. Shakespeare in Italia. *L'Indice* 10(December): 10.

Marenco, Franco. 1997. The rise and fall of irony. *World Literature Today* 71(2); Italian Literature Today. (Spring): 303–308.

Marrapodi, Michele. 1999. Introduction: Shakespeare studies in Italy since 1964. In *Italian studies in Shakespeare and his contemporaries*, ed. Michele Marrapodi, 7–18. Newark/London: University of Delaware Press/Associated University Presses.

Marrapodi, Michele (ed.). 2004. *Shakespeare, Italy and intertextuality*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Marrapodi, Michele. 2007. *Italian culture in the drama of Shakespeare & his contemporaries*. Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate.

Matar, Nabil. 1999. *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the age of discovery*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Memmi, Albert. 1991. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Trans. Howard Greenfeld. Boston: Beacon Press.

Messina, Maria Grazia. 2000. Da Romeo e Giulietta a Otello: melodramma shakespeariano nell'immaginario visivo del romanticismo italiano. *Memoria di Shakespeare* 2000: 1000–1014.

Meyer, Edward. 1897. *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama*. Weimar: Literarhistorische Forschungen.

Monaco, Marion. 1974. *Shakespeare on the French stage in the eighteenth century*. Paris: Didier.

Muccioli, Alessandro. 1922. *Guglielmo Shakespeare nella vita e nelle opere*. Firenze: Battistelli.

Muir, Edward. 1981. *Civic ritual in renaissance Venice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Najemy, John M. 2010. Introduction. In *The Cambridge companion to Machiavelli*, ed. John M. Najemy, 1–13. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Neill, Michael. 2004. His Master's ass: Slavery, service and subordination in *Othello*. In *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean*, ed. Tom Clayton, Susan Brock, and Vicente Forés, 215–229. Newark: University of Delaware Press.

Neill, Michael. 2006a. Introduction. In *William Shakespeare, Othello*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Neill, Michael. 2006b. Othello and race. Seminar looking into the colour of Othello. University of Bergamo, 22 May 2006.

Neu Mayr, Antonio. 1838. *Notizie biografico-letterarie sul commediografo Camillo Federici*. Venezia: tipografia Alvisopoli.

New Exegesis of Shakespeare. Book Review. *North British Review* 31 (1859): 471–91.
Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1994. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Michael Tanner. London: Penguin.
Nulli, Attilio. 1918. *Shakespeare in Italia*. Milano: Hoepli.
Nuttall, A.D. 2007. *Shakespeare the thinker*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Obama, Barack. 2008. *Sulla razza*. Milano: Rizzoli.
Oken, Lorenz. 1847. *Elements of physiophilosophy*. London: Ray Society.
Orkin, Martin. 1997. *Othello* and the plain face of racism. *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38: 166–188.
Orsucci, Andrea. 1998. Ariani, indogermani, stripi mediterranee: aspetti del dibattito sulle razze europee 1870–1914. *Cromohs-Cyber Review of Modern Historiography* 3(1998). http://www.fupress.net/index.php/cromohs/article/view/15749/14635.
Oursler, Tony. 2013. *Strawberry-Ecstasy-Green*, Exhibition Catalogue, Espace Louis Vuitton, Venice.
Ovid. 1995. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum. New York: Harcourt Brace.
Palazzi, Giovanni. 1707. *Sacrae ac profanae inaugurationes Venetiis*. Venice.
Pavan, Ilaria. 2006. *Il podestà ebreo. La storia di Renzo Ravenna tra fascismo e leggi razziali*. Bari: Laterza.
Pedani, Maria Pia. 2010. *Venezia porta d'Oriente*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
Pelling, Christopher. Judging Julius Caesar. In *Julius Caesar in western culture*, ed. Maria Wyke, 3–26.
Perpignani, Lorenzo, 2012. dir. *I diari di Cesare. Sul set di Paolo e Vittorio Taviani*, bonus feature, DVD *Cesare deve morire*.
Peterson, Kaara, and Deanne Williams. 2012. Introduction: The Afterlives of Ophelia. In *The afterlife of Ophelia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Petrarca, Francesco. 1976. *Rime*. Milano: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli.
Petrarch. 1999. *The Canzoniere, or rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. ed. and trans. Mark Musa. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Petrina, Alessandra. 2009. *Machiavelli in the British isles: Two early modern translations of the Prince*. Farnham: Ashgate.
Petrovich Njegosh, Tatiana, and Anna Sacchi (eds.). 2012. *Parlare di razza. La lingua del colore tra Italia e Stati Uniti*. Verona: Ombre Corte.
Phillips, Caryl. 1997. *The nature of blood*. London: Faber and Faber.
Pieri, Marzia. 1989. *La nascita del teatro moderno in Italia tra XV e XVI secolo*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.
Pisanty, Valentina. 2006. *La difesa della razza. Antologia 1938–1943*. Milano: Bompiani.
Pocock, J.G.A. 1975. *The Machiavellian moment. Florentine political thought and the Atlantic Republican tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Praz, Mario. 1947. *Shakespeare. La vita, l'opera, il messaggio*. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori.

Praz, Mario. 1966. The politic brain: Machiavelli and the Elizabethans (1928). In *The flaming heart. Essays on Crashaw, Machiavelli and other studies in the relations between Italian and English literature from Chaucer to T.S. Eliot*, 90–145. Gloucester: Peter Smith.

Praz, Mario. 1969. *Caleidoscopio Shakespeariano*. Bari: Adriatica Editrice.

Procacci, Giulio. 1995. *Machiavelli nella cultura europea dell'età moderna*. Bari: Laterza.

Procházka, Martin. 2002. Shakespeare's Illyria, Sicily and Bohemia: Other spaces, other times, or other economies? *Litteraria Pragensia* 12(23): 130–149. Special issue on Shakespeare's Illyrias: Heterotopies, identities, counter, histories.

Prusner, Nicole. 2000. *Romeo and Juliet before Shakespeare: Four early stories of star-crossed love*. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies.

Pugliatti, Paola. The true history of Romeo and Juliet: A veronese plot of the 1830s. In *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean*, ed. Clayton et al., 388–399.

Pullini, Giorgio. 1986. Il teatro fra scena e società. In *Storia della cultura veneta*, Dall'età napoleonica alla Prima Guerra Mondiale, vol. 6, ed. Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi, 237–282. Vicenza: Neri Pozza.

Raab, Felix. 1964. *The English face of Machiavelli. A changing interpretation 1500–1700*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Raimondi, Fabio. 2003. *La repubblica dell'assoluta giustizia. La politica di Giordano Bruno in Inghilterra*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS.

Ramo, Simon. 1985. *Tennis by Machiavelli*. New York: New American Library.

Raspanti, Mauro. 1999. Il mito ariano nella cultura italiana fra Otto e Novecento. In *Nel nome della Razza. Il razzismo nella storia d'Italia, 1870–1945*, ed. Alberto Burgio, 75–85. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Rebora, Piero. 1936. *Civiltà italiana e civiltà inglese. Studi e ricerche*. Firenze: Le Monnier.

Recalcati, Massimo. 2010. *L'uomo senza inconscio. Figure della nuova clinica psicoanalitica*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.

Redmond, Michael. 2009. *Shakespeare, politics, and Italy. Intertextuality on the Jacobean stage*. Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate.

Reginald, Foakes. 1993. *Hamlet versus Lear: Cultural politics and Shakespeare's art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Renier Michiel, Giustina. 1798. *Opere drammatiche di Shakespeare volgarizzate da una dama veneta*, 2 vols. Venezia: eredi Costantini.

Ricci, Saverio. 2000. *Giordano Bruno nell'Europa del Cinquecento*. Roma: Salerno Editrice.

Risaliti, Renato. 1996. *Gli slavi e l'Italia: viaggi e rapporti dal Quattrocento al Novecento*. Moncalieri: Centro interuniversitario di ricerche sul Viaggio in Italia.

Roe, John. 2002. *Shakespeare and Machiavelli*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.

Roe, Richard Paul. 2011. *The Shakespeare's guide to Italy. Retracing the Bard's unknown travels*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Rossi, Ernesto. 1885. *Studii Drammatici e Lettere Autobiografiche*. Firenze: Le Monnier.

Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the age of decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Rowland, Ingrid D. 2009. *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/heretic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Rutter, Carol Chillington. 2002. *Enter the body: Women and representation on Shakespeare's stage*. London/New York: Routledge.
Rymer, Thomas. 1956. *A short view of tragedy* (1693). In *The critical works of Thomas Rymer*, ed. C.A. Zimansky. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Sacerdoti, Gilberto. 1990. *Nuovo cielo, nuova terra. La rivelazione copernicana di "Antonio Cleopatra" di Shakespeare*. Bologna: il Mulino. Sacerdoti, Gilberto. 2008. 2nd ed. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.
Sacerdoti, Gilberto. '*Antony and Cleopatra* and the overflowing of the Roman measure.' In Del Sapio Garbero, *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome,* 107–18.
Sacerdoti, Gilberto. 2009. 'Calibano: post-colonial, precolonial o post-post-colonial?' In *Postcolonial Shakespeare,* edited by Masolino D'Amico and Simona Corso, 267–77. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.
Sacerdoti, Gilberto. Giordano Bruno in England. In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Anglo-Italian Renaissance Literature and Culture,* edited by Michele Marrapodi. Forthcoming.
Sacerdoti, Gilberto. 2005. 'La tempesta della *Tempesta*.' In *Con le ali dell'intelletto. Studi di filosofia e di storia della cultura,* edited by Fabrizio Meroi, 185–208. Firenze: Olschki.
Sacerdoti, Gilberto. 2002. *Sacrificio e sovranità. Teologia e politica nell'Europa di Shakespeare e Bruno*. Torino: Einaudi (new edition: Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016).
Sacerdoti, Gilberto. 2011. '"Self-sovereignty" and Religion in *Love's Labour's Lost*: From London to Venice via Navarre.' In Tosi and Bassi, *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare,* 83–104.
Sacerdoti, Gilberto. 2010. 'Spontaneous Generation and New Astronomy in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.' In *Questioning Bodies in Shakespeare's Rome,* edited by Maria Del Sapio Gerbero, Nancy Isenberg, and Maddalena Pennachia, 327–339. Goettingen: V&R unipress, 2010.
Sacerdoti, Gilberto. 1999. 'Three Kings, Herod of Jewry, and a Child: Apocalypse and Infinity of the World in *Antony and Cleopatra*.' In *Italian Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries,* edited by Michele Marrapodi and Giorgio Melchiori, 165–84. Newark-London: University of Delaware Press.
Sacerdoti, Gilberto. 1995. '"What means this?" An "odd trick" in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.' In *Counting and Recounting. Measuring Inner and Outer Space in the Renaissance,* edited by Paola Bottalla and Michela Calderaro, 209–231. Trieste: La Mongolfiera.
Salvadori, Renzo, and Toto Bergamo Rossi. 1997. *Venezia. Guida alla scultura dalle origini al Novecento*. Venezia: Canal & Stamperia Editrice.
Sansovino, Francesco. 2002. *Venetia, città nobilissima et singolare (1581)*. Bergamo: Leading Edizioni.

Saviano, Roberto. 2007. *Gomorrah*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Scarabello, Giovanni, and Veronica Gusso. 2000. *Processo al Moro. Venezia 1811. Razzismo, follia, amore e morte*. Roma: Jouvence.

Schalkwyk, David. 2013. *Hamlet's dreams: The Robben Island Shakespeare. The Arden Shakespeare*. London: Bloomsbury.

Scheppe, Wolfgang. 2010. *Migropolis. Venice/Atlas of a global situation*, 2 vols. Ostfildern: Hatje/Cantz.

Schmitt, Carl. 2009. *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of the Time into the Play*. Trans. David Pan and Jennifer R. Rust. New York: Telos Press.

Scott-Douglass, Amy. 2007. *Shakespeare inside. The Bard behind bars*. London: Continuum.

Secrest, Meryle. 2011. *Modigliani: A life*. New York: Knopf.

Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Reason before identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sennett, Richard. 1994. *Flesh and stone. The body and the city in western civilization*. London/Boston: Faber and Faber.

Serpieri, Alessandro. 2003. *Otello: l'eros negato*. Napoli: Liguori.

Sestito, Marisa. 1978. *Julius Caesar in Italia : 1726–1974*. Adriatica: Bari.

Shakespeare, William. 1746. *Le theatre anglois*, vol. 1. London.

Shakespeare, William. 1948. *Il Mercante di Venezia*, ed. Errante Vincenzo. Firenze: Sansoni.

Shakespeare, William. 1987. *Othello*, ed. Julie Hankey. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.

Shakespeare, William. 1997. *Othello, Arden 3*, ed. E.A.J. Honigmann. Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson and Sons.

Shakespeare, William. 2000. *Poemetti. Venere e Adone*, *Lucrezia*, *La fenice e la tortora*. ed. and Trans. Gilberto Sacerdoti. Milano: Garzanti.

Shapiro, James. 2010. *Contested will: Who wrote Shakespeare?* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Simon, Elliott M. 2007. *The myth of Sisyphus: Renaissance theories of human perfectibility*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Sinclair, Clive. 2014. "Shylock Must Die", in *Death & Texas*. London: Halban Publishers.

Snyder, Jon R. 2009. *Dissimulation and the culture of secrecy in early modern Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sofri, Adriano. 2013. *Machiavelli, Tupac, e la Principessa*. Palermo: Sellerio.

Sokol, B.J. 2008. *Shakespeare and tolerance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sollors, Werner. 1995. Ethnicity. In *Critical terms for literary study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia, 288–305. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sollors, Werner (ed.). 1996. *Theories of ethnicity. A classical reader*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Spiekerman, Tim. 2001. *Shakespeare's political realism. The English history plays*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Spitzer, Leo. 1948. *Essays in historical semantics*. New York: Russell and Russell.

Squires, Nick. 2014. Verona commissions replica "Juliet" statue after one too many brushes with tourists. *The Daily Telegraph* 25 Feb 2014. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/10660642/Verona-commissions-replica-Juliet-statue-after-one-too-many-brushes-with-tourists.html. Accessed 3 Sept 2015.

Stanivukovic, Goran. Illyria revisited: Shakespeare and the Eastern Adriatic. In *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean*, ed. Clayton et al., 5–20.

Stone, Alan. 2005. For God and country. *Boston Review* February/March 2005. https://www.bostonreview.net/stone-god-and-country. Accessed 3 Sept 2015.

Styan, John L. 1982. *Max Reinhardt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taguieff, Pierre-André. 1997. *Le racisme*. Paris: Flammarion.

Tanner, Tony. 1992. *Venice desired*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Targoff, Ramie. 2014. *Posthumous love: Eros and the afterlife in renaissance England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tassini, Giuseppe. 1970. *Curiosità veneziane*. Venezia: Filippi Editore.

Taviani, Paolo, and Vittorio, dir. 2012. *Cesare deve morire/Caesar Must Die*. Kaos Cinematografica, Sternal Entertainment/Le talee.

Taylor, Gary. 1991. *Reinventing Shakespeare. A cultural history from the restoration to the present*. London: Vintage.

Taylor, Gary. 2003. Welcome to McBard's. *The Guardian*, October 8.

Taylor, Gary. 2005. *Buying whiteness: Race, culture, and identity from Columbus to Hip-Hop*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tempera, Mariangela. 2004. Political Caesar: *Julius Caesar* on the Italian stage. In *Julius Caesar: New critical essays*, ed. Horst Zander, 333–343. New York: Routledge.

Thompson, Ayanna. 2011. *Passing strange. Shakespeare, race, and contemporary America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Tillyard, E.M.W. 1988. *The Elizabethan world picture (1943)*. London: Penguin Books.

Tolan, John V. 2002. *Saracens: Islam in the medieval European imagination*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Tomasi di Lampedusa, Giuseppe. 1990. *Letteratura inglese*, Dalle origini al Settecento, vol. 1. Mondadori: Milano.

Tosi, Laura, and Shaul Bassi (eds.). 2011. *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Toso Fei, Alberto. 2011. *Misteri di Venezia*. Venezia: Studio LT2.

Verdi, Giuseppe. 1971. In *Letters of Giuseppe Verdi*, ed. Charles Osborne. London: Victor Gollancz.

Veyne, Paul. 2009. *L'Impero greco romano. Le radici del mondo globale*. Milano: Rizzoli.

Villari, Anna. 2011. *The house and the tomb of Juliet*. Milano: Silvana Editoriale.

Vitkus, Daniel. 2003. *Turning Turk: English theater and the multicultural mediterranean, 1570–1630*. New York: Palgrave.
Voltaire. 1877. *Zaire*. 1732. In *Théâtre 1, Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire, 50 vols*, vol. 2. Paris: Garnier.
Vucetic, Srdjan. 2011. *The anglosphere: A genealogy of a racialized identity in international relations*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Wells, Robin Headlam. 2000. Historicism and "Presentism" in early modern studies. *The Cambridge Quarterly* 29(1): 37–60.
West, Cornel. 1990. The new cultural politics of difference. In *Out there: Marginalizations and contemporary cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson and Martha Gever, 19–36. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
West, Cornel. 1995. *La razza conta*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
White, Hayden. 2014. *The practical past*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
Wolff, Larry. 1998–1999. The enlightened anthropology of friendship in Venetian Dalmatia: Primitive ferocity and ritual fraternity among the Morlacchi. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32(2): 157–178.
Wolff, Larry. 2001. *Venice and the slavs. The discovery of Dalmatia in the age of enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Worden, Blair. 1992. Shakespeare and politics. *Shakespeare Survey* 44: 1–15. [reprinted in Alexander, Catherine. 2004. ed. *Shakespeare and politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 22–43.]
Wyatt, Michael. 2005. *The Italian encounter with Tudor England: A cultural politics of translation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Wyke, Maria (ed.). 2006. *Julius Caesar in western culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Wyke, Maria. A twenty-first-century Caesar. In *Julius Caesar in western culture*, ed. Maria Wyke, 305–323.
Wyke, Maria. Caesar, cinema, and national identity in the 1910s. In *Julius Caesar in western culture*, ed. Maria Wyke, 170–189.
Yates, Frances A. 1964. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic tradition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Yates, Frances A. 2003. *The occult philosophy in the Elizabethan age*. London: Routledge.
Yates, Frances A. 2013. *Shakespeare's last plays*. London: Routledge.
Young, Robert J.C. 1995. *Colonial desire. Hybridity in theory, culture and race*. London: Routledge.
Zable, Arnold. 2012. *Violin lessons*. Melbourne: Text Publishing.
Zabus, Chantal. 2002. *Tempests after Shakespeare*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Zagarrio, Vito (ed.). 2004. *Utopisti, esagerati. Il cinema di Paolo e Vittorio Taviani*. Venezia: Marsilio.
Zamir, Tzachi. 2014. "Shakespeare and philosophical criticism." In *Thinking with Shakespeare*, edited by Rosy Colombo and Nadia Fusini. *Memoria di Shakespeare. A Journal of Shakespearean Studies* 1: 33–56.

Žižek, Slavoj. 1997. *The abyss of freedom*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
Zorić, Mate. 1972–1973. Croati e altri Slavi del Sud nella letteratura italiana dell'800. *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagrabiensa* 33-34-35-36: 126–127.
Zorić, Mate. 1989. *Italia e Slavia. Contributi sulle relazioni letterarie italo-jugoslave dall'Ariosto al D'Annunzio*. Padova: Antenore.

Index

A
Accati, Luisa, 15, 128–9
actors, 34, 39, 46, 76, 92, 115, 142, 186, 187, 191, 192, 194, 195, 198, 199, 201
  black, 28, 33
  political, 86, 92, 95, 125
  The Star Actor (Risi), 200
adaptations, 4, 10, 70, 139–57, 199
  Julius Caesar, 181
  The Merchant, 155
  Othello, 3
  Romeo and Juliet, 145
  Shakespearean Places as Adaptations, 16, 139–57
  tragedy, 22
Agamben, Giorgio, 7, 8, 15, 16, 117, 121n, 122, 123, 176–7
Alderman, Naomi, 156
allegory *vs.* archaeology, 140–4
Alvis, John, 90
Andrews, Nigel, 193
Anglo-American criticism, 95
Anglo-American raciologies, 13
anglophilia, 7
Anglosphere, 10–13, 31, 34, 87, 114, 157, 192n
Anidjar, Gil, 176
Anthony and Cleopatra, 94, 106–13, 119
anti-Fascist criticism, 78
antiracism, 29
anti-Semitic laws of 1938, 64–8, 75, 154
anti-Semitism, 28, 65, 75, 154, 157
Antony and Cleopatra (Sacerdoti), 105
Aquilecchia, Gaetano, 118
archaeology *vs.* allegory, 140–4
Arcuri, Giovanni, 195
Aristotle, 7, 8, 95, 199
Aryanism, 66, 72
Ashcroft, Bill, 24
The Ash Wednesday Supper, 102, 107
atheism, 88, 90, 96
Averroes, 96, 111
Aymard, Maurice, 44

Note: Page number followed by 'n' refers to footnotes.

Uncorrected Proof

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016

S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49170-1

B

Bandello, Matteo, 144
Banfield, Edward C., 36
Baretti, Giuseppe, 12
Bartolo da Sassoferrato, 111
Bassi, Gino, 64, 157
Bate, Jonathan, 3
Bauman, Zygmunt, 171
Beauty and the Monster: Discursive and Figurative Representations of the Parental Couple from Giotto to Tiepolo (2006) (Accati), 15, 128–31
Beccaria, Cesare, 185
Bellotti, Luigi, 69
Ben-Ghiat, Ruth, 65
Berlinguer, Enrico, 193
Berlusconi, Silvio, 115, 124, 132, 133, 190
Bertoli, Manuela, 10
Bevington, David, 122
biological racism, 66
Bloom, Allan, 90
Boaistuau, Pierre, 144
Bodin, Jean 96, 111, 116
body, 3, 23, 32, 34, 66, 89, 130, 133, 144–50, 168, 170, 184, 190
Bruno, Giordano, 3, 5, 7, 15, 95–96, 99–119
Brunomanias, 100–4
Byron, George Gordon, 145, 179

C

Cacciari, Massimo, 15, 117, 121–35
Caesarism, 74, 182–4
Caesar Must Die (film) 181–201
Calbi, Maurizio, 186, 195, 196
Campanella, Tommaso, 102, 184
Canfora, Luciano, 183
Cartelli, Thomas, 3, 187, 198, 201
Castelneau, Michel de, 108
Catholic Church, 4, 16, 92, 192
Catholicism, 8, 15, 101, 110, 112, 128
Cavalli, Fabio, 17, 182, 189, 193–6
Cavarero, Adriana, 129, 130
Cesarotti, Melchiorre, 55
Chiesa, Lorenzo, 122, 134
Christianity, 88, 96, 101, 106, 108. *See also* Catholicism; Protestantism
Ciano, Galeazzo, 76
Ciliberto, Michele, 118
Cimino, Giorgio Tomaso, 79
Cinzio, Giambattista Giraldi, 9, 29, 46, 75, 175
citizenship, ethnicity and, 55
Coco, Carla, 169
Codussi, Mauro, 163
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 35, 40, 71
Colleoni, Bartolomeo, 163
Colombari, Compagnia de', 156
colonialism, 4, 28, 31, 67, 71, 86, 88
The Colonizer and the Colonized (1957) (Memmi), 174
comic, comedy *vs.* tragic/tragedy, 8–10, 28, 38, 74, 80, 96, 109, 149, 169, 200
communism, 67, 73, 115, 123, 183
community, 2, 11n, 79, 91, 151, 152, 156, 171, 186, 194, 201, 201n
  Christian faith and, 171
  Jewish, 152, 156–7
  Muslim, 169
Coppio Sullam, Sara, 151, 157
Coriolanus (film), 192
Coryat, Thomas, 152, 166–7
Cotin, Pierre, 55
Coursen, H.R., 33–4
criticism
  Anglo-American, 95
  anti-Fascist, 78
  philosophical, 100
  political, 87

Uncorrected Proof

Croce, Benedetto, 29, 60, 69–74, 79, 102
Crollalanza, Guglielmo, 69
Cukor, George, 145
Curiosità veneziane (1863) (Tassini), 168

D
Dalla Porta, Giovan Battista, 169
Dalmatia, 48–53, 60
Dante, 8, 75, 95, 144–5, 194
Dardot, Pierre, 189, 197
De Gubernatis, Angelo, 66
Del Sapio Garbero, Maria, 183, 198
Demick, Ian, 84
Derrida, Jacques, 100, 173
De Sanctis, Francesco, 9
Dickens, Charles 142, 155
didacticism, 193–6
Diocletian, 166
Ducis, Jean-François, 46–7
Dunnet, Jane, 67–8

E
Eagleton, Terry, 32
Edmondson, Paul, 139
Elam, Keir, 33
Elizabeth I, 72, 86, 89, 94–6, 101, 108, 110–2, 116
The Elizabethan World Picture (1943) (Tillyard), 87–8
Empson, William, 99
Engler, Balz, 64
Erasmus, 107, 132
Errante, Vincenzo, 63–4
esoteric racism, 66–7
Esposito, Roberto, 117, 122
ethnicity, 13, 17, 24, 28, 37–9, 41, 59, 162
  and citizenship, 55
  essentialization of, 60
  Othello, 14, 44, 46, 52, 60
  politics and, 14, 44
  from race to, 37–9
  and religion, 159
  Slavic, 60
etymology, 2n, 21, 43, 50, 150, 159, 169, 177, 182, 192
Eurocentrism, 60
European racism, 32, 41
The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast, 102, 107

F
Fanon, Frantz, 32, 174
fascination, 173
fascism, 4, 14, 60, 63, 66, 70, 72, 75, 77, 157, 183
Fascist racism, 29
Federici, Camillo, 44, 50–1
Federici, Carlo, 13, 43–60
feminism, 89, 129–30, 192
Ferrucci, Franco, 93, 97
Ficino, Marsilio, 102
Filippi, Franco, 169
films, 4, 16, 17, 27, 33, 34, 78, 141, 145, 146, 193, 194, 196–8, 200, 201
  adaptation (2010), 148
  Caesar Must Die, 187, 189, 199
  Coriolanus (film), 192
  Great Beauty (2013), 190
  Kaliyattam (1997), 34
  Letters to Juliet (2006), 148
  The Night of the Shooting Stars (1982), 188
  Omkara (2006), 34
  Romeo and Juliet (1936), 145
  St. Michael Had a Rooster (1972), 187
  The Star Actor (Risi), 200

Uncorrected Proof

Florio, John, 108
Foppa, Giuseppe, 55
Formichi, Carlo, 66
Fortis, Alberto, 50, 51, 53, 59
Forzano, Giovacchino, 68, 80
Foscarini, Marco, 48
Foster, Hal, 173, 175
Foucault, Michel, 114, 188–9
Freud, Siegmund, 174
Friedman, Lise and Ceil, 148

G
Garin, Eugenio, 118
Gassman, Vittorio, 200
Gatti, Hilary, 101, 118
Gautier, Théophile, 153
gender, 17, 30, 87, 89, 114, 176, 191–2
geopolitical crisis, Europe, 4
Ghetto of Venice, 16, 43, 139–57, 176
Gilroy, Paul, 13, 23, 29, 35
Ginzburg, Carlo, 84
Giovanni Fiorentino, Sir, 150
globalization, 4, 197, 198
Goldoni, Carlo, 49, 56
Grady, Hugh, 85, 92, 97
Gramsci, Antonio, 12, 17, 89, 121n, 183, 184
Greenblatt, Stephen, 32, 88, 95, 126
Greppi, Giovanni, 49
Griffiths, Gareth, 24
Guglielmo Shakespeare, 72

H
Hadfield, Andrew, 93, 96, 97, 118
Halévy, Jacques, 153
Hall, Stuart, 33, 37
Hamlet, 94, 121–35
Hamletica, 125–7
Hanegraaff, W., 103, 104
Harold, Niels, 188
Harriot, Thomas, 88, 95
Henri of Navarre (Henry IV of France), 110, 112
Henry VIII, 151
Hermes Trismegistus, 102
hermeticism, 95, 102, 104, 106
heterotopia, 17, 59, 188–189, 191, 193
Histoires tragiques (1559) (Boaistuau), 144
Hobbes, Thomas, 87, 89, 121n
Holderness, Graham, 141–2
Hollingshead, Stephen, 91–2, 97
Holocaust. *See* Shoah
Honigmann, E.A.J., 1, 39
honor, 196–8
Hopkins, Anthony, 33
Howells, William Dean, 154
hypotyposis, 2, 36

I
Iago, 1–2, 5, 6
  race, 21–41
  as 'Type of the Romano-Italic Race,' 35–7
Illyria, 47–55, 59
Istria, 60
Italian racism, 66
Italian theory, 15, 117, 121–3, 131, 135, 185
Italy
  and Britain, 67, 73–5
  and communism (*see* (communism))
  and fascism (*see* (fascism))
  and foreign travellers, 140, 146, 152, 164
  and gender, 17–8, 128–30, 191–2
  image of, 5, 10, 182

Uncorrected Proof

  and neoliberalism, 178, 190–9
  political history of, 4, 44–5, 60, 63–8, 71–2, 74–5, 78–80, 101, 123–5, 132, 183–6, 192–4, 198–9
  and race (*see* (race))
  and religion, 128
  and tragedy vs. comedy, 8–9

J

Jameson, Fredric, 86
Jews/Judaism, 25, 34, 35, 66, 67, 75, 79, 80, 150–2, 154, 156, 157, 176
John Paul II (pope), 115
Judaism, 67
Julius Caesar, 3, 14, 76, 180–201
Julius Caesar (character) 65–8

K

Kahn, Victoria, 84–5
Kaliyattam (1997) film, 34
Kaplan, Paul, 162
King Lear, 132–134
kitsch, 146–8
Kottman, Paul, 6, 149

L

La difesa della Razza, 29, 66, 67, 75
Lampas triginta statuarum, 103
Lassels, Richard, 145
Laval, Christian, 189, 197
Leeden, Michael A., 84
Levi, Carlo, 184
Levi, Lionello, 168
Levi, Primo, 176, 184
Liu, Alan, 114
live theaters, 75–8
Locatelli, Angela, 142
Lodge, Thomas, 83
Lombroso, Cesare, 23
Love's Labour's Lost, 95–6, 105, 109–12, 116
Lowe, Kate, 162
Lupton, Julia Reinhard, 6, 34, 98, 117, 126–7, 134, 162
Luzzatto, Simone, 151, 157

M

Macbeth (Shakespeare), 25, 26, 52, 93
Macbeth (Verdi), 22
Machiavellianism, 36, 77, 85, 92, 93
Machiavellian moment, new, 85–7, 93
The Machiavellian Moment (Pocock), 98
Machiavelli, Niccolò, 7, 83–98
  enigmatic smile, 96–8
  twentieth-century interpretations, 87–90
Mafia, 196–7
Magalotti, Lorenzo, 7
Maimonides, 96, 111
Manzoni, Alessandro, 9, 12, 194
Marini, Paola 146
Marxism, 123, 188
Marx, Karl, 86, 89
Masuccio Salernitano, 144
Mazzini, Giuseppe, 9, 76
Medusa, 16, 172–7
The Merchant of Venice, 6, 24, 25, 63–5, 75, 77, 79, 147, 150, 162
The Merchant of Venice (adaptations), 63–5, 79, 155
The Merchant of Venice (performed in the Ghetto), 149–50, 155–7
The Merchant of Venice (Reinhardt), 77
Mereghelli, Pierantonio, 45
Michiel, Giustina Renier, 17, 18, 45, 52
migration, 4, 10, 154, 160, 198

Uncorrected Proof

Miller, Jonathan, 28, 33
Moccia, Federico, 148
Modena, Gustavo, 7
Modena, Leone, 151, 157
Modigliani, Amedeo, 172, 174
Molmenti, Pompeo, 178
Monomotopa, 39–41
Montaigne, Michel de, 92, 93, 100, 116
Moors, 16, 32, 159–80
Moors of Venice, 159–80
Morlacchismo, 48, 49
Muccioli, Alessandro, 70
Murray's Handbook of Northern Italy, 179
Muselmänner, 177
Muslims, 46, 169, 171, 176
Mussolini, Benito, 14, 65–70, 72, 75, 79–80

N
nationalism, 23, 64, 71
The Nature of Blood (1997), 154
Nazi-Fascist regime in Italy, 64
Nazism, 66, 75, 177
Negri, Antonio, 15, 115, 121n, 122, 123, 185n
Neill, Michael, 22, 23
neoconservatism, 14, 85, 90, 97
neoliberalism, 10, 189, 190, 193, 195
A New Exegesis of Shakespeare: Interpretation of His Principal Characters and Plays on the Principle of Races (1859) (Shylock), 13, 24, 25, 36
new historicism, 15, 34, 87–9, 92–4, 114, 160
new somaticism, 33
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 93, 97, 100, 123, 125, 126

O
Oken, Lorenz, 33
Olivier, Laurence, 33
opera, 4, 9, 13, 22, 76, 153
Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, 76
Ophelia, 127–31, 134–5
orientalism, 61
Orlando Furioso, 49
Otello ossia lo slavo (Federici), 13, 43–61
Otello (Verdi), 22–3
Othello, 1, 2, 6, 7, 21, 22, 25, 28, 29, 31, 43–61, 77
  ethnicity and race, 14, 22, 25, 33–5, 39–41, 44, 46, 52, 60, 76
  existential itinerary, 40
  in Venice, 141–3, 155
  'Where should Othello go?', 178–80
Oursler, Tony, 178
Ovid, 172

P
Panofsky, Erwin, 114
patriotism, 49, 56–7, 64, 72
Paul IV (pope), 150
Pedani, Maria Pia, 169
Pellico, Silvio, 184
Petrarch, 173
Petrification, 172–7
Petrina, Alessandra, 83, 85, 97
Phillips, Caryl, 154–5
philosophical criticism, 100
Pieri, Marzia, 9
Pisanty, Valentina, 66
Platonism and Neoplatonism, 95, 103, 107, 108, 111, 113, 117, 124
Pocock, J.G.A., 85, 98
political criticism, 72–5, 83–98
Political Shakespeare (1985), 87

Uncorrected Proof

political theology, 100, 114, 117, 118, 127, 131, 134
postcolonialism, 3, 23, 31, 60, 61, 89, 154, 174
praeteritio, 30
Praz, Mario, 70, 78
prison, 16, 17, 97, 181–201
Prison Notebooks (1929–1935) (Gramsci), 184
prison theatre, 188, 189, 191
Protestantism, 101, 110, 112, 118, 193
pseudo-Machiavellianism, 85

R
race
- Anglo-Saxon, 26
- blackness *vs.* whiteness, 14, 23, 27, 28, 32–5, 44, 175
- Celtic, 23, 25, 26, 28, 38, 72
- and ethnicity, 37–9
- Iago, 21–41
- Italian, 63–80
- Shakespeare and, 24–8
- Shakespeare without, 28–35

Race laws of 1938, 64–8, 75, 154
racial classifications, 27
raciology, 39
racism, 28, 30–2, 35, 39, 65, 67
- biological, 66
- esoteric, 66
- European, 32, 41
- Fascist, 29
- Italian, 64–8, 75, 79, 154

Radical Tragedy (Dollimore), 88–9
The Rape of Lucrece, 94
Raspanti, Mauro, 66
razza, 21
Rebora, Piero, 71, 73–80
Redmond, Michael, 6, 85
religion, 15, 38, 40, 52, 67, 90, 98, 104, 108, 111, 113, 115, 159, 175
- Catholic, 8
- demystifier of, 88
- ethnicity and, 159
- Jewish, 152, 157
- Machiavellian notion of, 88
- and political theology, 117
- and politics, 95–6
- role, in politics, 95
- as social glue, 96

Renzi, Matteo, 132
repression fallacy, 28
republicanism, 7, 93, 94, 118, 183
rhetoric, 28, 30, 36, 66, 73–5, 84, 91, 106, 115
Roman history, 4, 7, 67–8, 72, 78, 181, 183–5
'Roman-Italic race', 67
romanticism, 9, 12, 18, 32
Rome, ancient, 67, 94, 140, 182–3
Romeo and Juliet, 9, 10, 16, 140, 143–9, 195
Romeo and Juliet (1936) film, 145
Romeo and Juliet's Last Kiss (1823), 9, 146
Rossi, Ernesto, 7
Rossini, Gioacchino, 9
Rowe, Katherine, 187
Rymer, Thomas, 40, 46

S
Sacerdoti, Gilberto, 15, 95–6, 105–119
Sacrificio e Sovranità (Sacrifice and Sovereignty) (Sacerdoti), 95, 109
Salvini, Tommaso, 9, 200
Saviano, Roberto, 197
Schalkwyk, David, 182
Scharoff, Pietro, 77

Uncorrected Proof

Schmitt, Carl, 72, 100, 125, 129
Scott, Walter, 153
sculpture, 147
self-sovereignty, 109–12
sexuality, 30–1, 191–2
Shakespeare
  ethnic/racial identity, 26
  in France, 46
  as guide to national ethos, 4–5
  Italian adaptations of, 4, 43–61, 79, 139–57, 181–201
  Italian attitudes toward, 6–7, 10, 12, 70–5
  in Italian cultural debates, 12
  and Italian locations, 139–157
  Italianness of, 69, 139
  Italian performances of, 7, 75–8, 156, 186, 195, 200
  Italian spellings of, 6–7
  Italian studies of, 5, 6, 12, 63, 70–5, 78
  in prison, 181, 182, 188–9, 192, 196
  and race. *See* (race)
  reception in Italy, 6–10
  in the U.S., 3, 13, 21, 23, 31, 35, 86, 90, 91, 93
Shakespearean Places as Adaptations, 16, 139–57
Shapiro, James, 139
Shoah, 176–7
Sidney, Philip, 108
sileni alcibiadis, 107
Slavic ethnicity, 44, 47, 49, 50, 60
Sofri, Adriano, 84, 85
Sokol, B.J., 41n
Solimani, Ettore, 148
Sollors, Werner, 38
Sorrentino, Paolo, 190
sources, 3, 4, 9, 83, 94, 103, 149, 195
sovereignty, 7, 95, 96, 98, 112, 117
Spiekerman, Tim, 91

T
Talma, Jean-François, 46
Tamassia, Giulio, 148
Tanner, Tony, 179
Tassini, Giuseppe, 168–9
Taviani, Paolo and Vittorio, 3, 17, 181–201
Taylor, Gary, 157
Taymor, Julie, 67, 187
Tempera, Mariangela, 184
The Tempest, 71, 73, 112–13, 117
Tetrarchs, 164–8
Thalberg, Irving, 145
Thompson, Ayanna, 27, 31
Tiffin, Helen, 24
Tirinnanzi, Nicoletta, 102
Titus Andronicus (Taymor), 67
Toland, John, 101
Tolan, John, 162
Tomasi di Lampedusa, Giuseppe, 29, 60
Toscano, Alberto, 122, 134
Toso Fei, Alberto, 141, 170
tourism, 10, 145, 148, 178, 179
tragic *vs.* comic, 8–10, 28, 38, 74, 80, 96, 109, 149, 169, 200
translatio imperii, 166
translation, 4, 10, 17, 21, 29, 45–7, 70, 79, 109, 148, 153, 196, 197
Treves, Piero, 68

U
universalism, 29, 34, 39
unpolitical, 126, 130, 132

V
Valentino, Domenico, 181
Venice, 1–3, 6, 15–17, 22, 43, 44, 47, 48, 50, 51, 55, 64, 65, 75, 142, 143

Uncorrected Proof

Hamlet in, 121–35
Moors of Venice, 159–80
Venus and Adonis, 109
Verdi, Giuseppe, 9, 13, 22, 23, 28
Verona, 3, 10, 16, 78, 140, 142–9, 154
Verrocchio, Andrea Del, 163
Vettese, Angela, 180
Victorian culture, 3, 13, 26, 27, 31, 35, 36, 38, 40
Vigano, Salvatore, 9
Voltaire, 12, 46

W
Wells, Stanley, 139
West, Thomas, 90
White, Hayden, 2
Wilson, Fred, 162
Wind, Edgar, 114
Wolff, Larry, 47, 49, 50
Worden, Blair, 86–7
Wynne, Giustiniana, 50–1

X
xenophobia, 157

Y
Yates, Frances, 15, 95, 99–105, 110–15

Z
Zable, Arnold, 151
Zamir, Tzachi, 116
Zavoli, Sergio, 198
Žižek, Slavoj, 4–6
Zurlo, Leopoldo, 76

Uncorrected Proof