Selected Publications in Shakespeare Studies

Bigliazzi, Silvia, *Julius Caesar 1935: Shakespeare and Censorship in Fascist Italy*, Skenè Texts 3, Verona, Skenè Theatre and Drama Studies, 2019, 405 pp.

The 2017 Shakespeare in the Park production of *Julius Caesar* in New York featured Gregg Henry as a paunchy blonde-maned Caesar in a red tie, accompanied by a svelte Calphurnia with a Slovenian accent. Some were amused, but most stopped laughing in Act III when the senators brutally assassinated the Trumpian dictator. In the resulting uproar, corporate sponsors withdrew funding while defenders argued for artistic freedom and pointed out that Shakespeare's play goes on to condemn violence, to show that the assassination of a tyrant only brings about other forms of tyranny. Some cited as precedent Orson Welles' important 1937 production, *Caesar: Death of a Dictator*, also staged in New York but at the Mercury Theater. Acting Brutus himself, Welles cast as Caesar Joseph Holland, who bore a striking resemblance to Benito Mussolini. The stage evoked the setting of Nazi rallies at Nuremburg, and Caesar's jack-booted followers greeted each other with the *Sieg Heil!* salute. Welles, however, did not settle for a simple one-sided reading of the play. Though cutting the text ruthlessly, he expanded the murder of Cinna the Poet into a chilling indictment of mob rule and a graphic demonstration that Fascism lies within ordinary people as well as dictators.

Because Welles' *Julius Caesar*, for many English speakers at least, still stands as a pre-eminent example of a modern political production of the play, Silvia Bigliazzi's discovery of a very different, almost exactly contemporary production is especially

welcome. Based on documents in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome, this monograph recovers one extraordinary political production, the 1935 *Giulio Cesare*, and places it in the larger context of Fascist literary appropriation and mythography. The book consists of an introduction, the 1935 censored script in Italian and English translation, and five appendices of documents, also with English translation: 1) the 1935 *Giulio Cesare* Acting Text; 2) the 1925 Introduction of Raffaello Piccoli (the translator) and Contemporary Views; 3) Selections from *Memorie Inutili* (1952) by Leopoldo Zurlo (the theatrical Censor); 4) Documents pertaining to the 1935 *Giulio Cesare* production; and 5) Documents related to productions of *The Merchant of Venice* 1934-1939.

This last appendix provides a fascinating insight into how the staging of a play can serve the purposes of polemical appropriation and instantiate sinister myths of inferiority and supremacy. Discovering the loss of his daughter and ducats, Shylock slams doors, overthrows chairs, laments, "con suoni selvaggiamente inarticolati" ("with wild, inarticulate sounds"), foams at the mouth, and finally falls to the ground, "con un ruggito di belva ferito a morte" ("with a roar as of an animal wounded to death"). His final bestial collapse follows the tearing of his prayer shawl, "alla maniera degli Ebrei secondo il vecchio rito del dolore" ("according to the Jewish manner in the old rite of grief", pp. 398-99). The staging accentuates the portrayal of Shylock as stereotypical greedy moneylender and the identification of Jews and animals.

After Tito Vezio's portrayal of Julius Caesar as a prefiguration of Benito Mussolini (*Le due marce su Roma*, 1923), it was practically inevitable that Shakespeare himself, particularly his *Julius Caesar*, would be enlisted in the service of Fascist mythography. The story of the 1935 *Giulio Cesare* begins with its unusual commissioning by the OND (Opera Nazionale del Dopolavoro, "National Workers' Recreational Club"), the very agency that censored and banned plays. It continues in the recollections of the Censor Leopoldo Zurlo (Appendix 3). Confessing initial uneasiness about Caesarian parallels to Mussolini and the 1935 production, Zurlo advanced a politically correct interpretation of the "intimo significato" ("intimate meaning", pp. 374-75) of the play: Cassius is a vile, scheming conspirator; Brutus kills the true hero of the play, Caesar,

and ends in suicide, leaving the Republic to corrupt Antony and calculating Octavius. Shakespeare here ultimately shows" "l'inutilità del delitto e la sua condanna, anche se compiuto da un uomo virtuoso" ("the uselessness of murder and its condemnation even if carried out by a virtuous man", pp. 374-75).

Along with these ancillary materials, Silvia Bigliazzi's meticulous edition and commentary presents for new consideration the two surviving source texts of the 1935 production: the marked-up copy of Piccoli's 1925 translation up through IV.ii; the eleven-page "copioncino", or short script, that replaces the remaining forty pages of translation (IV.iii to the end). She astutely notes the various additions and omissions that adapt the ancient story to contemporary ideological agendas. The 1935 Brutus, for example, announces to the people, "anno ammazzato Cesare!" ("They have killed Caesar!", pp. 170), thus evading responsibility and showing "political deviousness" (p. 23). A subtle change in phrasing has Brutus blame Cassius not Caesar for supporting robbers (p. 21). And the script generally excises the word "tyrant" and its cognates, which "clearly sat uncomfortably in a play aimed at celebrating Caesar-Mussolini" (p. 21). Bigliazzi notes several such excisions (I.iii.90; I.iii.101, pp. 21-22), to which we can add others (I.iii.97, II.iv.118, V.iv.5).

Silvia Bigliazzi well observes the significant patterns of alteration regarding Caesar himself, whom Shakespeare had portrayed ambivalently, and the climactic murder scene, especially difficult to stage since "Mussolini had himself been the target of several assassination attempts between 1925 and 1931" (p. 29). The Censor diminishes and erases "the corporeality of Caesar alongside some 'dangerous' aspects of his character" (p. 30). "The removal of all references to Caesar's death, especially when evoked vividly with mention of hands, blood, and details of the action, was part of that strategy" (pp. 30-31). Gone too are the mentions of Caesar's swimming contest in the Tiber and near drowning, the epileptic fit, the deaf ear, the plucking open of his doublet to the crowd. The revised text sharply curtails the ritualistic elements of the murder (including the gory handwashing) so that it might look "like the assassination of a martyr whose body was to remain untouched by human hands" (p. 40). After all, the 1935 play insisted, Caesar died but Caesarism eventually triumphed, incarnate in the new ruler

and future empire. "History was to progress and be imbued with Caesar's spirit through Caesar's death, not through his massacre" (p. 34).

Furnished with revealing illustrations (though readers could have used a comprehensive list in the prefatory materials), this monograph adds an important, hitherto unknown, chapter to the complicated history of Shakespearean production and appropriation. This history, as John Ripley ('*Julius Caesar' on Stage in England and America, 1599-1973*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980) and Andrew James Hartley (*Julius Caesar: Shakespeare in Performance*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2014) have well demonstrated, extends backwards to the first staging of *Julius Caesar* in 1599, through the Whiggish anti-royalist Dryden-Davenant adaptation (1719), Edwin Booth's sentimental and ill-fated 1864 revival, and the Welles 1937 production, up to many fascinating modern exemplars – the Italian *Cesare deve morire* (film, 2012) directed by the Taviani brothers in an Italian prison, for example. The 1935 *Giulio Cesare*, in fact, has an interesting analogue in Jürgen Fehling's 1940 German production of Shakespeare's play. Though himself a vehement anti-Nazi, Fehling enlarged Caesar into a mythic figure and portrayed his fall as a historical disaster. How different Nelson Mandela's reading in 1944, when he and his colleagues who formed the Youth League of the ANC adopted as their motto Cassius' "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars / But in ourselves that we are underlings" (I.iii.140-41). Discussing the play as a school text, Mandela's biographer, Anthony Sampson, observed that Africans read *Julius Caesar* "as a kind of textbook for revolution. [But] in South Africa the play had a deeper resonance, for it vividly described how an oppressed people can realise their potential against tyranny, and escape from their sense of inferiority" (quoted in Hartley, 2014, p. 183). Yaël Farber's 2001 *SeZaR*, produced for the Grahamstown National Festival of the Arts, resisted specific and local application but suggested to viewers a range of tragic events in recent African history. Retaining some English, the script incorporated African dance, music, and rituals and also resounded with African languages – Tswana, Pedi, and Zulu (Hartley, 2014, pp. 187-92). In accents yet unknown, indeed.

Julius Caesar 1935 belongs to this grand and complicated tradition of production and we are grateful to Silvia Bigliazzi for this discovery and careful representation. This account of the production also belongs to one of Silvia Bigliazzi's larger projects, the exploration of Shakespeare's intervention in Italian history and culture, evident most recently in her *Shakespeare and Crisis: One Hundred Years of Italian Narratives* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2020). For this and her other substantial contributions, notably her leadership as co-editor of the series "Global Shakespeare Inverted" and as director of the Skenè Research Centre, which sponsors an annual conference and journal, Shakespeareans everywhere are in her debt.

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Blank, Paula, *Shakesplish: How We Read Shakespeare's Language*, **Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2018, 213 pp.**

It is a matter of great regret for the global Shakespearean community that Paula Blank's latest book, *Shakesplish: How We Read Shakespeare's Language*, is also to be her last. Over the course of her career dedicated to early modern literature and the manifold properties of its language, Blank was Margaret L. Hamilton Professor of English at the College of William and Mary, and the author of two important books, *Shakespeare and the Mismeasure of Renaissance Man* (2006) and *Broken English: Dialects and the Politics of Language in Renaissance Writings* (1996), a key text for anyone interested in early modern English.

After her unexpected passing in 2016, her colleagues Elizabeth Barnes, Erin Minear and Erin Webster completed the manuscript she had left behind for her third book, working with Stanford University Press within the Square One series edited by Paul A. Kottman, to bring to light this learned, but approachable and thoroughly enjoyable volume which aims to "speak to an audience beyond the academy" (Barnes, p. vii), never forgetting, however, the academic point of view (where 'academia' is intended in the best, pedagogically-conscious sense). We must be grateful to them for this labour of love, for we are now able to read a book that completely and unapologetically legitimizes our modern misreadings and misunderstandings of Shakespeare's language,

which, Blank shows, can be interesting and productive of meaning even though historically 'wrong'. The distinction is crucial, for what Blank is really talking about here, in delving into the reasons why Shakespeare's language still matters to us so much, is not Shakespeare but ourselves – thus shedding light onto the radical shifts in aesthetic categories that have led us to consider his language as 'strange' (on the "linguistic, semantic, affective, and cognitive" aspects of "our understanding of Shakespeare's strangeness" see Paul A. Kottman's Foreword, pp. ix-x).

Blank had first engaged with some of these questions in a provocative article published a few years back in a collection edited by Michael Saenger (*Interlinguicity, Internationality and Shakespeare*, Montreal and Kingston, Mc-Gill-Queen's University Press, 2014), which she opened with the question "Are Shakespeare's poems and plays written in English?" ("Introducing 'Intrelinguistics': Shakespeare and Early/Modern English", pp. 138-56). Readers might initially scoff at the question, but Blank persuasively showed how reading Shakespeare today requires skills that she defined as translational, integrating Jakobson's well-known model based on three types of translation (intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic) with a fourth category, which she named "intr*e*lingual". The chosen label was perhaps not the most effective, but the concept is clear: moving from one period in the history of a language to another is essentially a form of translation and should be recognized as such, *pace* David Crystal – or not: I am not sure, in fact, that Blank's argument, in that article and in this book, is so radically opposed to the one the eminent linguist expressed on what he called the "translation myth" in his seminal book *Think On My Words: Exploring Shakespeare's Language* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008). Blank recognizes the worth in Crystal's claim that about 95% of Shakespeare's English is modern English, and never falls into the trap of believing that Shakespeare spoke a different language; like Crystal, she upholds the need to probe into the language to tease out what he calls "difficulty of thought" (p. 11). They also seem to share their ultimate goal – pursued with fiery passion in both books – which is to enhance the appreciation of Shakespeare's language in modern audiences. Where they diverge is the way they go about the task, for while

Crystal advocates for bringing *us* closer to Shakespeare ("Rather than modernize Shakespeare, […] our effort should be devoted to making ourselves more fluent in 'Shakespearean'", p. 15), Blank is interested in bringing Shakespeare closer to *us*: "explor[ing] how we hear, understand, fail to understand, are amused by, disturbed by, bored by, moved by, and challenged by [Shakespeare's language] today, specifically as *speakers of Modern American English*" (p. xi).

The ability of Blank's style to draw readers in is such that I had no difficulty at all in identifying in her 'we', and with her position, despite not being American; I don't think too many of my Italian students, millennials and post-millennials raised on a steady diet of Netflix, YouTube and other forms of social media heavily dominated by standard American English, would have to stretch their imaginations too far to identify with that 'we', either. Things might perhaps be different for native English speakers in the UK, though Susan Bassnett's well-known complaint about having to sit through actors' overcompensative antics in bad Shakespearean productions in which, she argues, they probably could not fully comprehend the language, attests to a shift there too (https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/shakespeare-s-danger-we-have-act-now-avoid-great-tragedy-9159195.html). The point that Blank makes is that while it remains necessary and useful to historicize Shakespeare's language in evaluating its intended effects, trying to understand the effect it has on 'us' four hundred years later is a perfectly valid endeavour. More than in 'Shakespearean', she is thus interested in reconstructing what she calls 'Shakesplish': an "early/modern interlanguage" (p. 15), a specific linguistic variety that exists neither in Shakespeare's time nor fully in ours, but in the friction between his language and our understanding of it, errors and all.

Drawing on translation theory, second-language acquisition theory, and performance studies, Blank sets out to study four effects she believes modern day readers/listeners of Shakespeare's language tend to focus on, and sometimes cling to: the idea that it is 'beautiful', 'sexy', 'funny' and 'smart'. To each of these effects she devotes a chapter, after a preliminary chapter on "Shakespeare in Modern English" which outlines and recaps the debate on Shakespeare's language from Abbott's early work onwards. Blank

is careful to analyze each of the chosen effects not only in terms of modern understanding, but also from a formal point of view, combining her critical insights with precise information on the rhetorical figures and patterns Shakespeare used. In speaking of beauty (chapter two), she points out the limits of radical historicization when dealing with aesthetic effects, for either we accept that our standards of beauty have changed, in which case we will never be able to find beautiful everything that Shakespeare's contemporaries did, or we must assume that aesthetic standards are timeless. "Our best chance", she concludes, is to consider not simply his texts and their contexts, but also "the moment we make contact with his texts, the moment of our interlinguistic participation" (p. 32), accepting, and embracing, the interference of our contemporary language. In considering all four of the chosen effects, Blank exposes the difference between what we feel and what we feel we ought to feel – the idea, for example, that long speeches must automatically be beautiful and important (while Johnson could complain, free of any sentiments of guilt, about the length of *Henry V*'s St Crispin's Day speech). Or the idea that we find old words beautiful precisely *because* they are old: here the concept of early/modern friction explains the paradox of modern-day readers and audiences experiencing the Elizabethan pronoun system in a radically different way than it would have been in its time, so that "thee" and "thou" are felt as anything but familiar, and thus more beautiful and literary. Similarly, elliptic structures, such as modal verb + infinitive forms (like for example "I must to Coventry", in *Richard II*), which would not have been considered lacking from a syntactical point of view in early modern English, are felt today as 'broken', imperfect, strange, and thus poetic. The poetry, Blank argues, in cases such as these clearly lies not in the original but in the space, or interference, between Shakespeare's language and ours.

Analogous considerations are given in the following chapters (three to five). In assessing Shakespeare's language as 'sexy', Blank shows how modern readers/audiences are oblivious to the 'real' meaning of Shakespeare's bawdy language half the time, but still enjoy the sex jokes they can grasp, however imprecisely; at the same time, they are often convinced that Shakespeare was

somehow more euphemistic in his use of sexual language, simply because they do not know the original, often far from inoffensive, meaning of a number of now neutral words. Conversely, other words which had no sexual content in Shakespeare's time now produce inevitable interferences and unintended *double entendres*. Blank is never dismissive of modern readers/audiences' lack of information or knowledge on early modern English and fills in the gaps with countless examples taken from early modern dictionaries and lexicons such as the work of John Florio. But she is also very clear in revealing the ambivalence of our feelings: "we prefer sex in Shakespeare to be hidden, so that we can find it out for ourselves" (p. 98). In chapter four, dedicated to the idea of 'funniness' in Shakespeare, we are shown how in this case too, obscurity of language can enhance rather than conceal the effect: when the "saucy Page" is shouting insults at Mistress Quickly, many of the words are frankly incomprehensible today ("rampallion", "fustilarian"), but in this case, once we have correctly identified the framework of the insult, it is precisely the novelty of the words that has us laughing. At the same time, Blank gives us permission to admit "that Shakespeare's puns are not very funny anymore, for all our will to enjoy them" (p. 111) – something Johnson was again not embarrassed to assert – unless one counts the pleasure of being able to correctly identify and explain the polysemy involved. Blank here seems to contend that this is a specifically academic pleasure, closer to satisfaction than to actual enjoyment, but perhaps this really is a matter of personal sensibilities. Whatever the case may be, I find her insight that, in recognizing the difficulty of Shakespeare's language, we like the feeling of being "in the know", and therefore enjoy even the jokes we have to work at to understand, quite profound. This idea connects to chapter five, in which the final effect, 'smart', is explored, since so much of our enjoyment is linked to the ability to understand Shakespeare's wit (or "intelligence effects", in Blank's words). Here a fruitful distinction is made between rhetoric and logic, both structuring principles of discourse that a good part of the Elizabethan audience would have been trained to recognize in ways that may be less evident to us today; so that Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy is re-evaluated by Blank as an example of "disjunctive proposition", in which a clear fallacy mars the logic, since only two propositions are given – "life

is brutal for everyone, and […] death is always to be feared. There is no middle ground" (pp. 144-45). But the general effect of Hamlet's speech "sounds" philosophical to our ears, and thus comes across as extremely rational, explaining Hamlet's modern reputation as a philosopher and generally intelligent character (T. S. Eliot, of course, was famously not fooled in this respect, whatever we want to make of his general judgement on *Hamlet* as an artistic feat).

Blank also treats the vexed question of Shakespeare's linguistic originality in this chapter dedicated to effects of intelligence. She interprets originality here in terms of neologisms, a slightly narrow view, perhaps, which leads to one small flaw in her argument at this point, in which, although in more cautious terms, she seems to uphold the widespread opinion that Shakespeare invented hundreds of words, based on occurrences listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Jonathan Hope, among others, has argued strongly and convincingly against this view, showing how the OED cannot be taken as final proof of an occurrence being the first one, since its compilers were heavily biased towards finding authoritative examples in Shakespeare and probably ignored earlier occurrences that are now being discovered. In an extremely cogent article published in our journal ("Who Invented 'Gloomy'? Lies People Want to Believe about Shakespeare", *Memoria di Shakespeare* 3, "The Shape of a Language", ed. I. Plescia, 2016, pp. 21-45), Hope gives examples of how one can trace and ante-date words that the public opinion has traditionally assigned to Shakespeare, coming to the drastic conclusion that "Shakespeare did not invent words. Not any. Not one that we have been able to find so far". Blank could not, of course, have read that article, so it would be unfair to judge her assertions with the benefit of hindsight, but I think she would not mind me pointing out that her conclusion, based on Hope's earlier work, that "until we actually discover alternative sources for words currently attributed to Shakespeare, [his] argument remains fallacious" (p. 148) has in the meantime been disproven, since we can now access and search tens of thousands of early modern books in digital repositories, which are revealing a surprising number of ante-datings with respect to the OED definitions (the dictionary has actually issued a call for

readers to contribute their own findings, not limited to Shakespearean words).

This small caveat, of course, takes nothing away from the importance of Paula Blank's final book. First of all, because as she herself explains, Hope's myth-busting argument is actually telling of what *we* want to believe about Shakespeare's language – yet another instance of Shakesplish, in fact. And secondly, because the bulk of her intuitions and arguments on Shakespeare's language does not rest on this idea of neologizing creativity, which is only tangentially explored. In a final chapter, Blank delves into the Shakespearean idiomatic expressions that we have come to accept and have made our own, no longer considering "Shakespeare *in* Modern English", as in the opening section, but "Shakespeare *as* Modern English" (emphasis mine). The change is subtle, but significant, and if we cannot help sensing the 'unfinishedness' of this final chapter, its need for a conclusion that Blank was not able to write, we can find a good degree of satisfaction in her acknowledgment of a "shared Modern American desire: wanting Shakespeare to have invented as much of our language as possible. We love it when we think we've been talking Shakespeare all our lives, just as he's been talking us" (p. 191). This statement naturally also has interesting implications when thinking about the construction of ideas of cultural and linguistic legitimacy in America – and this seems like a fitting place to announce that the next issue of our journal, to be published in 2021, will be dedicated to "Shakespeare in the American Imagination" (ed. Maria DiBattista). We owe Paula Blank much thanks for bequeathing to us a book that I would not hesitate to describe as possessing the same traits she has analyzed for us – a book that is 'beautiful', 'funny', 'smart', and yes, even 'sexy': seductive, that is, in the elegant and articulate way in which it helps reveal to us our innermost desires about what Shakespeare's language should be.

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Culpeper, Jonathan and Archer, Dawn, eds, "Special Issue: Shakespeare's Language: Styles and Meaning via the Computer", *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics*, vol. 29, no. 3, August 2020, pp. 191-351.

The digital revolution, digital databases and text analysis tools, that Shakespearean studies have only recently accepted to be put at the forefront of the future research and debate, provide radically improved ways to understand Shakespeare, both within the Shakespeare canon, and in the wider context of early modern literary culture. Editors and translators have long sought to understand Shakespeare through contextualisation: words and phrases have been glossed using examples from other texts, and critical arguments have been constructed around concepts that seem to be highly frequent in particular plays. *Memoria di Shakespeare* 7, "Stylometry", was about to be published when we received the last 2020 issue of *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics*, unsurprisingly devoted to Shakespeare's language in connection with and through the lens of corpus methodologies. We cannot miss such a wonderful opportunity to celebrate a common effort and a healthy attempt to make "our understanding of Shakespeare's language usage [grow] exponentially" (p. 200). "O brave new world, to have such corpora in it!" (p. 347), opens David Crystal in his "Afterword" to the special issue, congratulating the authors on an enterprise that joins a sociolinguistic and a pragmatic perspective in addressing two aspects of Shakespearean language study, structure and use, traditionally considered separately. Corpus linguistics and digital humanities, areas that have a foot in both linguistics and literary studies, have already given important contributions and produced in the early 1990s the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*, the *Corpus of English Dialogues*, the *Early English Books Online* (EEBO), the *Variant Detector* (VARD). However, one of the aims of *Language and Literature* special issue is to introduce the concept and preliminary research results of the *Encyclopedia of Shakespeare's Language* (2016-2019; https://wp.lancs.ac.uk/shakespearelang), the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project, designed to fill the gap of a thorough study of the methods used by linguists to work

with corpora (and, in so doing, to "bring scholarship on Shakespeare's language fully into the 21st century"! [p. 194]). In an illuminating interview for *Memoria di Shakespeare* 3, "The Shape of a Language" (ed. I. Plescia, 2016), Jonathan Culpeper had anticipated that

> [t]he guiding principle [of the *Encyclopedia*] will not be etymology or editorial intuition but frequency. It needs to be stressed that what is proposed is not a traditional concordance of Shakespeare. Matters of frequency are used to reveal patterns of meaning and usage; they are not an end in themselves. Internal comparisons will reveal how Shakespeare's language dynamically varies across his works. For example, it will reveal whether certain words, meanings, structures, etc. are peculiar to tragedies, comedies or histories, to certain social groups (e.g. men/women) and to specific periods and sites of composition/performance. External comparisons with the language of Shakespeare's contemporaries will form an even more significant and innovative part of the research. (p. 4)

The six articles in *Language and Literature* special issue are all corpus-based studies, hence showing both the methods used for bringing meaning to light and the theoretical approach behind the method adopted. Four articles draw upon statistical measures and deal with Shakespeare's style and his "representations of nationality, gender and deception" (p. 197) through the analysis of his grammar and lexicon (J. Culpeper and A. Findlay, "National Identities in the Context of Shakespeare's *Henry V*: Exploring Contemporary Understanding through Collocations"; S. Murphy, D. Archer and J. Demmen, "Mapping the Links between Gender, Status and Genre in Shakespeare's Plays"; D. Archer and M. Gillings, "Depictions of Deception: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Five Shakespearean Characters"; A. Hardie and I. van Dorst, "A Survey of Grammatical Variability in Early Modern English Drama"). The fifth article (S. Murphy, J. Culpeper, M. Gillings and M. Pace-Sigge, "What Do Students Find Difficult When They Read Shakespeare? Problems and Solutions") introduces a pedagogical perspective and addresses some problems with the help of corpora. Finally, the sixth article (A. Findlay, "Epilogues and Last Words in Shakespeare: Exploring Patterns in a Small Corpus") is more literary-oriented and focusses upon "the last words of plays and in

particular epilogues, a specific kind of paratext" (p. 199), exploring the contribution of corpus methods, even in special cases in which linguistic or stylistic phenomena do not follow a regular pattern. As Culpeper and Archer argue in their introduction: "taken as a whole, the six articles are designed to represent some of the broad array of the opportunities afforded by the new corpus resources created as part of the *ESL* [*Encyclopedia of Shakespeare's Language*] project" (p. 199). The digital world has both strengths and weaknesses, but it is capable to redefine scholarship and practice. The collection edited for *Language and Literature* provides both models for further research and tools for the assessment of the models themselves. Due to the unique cultural capital of his works, Shakespeare's language can sit at the forefront in the use of corpus methodologies: they can radically improve our contextual glossing and translating of Shakespeare. An awareness of statistical text analysis can refine and improve traditional literary criticism and ways of understanding.

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Del Villano, Bianca, *Using the Devil with Courtesy: Shakespeare and the Language of (Im)Politeness,* **Bern, Peter Lang, 2018, 196 pp.**

It is a fact that several paradigm shifts occurred in language studies in the closing decades of the twentieth century and in the early years of the current century: new directions were explored and new perspectives embraced as sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis took hold, shifting the boundaries of stylistics and linguistics alike. As occurred in other paradigms, the approach shifted from regarding language as a synchronic, static, and homogenous system to a diachronic, social, and dynamic entity. It is this interest in the diachronic dimension that eventually gave rise to studies into historical stylistics, or rather, a new historical stylistics, and, as a sister discipline, into historical pragmatics. Both fields of study have adapted methods and devices developed through stylistics and pragmatics to work on texts from the past (literary and otherwise) and on language use and variation in past contexts, in order to understand how meaning is made and provide new materials and evidence to linguists,

historical linguists, and language historians. However, despite isolated areas of obvious transfer, today it is generally true that literary studies and linguistics do not significantly communicate with one another, even in Shakespeare studies. While Shakespeare philology has a long research tradition, linguistic contributions to the study of Shakespeare's English are much more recent and less numerous, and the ones within the scope of historical pragmatics are still relatively new, although increasingly frequent. Terms of address, vocative constructions, discourse markers, speech acts, politeness and impoliteness strategies are the most relevant areas of pragmatics connected to Shakespeare's English and dramatic dialogues.

The book reviewed here falls within these 'happy few' examples and combines linguistics and literary studies, reading Shakespeare's dialogues through the lens of pragmatics, focussing in particular on politeness and impoliteness theory.

The title of the volume, *Using the Devil with Courtesy: Shakespeare and the Language of (Im)Politeness*, paraphrases from *Twelfth Night* ("I'm one of those gentle ones / that will use the devil himself with courtesy", IV.ii.32-33) and introduces the issue of the connection between politeness strategies and the concept of courtesy in the early modern period, the research hypothesis being that "subjectivity, language and culture in the Renaissance are interconnected through courtesy" (p. 17). Structured in four sections, the first and the second part of the volume engage with theoretical and methodological issues and offer a thorough overview of the concepts related to Brown and Levinson's positive and negative face, and the discursive strategies activated by politeness. The accurate outline is completed and updated by presenting Jonathan Culpeper's theory of impoliteness which occupies a special place in Del Villano's approach to the case-studies analysed in the second part of the volume. The second chapter focusses on the relationship between contemporary linguistic theories and "a historical era such as the early modern period, in which codes of politeness may have been differently expressed" (p. 52), by providing insights into the concept of subjectivity in the Renaissance context. The author resorts to new historicist tenets to outline the complex picture of the emergence or denial of subjectivity and, as is well known, in this intellectual

framework, self-fashioning and manners are intended as the source of identity for an individual who coincides with the figure of the courtier. In this context, "courtesy soon came to serve a dual purpose: on the one hand, it was construed as an inner quality inherently characterising the aristocrat whilst, on the other, it concerned exterior behaviour and was seen as something that could be acquired along with the use of proper manners, such as polite formulae for greetings or a courtly bearing" (p. 75).

Having established the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of Renaissance English subjectivity in connection with the cultural meaning of courtesy, chapter three and four turn to the analysis of two plays, *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, and this provides an interesting micro-level complement to the preceding discussion. Del Villano embraces Brown and Levinson's traditional model and current studies on diachronic impoliteness "in the conviction that a combined method can on the one hand ensure control over and precision in the identification of (im)polite strategies and markers using well-tested tools to measure the linguistic expressions found in the texts; on the other, the discursive approach can open up the interpretation of data to more markedly interdisciplinary dimensions" (p. 82). Honorific titles, address pronouns, discourse markers are crucial indicators in assessing a distinction between "*discernment politeness*, understood as formulaic conventional courtesy, and *strategic politeness*, understood as a means of persuading others, causing offence and minimising possible imposition by and on others" (p. 84).

The object of stylistic analysis is to account for, or dispute, previously established assessments and interpretations, rather than produce new ones, and the pragmalinguistic investigation conducted by Del Villano confirms the paramount role played by 'courtesy' in the early modern society as a necessary requisite in the context of self-reinvention and self-fashioning that marked the formation of the individual's subjectivity. Moreover, on the linguistic level of fictional representation, (im)politeness strategies testify to the existence of a sense of inwardness and a strategic negotiation both of subjectivity and subjection which can be demonstrated only through linguistic performativity. Hamlet's celebrated rhetoric of detachment between word and meaning is

translated into an "off-record strategy [that] goes beyond irony, playing on the arbitrariness of the signified/signifier link. […] Hamlet's off-recordness […] can be described as a (dramatically ironic and metonymical) *torsion* of language that breaks the analogical link between words and things" (p. 175). Katherina, like Hamlet, reacts to the oppression of the world around her, but her verbal choices are different, and her strategies are marked by aggression in the first part of the play and mock politeness in the final scenes. If Hamlet operates a "*torsion* of language", Katherina relies on a sort of "*inversion*, a typical Carnivalesque motif, in which the order of constatives and performatives, of what is 'real' life and what is theatre, are reversed" (p. 176).

All in all, *Using the Devil with Courtesy* is a good example of how a structural approach may be fruitfully integrated with strong hermeneutic overtones and Bianca Del Villano brilliantly confirms the shared, fundamental premises that still lie in a disciplined approach to the text, in the examination of data by means of verifiable and replicable procedures, and in addressing the construction of meaning as the principal task of textual interpretation. Her intelligent book at times risks exposing itself to traditional criticism against the use of a heavy apparatus of technical terms and acronyms which asks the reader to keep a constant eye on a glossary, necessary to understand the terms of the discussion. However, such style, at times didactic and explicitly concerned with involving the reader into methodological choices, is part and parcel of the rigorous approach of a linguistic analysis, and can be read as the fair price to be paid in order to counterbalance countless pieces of literary criticism in which subjectivity and impressionism guided the act of interpretation. Let me end with a remark made by Roman Jakobson, who throughout his career advocated for a collaboration between linguistics and literary criticism: "A linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar […] unconversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms". I think that the book reviewed here contributes in its own way to synchronising the two parts and offers a virtuous example of collaboration.

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Guardamagna, Daniela, *Thomas Middleton, drammaturgo giacomiano. Il canone ritrovato*, **Roma, Carocci, 2018, pp. 276.**

Thomas Middleton was one of the most prolific writers of the Elizabethan-Jacobean period. His remarkable career was a varied one. He wrote, alone or in collaboration with other major writers of the time (Shakespeare, Webster, Dekker, Ford, Rowley), in a huge variety of genres: plays, pamphlets, poetry, pageants, masques, epigrams, prose satires, Biblical and political commentaries. As a playwright, his range is wide – he swung from city comedies to tragicomedies, from histories to tragedies – and his plays, written for different companies, were successfully performed in various London theatres.

Middleton was an established and popular writer during his lifetime, yet it was not until the nineteenth century that his works were published in two collected (though incomplete) critical editions by Alexander Dyce (1840) and by Arthur H. Bullen (1885-87), and, in the following century, only a few scholarly monographs were devoted to his theatrical production.

In the last decades, however, the old canon of Thomas Middleton has been deeply modified by attribution studies, especially after the issue of what has been defined as "Middleton's First Folio" (*Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* and *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to the Collected Works*, general eds Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), and, in the years that have intervened since the publication of this new unified edition, the writer's prolific career has come into focus.

In this context of current scholarship, Daniela Guardamagna's *Thomas Middleton, drammaturgo giacomiano. Il canone ritrovato* is the first Italian comprehensive study on Middleton's dramas.

There are Italian translations and critical editions of some of Middleton's major plays – *The Changeling* (translated under various titles: *I dissennati*; *Il lunatico*; *I lunatici*), *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (*Una trappola per il vecchio*), *A Game at Chess* (*Partita a scacchi*), *Women, Beware Women* (*Donne guardatevi dalle donne*), *The Roaring Girl* (*Una maschiaccia a Londra*), *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (*La casta vergine del Cheapside*), *A Mad World, My Masters* (*Mondo matto, miei*

signori), *The Revenger's Tragedy* (*La tragedia del vendicatore*) – and a memorable production of *The Changeling* (*I lunatici*) under the direction of Luca Ronconi was performed in the courtyard of the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino on August 12, 1966. But the two previous Italian scholarly monographs date back to the end of the 1970s and the beginning of 1980s (Mary Corsani, *Il linguaggio teatrale di Thomas Middleton*, Genova, Il melangolo, 1979, and Franco Marenco, ed., *Thomas Middleton e il teatro barocco in Inghilterra*, Genova, Il melangolo, 1983).

The subtitle of Daniela Guardamagna's volume (*Il canone ritrovato*) makes it clear that her investigation is based on the new perspectives due to the recent reassessment of the Middleton canon – at the beginning of the book we find a very useful table in which the recent revision of the dramatic canon is set out (pp. 26-27).

Daniela Guardamagna follows current scholarship by including, for example, *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* while excluding *Blurt Master Constable*, but her book is not simply a presentation, to Italian readers, of the salient arguments and instances that provided a basis for the reinterpretation of the canon of Middleton's plays. She concentrates on the vast body of the Jacobean playwright's work with a wide range of scientific evidence and theory, reaching important conclusions which are of interest to general readers acquainted with Elizabethan-Jacobean drama as well as to specialists.

The book is divided into two main sections (chapters one to four and five to nine, respectively).

The first part starts with an overview of Middleton's early career (chapter one), moves on to detailed analyses of his city comedies and tragicomedies (chapters two and three) and ends with his last comic satirical play, *A Game at Chess*, to which an entire chapter is devoted (chapter four).

The second part of the volume ("Le tragedie e il nuovo canone") deals with Middleton's tragedies, starting with the new attributions: *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* (chapter five); *The Bloody Banquet* and *The Lady's Tragedy* (chapter six). Then, the book focuses on the 'canonical' *Hengist* (chapter seven), *Women, Beware Women* and *The Changeling* (chapter eight), and on Middleton's collaboration with Shakespeare – who appears to have chosen the younger colleague as one of his collaborators (*Timon of*

Athens) – and on his revision and adaptations of some Shakespearean plays (chapter nine). This is the reason why a review of this study is appropriate in *Memoria di Shakespeare.*

The chapters contained in the two sections present the texts with deep and relevant explanatory insights into their structure and internal dynamics and into their historical context and background.

Middleton was a satirical observer of coeval society. In his comedies and tragicomedies he pierces the vanity, hypocrisy and the foibles of his contemporaries in realistic portrayals of everyday life, concentrating his irony on economic problems, social relationships and sexual affairs: "What's this whole world but a gilt rotten pill?" (*The Roaring Girl*, IV.ii.221). In his tragedies – focused primarily on the protagonists' inability to surmount the limitations placed upon them by religion, family prejudice and society – his irony turns into cynicism and his characters are shaped with lurid and horrifying violence sometimes verging on the grotesque.

Middleton's sharpest social criticism was directed against the court and other people in authority.

After a period of optimism following the coronation of James I, the king was criticised for his tyranny, corruption and luxury, and the Jacobean dramatists portrayed the moral and political decadence of the court by safely distancing it into a foreign setting: a stereotypical Italy, conventionally seen as the land of treachery, bloodshed, poison, murder, flattery, lust.

For instance, Roger Ascham, Princess Elizabeth's tutor, had included a discourse against travels in Italy in his *The Schoolmaster* (1570): "time was when Italy and Rome have been […] the best breeders and bringers-up of the worthiest men […]. But now that time is gone, and […] the old and present manners do differ as far as black and white, as virtue and vice. […] Italy now is not that Italy that it was wont to be, and therefore not so fit a place […] for young men to fetch either wisdom or honesty from thence". Thomas Nashe echoes him by adding, a few years later: "From thence [Italy] he [the English gentleman] brings the art of atheism, the art of epicurizing, the art of whoring, the art of poisoning, the art of sodomitry. […] [I]t [Italy] maketh a man an excellent courtier, a curious carpet knight – which is, by interpretation, a fine close lecher, a glorious hypocrite. It is now a privy note amongst the

better sort of men when they would set a singular mark or brand on a notorious villain to say he hath been in Italy" (*The Unfortunate Traveller*, 1594).

Middleton too draws on this negative image of Italy – e.g., in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, with its allegorical characters called by the Italian equivalents of Lecherous (Lussurioso), Ambitious (Ambitioso), Bastard (Spurio), and in *Women, Beware Women*, with its despotic Duke of Florence (Francesco I de' Medici) and his mistress Bianca (Cappello) – in order to criticise coeval English monarchy from the safe distance of an abstract, stereotypical Italian setting of decadence and corruption.

Middleton's social concern that came to figure more and more prominently both in his comedies and in his tragedies is at the core of the research process that informs Daniela Guardamagna's detailed and contextualised case study: "Un tema centrale di questo volume", she writes, "è l'analisi della presenza di una critica feroce, sia nelle commedie sia nelle tragedie middletoniane, della corruzione della Corte. Ma questa critica non risparmia gli attacchi ai maneggi dei *citizens* contro la *gentry*, gettando luce su quanto accadrà nella realtà storica, quando i *citizens* arriveranno effettivamente a prendere il potere" (p. 29).

For this reason, this engaging book, while bringing together a range of interesting perspectives on Thomas Middleton's dramatic work, is also an important study of Jacobean England, and, as such, it speaks to a variety of audiences interested in the writer, in drama and in cultural history.

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Marrapodi, Michele, ed., *The Routledge Research Companion to Anglo-Italian Renaissance Literature and Culture*, **London-New York, Routledge, 2019, pp. xv+528.**

This book, published in 2019, is part of a series of important essays illuminating the fundamental relationship between Italian Renaissance works, Shakespeare and early modern English drama, and poetry. These studies were issued in the series "Anglo-Italian Renaissance Studies", devised by Michele Marrapodi, its general editor. Marrapodi – who acknowledges his inspiration from Robert S. Miola's work on the influence of Seneca, Latin and Greek New

Comedy and Italian sources on Shakespeare and his contemporaries (p. 21 and *passim*) – has widely written and edited on the subject: from the seminal 1993 *Shakespeare's Italy* to *Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (1999) to *Shakespeare, Italy, and Intertextuality* (2004), up to the influential *Shakespeare and Renaissance Literary Theories: Anglo-Italian Transactions* (2011), *Shakespeare and the Italian Renaissance: Appropriation, Transformation, Opposition* (2014), and *Shakespeare and the Visual Arts: The Italian Influence* (2017, which has just been published in paperback).

In the present volume, as in many of the above, a clear stance is to be found – and praised: as Marrapodi states in the introduction, recent criticism has established that the point to be highlighted in Italian-English relationships is not a passive absorption of literary texts, with "direct linear sources and adaptations"; the common core of the essays (Marrapodi's, but also Smarr's, Clubb's or Elam's) is the emphasis on the "creative intertextuality" which was at work throughout the early modern period. The rich reservoir of intertextual knowledge, reading and practices represents a "generative machine" producing powerful models (Marrapodi, p. 3, quoting Keir Elam's "Italy as Intertext", in Marrapodi 2004) for the creation of English plays and poems, where the Italian Renaissance writers' works were read, absorbed, introjected and re-employed.

Of course, the deeply controversial and ambivalent stance towards Italy is taken into account, as both "the cradle of early modern European civilization, of poetry, and art" and as a territory of vice, revenge plots, popish corruption (Marrapodi, p. 5); a "reviled other" (Walter, p. 295), contemplated both with "fascination and repulsion" (Marrapodi, p. 7), with "a mixture of enthusiasm and moral resistance" (Smarr, p. 80). Smarr applies this oxymoron to Machiavelli's fortune in England, but this stance can be seen to relate to most imitations from the Italians, where Boccaccio – for one – inspires many plots and ideas; but English authors 'sanitize' his more irreverent thrusts against the ruling classes and the *status quo*. The progressive attitude Ariosto shows towards his heroines is also shown to have been domesticated and simplified in some of his English translations, Harington's in particular (Scarsi, esp. pp. 172-75).

Another common core of this study is the acceptance of the controversial hypothesis that Shakespeare could read Italian, and that he resorted to Painter's and Bandello's translations only as a help to interpret his sources (see among others Walter, pp. 295-96). He is even supposed to have read *Orlando Furioso* in the original (Scarsi, p. 160, following Jason Lawrence's assumption, as Melissa Walter does).

The essays devoted to revenge tragedies rightly show the influence of Seneca through the Italians as paramount: with the mediation of works by Giraldi Cinthio (*Orbecche* in particular), Trissino, Rucellai (especially his *Rosmunda*), Sperone Speroni, Lodovico Dolce, and a few more. The extremely well-documented essay by Mario Domenichelli identifies all the elements of the inheritance, emphasizing the aspect – known to specialists, but usefully recapped and expanded on here – of the use of Italian courts as a mask for an effective criticism of corruption and vice at home. Going back to Marrapodi's introduction, an interesting hypothesis is that the "excessive theatricality and gruesome sensationalism" of John Webster "epitomises, perhaps more eloquently than other dramatists" (pp. 13, 18), the use of Italy both as butt and mask. This is fairly convincing, though the fact that Marrapodi unfortunately chooses to ignore the attribution of *The Revenger's Tragedy* to Thomas Middleton (by now certain, and rightly mentioned by Domenichelli) might have led him to underestimate Middleton's role in the same field. In his plays, Catholic countries – Italy in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *Women Beware Women*, Spain in *The Changeling* – represent an image of corruption maybe even more profound than Webster's.

The importance of "courtesy literature" as teaching the *ars vivendi* might be underestimated by the profane. In this book, Castiglione's, Della Casa's and Guazzo's teachings are analyzed in two essays (Cathy Shrank's and Mary Partridge's), but their overall importance is often stressed, as in the second notable essay by Mario Domenichelli (esp. pp. 420-23). Domenichelli usefully reminds the reader of the widespread practice of publishing controversial Italian books in England, sometimes importing them to Italy again, as happened to Giordano Bruno's *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante* and other works, as shown in Sacerdoti's insightful essay on the Nolan martyr. Diego Pirillo as well, in his essay on "heretics,

translators, intelligencers", underlines again the relevant factor of the printing in England of works forbidden in Italy – sometimes smuggled back with the pretense of an Italian publication. English print houses are here defined as "miniature international houses" (pp. 405, 408) for the spreading and the discussion of controversial ideas.

The two parts of the volume tend to overlap, but there is an identifiable division of sorts. The first part concentrates on the most prominent authors and phenomena in Renaissance Italy, taking into account their 'journey' to England but positing itself more firmly on the Italian side; the second part delves more profoundly into the relationship between Italian authors and phenomena and their influence on English writers, taking into account common sources (especially Seneca and the New Comedy of Plautus, Menander and Terence), English translations and the English remodeling of ideas, narremes and theatregrams (useful terms coined some decades ago, as Nicholson reminds the reader, by Louise George Clubb).

The Italian authors and phenomena shown to be relevant for their influence on English playwrights and poets are first of all the "three crowns", Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. Dante is much less influential than his prominence as a writer would make us expect, and more with his *Vita nova* rather than with the *Comedy*, as Marco Andreacchio shows; on Boccaccio, see the next paragraphs; Petrarch, again, is shown to have been more influential with his Latin prose works and, later, with his *Trionfi* rather than with the *Canzoniere*: in the earlier ages, more as a "moral thinker rather than a poet", as John Roe pertinently shows (pp. 269-87, esp. 269-72), and later more with his ideas and concepts rather than his polished style, often neglected and mistranslated. Other writers and thinkers are deeply analyzed in the book: Machiavelli (both as a political writer and as a playwright), the "courtesy literature" (Della Casa, Castiglione, Guazzo), the Italian novella, Tasso, the "commedia dell'arte", up to Giordano Bruno and Paolo Sarpi.

The influence of Boccaccio is stressed in various essays; it is central in Janet Levarie Smarr's profound study but appears throughout others. A crucial concept to be noted in Smarr's essay is the "theatricality" of the *Decameron*, where characters "are often

consciously performing" (p. 76), and where Boccaccio is shown as harking back to Plautus and Terence. The presence of seminal narremes and theatregrams, such as the disguise or the bed-trick, but also the device of the trunk and the wager motif (which will of course be central in *Cymbeline*), is shown as relevant for both Italian playwrights – such as Machiavelli and Aretino – and for many English playwrights: Shakespeare, Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Middleton, Massinger and Dekker. In the second part of her essay, Smarr interestingly indicates how the influence of the Counter-Reformation caused a shift in the mood of Italian plays towards "moral orthodoxy and romantic content" (p. 111), thereby preparing the way to the birth of tragicomedy.

The frequent reworking of narremes and theatregrams, born in Italy and re-employed by English playwrights, is also shown in Louise George Clubb's rich and documented essay on the *commedia erudita.* Specimens pertaining to this genre were written both in Latin and Italian by such authors as Ariosto, Boiardo, Pomponio Leto, Bembo, Bibbiena, Ruzante, and by the "radical writers" Machiavelli and Aretino. Clubb's essay proves the relevance of *imitatio* of classic literature in Italy and deals with more theatregrams, adding the brave cross-dressing heroine, the recognition and reunion of long-lost relatives (p. 109) and the theme of feigned madness (mentioned in Eric Nicholson's essay as well, p. 366). The list of the most frequent theatregrams is completed by Melissa Walter, who – quoting Marrapodi – adds the *topoi* of the twin brothers and that of "the lewd magistrate" (pp. 293-94).

The essays devoted to Ariosto and Tasso (Selene Scarsi's and Jason Lawrence's) show their persistent presence in the theatre and in English epic poetry, particularly in Spenser and Milton. After the deep influence on Spenser, mentioned in both essays, Lawrence shows in detail how Tasso's "erotic allure" (p. 256) echoed in Samuel Daniel's work and, almost a century later, in Dryden's and Purcell's; the second part of his convincing essay deals in depth with the borrowings from Tasso by Milton, which have partly been identified in Fowler's edition and later studies. The presence of Tasso – Lawrence reminds the reader, quoting Fowler's edition – is revealed by the "almost incalculable quantity of direct echo of the *Gerusalemme liberata* in *Paradise Lost*" (p. 250).

The pastoral form, which is analyzed in Robert Henke's essay (devoted to tragicomedy) and Jane Tylus' (concentrating on pastoral poems and novels), is shown as central in the birth of plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* (amusingly defined by Clubb as "pastorals minus pastors", p. 114). The influence of Giraldi Cinthio, Guarini and Tasso's *Aminta* is usefully dealt with in both essays.

Some space is devoted to the *commedia dell'arte*, which is the subject of Richard Andrews', Eric Nicholson's and Rosalind Kerr's essays. These point out some characteristics of the *commedia*, especially the underestimated fact that improvising was less pivotal to the creation of scenarios, while the memorizing of set-pieces and the capacity of adapting them to new situations arising on stage was central to the creation of good performances. Kerr concentrates on the importance of great actresses ("divas"), active on the Italian stage since the 1560s; Richard Andrews also effectively shows the interdependence of three-act scenarios and five-act traditional plays. The latter started from the success of a staged scenario and gave birth to written, published plays, which in turn were assimilated by English playwrights.

Machiavelli is often mentioned, but two essays are specifically devoted to him. Duncan Salkeld's study concentrates on Machiavelli's comedies (*Mandragola* and *Clizia*), with the *beffa* to the old husband, bed-tricks and potions to get pregnant (which will be employed by Middleton in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, a precise influence which is not mentioned by the contributors to this volume). Salkeld's essay deals with the central concept of *virtù* in Machiavelli, the lucid cynicism informing both his plays and his political writings, and his satirical thrusts against the meddling of the Church in family matters, which was mostly sanitized by his English imitators. Alessandra Petrina's profound and informed essay deals with the well-known misrepresentation of Machiavelli in the English imagination, finding instances in plays, texts and pamphlets, but also stating how this misconstruction was less widespread than is usually thought. In the Republican period, in particular, Machiavelli's writings (both *Il Principe* and the *Discorsi*) were used to "throw light on the pitfalls of monarchical rule" (p.

337) and as a warning against the excesses of Monarchic government.

Interesting topics in the volume which have not been mentioned are European festivals (J. R. Mulryne, pp. 376-88), the relevance of music and Italian paintings in Shakespeare's work (Duncan Salkeld's second essay, pp. 299-311), and the presence of Paolo Sarpi in England (Chiara Petrolini and Diego Pirillo, pp. 434-49). Lastly, the fundamental influence of John Florio as an interpreter and transmitter of Italian culture in the English Renaissance is dealt with by Michael Wyatt, who closes his essay with a final thrust against some public figures (like Lamberto Tassinari), who have promoted the fashionable, anti-Stratfordian hypothesis which identifies in John Florio the real author of Shakespeare's plays.

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