



THE UNIVERSITY OF
BUCKINGHAM

**‘In fair Verona where we lay our scene’:
The Inspiration and Treatment of Italy
In Shakespeare’s Plays**

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Caterina Galati, who has been a constant source of support, encouragement, and love during the challenges of my postgraduate career. I am truly grateful for the sacrifices she has made in order to help me succeed in achieving my dreams. She has taught me the meaning of unconditional love.

This work is also dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Maria Antonia Ruscio. Although she was an inspiration to pursue my doctoral degree, she was unable to see my graduation. I hope that she would have been proud of me.

Questa tesi è dedicata a mia madre, Caterina Galati, che è stata una costante fonte di sostegno, incoraggiamento e amore durante le sfide della mia carriera universitaria. Sono veramente grata per i sacrifici che ha fatto per aiutarmi a realizzare i miei sogni. Mi ha insegnato il significato dell'amore incondizionato.

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of fifteenth- and sixteenth- century Italian location, society, and individuals on the works of William Shakespeare. By examining the Italianate works of the playwright, I strive to understand what connected Shakespeare to his Italian sources, locations, and literature.

The thesis is interested in *how* as much as *why* Shakespeare was influenced by Italy. By incorporating detailed analysis of the Italianate and Roman plays, connections to Italian literature, and examining clues left by Shakespeare's contemporaries, this study demonstrates the difficulty in attempting to uncover a certain answer to the question of how Shakespeare was able to access different aspects of Italy including its writers, literature, and geographical layout. This paper will consider Shakespeare's education, social connections, and personal experiences when discussing the connection between the playwright and Italy. It argues that Shakespeare would have had enough education to aid him in reading certain pieces of Italian literature without a translation, helping him to recall information from the Roman Empire he would have learnt, and Latin literature on famous individuals he would have studied. It will also look at the reception that Italy has given Shakespeare; examining how famous cities have embraced, appropriated, and adapted their location to fit Shakespeare's version.

Understanding the link between one of England's most famous playwright and Italy is important when thinking about what inspired the tales that have become ingrained within different elements of human society all over the world.

All references to the plays are from the Proudfoot, Richard, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan and H. R. Woudhuysen (eds.), *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021) edition.

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Introduction to Shakespeare and Italy

Shakespeare continues to be upheld proudly by the English as our greatest cultural export, his nationality consistently linked to his works to reassert him as the country's greatest writer. But in reality, he was writing in a multicultural metropolis infused with ideas from across the continent. Barker and Hosington remark that 'Renaissance Britain was a place where languages, cultures and ideas met'.¹ This melting pot of differences can be found in all areas of British life: plays, prose, news, architecture, music, science, and even the military – the range of cultures that helped one of the most powerful countries in the world grow can be seen in almost every corner of their Isles. The international influence of Europe was just as important during the Renaissance as it is now; with foreigners trading their knowledge for the relative security of living in a fast-moving and modern country such as England. This thesis will focus in particular on the influence of Italy upon Shakespeare.

As early as 1750, critics were already noting that 'Shakespeare is a vast garden of criticism'.² That garden has grown exponentially, but within it, criticism regarding Shakespeare, education, language-learning, and multicultural knowledge may be thought of as rather a neglected flowerbed, covered in weeds and thorns and consequently observed, but not delved into at a more intimate distance. Many of the scholars who have tried to venture into the uncertainty of Shakespeare and his connections to foreign countries have been met with obstacles, denialists, and uncertainty. These obstacles, however, did not stop persistent scholars from traversing the thorns in order to get close enough to Shakespeare's 'garden of criticism' to uncover a more linear and plausible approach to how he came to understand the mechanics of countries such as Italy, France, and Spain. This thesis seeks to look at the areas

¹ *Renaissance Cultural Crossroads: Translation, Print and Culture in Britain, 1473-1640*, ed. by S.K Barker and Brenda M. Hosington (Boston: Brill, 2013), p. xv.

² Thomas Seward, *Beaumont and Fletcher*, 10 vols (London: Tonson & Draper, 1750), VIII, p. xi.

commonly overlooked by academics when discussing Shakespeare and Italy; alluding to connections within his sources, the importance of culture, as well as the confusing myth that is location within Shakespeare's Italian narratives. The idea that Shakespeare had an affinity with Italy is not a new concept, with academics, such as Lewis Einstein noting the connection between the playwright and the "exotic" location of Italy in 1902. However, with ideas that I have gathered when crafting my Master's thesis, I have come to the conclusion that Italy, its sources, location, culture, and people are of pivotal importance to an array not only of Shakespeare's Italian narratives, but across his canon. The use and subsequent representation of Italy within Shakespeare's narratives encapsulates the wider perceptions of it in Renaissance English. Shakespeare's active use of the 'sinful' Catholic location of Italy to fuel the creation of his narratives displays a direct protestation of the underlying xenophobia present in Early Modern England. References to Italy can be found throughout his plays including those set in England, showing how the playwright filtered these ideas into the commentary of his own country. But while Italy was a home of Catholicism, it was also the birthplace of the Renaissance, with its arts and literature admired and emulated by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. There is thus, a fascinating tension in the reception of Italy in England, and the way in which the country was both emulated and scorned, often within the same text.

England's relationship with Renaissance Italy is often romanticised as one of appreciation and appropriation, but this is far from the truth. Of course, by the time Shakespeare wrote his plays, Italy had been influencing different aspects of English culture for decades, through music, art, literature, and controversially, religion. Jonathan Woolfson notes that 'the roll call of Italian artists who came to England in the early Tudor period has

been recited often’,³ solidifying the notoriety associated with Italy and the arts. The Florentine artist Pietro Torrigiani (1472-1528) is best known for creating the tomb for Henry VII and Elizabeth of York in Westminster Abbey (1512-1518), creating an everlasting link between Italy and England. The collection of essays *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance* (2012) brings together modern scholars discussing the importance of the contribution of Florentine artists within Renaissance English culture, further emphasising the link between Early Modern England and the Italian states.

Kier Elam has labelled Italy as a ‘a generative machine producing powerful models’.⁴ This machine had been operating for sometime before Shakespeare and his contemporaries appropriated it into their works. The arrival of new classical and scientific knowledge introduced by Italy marked the beginning of a gradual process of influence from the Italian Renaissance in England, which extended from the late fifteenth century to the Reformation and beyond. The interest in Italy by the English dates back as far as the Middle Ages, with English scholars studying at Italian universities such as the University of Bologna, where there was an ‘English ”nation”, and both Vicenza and Vercelli had English rectors [...]’, then grew in popularity at English courts towards the first half of the sixteenth century.⁵ Puritan William Thomas (c. 1524-1554) travelled to Italy in 1544 after he was ‘constrained by misfortune to abandon the place of his nativity’.⁶ Upon returning to England in 1549, Thomas published his *Historie of Italie* as a result of his Italian studies, before being executed for treason in 1554 under the reign of Mary I. He notes...

that in one region of all the worlde againe, are not halfe so many straungers as in Italie: specially of gentilmen, whose resorte thither is principlallie vnder pretence of studie. For there are diuerse famouse citees, that be priuiledged with

³ Jonathan Woolfson, ‘Renaissance Intersections: The Arts of Italy and Early Tudor Visual Experience’, *Visual Resources*, 36, 2020, pp. 1-20 (p. 10).

⁴ Kier Elam, ‘Afterward: Italy as Intertext,’ in *Shakespeare, Italy and Intertextuality*, ed. Michele Marrapodi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 255.

⁵ H. Rashdall, *Universities of Europe*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859), I, p. 14.

⁶ Daniel Lleufer Thomas, “Thomas William (d. 1554)”, in *Dictionary of National Biography*, 100 vols, ed. By Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 2004), LVI, p. 194.

great libertees for all scholars that come: as *Padoa, Bononia, Pauia, Ferrara, Pisa*, and others: in euery one of the whiche, are excellente learned men, waged for the readyng of philosophie, of the ciuile lawes, and of all the liberall sciences.⁷

This flourishing within the English courts created a ‘new type of accomplished courtier and learned traveller, often the same individual under different aspects’.⁸ The second half of the sixteenth century saw the popularity of Italian culture spread from the courts to the general population, however, the integration into the population occurred at the same time as the growth of Puritanism, which clouded the moral and national reaction to Italy and put an end to the majority of its influence. Lewis Einstein notes that this newfound uneasiness towards Italy divides the users of its literature and culture into two groups: ‘the first is concerned mainly with the Englishman as affected by Italy in scholarship, court life and travellers and later with the movement against Italian influence. The second treats rather of the Italians in England – merchants and artists, reformers and adventurers’.⁹ The allusions to Italy, its culture, people, and literature can be seen to creep into different forms of work within the Early Modern period within England, but due to the religious and political tensions between Italy and England, this relationship would not be duly acknowledged until the rise of the Reformation.

There are multiple reasons why English scholars of the age would be drawn to Italy; despite the political tension between the countries, the cultural sweep of the Italian Renaissance was unchecked. With regard to this revolution, Einstein writes:

Italy was conscious of this discovery long before the rest of Europe had awakened to it. Italian scholars had been the first to see the ancient world in its true light, and to study the classics, not as allegorical explanations of Christianity, but from the literary point of view.¹⁰

⁷ William Thomas, *Historie of Italie* (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1977), p. 2.

⁸ Lewis Einstein, *The Italian Renaissance in England* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), p. viii.

⁹ Einstein, p. viii.

¹⁰ Einstein, p. 18.

Some of the earliest scholars to traverse the Alps into Italy came from Balliol College at the University of Oxford, with the exception of Robert Flemming. John Gunthrope had collected a great number of Italian and Latin texts during his time in Italy, many of which were later distributed among the colleges at Oxford'. John Leeland upholds this notion when he states that: 'In Italia comparaverat ibi ingentem bonorum librorum suppellectum, quam in Angliam traductam'¹¹ [*In Italy he had produced for himself a vast sum of good books, which was brought over to England*]. Robert Flemming studied at the University of Ferrara under the guidance of Battista Guarino, an influential humanist and teacher of both Latin and Greek. Upon moving to Rome, Flemming became acquainted with Bartolomeo Platina, known as Platina or Il Platina in Italian, a humanist writer, papal historian and librarian. He became known to the reigning pontiff at the time, Sixtus IV, and 'he thus became employed in the complicated affairs of [Rome]'.¹² Upon retreating to Tivoli during the summer months, Flemming composed his *Lucubrationes Tiburtinae*, written in the heroic meter and dedicated to the Pope. Einstein notes that this was 'probably the first important humanist verse written by any Englishman'.¹³ These Oxonian scholars aided in the growth of the Humanist movement within England; the end of the fifteenth century saw the Italian influence remain as the head for new learning. This new learning continued to filter into the sixteenth century through the methods of new learning brought back to England from Italy.

However, the assimilation of Italian literature, continental learning and movements into English culture was not only spearheaded by university scholars; the courts are also of importance when understanding how elements of Italy became integrated into English society. The Italian influence on military sports and military made an impact in turn on

¹¹ John Leeland, *Commentarii De Scriptoribus Britannicis* (Oxford: Theatrum Sheldonianum, 1709), p. 463.

¹² George Gresley Perry, 'Robert Flemming', in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen (London: Smith Elder & Co., 1889), pp. 288-289.

¹³ Einstein, p. 24.

English courts and literature during the Renaissance. The courtly practices of fencing and jousting gained in popularity in England, copied largely from Italy. William Segar's *Honor, Military and Civil* (1633) alludes to 'Italian practices' when describing their methods in conducting sports tournaments. This assimilation of Italian military sports slowly became an assimilation of Italian military influences; with the majority of European armies including Italian officers and soldiers in them. It was not just the French and the Spanish who employed the war-savvy Italians, with the English also providing accommodating fortunes to Italian military personnel. Hume notes that soldiers such as 'Petruccio Ubaldini served in the wars of Henry the Eighth and Edward the Sixth; in 1548 Captain Tiberio with a force of Italians, garrisoned Haddington for Lord Grey de Wilton'.¹⁴ One of the first instances of Italy being admired by the wider English population and not just by the scholars was for their advancements in the art of war; with some of the most important literature of the time being books and pamphlets written for military purposes. It is not surprising then, that 'the few English military books of the time were largely compilations from Italian sources, but Italian books as well were often translated into English'.¹⁵ Books such as Cattaneo's *Military Tactics* (1567), Count Giacomo Porcia's *Precepts of War*, and Machiavelli's *Art of War* (1521) were all translated into English; with Peter Whitehorne's translation of Machiavelli serving as a guide for soldiers rather than scholars, these were books translated for those who were seeking advice on tactics, not for those attempting to comment on the beauty of the language used. The translations of early Italian military texts sustain the hypothesis that Italian texts were making their way to England, and although a very limited number of members of English society would have been able to read the military texts in their original language, it was the form and tactics that were of interest to the military readers.

¹⁴ Martin A. S. Hume, *Chronicle of Henry VIII* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), p. viii.

¹⁵ M. J. D. Cockle, *A Bibliography of Military Book up to 1642* (London: Kent and Co., 1900), p. viii.

Amongst the books published on war tactics and military conduct, news pamphlets from around Europe made their way to England outlining the continental struggles of ‘French Wars of Religion and the Dutch Revolt, the Council of Trent and the Battle of Lepanto’.¹⁶ Having an awareness of the military advancements of their neighbours in mainland Europe and beyond was beneficial for the English because ‘people needed to know what was happening, to keep their place in conflict and to work out the significance of each battle, each siege, each declaration. They needed to know how God was working in the world, both England and abroad’.¹⁷ The influence of travelling scholars and military personnel to the exotic parts of forbidden Europe created a space for another type of literature that would be soon consumed by Italianate influences – travel writing. Einstein notes that ‘Italian geographers and cosmographers were far ahead of those of other nations’,¹⁸ therefore ‘some of the first English books of travel in the Renaissance were translations from Italian works’.¹⁹ Although travel to and from Italy was known by particular sects of the English population, the rest of the world was yet to be accurately explored and documented. Due to the power of Italian states such as Venice, the exploration of the East and subsequently the Americas was reported by Italian geographers and explorers; their accurate accounts were invaluable to the English. An example of an important travel text taken from Italian and translated into English was Pietro Martire d’Angheria’s *The Decades of the Newe Worlde* (1555). Thomas noted that ‘travellers began the long-standing tradition of Italian journeys’²⁰ influencing poets and dramatists alike, through their retellings of the landscapes, people, and literature they encountered on their travels. Thomas, who went on to author a book of Italian grammar in

¹⁶ S. K. Barker, ‘International News Pamphlets’ in *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England*, ed. Andy Kesson and Emma Smith (Oxford: Routledge, 2019), pp.145-156 (p.145).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Einstein, p. 27.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Einstein, p. 24.

English, offers a striking and evocative observation of the procession of Pope Paul III on Christmas day 1547:

O what a world is it to see the pride and abomination that the churchmen
There maintain. What is a king? What is an emperor in his majesty? Anything
Like to the Roman bishop? No, surely nor would I wish them to be so.²¹

Other influential travel books were also translated from the Italian into English; the Venetian merchant Cesare Federici spent approximately eighteen years travelling Asia (although many of the dates within his writings are rough estimates due to his vague date-keeping), giving important insights into the religious practices, customs, descriptions of the countries as well as the products which they traded. Federici's work first appeared in Venice in 1587 and reprinted in 1606 with the title *Viaggio de N. Cesare di Fedrici nell' India Orientale, & oltra l'India, per via di Soria*. According to Jarl Charpentier, Federici's travel writings have 'never been translated into any modern language except English'.²² Federici's writings about his travels to Asia were first translated by Thomas Hickok in 1588 under the title *The Voyage and traudile of M. Ceasr Fredrick, merchant of Venice, into the East India, the Indies, and beyond the Indies. Wherein are contained pleasant and rare matters, with the customes and rites of those countreyes. Also, heerein are discovered the merchandises and comodities of those countreyes. As well the aboundaunce of goulde and siluer, as spices, drugges, pearles, and other jewlles. Written at sea in the Hercules of London: comming from Turkie, the 25. Of March. 1588. For the profitabyle instruction of merchants and all other trauellers for their better direction and knowledge of those countreyes. Out of Italian, by T H*. Far before the rest of Europe, Italy had given importance to the studies in geography and held it in as much value as other artistic forms; this appreciation for travel and the navigation through most of the unknown world filtered down through the translated texts and influenced English

²¹ William Thomas, 'History of Italy 1550' in *The Italian Renaissance in England*, Lewis Einstein (New York: Macmillan, 1902), pp. 99-100.

²² Jarl Charpentier, 'Cesare di Federici and Gasparo Balbi', *Geografiska Annaler*, 2 (1920), 146-161 (p. 149).

travellers and writers alike. These descriptions of new territories and faraway lands allowed the English to understand how the trade routes made states such as Venice such impenetrable power houses within the trading world. It also gave writers inspiration for new exotic locations for their literature, many choosing to have Italian merchants as their protagonists and describing their travels to these unknown foreign states, to the amusement of readers and audiences alike. The role of Italian merchants in England has been well-established since the Tudor period, with the 'Italian merchant company of Giovanni Cavalcanti and Pierfrancesco di Piero Bardi in England, which was established at the very start of Henry VIII's reign'.²³ Thus, the Italian mercantile influence was fundamental for the distribution of art, and this may also be true for the distribution of Italian words of literature; through both printed and verbal means. This influence should not be discounted or underestimated when considering the link between England, Shakespeare and Italian literature. Domenico Lovascio writes that:

It has long been a critical commonplace that Italy – though at the same time largely acknowledged in Renaissance England as the cradle of civilization, arts and poetry as well as the land of wit, pleasure and refinement – was mostly depicted in drama through a distorting and deidealizing lens as a den of arrant knaves, base harlots, dissembling machiavels and crafty merchants.²⁴

Defensive sport practices, military texts and geographical accounts were not the only elements of Italy to be absorbed by the English courts; commerce was another important influence. England and Italy had two very different experience of commerce during the Renaissance; one was an 'agricultural community, the chief export of which was wool; the other, situated midway between Western Europe and the East, had developed a commercial life in its city republics far in advance of what was then known elsewhere'.²⁵ The Venetians and Genoese in particular had made their country a central trade point in the Renaissance

²³ Cinzia Sicca, 'Consumption and Trade of Art between Italy and England in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century: The London House of the Bardi and Cavalcanti', *Renaissance Studies*, 16, 2002, pp. 163-200 (p. 163).

²⁴ Domenico Lovascio, "Merchants, usurers and harlots: Genoa in early modern English drama", *Renaissance Studies*, 32, 2017, pp. 34-33 (p. 34).

²⁵ Einstein, p. 229.

world due to expansion of Italian merchants in Western Europe and Asia. Thomas not only writes about the type of people he encountered during his tour of Italy, but also the importance of many of the locations he travelled to, as well as the influence Italy had on Europe and the world as a whole. Within his introduction he notes:

Italie as an hert or knotte of these partes on our halfe of the world, is the principall place of recourse of all nacions that occupie any thyng of importaunce farre from home. For like as with vs in Englande the most merchauntes of the realme resort to London, to vtter theyr owne wares, and to bie suche other as make for theyr purposes: euen so thei of Frāce, of Spaine, of Germanie, and of all other westerlie plalces, that couet the merchaundise of *Soria, Aegypt, Cylprus, Candia, Constantinopol'*, and those other easterly partes, as ieuell{is}, drugges, spices, perfumes, silkes, cotton, suger, malmeseis, and other lyke: resorte moste commonly into Italie with theyr woulles, clothes, lin|nen, leather, metalles and suche other, to *Genoa, Myllaine, Venice, Ancona, Missena, Naples*, or to some of those places, whereas trafficque is vsed²⁶

The relationship between England and the trading powerhouse of Early Modern Venice will be discussed in chapter four, however, the importance of this great city must not be understated, neither should the influence of the Italian community of merchants in England at the time. The influx of Italian people to England began with the merchants who used the ports as rest-stops, or as a space to trade their exotic goods. This soon developed into small Italian communities appearing in different areas of London, although 'Italians were for long not permitted to have shops in London',²⁷ their fortune soon changed with the Tudor reign, and Italian artisans and handicraftsmen soon made their way to England to seek new fortunes encouraged by the merchants who had already settled. After some time, the Italians began to mingle within the English community; with some marrying a native Englishman or Englishwoman and becoming English by proxy. The Italians had begun to knowingly infiltrate many aspects of English life, thus the mixing of cultures, art forms and languages

²⁶ William Thomas, *Historie of Italie* (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1977), p. 2.

²⁷ Petruccio Ubaldini, *Le Vite Delle Donne Illustri Del Regno d'Inghilterra e de Regno di Scotia. Scritte da Petruccio Ubaldini* (London: Giovanni Volfio, 1591), p. 236.

was inevitable during the Early Modern period, especially in a growing multicultural metropolis such as London.

Translated news articles regarding the occurrences within the Holy Roman Empire had been making their way onto English shores since the rule of Charles V of France; but these publications became more prominent during the reign of Elizabeth. Barker notes that ‘it was when continental Europe became the physical battlefield of the forces of good and evil, which for Englishmen meant Protestantism vs. Catholicism, that the news industry found both its professional capacity and its audience’.²⁸ Thus, the movement of admiring Italy and awareness of their religious hostility had been well recognised within English print for both fiction and non-fiction. Regardless of this, it is interesting to discover that although news from Europe was proving popular with English readers, only ‘a dozen items were translated from Italian and around 20 from Spanish, a quarter of which were produced during the late 1580s, during the heightened circumstances of the Spanish Armada’.²⁹ Thus showing that the interest from a new perspective was aimed more at the events of northern Europe such as France with 140 translations made, and the Netherlands with just under 60 translations made.³⁰ Despite this, Italy proved to be of interest in many other aspects of English culture as discussed earlier in this introduction, such as in the form of military pamphlets, art, and literature.

Thus, the early integration of Italy into English culture can be seen to be widespread, finding its way into everyday mannerisms through scholars, the military, the courts, and the influx of Italian merchants to England. Each of these Italian communities hold invaluable

²⁸ Barker, p. 148.

²⁹ Barker, p. 149.

³⁰ A full detailed survey of the amounts of new pamphlets translated from Europe into English in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries can be found in S. K. Baker, ‘Newes Lately Come: European News Books in English Translation’ in *Renaissance Cultural Crossroads: Translation, Print and Culture in Britain, 1473-1640*, ed. by S.K Barker and Brenda M. Hosington (Boston: Brill, 2013).

information as to why and how Italy and its culture filtered into many areas of English life as well as English art. Understanding the influence of how culture from other countries has influenced England has been a ‘central aspect of early modern studies’,³¹ but decoding what classes as ‘popular’ during the English Renaissance can be a difficult path to navigate as Roger Chartier notes:

[F]irst, that it is possible to establish exclusive relationships between specific cultural forms and particular social groups; second, that the various cultures existing in a given society are sufficiently pure, homogeneous and distinct to permit them to be characterized uniformly and equivocally; and third, that the category of ‘the people’ or ‘the popular’ has sufficient coherence and stability to define a distinct social identity that can be used to organize cultural differences in past ages according to the simple opposition of *populaire* versus *savant*.³²

While Early Modern England would have been influenced by a variety of continental neighbours, such as Spain, France and Portugal, the specific influence of Italy stands above for its presence in universities, education, antiquity, the military and sports. But it is in literature and drama in particular that we can see its strongest influence both on Renaissance England and Shakespeare specifically.

The Italian Influence on English Literature

Our interest in Shakespeare can threaten to exaggerate the novelty of his Italian influences. As famous as *Romeo and Juliet* (1579) may be to a general population today, and regardless of how influential Shakespeare’s legacy has been to literature all over the world, he was certainly not the first English writer to display an interest in Italy and the wider location of Catholic Europe. Robert Kirkpatrick, for example, suggests that ‘no English poet makes fuller or more critical use of Italian sources than Chaucer’.³³ Chaucer, of course, was writing

³¹ Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, ‘What is Print Popularity? A Map of the Elizabethan Book Trade’, in Kesson and Smith, pp. 19-54 (p.19).

³² Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1897), p. 3.

³³ Robin Kirkpatrick, *English and Italian Literature from Dante to Shakespeare* (New York: Longman, 1995), p. 24.

pre-reformation, where the resistance to Italy, and the Catholic church, was not so prevalent as it would be for Shakespeare. His admiration for Italian sources could therefore be displayed with more candour. Kirkpatrick continues to argue that Chaucer ‘travelled to Italy, where he would have met Italian intellectuals and would have been able to consult [...] the manuscripts of major authors, possibly carrying copies back with him to England’,³⁴ and he was not alone. The use of Italian within English texts filtered down from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and works such as Boccaccio’s Decameron inspired a rise in popularity of Italian novellas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Writers such as Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Cinthio, Bandello, and Machiavelli became ingrained within English literary culture, allowing educated writers to indulge in the pleasure of being able to reference the works of great Italian authors, poets, and dramatists. The references of Italian authors could be competitive as well as emulative, with English writers aiming to show that they could produce works of equal or greater worth in their native tongue, rather than continuing the dominance of the Italian and Latin language in literature. Repackaging Italian sources and texts therefore allows for admiration of the original whilst also championing the creativity of the new.

The Early Modern stage shows several examples of Italian literature as source-text. As the theatrical industry grew and developed, one could presume that the need arose to look further afield for potential sources and ideas, beyond the traditional Biblical source that had dominated Medieval drama. In his *Chronicle* (1548), Edward Hall describes the first masque held at an English court in 1512 as having been Italian in its nature: ‘On the day of the Epiphany, at night, the King with eleven others were disguised after the manner of Italy,

³⁴ Ibid.

called a Mask, a thing not seen before in England'.³⁵ Shortly after this first introduction of the masque at the English court, Symonds notes that 'the very names of Maskelyn and Masculers, occurring in the *Records of the Revels*, point to Italian equivalents of Maschera and Mascherati'.³⁶ The popularity of masque spectacles grew greatly over the years, solidifying England's admiration and respect for Italy; with Italian players coming to England in order to perform in the masques 'at Windsor and Reading in 1574'.³⁷ It must also be noted that 'in the [masque] presented before the queen and the French ambassador, the Lord Chamberlain gave instructions for the speeches written in English to be translated into Italian'.³⁸

One of the earliest examples of the English stage appropriating an element of Italian theatre can be seen in the 1547 *Laeila Modenas* [Laelia of Modena], a production that was subsequently revived when it was performed at Queens' College Cambridge in 1595. This production comes with its own caveats, the most prominent of which is whether the 1595 production was truly a revival of an older work, or a new play that used an older Italian play, namely *Gl' Ingannati* (*The Deceived*), acted by Gli Intronati da Siena in 1531, and printed the following year. It is worth noting that both of these texts are argued to be sources for *Twelfth Night* (1602), as will be discussed in the next chapter. *Laelia Modenas* was followed by several more, and it is interesting to note that Italian literature influenced theatre companies across England to the point where it has become unclear as to whether the text is truly Italian or a clever adaptation by English writers at Cambridge. Scholars at both Cambridge and Oxford would be introduced to several classical texts as well as Italian, and it is no

³⁵ Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble Families of Lancaster and York* (London: Scholar Press, 2011), p. 232.

³⁶ John A. Symonds, *Shakespeare's Predecessors* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1884), p. 320.

³⁷ Einstein, p.78.

³⁸ F. G. Fleay, *A Chronicle History of the Stage 1559 – 1642* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1890), p. 26.

coincidence that many of the early playwrights were university educated, nor that their plays frequently drew upon classical and Italian influences. The Early Modern theatrical stage allowed for the dissemination of these source-texts to extend beyond the academy and into the wider public. Nor was it only the playhouses that allowed for these stories to appear repackaged to a new audience. For example, in 1555, a production of *A Masque of Eight Patrons of Galleys*, or later assigned *The Venetian Masque*, took place at Whitehall Palace. Masque festive country entertainment rose to popularity in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however it was popularised much earlier in Italy. This production in particular documented the rivalries between the Turkish commoners and Venetian senators. The locations of Venice and Turkey depicted the vast connections to the East that Venice had, as well as the politically charged arguments that occurred in Venice due to the variety of cultures within their city that attempted to climb the social ladders. In his *Catalogue of English Drama*, Martin Wiggins notes that the performance was ‘part of the court’s Christmas revels, probably on Sunday 6 January 1555 (*Twelfth Night*). The performance finished very late at night. The audience presumably included: Queen Mary I; King Philip’.³⁹ The presence of the Queen shows that at the highest level the English had a growing interest in the Catholic region, not just for its growing military and trade powers, but also for its art, literature, and theatre.

The masque continued to be popularised; Whitehall Palace took an affinity with the genre and performed another masque production, *The Masque of Italian Women*, in 1560. Although the author of this masque is unknown, the Italian location and the characters of six Italian women show that the production focused heavily on the offshore location of Italy and

³⁹ Martin Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, 9 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), I, p. 256.

its inhabitants to communicate the allegorical messages frequently associated with the genre. Wiggins further notes that it was performed 'at Whitehall Palace on Saturday 6 January 1560. The performance took place in the evening. The audience presumably included Queen Elizabeth I'.⁴⁰

However, politics, location, and genre were not the only elements of Italy that were becoming integral to English drama: translations of Italian prose and plays were pivotal in expanding the English stage. George Gascoigne's *Supposes*, translated from the Italian comedy *I Suppositi* by Ludovico Ariosto in 1566, proved popular in its endeavour to bring a translated Italian work on the English stage. Scholars such as Collier have commented that the play is 'the earliest existing specimen of a play in English acted either in public or private'.⁴¹ The translation adapted by Gascoigne was important to crossing the bridge between the relatively unknown world of Italian literature and making the works more accessible to English audiences who had no knowledge of the Italian language or wider examples of its literature. Collier believes that Gascoigne took his translation from the earlier work by Ariosto, but that he may have adopted some of Ariosto's own changes when he himself turned the play into verse, he concludes that 'Gascoigne has added very little of his own',⁴² thus allowing English audiences to see an almost 'virgin' example of an Italian play that was simply translated into English and not heavily edited or adapted. The importance of this first English translation of an Italian work is not overlooked by critics, with many praising it for having an important place within the history of English prose drama:

It seems particularly fitting, that our comedy should have begun with a translation of Ariosto's *Suppositi*, which with the same author's *Cassaria* are placed next to the comedies of Machiavelli by most Italian critics; for Ariosto seems to have been the

⁴⁰ Wiggins, *British Drama*, I, p. 348.

⁴¹ John P. Collier, *History of English Dramatic Poetry to the Time of Shakespeare and Annals of the Stage to the Restoration*, vol iii (London: John Murray, 1831), p. 6.

⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 6-7.

first who conceived and carried into effect the idea of regular comedies in imitation of the ancients.⁴³

This importance of using Italian works as a means to conceive the writing of comic prose dialogue in English did not go unnoticed by critics, with Shakespeare's indebtedness to Gascoigne's translation becoming apparent in many nineteenth-century writings regarding the playwright's source materials, such as Joseph Hunter and Richard Farmer. While scholars have noted Gascoigne's debt to Ariosto, we cannot know how many of Gascoigne's original audience would have known this. It may well be that educated audience members recognised Ariosto from their own reading, but as the playhouses grew in popularity, there would be an equal, if not greater, number of audience members who had no prior experience of the tale and would not realise they were watching an appropriation of Italian literature' to 'but ultimately there would be a significant number of the playhouse audience who were illiterate or unable to afford Ariosto's book, meaning that they would be experiencing the story for the first time with no awareness of its sources.

Furthermore, despite the translation of Gascoigne being available to Shakespeare at the time of penning *The Taming of the Shrew*, we must not discount the possibility of the playwright being able to use the original Italian text. The two most influential plays written by Ariosto, *La Cassaria* and *I Suppositi*, were reworked into verse; 'there is no evidence these rifacimenti were ever performed, although Ariosto wrote and produced four other plays at this time, *Il Negromante*, *I Studenti*, *La Lena*, and *La Scolastica*'.⁴⁴ What does this mean for Shakespeare's use of Ariosto? We must take into consideration that when Gascoigne translated Ariosto's play into *The Supposes*, he did so in prose despite having access to the verse version. Ross notes that 'The prosaic verse style is that Shakespeare had before him not just Gascoigne's prose, but a prose ultimately based on Ariosto's own prose [...] When

⁴³ John A. Symonds, *Sketches and Studies in Southern Europe*, 2 vols (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1880), I, p. 109.

⁴⁴ Charles Ross, 'Ariosto in Prose', *Prose Studies* 29 (2007), 336-346 (p. 336).

Shakespeare wrote *The Taming of the Shrew* mainly in verse, despite Gascoigne's prose model'.⁴⁵ Thus, if Shakespeare was able to adapt his source narrative from verse as well as translated prose, it is possible he would have also had a copy of, or at least have read, Ariosto's prose. Even though Ross speculates that 'Shakespeare benefitted from Ariosto's nuanced prose (if indirectly, since we cannot say that Shakespeare has either of Ariosto's versions in front of him in addition to Gascoigne's text) was able to give brilliant expression to otherwise dull-witted characters in *The Taming of the Shrew*'.⁴⁶

This idea that Shakespeare may have possibly read Ariosto in Italian is further reinforced by Domenico Lovascio, who details examples of linguistic and narrative similarities between the playwright and Ariosto, and notes how difficult it is to refute the evidence that Shakespeare took characters, themes, and verbal elements taken from Ariosto and Gascoigne.⁴⁷ Lois Potter also comments on Shakespeare's use of Ariosto and Gascoigne, stating that 'He set the play in Italy rather than Athens, and emphasized its "Italian" atmosphere with allusions to the *commedia dell'arte*. His original intention was probably to rewrite all the frame scenes'.⁴⁸

Shakespeare's Interest in Italy

Shakespeare, as has often been noted (and in many cases lamented), did not go to university, and therefore in many instances his first exposure to these texts is explicitly in the context of looking for play material. Hunter notes that:

⁴⁵ Ross, p. 367.

⁴⁶ Ross, p. 341.

⁴⁷ See: Domenico Lovascio, 'Ariosto, Gascoigne e *The Taming of the Shrew*', *L'Analisi Linguistica e Letteraria* 17 (2010), 71-92.

⁴⁸ Lois Potter, *The Life of William Shakespeare: A Critical Biography* (Malden: Wiley – Blackwell's, 2012)

One of the most interesting circumstances about this play is that when Shakespeare in the fourth act introduces an incident which is not in the old play, he takes it from Ariosto's comedy entitled *I Suppositi*, as translated by Gascoigne.⁴⁹

Farmer also made the important connection between Ariosto, Gascoigne and Shakespeare in his 1767 essay on *The Learning of Shakespeare*:

My young master and his man exchange habits and characters, and persuade a Scense, as he is called, to personate the father, exactly as in 'The Taming of the Shrew', by the pretended danger of his coming from Sienna to Ferrara, contrary to the order of the government.⁵⁰

We can never say with certainty *why* Shakespeare used Italy as a source, though we can formulate several potential answers. Early critics such as Hunter and Farmer prove that the importance of Italy was felt by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, highlighting how location, genre, and source material influenced many of the writers we have come to idealise centuries later. The topic of Shakespeare and Italy has been discussed by many scholars, including recent criticism from Shaul Bassi, Jack D'Amico, Michele Marrapodi, and Hugh Grady to name a few,⁵¹ the majority of this fascination occurring during the past two hundred years, starting with editors of the individual plays adding whole texts and extracts of alleged sources and elements of ineptness of location and characterization. The categorizing of both English and foreign sources continued to gain popularity with Sir Israel Gollancz in his valuable *The Shakespeare Library* (c. 1916), and the collection by Charlotte Lennox entitled *Shakespeare Illustrated, or the Novels and Histories on which the Plays of Shakespeare are founded, collected and translated from the original authors. With remarks* (1753-4) (3 vols.). In more recent criticism, critics such as Kenneth Muir and Geoffrey Bullough, as well as

⁴⁹ Joseph Hunter, *New Illustrations of the Life, Studies, and Writings of Shakespeare*, 2 vols (London: J. B. Nicholas and Son, 1845), I, p. 352.

⁵⁰ Richard Farmer, *An Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare* (London: T. and H. Rodd, 1821), p. 341.

⁵¹ See Jack D'Amico, *Shakespeare and Italy: The City and the Stage* (Florida: Florida University Press, 2001), Hugh Grady, 'Moral Agency and Its Problems in Julius Caesar: Political Power, Choice, and History' in *Shakespeare and Moral Agency*, ed. Michael D. Bristol (London: Continuum, 2010), 15-28, and Michele Marrapodi (ed.), *Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare & his Contemporaries* (London: Routledge, 2016).

contemporary researchers such as Shaul Bassi and Jack D'Amico, have written about the ever-compelling link between Shakespeare; they take into consideration different aspect of Italy and its literature that may have influenced one of the greatest English writers.

This connection between Shakespeare and Italy is so explicit in fact, that some scholars have gone as far as to speculate that Shakespeare was more travelled than we are told to believe: for example, Richard Paul Roe argues that '[...] the precise and abundant allusions in those plays to places and things the length of that country [Italy] are so unique to it that they attest to the playwright's personal travels there'.⁵² Although Roe presents a structured argument, there are too many logistical difficulties to state that Shakespeare did travel to Italy; the theory is fraught with inconsistencies, hence why I am in agreement with the majority of scholars who have come to the educated conclusion that Shakespeare did not travel to Italy. Instead, it was through his contemporaries, acquaintances, and interest in the literature of antiquity that he was able to access Italian works of literature. Though Shakespeare did not literally travel to Italy, his engagement with its literature betrays a voyage of the mind, and a deep interest in the country. What is more interesting, and revealing, is not whether Shakespeare went to Italy, but our interest and desire for him to have done so; proving Shakespeare's presence in Italy would allow the co-opting of England's National Poet into Italian culture, an ironic reversal of Shakespeare's own co-opting of Italian culture into his plays.

Understanding how Shakespeare came to have such a strong link with Italy is the underlying question of this thesis, speculating as to what or who may have led Shakespeare in

⁵² Richard Paul Roe, *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy: Retracing the Bard's Unknown Travels* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), p. 1.

the direction of Italian literature. By labelling a handful of the playwright's narratives as 'Italianate' due to their relation to Italian location and literature, the discussion for Shakespeare's sources becomes more accessible. But what qualifies a play as Italian? Is it simply the location of the story, or the origin of its source-text, or can we extend the definition further to any play which continues trends begun in Italian drama? Are we to include Latin sources as Italian? These are questions which this thesis will tackle in the following chapters. But the asking of these questions betrays how, once we begin to explore the influence of Italy in Shakespeare's works, it becomes all pervasive. For the purpose of this thesis, I have selected certain plays to focus on, but it should be understood that the presence of the Italian influence in Shakespeare's plays is not binary, but rather that all his plays contain a degree of Italian, with some more explicit than others.

The interest in the use of sources by Shakespeare may be a consequence of the increased interest in attribution studies, which now dominates discussion of the composition of the playwright's works. The importance of source-texts, whether original or in translation, when discussing Shakespeare's connection to Italy is highlighted by Massimiliano Morini, who writes that 'the translations must be studied not only to analyse the means by which the Renaissance came to England, but also understand *how* it happened, i.e., how those source texts were 'transported' into England and 'put into English clothes'.⁵³ The Italian sources that Shakespeare may have consulted during the creation of his Italianate narratives is the backbone of this thesis, with each chapter discussing potential sources and why their importance is critical to the overall chapter discussion as well as modern Shakespearean criticism. In order to understand how Shakespeare came to find a fascination with multiple aspects of Italy, it is important to start at the earliest possible period in his life – his

⁵³ Massimiliano Morini, *Tudor Translation in Theory and Practice* (London: Ashgate, 2006), p. 65.

educational years. The aim of the first chapter is to identify the factors that may have given Shakespeare an entry into learning about Italy and its history, before being using as a springboard into its literature during his career as an actor and playwright. Shakespeare's education has been a source of interest for many years, especially in the wake of conspiracists who tried to dismiss Shakespeare as the author of the plays on the ground that he could not possibly have the necessary intellect and knowledge. Consequently, a number of Shakespeareans have attempted to better understand the quality of education Shakespeare may have received, to whom I am indebted. Park Honan's *Shakespeare: A Life* helps us to delve further into the perceptions held by many regarding the earlier, more unknown period of his life. Honan resists the urge to speculate and instead focuses on those few areas we can be more certain of, such as the general environment in which Shakespeare lived, learned, and worked. Through gaining a deeper understanding of the playwright's school learning, his parents' capabilities, marriage, and preparations for his career move to London, we can then cautiously speculate on the connections he made in later life, as well as the creative liberties he chose to adopt. Specifically, a wider awareness of what Shakespeare learnt while he was at grammar school allows a better understanding of what knowledge the playwright had of Greek, Latin, and French, and how this may have aided him later in life when consulting Italian texts that were yet to be translated into English.

Although it cannot be said with any degree of confidence that Shakespeare was able to read Italian, the evidence found within his Italian-themed narratives proves that he had a certain amount of familiarity with the language. T. W. Baldwin's *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (1944), collects information of the playwright's early education in two volumes, with this collection of entries, identifying texts and languages that could have been use as a foundation by Shakespeare in order to acquire a more rounded

knowledge of Italian in later life. Baldwin notes that ‘if we are able to understand how Shakespeare developed, we must know something of the formal education to which he was exposed, and whether he later found any use for it’.⁵⁴ The great exemplars and principles of literary art were based in Latin and Greek, and though Jonson’s evaluation of his colleague’s knowledge of language was not flattering, it can be dismissed with a certain amount of confidence. To a well-educated Elizabethan dramatist like Jonson or Marlowe, Shakespeare’s ‘smalle Latine and lesse Greeke’ would have been less than sufficient to excel in the world of theatre, however, when taking a modern view of how much Latin and Greek Shakespeare would have learnt, we find that it is a considerable amount; enough for him to have had a firm grasp of both languages.

In considering the texts that would have been undoubtedly taught to Shakespeare and his contemporaries in varied degrees of detail, many of the classical writers such as Ovid and Plutarch would have certainly made an appearance in the syllabus. In Henry R. D. Anders’ *Shakespeare’s Books: A Dissertation on Shakespeare’s Reading and the Immediate Sources of His Works* (1904), where he dedicates a chapter to collating a comprehensive collection of Renaissance schoolbooks and speculates which may have been used by Shakespeare himself, he notes that ‘English dramatic works and the English literature are generally inclusive of the popular literary productions, Holinshed in special, Plutarch, the Bible, and Ovid’.⁵⁵ Although this compliments the idea that Shakespeare was taught classical literature as part of his day-to-day education, I feel as though Anders is overlooking an important aspect of literature at the time: European literature.

⁵⁴ T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakespeare’s Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 194), I, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Henry R. D. Anders, *Shakespeare’s Books: A Dissertation on Shakespeare’s Reading and the Immediate Sources of his Works* (Berlin: George Reimer, 1904), p. xx.

As I have already noted, European works of literature were gaining popularity during the early Elizabethan era and kept growing in circulation during the years that followed. It is possible then, that medieval Italian writers such as Dante and Boccaccio may have also featured in the syllabus of schools during the English Renaissance and may be attributed to the trend of educated playwrights using Italian literature to influence their productions. Understanding the circulation of literature is important when attempting to understand how writers such as Dante made their way into the English Grammar School curriculum. Nick Havely notes that there are multiple texts during the period that could have provided access to Dante's work, writing that 'they include not only manuscripts, printed editions, and complete translations, but also, for example, polemical writing, encyclopaedias, historical words, and (at a later stage) anthologies, critical discussions, and introductory guides'.⁵⁶ The circulation of important Medieval Italian writers such as Dante in Henrician England is also important when attempting to understand some of the earlier receptions of Italian literature. Havely notes that an 'Eton schoolmaster had placed Dante's name at the head of a list of "goodly makers of feyned narrations"',⁵⁷ which could suggest that the inclusion of Dante was beginning to spread to the English curriculum before the 1550's. Investigating private libraries can also help us understand the circulation and use of examples of Italian literature; when consulting The Folger Library's *Private Libraries in Renaissance England* database, an entry for *La Divina Commedia* in Italian owned by a landowner named George Brome in Buckinghamshire in 1586 suggests that untranslated versions of the *Commedia* were being sought out by individuals. When searching the database for private libraries with copies of Boccaccio, the majority of the owners are scholars, with the earliest entry being from 1558.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Nick Havely, *Dante's British Public: Readers and Texts, from the Fourteenth Century to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. xxx.

⁵⁷ Havely, p. 33.

⁵⁸ *Private Libraries in Renaissance England* (Washington D. C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1992-), <https://plre.folger.edu/>.

Alongside the possible use of private libraries by Shakespeare, other possibilities should be explored; while writing for the King's Men, formerly the Chamberlin's Men, there is a possibility that the playwright may have gained access to borrowed books from a 'company library'⁵⁹ as Sarah Wall-Randell has described. Randell further notes that these libraries may have included 'a collection of reference books, such as the Bible, Holinshed's Chronicle, Plutarch's Lives, Ovid's Metamorphoses, Painter's Palace of Pleasure, and other key texts that could have been owned by a playing company and made available to playwrights to mine as sources in the writing process'.⁶⁰ Lucy Munro builds on this theory by suggesting that some of these books might have been those included 'in a previously unknown inventory of the household goods of Elizabeth Condell, apparently drawn up after her death in 1635'.⁶¹ Elizabeth was the widow of King's Men member Henry Condell, and there is evidence that her inventory features titles such as 'one booke called the ffayry Queene [. . .] one booke called the Turkish history one booke called Jeffery Chaucers works one booke called Decameron'.⁶² Elizabeth Condell's subsequent will, as documented by Honigmann and Brock, further supports the notion that books were donated to playwrights upon the death of individuals with large private libraries: 'because the said Thomas Seaman hath done the office of a true friend unto me, therefore and in performance of my promise I doe give unto him all my books'.⁶³ Interestingly, when discussing Robert Daborne's correspondence with impresario Phillip Henslowe, Munro also suggests that 'company managers or financiers may routinely have lent books or other source materials, such as older

⁵⁹ Sarah Wall-Randell, 'What is a Staged Book? Books as "Actors" in the Early Modern English Theatre', in *Rethinking Theatrical Documents*, ed. Tiffany Stern (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 128-52 (132).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Lucy Munro, 'Writing a Play with Robert Daborne', in *Rethinking Theatrical Documents*, ed. Tiffany Stern (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 17-23 (19).

⁶² Munro credits 'John and Isabel Deodati v. Thomas Seaman and John Hatt', Chancery, 1638, The National Archives (TNA), C 3/400/76. Elizabeth Condell also owned copies of Lancelot Andrews's sermons and the works of Du Bartas.

⁶³ E. J. Honigmann and Susan Brock (eds), *Playhouse Wills 1558-1642: An Edition of Wills by Shakespeare and his Contemporaries in the London Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 183.

playbooks, to playwrights'.⁶⁴ In addition to Shakespeare possibly gaining access to obscure texts through private libraries, and company libraries, he may have also borrowed books from his literary friends and colleagues such as Marlowe.

The idea that education and Italian literature had a considerable influence on writers during the Early Modern period is supported by Michele Marrapodi, who in his *Shakespeare, Italy and Intertextuality* (2004), notes that 'The structure and functionality of Shakespeare dramaturgy have proved to be embedded in a manifold corpus of intertexts stretching from classical Greek and Latin New Comedy to early modern culture, via the mediation of novelistic literature, Italian cinquecento theatre, educational tracts, and Renaissance dramatic theory'.⁶⁵ Understanding the intertextual connection between Shakespeare, his contemporaries, and education is important when trying to piece together a timeline of Italian influence on the English stage.

Further into his dissertation, Anders poses an interesting question regarding the availability of the works Shakespeare read as a schoolboy, and if these books were also widely available to his contemporaries, why did Shakespeare plays have a wider cultural impact:

The transcendent works of the great poet [William Shakespeare] can never be said to be explained by the sources he used. The same books were available to all his contemporaries, the same influences were at work everywhere, - why did the age not produce more than one Shakespeare? Why did his later contemporaries, with Shakespeare's example before their eyes, not write as great or greater works?⁶⁶

Anders makes a valid point: often our interest in identifying sources can threaten to devalue the worth of an author, presuming originality to be a key factor in genius. In my work on the

⁶⁴ Munro, p. 19.

⁶⁵ Michele Marrapodi, 'Introduction: Intertextualizing Shakespeare's Text', in *Shakespeare, Italy, and Intertextuality*, ed. Michele Marrapodi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 1-12 (p. 1).

⁶⁶ Anders, p. xix.

Italian influence on Shakespeare, I certainly have no intention of discrediting Shakespeare nor challenging his claim to authorship; arguably, the selection and manipulation of sources shows just as much discernment and creativity as the production of an entirely new narrative. Nonetheless, I take particular issue with Anders' notion of the universal accessibility of sources. While school education may have been more universal, with Shakespeare and his contemporaries thus taught similar authors during their time in formal education, the 'University Wits' had the privilege to study further authors and texts at length during their time as undergraduates, an opportunity that Shakespeare was not fortunate enough to experience. Beyond the academy, books were not readily available to all, and if, as we suspect, Shakespeare and other writers relied upon the private libraries of gentlemen, then there would be an arbitrary limit to their sources defined by which book that particular gentleman owned. Furthermore, how everyone interpreted what they studied and how they chose to use this knowledge is not universal. Anders also fails to take into consideration other decisive factors when looking at how Shakespeare and his contemporaries interpret what they had learnt while in education, or a text they came across in later life. Factors such as the differing influence of education, career choices, and social connections; all elements that would shape each writer, poet, and playwright differently, causing them to produce work of varying degrees of success. Deciphering all the contributing factors that may have led Shakespeare to create a lasting rapport with Italian literature is an important element of this thesis; understanding the external factors that may have connected the playwright to Italy is equally important.

Italian-language texts began circulating in England, predominantly through printers such as John Wolfe, who trained in Florence, and set up his press in England in order to print edition of Italian texts such as Machiavelli's *Discorsi* (1531), first published in London in

1584. Many critics have traditionally been quick to assume that Shakespeare was unable to acquire and read Italian materials, and thus sought French and English intermediaries. There is no reason to doubt the notion that Shakespeare used French and English intermediaries, however, the presence of Italian teachers who were active within the playwright's circle, would have contributed to his wider knowledge of the Italian language and culture. An external factor that will uphold this perception of a foreign intermediary, and make numerous appearances within this thesis, is Giovanni Florio, or more commonly known as, John Florio. The translator, writer, poet, and royal language tutor to the court of Elizabeth I appears to be a crucial link between Shakespeare and his use of obscure Italian literature, as well as having a wide knowledge of Italian culture. Researchers, such as Marianna Iannaccone, are attempting to bring to the forefront the importance of Florio within English literature and linguistics of the Early Modern period. We can not say with absolute certainty how much Florio influenced Shakespeare, but the significance of Florio's two Italian-English dialogue books *First Fruites* (1579) and *Second Fruites* (1591) is difficult to ignore when many of Shakespeare's references to Italy, or pieces of Italian dialogue strewn within his plays can be seen to derive from either of these prominent books.

Thus, the internal and external factors that influenced Shakespeare will be a vital foundation when attempting to understand Shakespeare's connection to Italy. Through internal factors such as education, and external factors such as language-learning teachers and his contemporaries, this thesis will attempt to make the connections between the methods utilised by Shakespeare to craft his Italian narratives.

The Structure of this Thesis

Although this thesis will follow a loosely chronological order to show how shakes ideas develop, but moreover attempt to address different aspects of shakes relationship to Italy in

his plays. Therefore, I do not maintain that riding chronology where appropriate look at plays through genre or relevant connecting themes. As mentioned, the first chapter of this thesis will look at Shakespeare's early Italian plays, and both how and why they came to draw on Italian literary texts and culture. This chapter will include a discussion of Shakespeare's likely education, and the general trends occurring on the early modern stage, to better understand how Shakespeare came to utilise Italy as both a location and source of narrative inspiration.

The second chapter of this thesis will move away from the overall argument in order to provide a case study on *Twelfth Night* and its potential sources. The case study aims to help the reader understand the difficulty that surrounds researchers looking to Shakespeare's sources, especially his foreign sources; with many aspects of the playwrights' life, career, and works, nothing is linear. The purpose of the chapter is not to identify a definite source, but rather to illustrate how impossible it is to ever define an irrefutable source. Against the backdrop of this uncertainty, I will re-examine texts previously discounted on the grounds of not being in English, to look objectively at the likelihood of Shakespeare using Italian sources as well as, or instead of, English texts. By examining the intricacies of source identification at length in this chapter, it is hoped that subsequent discussion of sources in later chapters can be better understood in the context of the ambiguities and uncertainties which surround such explorations.

The case study in chapter two serves as an example to depict how difficult pinpointing a specific source that may be linked to Shakespeare can be, as well as showcasing why some scholars may have omitted certain sources. In order to explicitly show the tedious task of relating Italian sources to the Italianate works of Shakespeare, chapter two will focus on *Twelfth Night*, looking in particular at how the playwright used and adapted the sources he

chose to take inspiration from, serving as a foundation to the thesis allowing the reader to understand the importance of sources, without forgetting the other Italian elements that are vital in understanding Shakespeare's "Italian" plays. The notion of the case study echoes the argument presented by Bullough in the preface of his *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (1957), that 'on the whole Shakespeare kept close to his source, but his deviations are at least as significant as his borrowings. Without a knowledge of the material available to him neither his debts nor the transcendent scope of his creative energy can be assessed'.⁶⁷

Although scholars such as Bullough and Muir have laid important steppingstones for future researchers, they have omitted certain lesser-known or obscure Italian sources that may have provided Shakespeare with differing degrees of inspiration. The strength of their work is ultimately their weakness: in trying to provide an overview of all Shakespeare's alleged sources, they are limited in the amount of meaningful analysis they can provide for each play. The reason as to why certain scholars and critics have chosen to omit certain alleged sources may be due to publication constraints, wanting to keep their analysis of sources concise, lack of evidence supporting a certain knowledge, or simply because they are unaware of a lesser-known source. Many critics over the years, such as Marrapodi and Muir to name a few, are more open to investigating sources that were more uncommon in England during Shakespeare's career, and thus open more opportunities for obscure sources to be uncovered.

The source materials for *Twelfth Night* have, for the most part, been discussed at length since the debut of the play on the Renaissance stage. Although multiple English, Italian and French sources have been discovered to be alleged sources for the crossdressing play, the possibility of an undiscovered source surfacing in the near future is not impossible.

⁶⁷ Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols (London: Routledge, 1957), I, p. xii.

The discovered sources portray Shakespeare as an individual who was proficient enough the Latin-based languages to presumably use untranslated versions of the texts due to the relative obscurity in England at the time. How Shakespeare became proficient enough in the language to read and adapt a narrative for his own repertoire is cause for a deeper investigation into the playwright's early years and education, in order to understand what factors may have contributed to his language learning and infatuation with Italy, its culture, and most importantly, its literature.

The third chapter of this thesis takes into consideration Shakespeare's Roman plays and how they fit into both the Roman and Italian narratives. It is arguable that the influence of Latin and classical texts belongs in a separate thesis, but it is precisely that tension of defining an agreed boundary between Italian and classical texts that warrant discussion here. Does the geographical location of Rome define these plays as Italian, or does their historical setting define them as something else? The importance of Rome has always been greatly interrelated into English literature; the connection between the two great states can be traced back to the Roman invasion of England, thus, it is not surprising that the location of Rome proved to be of great influence for Shakespeare. During the early Renaissance, Rome started to become an important political and cultural centre for Italy, one that would slowly gain enough recognition to become as important as city states such as Venice and Florence. Kirkpatrick notes that 'under the Popes [...] the city which had, for most of the early Renaissance, been little more than a market town began to be transformed while, administratively, its position was greatly enhanced'.⁶⁸ By the time Shakespeare was writing, the reputation of Rome was in ascendance, prompting him to reimagine the power of the classical version of Rome in his plays. By understanding the critical elements of Latin

⁶⁸ Kirkpatrick, p. 20.

literature and comparing these to the fundamental aspects of Italian literature, the chapter will seek to understand where Shakespeare took his inspiration from and if the categorization of the plays needs re-examination based on these fundamentals. The Roman plays are also important when considering Shakespeare's depiction of classical Rome and whether he was truly depicting the Empire or simply adding classical characters to a more Renaissance version of the location.

Having considered the issue of identifying sources, Shakespeare's education, and the boundaries of defining an Italian or Roman play, the final chapter focuses on Shakespeare's later Italian plays and the significance of the Italian location. It will argue that while Shakespeare's early plays have a tendency to use the location of Italy as window-dressing, we can by contrast see a much deeper engagement with the locality in plays such as *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*. The chapter will contrast the vivid depiction of Venice in these plays with the more generic use of Italian backdrops elsewhere, such as Verona in *Romeo and Juliet*. It will also consider how the cities themselves have subsequently embraced Shakespeare's fictional narratives as part of their own heritage, to interrogate the reciprocal relationship between Shakespeare's plays and their Italian locations.

I will be presenting a contextual analysis of Shakespeare's plays in relation to his education, proposed Italian sources, and importance of the Italian location. The overarching argument being that multiple elements of Italy influenced both Shakespeare's life and his career; including a detailed investigation into the consequences of this interest, and whether researchers give the playwright too much credit for narratives that are otherwise "borrowed". This study pays particular attention to the various methods of language acquisition that Shakespeare may have had at his disposal, and how he utilised them when crafting the narratives of not only his Italianate and Roman narratives, but also his English narratives.

Understanding why Shakespeare chose to use Italy as an influence is paramount in communicating the arguments of this thesis as authentically and meaningfully as possible; further raising the notion that William Shakespeare knew a considerable amount of Italian, even though this theory has been acknowledged, and at times dismissed completely. This thesis will not exclusively focus on identifying the Italian sources behind Shakespeare's plays, but it will make continuous references to these sources and how the playwright's use of them affects the way we categorise, read, and interpret these plays. Although Shakespeare is still arguably the most important and prolific English playwright to have existed, many of his narratives, including his traditionally "English" narratives, have influences and inspirations that put into questions the categorisation of these plays, as well as how much credit should be attributed to Shakespeare for these narratives when many of them were adapted from previous pieces of literature. When the tools of language learning, literary adaptation, and location adoption are used by Shakespeare, they can be seen as an invaluable addition to the repertoire of skills employed by the playwright when creating engaging and timeless entertainment for the English stage. However, some critics fail to acknowledge the importance of Italy when discussing Shakespeare's narratives and use of location, as it undermines his innate "Englishness" that has been cultivated for many years. Although we are unable to state for certain precisely under what circumstances Shakespeare interacted with Italian literature, or how much Italy he personally came to learn, understand, and use, or whether he was simply employing a trend that he had seen his contemporaries use successfully, we are able to speculate how important the Italian elements are in Shakespeare's work and subsequent legacy. During a time when the link between Britain and Europe is coming to a bitter end, this thesis will attempt to depict the influence that a small European republic has left on the works of one of the greatest English playwrights.

Chapter I: Shakespeare, the Problem of Early Modern

Language Learning and His Early Comedies

1.1 Shakespeare's Education and Early Modern Language-Learning

Shakespeare was born during a time when Elizabeth I was attempting to secure the Anglican church and its superiority, by showing the vagaries of Catholicism and ensuring that it was chastened. Through the Act of Supremacy of 1559, Elizabeth I affirmed herself as the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, further cementing the disconnection from the Catholic state of Italy. One would assume with it the Latin language of which the church had been rooted in for many centuries: as we will see, this is not the case. The scope of Elizabeth and her advisers in 1559 'was to re-establish state or monarchical control over the English Church, a more "reformed" version of the Henrician Church settlement, rather than any particular form of post-reformation Christianity'.⁶⁹ This disdain for the Catholic Church under the reign of Elizabeth made it a perilous time for either underground or suspected Catholics; priests were tortured or killed, and deliberate unattendance of Church of England services would result in fines or even imprisonment. It was a tempestuous time for religion, as extreme views from both sides caused the death of many Catholic and Protestant martyrs. Yet it should be noted that even with these sweeping changes, some allowances remained: Elizabeth 'ordained that church services should be held in English but permitted the use of papist tokens [such] as the crucifix and candlesticks'.⁷⁰ Furthermore, while church services moved towards English, interest in learning the Latin language remained, with Oxford and Cambridge still holding the language in high regard and, as a consequence, university-

⁶⁹ Thomas Betteridge, "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan and Jacobean Church" in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 1-17 (p. 3).

⁷⁰ Peter Ackroyd, *Shakespeare: The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2005), p. 16.

educated poets and playwrights flouting their knowledge of the ancient language within their works. One would presume that England's separation from Catholicism and the growing distrust towards the Catholic states of Europe would prompt a rebellion against the languages of these states in England. Instead, Italian was a language that Elizabeth I welcomed within her court; Giovan Battista Castiglione was responsible for teaching the young princess Italian in the 1540s. During the first decade of her reign, he remained at her services and dedicated 'his own Italian poems to her'⁷¹ in 1580. This interest in Italian was funnelled down from members of the Royal family into the population that could afford to indulge in the foreign fashions of Italy. For example, Ernesto Grillo states of Italian language learning at court that:

The men of learning, poets and artists at the Court of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester were Italians. Since not only princes but nobles and clergy adopted the practice of employing Italians for educational purposes, a large number of our humanists['] occupied positions of importance in England.⁷²

As previously mentioned in the introduction, the influence of Italian was vast during the period of Shakespeare's infancy. Italy's impact on English culture was extensive, influencing areas outside of literature, thus the demand for Italian grew so exponentially that it was a sought-after language by both members of high society and students alike. Grillo further notes that during this period in English history, the Italian influence:

gave a great impetus to the study of law and the humanities in England. These studies were encouraged in the universities and courts, which were specifically favourable to the works of our masters. Italian poets were always sure of a cordial welcome; while humanists, lecturers and rhetoricians were greatly in demand for the teaching of Greek, Latin and Italian in schools and colleges.⁷³

This newfound interest in Italy and its people was not only beneficial for the English; the Italians found admiration, work, and above all, refuge on the English shores. The late 1500s saw a rise in Italian reformers who chose to distance themselves from the Catholic faith and instead embrace Protestantism; for example, Jacopo Calco, Francesco Pucci, and Michael

⁷¹ Lawrence, p. 6.

⁷² Ernesto Grillo, *Shakespeare and Italy* (Glasgow: The University Press Glasgow, 1949), p. 55.

⁷³ Grillo, p. 54

Angelo Florio (father of John Florio). As noted previously in the introduction, the influx of Italian nationals to Early Modern England was for a variety of reasons; this influx ultimately influenced the language learnt and studied within England. Although learning proper Italian was reserved for higher education establishments and the courts, Latin was still being taught within English schools at levels that would be somewhat advanced for modern Latin-languages learners. The notion that Shakespeare was uneducated, or that he was not educated enough to produce such timeless pieces of literature has been disproven by many scholars; for example, Stanley Wells has written about Shakespeare's early education as well as speculated how the playwright's mother may have also contributed to his familiarity with language and stories of antiquity:

Shakespeare's education would have started at home. No doubt his mother told him stories; they may have had books around the house, there's no reason why they shouldn't have done. She probably told him some of the legends, the fairy stories and that sort of thing, some of which are mentioned or referred to in his plays.⁷⁴

Resistance to the idea of Shakespeare's education rests on a notion that Stratford-upon-Avon was an unclean and unintellectual country town, but this notion has been regularly critiqued by scholars such as J. S. Smart, who visualise sixteenth-century Stratford as 'a thriving metropolis'.⁷⁵ Instead, we should recognise Shakespeare's home town as an environment that would have allowed him to thrive both as a student and as an early career playwright later on in life.

Though no conclusive evidence regarding Shakespeare's education remains, we can speculate that the exposure to materials that would influence him during his career began during his short time in the English education system. Nicholas Rowe, Shakespeare's first biographer, writes that the playwright's father, John Shakespeare, 'had bred him, 'tis true, for

⁷⁴ Stanley Wells, 'Let's Talk Shakespeare: Was Shakespeare Educated?', *Let's Talk Shakespeare Podcast*, Apple Podcasts, 21st November 2015.

⁷⁵ J. S. Smart, *Shakespeare: Truth and Tradition*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 14.

some time at a Free-School, where 'tis probable he aquir'd that little Latin he was Master of'.⁷⁶ It would not be unreasonable to speculate that John Shakespeare's position as deputy bailiff would have enabled him to secure a place for his son at the King's New School on Church Street. Although the school records from when Shakespeare would have attended school are missing, scholars estimate that 'he enrolled at the grammar school in 1571, when he was roughly seven years old'.⁷⁷ Biographers such as T. W. Baldwin, Peter Ackroyd, and Park Honan have speculated about what pieces of literature Shakespeare would have had access to during his time in a state school using accounts from other schools at the time, thus creating a general curriculum that the playwright would have most likely followed. Duncan Driver writes that 'the language of instruction and assessment was either Latin or Greek (or both), and the curriculum was divided into three 'key learning areas': grammar (the Latin kind, of course), dialectic (the study of argument) and rhetoric'.⁷⁸ Records discussing the education system and teaching methods of the Early Modern period, such as Charles Hoole's *A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School* (1660) are crucial when piecing together the curriculum that Shakespeare would have most likely followed. The section of his writing detailing the books 'most proper for every form of scholars in a grammar-schoole', lists the works that are recommended for study from the lower years to sixth form. Interestingly enough, Latin texts are prevalent within Hoole's recommendations, keeping a focus on Latin grammar as well as learning the classical narratives through translated and original texts. Though school children were actively being exposed to Latin, this was not as paramount as learning to speak, read, and write English correctly. Hoole notes the sequence of an average education: 'learning to read English perfectly, I allow two or three years time, so that seven

⁷⁶ E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), p. 264.

⁷⁷ Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 45.

⁷⁸ Duncan Driver, 'Shakespeare's Education and What It Teaches Us', *Changing English*, 29 (2022), 310-22 (p. 310).

or eight years of age, a child may begin Latine'.⁷⁹ Thomas Spencer Baynes explains what would constitute a typical school day:

These [boys] were first put to read the Accidents [books of grammar], and afterwards made to commit it to memory; which when they had done, they were exercised in construing and which it was required to say four Lessons a day: but of the other forms, a part and a Lesson in the fore-noons, and a Lesson only in the after. The second form was to repeat the Accidents for Parts; to say fore-noons Lessons in *Propria quae maribus*, *Quae genus*, and As in *praesenti*, which they repeated memoriter, construed and parsed; to say an after-noon's lesson in *Sententiae Pueriles*, which they repeated by hart, and construed and parsed; they repeated their tasks every Friday *memoriter*, and parsed their Sentences out of the English.⁸⁰

From the records that are still available regarding the textbooks used in Early Modern Schools, we know that the schoolmasters would 'teach only from authorised texts',⁸¹ such as William Lily's *Latin Grammar* (c. 1540), which was the authorised introduction to Latin in the curriculum since the reign of Henry VIII. Lily remained the 'standard grammar-school text throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries'.⁸² The manner in which Latin was taught to the schoolboys is also of importance when attempting to understand how Shakespeare used this knowledge to advance in Italian language learning and translating skills later in life; Hattaway notes that:

[...] most schoolmasters used the 'double translation' method advocated by Roger Ascham in the *Schoolmaster*. Students would be given verses from a text, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and asked to parse them grammatically, identify tropes and figures, and suggest synonyms in Latin. Then, they would turn the passage into English prose and translate it back into Latin, taking care to ensure that each word was correctly placed grammatically and rhetorically; finally, the passage was turned into English verse.⁸³

⁷⁹ Charles Hoole, *A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School*, ed. Mark Thiselton (New York: C. W. Bardeen, 1912), p. 53.

⁸⁰ Thomas Spencer Baynes, 'What Shakespeare Learnt at School', in *Shakespeare Studies, and Essay on English Dictionaries* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894), p. 741.

⁸¹ Brett Usher, 'New wine into old bottles: the doctrine and structure of the Elizabethan church', in *The Elizabethan World*, ed. Susan Doran & Norman Jones (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 203-221, (p. 218).

⁸² Michael Hattaway, *A New Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2010), p. 33.

⁸³ Hattaway, p. 34.

This method of double translation required the students to carry out close reading of the given texts and ‘pay more attention to specific word choice than to overall design and structure’, something that could be attributed to Shakespeare’s method of learning Italian as it was a method he would have been familiar with. Latin writers were introduced into the curriculum in order to focus on the oratory aspects of the language; it was ‘the sound of a language – far more than its syntax or vocabulary – [which] appealed to the Elizabethans’⁸⁴. Thus, the memorising of Latin would train Shakespeare’s ear allowing him to ‘later be able to synthesise in his works a great deal of verbal material that he has heard or read’.⁸⁵ The works of Cicero, Virgil, Aesop, Lucan, Horace, Martial, Seneca, Plautus, and Ovid were frequently used in both the original Latin and translated versions. Studying these great Latin poets and philosophers left a notable lasting impression on Shakespeare, as references to Ovid, in particular, can be seen in several instances within his works, as well as his close reading of Plautus as a foundation for his narratives (both of which will be referred to throughout this thesis). In all of this we have to be conscious of how prevalent the classics were in education compared to our own time to appreciate the engagement Shakespeare had which would be considered remarkable today. Paul Menzer makes the case:

However imperfect Shakespeare’s Latin may have been, it is worth pausing to consider how extraordinary – and non-inevitable – it was that Shakespeare and his school chums turned off Church Street into a long, low, wattle-and-daub building, climbed the winding stairs into a vaulted school room and walked right in on ancient Rome. Cicero, Ovid and a host of antique others were the companions of Shakespeare’s early life. It explains why his plays join that living classicism of the age, in which the fall of Troy seems as recent as the rise of the Tudors. In which the Tiber flowed into the Thames. It helps explain why the weather that warms so many of Shakespeare’s plays is Mediterranean, not English.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Honan, p.45.

⁸⁵ Honan, p. 45.

⁸⁶ Paul Menzer, *Shakespeare: A Brief Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), p. 29.

Conversely, despite the growing evidence that supports the notion of a respectable education being offered to the young playwright, ideas regarding Shakespeare have gone to extremes; for example, that he was either an uneducated playwright who managed to create timeless pieces of literature, or that he *was* in fact intelligent enough to go to university. Due to his prevalence within English culture, and the status he holds as one of the greatest English writers, his intelligence, or lack thereof, and his education history have been topics of frequent debate throughout the years of research into Shakespeare. Early criticism of Shakespeare deemed him not as educated or intellectually capable as some of his contemporaries, such as Christopher Marlowe, due to his lack of university education. Views of the primary and secondary school curriculums were also heavily scrutinised for not being as academic as the more detailed curriculums taught at university level, and thus this led many to view Shakespeare as an academically inferior playwright when compared to his contemporaries who continued their studies at university. Of the intensity of the Tudor school system, Duncan Driver writes about ‘how arduous the experience was by today’s standards’,⁸⁷ thus suggesting that Shakespeare may have been in an educational system that would have given him a solid literary foundation.

Shakespeare’s connection to learning the Latin language may have initially been used to aid him in using English sources, before being a way into using Latin sources, and subsequently using it a basis for learning Italian. Potter writes that ‘Learning Latin was the key to almost all earlier literature. Virtually no one could read the Germanic language of pre-Conquest England and only a few scholars had heard of Beowulf. Gower and Chaucer were as far from Shakespeare as Byron and Sir Walter Scott are from a reader in the first quarter of

⁸⁷ Driver, p. 310.

the twenty-first century, but, because of changes in pronunciation, Middle English may have been as hard to read as Latin'.⁸⁸

Potter also writes that Shakespeare's 'education has given him enough Latin for other employments closer to home' and speculates that Shakespeare may have worked as a schoolmaster, noting that 'A teaching position would have provided opportunities for writing and directing plays, and kept him in touch with some of the texts that were important sources for his early work'.⁸⁹ This is entirely hypothetical but an intriguing thought; emphasising Shakespeare's familiarity with Latin and Classical texts. But we can at least agree that with Potter that the education provided allowed for the *potential* for such employment, which in turn makes his use of Classical texts in his plays less of a questionable idea.

Speculation about the extent of Shakespeare's education is reliant on internal evidence within his texts as much as, if not more than, any external evidence. Thus, the comments made by his contemporary, Ben Jonson in his poem within the 1623 First Folio, that Shakespeare knew 'small Latine and lesse Greek'⁹⁰ can be challenged. Colin Burrow's reinterpretation of Jonson's elegy is important to consider when using it to comment on Shakespeare's language competence:

The whole passage is hypothetical. [...] When Jonson moves on from considering Shakespeare's superiority to vernacular authors there is a shift of emphasis, and at this point a lot hangs on the single word 'though'. 'Though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek', could mean 'despite the fact that you only had a smattering of Latin and less Greek' [...] It could alternatively mean 'even supposing (counterfactually) that you had only a little bit of Latin and even less Greek, the major classical dramatists would still admire you'.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Potter, p. 26.

⁸⁹ Potter, 49, 50.

⁹⁰ Ben Jonson, 'To the Memory of my Beloved, the Author Mr. William Shakespeare: and What He Hath Left Us' in *The Works of William Shakespeare in Reduced Facsimile from the Famous First Folio Edition of 1623*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1876), p. xxiii.

⁹¹ Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1-2.

Even though Burrow write that ‘There is no way of finally knowing which of these alternatives Jonson meant’,⁹² it is the directness of Jonson’s statement allows it to be regularly cited as evidence to justify calling the playwright uneducated or uncultured. So is Jonson’s comment fair? First, we must consider what constitutes ‘small Latine and lesse Greek’ in Shakespeare’s time and what scale Johnson is judging him on. It is possible, as Burrows states, that Jonson was ‘praising Shakespeare in a double-edged way – he does manage, after all, to make it clear that it is *he* and not Shakespeare who is bringing Greek back to life’.⁹³ In a culture where Latin was taught in school (compared to our own, where even the teaching of modern foreign languages is increasingly under threat), ‘small Latine’ could still be a reasonable grasp of the language. Secondly, there is the question of how much we can trust Jonson’s knowledge and judgement of his fellow playwright’s language skills: in short, how (and why) can we consider Jonson’s viewpoint to be authoritative?

Therefore, the internal evidence of Shakespeare’s writing can be argued to be just as valuable and no less subjective than Jonson’s comment; furthermore, by looking at his earlier plays, we will also be able to identify areas of development and speculate where he may have expanded his knowledge in later life when he began working as an actor and subsequently as a playwright. Though reading the plays for biographical information can be contentious, ultimately, in this instance, the presence of foreign language and sources is irrefutable evidence of Shakespeare’s awareness and knowledge of those sources; as to how much he knew those sources, that is where it can become more subjective, but not more than the degree to which we can trust Jonson’s comment. Shakespeare’s writings give us a more realistic view of how far his education stretched regarding the wide range of topics he covered, including Italy, its culture, and its customs. This balance between the importance of

⁹² Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*, p. 2.

⁹³ Ibid.

external and internal evidence, with specific regard to identifying sources and influences within Shakespeare's Italian narratives, will be looked at in detail within the following chapter, where *Twelfth Night* will serve as a case study for identifying the different elements that may have influenced the playwright during the composition of this play in particular.

However, Baldwin's conscientious investigation into Shakespeare's 'apparent references to Latin literature in relation to the typical education methods and grammar-school syllabus of the 1570s'⁹⁴ disputes the notion that the playwright had no direct classical learning. Through the evidence meticulously collected by Baldwin, one can easily identify the schoolbooks and texts that would have made up the language-learning syllabus of grammar schools during the late 1500s. A staple within the classroom would have been Cooper's *Latin Dictionary*, a book that Shakespeare would have undoubtedly had increased use for as his career progressed. Baldwin notes that 'the surviving sixteenth and seventeenth-century curricula are practically uniform, and their component items were administered in a standard order',⁹⁵ suggesting that all grammar schools at the time would have provided their students with the same resources to learn the languages and the classical authors. As well as textbooks on Latin and Greek grammar, dictionaries and pamphlets on the lexicon, many of the aforementioned Latin thinkers are present within Baldwin's collection of texts, such as Cicero and Virgil, present within the curriculum were also Renaissance writers known for translating great Latin works or writing in the Latin style, such as Erasmus and John Palsgrave. It can be speculated then that Shakespeare's knowledge of Latin was substantial enough, as shown by the appearance of Latin phrases within his works. Examples of common Latin proverbs can be found within Shakespeare's language, most notably in *Love's Labours*

⁹⁴ Baldwin, p. 422.

⁹⁵ Baldwin, p. 497.

Lost, where the characters add Latin phrases into their conversations seemingly at random: ‘Veni vidi, vici’ (IV, I, 68), ‘vir sapit qui pauca loquitur’ (IV, ii, 77), ‘Satis quod sufficit’ (V, I, 1), ‘Novi hominem tanquam te’ (V, I, 11) and ‘Laus Deo, bone intelligo’ (V, I, 30). The use of Latin proverbs by Shakespeare may allow space for one to argue that he was familiar with the basic language-learning phrases taught to him during his grammar-school education. However, examples of Latin quotations taken from Classical thinkers are also present within his works. ‘Irae furor brevis est’ (*Timon* I, ii, 28) resembles an extract from Horace: ‘Ira furor brevis est’ (Epistles I, ii, 62) and ‘Si fas aut nefas’ (*Titus* I, I, 633) resembles ‘Fasque nefasque’ (585) from Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*. Thus, it can be reasonably presumed that Shakespeare was inspired by the Latin writers he learnt about during his grammar school years and incorporated elements of their work into his or the details he could actively recall. This knowledge of Latin would also aid him in later life when attempting to use untranslated Italian sources and thus indulge in learning the language. Regardless of Shakespeare’s limited knowledge of the classic languages, these basic skills would have aided him greatly later on in life when attempting to access, read and translate pieces of Italian literature.

Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith show some scepticism about the fascination with sources, suggesting that ‘traditional source study does not have room for cognitive theory [...]’⁹⁶. Still, I would argue that consideration of a writer’s sources can provide valuable insight into their writing process. Although Maguire and Smith construct a compelling argument, it is not common for writers to outwardly express their gratitude to sources they studied in earlier life, influencing them significantly later on in their careers. Petrarch, for example, reports that he:

⁹⁶ Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith, ‘What is a Source? Or, How Shakespeare Read his Marlowe’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 68 (2015), 15-31 (p. 16).

swallowed as a boy what I would ruminate upon as an older man. I have thoroughly absorbed these writings, implanting them not only in my memory but in my marrow, and they have so become one with my mind that were I never to read them for the remainder of my life, they would cling to me, having taken root in the innermost recesses of my mind.⁹⁷

We cannot disconnect the sources an author knows from the works they then produce; some level of influence is almost inevitable. It would be unwise to rule out the possibility that the Latin and Greek texts Shakespeare studied at school may have aided him during the creation of his plays. An example of this borrowing of texts ingrained within Shakespeare from his education can be found within his early comedies, where he draws heavily on Plautus, not only for narrative inspiration, but also for ‘setting a lifelong pattern by adopting the five-act structure of classical comedy’.⁹⁸ In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Holofernes enthusiastically exclaims ‘Ah, good old Mantuan’ (IV.II.93), in reference to Baptista Spagnuoli Mantuanus (1448-1516), a fifteenth-century Italian Carmelite reformer, humanist and poet who wrote bucolic eclogues. These eclogues are further referenced when Holofernes continues to say:

*Fauste precor, gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra
Ruminat –*

And so forth. Ah good old Mantuan, I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice:

Venetia, Venetia,

Chi non ti vede, non ti pretia.

Old Mantuan, old Mantuan, who understandeth thee
Not, loves thee not. (IV.ii.93-8)⁹⁹

An example of this borrowing of texts ingrained within Shakespeare from his education can be found within his early comedies, where he draws heavily on Plautus for narrative inspiration. Another example of a text that Shakespeare studied at school that made multiple appearances within his works is the Geneva Bible: ‘quotations from or references to no fewer

⁹⁷ Francesco Petrarca, *Letters on Familiar Matters: Rerum familiarium libri XVII-XXIV*, trans Also S. Bernardo, 3 vols (New York: Italica Press, 2005), III, pp. 212-13.

⁹⁸ Anthony Holden, *William Shakespeare: His Life & Work* (London: Abacus, 2005), p. 34.

⁹⁹ ‘Faustus, while all the cattle are chewing the cud in the cool shade, I pray you [let us talk a little about our old affairs]’

than forty-two books of the Bible – eighteen each from the Old and the New Testaments, and six from the Apocrypha – have been identified throughout the plays and non-dramatic poems'.¹⁰⁰ A translated phrase found within Ecclesiastes 5:11 'The sleep of him that traveleth is sweet', can be seen as a clear echo within Claudio's description of Barnardine in *Measure of Measure*:

As fast lock'd up in sleep as guiltless labour
When it lies starkly in the traveller's bones. (IV.ii.64-5)

Another possible reference to the Geneva Bible can be found within *The Tempest*; 'We have spent our years as a thought' (Psalms 90:9), could be the inspiration for Prospero's lines:

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (IV.i.156-8)

The Geneva Bible stands as testament in itself to the gradual evolution of English literature from Latin source-texts; however, the primary interest here of these parallels is that they evidence a precedent for Shakespeare's close reading and use of an existing text. If we project this onto his use of classical texts, it is not unreasonable to consider that they too have the potential to be a similar influence. Thus, although what Shakespeare read of the Classics after he left the King's New School is yet to be closely approximated, it can still be speculated that what he did learn of the Latin writers and their language was beneficial to him during his career in London.

1.2 Italian Narratives and Settings on the English Renaissance Stage

Consideration of Shakespeare's Italian influences need not limit to his specific education, but also the wider culture trend in theatre. Renaissance theatre throughout Europe was predominantly influenced by 'strong traditions of medieval theatrical forms, religious and

¹⁰⁰ Holden, p. 38.

festive plays, mumming, municipal pageants, court spectacles, and, eventually, humanistic neo-Latin school drama'.¹⁰¹ The playwrights who dominated the early Renaissance playhouses were those with extensive literary knowledge, titled 'The University Wits' by modern scholars, due to their university level education. Playwrights such as Marlowe, Lyly, Kyd, Greene, Nashe, Peele and Lodge used their knowledge of the Classics to create narratives that displayed their impressive education, alluding to mythology and using examples of natural history. However, these dramatists also tackled complex themes within their works such as homosexuality, damnation, and even regicide. The earliest plays being produced during the period, in the 1550s and 1560s, perpetuated the classical genres of comedy and tragedy as the main types of drama. The drama that these playwrights produced were derived mainly from Latin sources: such as the comedies from Terence and Plautus, and the tragedies largely taking influence from Seneca. Ronald Carter and John McRae describe this period as 'an age when the need for a social demonstration of an English nationalism and Protestantism climaxed in the public area of diverse and energetic theatre'.¹⁰² However, Latin works were prevalent within the majority of English literature, so even though this thirst for nationalism was occurring within the English theatre, it did not deter Classical Italian influences from making their way into the narratives created by English playwrights.

One of the earliest examples of Italian literature influencing the English stage can be seen in the anonymous 1567 play *The Bugbears* (though there's some speculation regarding the authorship, scholars such as Clark credit the play to John Jeffere). *The Bugbears* follows a standard comedic structure, but what is interesting to note is the location of the play: Florence. This could indicate that Shakespeare's contemporaries were already using Italy as a

¹⁰¹ Louise G. Clubb, 'Italian Renaissance Theatre' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of The Theatre*, ed. John Russel Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 107.

¹⁰² Robert Carter & John McRae, *The Routledge History of Literature in English* (Oxford: Routledge, 2001), p. 62.

location for their narratives. Another element that makes *The Bugbears* interesting is its proposed sources; Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and *Metamorphosis*, and Virgil's *Eclogues* keep the trend of the Classical Latin thinkers influencing the English stage at the time.¹⁰³ However, there is also evidence to suggest that later Italian literature also influenced the play's narrative; Antonfrancesco Grazzini's *La Spiritata*, Academia degli Intronai's *Gl'Ingannati*, and Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* all influenced the play.¹⁰⁴ A later example of a play that uses Italy as a location for its narrative is the *Comedy of Julia and Erophilus* dated approximately 1579. The setting of Padua and the mention of Venice indicates the use of Italy as a foreign backdrop and does this to explicitly influence the course of the narrative. Within the roles, the character of Leonard is described as 'an Italian', suggesting that he should be seen as an outsider to the audience due to the fact that he is Italian. The trend of using Classical sources as influences on the narrative is evident within the comedy as Plautus's *Poenulus*, *Amphitruo*, *Asinaria*, *Aulularia*, *Bacchides*, *Captivi*, *Cistellaria*, *Curculio*, *Menaechmi*, *Miles gloriosus*, *Mostellaria*, *Persa* and *Rudens* are all speculated sources. Terence's *Andria* and Boccaccio's *Decameron* are also cited as sources for the play by Martin Wiggins.¹⁰⁵

In order to better understand whether Shakespeare was following a trend or his own initiative in regard to using Italianate literature as source-texts, it is important that we look at Shakespeare's contemporaries and what literature they were consulting, as well as what was popular on the stage prior and during Shakespeare's first appearance as a playwright. When attempting to recognise the origins of drama in modern Europe, it is not surprising that it began 'in Italy early in the sixteenth century with the work of Ariosto, Bibbenia, Machiavelli, and their successors [...]'.¹⁰⁶ These works were direct derivatives from great Latin writers of

¹⁰³ See Wiggins *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, II

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ R. Warwick Bond, *Early Plays from The Italian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), p. xv.

ancient Rome such as Plutus and Terence, writers that educated playwrights, such as Marlowe and Jonson, would have encountered during their studies at university level, something that Shakespeare did not have the opportunity to experience. Although Jonson did not attend the University of Cambridge due to an unwilling apprenticeship, he did have a more lucrative educational career than Shakespeare, having attended the Westminster School where his knowledge of Latin and Greek would have been heightened, in addition to further independent study. Regardless of Shakespeare's education, or lack thereof, he was a figure who worked in an age that was rich in theatrical and dramatic talent as well as an age of great theatrical achievement. It is without a doubt that the interactions Shakespeare had with his contemporaries and the array of literature available to him will have shaped his writing. Stanley Wells notes that 'he worked within the same intellectual and theatrical environment as his contemporaries, was subject to the same commercial and social pressures, and interacted with fellow dramatists and actors throughout his career'.¹⁰⁷

Despite concerns Protestant concerns about Italy another European countries, this did not stop writers from setting their scene in this 'exotic' and 'forbidden' country; Raab notes that 'Italy could be seen as both the centre of humanist learning and the dangerous seat of Catholicism'.¹⁰⁸ The satirist Stephen Gosson was explicitly vocal in criticising the assault of Italianate literature on the English stage. He suggested that the infestation of the stage was due to England becoming a Protestant state, and that this caused consternation elsewhere: 'the devil, foreseeing the ruin of his kingdom, both invented these shows and inspired men with devices to set them out, the better thereby to enlarge his dominion and pull us from God'.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare & Co.* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli: A Changing Interpretation 1500-1700* (London: Routledge, 1964), p. 56.

¹⁰⁹ Stephen Gosson, *Schoole of Abuse and a Short Apologie of the Schoole of Abuse 1579*, ed. Edward Arber (London: Alex Murray & Son, 1868), p. 49.

Gosson argued that this assault on the English stage began with the import of literature from Catholic states such as Italy: ‘First he sent over many wanton Italian books, which being translated into English, have poisoned the manners of our country with foreign delights’.¹¹⁰ Ironically, Gosson’s xenophobic interpretation is broadly correct as Martin Wiggins notes that ‘early Elizabethan prose fiction was indeed dominated by translation from Italian – and the overall structure of his narrative reflects the common practice of Elizabethan dramatists, transforming literary sources into plays’.¹¹¹ Translations of Italian works were becoming more common throughout the century; Soko Tomita and Masahiko Tomita have collated a bibliographical catalogue of Italian books printed in England from 1603 – 1642, which can give us a detailed insight to how the circulation of Italian books.¹¹² It would also be helpful to consult the data tables created by Warren Boucher on the trends of translation in England, Scotland, and Ireland:

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Martin Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 8.

¹¹² See Soko Tomita and Masahiko Tomita (eds.), *A Bibliographical Catalogue of Italian Books Printed in England 1603 – 1642* (London: Routledge, 2021).

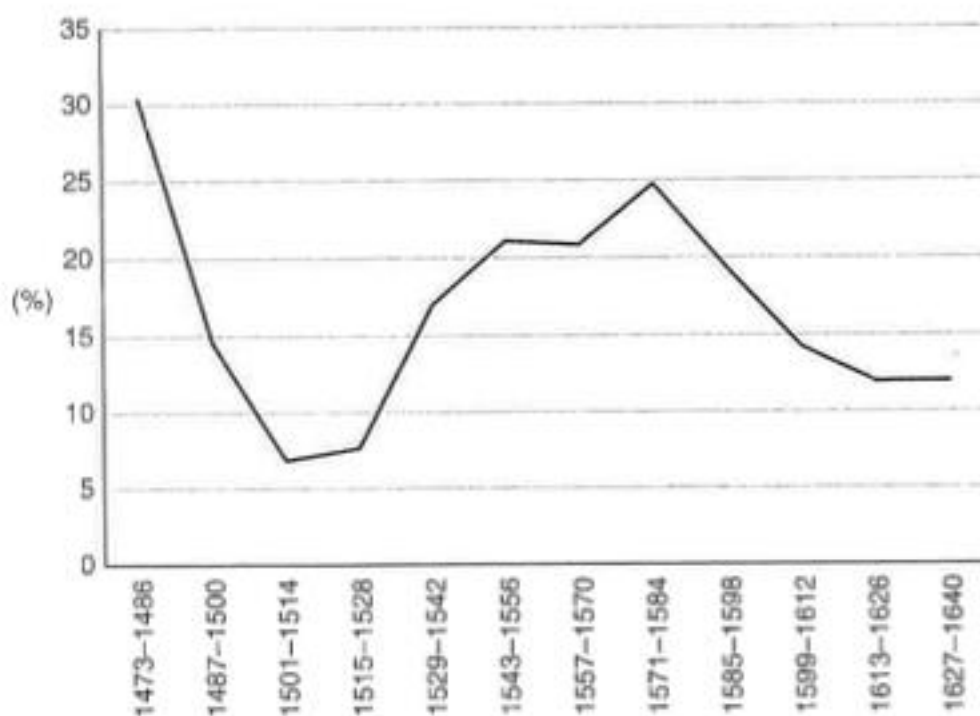


Fig. 1.1¹¹³

Although Boutcher's table does not specifically depict how many of these translations were from Italian sources, it does show a positive trend in overall translation during the years of Shakespeare's writing career. Before falling into remission prior to his death in 1616, Florio had already quoted from Ariosto in his *First Fruites*, and Sir John Harrington had the task of translating *Orlando Innamorato*¹¹⁴. Einstein notes that the 'classical influence in English literature largely came from Italy',¹¹⁵ which is a concept that can be seen through the amount of Italian literature discussing classical themes that were translated into English during the Early Modern period. Italian culture began to slowly spread out from the courts into the educated middle-class populous during the Elizabethan reign, as mentioned in the

¹¹³ Translation printed in England, Scotland and Ireland, and into English printed abroad, 1473-1640 as a percentage of a total printed output.

See Warren Boutcher, 'From Cultural Translation to Cultures of Translation? Early Modern Readers, Sellers and Patrons', in *The Culture of Translation in Early Modern England and France, 1500-1660*, ed. By Tania Demetriou and Rowan Tomlinson (London: Palgrave, 2015), pp. 22-40 (p. 26).

¹¹⁴ The first three books had already been translated by Robert Tofte in 1558.

¹¹⁵ Einstein, p. 357.

introduction to this thesis, although the development of a general anti-Italian feeling began to spread across the population fuelled by the anti-Catholic ideas during the rise of Protestantism. Regardless of this, translations of Italian texts were nonetheless used in education, general leisure reading, and as sources for creating new pieces of inspired literature; the importance of Elizabethan translations was postulated by F. O Matthiessen, who called the work of a translator ‘an act of patriotism’¹¹⁶ and went on to detail four great translators of Italian words that proved quintessential for the period: ‘Thomas Hoby’s *Courtyer* (1561), Thomas North’s *Plutarch* (1579) John Florio’s *Montaigne* (1603), and *Plutarch’s Morals* by Philemon Holland (1603)’.¹¹⁷ Positioned against Gosson’s fears, this repositions the dynamic of the Italian-English relationship, with English translations as a proactive co-opting, almost colonising, of Italian texts, rather than an Italian invasion of English. Though colonising may seem a strong word, ultimately in these plays Shakespeare and his contemporaries are taking Italian texts and using them without acknowledgement to create their own works; the subsequent fame of Shakespeare has celebrated the English writer without crediting the Italian influences so that, intentionally or not, the original culture is subsumed into the English.

1.3 Shakespeare’s Early Career: Ideas of Italy, the Commedia del’Arte and His First Comedies

It is uncontroversial then, to state that the Italian Renaissance had started to influence the English Arts by the time Shakespeare reached London, and this was being reflected within the narratives being performed on the English stage at the time. Although not much is known about what Shakespeare did during his ‘lost years’, 1587-1592, it can be speculated that he

¹¹⁶ F. O. Matthiessen, *Translation: An Elizabethan Art* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 1931; repr. New York: Octagon Books, 1965), p. 13.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

performed as an actor. In *The Works of Benjamin Johnson* (published 1616), Shakespeare was included in a cast list for a play being performed in 1598, alongside fellow Lord Chamberlain's men actors Will Kemp and Richard Burbage. Furthermore, Greene's infamously snide allusion to Shakespeare as an 'upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that with his tygers head wrapt in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast our blank verse',¹¹⁸ alluding to the verse in *Henry VI, Part 3*, where Margaret of Anjou is addressed, 'O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide!' (1.4.137). Green also describes Shakespeare as 'an absolute Johannes fac totum',¹¹⁹ which refers to the playwright's time as an actor, thus making him a 'jack of all trades'. Working and acting on the London stage would have given Shakespeare the insight he needed into what was popular with audiences and what trends were appearing in multiple successful productions. His time as an actor would have most likely exposed him to foreign texts that were used as sources by his contemporaries and this may have contributed to Shakespeare subsequently using Italy as a location for his plays, as the 'otherness' of Italy provided an exotic backdrop for the majority of his early comedies. Travel to Europe was becoming increasingly popular during the sixteenth century, while Europeans, in turn, were also migrating to London, hence certain assumptions and stereotypes of Italy began to form within English culture. Jack D'Amico notes that:

assumptions about the attractions and the dangers of travel to Italy existed in Shakespeare's day, [...] Italy could be seen as both the centre of humanist learning and the dangerous seat of Catholicism, the country of Castiglione's graceful courier and the evil of "Machiavel".¹²⁰

It is this increased demand for travel by the higher classes that has prompted scholars such as Roe to fantasize over the idea that Shakespeare travelled to Italy during his 'lost years',

¹¹⁸ Robert Greene, *Groatsworth of Wit, Bought with a Million of Repentance* (London: William Wright, 1592), p. 72.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Jack D'Amico, *Shakespeare and Italy: The City and the Stage* (Florida: Florida University Press, 2001, p. 12.

which would justify the somewhat accurate descriptions of Italian cities within his narratives. Shakespeare's education and perceived intelligence connected to his writing has always been a topic of contention for scholars; with writers such as Roe interpreting the playwright's mistakes within his plays as evidence that he travelled to Italy. Robin Fox appears to support Roe's "investigation" in his book *Shakespeare's Education: Schools, Lawsuits, theatre and Tudor Miracle*:

It is depressing how anxious defenders of the orthodox position are to belittle Shakespeare: to claim on the one hand his transcendent genius and in the next breath deny him any achievements of learning and travel if these suggest a noble background. All to preserve the image of jolly and genial, never-left-merry-England, simple country-grammar-school-boy and journeyman playwright Will from Warwickshire. The less cultivated, knowledgeable and travelled he is, the better their case.¹²¹

Of course, Shakespeare criticism has been controversial since the Renaissance period, and there have been a multitude of different veins taken on the true identity of Shakespeare, the authorship question, and the general myth around the lost years. I feel as though we are sometimes quick to discredit the value of Shakespeare's education, as there is enough evidence to show that he was educated enough to create lasting pieces of literature. However, I do not believe that Shakespeare travelled outside of England; understandably, this goes against the theories of individuals such as Roe and Fox, but it does not appear feasible to place the playwright in an Italian or French environment when there is evidence that counteracts this. Interestingly, Roe is not the only scholar who believes that Shakespeare's supposed travel to Italy inspired his Italian narratives, Ernesto Grillo concluded with confidence that Shakespeare must have visited Italy.¹²² Shaul Bassi writes that 'our own fantasy of the poet getting lost in the Venetian maze is exactly that: a fiction.'¹²³ But the idea

¹²¹ Robin Fox, *Shakespeare's Education: Schools, Lawsuits, theatre and the Tudor Miracle* (Germany: Laugwitz, 2012), p. 51.

¹²² Grillo, p. 65.

¹²³ Shaul Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare: Place, "Race" and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 2016), p. 142.

of Shakespeare travelling to Italy in order to gain knowledge on the country, its literature, and culture is not a new idea. Even later travellers to Italy, such as Charles Dickens, daydreamed about the playwright walking the streets 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.¹²⁴

Dickens's allusion is deliberately fantastical, and appropriately so, for it is more likely than not that Shakespeare's conception of Italy was not founded on personal experience. It is much more probable that he was surrounded by learned and travelled individuals who gave him an insight into Italy and its culture. This does not make the influence any less profound; these descriptions and stereotypes were woven into his narratives and even though Shakespeare's early plays may have lacked technique and structure, they were ample with Italian scenery and characters.

It is thus widely acknowledged by scholars that Shakespeare drew on contemporary Italian literature as sources for his characters and plot. Gosson proclaimed that Shakespeare's predecessors 'ransacked' Italianate literature in order to feed their playhouses; Clubb has since suggested that 'it is time to take Gosson seriously, to identify Shakespeare as one of the ransackers and to treat his Italian stories as a chapter in the history of ransacking'.¹²⁵ There are direct references to the characters and methods used in the early Commedia dell'Arte, together with explicit Italianate elements within his works, in particular Shakespeare's early comedies, which lead to speculations of how acquainted he was with the Italian comedy movements. In order to understand where Shakespeare's interest in Italianate literature began,

¹²⁴ Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), p. 84.

¹²⁵ Louise George Clubb, 'Italian Stories on The Stage', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. Alexander Leggatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 32-46 (p. 32).

this section of the chapter will look in detail at how his education, time as an actor, and trends created by his contemporaries may have contributed to the choices he made when crafting his early comedies.

Andrew Grewar notes that ‘although his ultimate sources may have been ancient Roman drama or the recent Italian *Commedia Erudita*, Shakespeare’s immediate dramatic model appears to have been the *Commedia dell’Arte*, with its reworking of both classical and neo-classical materials’.¹²⁶ Many of Shakespeare’s early comedies have elements reminiscent of the *Commedia dell’Arte*; *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. For example, the character of the Pantaloon, ‘one of the four primary characters of the *Commedia dell’Arte*’, is echoed throughout Shakespeare’s works: the use of the word ‘pantaloon[s]’: ‘Into the lean and slippered pantaloon’ (AYL II.viii.159), ‘Enter Baptista with his two daughters, Katerina and Bianca, Gremio a Pantelowne’ (TS I.i.46.2) and ‘[...] we might beguile the old Pantalowne’ (TS III.i.36).¹²⁷

The Renaissance period was not unfamiliar with Italy, its literature, plays, and players; with the English curiosity surrounding Italy beginning as far back as Henry VIII. During the reign of Elizabeth I, the first prominent Italian work was translated into English by Thomas Hoby in 1561, Baldassare Castiglione’s *The Courtier* (1525), a book that commented on court manners in the court of the count of Urbino during the early 1500s. A few years later, in 1566, George Gascoigne’s translation and adaptation of Ludovico Ariosto’s *I Suppositi* further popularised Italian dramatic theatre. It is not a coincidence then that Shakespeare chose to take inspiration from Italian influences and ideas when Italian literature was increasingly common throughout England at the time of his early career. But

¹²⁶ Andrew Grewar, ‘The Old Man’s Spectacles: *Commedia* and Shakespeare’ in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell’Arte*, eds. Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 300-11 (p. 300).

¹²⁷ Peter Jordan, ‘Pantalone and Il Dottore: The old men of the *commedia*’ in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell’Arte*, eds. Judith Chaffee & Olly Crick (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 62-9 (p. 64).

London was not the only place that exposed Shakespeare to the complexities of the Commedia dell'Arte; whilst growing up in Stratford, 'his father would pay the companies that played at Stratford. From these touring companies, Shakespeare may have heard of the Italian acrobats and Italianate plays at nearby Kenilworth Castle'.¹²⁸ Thus, it is not unreasonable to assume that through his boyhood experiences with travelling Italian companies, the influences that his grammar school education had on his reading, and not forgetting the path that his contemporaries had carved out for him, Shakespeare was bound to have an interest in the Commedia dell'Arte.

The relationship between Shakespeare and the Italian *novella* is a common argument when attempting to understand his early influences; but the most pressing question that is less commonly discussed by Renaissance scholars is under what circumstances he was able to access these Italian narratives. Alexander Leggatt notes that 'except for Giraldi's tale of the Moor of Venice, all the stories Shakespeare used had already been used in Italian drama, either whole or in pieces differently combined'.¹²⁹ It may be more appropriate then, to argue that Shakespeare was using Italy as a location rather than as a fountain for foreign narratives. The use of the Italian setting is prevalent within his early comedies, however, at this stage in the dramatist's career he lacked knowledge of Italy itself, its customs and its language - this is evident within his early Italianate comedies. As D'Amico notes, Shakespeare used Italy as a location rather than a literary influence, perhaps due to the issue of finding sources for his early comedies.¹³⁰ This is most evident within his first Italian comedy and earliest surviving stage piece *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (c. 1590-1591), a play that 'takes its cue from courtly Elizabethan comedies about the value of male friendship'¹³¹ rather than the

¹²⁸ Einstein, p. 320.

¹²⁹ Leggatt, p. 35.

¹³⁰ D'Amico, p. 6.

¹³¹ Andrew Dickson, *The Globe Guide to Shakespeare* (London: Profile Books, 2016), p. 480.

complexities of Italian life. Although there is no existing printed edition of this play that predates the printing of the First Folio in 1623, it may be used as a clear example of his early interest in Italian literature and its Commedia productions. Among the narrative inconsistencies that are shrouded within the script, the most evident is the confusion between the various Italian locations. Even though the title of the play suggests that the setting is Verona, the descriptions by Shakespeare suggest otherwise; ‘the ‘Verona’ of the play seems, instead, to be a fairly generic small town, from which the ambitious youth leave to go to the sophisticated court of Milan’.¹³² Another geographical mistake made by Shakespeare in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* that is hard to ignore involves the departure of Valentine who sails inland from Verona to Milan:

Once more adieu; my father at the road
Expects my coming, there to see me shipped (I.ii.53-4)

This embarrassing geographical mistake is well-documented by scholars from a range of eras, this error somewhat disproves Roe’s theory that Shakespeare travelled to Italy and thus created accurate scenic locations as it is common knowledge, even to Early Modern travellers, that there is no sailing route from the two mentioned cities as they are located inland:

Shakespeare had a clearly conceived geography of the land, and accurately maintained his conception, though it was, for the most part, an ideal, not a real geography. For instance, Verona is a port upon the sea, with tides that ebb and flow, with boats that may sail from thence to Milan; Valentine’s father at the road expects his coming, there to see him shipped; and Launce [servant to Proteus] “is like to lose the tide”.¹³³

Thus, we can assume with a certain degree of certainty that *Two Gentlemen of Verona* was not an intimate interrogation of Italian culture, but rather an early experimentation with an

¹³² William C. Carol, ‘Introduction’, in William Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ed. William C. Carol (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), p. 76.

¹³³ Horatio Brown, *Studies in Venetian History*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1907), I, p. 55.

‘exotic’ setting that he would frequently return to as his career progressed. As stated in earlier sections of this dissertation, identifying Shakespeare’s sources is a difficult endeavour due to the lack of concrete evidence available to us regarding the playwright’s reading habits and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is no exception. However, scholars such as Bullough have attempted to piece together proposed sources that may have influenced the playwright when drafting his first stage comedy. During this early stage in Shakespeare’s career where he is attempting to establish himself as a successful playwright, it is probable that he used sources that he was familiar with from his school days or from productions he had appeared in as an actor or had seen performed by other acting companies. The works of Boccaccio, for example, are frequently mentioned when considering the sources for *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

It is unlikely that Shakespeare would have studied Boccaccio’s *Decameron* during his grammar school education, as the focus was on the Latin Classics rather than early Italian novellas. It may be plausible to assume that Shakespeare’s interest of Italian Commedia during his early career would have led him to the collection of fourteenth-century novellas by Boccaccio. Within this collection there is a rather undeniable similarity between the narrative of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *La Teseide* - the eighth story of the tenth day:

Sophronia, thinking she has married Gisippus, has really married Titus Quintus Fulvius, with whom she goes off to Rome, where Gisippus turns up in abject poverty. Believing that Titus has snubbed him, he confesses to a murder so that he will be put to death. But Titus recognises him, and claims that he himself has done the murder, in order to secure Gisippus’ release. On perceiving this, the real murderer gives himself up, whereupon all three are released by Octavius. Titus then bestows his sister upon Gisippus in marriage, and shares with him all he possesses.¹³⁴

This theme of ‘conflict between the duties of friendship and love’¹³⁵ was a favourite of Boccaccio, and of Chaucer in *The Knight’s Tale* (which may be a loose source for *Two*

¹³⁴ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. G. H. McWilliam (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 745.

¹³⁵ Bullough, I, p. 203.

Gentlemen of Verona but is more widely credited to have inspired the narrative of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, though in the place of the this latter it may have been Fletcher's choice as much as Shakespeare's). However, the narrative of the disloyal friend and questionable ethical values may have been pervasively influenced by the works of one of Shakespeare's contemporaries – John Lyly. Even though *Two Gentlemen of Verona* may have a few similarities with *Euphues. The Anatomy of Wit* (1579), Bullough notes that Shakespeare's debt to Lyly was probably more one of technique than of matter'.¹³⁶ The theme of friends betraying one another in the name of love is described by Oscar Campbell as being a 'sort of three-handed contest of suitors was commonplace in the Commedia dell'Arte'.¹³⁷

Other proposed sources for *Two Gentlemen of Verona* include Scala's fifth scenario *Flavio Tradito* and Jorge de Montemayor's *Diana Enamorada* (1542), both of which are Mediterranean works with the theme of treachery to a male friend accompanied by treachery to a mistress. It is interesting to note that within his writings, Bullough comments on the playwright's use of *Diana* in particular:

Shakespeare may have known enough Spanish to read the original; there was also a French translation by Nicholas Collin (1578, 1587). He may have seen a manuscript copy of Bartholomew Yonge's English version, which, though not published till 1598, was completed sixteen years earlier.¹³⁸

Thus, the notion that Shakespeare's basic language-learning skills were acquired during his time at school is not wholly implausible. Due to both Spanish and Italian having derived from Latin, this basic knowledge would have been useful when looking at sources. Granted, his knowledge of these languages would have not been perfect but

¹³⁶ Bullough, I, p. 204.

¹³⁷ Oscar J. Campbell, 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona and Italian Comedy', in *Studies in Shakespeare, Milton and Donne*, eds. L. I. Bredvold, O. J. Campbell, C. C. Fries and J. H. Hanford (Michigan: Macmillan, 1925), pp. 54-6.

¹³⁸ Bullough, I, p. 206.

they would have given him the space to explore texts without a translation. Both plays end with the triumph of love being used as an example as to why the betrayed lover should forgive his traitor friend. Regardless of these similarities, as with many of Shakespeare's adaptations, the motives of Silvia, Proteus and Valentine are outlined for the audience and are 'simpler in nature and far easier understood than the corresponding figures of Isabella, Oratio and Flavio'.¹³⁹

By looking at another of Shakespeare's early comedies, we can better understand the trends and possible sources that influenced his writing during his early pre-plague career. *The Comedy of Errors* (c. 1594) appears to have fewer narrative shortfalls than *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, as well as a more distinguishable alleged source. With regards to the construction of the narrative of *Errors*, Baldwin accounts that:

His grammar-school training had been insistent that he must gather into notebook and mind materials out of which later to compile by imitation his own work. So here he assembles in his mind all accessible plays on mistaken identity; *Amphitruo*, *Menaechmi*, possibly *Miles*, and probably Gascoigne's translation from Ariosto *Supposes* [...] *The Comedy* is not merely constructed principally from two plays of Plautus; it also analyses and reconstructs those plays into the Andria formula or Terentian structure.¹⁴⁰

Among the less specific sources, such as the typical Elizabethan pamphlets of Nashe and Greene, was the influence of Plautus' *Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo*. By 'adapting, cutting, altering or expanding it, whether for local incidents or the play's overall plan'¹⁴¹ *Errors* is an early example of Shakespeare transforming a source-text into a production better suited to an Elizabethan audience. Kent Cartwright notes that this juggling of sources and influences,

¹³⁹ June Schlueter, *Two Gentlemen of Verona: Critical Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996) p. 29.

¹⁴⁰ Baldwin, p. 665.

¹⁴¹ Kent Cartwright (ed.), William Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 75.

used by Shakespeare rather eclectically, is important when understanding the intention of the text:

The play's richness reflects the sources' variety and the directness or indirectness of their use; sensing them in the background brings shadows and echoes to the reading or speculating experience.¹⁴²

By using a text that Shakespeare had previously studied during his time at school, he was able to use this familiarity to his advantage when adapting the narrative to suit a more 'modern' audience. There were many editions of Plautus in circulation at the time and 'Shakespeare doubtless knew enough Latin to read him in the original'.¹⁴³ As stated previously, Plautus was undoubtedly taught at Elizabethan grammar schools due to his 'linguistic richness, eloquence and moral examples'.¹⁴⁴ However, Shakespeare's use of Plautus may not be exclusively linked to his grammar school education, this reworking of Latin works was evident within the European humanist culture, especially in Italy. The Italians rediscovered Roman comedies and tragedies [which] were being newly performed, translated, adapted, and refashioned¹⁴⁵. Thus, it is no wonder that in Clubb's analysis of *Errors*, she finds 'so many features with late sixteenth-century Italian comedy that a fundamental resemblance cannot be denied'.¹⁴⁶

The relationship between Latin and Italian, and how we choose to define them, will be explored further in chapter four when I discuss Shakespeare's Roman plays, but it is worth noting here that Shakespeare's use of classical sources, like his use of Italian novellas, was not unique amongst playwrights, nor was the use of Roman source-texts within English theatre revolutionised by Shakespeare. *A New Interlude for Children to Play named Jack*

¹⁴² Cartwright, p. 75.

¹⁴³ Bullough, I, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ Baldwin, pp. 667-9.

¹⁴⁵ Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Comedy: The Influence of Plautus and Terence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 18.

¹⁴⁶ Louise G. Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 6.

Juggler, both Witty, Very Pleasant, and Merry (c. 1562) (anonymously published with some attributing the play to schoolmaster Nicholas Udall) is considered to be one of the earliest examples of English comedy to have been derived from a Latin source. Ben Jonson was particularly interested in the works of Terence ‘for he acquired a fifteenth-century manuscript of Terence that is now in the library of St John’s College, Oxford.’¹⁴⁷ Jonson also commonly referenced Terence within his works, for example, the first prologue of *Epicene* (1609) alludes to the opening lines within the prologue of Terence’s *Andria* (166 BC).

As with many Latin narratives, the prologue to *Menaechmi* promised a lavish plot, in contrast ‘Shakespeare’s comedy is an attempt to outdo the Roman by a manifold complication of his effects’.¹⁴⁸ Thus, the playwright took a narrative that he was familiar with and attempted to transform it into something that would resonate with his growing Elizabethan audience. It is not uncommon to note that Shakespeare’s early comedies show a roughness in quality and finish compared to his later comedies; even so, R. Warwick Bond notes that ‘the art and pains displayed by Shakespeare in this early work are an indication of the kind of craftsmanship we should expect to find in his mature plays’.¹⁴⁹ We can apply this comment to the specific arts and pains displayed in Shakespeare’s use of Italian sources. Yes, the use of both Latin and Italian lacks the deeper engagement which I will show exists in his later works. But this should not be taken as a dismissal of Shakespeare’s early plays for merely having a surface connection to those sources.

Ironically, even the idea of literary imitation, sometimes referred to as *imitatio*, or *mimesis*, is itself a concept from classical literary theory. The term *mimesis* was coined by Plato who

¹⁴⁷ Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 80.

¹⁴⁸ Bullough, I, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ R. Warwick Bond, *Studia Otiosa: Some Attempts in Criticism* (London: Constable and Company, 1939), p. 47.

wanted to express that ‘literature in some way represents life, or the world, or the reality that surrounds us’.¹⁵⁰ Aristotle also used mimesis, particularly in his *Poetics*, to ‘refer to the representation of life in a work of art’.¹⁵¹ The humanist view of imitation, or imitation, began with Petrarch, with ‘Latin no longer a serious alternative to the vernacular for works of literature, and the question of imitation in Latin has been resolved in favour of vernacular Ciceronianism, urging the exclusive imitation of Petrarch for poetry of Boccaccio for prose’. Martin McLaughlin writes that *imitatio* is ‘one of the dominant critical concepts’¹⁵² of Renaissance Italian literature. Appropriation of literary predecessors did not indicate a dearth of creativity but rather an abundance; English playwrights adopted the ideas found in Italian sources and elsewhere to replicate and respond.

In following dramatic trends and incorporating Latin phrases and references, Shakespeare is showing a willingness to use wider European sources even at this early stage of his career. Arguably, much like the University Wits are presumed to have done, this borrowing of Latin offered a credibility to Shakespeare’s writings and allowed him to emulate those works and demonstrate his own cultural credit. But the main point of interest is in exploring that moment of development where Shakespeare goes beyond brief references and imitation towards a more ingrained and meaningful assimilation of Italian influences, and to understand that we need to consider how Shakespeare might have furthered his knowledge during his early career.

1.4 Shakespeare Gets Literary

¹⁵⁰ Martin L. McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Literary Imitation in Italy from Dante to Bembo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 5.

¹⁵¹ See R. McKeon, ‘Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity’, in *Critics and Criticism, Ancient and Modern*, ed. By R. S. Crane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 147-75.

¹⁵² McLaughlin, p. 1.

Jason Lawrence hypothesises that Shakespeare's 'putative knowledge of the Italian language must have been acquired in England either by means of a professional language teacher or from his own self-study of the language-learning manuals [...]'¹⁵³ This notion is not uncommon within modern Shakespeare criticism, with many scholars such as Jonathan Bate drawing parallels between Shakespeare's minimal use of Italian within his plays and the Italian-English dialogue books written by the prominent Italian teacher John Florio: *First Fruites* (1578) and *Second Fruites* (1591). Recent attempts by scholars, such as Lawrence, to link the two figures depend on the 'presence of both Florio and Shakespeare in the household of the Earl of Southampton [...] between April 1593 and May 1594'.¹⁵⁴ The timing of this alleged meeting is significant for a number of reasons, particularly when considering the composition of the dramatist's early comedies and their source-texts. It is possible then, that Shakespeare was tutored by Florio during the closure of the playhouses due to the spread of the plague; this would have subsequently influenced the format of his later Italianate comedies. Bate credits the meeting with Florio as having a significant impact on Shakespeare's future dramatic endeavours:

His presence in the household seems to have been of considerable importance on the development of Shakespeare's career – it accounts for much of the dramatist's broad, though very patchy, acquaintance with Italian literature and his slight knowledge of the Italian language. It seems to have been immediately after the period of Southampton's patronage during this closure of the theatres that Shakespeare began to make extensive and ambitious use of Italian settings and plots in his plays. Florio was the obvious person to introduce him to his sources.¹⁵⁵

According to Bate then, it is the meeting between Shakespeare and Florio that gives the dramatist the incentive to turn to Italian sources, as well as provide him with 'both a rudimentary knowledge of the language and guided access to a collection of Italian books'.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Jason Lawrence, *'Who the Devil Taught Thee So Much Italian?': Italian Language Learning and Literary Imitation in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 119.

¹⁵⁴ Lawrence, p. 120

¹⁵⁵ Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, p. 42.

¹⁵⁶ Lawrence, pp. 120-1.

The notion presented by Bate is not unreasonable, as Florio was familiar with Shakespeare's contemporary Ben Jonson. Jonson dedicated his comedy to Florio *Volpone*, crediting him as an inspiration to his creative process: 'To his loving Father & worthy Friend / Mr John Florio / The Ayde of his Muses / Ben: Jonson seakes this testimony / of Friendship & Love'.¹⁵⁷

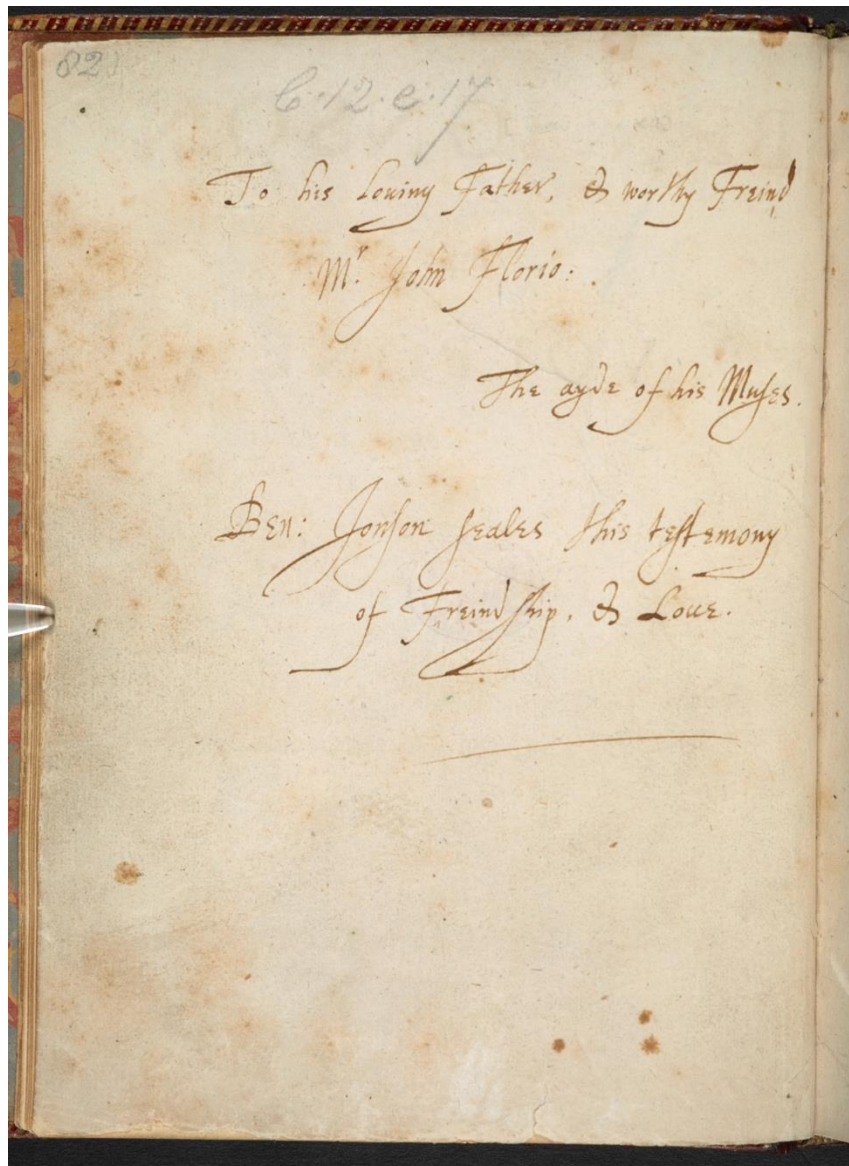


Fig. 1.2¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Ben Jonson, *Volpone, or The Foxe* (London: Thomas Thorppe, 1607), p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Ben Jonson, *Volpone or the Foxe*. A comedy in five acts and in verse and prose, 1607, British Library, London.

By using Bate's theory regarding Shakespeare and Florio, one can temporarily solve the issue of uncovering how Shakespeare gained access to uncirculated and untranslated Italian texts. This access would allow him to find new plotlines and characters to manipulate for the English stage as well as practise his language-learning skills while reading these texts. In order to somewhat prove that Florio had an influence on the dramatist's early access to Italian sources as well as his language learning habits during 1593-94, one must look for evidence within the works themselves, namely his early 'Italian' comedies composed before the closure of the playhouses - *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Error*, and *The Taming of the Shrew* - and the later early 'Italian' comedy composed after the reopening of the theatres and with the proposed influence of Florio: *Love Labour's Lost*.

The theory of collaboration and Shakespeare is not new and will be discussed multiple times within the upcoming chapters; regardless of how much of a "genius" the playwright has been perceived to be by his contemporaries and future audiences, critics, and biographers, it is now widely accepted that Shakespeare collaborated on a number of his narratives. Although no evidence suggests he collaborated on any of his Italian plays, nonetheless this openness to engage with others in his career supports the idea of a writer happy to draw upon the work and inspiration of other. The clear presence and influence of Italian sources in the works is difficult to justify without acknowledging some level of engagement with the language and culture on Shakespeare's part: while we can confidently discount his having travelled to Italy, we are left to presume either a sufficient fluency in the language, or a suitable degree of enthusiasm and investment in Italian culture as well as some form of community from which he could gain access to untranslated versions of his sources.

Plays where the collaboration is not immediately obvious, or the collaborator is not known, are equally important when considering any Italian influences. *Two Gentlemen of Verona* does not boast an explicit Italian source or have one of Shakespeare's famous contemporaries helping craft the narrative, it does, however, have a very identifiable Italian location. Although location is a topic that will be discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis it is important to understand how external influences may have helped Shakespeare choose the Italian locations of his earliest play. The play's geographical error of the characters travelling by sea from Verona to Milan highlights the limit of Shakespeare's knowledge of the locations. Verona as a location is only mentioned in four instances within the play (III.i.81, IV.i.17, IV.i.47, and V.iv.127), which, at first, may be perceived as strange considering the title of the play emphasises Verona. However, this may not be as surprising as one may think, as it is very likely that Shakespeare was reading descriptions of the area written and translated by travellers, or through accounts given to him by his contemporaries, proposed tutors, such as Florio, or through tales he may have heard by travellers whom he socialised with in London. For example, accounts by figures such as William Thomas, who travelled to Italy in 1549, and wrote that 'Verona was just one of many small towns under the domination of the State of Venice',¹⁵⁹ and thus did not write at length about the history of the city. Regardless of Thomas's views on the city, accounts of identifiable landmarks such as Piazza Bra and the Arena Roman amphitheatre were available during the period in which Shakespeare was penning *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, how much of the accounts he was able to filter into his narrative is another matter; his first work was focused on the humorous relationships between the characters and the resolution of the comical problem, and less on painting an accurate picture of the locations he mentions within the narrative.

¹⁵⁹ William Thomas, *The History of Italy* (1549), ed. George B. Parks (New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 82.

Milan is also presented as somewhat unidentifiable by Shakespeare in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, with no notable Milanese landmarks making an appearance in the description of the scenery. Mantua is mentioned as a passing reference only twice in the play, by Outlaw 2 ‘And I from Mantua [...]’ (IV.i.49), and by Silvia ‘To Mantua, where I hear he makes abode’ (IV.iii.23). The city itself is never described within the play, none of the action is ever set in Mantua, nor do the characters ever physically travel to the region; its mention only being used as a way to insert another “exotic” location into Shakespeare’s early Italianate play. Similarly, the fourth Italian city to be mentioned in the play is Padua, but many critics believe that the mention of Padua was unintentional, or potentially a printing error. William C. Carroll notes in the introduction to the Arden 2018 edition of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* that Padua ‘is either a joke, a confusion by Shakespeare or an error in the transcription and printing process [...] like many other editors, I have emended to ‘Milan’, yet the F reading has been successfully played as Speed’s joke greeting to a confused Lance’.¹⁶⁰ These examples of “errors”, or lack of description of the given locations may lead one to assume that Shakespeare made these mistakes due to his limited education, however, this is not strictly true. When considering his relationship with Florio, the influence of his contemporaries, and the access he may have had to traveller’s accounts of Italy, Shakespeare’s depictions of Italy in his early plays becomes more obvious. His early Italianate plays were created during a time when he was not fully established as a playwright, and the concept of using Italy for inspiration may have been new to him, and thus he may have confused elements of the information passed to him. This notion supports the errors found within *Two Gentlemen of Verona* as well as the lack of any identifiable monuments

¹⁶⁰ William C. Carroll (ed.), William Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018) p. 78.

within the locations mentioned within the narrative. Interestingly, Florio had read Paolo Mariglia's *Historia Dell'Antichita di Milano, Divisa in Qvattro Libri* (1592), a series retelling the history of Milan in four volumes, for his collections of *A World of Words* (1958) and *Queen Ann's New World of Words* (1611). If we continue to assume that Shakespeare's friendship with Florio allowed him access to the array of Italian books within his collection, it would be plausible to then assume that the playwright may have read more about the city mentioned within his early play. Although this series does not provide a viable navigable route from Verona to Milan, it would have given the playwright an insight into the history of the city, its customs, and the different types of individuals who called the city home. However, it appears as though Shakespeare did little to reflect his reading in his narrative, as the locations resemble English towns and cities rather than "exotic" and far away Italian lands with courtiers. Regardless of the active reading he may have undertaken when attempting to understand the geography of northern Italy, it does not answer the questions of how Proteus and Valentine sailed between Verona and Milan.

The more Shakespeare learnt about Italy, the more prominent it became within his Italianate narratives. As he became more familiar with Italian theatre techniques, such as Cinquecento comedy, and had growing access to more translated and untranslated texts, the details surrounding Italy became more evident in and important for his canon. *The Comedy of Errors* can be described as one of the playwright's most derivative works, taking inspiration from a range of sources and literary movements, predominantly Roman sources, conventions found in sixteenth-century Italian comedy, and more "local" sources such as earlier English comedies or pamphlets published by Nashe and Greene respectively. Shakespeare drew on elements that he was familiar with, namely the works of Plautus for sections of the narrative of *The Comedy of Errors*, as well as for *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of*

Windsor, and *Twelfth Night*, rather explicitly supporting the concept of Shakespeare education, as the works of Plautus were widely taught in Elizabethan Grammar schools, as discussed earlier with the evidence from Baldwin. Given that his main source was Plautus' *Menaechmi*, with elements of *Amphitruo* also evident, Ariana Traill argues that the playwright used a third Plautine source for *The Comedy of Errors*, Plautus' *Casina*, which 'provides the dramatic framework for Errors 2.1, a prototype for the character of Luciana, and a variation on the *uxor dotata* that explains some of the differences between Adriana and the *Menaechmi* wife'.¹⁶¹ The prevailing use of the *contaminato* technique by Shakespeare, as described by Renaissance rhetoricians, shows the playwright drawing from a range of different influences to create a comedic narrative. Even though *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* was a popular enough play for Shakespeare, it lacked a definitive source, which may indicate a lack of care or preparation compared to later plays where he has done more prior reading. Italy is thus used as an exotic location, rather than engaged with on a deep cultural level.

By the time he came to write *The Comedy of Errors*, Shakespeare had decided to hearken back to the texts he was exposed to during his educational years, as well as adding rhetorical elements from popular Italian comedies, thus showing that he was beginning to expand his source range as a playwright. It can be argued that the easiest source material for Shakespeare to turn to was that which he has studied at school, allowing him to mix the stories of great Latin writers with the Italian comical rhetoric of the Cinquecento. Cartwright postulates that there is in fact an Italian source for *The Comedy of Errors*; Ariosto's *I Suppositi* may have provided Shakespeare with the idea for the climactic "lock-out" scene in III.i.¹⁶² Shakespeare would have had access to Gascoigne's translation of Ariosto which was first published in 1573 in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowers (Supposes, Jocasta, etc)*, so when the

¹⁶¹ Ariana Traill, "'Casina' and 'The Comedy of Errors'", *International Journal of the Classic Tradition*, 18 (2011), pp. 497-522 (p. 497).

¹⁶² Ibid.

playwright came to compose *Errors*, he was not only using his knowledge of classical Latin works to influence elements of his narratives, but also widening his source material by beginning to incorporate elements from Italian novellas. With a translation of Ariosto being available to him at the time, this is the most plausible author Shakespeare would have started with, before widening his reading even further when taking inspiration from untranslated Italian materials that will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Perhaps the playwright wanted to test his Latin skills on a comedy, before using these skills to help with reading, or partially reading, untranslated Italian texts, or Italian texts that Shakespeare deemed important enough to read in the original language.

Shakespeare's use of texts studied during his time at grammar school continued to grow as his career progressed. The plague, subsequent closure of the theatres, and alleged meeting with Florio prompted the playwright to explore his poetic skills in more detail. During a period when he was actively undertaking the task of adapting Edward Hall's and Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles for the *Henry VI* plays, Shakespeare was also learning to become 'remarkably bold in altering, editing, and omitting source material to support freshly fictionalised versions of events and characters, while adding extended passages of reflection and debate'.¹⁶³ This newfound boldness is visible within the poetry writtenduring this period, namely *Venus and Adonis* (c. 1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). As mentioned earlier, some of Shakespeare's plays, especially his earliest and latest plays, were collaborative works, however, it is commonly presumed that his narrative poems are solo works; this is important to consider as it shows how he is using his independent composition process while creating a type of literature that he had never attempted before.

¹⁶³ William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, eds. Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen, (London: Methuen, 2010) p. 57.

Venus and Adonis is a poem that shows the self-confidence and self-fashioning of Shakespeare as a writer, not a mere playwright, with more focus on language and technique rather than dialogue and action. Bullough supports the notion, commenting that ‘the style, so much richer and more glowing than that of the earliest Histories and comedies, suggests either a new literary discipleship or some recent enrichment of personal experience, perhaps both’.¹⁶⁴ The notable change within the playwright’s writing technique is noticed by scholars such as Bullough, which further supports the notion that Shakespeare was being guided by Florio during the closure of the theatres, and experimenting with texts that were used by his contemporaries, or untranslated for the masses during the period in which he was composing his narratives. The main source model used as inspiration for *Venus and Adonis* has been named as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, a text which I have previously noted the playwright knew well due to it featuring heavily in the Elizabethan curriculum. Schoolboys learning Latin would have likely had access to Arthur Golding’s *The XV. Bookes of P. Ovidius Naso, Entytuled Metamorphosis* and George Turberville’s *The Heroicall Epistles of Publius Ovidius Naso, in Englishe Verse*,¹⁶⁵ both published in the same year, 1567, which would have given students access to translated versions of *Metamorphoses*. Shakespeare’s use of the Venus and Adonis myth is of notable importance because his poem showcases ‘two of his most radical alterations [which] are so smoothly woven into the poem’s fabric that they can pass virtually unnoticed’.¹⁶⁶ Venus’ companion, Cupid, has been wholly omitted from the poem except for a single mention, and ultimately makes Adonis recoil in response to Venus’ sexual advances. Renaissance painters, such as Tintoretto, have interpreted Adonis in their art as he is depicted in the Ovidian myth; as a ‘sexually mature young man with whom Venus enjoys a fully consummated love affair’.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, vol. 1, p. 161.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas Heywood, *Art of Love*, ed. M. L. Stapleton (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2003), p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen, p. 57.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.



Fig. 1.3¹⁶⁸

Those who are familiar with Ovid's original narrative may have assumed that Shakespeare may have not known *Metamorphoses* well enough to write an accurate poetic homage to the classical myth, and thus deduce that he was uneducated or lacked the intelligence to understand such an important myth within literature. Although it is not traditional for Venus' advances to go unrecognised without any erotic response from Adonis, in altering the core of the myth, Shakespeare has in turn begun to use elements from his sources that he enjoys and omits or changes elements that he does not feel work with his reworking of the narrative. In order to rework his source material, Shakespeare needed to have extensive knowledge of the source material, as this would aid him in interpreting plots, sub-plots, and contextual cues that he could mould for his new edited narrative, like that seen in *Venus and Adonis*, or an amalgamation of different sources, which can be seen in his later plays. Again, the argument that he was uneducated and unable to read and understand Latin texts appears to fall apart

¹⁶⁸ Domenico Tintoretto, *Venus Lamenting the Death of Adonis*, 1580-90, oil on canvas, 108.6 x 142.2 cm, University of Arizona Museum of Art, Arizona.

when we look at the language and construction of his narratives. Even though the characters within the poem are vastly different from the original Ovidian myth, this is not necessarily an indication of Shakespeare's ineptness with the Latin language. Instead, there are instances within the poem where he adapts and develops Ovid's narrative. For example, the environment in which the events unfold has been enriched: the vast Ancient Greek landscape depicted by Ovid was expertly changed by Shakespeare into a more identifiable English location, such as the Forest of Warwickshire, thus giving the poem a more realistic backdrop for his reader to imagine and resonate with; a technique that he would continue to use with many of his subsequent Italianate and Latinate narratives. Duncan-Jones notes that the environment of *Venus and Adonis* has 'naturalistic evocations of light effects and of birds, plants and animals'¹⁶⁹, which further shows how the playwright was expanding and refining his techniques during the closure of the theatres, and subsequently using these new techniques when creating narratives for the stage after the reopening of the theatres. This emphasis on the beauty of nature was greatly appreciated by Coleridge, who said:

Nature, the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms; - each exterior is the physiognomy of the being with, - its true image reflected and thrown out from the concave mirror; - and even such is the appropriate excellence of her chosen poet, of our own Shakespeare [sic], - himself a nature humanized, a genial understanding directing self-consciously a power and an implicit wisdom deeper even than our consciousness.¹⁷⁰

Venus and Adonis was heavily fashionable during Shakespeare's day as it certainly helped to establish a tradition of erotic mythological poetry. After this run of success for the narrative poem, it was neglected for many centuries until Coleridge's lecture on the narrative poems in 1811 which 'gave ample proof of [Shakespeare's] possession of a most profound,

¹⁶⁹ Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen, p. 63.

¹⁷⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Shakespeare Judgement equal to his Genius' in Jonathan Bate (ed.), *The Romantics on Shakespeare* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 128-129 (pp. 128-9).

energetic, and philosophical mind'.¹⁷¹ However, this impression of the poem did not remain, as 'scholars and critics seldom mention Venus [...] without apologies expressed or implied'.¹⁷² This judgement is less to do with how well Shakespeare knew his source material, and more to do with the poem's underlying message against lust. There have since been conflicting statements regarding the reason behind the composition of the narrative poem, and how well it reflects Ovid's true meaning. R. P. Miller offers a moral reading of the playwright's poem, commenting that the poem was 'a moral lesson against man yielding to lust, with the rider that adultery is sure to be found out',¹⁷³ which causes the poem to be interpreted as 'a mythological re-enactment of man's fall to sin'.¹⁷⁴ Although the ultimate scope of the poem remains unknown, it is pleasing to see Shakespeare's first narrative poem cause such detailed debate within criticism regarding its meaning; this extended argument as to why Ovid's original meaning of the poem has changed further shows how he was beginning to take his source materials and mould them into his own work in order to fulfil an image or scope that was closer to Shakespeare's own views on interests. This technique of moulding and changing his sources will become more evident within the following chapters, where I will explore how he changed the source materials for his remaining Italianate and Latinate plays. Shakespeare may have also had access to *Ars Amatoria* and *Fasti*; he may have also taken inspiration from his contemporaries who also used Ovid as a model for their own works, for example Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (1593) and Thomas Lodge's *Scylla's Metamorphosis* (1589).

¹⁷¹ S. M. Coleridge, *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other English Poets*, ed. T. Ashe (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1900), p. 223.

¹⁷² William Shakespeare, *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Poems*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1938), p. 474.

¹⁷³ A. C. Hamilton, 'Venus and Adonis', in *Studies in English Literature*, 1 (1961), 1-15 (p. 2).

¹⁷⁴ R. P. Miller, 'Venus, Adonis, and the Horses', *ELH*, 19 (1952), 249-64 (p. 263).

The history of Shakespeare's education and the link it has to the eloquence of his works has been an argument that has dominated scholarly Shakespearean research for many years; with denialists using the playwright's education, or supposed lack thereof, as evidence of authorship inaccuracies. Even though very little evidence regarding Shakespeare's early years and education remains, we can deduce a logical path for him through records that are still available to us. The points raised in this chapter show why most scholars are now happy to assume that Shakespeare was educated enough for him to be able to read Latin to a proficient level and explore the contexts of classical texts that he would return to during his career as a playwright, and subsequently his career as a poet. Gabriel Egan accurately states that the 'measurements of features that were wrongly thought to be distinctive, in scholarly overestimation of the value of evidence, and in faulty calculations or likelihood',¹⁷⁵ which supports the idea that Shakespearean scholars, theorists, and denialists have a tendency to give weight to evidence within the canon that may not be as accurate as one first thought. Similarly, mistakes or changes to a source that Shakespeare made with his narratives are not necessarily evidence that Shakespeare was not "real" or was the pen name for another author or figure of the Renaissance. Indeed his involved engagement with Italian sources justify the close reading which will be discussed in the following chapter. Through more thorough research and more in-depth investigations into both Shakespeare's life and works, we are now realising that we should not dismiss his knowledge of Latin, and thus his subsequent knowledge of Italian, as he was more than qualified to read and interpret these texts. This use of both translated and untranslated texts is important when considering the playwright's relationship with Italian literature in particular, as it shows his proficiency with Latinate

¹⁷⁵ Gabriel Egan, 'A History of Shakespearean Authorship Attribution', in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, eds. Gabriel Egan and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 27-47 (pp.27-8).

languages, his relationship with them, and how is he able to read and manipulate Italian texts to benefit his Italianate and non-Italianate narratives.

The aim of this chapter has been to show that Shakespeare was educated to a relatively standard level during his time at the King Edward IV Grammar School in Stratford-Upon-Avon, and that the insecurity over his lack of university education which has provided much fuel to the authorship controversies should now be put to rest. The new narrative that is emerging is of an apprentice playwright, learning from others and self-educating with the help of fellow playwrights and perhaps Florio, which provides a credible narrative for how Shakespeare emerges from a provincial education to an accomplished playwright. For this thesis specifically, the significance of this recent reappraisal is that we can now confidently look at many Italian references which follow and explore those references knowing more about their intentions. Therefore, the argument for Shakespeare's education and intent to use classical and Italian sources justifies the close reading of those Italian influences which will be explored during the subsequent chapters. In the next chapter I will take one play – *Twelfth Night* - as an example to show the myriad of potential sources and the intricate difficulties of identifying Shakespeare's influences.

Chapter II: The difficulty of identifying Shakespeare's Italian sources:

A case-study on *Twelfth Night*

It is one thing to say that a Shakespearean play might have had an Italian source, but another to prove it. Discussions of Shakespeare's sources will often point to earlier works with similar plots, but there is a minefield of difficulties and uncertainties in confirming precisely which earlier works influenced him and – equally importantly – how Shakespeare might have had access to those sources. To highlight the difficulties and pitfalls inherent in such a discussion, I shall take *Twelfth Night* as an example, exploring the multiple possible influences and highlighting the uncertainty that permeates any exploration of sources. *Twelfth Night* has been regarded as 'a masterpiece of recapitulation'¹⁷⁶ by Leslie Hotson; given the interest in Italian literature in Early Modern England, it is not surprising that some of those sources and influences recapitulated in the play are Italian. It is widely accepted that works of Shakespeare's contemporaries, as well as works of medieval writers, greatly influenced him when crafting his great pieces of theatre; however, there are also examples of scholars considering how greatly *Italian* literature has influenced his plots and political stances within certain plays. Melissa Emerson Walter, for example, writes that 'More than half of Shakespeare's comedies contain a plot borrowed from an Italian novella, [...] He knew novella as part of an Italianate theatrical and textual culture, and his participation in novelesque discourse goes beyond the plots that have traditionally been seen as sources for his plays'.¹⁷⁷ Chris Stamatakis and Enza De Francisci have also collected writings on the transnational exchange between Italy and Shakespeare, with Stamatakis writing that 'given the shifting hegemony of Italian and English literature over the early modern period, the direction

¹⁷⁶ Leslie Hotson, *Shakespeare's Motley* (New York: Haskell Publishers Inc, 1982), p. 71.

¹⁷⁷ Melissa Emerson Walter, *The Italian Novella and Shakespeare's Comic Heroines* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), p. 3.

of cultural transfer in the first instance from Italy to Shakespeare, who derives material and inspiration from Italian sources'.¹⁷⁸ In light of this, the recapitulation of the *Twelfth Night*, to use Hotson's words, is difficult to deny, with tropes from the playwright's previous comedies from the first half of his career making an appearance, but the sources outside of his own narratives are crucial to understanding how he interacted with foreign sources once he gained access to them.

It is almost impossible to identify definitively the sources Shakespeare would have used without concrete external evidence such as comments from the playwright himself detailing his composition process. Thus, we are left to make educated assumptions based on circumstantial and literary clues. If we were to discount the elements he borrowed from his previous comedies, there are six specific texts that have the potential to be direct sources for *Twelfth Night*.

Author / Playwright	Title of Source	Date of Publication/Performance
Intronati di Sienna	Gl'Ingannati	1531, Sienna
Niccoló Secchi	Gl'Inganni	1547, Milan
Matteo Bandello	Novelle	1554, Lucca
Giraldi Cinthio	Hecatommithi	1565, Mondovì
Barnaby Riche	Riche His Farewell to the Militarie Profession	1581, London
Curzio Gonzaga	Gl'Inganni	1592, Venice

Fig. 2.1

¹⁷⁸ Chris Stamatikis, 'Introduction', in *Shakespeare, Italy, and Transnational Exchange* ed. Enza De Francisci and Chris Stamatikis (Oxford: Routledge, 2017), pp. 1-23 (p. 2).

However, the play's tropes of a shipwreck, a woman disguising herself as a man, cross-wooing, and the separation and eventual reunion of twins are all well-worn devices found within Plautine comedy. This raises questions as to whether Plautus should be in turn classed as a source for Shakespeare, and therefore whether Shakespeare directly borrows from the other sources here, or whether they all share a heritage dating back to Plautus' time.

Another point worth noting is that amongst the proposed sources there is an English translation of an Italian play by Barnaby Riche. Including a translation as a source may appear to be counterintuitive to my argument at first, but translations are a crucial component for understanding how Shakespeare may have gained access to Italian sources. English translations of obscure Italian plays and novellas provide an easy steppingstone for Shakespeare, who may still have read the translation and felt the need to consult the original text in order to read the original narrative for himself. But even if this second step was not taken, these sources all derive from Italian originals and thus show Shakespeare turning towards the culture and literature of Italy as he sought new ideas for plays. Confusion abounds over these texts: they all have instances of the central tropes that are crucial to the plot of *Twelfth Night*, but some of them have been identified more due to misunderstandings with their titles and not because they themselves share compelling similarities with Shakespeare's play. The very act of discussing Shakespeare's sources results in a perpetuation of these sources in relation to Shakespeare's play. Even if we name them only to discount them, we still name them, and so they go on featuring within the narrative of Shakespeare's play. As I will discuss, some sources are named and agreed upon predominantly due to previous critical consensus, and one of my aims in this chapter is to look afresh upon the sources without prejudice. Fig 2.1 depicts a comprehensive list of the sources associated with Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* as well as their year of performance, publication, and, if applicable, their translation into English.

At a surface glance, these proposed pieces of literature could all be identified as sources given that they all contain one or more of the elements found within *Twelfth Night*. There are several approaches one could take when narrowing the field in order to properly ascertain which of these texts are the most likely to have been consulted by the playwright: analysis of each plot for further similarities or distinguishing features; consideration of any external evidence; closer reading of the text to identify borrowed language or themes. We must also go further and ask not simply *what* the source is, but moreover *how* Shakespeare would have accessed that source. Ideally, the two questions would require a simultaneous response as each will inform the other; but in practice we must answer each one tentatively in part with an awareness of the other until we can begin to close in on a likely candidate for a source. Even then this presumes there to be one singular source, when, as Helen Kaufman notes, ‘it is not unlikely that he was familiar with more than one account of the story’.¹⁷⁹

Primarily then, the purpose of this study is not to definitively identify a source, but rather to use *Twelfth Night* as an example to show the difficulty and precarity of identifying the sources of Shakespeare’s plays. To do this I will indicate the intimate similarities between Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and his possible Italian influences. This in turn leads to important questions, which are interchangeable within previous and subsequent chapters of this thesis, such as how and why Shakespeare might decide to change aspects of the ‘original’ narratives; how he might be so familiar with the texts, whether any translations may have aided him, or if his scholarly knowledge of Latin and Greek were sufficient enough when reading Italian. The correlation between this chapter will show how circular the investigations into Shakespeare’s Italian influences can be, as each informs the other, and any

¹⁷⁹ Helen A. Kaufman, ‘Nicolo Secchi as a Source of *Twelfth Night*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 5 (1954), 271-80 (p. 271).

discoveries will link back to texts he studied at school, friendships he made during his career, and important collaborations he embarked on as a developing playwright in London. To better understand the work needed to address these larger questions, this case-study will call attention to sections of the sources in order to analyse potential translations and appropriations used by Shakespeare.

2.2 Wider Trends

Before we consider the potential texts in greater detail, we must begin by questioning whether their similarity alone is enough to warrant their consideration. One immediate issue in identifying sources is the questionable assumption that similarity between two texts is equivalent to a direct connection between them. Even discounting the possibility of sheer coincidence, there remains a path of indirect connection wherein a text can prove widely influential, starting trends which later writers can then adopt in ignorance of the original source. *Twelfth Night* is a notable example of a play that may have been heavily influenced by works of Italian literature both of the Medieval and Renaissance periods, not to mention popular trends of the Early Modern English stage, so it is not surprising to see that there are aspects of *Twelfth Night* that draw upon wider cultural trends both concurrent and separate from any specific sources.

For example, a theme that is prevalent within *Twelfth Night* and all six of the proposed possible sources is that of cross-dressing, but that is a theme which extends far beyond the seven works. Clearly we cannot work back through every individual example of cross-dressing in culture to pinpoint an influence on Shakespeare, nor should we. The Renaissance stage displayed a great number of plays that contained cross-dressed characters; in his book, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage* (1994), Michael Shapiro lists eighty instances of cross-dressing in the appendix, but it is impossible to know the exact number

there were due to many works being lost or undocumented.¹⁸⁰ This not only widens the potential influences on *Twelfth Night* but also in turn shows how Shakespeare was not alone in partaking in this trend. Even just limiting ourselves to Shakespeare's own works, the theme of cross-dressing is not uncommon: out of the thirty-eight surviving plays attributed to him, seven involve cross-dressing. In three of these plays - *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* cross-dressing is central to the action of the play – both being the complication and resolution of the plot. The heroines in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Cymbeline* also disguise themselves as men, whereas in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* the male characters disguise themselves as women. Furthermore, one can speculate that during the production of three of Shakespeare's earliest history plays, *Henry VI*, *Henry VI Part III* and *King John*, the presence of women in battle scenes implies they may have appeared in masculine battle garments. Despite the many examples of cross-dressing within Shakespeare's narratives, he was not the only Renaissance playwright to adopt the act of cross-dressing as a vessel for exploring the identity of his characters; Dekker and Middleton also use the theme of cross-dressing to interrogate the idea of identity within their fictionalized dramatization of the life of Mary Frith, *The Roaring Girl* (1607). It is interesting to consider that it was not just English playwrights that adopted the trope of cross-dressing within their narratives; Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina's last work, *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes* [Don Gil of the Green Breeches] (1615) revolves around the play's hero, Dona Diana, who cross-dresses as a man in order to 'daringly defy conventions if needs be to regain the affection of her fickle husband-to-be'.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 205.

¹⁸¹ Elizabeth Freund, 'Twelfth Night and the Tyranny of Interpretation', *ELH*, 53 (1986), 471-489 (p. 478).

Cross-dressing is a trope that extends far beyond any one individual source to instead be a cultural trend. However, every trend has a beginning, difficult as it may be to identify conclusively. As discussed in the previous chapter, there was a general wave of influence from across the continent on the English stage. The influx of cross-dressing comedy on the European Renaissance stage was partially due to a movement that was being created on the Italian Renaissance stage. The end of the fifteenth century saw a form of stage comedy developed by humanists appear called *commedia erudita* ('learned comedy') which was 'being constructed according to rules drawn from Latin Models'.¹⁸² Unlike its theatrical contemporary of the vernacular and improvisational *commedia dell'arte*, *commedia erudita* closely followed scholarly works written by earlier Italian or ancient Roman authors in either Italian or Latin. Sources included Roman dramatists such as Plautus and Terence, as well as works of Italian humanist Giovanni Boccaccio, philosopher-playwright Giambattista della Porta, and Ludovico Ariosto, who is considered to be 'the best writer of early Italian comedy and a principal figure in the establishment of this literary form'.¹⁸³ Due to the elevated language of this new dramatic form, it was not easily comprehensible to the general public, and thus these plays were generally preformed for nobility by *dilettanti* or nonprofessional actors.

It is possible that both the influences of the trend of cross-dressing on the European stage, and the development of a new type of comedy from the Italian stage led Shakespeare to his sources for *Twelfth Night*; we can speculate that Shakespeare founded the main action of his comedy on *Menaechmi* by Plautus, as the story also sees a pair of twins separated at a young age search for each other relentlessly. Seeing that the only similarity between *Twelfth Night* and *Menaechmi* is the theme of the displaced twins, it may be a stretch to assume that

¹⁸² Douglas Radcliffe-Umstead, *The Birth of Modern Comedy in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 124.

¹⁸³ <https://www.britannica.com/art/commedia-erudita> [accessed 22 May 2019]

Shakespeare read and adapted the Plautine play, although presumably he may have well read it in his school days. But it is more plausible to once again assume that the trend of the time caused scholars to find connections between Shakespeare and other works that also included instances of separated twins attempting to reunite with each other. If one was to speculate on the ways in which Shakespeare may have had access to the *Menaechmi*, we could potentially link the text back to his time in school where Plautus was a common author for schoolmasters to teach, or through copies held by his contemporaries and acquaintances, such as Florio, it is possible that he may have visited the work later in life; it is equally possible that Plautus is an indirect influence through later permutations of his work, which Shakespeare may have known of.

For example, there is Dovizi's *La Calandria* (1513). In this play 'motifs from Plautus are combined with sustained reference to Boccaccio; and much of the pleasure which the original audience derived from the play must have been due to an understanding – akin to that which they would have experienced from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* – of the skill with which the author had commanded and redirected his literary sources'.¹⁸⁴ This effect in which the audience were well aware, and appreciative of, the sources and heritage of the piece is a deliberate technique called *contaminatio* used by the playwrights of ancient Rome whereby the writer did not create a new piece of theatre, instead of being influenced by a collection of translated ancient Greek works. *La Calandria* took inspiration from Plautus, and depicts the tale of two Greek twins separated at birth during a Turkish-led raid on their native city. However, Dovizi distances himself slightly from the narrative of Plautus when he decides to give the twins different sexes and has the female twin Santilla disguise herself as a man and

¹⁸⁴ E. Bentley, *The Genius of the Italian Theatre* (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 43.

call herself by her brother's name Ludio, a prominent change that Shakespeare kept for the narrative of *Twelfth Night*.

In short, there are several elements of Shakespeare's plays which can be found to have any number of precedents in previous works of literature and drama, without even considering additional influences, including biographical impacts. One can speculate, for example, that as Shakespeare himself was the father of twins, Hamnet and Judith, they may have inspired him to use twins as his protagonists. We could even go further to suggest that the death of Hamnet may also have fed into the narrative of *Twelfth Night* as he may have mirrored the loss of his son with Viola's apparent loss of her brother, thus making her character more independent and headstrong. This could be true, or it could not be true; we simply do not know. Even though we may be compelled to find biographical similarities between some of Shakespeare's characters and members of his own family in order to have a more intimate understanding of his works, there is a danger of overanalysing ideas when reading biography into literature; conversely not should we fully discount the idea that influences can be personal as well as literary.

Thus, the range of potential sources is broad and nebulous. Allowing for the wider world of biographical influence and cultural trends, this chapter will now attempt to isolate the likeliest potential literary source. To narrow down this, we must look for consistency of similarity across the plot of Shakespeare's play and its potential influences. We must ask which of the earlier plays most resembles *Twelfth Night*; how can we identify which similarities are coincidence or evidence of direct or indirect succession; and, in the event of identifying a likely source, how do we explain Shakespeare's access to that source?

2.2 Internal Evidence I: Similarities in Plot and Character

The identification of a source can be confirmed by either external evidence, which is scant in the case of Shakespeare, or internal evidence. Close-reading is time-consuming and consequently academics begin with broader similarities to nominate and shortlist potential sources, looking for similarities across the wider plot of the text and any earlier iterations. If we assess the plots of the proposed sources in more detail, we can quickly identify the handful of likely sources; but to further narrow that down we should identify specific similarities unique to one text. None of the earlier texts have all of the elements used by Shakespeare within *Twelfth Night*, suggesting that he may have amalgamated elements from different texts, as well as introducing ideas which occurred to him independently. These discrepancies within the similarities and differences display the difficulties associated with attempting to uncover, with any amount of certainty, the sources that Shakespeare may have used. The similarities between the four texts may suggest a clear trend occurring within the literature of the time, discrediting the notion that Shakespeare may have read Italian, but supporting the idea that he may have used his Italian sources to profit off a narrative trend that was proving popular in the theatre during the composition of *Twelfth Night*.

The text most consistently agreed upon as a primary source is *Gl'Ingannati* (The Deceived Ones). This Italian play was written by a literary society that referred to themselves as the Accademia degli Intronati (full title: *Comedia del Sacrificio degli Intronati celebrato nei Giuochi dun Curnuoale in Siena*), a centre of intellectual life founded in Siena. Even though it was not published until 1537 in Venice, it was being performed as early as 1531, which makes it a likely source for the stories retold by Bandello and Cinthio as well as others: 'other editions appeared at frequent intervals before 1602, a fact which testifies great popularity; and within the same year several imitations or translations were published in Italian, Spanish, and Latin; the play's popularity and ample translations could indicate that

Shakespeare found it easy to acquire a translation that would meet his knowledge of both Latin and Italian'.¹⁸⁵ No English translation was available at the time, and the play was not translated in its entirety until after Shakespeare's death. (The most recent translation is of Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella published in 2017.) Thus, if we are to propose this as a source-text, we are then presuming that Shakespeare directly read either the untranslated Italian text, or the Latin versions of the play, or that he sought help in translating by his friends and contemporaries who knew Italian to a better degree than himself. Although it is not listed as one of the texts consulted by Florio when writing his *World of Words* (1598) and *Queen's Ann New World of Words* (1611), it is not impossible to speculate that he may have been in possession of a copy for personal use or was given a copy to look at by one of his many acquaintances. Whether Florio personally owned a copy of the book or not, we can say that as an Italian teacher supposedly close to Shakespeare, Florio's aid in reading or acquiring the untranslated text would have helped Shakespeare better understand the overall tone of the play, and helped him choose what elements he wanted to mimic within his version of the retelling.

¹⁸⁵ Morton Luce, *Shakespeare, The Man and His Work: Seven Essays* (London: Marshall and Co., 1913), p. 9.

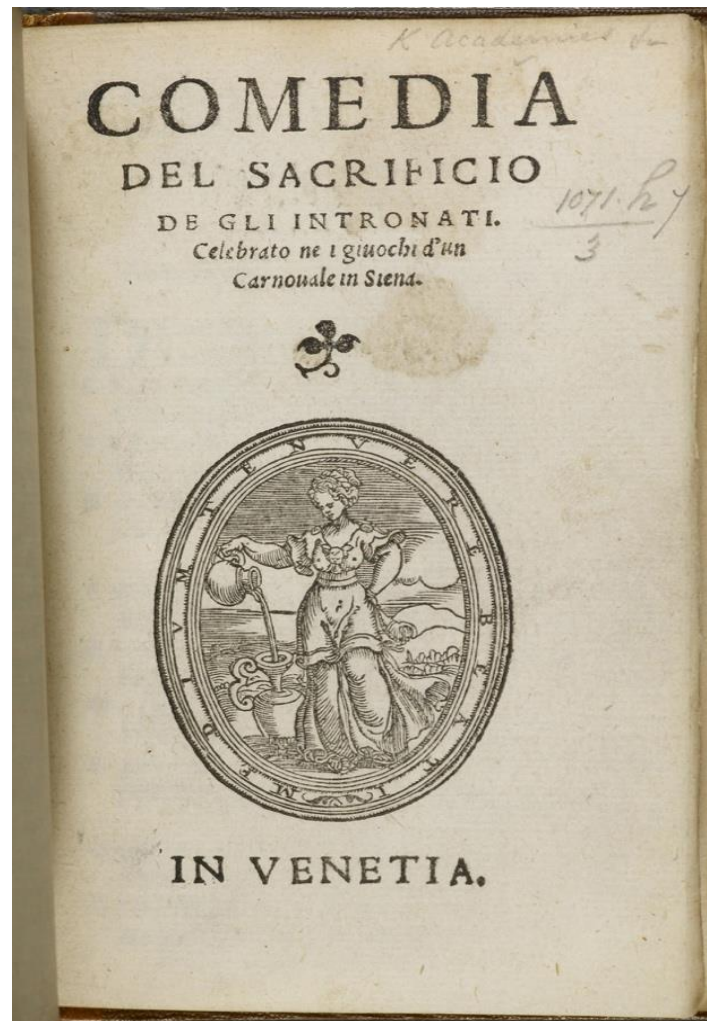


Fig: 2.2¹⁸⁶

Gl'Ingannati is found on the eighteenth page within a collection of sonnets and poems called *Il Sacrificio* 'supposed to be sung to the lyre by each member of the society as he casts into an altar flame some token of a mistress who has deserted him'.¹⁸⁷ The play is 'essentially a Plautine comedy of mistaken identity',¹⁸⁸ with little attempt to develop the central romantic aspect. Geoffrey Bullough offers a helpful summary of the plot:

An old man, Virginio, has a daughter named Leila and a son named Fabrizio. In the Sack of Rome he lost his son but took his thirteen-year-old daughter to Modena. Leila is now sought in marriage by another old man, Gherardo, who has her father's consent. She, however, loves a young gentleman, Flamminio, and has done so since

¹⁸⁶ Cover page of Nicolò Secchi, *L'Interesse*, 1501.

¹⁸⁷ Luce, p. 9.

¹⁸⁸ *Twelfth Night*, eds. J. M. Lothian & T. W. Craik (London: Methuen, 1975), p. xxxvi.

she came to Modena; he at first returned her love, but, during her absence for a year with her father, he has transferred his love to Gherardo's daughter Isabella, who does not return it. Leila has escaped from the convent where her father has temporarily placed her, and now serves Flamminio (unrecognized) as a page called Fabio, carrying his love-messages to Isabella. Isabella has fallen in love with Fabio, who requires her to repulse Flamminio. Leila's brother Fabrizio now arrives in Modena, with a pedant-tutor and a greedy servant. The old men mistake him for Fabio and they both make the most of their opportunity, Flamminio meanwhile has heard that Isabella loves Fabio, but his revengeful feelings are mollified when Leila's nurse tells him a long story of the constancy of a woman who proves to be Leila, and he marries Leila, Isabella's comic suitor, a Spaniard called Giglio, is tricked out of a valuable rosary by her maid Pasquella.¹⁸⁹

It is worth noting that in his 1958 translation of the play, Bullough omits scenes which he believes to be irrelevant to Shakespeare's narrative; this perfectly illustrates the danger of viewing these texts solely as sources to Shakespeare, as well as how an unwary reader can get a false perspective of the levels of similarities without a corresponding appreciation of their differences. Nonetheless, from the summary of the Italian play, it is obvious to see where the similarities in plot can be found: twins separated under traumatic circumstances, the female heroine cross-dressing as her male brother, the heroine helping a lovesick man while falling in love with him, the twin brother who, upon his return, is confused to be his disguised sister, and a foolish alternative suitor. However, despite there being many similarities between *Twelfth Night* and the Italian *Gl'Ingannati*, there are crucial plot points present in Shakespeare's reworking that are absent from the Italian text, for example, the lack of a shipwreck while travelling to a far offshore island to escape prosecution and the convent where Olivia mourns the death of her family. This suggests that Shakespeare was able to take the base dynamics and relationships of *Gl'Ingannati* but change the circumstances in which they occur. He borrowed and adapted the comedic elements of *Gl'Ingannati*, but omitted the tragic elements deeply rooted within sixteenth-century Italian politics. The temptation is to dismiss this as an unintentional cut due to his limited knowledge of Italian; if attempting to

¹⁸⁹ Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare: The Comedies, 1597-1603*, Vol II (London: Routledge, 1958), pp. 226-339.

understand the complicated history between the Italians and the Spaniards, Shakespeare could have easily become overwhelmed or confused and decided it was easier to ignore the political references. Alternatively, it is possible that the playwright did not care to indulge in the political undertones of his source material. Paul Menzer writes that ‘For the main part, Shakespeare avoided ‘current events’. [...] though Shakespeare was from a small town, his mind was not parochial. His artistic vision was an eccentric one, fired by other plays, by stories out of novellas and fable, by the classical past and England’s pre-Christian era, not the events that eddied around him everyday’.¹⁹⁰

The omission could therefore have been an intentional choice by the playwright in order to make his play more comedic by refusing to mention any distressing events from the Sack of Rome, which had occurred in 1527, or to allow the audience to better resonate with *Twelfth Night* by omitting political events that the audience would not have been able to understand. Although *Twelfth Night* is considered to be an Italianate play due to its sources and fabricated quasi-Italian setting, it has no distinguishable Italian features, thus giving the audience the illusion of being in an “exotic” location, with familiar English tropes. By adding scenes that depict violent events from Italian history, Shakespeare would have alienated the majority of his audience, as not many would have been aware of the horrors bestowed upon Italy during their conflicts with the Spanish. Beecher and Ciavolella note that in *Gl’Ingannati* the ‘harsh realities of Italian history linger quite tellingly throughout the play’,¹⁹¹ for example, the emancipation of Leila’s sex, the character whom Viola mirrors. During the Sack of Rome, women and girls were periodically abducted and raped by the Spanish soldiers. This is described bluntly within *Gl’Ingannati* when Leila’s nursemaid, Clemenzia, asks if she

¹⁹⁰ Paul Menzer, *Shakespeare: A Brief Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), p. 167.

¹⁹¹ Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella, p. 5.

has lost her virginity, to which Leila replies by telling Clemenzia that if she wants to know the answer, she will have to ask the Spanish soldiers who abducted and raped her:

CLEMENZIA. Adunque, hai tu perduto il nome di vergine?

LELIA. Il nome no, ch'io sappi, e massimamente in questa terra. Del resto si vuol domandarne gli spagnuoli che mi tenner prigiona a Roma. (I. 3. 60-3)¹⁹²

[CLEMENZIA. *And so, have you lost the title of virgin?*

LELIA. *Not the title, as far as I know, and especially not in this land. For the rest, you may want to ask the Spaniards, if you like, who held me captive in Rome.*]

The tragic elements of *Gl'Ingannati* that are prevalent to the plot may not have been what attracted Shakespeare to the play in the first place, it may have been its tragi-comic elements that offer the audience moments of relief. The heroine's feelings of vulnerability and the overall dire circumstances in which she finds herself are mostly overshadowed by the scenes of badinage, which are particularly prevalent amongst the secondary characters, encapsulating the festival season for which the play was conceived. Shakespeare was active in adapting the scenes of buffoonery into his own play, borrowing nuanced matters of gender, phallic allusions, almost harmless deceits, and the romantic closure.

As compelling as the relationship between *Gl'Ingannati* and *Twelfth Night* is, when looking at sources we must remember the likelihood of one original source informing many later iterations of the story – in other words, even if we are to suggest a link between the two plays, that need not necessarily imply a direct link, but could be the result of any number of interim texts. Chronologically, the tales which are believed to have been influenced by *Gl'Ingannati* are Charles Estienne's French translation *Le Sacrifice* (1543), republished as *Les Abusez* (1549), Matteo Bandello's tale of 'Nicuola innamorata di Lattanzio' (Nicuola

¹⁹² Accademici Intronati Di Sienna, *Gl'Ingannati*, ed. Ireneo Sanesi (Bari: Laterza & Figli, 1912), p. 18.

who is in love with Lattanzio) which is found within his *Novelle* (1554), the anonymously written *Buggbears* (c. 1560), *Hecatommithi*, part 1, novella 8 (1565) by Giraldi Cinthio, *Los Engañados* (1567) by Lope de Rueda, François de Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, vol. iv, no, 59 (1570), and Barnabe Riche's *Apolonius and Silla* (1581).¹⁹³ Estienne's French version and Rueda's Spanish version of the *Gl'Ingannati* plot have been mentioned in passing by scholars and critics, but never looked at in detail as serious sources for Shakespeare's narrative. This could be for a multitude of reasons, but I suspect that Estienne and Rueda fall victim to the same prejudices English critics impose upon the proposed Italian sources: Shakespeare's lack of knowledge of French, Spanish, and Italian, as well as supposedly not being educated enough to be able to read untranslated works in either French, Spanish, or Italian, despite Shakespeare's use of French in *Henry V*. From my research into the playwright's education and English language-learning habits in the Early Modern Period, I am certain that he would have been able to use materials from France, Spain, and Italy, with some materials being easier for him to read than others. Although this thesis' main scope is to address and identify the link between Shakespeare and Italy, the importance of sources from other countries and in other languages should not be minimized. Eric Hobsbawn notes that 'the idea of England as a monoglot nation is a modern one',¹⁹⁴ supporting the idea that language-learning was prevalent during the Early Modern period. As I have mentioned in chapter I, the learning of a new language was socially charged, with those of a higher class travelling abroad to learn the language or continuing their language learning at university level. However, learning a new language was not reserved solely for members of higher society; priests, merchants, and beggars used their native tongue proactively, causing certain phrases to be integrated into the vocabulary of the English working class. Gallagher notes

¹⁹³ The translation by G. C. Moore Smith in 1910 has been purposefully omitted from this list in order to show only the translations and retellings that are in close publication to the first performance of Shakespeare's play.

¹⁹⁴ Eric Hobsbawn, 'Language, Culture, and National Identity', *Social Research* 63 (1996), 1065-60 (p. 1067).

that although ‘historians have been slow to consider language-learning and linguistic competence from a historical perspective [...] literary scholars have been quicker than historians to consider the importance of multilingualism, translation, and code-switching in the Early Modern period’.¹⁹⁵ If we take Gallagher’s statement into consideration, we must then wonder why certain Shakespearean scholars and critics refuse to give any weight to foreign sources. Estienne’s French reworking of *Gl’Ingannati* is important for us to consider within this chapter because it shows how the Italian story was making its way from Italy to England through different translations. Although Rueda’s Spanish version may not have been as popular as the original Italian, the subsequent French reworking by Estienne, or Riche’s English translation, it is still important to see the progression of the text, and how one text can influence a significant number of other writers in a number of different languages. The importance of Estienne’s *Le Sacrifice* and Rueda’s *Los Engañados* to the interpretation and distribution of *Gl’Ingannati* might almost call for a second (or third) thesis on Shakespeare’s French and Spanish influences; for the purpose of this chapter I shall limit my focus to those Italian source-texts, but acknowledge the potential for these as additional pathways for the original Italian to find its way to England.

Nicolò Secchi may have also taken inspiration from *Gl’Ingannati* when crafting his own similarly titled tale *Gl’Inganni* (The Deceived). Even though it is the best known of Secchi’s plays, it ‘has never been translated into English’,¹⁹⁶ with the only translation being that of French dramatist Pierre Larivey in 1611, who is credited with bringing Italian comedy to the theatres of France. But it is not the only Italian play dealing with this sort of plot to

¹⁹⁵ John Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 16.

¹⁹⁶ Kaufman, p. 273.

have emerged at this time. In a similar fashion to *Gl'Ingannati*, Secchi's *Gl'Inganni* also concerns itself with the tropes of mistaken identity, love, and intrigue:

Anselmo a Genoese merchant, dealing on the east coast, having left his pregnant wife in Genoa, had 2 children, a male called Fortunato and a female named Ginevra. After four years of longing for his family, he returned home to them with the resolve of taking his family with him in order to be less absent from them. He dressed both his children in short tunics, so that even his daughter appeared to be a boy while on the ship. While passing Soria, the ship was robbed by pirates and Anselmo was taken to be a slave. The children were subject to a different fate; the boy had been sold a few times, until he finally arrived in Naples, where he now serves Dorotea, a courtesan. The mother and Ginevra after various mishap were bought by Signor Massimo Caraccioli, on the advice of her mother, Ginevra changed her name, and called herself Ruberto. She continued to pass a man like she did while her mother was alive thinking in that way to better guard her chastity. Fortunato and Ruberto were told by their mother that they are brother and sister. Signor Massimo has a son named Costanzo and a daughter, named Portia. Costanzo is in love with the courtesan Dorothea, owner of Fortunato. Portia, his sister, is in love with Ruberto, even though she is unaware that he is not a man, because she has always seen her as a man. The Female Ruberto, not knowing how to satisfy the needs of Portia, substitutes her brother Fortunato for herself on many nights; consequently, leaving Portia pregnant, and ready to be with child at any moment.

Ruberto, as a woman blinded by love of her master Costanzo, is equally anxious; one for the love which blinds her, the other that Portia's condition may be discovered by others. Massimo, Portia's father, has discovered her affliction, and has sent to Genoa for information regarding Ruberto's family, because if he found him ignoble and unworthy of being his daughter's husband, as he thinks she has been seduced by Ruberto, will have him executed. However, the father of the twins, Anselmo, has been ransomed from the hands of the Turks, and returns with Massimo's messenger, and all will be resolved.¹⁹⁷

Although the plot of Secchi's *Gl'Inganni* does not resemble the plot of *Twelfth Night* as closely as that of *Gl'Ingannati*, there are nevertheless similarities that are difficult for scholars to ignore. Instead of the Sack of Rome, in *Gl'Inganni* the initial tragedy to cause the separation of the twins is pirates, moving one step closer to the shipwreck which initiates Viola and Cesario's predicament. The idea that Manningham was proposing was relatively new and unthought-of as 'no one had ever thought of referring to the Italian drama for the origins of this play, or even for the origin of any of the plays of Shakespeare, and it became

¹⁹⁷ Translated by author.

immediately a point of great interest to obtain this Italian Play and to see how far Manningham was borne out in his suggestion, and also to what extent Shakespeare might be indebted to this work of the Italian dramatist'.¹⁹⁸ Secchi's *Gl'Inganni* has a more obvious comical tone than *Gl'Ingannati* choosing to retain certain political elements, but refusing to use them as part of the main conflict that drives the plot forward. The comedic elements may have appealed to Shakespeare when searching for more mistaken identity narratives, allowing him to use Secchi's play to craft a more comedic play that would resonate more with his English audience.

The main reason for considering *Gl'Inganni* as a potential source will be discussed in the next section, but for now it is worth noting that Secchi's writing may have interested Shakespeare to the point where he was inclined to seek out other works by the Italian playwright which might further complement his growing collection of sources for *Twelfth Night*. Kaufman further suggests that Secchi's *L'Interesse* (1587) should also be credited with providing source elements for *Twelfth Night*, especially with regard to the demeanour of the cross-dressing heroine. *L'Interesse* would have been even more obscure to English readers than Secchi's *Gl'Inganni*, 'aside from a little-known seventeenth-century manuscript translation there has been no translation of this play into English or, for that matter, any language'.¹⁹⁹

Two Italian merchants, Pandolfo and Riccardo, have made a wager on the sex of Pandolfo's expected child, Riccardo betting that it would be a girl and Pandolfo that it would be a boy. A girl was born but Pandolfo, in order to win the wager, has disguised her as a boy and named her Lelio. Meanwhile, Virginia, Pandolfo's older daughter, has been wooed by two youths, Fabio, the son of Riccardo, and Flaminio whose affection she returns. Lelio, on her part, has fallen in love with Fabio and has managed, by borrowing her sister's clothes and by arranging a series of nocturnal meetings, to pass herself off as Virginia on the unsuspecting Fabio. As a result, Lelio is pregnant and turns to Tebaldo, her father's friend, for advice. The situation is

¹⁹⁸ Hunter, p. 391.

¹⁹⁹ Kaufman, p. 276.

further complicated by the rivalry between Fabio and Flaminio. The latter, confident in Virginia's love, is puzzled by Fabio's insistence that Virginia is his. Fabio's servant has confided the secret marriage of Fabio and Virginia to Riccardo who, feeling that his son has taken advantage of the girl, agrees to a very small dowry. At this juncture Tebaldo steps in and solves the difficulties. Riccardo is persuaded by the promise of a larger dowry to forgive the deceit of Pandolfo and accept Lelio instead of Virginia as his daughter.²⁰⁰

Although at first glance *L'Interesse* and *Twelfth Night* do not share any explicit similarities in plot, it is important to note the scenes of cross-dressing of the main female heroine, and the duel scene involving the love interest, heroine, and twin brother. The duel scene is unique to both Shakespeare's and Secchi's narratives and proves to be vital when considering what crucial elements he took from different Italian plays. These similarities remain superficial until the internal evidence is further examined, by looking in detail at the language of the two playwrights to determine how alike they truly are, which will be undertaken later in this chapter. However, even though Kaufman's argument showing 'the points common to *L'Interesse* and *Twelfth Night*'²⁰¹ is compelling, it is a text that one may consider to have been linked to Shakespeare due to its author already being named as a source through one of their other pieces of writing. But in accepting this we also need to consider whether he was able to come into contact with a copy of such a sparsely known text at the time of composing *Twelfth Night*. Shakespeare's use of such texts is plausible; we have evidence of other English playwrights using texts such as John Marston using Sforza Oddi's *I morti vivi* (1578) as a source for one of his plays. It would be similarly possible for Shakespeare to obtain a copy of *L'Interesse* and use it as part of his source repertoire for *Twelfth Night*.

Italian writer, monk, soldier, and bishop Matteo Bandello (1480-1562) also followed the general plot provided by *Gl'Ingannati* in 'Nicuola innamorata di Lattanzio', which is the

²⁰⁰ Bullough, II, p. 275.

²⁰¹ Kaufman, p. 272.

thirty-sixth novella in his collection *Novelle*. Bandello, did, however, change the location of the action from Modena to Jesi, a town near Ancona, and the names of the majority of the characters. When discussing Bandello's narrative as a possible influence on Shakespeare, Bullough notes that 'of foreign narrative versions Shakespeare is most likely to have known Bandello's story',²⁰² alluding to the wider circulation of Bandello's *Novelle* within England during the sixteenth century. Bandello's introduction to 'Nicuola innamorata di Lattanzio' depicts many of the same main tropes found within the majority of the sources for *Twelfth Night*, including the female protagonist cross-dressing as her brother and working for a man she loves disguised as a page:

Nicuola innamorata di Lattanzio va a servirlo vestita da paggio
e dopo molti casi seco si marita, e ciò che ad un suo fratello avvenne.²⁰³

[*Nicuola, who is in love with Lattanzio, goes to serve him dressed as a page
and after many misunderstandings, she marries him, and thus what happened
to her brother is revealed.*]

Bandello's novella provides crucial links between *Twelfth Night* and the original *Gl'Ingannati* narrative. Though both Secchi and Shakespeare remove any mention of the sack of Rome, Bandello decides to keep the historical invasions of Italy by the Germans, Spanish, and Turkish, naming these invasions as the reason behind the separation of the twins Nicuola and Lodovico. Bandello's popularity was noticed by translators and writers alike across Europe, with six of the novellas being translated into French by historian Pierre Boaistuau. We could postulate that Bandello's novella is the most likely Italian source for *Twelfth Night*, on the grounds that it is the text that Shakespeare would have been able to access most easily. If Shakespeare used this as a source, then it may have been the playwright's decision to

²⁰² Bullough, II, p. 276

²⁰³ Matteo Bandello, 'Novella XXXVI', in *Novelle di Matteo Bandello*, 9 vols (Torino: Cugini Pomba, 1853), III, pp. 85-90, (p. 236).

remove any mention of the political and historical events involving Italy within his narrative in order to accommodate his English audience.

In the same year, Belleforest also published a translation and adaptation of the ‘Nicuola and Lattanzio’ novella where he once again changed the names of the main protagonists: ‘The Long and Dolorous Discourse Recorded by Silla for this Sodaine Departure of her Apolonius’. English soldier-turned-writer Barnabe Riche would have most probably taken inspiration from Belleforest’s reworking of Bandello for his own translation, appropriating the character names chosen by the French writer for his ‘Appolonius and Silla’ found in *Barnabe Riche’s Farewell to Militarie Profession*, a collection of eight stories originally published in 1581.

It has been suggested that Belleforest and Riche’s translations also take certain plot elements from Giraldi Cinthio’s *Hecatommithi*, a source used by Shakespeare when crafting the narratives for *Othello* and *Measure For Measure*, and an idea that will be further explored in the fourth chapter. Cinthio’s tale includes the motifs of ‘twins of different sex separated by shipwreck, reared apart and having love-adventures involving disguise and mistaken identities’²⁰⁴, but according to Bullough ‘it neither resembles Riche nor Shakespeare’.²⁰⁵

A text that many critics, such as Bullough, keep returning to is *Apolonius & Silla* (1581), some even naming it Shakespeare’s most likely source. It is, after all, translated into English, thus removing any need to consider whether Shakespeare spoke Italian. But the easiest answer is not necessarily the right one. *Apolonius & Silla* is the second within a collection called *Riche his Farewell to Militarie Profession* containing eight stories written by Barnabe Riche. First published in 1581 in London, the text itself would have been easily

²⁰⁴ Bullough, II, p. 276.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

accessible for Shakespeare and did not require the tedious task of translating as it was written in English. Similarly to Shakespeare, Riche also drew on elements from *Gl'Ingannati*, hence the familiar narrative of a female twin dressing as her brother in order to get close to her master, and a lovesick count, or in Riche's case a Duke. Unlike Shakespeare and his Italian counterparts, Riche decides to set his narrative in Constantinople and Cyprus. This may be due to the fact that Riche was familiar with these countries after having travelled to them during this time as a soldier. However, it is interesting to note the argument proposed by Constance C. Relihan regarding Shakespeare's decision to dilute the orientalism of his main source; she attributes Shakespeare's erasure of the east to his concern 'to explore his main themes of (English) gender and sexuality, without the interference of the Turkish cultural stereotypes of the source'.²⁰⁶

Riche's version of the original separated twins and cross-dressing with the romantic intent tale is the source that many scholars, such as Muir and Bullough, conclude to be the most probable source that Shakespeare would have used when crafting his narrative for *Twelfth Night*. Although I do not completely discredit the comments made by these scholars, I feel as though there is enough room to speculate that Shakespeare would have been able to also gain access, consult, and adapt the proposed Italian sources. Even though Bullough and Muir mention the connections between Shakespeare and the Italian texts, they remain sceptical regarding how viable it was for the playwright to gain access to these sources, but if we use the enthusiasm of critics such as Kaufman, it may be possible to prove that the Italian sources should be considered to be as viable as any English or French source that Shakespeare may have come into contact with. But how can we tell?

²⁰⁶ Constance C. Relihan, 'Erasing the way from *Twelfth Night*', in Joyce Green MacDonald, *Race, Ethnicity, and Power in the Renaissance*, ed. Joyce Green MacDonald (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), pp. 80-94 (p. 89).

A surface review of plot similarities thus presents us with any number of potential source-texts, and with that, the realisation that with so many alternatives available, any one proposed source is potentially the wrong one. We must consider not only similarity, but frequency of similarities, if we are to build a compelling case for a source-text. At first glance, one text may appear to be the ultimate source used by Shakespeare but coming to this conclusion by looking at plot summaries alone is very dangerous as it does not show us what detailed elements of the plot were appropriated by Shakespeare, including characterisation, language, and pacing. Furthermore, we must also consider under what circumstances Shakespeare was able to access these sources, whether that be through direct access to a source or a retelling from one of his acquaintances. If Shakespeare was gaining access to these sources through a third-party retelling, how would this affect the depth of his understanding of the narrative? By continuing to look in detail at the external and internal evidence surrounding the proposed source, understanding Shakespeare's sources may become slightly clearer.

2.2 External Evidence: Contemporary Reports and Scholarly Consensus

Similarity of the general plot is clearly not conclusive evidence in itself. Much of this speculation remains hypothetical without external evidence to support it. Just because we can see an earlier text is similar to Shakespeare's play does not automatically identify it as a source, unless we can also prove it was actually possible for Shakespeare to access it. At this point, in the absence of explicit external evidence, we are left with making reasonable assumptions and best guesses. Even if we can prove a source was published or performed in England prior to the writing of *Twelfth Night*, that does not mean Shakespeare read it. We cannot automatically assume that Shakespeare read the work himself, but nor can we rule it out; considering whether he read original Italian or possible translated sources will allow us

to better understand precisely how this popular story of the heroine in love with a man while disguised as his male servant became so popular in literature from across Europe.

At present, there is a lack of surviving evidence that outlines Shakespeare's reading habits; however, this lack of evidence does not negate the argument in question. In chapter 1 I outlined the likely education Shakespeare would have received and the materials he may have had access to as a playwright in London. Shakespeare may have known something of these Italian works, it is certainly likely that himself and other playwrights might have access to these works through private libraries of the nobility; this availability of resources would allow the rising use of adaptations of popular European tales, but also the success of those plays would in turn encourage more writers to access such works for further inspiration. It is possible that he may have had access to the private libraries of noblemen who were interested in collecting plays, novellas, and poems from abroad in order to expand their impressive collection of books. London had a substantial number of academic gentlemen, like Sir Richard Drummond of Hawthorne, who collected copies of both Italian and French literature in their private libraries. This was not an uncommon practice at the time, as we can observe playwrights such as John Fletcher using the libraries of noblemen such as that of the Count of Gondomar, who may have had a wide range of Mediterranean literature due to his connections with Spain due to his position as a Spanish diplomat. José A. Pérez Diez notes that within Europe 'theatrical performance flourished undisturbed throughout the seventeenth century and beyond, and where documentary evidence of dramatic composition and theatrical practice is much richer'.²⁰⁷ Spain has even been able to preserve some of its Renaissance literature through databases that are openly available to the public. Although Shakespeare and Fletcher were writing four hundred years prior to the invention of online databases, this

²⁰⁷ José A. Pérez Diez, 'What the Quills Can Tell: The Case of John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *Love's Cure*', in *Shakespeare 70: Creating Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 89-98 (p. 90).

recent scholarship is built upon the foundations of the Early Modern European noblemen and academics who were more diligent in preserving rare manuscripts and works of literature than their modern English counterparts, thus allowing playwrights potential access to these libraries where uncommon works could be found.

Access to libraries or collections of obscure Italian works of literature in Renaissance England may appear to be a difficult task for a young playwright attempting to establish himself in London. However, as mentioned previously, Shakespeare's connection to Italy started early into his career and may have been encouraged by his meeting and eventual friendship with John Florio. From the works available within his library, Florio had access to all three volumes of Bandello's *Novelle*, thus allowing us to speculate that it may have been through Florio that he was able to access the original Italian text. We are unable to conclusively state which source was the definitive one, nor will we be able to conclusively know if Shakespeare was drawing from one source, but from the external and internal evidence that we are able to extract from *Twelfth Night* and its proposed sources, we can see there is a link between them. The internal evidence that will be explored within this chapter shows the linguistic link between Shakespeare's narrative and its Italian counterparts, knowing that Florio owned a copy of Bandello makes the link between the Novella of Nicuola and Lattanzio more probable as a source of influence for Shakespeare. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Florio also owned copies of Italian-to-English dictionaries, that would have aided Shakespeare in reading the somewhat difficult Italian of Bandello, Secchi and the Intronati. However, private libraries are not the only way in which Shakespeare may have come into contact with his Italian sources. There is a potential for indirect access through the retelling or summarising of the plot from a third party – another playwright perhaps – who may have encountered the source, leading Shakespeare to borrow and adapt

the retelling. In a more orally-inclined culture than our own, memory was often stronger, and it is then a real possibility that word of mouth would have been one mode of memorisation.

There are two, brief, pieces of potential evidence which have drawn the attention of scholars. J. L. Hotson argues that ‘the first performance [of *Twelfth Night*] was at Whitehall on *Twelfth Night* 1600/1 before the Queen and an Italian Visitor, Orsino Duke of Bracciano’.²⁰⁸ However, like many theories surrounding Shakespeare, we can never be certain of what truly inspired the unusual title of the play. But Hotson’s theory does create a compelling reason behind the naming of Shakespeare’s lovesick duke that does not revolve around instances of Italian Literature. It is doubtful that the Duke of Bracciano would have approved of his name being used under such circumstances, and it is more likely that the name was given to Olivia’s lover after his departure.

The second external evidence of interest is a diary entry by John Manningham, a fourth-year law student at Middle Temple in 1602. After a performance of *Twelfth Night* by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men at Middle Temple, ‘the diary of John Manningham [...] has the following entry for 2nd February (Candlemas) 1602’.²⁰⁹

FEBR. 1601.²¹⁰

2. At our feast wee had a play called ‘*Twelue Night*, or what you will’
./ much like the comedy of errors, or Menaechmi in Plautus /
but most like and neere to that in Italian called Inganni / a good
practise in it to make the steward beleue his Lady widowe was
in Loue with him. by counterfayting a letter / as from his Lady, in
generall termes / telling him what shee liked best in him / and
prescribing his gesture in smiling, his apparaile / etc. and then when
he came to practise, making him beleue they tooke him to be mad

²⁰⁸ Leslie Hotson, *The First Night of Twelfth Night* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), p. 56.

²⁰⁹ Keir Elam (ed.), William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (London: Cengage Learning, 2008), p. 3.

²¹⁰ Note: The year 1601 in the old Julian calendar corresponds to 1602 in the reformed Georgian calendar introduced in 1582 but not adopted in England until 1752. In Shakespeare’s day the New Year began on 25 March.

etc. /.00²¹¹

It is important to remember that, as interesting as Manningham's comments are for subsequent scholars who wish to determine Shakespeare's sources, this was not his intent when writing his diary entry. For him, as a contemporary of Shakespeare, his interest is not about identifying Shakespeare's influences, but rather finding suitable comparisons to help remember the play and its plot. Whether or not Shakespeare knew the earlier play is not a consideration, instead the similarity between the plays is just an objective and non-leading observation on Manningham's part. J. P. Collier nonetheless builds on Manningham's diary to speculate that 'Shakespeare made use of another play *Gl'Inganni* (The Deceived), the 1547 comedy by Nicolo Secchi,²¹² Manningham's casual observation, in the lack of any direct evidence from Shakespeare, becomes the basis for identifying a source.

Despite Manningham's diary, the general consensus is that *Gl'Ingannati* is the play which most resembles *Twelfth Night*, so much so that Kenneth Muir assumes that 'Manningham was referring to this when he spoke of *Inganni*'.²¹³ Muir invites us to both trust and question Manningham's diary in order to fit his theory of influence. The internal evidence Muir builds his case upon is used as justification to tamper with the external evidence. Although the theory presented by Muir is compelling, it raises another issue when attempting to uncover the foreign sources used by Shakespeare; he may have used sources with the same or similar titles. Bullough comments that:

In tone and conduct the contrast between *Twelfth Night* and *Gl'Ingannati* is extreme. The earlier play is farcical, satiric, loosely constructed despite the Plautine framework, and entirely lacking in poetic feeling although some of the characters and their motives have considerable validity.²¹⁴

²¹¹ John Manningham, *The Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple 1602-1603*, ed. Robert Parker Sorlien (Hanover: NH, 1976), p. 49.

²¹² J. P. Collier, *English Dramatic Poetry to The Time of Shakespeare: And Annals of The Stage to Restoration* (London: William Clowes, 1831), p.99.

²¹³ Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources* (London: Methuen, 1957), p. 67.

²¹⁴ Bullough, II, p. 278.

Muir works through methodically, and reasons his ideas well, so that his judgement is shown in precisely the right light as a reasonable, but not conclusive, assumption. The danger is that his conclusions have subsequently been taken by others and replicated in shorthand; and with more certainty than they merit – academic editions and introductory guides to the play will casually refer to *Gl'Ingannati* as the source of *Twelfth Night*, as stated by Muir, without making readers aware of the layers of uncertainty which surround this statement.

2.3 Internal Evidence II: Language and In-depth Reading

The haziness of these speculations undermines the confident certainty with which academic editions identify source-texts. Trying to better understand Shakespeare's relation to earlier variations can become clearer through a closer reading of *Twelfth Night* and its possible sources. Furthermore, examining how faithfully the language and phrasing of the texts match up (or whether indeed there is significant disparity) can in turn give us a better idea of how closely Shakespeare worked with his sources in order to create his own version. If no parallel in the language and phrasing exists, this would suggest that Shakespeare's knowledge of the source-text is non-existent, or via a third party. If, however, we can identify close parallels, this would support the idea that Shakespeare himself had read the source-text, prompting us to revisit the external evidence and reconsider how he might have accessed it.

The element of Riche's narrative that stands out from the rest of the proposed sources for *Twelfth Night* is the appearance of a shipwreck which is absent within the Italian sources but pivotal in Shakespeare's retelling:

The storm continued all that day and the next night; and they being driven to put before the wind [...] where the galley brake all to pieces: there was very man for providing to save his own life [...] but the greatest number were drowned [...] but Silla herself being in the cabin, as you have heard, took hold of a chest that was the

captain's, the which, by the only providence of God, brought her safe to the shore [...] for she saw nobody upon the shore but herself.²¹⁵

This passage most resembles the events described by the captain in I.ii of *Twelfth Night*. Even though the details of what occurred on the ship are omitted by Shakespeare, it may be difficult to dismiss the similarities between the two extracts due to the female twin being the only survivor after a storm caused the ship to catastrophically sink:

VIOLA

[...] My brother he is in Elysium.

Perchance he is not drowned. What think you, sailors?

CAPTAIN

It is perchance that you yourself were saved.

CAPTAIN

[...] Assure yourself, after our ship split,

When you and those poor number saved with you

Hung on our driving boat, I saw your brother,

Most provident in peril, bind himself –

Although the similarities between the texts of Shakespeare and Riche are compelling, there are still elements of *Apolonius and Silla* that Shakespeare did not deem appropriate for his retelling of the narrative. Riche found it necessary to detail the events that occurred on the ship before the storm, going into detail about Silla's fellow sailors and their failed attempts at surviving the shipwreck. Rich's narrative also appears to be more explicit in certain instances, for example looking at the respective roles of the sea captain in each work: 'in Riche he endeavours unsuccessfully to rape Silla, while in *Twelfth Night* he offers Viola moral and material aid'.²¹⁶ If we were to assume Riche as source, and then account for these omissions, we could point to Shakespeare adapting a novella into a play and thus summarise that this type of scene would have been more difficult to recreate in an engaging manner for an Elizabethan audience on the stage; he may also have decided to not give details of the

²¹⁵ Barnabe Rich, *Apolonius & Silla* (Beaconsfield: Canelo Publishing, 2016), p. 101.

²¹⁶ Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan and H. R. Woudhuysen (eds.), *The Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), p. 1339.

events on the ship as he did not think they would allow the play to flow as seamlessly as it does in his final version. The change in medium is a significant difference to take into account. There is another, equally fundamental difference between Shakespeare's play and the proposed sources: the genre. *Twelfth Night* was written as a comedy whereas the majority of the sources outlined in this case-study are novellas that have tragical undertones. Riche's narrative thus has a substantial amount of tragical elements that did not fit with the comical events that Shakespeare created in *Twelfth Night*.

Let us consider the example of Silla's twin brother Silvio and his relationship with the Olivia figure, Juliana. Once he is mistaken for his sister by Juliana and begins a relationship with her, Silvio is captured by Duke Apolonius:

But the lady Juliana, wondering what made Silvio that he was so slack with his visitation, and why he absented himself for so long from her presence, began to think that all was not well; but in the end, receiving no decoction of her former surfeit, received as you have heard, and ... assuring herself to be with child, and fearing to become quite bankrupt of her honour, did think it more than time to seek out a father, and made such secret search and diligent inquiry, that she learned the truth, how Silvio was kept in prison by the Duke his master.²¹⁷

Once Juliana discovers the truth about the whereabouts of Silvio, she confesses her loves and demands that he is freed by the Duke, in return Silvio abandons her while she is with child:

But now to return to our Silvio who, hearing an oath sworn so divinely that he had gotten a woman with child, was like to believe that it had been true in very deed; but, remembering his own impediment, thought it impossible that he should commit such an act, and therefore, half in chafe, he said: "What law is able to restrain the foolish indiscretion of a woman that yieldeth herself to her own desires? What shame is able to bridle or withdraw her from her mind and madness, or with what snaffle is it possible to hold her back from the execution of her filthiness? [...] But how horrible is it to hear the name of God so defaced, that we make no more account for the maintenance of our mischiefs we fear no whit at all to forest wear his holy name, as though he were not in all his dealings most righteous, true, and just, and will not only lay open our leadings to the world, but will likewise punish the same with the most sharp and bitter scourges."²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Rich, pp. 213-214.

²¹⁸ Rich, pp. 256- 281.

There are therefore discrepancies between Rich and Shakespeare. If it is a source, then we must conclude Shakespeare does not treat it with absolute reverence and fidelity but rather as a mutable idea to be reshaped. Once we allow for that idea, which is a reasonable one, then trying to find an exact source-text becomes even more difficult with this additional, ambiguous, presence of Shakespeare's own reworkings. Once again, plot similarities are so generalised as to make conclusive judgements of direct influence almost impossible to achieve. This is why similarities in language, description, and the minor details can potentially offer a more incisive indication of influence.

Is it possible Shakespeare was using a source written in Italian instead? A closer comparison of the language of Shakespeare's plays and its predecessors cannot only help us better understand the likelihood of those texts as an influence, but also whether Shakespeare read the text himself. Depending on the degree to which Shakespeare's text follows the precursor, it will help us determine whether he read them directly in the original Italian, or a translation, or whether the play's plot was explained to him by a third party. Take Bandello's *Novelle*, where a close parallel can be found to the exchange between Viola and Orsino when 'Nicuola speaks to Lattanzio of the girl he once loved – herself':²¹⁹

Chi sa che quella bella fanciulla ancor non v'ami e viva per voi in pessima contentezza? Con cio sia cosa che io molte volte ho sentito dire che le fanciulle nei lor primi amori amano assai piu teneramente e con maggior fervore che non fanno gli uomini. A me pare che il cor mi dica che quella sfortunata garzona debbia per voi consumarsi e menar una afflitta e penace vita.²²⁰

[Who knows but this fair damsel who does not yet love you and live in affliction for your sake? Although I have heard say many times that girls, during their first loves, love far more tenderly and with greater fervor than men. It seems my heart forebodeth me this hapless girl needs to languish for you and live a life of anguish and misery.]

²¹⁹ François de Belleforest, *Le Cinquiesme Tome des Histoires Tragiques* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 2013), p. 59.

²²⁰ Matteo Bandello, *Tutte le Opere di Matteo Bandello*, ed. Claudio Paganelli, (Milano: Mondadori, 1943), p. 474.

It can perhaps be speculated that Shakespeare may have been able to read Bandello's original Italian version using his knowledge of Latin that he acquired during his time in school. However, it is interesting to note that Bandello's line 'l'amoroso verme veracemente con grandissimo cordoglio le rodeva il core'²²¹ (*the amorous worm with great sorrow feeds on the heart*) is suspiciously similar to Shakespeare's line 'But let concealment, like a worm i th' bud,/Feed on her damask cheek' (II.IV.108-9). Both phrases are of notable similarity, this may add to the notion that Shakespeare was able to read his Italian texts, as the word 'worm' is of importance to both of the phrases as it gives the reader and audience an insight to the growing lovesick emotions of Orsino and Lattanzio. However, one must not forget that the themes both of a brother and sister becoming separated, and cross-dressing have occurred in many of the possible sources for *Twelfth Night*. Therefore, it can be speculated that this may be an obvious trend occurring in the literature of the time, which makes it more difficult to accurately identify the sources that Shakespeare may have used. Within the first few lines of Bandello's novella, he foreshadows the events to come by stating: 'o bene o male che si facesse, che vi parrá egli se udirete che una fanciulla operasse il medesimo e vestita da paggio andasse a servire, senza esser conosciuta, il suo amante?'²²² By making the reader aware that the beautiful girl within the story who disguises herself as a page in order to become closer to her lover, Bandello creates a sense of outrage and sympathy through his narrative, an aspect that Shakespeare may have wanted to replicate on the stage when creating his own version of the tale, but at the same time omitting the omnipresent narrator, once again due to Shakespeare changing the format from a novella to a play, who directly addresses the reader used by Bandello, and instead opting to use humour to move the plot along.

²²¹ Bandello, p. 473.

²²² Bandello, p. 468.

An equally interesting parallel can be seen with Secchi's *Gl'Inganni*. Although there are no obvious similarities between the dialogue of *Gl'Inganni* and Shakespeare's narrative, in a later scene Kaufman points out that 'Costanzo asks his supposed page why he is so upset by the girl's suffering, and Ginevra replies that she loves the girl as much as she does herself'.²²³ Similarly, within Shakespeare's narrative, Viola is also seen to subtly express her love for Duke Orsino while disguised as Cesario:

VIOLA

Too well what love women to men may owe.
In faith, they are as true of heart as we.
My father had a daughter loved a man,
As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman,
I should your lordship.

ORSINO

And what's her history?

VIOLA

A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
But let concealment like a worm i'th' bud
Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy
She sat like Patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?
We men may say more, swear more, but indeed
Our shows are more than will; for still we prove
Much in our vows, but little in our love. (II.IV.102-1115)

However, apart from this brief exchange, there are no other compelling similarities between the narratives of Secchi and Shakespeare which recommend it above other potential sources.

Despite the possible influence of Secchi's *Gl'Inganni* and Bandello's *Novelle*, the source that critics, like Kaufman, keep returning to is the one that has the most compelling similarities: *Gl'Ingannati* of the Accademia degli Intronati. However, as compelling as these similarities may be, it becomes increasingly difficult to sustain the notion that Shakespeare

²²³ Kaufman, p. 271.

used *Gl'Ingannati* as a source when faced with the many differences between the two plays. Bullough may be correct in stating that the two pieces of literature do not have any similarities on the grounds of tone and conduct, an example being when Shakespeare creates a tone of 'moody melancholy and love-sickness'²²⁴ in the last scene of the first act through the 'aid of music'²²⁵ in order to make the audience aware of the Duke's dwelling on his confused emotions for Olivia. By the end of this scene, Shakespeare is able to show that due to the seven years spent grieving the death of her father, Olivia is akin to Orsino in sensibility. This theme is explicitly contrasted in the next scene where Viola is seen to swallow her grief and instead attempt to make a living for herself in an unfamiliar land. The pace and tone in *Gl'Ingannati* are 'cumbrous and unreal',²²⁶ with Leila clumsily repeating information to Clemenzia making the plot feel as though it is avoiding the central situation of the play, whereas Shakespeare expertly introduces the main conflict situation to the audience almost immediately: Orsino's unreciprocated passion for Olivia. Another interesting difference that may depict an instance of Shakespeare improving upon his source material occurs at the beginning of the play when the audience is first introduced to Olivia. In *Twelfth Night*, Olivia is presented on stage during I.V, when we see her interacting with other characters such as Sir Toby Belch and Malvolio, the audience is treated to a moment of tension when we hear Olivia's thoughts on the arriving page. This greatly contrasts the Italian version as Isabella is not present onstage until II.VI, one may speculate that Shakespeare saw this as an instance for improvement within his source material and decided that the plot would benefit from an earlier introduction of the conflicting love interest.

²²⁴ Bullough, II, p. 278.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

However, there are instances within *Twelfth Night* in which Shakespeare may have closely followed the Italian text; one such passage is found in II.III of *Gl'Ingannati* when Pasquella rebukes Leila disguised as Fabio:

PASQUELLA

In buona fede, in buona verità, Fabio, Fabio, che tu sei troppo superbo. E sai che ti ricordo? Che tu sei giovanetto e non conosci il ben tuo. Questo favore non ti durerà sempre, no. Ne verrà la barba; non sarai sempre sì colorite le gotuzze ne così rossette le labbra; non sarai così sempre richiesto da tutti, non. Allora conoscerai quanto sia stata la tua pazzia; e te ne pentirai, quando non sarai più a tempo.²²⁷

[In good faith, in good truth, Fabio, Fabio, you are too arrogant. Do you know what I want to remind you of? That you are a young man and you don't yet realise your potential. These good traits won't last forever, no. The beard will grow; your cheeks and lips will no longer be flushed; you will not always be so in demand by others, no. Then you will understand crazy you were, and you will come to regret it, when time has run out.]

A similar rebuke is found within *Twelfth Night* in I.5 between Viola and Olivia when they are discussing her own beauty:

OLIVIA

Tis in grain, sir; 'twill ensure wind and weather.

VIOLA

'Tis beauty truly blent, whose red and white
Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on.
Lady, you are the cruell'st she alive
If you will lead these graces to the grave
And leave the world no copy. (I.v, 230-5)

Within the discussion between Olivia and Viola, it is evident that Shakespeare has taken elements from Pasquella's speech, most notably the reference to natural beauty and how it will inevitably fade with age. Both Pasquella and Viola want their rebuke to show how the favoured beauty that Leila and Olivia hold so dear will not last forever: 'Questo favore non ti

²²⁷ Intronati, p. 26.

durerà sempre'. Even though Leila and Viola are akin in their disguised pursuit for love, each character has different fundamentals that become obvious when comparing the speech in question. Leila still favours her beauty and hopes that this will help Flamminio regain his lost passion for her, whereas Viola uses her wit in order to win the affection of Orsino. Unlike *Gl'Ingannati*, Shakespeare decides to give his rendition of the plot a more comical tone, using humorous puns in order to show the wit of his characters, especially his female lead Viola. The phrase 'truly blent' refers to how nature has mixed the colours in Olivia's complexion and not art, making Viola's previous comment 'Excellently done, if God did all' (I. v, 229) more ironic.

Another similarity between the two plays can be found in II.iv of *Twelfth Night* when Viola suggests to Orsino that he should consider giving up his courtship of Olivia, but he refuses to listen to any sense:

VIOLA
Say that some lady, as perhaps there is,
Hath your love as great a pang of heart
As you have for Olivia: you cannot love her:
You tell her so; must she not then be answer'd? (II.iv, 89-92)

Comparably, in II.vii of *Gl'Ingannati*, a conversation between Leila disguised as Fabio and Flamminio is reminiscent of that used by Shakespeare. Leila advises Flamminio to give Isabella up in order to pursue another young lady who may perhaps be of more romantic interest to him:

LEILA
Lasciatela andar, vi dico. È possibile che, in tutta questa
citta, non sia un'altra che meriti l'amor vostro quanto lei? Non
vi e piaciuta mai altra donna che lei?²²⁸

²²⁸ Intronati, p. 32.

[Let her go, I tell you. Is it possible, that in all this city, there is not another who deserves your love as much as she? Did you ever like another woman other than her?]

Both Leila and Viola attempt to make their love interests understand that the one they have been searching for is in front of them and they need look no further. Flamminio and Orsino fail to take the advice that their pages give them, and instead proceed to stubbornly pursue a woman who does not reciprocate their advances. However, Flamminio's rejection of his page's comment has a more dramatic tone:

I see you what you are: you are too proud;
But, if you were the devil, you are fair [...] (I. v, 258-9)

Despite these superficial differences, one cannot ignore the similarities between plot and language. These similarities can also be observed in certain instances of Gonzaga's *Inganni*; a compelling factor within the language used by Gonzaga is that the heroine, once disguised, adopts the name Cesare: Shakespeare's use of the near-identical Cesario suggests he may well have appropriated this from Gonzaga. However, anything beyond this particular similarity is not particularly striking and it would be difficult for one to find anymore resemblances apart from the main narrative of the plot.

A phrase that appears within the prologue of *Gl'Ingannati*, 'la note di Beffana'²²⁹ [*the night of Epiphany*] which occurs on the sixth of January (exactly twelve days after Christmas day) may have been what gave Shakespeare his title for *Twelfth Night*, even though 'it is usually assumed that the play was first performed on the *Twelfth Night*'.²³⁰

Within the characters of the play, we can observe obvious striking similarities to those within Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*; Giglio may have been an early suggestion for Malvolio,

²²⁹ Intronati, p. 8.

²³⁰ Muir, p. 69.

Pasquella and Clementia, Leila's nurses, both have a likeness to Maria, Gherardo shows similarities to Sir Toby Blech 'with his scraps of mad Latin and his ridicule of pedantry',²³¹ and Giglio may be a dim instance of foreshadowing the Shakespearean character of Feste, although this is disputed by Muir who states that 'it is difficult to see any resemblance'²³² between the characters of the Academia and those of Shakespeare's.

Despite these similarities, the main heroines of each play are presented as polar opposites by their respective playwrights: Shakespeare's Viola is head-strong with her speeches showing memorable instances of 'innuendo and skilful fencing',²³³ whereas Leila 'speaks and acts more bluntly and shows much less disinterred devotion than does Viola'.²³⁴ This contrast is most clearly seen when the heroines must refuse the passionate advances of Isabella and Olivia; 'Isabella [...] has fallen madly in love with me and makes the most passionate advances. I pretend I will not love her unless she can manage to bring Flaminio's pursuit of her to an end' (I.iii.39). This directly contrasts Viola's comment upon hearing Olivia's avowal of love: 'Nothing but this, your true love for my master' (III.iv.233). Samuel Johnson remarks that 'Viola seems to have formed a very deep design with very little premeditation; she is thrown by shipwreck on an unknown coast, learns that the prince is a bachelor, and resolves to supplant the lady who he courts'.²³⁵ As Hunter points out, this is not entirely true as 'all pretence for such a remark is precluded in the Italian play, where Leila is represented as having been before known to Flaminio, and having been admired by him, and as using what was but a fair stratagem in love'.²³⁶

²³¹ Luce, p. 9.

²³² Muir, p. 69.

²³³ Kaufman, p. 272.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Edward Tomarken, *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare: The Discipline of Criticism* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2009), p. 57.

²³⁶ Hunter, p. 394.

2.4 The Ambiguity of Sources, and Why We Search for Them

The purpose of this case study has been less about identifying a definitive source, so much as showing how utterly impossible it is to do so. Frustratingly, the question of which text informed *Twelfth Night* is one that we cannot conclusively answer. This does not mean we should not try, but that we should maintain a healthy awareness of the uncertainty of any answers. Although we can make scholarly assumptions on Shakespeare's sources, we can never know for certain if he used the texts mentioned in this case-study since there is in fact no absolute evidence. As a result, we as scholars fall into a trap of attempting to justify coincidences within texts in order to fill the gap regarding Shakespeare's sources.

Manningham's diary suggests *Gl'Inganni*; common sense would suggest Riche, as the English translation; but examination of the plot, closer reading of language, and the consent of previous scholars all point to *Gl'Ingannati*.

As previously mentioned in this chapter, there is a possibility that Shakespeare was following a trend when it comes to the narrative of *Twelfth Night*; this would explain why so many texts during the Renaissance period have reoccurring elements such as the separated twins and a female dressing a page in order to get close to her master. However, stating that Shakespeare was simply following a trend challenges the Romantic notion of his lone genius, as does the idea of him copying plotline from other sources. Just as the latter has now been widely accepted, so too is the notion of Shakespeare responding to the world around him. Ironically, of the two, it is actually the idea of Shakespeare using a direct source which proves the more flattering in this instance, crediting him with more intelligence and linguistic prowess.

If we look closer at Muir's comments on Manningham's diary entry, we discover that he is *assuming* a mistake on Manningham's part when confusing the titles of *Gl'Ingannati*

and *Gl'Inganni*. Hence, if we take Muir's example then the more similarities between Shakespeare and his sources we discover, the more we as scholars *assume* a correlation between the texts exists; but when we look closer, we can see not only the correlation on a surface level but in the language and characterisation too. This deeper correlation within the sources may give us leverage to cautiously speculate that Shakespeare read the texts in the original Italian, as it would be nearly impossible to have such close similarities within the language without previous knowledge of Italian. However, this opens the argument to the assumption that perhaps Shakespeare was aided by someone who was familiar with the Italian language and provided accurate translations for him, or that he perhaps had access to private libraries where detailed documentation regarding these texts were available, it is impossible to say for certain due to the lack of evidence. Critics have speculated loosely within their writings about how Shakespeare may have accessed these Italian texts, with Hunter proclaiming that he is almost certain he owned the copies of the Italian plays used by Shakespeare:

I could almost persuade myself that the very volume in which the *Sacrificio* was first found by me had once been Shakespeare's and that it contained the identical copies of the *Inganni* of Gonzaga and the *Ingannati* or *Sarcificio* of the Thunderstruck Academicians, which had been used by him. It was at least a singular circumstance that they should be found bound together in the same volume.²³⁷

It is interesting to consider why we are so concerned with identifying Shakespeare's sources; desire to know all, to contain even or to categorise and understand his motives. As scholars, we have an uncontrollable urge to understand how a playwright from Stratford-upon-Avon with a limited grammar school education was able to produce such compelling and geographically correct narratives without having left the shores of England.

Regardless as to whether Shakespeare was following a trend or not, the similarities between the language used in *Twelfth Night* and its proposed sources are compelling. The

²³⁷ Hunter, p. 398.

closer reading performed within this case-study shows instances of Shakespeare using similar phrasing to that found within *Gl'Ingannati*, particularly with Viola and Leila. Although the linguistic and narrative similarities between these texts is impressive, there are prominent differences that are hard to ignore; namely, the brutal narrative presented by Riche and the idea that Leila and Latanzio knew each other prior to Leila becoming his page. We can speculate reasons, other than that of plagiarism, as to why Shakespeare chose to take out certain elements of the borrowed narrative. Being aware of the playwright's potential we could assume that the areas he chose to change were areas of the narrative that he thought lacked in excitement for a Renaissance English audience and chose something that would convey the comedic value of the play more explicitly. *Gl'Ingannati* is primarily written in prose, but one of the elements of interest that Shakespeare may have been drawn to when finding source materials for his play, is the opportunity to integrate poetry within the narrative. Hunter notes that: 'The Italian play is mere prose: but the serious parts of the English play – those in which there is the resemblance to the Italian – is poetry, and such poetry as only Shakespeare could have given us'.²³⁸ Regardless of these compelling similarities between *Twelfth Night* and *Gl'Ingannati*, we are still unable to conclusively state it as a source, when there are many different texts that also share elements of location, plot points, and characters with Shakespeare's iteration. Stating what texts class as a source can be a convoluted and confusing task, for example, there is a text entered into the Biblioteca Italiana which bears a similarity in title to *Gl'Ingannati* by the Academia Degli Intronati and Secchi's *Gl'Inganni*: Curzio Gonzaga's *Gl'Inganni* (1592).

²³⁸ Hunter, p. 395.

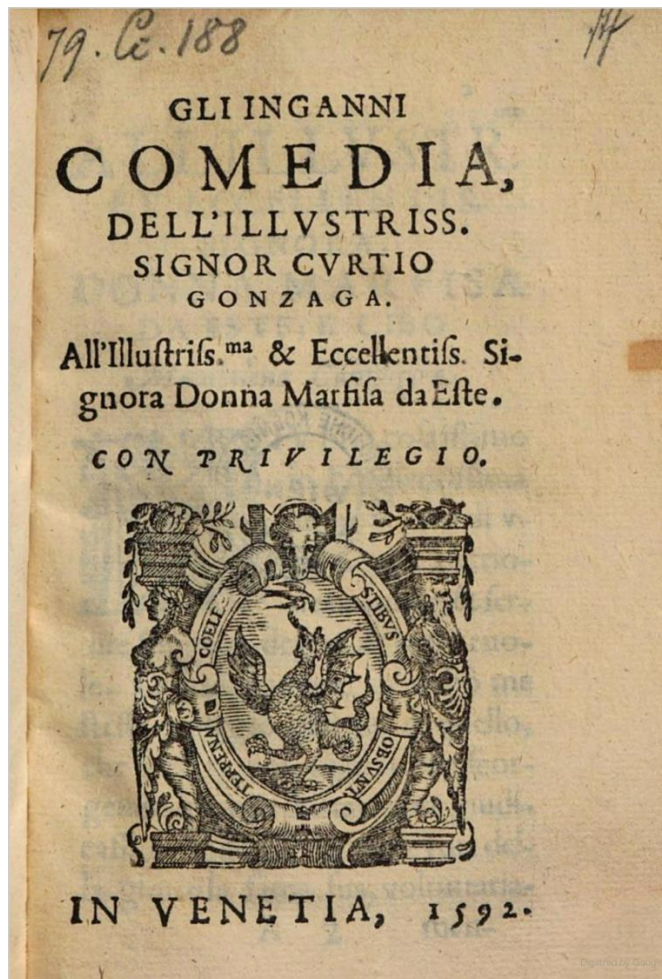


Fig: 2.3 ²³⁹

This play is acknowledged by Muir as a text that ‘has some links with Shakespeare’,²⁴⁰ as there is a woman, Ginevra, who disguises herself as a man with the name Cesare. Although the overall theme is similar to that of its Italian predecessors, and the location of Rome remains true to the original narrative of *Gl’Ingannati*, why is Gonzaga’s comedy not considered to be a more important source for Shakespeare? This dilemma lends itself once again to the argument of source and analogue; how do we class Gonzaga’s *Gl’Inganni*? Unlike *Gl’Ingannati* and Secchi’s *Gl’Inganni*, where we are able to postulate how Shakespeare may have gained access to the texts and what linguistic and narrative elements he borrowed from these texts, Gonzaga’s comedy appears to only share motifs and themes

²³⁹ Curzio Gonzaga, *Gl’Inganni* (Venice: Giovanni Antonio Rampazetto, 1592), p. 1.

²⁴⁰ Muir, p. 67.

central to the plot, without any compelling internal evidence. Thus, it may be the case that Gonzaga's comedy was listed as a source by scholars simply because it had a similar title and central theme, but these basic similarities do not class it as a source, then it would be correct to classify Gonzaga's *Gl'Inganni* as an analogue.

If we return to the statement made by Manningham upon his viewing of *Twelfth Night*, he states that play is 'most like and neere to that in Italian called Inganni',²⁴¹ however, we are unable to confirm if he was referring to Secchi's *Gl'Inganni*, the later play written by Gonzaga, or if he was confusing the title of *Gl'Ingannati* as the Italian titles are similar and could be easily mistaken by an individual who has not studied the language in detail. What is vital for scholars to understand is what play Manningham was referring to and why this mistake is important when discussing the sources for *Twelfth Night*. There is a possibility that Manningham's comment may have been a genuine mistake due to the confusing nature of the Italian language to someone who is not fluent in the language and assumed that the two titles were interchangeable. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in this instance, regardless of what Italian text Manningham was referring to, he does not describe it as a source, instead he describes it as a similar text, further complicating and blurring the definition of a source and how Shakespeare interacted with the texts he took inspiration from. There is a third Italian comedy with the same name, *Gl'Inganni*, written by Domenico Cornacchini in 1604, but this 'is after the date of *Twelfth Night*, and attention to it may be at once dismissed, as it contains nothing that has the slightest resemblance to this play of Shakespeare'.²⁴²

Thus, we must not solely rely on works that share similar titles when identifying possible sources, or analogues, of Shakespeare as they may not be as fruitful as one initially may have thought. Cornacchini's play could, however, point to a trend occurring in Italy

²⁴¹ Manningham, p. 49.

²⁴² Hunter, p. 391.

whereby authors would reuse the title of popular plays to bring notoriety to their own works or attempt to make a link to previous successful plays by reusing their titles and key narrative elements, but a similarity in title does not always suggest a relationship as a source. In his description of *Twelfth Night*, Manningham would go on to remark that the plot ‘resembles that of *The Comedy of Errors*, or *Menaechmi* of Plautus’,²⁴³ further suggesting that contemporaries responded to Shakespeare’s comedy with a dual awareness of precedents on the English and Italian stage.

The answers to the question of Shakespeare’s sources are convoluted and filled with a certain degree of doubt. Attempting to uncover what texts may have influenced Shakespeare at different times in his life and how he may have accessed them is a difficult task due to how little evidence we have left, as scholars we can make educated guesses from what we are able to piece together with the information available to us.

When considering Bandello as a source for *Twelfth Night*, Alessandra Petrina prefers to use the term analogue, a distinction originally made by W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales* (1941), when considering the tale of Nicuola and Lattanzio: ‘non invocherei il concetto di *source* ma di *analogue*, un testo che condivide motivi, temi o strutture e che nasce, in tutto o in parte, dallo stesso clima culturale’ [*I would not invoke the concept of source but of analogue, a text that shares motifs, themes or structures and that is born, in whole or in part, from the same cultural climate*].²⁴⁴ By considering the idea proposed by Bryan, Dempster, and Petrina we are met with the argument of how appropriate the term source is when referring to texts that may have been concluded by Shakespeare; we encounter the dangers associated with the term

²⁴³ Hunter, I, p. 391.

²⁴⁴ Alessandra Petrina, “*Twelfth Night* e la Novella II.36 di Matteo Bandello” in *Twelfth Night: Dal Testo alla Scena*, eds. Mariangela Tempera & Keir Elam (Bologna: Emil di Odoya srl, 2017), pp. 25-46 (p. 31).

source. However, if we refrain from using the term ‘source’, we are left with using the term *analogue* for pieces of literature that have obviously inspired Shakespeare’s narrative, but how wise is it for scholars to use the term *analogue* when referring to texts consulted by Shakespeare? Naming a piece of literature as a source implies an inherent sense of hierarchy and intellectual ownership of the text that allows the playwright the freedom to use the text as he pleases, but the term source does not come without causing tension due to its implications. Those who instead choose to use analogue risk causing irritation to the critics and scholars defending Shakespeare’s intellect and ability to transform original pieces of literature into timeless works of theatre. Ultimately, a source can be considered a more linear way of using literature for inspiration, with the original directly influencing multiple aspects of the product or adaptation. By contrast an analogue can be viewed as using literature in a parallel manner to the product or adaptation, for example, the original material will share common links with the adaptation, but can’t be considered linear due to only certain motifs appearing in the final product. Understanding where Shakespeare falls within this everlasting argument can be confusing, and there will never be an answer that all scholars and critics agree on unanimously, but I believe that the term source encompasses the areas of research I have focused on when analysing the Italian literature that may have influenced Shakespeare during his creation of *Twelfth Night*. The difficulty and precarity of attempting to document in detail the different texts that are echoed within Shakespeare’s narrative are true in many different areas of the case study, and choosing the correct terminology is proof that even areas that can be easily overlooked aren’t as straightforward as one would initially assume.

What we can say with certainty is that there exist for *Twelfth Night* several potential Italian sources and whether they be direct or indirect this shows an engagement on Shakespeare’s part with the Italian dramatic form. As I have argued in this chapter, there is good indication of close engagement with the text beyond a surface reading, which in turn

implies either that Shakespeare was reading the text directly or was in close conversation with someone who could. Therefore, it is wise not to discount these sources on account of their language, but rather to assess them as equally plausible to any English source. *Twelfth Night* is born from an Italian tale and its Italian nature, therefore, encompasses both its location and its plot to render it indeed a truly Italian play.

Author / Playwright	Title	Year & Location of First Performanc	Year & Location of First Publication	Original Language	Year & Location of Publication in England	Name of Translator
Intronati di Sienna	Gl' Ingannati	1531, Sienna	1537, Venice	Italian	1595, Cambridge*	
Niccoló Secchi	Gl' Inganni	1546, Milan	1562, Florence	Italian		
Matteo Bandello	Novelle	N/A	1554, Lucca	Italian	1567, London**	Sir Geoffrey Fenton
Giraldi Cinthio	Hecatommithi	N/A	1565, Mondovi	Italian	1582, London**	George Whetstone
Barnaby Riche	Riche His Farewell to the Militarie Profession	N/A	1581, London	English		
Curzio Gonzaga	Gl' Inganni	1592, Venice	1592, Venice	Italian		

Fig 2.4

Chapter III: Shakespeare's Roman Plays and The Meaning of Italian Literature

3.1 What is a Roman Play?

The categorization of the dramatic works of Shakespeare is a subject that still causes arguments among academics. In the Folio of 1623, John Heminges and Henry Condell listed the plays in the table of contents under the genres of 'Comedies', 'Histories', and 'Tragedies'. The organisation of the plays chosen by Heminges and Condell forced the 'readers of Shakespeare's plays to read in the light of genre, apprehending family resemblances within each group as well as individual distinctions'.²⁴⁵ However, organising plays into these categories may not be as straight-forward as the Folio would have us believe; many of Shakespeare's plays blur the definitions of genres and many have examples of multiple genres within their narratives. There are two questions of significance to this thesis that arise from this blurred grouping of plays - the first, arising from the ambiguity of history plays is whether a handful of the tragedies – *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus* – are better described as 'Roman' due to their location and historical setting. Reference to the Roman plays as a recognised group is now commonplace, with theatrical seasons dedicated to them. But the second question which I now want to propose in this chapter is why we do not further claim these plays as 'Italian'. Subsequent considerations underpinning these questions are whether it is purely their setting that unites these four plays, or whether there is thematic or structural coherence across these plays. Derek Traversi suggests that 'variously situated in time the plays, bringing together into a mutually enriching unity two of the principal themes of Shakespeare's mature work – those expressed respectively in the historical chronicles and in the series of great tragedies which

²⁴⁵ Susan Snyder, 'The Genres of Shakespeare's Plays', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, eds. Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 83-95, (p. 83).

followed them – constitute one of the undoubted peaks of his achievement’.²⁴⁶ If we consider how historically far apart the events that occur in *Titus* and *Coriolanus* are in comparison to *Caesar* and *Cleopatra*, the question of how unified these four plays truly are comes into question. The same argument may be presented when discussing the genres of *King Lear*, *Cymbeline*, or *Macbeth* and why they’re not classed as History plays in the same way as the Henry and Richard plays. The proposed sources and location of these plays may lead one to argue that they deserve their own genre, yet that same logic would argue for the ‘Italian’ plays as a genre too, which in turn raises a new consideration of how we define Italy prior to the Risorgimento, and whether plays set in ancient Rome can or should be considered equivalent to plays set in Renaissance Verona or Venice.

How do the Roman plays differ from the definition of Italian plays, and can the Roman plays be considered ‘Roman’ when they use Italian sources as well as Latin sources? In short, the Roman plays present us with a cluster of conundrums and puzzles to unpick. These are all notions that will be explored and discussed within this chapter, in which I will seek to understand what defines a piece of ‘Roman literature’ and how this differs from definitions of ‘Italian literature’, and how best to place Shakespeare’s Roman plays somewhere within those definitions. In doing so it will also explore the problem of defining genre within the plays’ Roman narratives and, in the instance of *Antony and Cleopatra*, conceptualise whether a play can truly be a tragedy when it is written with an explicit comical structure.

3.2 The Influence of Rome on the Early Modern Stage

²⁴⁶ Derek Traversi, *Shakespeare: The Roman Plays* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1963), p. 9.

As discussed earlier in my introduction, there was a general trend of Italian influence upon English culture, but in turn there was also a Roman influence upon Italian culture before that. Andrea Palladio (1508-1580) reintroduced key aspects of Roman architecture into his buildings. His book *I Quattro Libri dell'architettura* (1554) would not be translated into English until 1663, but was already an influence on English architecture before then, most notably through the work of Inigo Jones, who had 'extensive annotations in the margins of his copy' of Palladio's book which he took with him on his tour of Italy in 1613-1615.²⁴⁷ Jones's major works would not be completed until after Shakespeare's death; nonetheless the incorporation of Rome into Palladio's work, and the subsequent influence upon Jones illustrates how both Roman and Italian influences were amalgamated into English culture.

The Roman plays propose a dilemma of categorisation due not only to their amalgamating of genres, but also their occasional mixture of both Latin and Italian sources. Italian Renaissance drama – including those playwrights whose works provided source-texts for Shakespeare – was in turn inspired by, and reacting to, its classical forebears; the humanist movement actively tried to revive plays of antiquity for their contemporary audience, and their proliferation on the stage inevitably shaped the form of new Italian drama. Therefore, before we can entertain the notion that Shakespeare was experimenting with different genres within his Roman plays, we must first understand the fundamental details of Roman narratives.

Roman drama would not fully emerge until the second half of the third century BC, where 'it manifested itself in a variety of literary modes, influenced by both native Italian traditions and Greek literary forms'.²⁴⁸ In Rome, and similarly in Greece, theatrical

²⁴⁷ Elizabeth T. Jordan, 'Inigo Jones and the Architecture of Poetry', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44.2 (Summer 1991), 280-319 (p. 282).

²⁴⁸ A. J. Boyle, *An Introduction to Roman Tragedy* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 10.

productions were performed during religious festivals known as *feriae*, which could last anywhere between four to twenty days. These festivities included not only ceremonies and religious rituals, but also games which took various forms, namely sports and circus-type performances, named *ludi*. The first theatrical *ludi* were organised to mimic the Greek tradition and were subsequently named *ludi Romani* which were usually performed between September and October. In 240BC these theatrical performances were performed with a particular solemnity to celebrate the victory at the first Punic War; this event marked the first performance of a *fabula*, written by the poet Livius Andronico. It is not surprising then, that the Roman audiences thoroughly enjoyed these productions and thus, the term *ludi scaenici* was coined, or theatrical productions which occurred at different times throughout the year. From this point forward, different forms of *ludi* would begin to appear; *ludi plebei* were performed in honour of Jupiter, while *ludi Megalenses* were performed in honour of the goddess Cybele, and *ludi Apollinares* honoured Apollo.

A recurring, though not exclusive, source for many Roman-based narratives would be the Classical Epic; a term deriving from the Greek *épos* meaning “words”, “discourse” and “discourse through verse”. Giovanna Garbarino says of the Roman Epic:

[...] l'*épos* nasce dalla volontà di conservare e di tramandare un patrimonio di storie leggendarie di cui sono protagonisti nobili personaggi dotati di virtù eccezionali e capaci di imprese straordinarie; e nella rievocazione del passato eroico si affermano e si celebrano i valori in cui si riconoscono una collettività, un popolo o un gruppo sociale.²⁴⁹

[The épos was born from the desire to preserve and pass on a heritage of legendary stories, of which noble characters endowed with exceptional virtues and capable of extraordinary feats are the protagonists; and in the re-enactment of the heroic past, the values in which we recognise a community, a people, or a social group are affirmed and celebrated.]

²⁴⁹ Giovanna Garbarino, *Storia e Testi della Letteratura Latina: Excursus sui Generi Letterari*, ed. Maria Clara Conti (Turin: Paravia, 2001), p. 2.

Shakespeare certainly understood the mechanics of the Roman epic, and instances of the genre can be found strewn throughout his works, for example in *Troilus and Cressida* whose allusions to Homer's *Illiad* and Virgil's *Aeneid* are difficult to ignore. But Shakespeare was not the only Early Modern dramatist to make use of Virgil's epic poem for theatrical gain; Marlowe's early play *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (believed to have been written and performed during his student days in the mid-1580s) also relied heavily on the classical poem. By following the notion that this play was written by Marlowe during the last years of his education, it is not surprising for him to have also returned to a text that he would have most certainly studied. Wells notes that Marlowe was heavily 'dependent on Virgil's *Aeneid*, even to the extent of quoting eight lines of the epic poem in Latin in the last act',²⁵⁰ thus cementing the idea that many Renaissance dramatists were influenced by Classical Roman literature, and often turned to them as source-texts due to their prior familiarity with them through their university education. However, Shakespeare's 'conception of [the] 'epic' was a fully theatrical one, in which different characters manifest different, and often deviant, versions of the epic character of style'.²⁵¹ Thus, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Shakespeare's knowledge of the epic genre might feed into his narrative in a theatrical manner to amplify or highlight characters.

The ambiguity of the Roman plays' genre is further heightened by Heminges and Condell's division of plays into history and tragedy; after all, these plays are historical too, just as several of the history plays are tragic in tone. But whereas some of Shakespeare's English history plays could be considered as tragicomic or comic, the Roman plays, on the

²⁵⁰ Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare & Co*, p. 80.

²⁵¹ Colin Burrow, 'Shakespeare and the Epic' in *Epic Performances from the Middle Ages into the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Fiona Macintosh, Justine McConnell, Stephen Harrison, and Claire Kenward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 31-45 (p. 34).

surface at least, seem more readily identifiable as tragedies (although I will query this later in the case of *Anthony and Cleopatra*).

Traditionally, the term ‘tragedy’ derives from the Greek *tragodía* which itself derives from the words *trágos* meaning goat, and *odè* meaning song; Roman tragedy, or more precisely termed *fabula*, or *fabula crepidata*, was oriented towards Greece. The Romans ‘Romanised’ and remodelled the dramas from the Greek mainland, but their ‘predilection was for the Attic drama of the fifth century, even if modulated in and by Hellenistic and south Italian theatrical practice’.²⁵² Garbarino defines Roman tragedy thus:

Gli argomenti, dunque, sono gli stessi del genere epico [...] la tragedia li mette in scena come se si svolsero in quel momento dinanzi agli occhi degli spettatori [...] assunse il ruolo istituzionale di affrontare e dibattere grandi temi morali, politici e religiosi, proponendo alla riflessione, attraverso le vicende mitiche, i problemi di fondo dell’esistenza umana, e specialmente quelli che sorgono dall’esperienza del dolore.²⁵³

[The arguments are therefore the same as those for the epic genre [...] a tragedy was staged as though it was taking place in that moment before the eyes of the spectators [...] it assumed the institutional role of addressing and debating great moral, political and religious themes, would cause one to reflect, through mythical events, of the basic problems of human existence, especially those arising from the experience of pain.]

During the Renaissance, tragedy, as well as comedy, was theorized in a schematic manner, with Aristotle’s comments on the genre receiving attention from theorists. ‘Essays by the grammarians Donatus and Evanthius, in addition to the widely circulated editions of the plays of Terence, were common within Renaissance schools and universities’,²⁵⁴ thus reinforcing the notion that Shakespeare was familiar with certain Latin source-texts before his career in London. Renaissance tragedy imitated themes found within its Classical counterparts:

²⁵² Boyle, p. 11.

²⁵³ Garbarino, p. 15.

²⁵⁴ T. J. B. Spencer, *Shakespeare: The Roman Plays* (Harlow: Longman, 1976), p. 4.

Actual lives, no matter how rich in power and achievement, always end in final defeat of death, and tragedies, whether they end in death or not (Shakespeare's usually do), have the same fated quality of what has already happened and cannot be changed or evaded. In its unerring movement towards that inevitable conclusion, tragedy enacts the cadential rhythm of every human existence, even while it protests against that inevitable end in its countermovement of expanding heroic self-realization.²⁵⁵

These imitations become important when looking at tragedy from an intertextual perspective; as Elizabethan tragedy grew in popularity, the roots from earlier literature, such as classical drama, became more apparent within the performances that began to dominate the stage. Though English Medieval drama was certainly an influence on the English Renaissance stage, the fascination with moral sinners and deviation from religion expanded after the Reformation to inspire Protestant tragedies such as William Wager's *Enough is as Good as a Feast* (1560s) and Nathaniel Woodes' *The Conflict of Conscience* (1570s). In conjunction with these morality-based tragedies, the period also saw tragedies that emphasised their Classical origins such as Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Gorboduc* (1562) and George Gascoigne's *Jocasta* (1566), which was performed at universities and the Inns of Court. By the 1580s, Shakespeare's contemporaries were beginning to shape tragedy to a model and style that ultimately popularised the genre. Two commercial successes of this style are Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587) and Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (1587-8) which both use the central premise of revenge as well as 'blurring the line between theatricality and life, so that events presented as plays become all too real, and courses of action apparently individually willed are shown to be a fated script'.²⁵⁶ Kyd's play in particular is one of the first great examples in a multitude of revenge tragedies for the era; the influence of the Roman dramatist Seneca fortifies the notion that Roman literature was common within theatres at the time, and audiences did not shy away from narratives revolving around their Catholic neighbours in Europe.

²⁵⁵ Snyder, p. 85.

²⁵⁶ Snyder, p. 86.

Nor was it tragedy alone that proved influential on Early Modern theatre. Although it appears to be counterintuitive to assume that the Roman plays took influence from the classical model of comical theatre, as stated earlier in this introduction, some of Shakespeare's Roman plays, such as *Antony and Cleopatra*, display examples of comical traits, which can be outlined thus:

[la commedia] si propone di divertire e rallegrare il pubblico, [...] lo scioglimento felice del nodo drammatico, il superamento degli ostacoli e delle difficoltà nel lieto fine, [...] mette in scena personaggi di condizione sociale umile o media e vicende della vita commune.²⁵⁷

[[comedy] aims to entertain and amuse the public, [...] the happy unravelling of the dramatic knot, the overcoming of obstacles and difficulties in the happy ending, [...] it involves characters of humble or middle class social status and deals with events from common life.]

Clearly, *Anthony and Cleopatra* does not contain the happy ending we would expect from a comedy, but much of the tragedy stems from miscommunication and misfortune of events rather than underpinning fatal flaws of the characters, and in doing so it mimics the subversion of comic tropes as also explored in *Romeo and Juliet*. Understanding the fundamentals of comedy is important when looking at Shakespeare's 'Roman' plays due to their crossing-over of genres. In general terms, comedy takes its narratives from fiction rather than events from history and thus involved stories that revolve around working-class characters, as opposed to the figures of importance or the richer classes that are more accustomed to tragedies.

Comedy involves men of middling estate; its perils are small-scale, its outcomes peaceful. [...] Comedy, beginning in turmoil but ending in harmony, celebrates life.²⁵⁸

Shakespeare's Roman plays are inherently political and as such will centre upon the leaders of Rome; nonetheless each play also takes opportunity to show a wider cross-section of the Roman population, often resulting in humorous scenes, even if they are dark comedy (such as

²⁵⁷ Garbrina, p. 23.

²⁵⁸ T. Herrick, *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1960), pp. 56-7.

the lynching of Cinna the poet in *Julius Caesar*). Thus, elements of several genres can be found in these plays. Introducing scenes with labourers and laymen allowed brief moments for the groundlings to connect to among these grander tales of emperors and generals; similarly, while setting these plays in ancient Rome, there are several moments we can see where Early Modern dramatists use features and references that would be familiar to their English audiences. The earliest Renaissance example of this is Thomas Lodge's *The Wounds of the Civil War* (1589), which gives mention to 'Paul's steeple', a direct allusion to the peak of St. Paul's Cathedral – the highest point situated in London before it was struck by lightning in 1561: 'base mind, that being in the Paul's steeple of honor hast cast thyself into the sink of simplicity' (V.5.224-6).²⁵⁹ This Anglicizing of the Roman setting is supported by Douglas Bruster, who notes how various Renaissance dramas 'frequently owe some debt (often a significant one) to London for their compositional genesis' and as one of the numerous instances in which, through 'humanistic parallelism and the exploitation of urban likenesses, London often became Rome, even as Rome became London'.²⁶⁰ Thus, we can confidently deduce that Rome becomes a metaphor for London, or a political allegory at the very least when represented within Early Modern English narratives. Lovascio notes how Rome was 'always a synthesis of different polities, cultures, and races, Rome became for early modern English drama the privileged place – at the same time geographic and symbolic, so near and yet so far in both space and time – for the development of a complex series of questions inscribed in a broader range of sociopolitical interests that closely impinged on the British context'.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Thomas Lodge, *The Wounds of the Civil War*, ed. Joseph W. Houppet (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), p. 45.

²⁶⁰ Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 35.

²⁶¹ Domenico Lovascio, *John Fletcher's Rome: Questioning the Classics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), p. 5.

The link between Rome and English politics of the time is further corroborated by Michael Hattaway, who notes that it is ‘arguable that all of the plays have at their centres political and social concerns’.²⁶² From this then, we can deduce that regardless of whether the history plays are English or Roman at surface level, they will always have an inherent link to England and its Early Modern politics: Hattaway continues by noting that ‘Julius Caesar, for example, exposes the fragility of republics’ while ‘*Titus Andronicus* addresses the grotesque excesses of honour cultures and the way tyranny both generates and is generated by violence’.²⁶³ The political mechanics of Rome appears to have fascinated Shakespeare, but it also allowed him to depict dramas of deposition without the same potential scandal that could arise from members of English royalty being challenged. These political links also extend into physical elements: the trend of connecting great English structures to Rome is common within Elizabethan Drama, for example, the myth that the Tower of London was built by Caesar, the importance of which is noted by Domenico Lovascio:

In local Latin annals and vernacular poems, Caesar was reported to be, amongst other things, the implausible founder of innumerable towns [...] builder of the Louvre, the Tower of London, of castles at Canterbury, Rochester, Dover and in several places across France and Germany; builder of the baths at Aachen, Aix, and Bath, of Bristol Castle, the castle and town of Salisbury, the Tower of Dunother, the magical castle of Adamante, the castle of Exeter, the River Lavant; responsible for the introduction into England of the common Roman nettle, *urtica romana*.²⁶⁴

Early modern dramatists took advantage of the elements that made the portrayal of Rome resonate with England, creating a subconscious sense of ‘home’ for the audience. A technique adopted by Shakespeare in *Richard III*, where mention of the legend of the Tower and its connection to Caesar are discussed as a part of English history:

PRINCE

I do not like the Tower, of any place,
Did Julius Caesar build that place, my lord?

²⁶² Michael Hattaway, ‘The Shakespearean History Play’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare’s History Plays*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 6.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Domenico Lovascio, “‘Of higher state / Than monarch, king or world’s great potentate’: The Name of Caesar in Early Modern English Drama”, in *Early Modern Literature Studies* (2016), p. 16.

BUCKINGHAM

He did, my gracious lord, begin that place,
Which since succeeding ages have re-edified.

This idea is more broadly supported by Warren Chernaik, who notes that ‘there are certain values that are characteristically Roman, but not geographically or temporally limited to a particular place’.²⁶⁵ It was not Shakespeare alone, but Renaissance playwrights more broadly who were utilising Rome as a cultural reference point either for literary enrichment or political commentary. Ben Jonson’s *Poetaster* (1601) is an example where the classical Roman location is central to the narrative of the play; the initial induction scene presents the audience with an allegorical narrator figure of Envy’s, who states her intentions:

To blast your pleasures and destroy your sports
With wrestings, comments, applications,
Spy-like suggestions, privy whisperings,
And thousand such promoting sleights as these (Induction, 23-6)²⁶⁶

Upon discovering that she is in Rome, Envy’s tone changes and becomes frustrated at the location of the events that are about to unfold:

Rome? Rome? And Rome? Crack, eye-strings, and your balls
Drop into earth; let me be ever blind.
I am prevented; all my hopes are crost,
Check’d, and abated; fie, a freezing sweat
Flows forth at all my pores, my entrails burn:
What should I do? Rome! Rome! O my vexed soul,
How might I force this to the present state? (Induction, 30-6)

Suggesting that ‘a setting as remote, both temporally and geographically, as Rome under the emperor Augustus can offer no scope for such apparently distorting topical application’.²⁶⁷

This example of Rome being a location of fear and antiquity is also echoed throughout

²⁶⁵ Warren Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 1.

²⁶⁶ Ben Jonson, *Poetaster, or His Arrangement* (1601), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, <<https://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/works/poetaster/facing/#>> [Accessed Monday 27th November 2023].

²⁶⁷ Daniel Cadman and Andrew Duxfield, ‘Rome and Home: The Cultural Uses of Rome in Early Modern English Literature’, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 19.1 (2016), pp. 1-15 (p. 1).

Shakespeare's Roman plays; with audience forced to have a sense of both fear and appreciation for the lands of their supposed distant ancestors. If we are to take Jonson's *Poetaster* as an example, it is clear to see that Envy feelings reflect those of the general public that Rome and its history are still affecting Early Modern England. This further emphasises the way in which Renaissance playwrights were appropriating ancient Rome both as London's cultural ancestor and allegorical mirror; in keeping with his contemporaries, Shakespeare's Roman plays show the same tendencies.

3.3 Depictions of Rome in Early Modern Theatre

It was not solely the Roman style that influenced Early Modern theatre, but Roman history as well. Initially critics such as Bullough queried the popularity of the Roman plays beyond Shakespeare:

There is no evidence that Roman themes found any popularity on the public stage before Shakespeare, although the Revels Accounts mention several pieces performed at court by child-actors between 1574 and 1581. Roman plays came next from members of court circles revolving around Sidney's sister, Mary Countess of Pembroke, and their attempts to naturalize French Senecanism in closet drama. In writing *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare may have well been the initiator of a fashion in the popular theatre.²⁶⁸

However, subsequent research shows that Roman plays proved very popular. The subject was not uncommon on the Elizabethan stage, and the list of Roman tragedies during the period from Shakespeare's first appearance in London to the closure of the theatres in 1642 is a long one. Lovascio writes that 'the interest in the Roman past displayed by Early Modern English playwrights was fervid, incessant, prodigious: if one takes into account the Roman-themed dramatic works written in England around 1567 and 1642 that are still extant together with

²⁶⁸ Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 5 vols (Australia: Law Book Co. of Australia, 1969), IV, p. 25.

those that are lost and of which only the titles are known, one is faced with a figure around one hundred'.²⁶⁹

During the time when the playwright was establishing himself as a respected dramatist, Thomas Lodge's *The Wounds of Civil War* (1589) appeared on the stage depicting the tale of Marius and Sulla. This was followed by an impressive amount of Roman-themed plays: Spencer notes, to name but a few, Samuel Daniel's *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* (1594), Samuel Brandon's *The Tragicoedi of the virtuous Octavia* (1598), an anonymous play by the title *The Tragedie of Caesar and Pompey, or Caesar's Revenge, Privately acted by students of Trinity College in Oxford* (1607), Ben Jonson's *Sejanus his Fall* (1605) and *Catiline his Conspiracy* (1611), John Marston's *The Wonder of Women, or, the Tragedie of Sophonisba* (1606), Thomas Haywood's *The Rape of Lucrece, or The Roman Tragedy* (1608), George Chapman's *The Warres of Caesar and Pompey* (1613), John Fletcher's *The False One* (1619-23, with Massinger), and Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor* (1626).²⁷⁰ Note that these plays postdate *Titus*, and in many cases Shakespeare's other Roman plays too, which would seem to endorse Bullough's conception of Shakespeare as the first playwright to truly utilise the topic. When discussing the theme of 'Roman play' Lovascio writes that:

Arguably, the most immediate association that the phrase 'Rome plays' would arouse at a gathering of early modernists would be with Shakespeare and his *Titus Andronicus* (1584-94), *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Antony and Cleopatra* (10-07), *Coriolanus* (1607-09), and *Cymbeline* (1609-11). Then, someone would be likely to think of Jonson and his *Poetaster, or His Arraignement* (1601), *Sejanus His Fall* (1603), and *Catiline His Conspiracy* (1611).²⁷¹

Naturally, we must not attribute the use of the Roman location and classical tropes during the Early Modern period to Shakespeare alone, Lovascio further argues that John Fletcher also contributed to the trend: 'Fletcher did pen as many as four plays that can be classified as 'Roman', namely *Bonduca* (1613-14), *Valentinian* (1610-14), *The False One* (1619-23, with

²⁶⁹ Lovascio, *John Fletcher's Rome*, p. 5.

²⁷⁰ Spencer, p. 6.

²⁷¹ Lovascio, *John Fletcher's Rome*, p. 1.

Massinger), and *The Prophetess* (1622, with Massinger)'.²⁷² Shakespeare was not alone; this evident widespread use of Roman themes and subjects which followed shows that Shakespeare was either attuned to the general trend of what was, or could be, popular on the stage at the time.

But why was Roman history so enthralling to Elizabethan audiences? Despite the patriotic and monarchical sentiments that arose from plays on English national history, they were limited in 'scope and interest'.²⁷³ When Shakespeare moved from English history to Roman history, his plays discussed provoking arguments on political morality. Lovascio reflects on Rome in Early Modern England:

Largely conceived of as supreme ideal of military, political, artistic, and cultural excellence, towards which the present invariably tended in an unflagged striving for emulation, ancient Rome penetrated the early modern English imagination with incredible pervasiveness. The adjective 'Roman' primarily stood for a complex of values variously subsumed under the broader notion of *virtus*: *dignitas*, *integritas*, *constantia*, *fides*, *pietas*, *gravitas*, *sobrietas*. Rome, however, arguably also represented evils such as *superbia*, brutality, ingratitude, destruction, tyranny, horror, blasphemy, fratricide, and human sacrifice.²⁷⁴

Early Modern England was linked to Rome, politically, culturally, and allegorically, allowing writers to create connections to the ancient city that resonated with audiences. Unlike the modern perception of Rome, Elizabethans thought of Rome as their 'ancestor', giving them the right to appropriate, discuss, and interpret the historical events that made the Republic and the Empire such important reference points. The image of Rome still loomed heavily in the history of the world at the time and held more importance to historians and writers than it does in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, Rome remained a city that England was simultaneously in admiration of, and slightly suspicious of; continuing this affinity and

²⁷² Lovascio, *John Fletcher's Rome*, pp. 1-2.

²⁷³ Spencer, p. 7.

²⁷⁴ Lovascio, *John Fletcher's Rome*, p. 2.

desired connection to the city, showing that Rome's successes were in some ways also England's successes. For Shakespeare's Roman plays to be as successful as his 'English' plays, he was 'bound to select episodes of more salient interest and more Catholic appeal than such as had hitherto sometimes served him'.²⁷⁵ Subject matters for these plays were taken from 'legends of the dawn [...] and from rumours of the dark [...] from Roman pictures of barbarian allies [...] or barbarian antagonists [...] as well as from the intimate records of home affairs and the careers of the great magnates of the Republic or Empire'.²⁷⁶ The enthralling tragic possibilities that Roman history provided Shakespeare may, at first glance, appear unfit for the contemporary audience, but in reality fit into their love for gore, action, spectacle, and exoticism. Events such as the fall of Caesar, Antony's loss of his world for the love of the beautiful Cleopatra, and the triumph before the inevitable destruction of the Empire provided politically explicit subjects for the enjoyment of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre patrons. Shakespeare's fellow dramatists and audiences alike who were familiar with the subject matters would be impressed by their outstanding retelling, and those who came to know the tales through the stage performances were left in awe at the complexity of the great city.

Rome, its political figures, and imperial individuals were constantly in the minds of the Elizabethans and Jacobeans, Paul A. Cantor mentions that the 'early modern English view of Roman political history was complicated and ambiguous, since both growing imperial ambitions and nascent republican sentiments became bound up with the way the Elizabethans Roman history'.²⁷⁷ This deep-set integration of the Roman influences within English culture is not only seen within the dramatists of the time; royalty were also indulging in showing their ancestral link to Rome and its power. The most notable iconographic example of this is

²⁷⁵ M. W. MacCallum, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background* (London: Macmillan, 1925), p. 77.

²⁷⁶ MacCallum, p. 1.

²⁷⁷ Paul A. Cantor, *Shakespeare Rome: Republic and Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 21.

described by Jonathan Goldberg, when upon his entry into the city of London ‘James displayed, passing by the triumphal arches [...] a Roman style, imperial’.²⁷⁸ This is not the only example of monarchs such as James I showing a likeness to their Roman ancestors; he was compared to ‘Emperor Augustus, Prince of Peace and as England’s Caesar’,²⁷⁹ which caused inevitable links to Julius Caesar.

English Renaissance playwrights were returning to Latin writers and Roman history for inspiration due to the usefulness it provided: ‘as a political system that experienced transitions from monarchy to a republic and then, in turn, to imperial rule, Rome endured considerable turbulence and generated numerous figures who were represented in histories as moral exemplars, both good and bad’.²⁸⁰ An example of a readily available translated Latin source is undoubtably North’s translation of Plutarch’s *Lives*, which has been a vital text to both Shakespeare and his contemporaries. David Norbook notes that:

Throughout Europe, in the later sixteenth century, writers were turning away from the elaborate ‘Ciceronian’ style, a style associated with public debate and oratory, and turning to ‘silver Latin’ writers like Seneca and Tacitus. These men were writing at a time when the Senate had lost its real political power and important decisions were taken in private by the emperor and his associates. Thus the ‘Taciitist’ movement had marked, though ambiguous, political connections.²⁸¹

Imperial Rome and the rise of Tacitism can be linked to the emergence of discourses such as stoicism and republicanism. Cadman and Duxfield write that ‘the late sixteenth century saw the emergence of neo-stoicism, broadly defined as an attempt to reconcile the principles of ancient Roman stoic thought with reformed Christian principles’.²⁸² This would have been appealing for the English as it would have allowed them to keep the greatness of their

²⁷⁸ Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), p. 32.

²⁷⁹ Goldberg, p. 43.

²⁸⁰ Cadman and Duxfield, p. 3.

²⁸¹ David Norbook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 1984), pp. 171-2.

²⁸² Cadman and Duxfield, p. 3.

ancestral Rome, without the risk of Catholicism from Early Modern Italy. Lovascio notes how

Rome to the early modern mind could never mean simply the capital city of the Roman Empire: it also meant the home of the Vatican, and thus connoted Roman Catholicism, the despised Other that Protestants officially feared and hated, but for which many of the older generation perhaps also felt nostalgia. As a result, Rome had for Protestants a double power: it evoked with extraordinary emotional power, two separate pasts, both acknowledged as foundational to English national identities, but both now lost. In the case of recusant Catholics, Rome continued to be even more crucial to their identity.²⁸³

Republicanism also provided a framework for political analysis within Early Modern England; the analogy of Rome afforded a safe distance for discussions on political authority and civic liberty for writers of the time such as Jonson and Marlowe as well as Shakespeare. Patrick Cheney has proposed that there was a ‘distinct tradition of republican authorship characterised by the ways in which a writer’s literary works vigorously engage classical Roman and early Modern European writing, both historical and literary’.²⁸⁴ Thus, Rome’s turbulent political history caused Early Modern dramatists to question the fundamental issues behind civic liberties, all ideas that continue to be explored in contemporary productions of these plays.

The significance of Rome and its ancient mechanisms should not be overlooked or forgotten when attempting to understand why Shakespeare, and his contemporaries, chose to return to the ancient world; although it may appear to be counterintuitive as Rome is the contemporary home of Catholicism, Shakespeare was able to see beyond the religious binding, and write narratives that had a subtle mirroring of English life.

The events of the Roman past carried a singular dramatic potential that proved to be decisive in stimulating its transformation into a storehouse of spectacular dramatic plots, with *exempla* and lessons of wisdom from the past being routinely applied to the present – either for moral didacticism and topical application or as guidance to sovereigns and politicians – chiefly from the mid-1590s onwards, a decade that also

²⁸³ Lovascio, *John Fletcher’s Rome*, p. 3.

²⁸⁴ Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe’s Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime* (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 2009), p. 188.

witnessed an impressive proliferation of English translations and original accounts of Roman history.²⁸⁵

Lovascio's argument is supported by Timothy Duffy who writes that 'Rome's significance as a site of history, of ancient ruins, and a space of religious authority meant it was a location that contained the ghosts of its past, the powerful draw of its present, and the pull of eternal destiny rooted in its role as the spiritual centre of the Catholic world'.²⁸⁶

Shakespeare used Rome, its history, and politics as a mirror to reflect and discuss the political question that concerned him about England. Peter Holland discusses the echoes of the Midland Revolts in *Coriolanus*, for example..²⁸⁷ Although his audiences would be made aware of the political similarities, they would nonetheless regard the location of ancient Rome as a location that was safe to talk about due to its lack of a monarchy, a parallel to England, thus allowing the playwright to critique the individuals with power without attacking the monarchy outright. Any similarities to the English monarchy or to English political strife could be brushed off as coincidental or as simply impossible, due to the obvious political differences between Rome and England. However, despite Shakespeare's efforts to distance any negative political commentary from being explicitly linked to the English monarchy, there were still aspects of Roman history that can be seen as a blueprint for the hopeful rise of an English empire, and use the mistakes made by their ancestors as steppingstones to navigate the perils of politics, in order to stop history from repeating itself. Specifically, 'how tyranny was to be overthrown, whether crimes against a government were ever to be condoned'²⁸⁸, a topic that would have enthralled his audiences for how closely they could understand the feelings that this topic would manifest.

²⁸⁵ Lovascio, *John Fletcher's Rome*, pp.3-4.

²⁸⁶ Timothy Duffy, 'Triangulating Rome: Du Bellay, Spenser, and the Fantasy of Perspective', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 19 (2016), pp. 1- 25 (p. 6).

²⁸⁷ See William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. Peter Holland (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), p. 56.

²⁸⁸ Freund, p. 658.

The link between Rome and England is difficult to ignore when there are many cross-overs both ancient and modern to be found within Shakespeare's Roman plays; similarly, in his English history plays, the characters within *Coriolanus* are concerned with power in all its aspects, with the word appearing 38 times within the play, which compares to *Richard II* that uses the words 18 times. Power, social affairs, and the link to history are all possible influences that Shakespeare may have considered when crafting his Roman narratives; but how do these influences translate onto an Early Modern stage that was attempting to fill a niche with Roman-based narratives?

3.4 'Walking on Treaded Ground': *Julius Caesar*, its Sources and Italian Influences

The stories of Rome were ample within the Renaissance, as Bullough and Spencer have shown with their comprehensive list of Roman-inspired plays listed in section 3.3 – a fact that Shakespeare knew well after having helped complete *Titus Andronicus*. Thus, it is not surprising that for his next Roman narratives he ventured into more widely known events in history; it may be favourable to assume that in order to further experiment with Roman narratives, he chose to use events that were ample in their documentation so as to lessen his research into the events and spend more time reworking the narrative for the English stage. What occurred within the Greco-Roman world influenced the views of history for centuries to come; the Elizabethans felt an affinity with the Romans that was not felt towards the Greeks. 'Rome was a sort of cultural parent and ever-present model, and Greece a less familiar, often disparaged distant relative of Rome';²⁸⁹ in the present day, we honour the mechanics of tragedy and the epic that Greece provided to us as valued literary genres. However, during Shakespeare's day, Rome took precedence over Greece due to its

²⁸⁹ Kahn, p. 205.

connection to the founding of Britain. Coppelia Kahn writes: ‘in the humanistic culture of England, as of Europe generally, reading, writing, and speaking Latin was the key to privilege and authority, and Rome the model of civilization itself’.²⁹⁰ It is no surprise then that Shakespeare chose to retell the story of one of the most famous rulers of Rome, as well as the story of the tumultuous relationship between a Roman soldier and an Egyptian queen.

Of all Shakespeare’s Classical Roman narratives, *Julius Caesar* creates a lasting image of political duty, public duty, and patrician Stoicism as keynotes. The play shifts perspectives between characters; allowing space for judgement of the victim and the assassins, and never allowing the empathy of the audience to be swayed between the two sides. Cicero’s statement, ‘But men may construe things after their fashion, /Clean from the purpose of the things themselves’ (I. 2 . 34-5), suggests that the play provides more questions than answers. Was Caesar a true tyrant, or a misunderstood leader? Was Brutus killing in order to create a better Republic, or was he a misguided idealist? Did Shakespeare purposely make the answers to these questions so ambiguous because he was using an Italian source rather than Latin sources and thus, his notion of Rome was hindered by the Italian interpretation? This skewing of history through the choice of sources once again brings into question the genre of Shakespeare’s Roman plays, or the ones that claim to have possible Italian sources; can we class the plays as Roman if they predominantly derive from Italian source-texts?

When he did use sources, Bate argues that Shakespeare tended to ‘begin by sticking to them quite closely, then to drift away from them’.²⁹¹ This tactic outlined by Bate is true in the

²⁹⁰ Kahn, p. 205.

²⁹¹ Bate, *Titus Andronicus*, p. 84.

majority of his Italian plays, both comedy and tragedy, for example, *Romeo & Juliet* was presumably adapted from Masuccio Salernitano's novella XXXIII of *Il Novellino*.

Shakespeare stayed close to the original material provided by Salernitano at the beginning of his play, but by the end the two texts had drifted away from each other even if the narratives are innately similar. Shakespeare also returned to Salernitano and his *Novellino* for the source material for *The Merchant of Venice*, this time however, only choosing to take parts that were relevant to the sub-plot of Shylock and his daughter Jessica. This trend of drifting away from his sources is also present within the Roman plays. *Titus Andronicus* begins by displaying connections to historical events, but by the end of the play, where Shakespeare had taken over from his co-author, the narrative has drifted away from any historical connection it may have had at the start. Thus, it is surprising then that he chose to retell the events that revolved around Caesar by staying as close as possible to the accounts already written by Latin, English, French and Italian philosophers and playwrights, perhaps due to his inexperience with Roman narratives, or because English audiences would have never forgiven him for embellishing the story of the man who helped build their country. Another possibility is that the story of Caesar was so familiar due to it being deeply ingrained into English society, that Shakespeare knew it well enough to present it accurately on the stage, or that the story was too familiar that he could not afford to meddle with the story as his audiences would know the blatant and false changes he made for the sake of theatrical entertainment. There is limited evidence to suggest that Shakespeare accessed the autobiographical military memoirs written by Caesar which were readily available during the Renaissance, this would place the playwright's version as being one of the most accurate, however, there are no concrete parallels between the *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, the *De Bello Civili*, and Shakespeare's *Caesar*. Another suspected Latin source consulted by the playwright is Cicero's *Familiar Epistles*, which was explicit in its disagreement with Caesar's rule. Although not translated

into English until 1620 by J. Webbe, they were widely known and circulated in the original Latin in the Renaissance:

In England a Latin edition printed by H. Bynneman in 1571 was followed by others in 1574 (T. March), 1575 and 1579 (T. Vautrollier), 1585 (J. Jackson and E. Bollifant), 1591 (R. Robinson). They were used in schools and universities to teach the art of prose writing.²⁹²

As mentioned, Plutarch's *Lives* was a clear influence for Shakespeare's last three Roman plays. With regard to *Caesar*, Muir notes: 'The first three acts draw upon all three lives, and the last two acts are chiefly based on the life of Brutus'.²⁹³ But other sources were also incorporated. Bullough notes that within Shakespeare's research into the life of Caesar, Dante's *Inferno* and *Paradiso* may have given the playwright another view of the tyrannical leader – a somewhat more favourable one. Shakespeare being able to access Dante is not outside the realm of possibility; due to his friendship with John Florio, he would have known someone who was familiar with the poem and owned copies edited by many Italian commentators. Even though the events that surrounded Caesar were well documented and readily available for Shakespeare to look into, he chose to look at how other writers viewed the leader, Cicero and Plutarch being the most obvious choices for the playwright. Dante appears to be the anomaly within these sources due to him writing in Italian with explicit Medieval Catholic Italian views on Roman history and its figures.

On the surface, it may appear as though Dante is commenting negatively on Caesar as he writes about meeting him upon entering Hell, however, it is important to understand the dynamics of Dante's Hell in order to understand his views on Caesar. He had a more absolute way of thinking, and thus rather than total Hell, those who lived before the time of Jesus, and

²⁹² Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol. V, p. 6.

²⁹³ Muir, *Sources*, p. 189.

thus did not have the opportunity to learn about him, named The Masters of Pagan Antiquity, are placed in the circle of Virtuous Pagans. Dante describes caesar thus: ‘Cesare armato con li occhi grifagni’²⁹⁴ [*And the armed Caesar with the eyes of a hawk*] (Canto IV, 123), alluding to an image of power and military respect, far from the damning critiques of Cicero. A word that strikes a particular similarity with Shakespeare’s representation of Caesar is ‘grifagni’, which is an adjective of provincial derivation from the Tuscan dialect ‘guilfanghi’, meaning ‘threatening’, ‘daring’, and ‘proud’, all qualities Shakespeare chose to display within his representation of Caesar on stage.²⁹⁵ Although at surface level Dante’s favourable view of Caesar appears to have a limited connection to Shakespeare’s play, it does support the notion that he consulted Italian sources for either research or direct references. Shakespeare’s *Caesar* has multiple layers, which causes the audience to have conflicting emotions towards the leader; by reading the works of multiple writers, poets, and philosophers on Caesar, Shakespeare was able to create a well-rounded character that embodied these different perspectives. Interestingly, Dante was also vocal in his damnation of Brutus and Cassius, placing them alongside Judas in the mouth of Lucifer: ‘De li altri due c’hanno il capo di sotto,/ 155hem che pende dal nero ceffo è Bruto:/vedi come si storce, e non fa motto!:/ e l’altro è Cassio, che par sì membruto’²⁹⁶ [*Of the two other, who hang upside-down,/ The one who hangs from the blackface is Brutus,/ See how he twists and says not a word:/ And the other is Cassius, whose body looks so heavy*] (Canto XXXIV, 64-7). This position that Providence is expressed in the punishment of Brutus and Cassius that sounds anachronistic in the mouth of an early humanist may have run through the Renaissance until arriving at Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, causing his play to have Italian humanistic undertones and in

²⁹⁴ Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*, eds. S. Jacomuzzi, A. Dughera, G. Loli, and V. Jacomuzzi (Turin: Societa Editrice Internazionale, 1990), p. 63.

²⁹⁵ Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*, eds. S. Jacomuzzi, A. Dughera, G. Loli, and V. Jacomuzzi (Turin: Societa Editrice Internazionale, 1990), Canto IV, 123, fn.

turn undermine the validity of calling his play ‘Roman’ due to it veering away from Roman perspectives.

Dante is not the only Italian writer that Shakespeare may have encountered during the creation of *Caesar*; Alexander Boecker argues convincingly that Orlando Pescetti’s *Il Cesare* (1594) is a minor source for the playwright’s second Roman play. Known for his work as an esteemed pedagogue, and for volumes discussing Italian dialects and proverbs, Pescetti’s dramatic career saw him write multiple plays, but none would garner such popularity as *Il Cesare*. Scholars such as Bullough and Muir seem to minimise the importance of the Italian play when discussing the sources of Shakespeare’s *Caesar*, perhaps due to its lack of circulation in Renaissance England, or due to the presumption that Shakespeare would have been unable to access an untranslated Italian source. But, as I have discussed in my previous chapters, Shakespeare’s knowledge of Italian may have been more advanced than is commonly supposed, thus I would argue we should reconsider Pescetti’s influence on *Caesar*. The discussion around Pescetti and Shakespeare is limited, with the most influential work being Boecker’s in 1913, which looked to ‘demonstrate the probability of Shakespeare’s indebtedness in the composition of the first three acts of his *Julius Caesar*, to the *Cesare* of Orlando Pescetti’.²⁹⁷ Boecker presents compelling evidence on the ‘details of the Brutus-Portia scenes, Popilius Lena’s episode, and the presence of the supernatural element throughout the plays’.²⁹⁸ Both Shakespeare and Pescetti take influences from Petrarch and Cicero alike, thus similarities in form and content are unavoidable, however, there are elements shared by both playwrights that are not present within Plutarch. For

²⁹⁷ Alexander Boecker, *A Probable Italian Source of Shakespeare’s ‘Julius Caesar’* (Lancaster, PA: New Era, 1913), p. 4.

The text was the author’s thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and was accepted by the Faculty of New York University in 1912.

²⁹⁸ Cristina Vallaro, *Pescetti’s Il Cesare and Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar: A Case of Political Intertextuality* (Milan: EDUCatt, 2012), p. 5.

example, Portia's prayers for her husband in Act II of *Caesar* echo the corresponding action in Act II of *Cesare*:

Va', che ti scorga, e ti difenda Giove
[Go, let Jupiter see you, and defend you.]

(*Il Cesare*, II, 592)

O Brutus,
The heavens speed thee in thy enterprise

(*Julius Caesar*, II, iv, 41-2).

Again, there is no real suggestion in Plutarch for this exchange thus reinforcing the notion that Pescetti's narrative is far more important than has generally been supposed. It is even more interesting to note that this exchange occurs in Act II of both plays, further suggesting that Shakespeare was carrying out a detailed reading of the Italian work in order to influence his own narrative. Boecker gives further examples of the similarities between Pescetti and Shakespeare, arguing that these instances are not 'simply accidental, but taken in connection with many other points of contact between the two dramas, they assume greater significance'.²⁹⁹ However, it is not just within phrasing that similarities between Pescetti and Shakespeare can be found; Boecker also notes that the theme of the supernatural is also heavily used by both dramatists in order to attempt a 'distribution of the supernatural which tends to emphasise the impending catastrophe and to invest [their] play[s] in an atmosphere of portent very similar to that created in *Julius Caesar*'.³⁰⁰ The roles of the ghosts, earthquake and violent seas within Shakespeare's play are elements that are missing within all of the sources proposed by other scholars, but can be found within *Cesare*:

Nettun volto hà sossopra tutto il suo
Immenso regno, e sì gonfiato hà l'onde,
Che pareo, che de' suoi confin volesse
Uscir, e tutta subissar la terra.

(*Il Cesare*, I. 3, 353-6)

[Neptune has turned all of his

²⁹⁹ Boecker, p. 107.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 27.

*immense kingdom upside down, and the waves had swollen,
It seemed, wanting to
Escape their confines, and submerge the whole Earth]*

I have seen
Th' ambitious ocean swell, and rage, and foam,
To be exalted with the threatening clouds.

(Julius Caesar, I. 3. 6-8)

Although these similarities appear to be favourable when attempting to solidify a connection between the Italian and English dramatist, these connections do not come wholly unfavoured. Within his *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, Bullough uses Boecker as his main argument for citing Pescetti as a source, however his tone is less optimistic and his reasoning less convinced, as he concludes that Pescetti ‘seems to have introduced into drama the scenes between Brutus and Portia in which she demands his full confidence and tells how she wounded herself’.³⁰¹ Although appearing to acknowledge that there may be some areas which Pescetti may have contributed to, he leaves a larger margin for doubt than Boecker.

If the evidence that links Shakespeare’s *Caesar* to Italy is more than simply geographic, why then do scholars veer away from naming Pescetti as a main source rather than a minor source? At surface level, it may appear as though scholars dismiss the use of Pescetti as a main source due to *Caesar* being a ‘Roman’ tragedy rather than an ‘Italian’ tragedy as though the location dictates inspiration, whereas recognising the legitimacy of Italian sources blurs the boundary between Roman and Italian plays. This may also be another case of English scholars attempting to solidify a connection between Shakespeare, Rome, and the British Empire, creating a constant parallel between the three; by admitting to an Italian source, this brings into question how Roman Shakespeare tragedies really are, and

³⁰¹ Bullough, V, p. 30.

in turn what, if any, connection Rome had to Britain. This dilemma of attempting to make reason of Shakespeare's use of sources may be described through Ockham's razor theory:

We are not allowed to affirm a statement to be true or to maintain that a certain thing exists, unless we are forced to do either by its self-evidence or by revelation or by experience or by logical deduction from either a revealed truth or proposition verified by observation.³⁰²

Thus, it is easier for an English scholar to assume that Shakespeare was using English sources, or translations, rather than Italian. In light of this, one may be inclined to assume that Italian scholars have more confidence in the notion that Pescetti was a major source for Shakespeare's *Caesar*. Frustratingly, this is not the case; many Italian scholars side with Bullough and agree that the only connection between the two playwrights is due to their shared source of Plutarch. Alessandro Serpieri notes:

Di notevole rilievo è un drama Italiano, Il Cesare (1594) di Orlando Pescetti, che tiene presente il drama di Muret, nonché l'elaborazione di Grévin, e utilizza materiali da Appiano, Plutarco, Svetonio e Lucano. Si riscontrano alcuni singolari parallelismi tra questo drama e quello Shakespeariano, sia nella concezione globale, come suggerisce Bullough, che i parallelismi siano dovuti al fatto che entrambi i drammaturghi, Pescetti e Shakespeare, lavorassero sulle stesse fonti, e in particolare su Plutarco.³⁰³

[An Italian drama of notable importance, Il Cesare (1594) by Orlando Pescetti, which takes into account Muret's drama, as well as Grévin's elaboration, and uses material from Appiano, Plutarch, Suetonius and Lucan. There are some singular similarities between this drama and the Shakespearean one, both in the global conception, as Bullough suggests, that the parallelisms are due to the fact that both playwrights, Pescetti and Shakespeare, worked with the same sources, particularly Plutarch.]

Thus, both Italian and English scholars agree that the similarities between the two dramatists are due to their shared use of Plutarch. This idea is further supported by Giorgio Melchiori:

Sono state anche notate curiose affinità, soprattutto nel trattamento dei congiurati, con la tragedia paludata Italiana Il Cesare di Orlando Pescetti (1594), quasi certamente ignota in Inghilterra; ma le somiglianze sono legate al fatto che entrambi gli autori attingono a Plutarco.³⁰⁴

³⁰² William Ockham, *Philosophical Writings: A Selection*, eds. Stephen F. Brown and Philotheus Boehner (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Co., 1990), p. xx.

³⁰³ Alessandro Serpieri, *Nel Laboratorio Di Shakespeare. Dalle Fonti Ai Drammi*, 4 vols (Parma: Pratiche, 1988), IV, p. 16.

³⁰⁴ Giorgio Melchiori, *Shakespeare: Genesi e Struttura delle Opere*, (Bari: Laterza, 1994), p. 396.

[Curious affinities have also been noted, especially in the treatment of the conspirators, in the Italian tragedy Il Cesare by Orlando Pescetti (1594), almost certainly unknown in England; but the similarities are linked to the fact that both authors drew from Plutarch.]

Despite the dismissal from both Italian and English scholars to acknowledge the importance of the role that Pescetti played within the creation of Shakespeare's Caesar, I believe that it is evidence that Italian sources continued to influence Shakespeare's narratives throughout his professional career. Pescetti's potential influence, as first explored by Boecker, on Shakespeare makes the identification of these plays as Roman or Italian yet more ambiguous. But consideration of these plays as either Roman or Italian is not solely down to the author's influences and sources, but also to audience perception and understanding.

When considering how Italian Shakespeare's Roman plays are, it is worth considering their inherently political nature, and the various links that his Roman characters have to the Machiavellian character principles: coldness, manipulative behaviour, indifference, and callousness. Characters in the Roman plays are driven by their own ambition, without much regard for those around them, choosing to advance their own affairs rather than the salvation of their own kin. Although the traditional Shakespearean Machiavellian characters are Richard III and Iago, I feel as though it is necessary to re-examine the characters within the Roman plays in order to further link them to Italian literary traits. John Roe makes the case:

Why speak particularly of Machiavelli's influence, when his examples, as any annotated edition reveals, derive from classical authors such as Aristotle, Tacitus, Cicero, Plutarch, or Livy, all of whom he studied carefully? Such authors, now fully incorporated into the humanist tradition to which Shakespeare belonged, were available without the need for Machiavelli's intervention. One answer to this has just been given: Machiavelli drew from his authorities lessons which they themselves

were reluctant to drive home. Another is that no ancient author remains in his original place, unaffected by the attentions of the humanist movement”³⁰⁵

Just as Shakespeare draws on multiple source materials, so too do his source, in a cycle of borrowing and imitating through the ages. As with any of Shakespeare’s sources, we must consider if it was viable for him to have accessed works of translated Italian literature.

Machiavelli’s *Il Principe* was published in Italy after his death in 1532, and appeared in the Papal Index in 1559, before a Latin translation the following year. It was translated into French in 1553 and 1571, and a German translation appeared in 1623. Although the English did lag behind in translating Machiavelli’s works, ‘The printer John Wolfe brought out an Italian edition of *Il Principe* in London in 1584’³⁰⁶ However, manuscript translations were in circulation in London at the time, and copies can be found in the British Library’³⁰⁷

The ‘machiavel’³⁰⁸ character was figure present within English drama first introduced to the stage by Marlow and Kyd before being adopted by their predecessor, Shakespeare, with examples in *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Richard III*. Hugh Grady writes that ‘Shakespeare may have adopted this Machiavellian analytic framework through direct or indirect knowledge, but there is no doubt that this secular humanist discourse circulated prominently in the Elizabethan political class and had also entered the theatrical world’³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ Roe, John, *Shakespeare and Machiavelli* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), p. ix.

³⁰⁶ John Roe, pp. 3-4 (I put his full name because I already have Paul Roe elsewhere, is that ok?)

³⁰⁷ See Hardin Craig (ed), *Machiavelli’s The Prince: An Elizabethan Translation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), pp. 18-28; also, Napoleone Orsini, ‘Elizabethan Manuscript Translations of Machiavelli’, *Journal of Warburg Institute*, 1.2 (October 1947), pp. 166-9.

³⁰⁸ Hugh Grady, ‘The End of Shakespeare’s Machiavellian Moment: Julius Caesar, Shakespeare’s Hystography, and Dramatic Form’, in *Shakespeare and Renaissance Literary Theories: Anglo-Italian Translations*, ed. Michele Marrapodi (London: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 119-36 (p. 119).

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

When considering how Shakespeare uses Machiavellian characters, we need to understand that each character uses a different aspect of Machiavelli's ideas. For example, Shakespeare's earliest examples of using Machiavellian characters, such as Aaron from *Titus Andronicus*, and Richard of Gloucester from *Richard III* and *Henry VI*, which depict more conventionally evil characters with visible moral issues. This is in stark contrast to the characters of Lady Macbeth, and the characters of Iago and Edmund from *King Lear*, who exhibit more psychologically sophisticated villain qualities. Not forgetting the more political influence of Machiavelli that can be seen in plays such as *King John*, *Hamlet*, and *Julius Caesar*. With Grady writing that

The narrative dramatized in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* reproduced some of the era's best known historical events among both humanist scholars and members of the larger audience with a modicum of cultural knowledge in Elizabethan London, portraying as they do the assassination of the great soldier and much studied author that marked the final transformation of Rome from a Senate-controlled republic to a monarchical empire'.³¹⁰

Though Shakespeare was depicting Roman characters, he is nonetheless using contemporary Italian models in his portrayal of these characters. It is not uncommon to see references to foxes and lions being attributed to Machiavellian characters alongside the principles of coldness, manipulative behaviour, indifference, and callousness. Machiavelli associates humanity with the acts of being god-fearing and law-abiding citizens, they also have an animalistic side with force and power. In *The Prince* (1532), Machiavelli writes:

In ancient times writers used fables to teach their leaders this lesson: they tell how Achilles and many other leaders were sent to the centaur Chiron to be fed and brought up under his discipline. This story of having a teacher who was half-man and half-

³¹⁰ Grady, 'The End of Shakespeare's Machiavellian Moment: *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare's Hystography, and Dramatic Form', p. 128.

beast obviously meant that a ruler had to be able to draw on both natures. If he had only one, he wouldn't survive.³¹¹

Rulers are supposed to use their animalistic power more than the average citizen in order to bend the rules and resolve any friction and diffuse situations of tension. Even though Machiavelli mentions Chiron's horse form, he does not list this animal as one a leader should learn from; instead choosing to describe the traits of a prudent ruler by using the features of a lion and a fox:

Since a ruler has to be able to act the beast, he should take on the traits of the fox and the lion; the lion can't defend itself against snares and the fox can't defend itself from wolves. So you have to play the fox to see the snares and the lion to scare off the wolves. A ruler who just plays the lion and forgets the fox doesn't know what he's doing.³¹²

The slyness of the fox and fierceness of the lion are skills that Machiavelli puts particular emphasis on; he gives real-life examples of these traits in action from the Romans:

Severus had such a strong character that though he tyrannized the people to keep the army friendly he was always able to govern with success; his qualities amazed and awed people, impressed and pleased the army, so that both groups in their different ways admired him. [...] The Prince should study historical accounts of the actions of great men, to see how they conducted themselves in war; he should study the causes of their victories and defeats [...] and above all he should model himself on some great men of the past, a man who no doubt modelled his conduct on some still earlier example, as it is said Alexander the Great modelled himself on Achilles, Caesar on Alexander, and Scipio on Cyrus. Any reader of Xenophon's life of Cyrus will see how much Scipio profited from imitating him – how he conformed himself in honesty, affability, humanity and generosity to what Xenophon reported of Cyrus'.³¹³

When considering the link between Machiavelli and Shakespeare's Roman plays, the arguments of John Roe and Hugh Grady should be considered as they 'insist that whether or not he was a Shakespearian 'source' is irrelevant, since both writers want to use him as a figure whose devastating critique of political idealism can be read alongside Shakespeare's dramatic analysis of the relationship of the individual to the world of power'.³¹⁴ Although

³¹¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Tim Parks (Milton Keynes: Penguin, 2009), p. 69.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Machiavelli, pp. 59-77.

³¹⁴ David Lindley, 'Review: Shakespeare's Machiavellian Exploration', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 33 (2004), 376-378 (p. 376).

discourses on the importance of Machiavelli's *Discourses* and *The History of Florence* are important to consider, there is particular interest in *The Prince* as it sets out to 'demonstrate that situations, and the manner of depicting them, that occur in Shakespeare find analogous treatment in Machiavelli'.³¹⁵ The Roman plays, though not explicitly influenced by *The Prince*, demonstrate knowledge of the values of the prudent leader outlined by Machiavelli; with mentions of foxes and lion making an appearance:

MARTIUS

He that will giue good words to thee, will flatter
 Beneath abhorring. What would you have, you curs,
 That like nor peace, nor war? The one affrights you,
 The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,
 Where he should find you Lyons, finds you hares:
 Where Foxes, Geese you are – no surer, no,
 Then is the coal is fire upon the Ice,
 Or Hailstone in the Sun. Your virtue is
 To make him worthy, whose offence subdues him
 And curse that lustice did it. (*Cor.* I. 1.162-71)

Within Shakespeare's canon, there are a further 39 results for the use of the word 'fox'; although these are not all examples that relate to the qualities of a prudent leader, it does suggest that for his more power-hungry characters, Shakespeare chose to use the Machiavellian model when describing them. It is also interesting to note that in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare makes reference to 'an old Italian fox' (*TS.* II.1.406), further suggesting the link between slyness and Italians.

There are a total of 94 mentions of the word 'lion' within Shakespeare's canon; many of these are allusions to qualities of a leader, or valiant individuals. However, there are also allusions to the lion being an animal that would fare well being hunted and displayed as a trophy for those who dare to challenge the leader. For example, in *Coriolanus* when Maritus says 'Were half to half the world by th'ears and he / Upon my party, I'd revolt to make / Only

³¹⁵ John Roe, *Shakespeare and Machiavelli* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), p. x

my wars with him. He is a lion / That I am proud to hunt (Cor. I.1.228-31). It is not surprising then that when looking at the link between Machiavelli and the leaders of Shakespeare's Roman plays, alongside those from the rest of his canon, there are influences which are hard to ignore. It is no wonder then, that John Roe describes this relationship as one where 'Shakespeare may illuminate Machiavelli as much as Machiavelli may illuminate Shakespeare'.³¹⁶

3.5 *Antony and Cleopatra* and the Question of Genre, Sources, and Location

Harold C. Goddard describes *Caesar* as being a 'bridge between Shakespeare's Histories and Tragedies [...] Shakespeare finally passes from one world to another'.³¹⁷ Goddard raises an important point which is vital when attempting to understand how Shakespeare's Roman plays should be categorised; *Caesar* is a unique play as it shows a deepening engagement with Rome from a source-text and setting to provide a more integral understanding of Rome and its inner workings. Unlike the narrative of *Titus*, which was chosen for Shakespeare by his co-author Peele, *Caesar* sees the playwright independently choose the Roman topic for his play. This Independence suggests that his affinity with Rome was growing; he would now explore wider issues beyond the mere location of Rome, such as the complexities of Roman relationships and the morals behind historical choices. Although this deepening of interest is visible within *Caesar*, Shakespeare nonetheless decided to use a narrative that was well-known to his audiences and readily available for him to research; this decision dramatically reduced the risk of the play failing to meet expectations. This tactic proved fruitful for the playwright, and he continued along the same path when writing *Antony and Cleopatra* – his third Roman tragedy.

³¹⁶ Lindley, p. 376

³¹⁷ Harold C. Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, 2 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, p. 307.

Though classified as a tragedy in the First Folio, *Antony and Cleopatra* is a play where ‘history, comedy, and tragedy are chemically combined’,³¹⁸ showing that Shakespeare’s affinity with Rome had developed to a point where he decided to experiment with genres alongside the narratives in order to put his own unique touch on the well-known story. This amalgamation of genres within a Roman play opens the discussion to how many Italian elements are present within the Roman plays, and once again brings into question if we are labelling these dramatic works correctly. Dialogues and novellas dominated Italian literature during the Renaissance; these episodic stories tell a broad range of ‘love, adventure, fortune, faith, laughter, and loss’; nonetheless Italian novellas can still be characterised by a handful of specific features. Anna Maria Montanari has discussed the various Italian versions of the Cleopatra narrative in extensive detail in addition to the influence of Greek, English, and Italian theatre on Shakespeare’s final version of the tale, and noted Shakespeare’s ‘contamination of genre’.³¹⁹ In order to understand this ‘contamination’, it would be useful to consider the main pillars of Italian prose fiction and how Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* may, or may not adhere to these elements. Some formative elements of Italian prose fiction are outlined by Jon R. Snyder:

- (i) Do not usually represent only historical events or characters;
- (ii) Avoid formulating explicit moral lessons for their readers;
- (iii) Develop plot through linear (no episodic) action;
- (iv) Employ chiefly realistic elements;
- (v) Have protagonists who overcome an obstacle without supernatural assistance, and act on their own autonomous initiative (unlike the fairy tale);

³¹⁸ Goddard, II, p. 184.

³¹⁹ Anna Maria Montanari, *Cleopatra in Italian English Renaissance Drama* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), p. 219.

(vi) Reveal the life of the protagonist through the action (unlike the novel);

(vii) Provide only a limited number of motives for that action.³²⁰

One of Shakespeare's Italian sources is Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which matches the description given by Snyder above; if the playwright used sources that followed a strict Italian structure, it would thus be plausible that his works would also share undistinguishable Italian elements. However, Shakespeare's Roman plays do *not* wholly follow Snyder's description, which may indicate their distinction from other Italian plays: if they are Roman plays why should they follow the model made for Italian prose literature? *Caesar*, for example, does not fully follow the tropes outlined for Italian prose fiction; particularly, the minor role of the soothsayer contradicts the features noted by Snyder. However, soothsayers were not uncommon within ancient Roman culture; they were considered to represent minor priests who were trained in haruspicy, a technique where one can tell the future by reading the guts of dead animals. The Romans saw soothsayers as important individuals within their society as the gods would only reveal the future to those who were the most sincere in their worship. Hence, it would not be uncommon to find the character of a soothsayer within a Roman narrative, but it would be considered supernatural according to Italian Renaissance society, who had somewhat moved forward from the barbaric ways of their Roman ancestors. Thus, it would be counterintuitive for Shakespeare to eliminate this character, however minor, in order to categorise his play as Italian, when it has tropes that are evidently more Roman than Italian.

However, the discussion of whether scholars are mislabelling Shakespeare's Roman plays comes into question once again when we consider the text that he may have consulted when crafting the later Roman narratives. Given Shakespeare's continued use of Boccaccio

³²⁰ John R. Snyder, "Prose", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Michael Wyatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 202-23, (p. 203).

as a source, it is not surprising to see Cleopatra is also in Boccaccio's works; in *De claris mulieribus*, Boccaccio describes her as 'extravagant and promiscuous'.³²¹ Although not enough to cite this particular work of Boccaccio's as a source, it is important to note that some of Shakespeare's past sources had also made mention of the Egyptian queen. This inherent return to the classic fuelled a rise of drama based on 'classical precept and practice' which manifested itself on the stage as well as in prose. As an example, consider Gianbatista Giraldi Cinthio's *Cleopatra* (circa 1583)³²². Cinthio was a vital figure in popularising Senecan drama on the Italian stage, and it is not surprising that he wrote a tragedy about Cleopatra. Although deemed an unlikely source by Bullough, Cinthio has previously appeared as a source for *Othello*, and thus should not be easily dismissed as a possible source for *Antony and Cleopatra*.

It is true that Cinthio's plot in *Cleopatra* differs from that of Shakespeare, most notably in pacing Antony's death in the second act and so, after her lover's death, showing the audience more of Cleopatra's life with Octavius. Elsewhere, the plot similarities between the two plays are ample, though initially this can be explained by the retelling of shared historical events. Nonetheless, a closer analysis suggests that Cinthio's play had a more significant influence on Shakespeare's than has been suggested by previous discussions – as, for example, by Muir, Wilders and Bullough. As with *Twelfth Night*, there are similarities between Shakespeare's play and its Italian counterpart which go deeper than coincidences of plot. It is not uncommon for Roman narratives to touch upon the theme of honour: however, Shakespeare's narrative emphasises the importance of the deities whereas Cinthio chooses to

³²¹ Bullough, V, p. 221.

³²² *Cleopatra Tragedia di M. Gio Battista Giraldi Cinthio Nobile Ferrarese. In Venetia. Appresso Guilo Cesare Cagnacini, MDLXXXIII.*

focus on Antony's internal conflicts. Despite this, both plays have striking similarities when depicting Antony's regret:

ANTONY

Since Cleopatra died,
I have lived in such dishonour [...] I should see behind me
The 'inevitable prosecution of
Disgrace and horror, that on my command
'Thou then wouldst kill me.

MARCO ANTONIO

Vengo ben'io, ch' un'infelice, oime
Vivendo, si conserva à mille angoscie,
Mostro mi hai dunque Cleopatra, come
Si dee dar fine à le miserie humane.³²³ (I. 6. 80-3)

*[I come, although unhappy,
By living, keeping a thousand anguishes
a monster therefor you made me, Cleopatra
So to put an end to these human miseries]*

Both playwrights show Antony's regret stemming from Cleopatra's death and seeing the only escape as death. Shakespeare and Cinthio emphasise the disgrace and dishonour that Antony feels in having doubted his lover and in effect causes her death; showing their audiences that a great Roman soldier can be reduced to nothing by falling in love; perhaps depicting the fragility of Rome and how easily the leaders that uphold it can fall.

Examples of similarities between the two narratives is unavoidable due to their affinity with the historical event itself, and their most likely shared source of Plutarch. However, the language used by both playwrights causes one to reconsider Cinthio as a more prominent source for Shakespeare's adaptation; examples of these similarities can be found strewn throughout the play. Both playwrights romanticise Cleopatra's death by emphasising that the motive behind her suicide is after the reunion with her lover; although Shakespeare

³²³ Cinthio, p. 32.

stays true to North's translation and uses an asp as the poisonous snake of choice, "the asp is said to have been smuggled in with the basket of figs and leaves [...] the creature struck at her body without her being aware of it"³²⁴, whereas Cinthio chooses phial. However, it is important to note that although both playwrights choose different snakes when describing the death of Cleopatra, even Plutarch himself was unsure of the exact method of death due to there being many conflicting witness accounts:

Then, after removing some of the figs, she spotted the snake and said, 'Here it is, then', and made sure that the snake could bite her naked arm. However, others say that the asp was kept shut inside a water jar, and that as Cleopatra was trying to get it to come out by provoking it with a golden distaff, it lunged at her and fastened on to her arm. But no one knows the true story: after all, it was also said that she carried poison around inside a hollow hairpin, which was hidden in her hair, despite the fact that there were no marks on her body, and there were no other indications that she had taken poison either.³²⁵

To end the retelling, both playwrights have Caesar declare that the lovers should be buried together, cementing their eternal love and declaring that their love shall be everlasting:

CAESAR:

Take up her bed,
And bear her women from the monument.
She shall be buried by her Antony.
No grave upon the earth shall clip in it
A pair so famous. High events as these
Strike those that make them, and their story is
No less in pity than his glory which
Brought them to be lamented. (V.ii 355-62)

OTT:

Onde poi che mi hà chiesto, per le lettere
Che mi hà dianzi mandate, Cleopatra,
Che nel sepolchro, ov'hora, è Marco Antonio,
La faccia sepelire, io vò che cura
Proculeio ti pigli tu di questo,
E che con quell'honor, con quella pompa,
Che si conviene ad una tal Reina,
La facci sepelir con Marco Antonio.³²⁶ (V.6, 170-7)

*[Then after he asked me, for the letters
That he already sent me, Cleopatra,*

³²⁴ Plutarch, *Roman Lives*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 428.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Cinthio, 126.

*That in the sepulchre, where he is now, Mark Antony
Have her buried, I want to ensure that
Proculeius, you take care of this affair,
And with this honour, with this pompousness,
it is as befitting such a Queen,
Have her buried with Marc Antony.]*

Superficial similarities can be attributed to Plutarch due to both playwrights using his retelling of events as a foundation for their dramatic narratives; but Shakespeare and Cinthio veer away from the classical source when adapting language and feelings for the stage, expressing raw emotions and making the motives behind character decisions more explicit. Shakespeare's iteration of the final scene stays true to Plutarch, particularly when Octavius states that Cleopatra is to 'Take up her bed' (V.ii. 355), reminiscent of how Plutarch comments that when in her monument Cleopatra was 'layed upon a little low bed in poore estate'.³²⁷ Allowing Cleopatra to be buried next to her beloved Antony shows that both playwrights have remained close to the original narrative outlined by Plutarch as the mention of her burial was written in her letter to Octavius:

[...] and began to read her lamenation and petition, requesting him that he would let her be buried with Antonius, founde straight what she ment, and thought to have gone thither him selfe: howbeit he sent one before in all hast that might be, to see what it was [...] But when they has opened the dores, they founde Cleopatra starke dead, layed upon a bed of gold, attired and arrayed in her royal robes, and one of her two women, which was called Iras, dead at her feete: and her other woman, called Charmion halfe dead, and trembling, trimming the diademe which Cleopatra ware upon her head'.³²⁸

Although expertly dramatized by the two playwrights, the request by Cleopatra to be buried with her lover Antony is a well-documented historical event, with modern archaeologists stating that their tomb is most likely situated in Taposiris Magna, approximately thirty miles

³²⁷ Plutarch, 'The Life of Marcus Antonius' trans. Sir Thomas North, in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, vol 5 (1964), p. 313.

³²⁸ North, p. 316

outside of Alexandria.³²⁹ Shakespeare and Cinthio make a point of describing the honour associated with the two lovers, ensuring that the story of Antony and Cleopatra is not overshadowed by pity. Thus, while the similarities between Shakespeare and Cinthio are not as easily identifiable as other Italian sources previously discussed in this thesis, I believe that *Cleopatra* should not be dismissed as a source for Shakespeare's own narrative purely because it is in Italian. There is no doubt that Plutarch, as translated by North, was used extensively by Shakespeare as source material for his own adaptation, proving that his interest in Rome and its literature increased to the point where the playwright looked at Classical literature for inspiration and clarification of historical events. However, Shakespeare's use of North and Plutarch does not necessarily suggest that he was not inspired by other works that also chose to adapt the story of Antony and Cleopatra; as stated previously, the Classical revival occurred earlier in Europe than it did in Britain, giving Shakespeare ample time to collect and learn from European literature that had already covered Roman topics, such as *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, before attempting to pen a narrative himself. Plutarch was most certainly a source for Cinthio, thus his narrative would inevitably share similarities with Shakespeare, but this should not discredit his influence within Shakespeare's own narrative. Again, considering the use of Cinthio's *Gli Hecatommithi* in *Othello* and *Measure for Measure* strengthens his potential as source-text here: It is not uncommon for Shakespeare to return to sources as inspiration for more than one narrative, as can be seen from Bandello and Plutarch thus, it is not improbable that in light of the success of *Othello*, Shakespeare returned to Cinthio a second time in order to help him dramatize a prose narrative that he took from Plutarch. Being familiar with Cinthio's work, allowed Shakespeare to comfortably use him as a second, or less prominent

³²⁹ Brittani Barger, 'Cleopatra's Grave Reportedly Finally Located', <<https://royalcentral.co.uk/interests/history/cleopatras-grave-reportedly-finally-located-114567/>> [accessed 10 April 2021]

source, learning how to adapt such a famous moment in history for the stage. It is also interesting to consider that John Florio is known to have owned a copy of Plutarch's *Lives* as well as Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*: it is not improbable to hypothesise that other works by Cinthio may have also been owned or read by Florio and subsequently passed to Shakespeare either in print or verbally.³³⁰ The presence of both Plutarch and Cinthio in their original language within Florio's library opens the possibility for Shakespeare having consulted Florio during his creation of his Roman narratives in order to acquire further knowledge of the Roman events with which he had come to be infatuated.

Thus far in this chapter I have predominantly focused on tropes, sources, and genre. But what about the use of Rome as a location, and the presentation of the city itself? The Renaissance era saw a return to the Classics across Europe. In Italy itself this was prompted by the roles that important urban centres, such as Padua, Ferrara, and Mantua, played in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, as David Robey and Peter Hainsworth highlight:

The cultural importance that so many Italian cities was not simply a consequence of disunity; it also resulted from the fundamental continuity of urban life in the peninsula from late antiquity to the Middle Ages [...] The existence of so many major urban centres in medieval Italy is probably the main reason why the classical revival of the Renaissance began here earlier than anywhere else.³³¹

The importance of cities within the Italian geography outlined by Robey and Hainsworth shows a stark contrast between Italy and England. It was not until the unification of 1848 that Italy became a single country; during the Renaissance it was still a territory divided into separate, independent states with laws and rulers of their own thus, each city had a major theatre of importance, as well as certain cities serving different purposes, for example: Venice was considered to be a city of commerce and trade whereas Rome was considered a

³³⁰ Marianna Iannaccone, 'Florio, Shakespeare, and the Elephant in the Room,' <<https://www.resolutejohnflorio.com/john-florio-the-elephant-in-the-room/>> [accessed 15 April 2021]

³³¹ David Robey and Peter Hainsworth (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Italian Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. xi.

city of power and heritage. This mixture of cultures through trade, theatre and travel was not yet adopted by the English, who instead chose to situate the majority of the theatres in London, along with the largest trading areas and ports, leaving the rest of England to be overshadowed by the prominence of the capital city. In both Shakespeare's Roman and Italian plays, he chose to focus on the play's immediate location, be it Padua, Verona, Rome or Venice, rather than exploring the broader country around them. Of course, there are exceptions to this argument for example in *Romeo and Juliet* when Romeo is exiled to Mantua, or when Proteus travels from Verona to Milan. This raises the question of whether Shakespeare did this due to his lack of knowledge of Italian geography, as alluded to in chapter one, or due to his first-hand experience travelling from Stratford-Upon-Avon to London and seeing how important the city was for the majority of England.

The location of Rome can be viewed as cold, political space with 'a predominantly male society',³³² a stark difference from the more ancient city, or its more modern papal counterpart. The professional and politically driven city may be an instance of Shakespeare attempting to mould ancient Rome to fit the perspective held by his English audience: that of a city whose goal was to be the most feared and respected Empire in the world. Setting and location is particularly important when crafting productions of Shakespeare's narratives; in 1972, during a season that included all four of Shakespeare's Roman narratives at Stratford, Trevor Nunn directed a production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The locations were suggested through the furniture present on stage, for example, luxurious furniture and warm colours for Alexandria, and cold background with a plain table to represent the politically charged location of Rome. The visual indicators for Rome, such as the togas, can be traced back to the Early Modern period; for example, the Peachum drawings found within a manuscript of *Titus Andronicus* from circa 1596:

³³² William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. John Wilders (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 29.

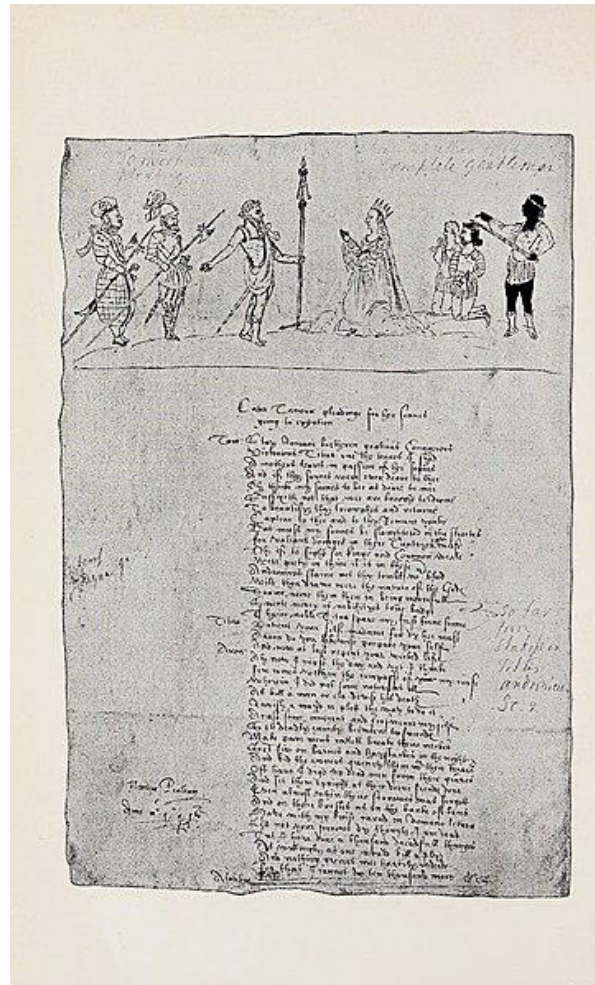


Fig. 3.1³³³

The drawing depicts Titus threatening to sacrifice Tamora's eldest son, which prompts her to plead for his life; the attire in which the figures are drawn reflects the classical view of the Romans that was prevalent during the Early Modern period and is stereotyped in modern culture. The costumes are an easy visual marker for audiences to distinguish these plays from the others, which is especially helpful when the Roman plays are being used as political allegories for England. The use of Rome as political and social commentary on England is not something that is unique to the Early Modern period; twentieth-century directors are continuing to use Rome to make political and social on England. For example, the Mercury Theatre adaptation of *Caesar* directed by Orson Welles in 1937, set the play in fascist Italy

³³³ The Peachum Drawing, c. 1595, held in the collections of the Marquis of Bath, Wiltshire

and Nazi Germany with a bare stage, which was directly discussing the political state of Europe at the time. There was also the 2002 RCS production of *Coriolanus* directed by Greg Hicks, which saw Rome transform into imperial Japan, complete with samurais' and elements taken from 'Noh and Kabuki theatre'.³³⁴ Of the setting, and its political undertones, Billington comments that the Japanese setting 'gives Coriolanus a clearly defined role as a military aristocrat, whereas the tribunes are simply anonymous troublemakers in grey kimonos'.³³⁵ Even though the modern settings of the Roman plays allow modern audiences to tackle political and social issues through the lens of a different society, what happens when the Roman plays are not staged in Rome? Do they lose their fundamental appeal and identity? Or does it expose just how very relevant and applicable they are to the political system beyond Rome? Shakespeare may have been one of the first to use Rome in a way that can be applied to many different areas of social and political life; parallels that Early Modern and twenty-first audiences would be able to distinguish without the risk of offending the establishment.

Examples of the classical revival through allusions to the classical world are used by Shakespeare in many of his narratives, including his 'Italian' narratives: R.K. Root collated the incidents and counted fifty-six in *Troilus and Cressida*, fifty-three in *Titus Andronicus*, thirty-nine in *Antony and Cleopatra*, thirty-eight in *Love Labour's Lost*, thirty-seven in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, thirty-one in *Cymbeline*, twenty-six in *Coriolanus*, twenty-five in *Romeo and Juliet*, *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Pericles* nineteen in *Hamlet*, and eleven in *Othello*.³³⁶ It is interesting to consider that the plays in which the majority of these classical allusions occur are all set offshore, in Europe or further East, all areas that were controlled by

³³⁴ Michael Billington, 'Coriolanus', *The Guardian*, (2002),
 <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2002/nov/28/theatre.artsfeatures>> [accessedd 15 August 2022]

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ R. K. Root, *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare* (New York: H. Hold & Company, 1903), p. 33.

the Roman Empire. In reducing references to the classics in his British plays, Shakespeare is unconsciously raising the idea that the classics are more at home within Europe and have less in common with Britain. Within the allusions mentioned in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare makes frequent references to greater divinities, cementing the idea that a Catholic religion has not yet been established, and thus these offshore narratives are less harmful than those set in Renaissance Europe. Ovidian and Virgilian references are ample within the play, reinforcing the notion that Shakespeare was consulting Latin works in order to make his later Roman narratives as accurate as possible by delving into research revolving around the lives of the historical figures that he chose to portray onstage. The same cannot be said for the portrayal of English historical figures, however, whose timelines were often altered by Shakespeare in order to please the monarch for whom he was writing, for example, *Richard III* and *Macbeth*. The additional allusions which Shakespeare provides in the Roman plays, can be considered as an attempt to cement their setting in the Roman era and distance them from Renaissance Italy, however, the Italian plays contain classical allusions of Rome, suggesting that Shakespeare was aware of their history and indebtedness to Rome, but decided to keep their timelines separate. Shakespeare also keeps the location of Rome separate from the Renaissance cities mentioned in the 'Italian' plays; urban areas such as Verona, Venice, Padua, Sicily and Milan are not mentioned once within *Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* or *Coriolanus*, but upon searching for the term 'Rome' within the plays, there are significant mentions, for example, it has forty-two mentions in *Caesar* alone, further cementing the notion that Shakespeare did not see the Roman plays as Italian, but saw the Italian plays as having influence from Rome and the classics.

This symbiotic relationship that is apparent within the Italian and Roman narratives can be seen when looking at what Italian influences the Roman plays absorbed; this is not strictly limited to source materials, it can also relate to specific features within the Roman

plays that were reminiscent of Italian culture of the Renaissance. For example, John W. Draper notes that in *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare turned to ‘contemporary Italy for oranges and silk, not realizing that they were introduced from the Orient at a later date’.³³⁷ Thus, mixing up his own perceptions of Italy and Rome while attempting to craft a narrative that depicted the power and luxury of Rome.

3.5 Conclusion:

It is important that when discussing Shakespeare’s Roman narratives, we do not dismiss the fact that they are Roman *tragedies*, and that in looking for inspiration we should consider not only Roman influences but also tragical influences, which once again brings us back to Italian tragical theatre. As outlined earlier in this chapter, understanding the tragical elements of the Roman plays is as important as determining whether to categorise them as Roman or Italian plays. As chapter one showed, many social, dramatical, ethical, and aesthetic innovations started in Italy before making their way across Europe through a variety of methods before landing in England. In many of these instances, the new wave from Italy brought a renewed excitement for the classics, and a newly found accessibility to the classics, which up until this point had been reserved only for the most sophisticated and learned academic circles. Freund notes that ‘the arts in this period advanced by looking backwards, towards the long-vanished Hellenic and Roman civilizations that fifteenth-century intellectuals idealized and now eagerly sought to emulate’.³³⁸ It is not surprising then, to see the influence of Italian theatrical representations of Rome make their way into the narrative found on the English stage.

³³⁷ John W. Draper, ‘The Realism of Shakespeare’s Roman Plays’, *Studies in Philology*, 30:2 (1933), 225-242, (p. 238).

³³⁸ Freund, p. 114.

In turn, it is worth noting the influence in turn of Shakespeare, and his role as intermediary in popularising Roman plays. Lovascio describes Shakespeare Roman plays as ‘exemplary’ noting that these works influence the Roman plays of Fletcher; this is important to consider, especially when considering the possible Italian influences. Shakespeare used English, Latin, and Italian influences to aid him in writing compelling and engaging pieces of theatre, that thus filtered down into his predecessors, many of which may have been unknowingly used examples of Italian works within their plays. Lucy Munro notes that ‘after Shakespeare’s retirement, his plays continued to be central to the court and commercial repertoire, and to the ongoing identity and practices of the King’s Men’,³³⁹ that is fitting when considering the scope of this chapter and overall thesis: the examples of Italian literature and geography that influenced Shakespeare have remained within the general discourse surrounding the playwright, regardless of whether others are aware of this or not. Of course, Shakespeare was not the first and last playwright to retell the tales of great Roman figures, but he was certainly a playwright who used more than one mechanism available to him in order to create Roman and Italianate narratives that both embellished and upheld the values of classical and Early Modern Italy. For those who were aware of the connections, including Fletcher and Massinger, this would have left them space to either expand on the original source-text, or ignore any drawn out connections that they did not deem necessary to expand on. An example of this, is described by Lovascio who notes that within *The False One*, Fletcher and Massinger choose to provide a ‘full dramatization of the mattress episode reported by Plutarch’,³⁴⁰ which was only mentioned as a passing reference within Shakespeare’s *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Thus, this shows that, in the case of Fletcher and Massinger, they were ‘far from merely producing a pattern of sophisticated allusions to their

³³⁹ Lovascio, *John Fletcher’s Rome*, p. 135.

³⁴⁰ Lovascio, *John Fletcher’s Rome*, p. 150.

predecessor's writings or simply parodying successful plays in the company's repertory, the Shakespearean reminiscences are so woven into the Fletcherian texts as to make those stories part of the characters' memories and decisively influence their thoughts, decisions, and actions by bestowing on them a kind of prescience of future events and an increased awareness of both the inward and the outward worlds'.³⁴¹

Shakespeare's Roman tragedies are a group of plays that upon further consideration, can be difficult to categorise due to their amalgamation of genre, topics, and sources. Gary B. Miles notes that 'the Romans Shakespeare chose for his subjects were driven by intense pressures to compete for power and distinction',³⁴² much like the playwright himself in a London theatre circle that was already oversaturated with playwrights, using Rome, and by proxy Italy, as inspiration to write narratives that would attract English audiences. The playwright began his Roman career by allegedly finishing a play with limited prior knowledge of the context and narrative arch. *Titus Andronicus*, although written with visible shortfalls and historical inaccuracies, was used by Shakespeare as a gateway into his subsequent Roman narratives, ones that were not hindered by the interference of another playwright. By moving on to larger and more well-known stories from Ancient Rome, Shakespeare is showing that his confidence in using Rome is growing, thus allowing him to dramatize the lives of Julius Caesar as well as Mark Antony and Cleopatra. As his career progressed, Shakespeare's interest in Rome never quelled, and for his final Roman narrative, he chose a niche historical figure that would allow him time to dramatize without the constraints of audience expectations – *Coriolanus*. The playwright's last 'Roman' play can be seen as him breaking away from mainstream historical events and breaking away from a superficial interest in Rome and its literature, and instead looking for an event he could use

³⁴¹ Lovascio, *John Fletcher's Rome*, p. 168.

³⁴² Gary B. Miles, 'How Roman are Shakespeare's "Romans"?', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40:3, (1989) 257-83 (p. 259).

his newly acquired skills and mould into a theatre favourite. Cho'sing a niche historical figure to dramatize may also symbolise Shakespeare returning to the skills taught to him by Peele when writing *Titus*; using a lesser-known Roman character and crafting a dramatic narrative around them allowing the audience to widen their knowledge and perspective on Rome. Despite being the last play in Shakespeare's Roman canon, *Coriolanus* shares more similarities with *Titus Andronicus* in terms of being an experimental play looking at characters and events that were not as widely known by Shakespeare's audiences. This simultaneously shows that Shakespeare's knowledge of Rome, its literature, politics and historical figures had expanded from his first Roman play, but also that he returned to a niche that allowed him to take more liberties with the retelling due to its relative anonymity within the wider audiences. M. L. Clarke notes that 'Shakespeare's primary interest is in the characters rather than in their political aims',³⁴³ which is in stark contrast to his main source, Plutarch, who invested time in detailing the political triumphs and pitfalls of the Romans he wrote about.

The question as to whether we have correctly categorised Shakespeare's plays is vital when considering sources – can a Roman play truly be Roman if it has Italian sources? This question has been constant throughout this chapter, and has been pivotal when considering, or reconsidering, what sources would have had the greatest impact on Shakespeare's Roman narratives. Miles comments that 'Shakespeare's emphasis upon the private, interior dilemmas of his characters may be understood as an enrichment of the material that he found in his ancient sources'.³⁴⁴ However, we must not ignore, or dismiss the potential Italian sources that also aided Shakespeare in creating dramatized versions of the lives of powerful Romans for

³⁴³ M. L. Clarke, *The Noblest Roman* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 121.

³⁴⁴ Miles, p. 282.

the English stage; a source should not necessarily be negated marginalised on the grounds that it is a Renaissance text reworking ancient events.

Although Plutarch and the subsequent translation by Sir Thomas North almost certainly played a major role in aiding Shakespeare with his research into the lives of the Romans he chose to portray on stage, this should not be cause for dismissing the Italian, or even European sources that may also have played larger roles than what is outlined by scholars such as Bullough or Muir. The range of Italian, French, and Spanish sources for these plays show that their appointed title of Roman plays not defined by their inspiration but their location, characters, and subject matter. As much as we can delve into the origin of the plays, it is the surface appearance to an audience which proves most important in the end, Even though the Roman plays have evidence of Italian sources, I feel as though it would be nonsensical to reclassify them as 'Italian' purely on the basis of their sources. The Roman plays go beyond their proposed sources, whether English or Italian, to create an image of Rome not an image of Renaissance Italy. Although it would benefit the argument of my thesis greatly to insist that these four plays be rename to Italian tragedies, they simply do not fit the requirements that would justify this. The Roman plays stand in stark difference to Shakespeare's Italian, European and British narratives, depicting a civilisation that is both alien and familiar.

Chapter IV: Shakespeare's Late Italian Plays and the Representation of Italian Locations

If the Roman plays embrace the ancient capital and foreground the location in drama, how then does Shakespeare use and represent Early Modern Italian cities in his plays? When writing his early Italian narratives, Shakespeare was aware of the Italian locations but was not informed enough to portray them accurately to his audiences. As his career progressed, his knowledge of Italy widened and his interaction with Italian source materials also helped him to understand the geography of the location. This chapter will consider Shakespeare's Italian plays written in the later part of his career, and in particular their portrayal of their locations: the Venice of *Othello* and, *The Merchant of Venice*, and the Verona of *Romeo & Juliet*. In doing so, we can attempt to understand what locations the playwright chose to portray, and subsequently Anglicise. Attempting to decipher why the locations for Shakespeare's later Italian plays are more explicitly identifiable will also allow us to understand what may have drawn the playwright to these specific locations, and how they were received by English audiences. Due to the fame of these later Italian plays, the impact they had on the locations they portrayed was inevitable; thus this chapter will investigate the legacy that these plays left on the locations their narratives are set in from the Renaissance to the modern day.

4.1 Location, Location, Location

Understanding how Elizabethans viewed Europe geographically is important when investigating how Shakespeare and his contemporaries used Italy as a location. A. J.

Hoenselaars writes that:

The religious controversy that occupied the nations of Europe on an international political level also affected the social and economic climate in England in various ways. [...] From the 1550s onwards, many immigrants arrived in search of protection for their religious beliefs and in the expectation of finding in England economic opportunities they lacked at home. The influx of foreigners during the second half of the sixteenth century placed a heavy burden on the native economy and coupled nascent national awareness with a strident form of popular xenophobia. A reflection of this socioeconomic invasion [...] is largely found in the moralities, interludes, and comedies of the period.³⁴⁵

Although the socioeconomic burden of the Europeans on England contributed to the xenophobia within the English population, there was still a fascination with Europe; with many desiring to experience that “exotic” and far away Catholic locations that were described by writers and travellers alike. Although many Early Modern English citizens were unable to experience a world outside of their sovereign state, there were resources available to them that made experiencing Europe easier. Abraham Ortelius’ 1571 map of Europe, Northern Africa, and the western part of the Middle East, would have provided Elizabethans with the general geography of the world outside of England, making Europe more geographically accessible for a large number of people.

The location of a play can be easily overlooked by audiences; during the Renaissance the bare stage, without backdrop, reduced the number of visual clues; in subsequent ages many productions were performed in contemporary dress, until the mania for pictorialism and historical accuracy in the Victorian age, we have since seen ever more fluid and varied approaches to staging Shakespeare’s plays. The ambiguity of location is exacerbated by the

³⁴⁵ A. J. Hoenselaars, *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries: A Study on Stage Characters and National Identity in English Renaissance Drama, 1558-1642* (London: Associated University Press, 1992), pp. 26-7.

manner in which Shakespeare's nationality is often made prominent in his legacy, as one of England's greatest cultural exports, which can in turn lead audiences to assume a certain Englishness in his locations. But while Shakespeare's stage did not have visual prompts, they had aural prompts in his language and the description therein, offering audiences a hint of exoticism and an imaginative journey into other realms. The locations of Shakespeare's plays are vital in understanding his connection with Italy, as well as how much he took into consideration his sources when crafting a narrative. D'Amico notes that 'in the sources he used, or his general knowledge of Italian life, he perceived certain dominant characteristics of family, government, and society'.³⁴⁶ Shakespeare merged Italy and London together in order to create a landscape that was simultaneously familiar and alien to his audiences; his Italy was 'not a place to which one escaped from the everyday, but rather a place where familiar structures were subtly reconfigured'.³⁴⁷ The backdrop of Italy is used by the playwright to show the inherent theatricality of urban life; enhanced by the political, literary, artistic stereotypes of Italy held by the English, these elements developed and shifted at different points in his career. His depictions of Italy are not stagnant, rather, Shakespeare shifts perspectives according to each play and its Italian location using elements such as 'language, props, structures placed on the stage, costume, music, and the ingenious use of the façade, the pillars, the heavens, and the trap'.³⁴⁸ The stage acts as a bridge between the realms of England and Italy; the cities represented in Shakespeare's "Italian" plays have meaning to an English audiences regardless of whether they were familiar with the city or not, because the locations were made up of recognisable features present within English urban life – things such as houses, walls, gates, gardens, and squares. Within the discussion of location and its use, it is important to mention the use of English locations by Shakespeare and his

³⁴⁶ D'Amico, p. 1.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Leslie Hotson, *Shakespeare's Wooden O* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p.131.

contemporaries, such as Pudding Lane in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610), where Face meets Subtle 'at pie corner, / taking [his] meal of steam in from cooks' stalls (I.1.28-9),³⁴⁹ or the vague references in Shakespeare's *Henry V* to Eastside and Southampton which indicated the lack of need or specifics of the English landscape to a knowing audience, or contrastingly the description of maps in I.2 of *King Lear*, and III.4 of *Henry IV Part One*. In each instance, these references to locations offer a depth and reality to the drama, as well as an imaginary tourism for the audience: 'The life lived within these imagined cities has a distinctive character with which the audience can, for the two hours or more of the play, imaginatively traffic'.³⁵⁰ Michele Marrapodi writes that:

The question of the Italianate setting was in itself semantically over-determined for the Elizabethans: it implied a variety of dramatic issues and responses, for both playwrights and audience, affecting imagination and culture, social customs and traditions, theatrically and characterization, language and ideology.³⁵¹

Shakespeare utilises a range of Italian locations to show how distinct and unique each city was, in contrast to England which solely relied on London as its urban powerhouse. Angela Locatelli notes that 'every setting, no matter how distant and exotic, is meant as analogous (whether a similarity or opposition is created) to London, and its strangeness is given as the equivalent of London's booming diversity [...]'.³⁵² Shakespeare began his career with an affinity for Verona and the surrounding area; with two of his earliest plays being set in the city, its surrounding countryside, and Padua. Although early in Shakespeare's career, Robert Kirkpatrick argues that in these plays he 'displays considerable understanding of the culture

³⁴⁹ Ben Jonson, 'The Alchemist', in *Three Comedies*, ed. Michael Jamieson (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 202.

³⁵⁰ Bruster, p. 35.

³⁵¹ Michele Marrapodi, *Shakespeare's Italy*, vii.

³⁵² Angela Locatelli, "The Fictional World of Romeo and Juliet: Cultural Connotations of an Italian Setting" in *Shakespeare's Italy: Functions of Italian Location in Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), ed. Michele Marrapodi, pp. 69-84 (p. 71).

and social order in Italy'.³⁵³ This can be best demonstrated in Shakespeare's use of Italian locations in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Shakespeare begins with two induction scenes that establish the play as having a traditionally English backdrop due to the characters and location mentioned; characters such as the drunk tinker Christopher Sly and Bartholomew, who embody traditional characters. The location of an English pub indicates to the audience that the trickery and mockery occurring are to be expected such a location. This location and the characters present within the location are soon challenged and superseded by the location and characters which are introduced in the first proper scene of the play itself, or the play within the play. This juxtaposition of locations, characters, and stereotypes can be seen as Shakespeare presenting the Italian location and characters through an obvious English lens, allowing for further exaggerated portrayals of the exotic location due to the story being told by English characters. This overall shift in character, location, and stereotypes is an excellent allegory for my thesis as a whole because it shows Italy through the framework of an English narrative.

Lucentio's opening speech in *The Taming of the Shrew* depicts a detailed desire to travel across Italy:

LUCENTIO: Tranio, since for the great desire I had
To see fair Padua nursery of arts,
I am arrived for fruitful Lombardy,
The pleasant garden of great Italy,
And by my father's love and leave am armed
With his good will and thy good company –
My trusty servant, well approved in all –
Here let us breathe and haply institute
A course of learning and ingenious studies.
Pisa, renowned for grave citizens,
Gave me my being and my father first –
A merchant of great traffic through the world –
Vincenzio, come of the Bentivogli.

³⁵³ Robin Kirkpatrick, *English and Italian Literature from Dante to Shakespeare* (New York: Longman, 1995), p. 278.

Vincentio's son, brought up in Florence,
 It shall become to serve all hopes conceived
 To deck his fortune with his virtuous deeds:
 And therefore, Tranio, for the time I study,
 Virtue and that part of philosophy
 Will I apply that treats of happiness
 By virtue specially to be achieved.
 Tell me thy mind, for I have Pisa left
 And am to Padua come, as he that leaves
 A shallow plash to plunge him in the deep,
 And with satiety seeks to quench his thirst. (I. 1. 1-24)

The plot details here compete with a barrage of superfluous contextual information dazzling the audience with references to Florence, Pisa, and eventually Padua. Lucentio's speech is the first after the induction scene and the first instance of the events in the 'proper' part of the play, thus it can be argued that Shakespeare was creating a deliberate sense of affectation and word-building, designed to quickly and effectively impress the change of location upon his audience.

Lucentio's speech is not unique in Early Modern Drama. Marlowe's *Doctor*

Faustus offers a similar speech summarising his own tour through Europe.

FAUSTUS: Having now, my good Mephistopheles,
 Passed with delight the stately town of Trier,
 Environed round with airy mountain tops,
 With walls of flint, and deep entrenched lakes,
 Not to be won by any conquering prince,
 We saw the river Main fall into the Rhine,
 Whose banks are set with groves of fruitful vines;
 Then up to Naples, rich Campania,
 Whose buildings fair and gorgeous to the eye,
 The streets straight forth and paved with finest brick,
 Quarters the town in four equivalence.
 There saw we leaned Maro's golden tomb,
 The way he cut an English mile in length,
 Thorough a rock of stone in one night's space.
 From thence to Venice, Padua and the rest,
 In midst of which a sumptuous temple stands,
 Whose frame is paved with sundry coloured stones,
 And roofed aloft with curious work in gold.
 Thus hitherto hath Faustus spent his time.
 But tell me now, what resting place is this?
 Hast thou, as erst I did command,

Conducted me within the walls of Rome? (III. 2. 1-24)³⁵⁴

It is worth noting that Marlowe had already taken the opportunity to demonstrate his knowledge to his audience in Faustus's opening speech and the discussion of various textbooks such as Aristotle, Galen, and Justinian, with quotations in the original languages. Moments like this serve to dazzle the groundlings whilst also proving Marlowe's intellectual worth to those in the balcony. Later in the play, Faustus summaries his world tour thus far with a similar display of geographical knowledge to once more ground this fantastical play in realistic detail. However, Marlowe's summary is flawed, proving that for all his skills as a writer he is not to be trusted as a navigator. The initial part of the journey is logical: Wittenberg, Trier, Paris and the River Maine form a direct line. However, his path through Italy is less logical: travelling south to Naples, then north to Padua and Venice before settling in Rome, in the middle. It is of course arguable that Marlowe is showing the ease of travel with a devil by your side in Faustus's haphazard tour; but the directness of the journey from Wittenberg to Maine negates this. The exact details of Marlowe's time in Europe are unknown; many have postulated he visited Italy (though this is often as part of an argument for Marlowe being the author of Shakespeare's plays), but with no direct record it remains speculative. It is plausible therefore to see in the confused direction of Faustus's journey a gap in Marlowe's knowledge; whilst he is more confident of the geography of Germany and France, in Italy he is content to list names in an offhand manner: 'From thence to Venice, Padua and the rest' is an offhand and almost dismissive account of Italian geography compared to the detail with which he has provided on Naples.

Considering Lucentio's speech in comparison to Faustus's, we can see the same casual name-dropping of locations with little regards to their geographical relationship to one

³⁵⁴ Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. Roman Gill (London: A & C Black, 2004), p. 65.

another. Lucentio speaks of Padua as being in Lombardy, which is untrue, but may be a common Elizabethan misconception based upon Ortelius's map. In both *Faustus* and *Shrew* we see the utilisation of Italian geography for instant effect rather than meaningful interrogation. Shakespeare's surface use of Italy in this speech produces the same result as Marlowe's in populating the stage with geographical colour. On a stage with no changeable backdrop, the description of Faustus and Lucentio's journeys doubles as ekphrasis, in which the audience is encouraged to imagine the scene and thus locate themselves in Italy, or at the very least in their idea of Italy. After the emphatically English scenes of the Induction, this speech assertively removes us to the continent. It is also worth considering the speech's metatheatrical element here; the speech is being told to Sly as much as to us, and therefore is transporting him as well as the wider audience.

The beginning of the play introduces the location of Padua as adhering to the Renaissance stereotype of Northern Italy being the epicentre of art in Europe. Padua is mentioned twenty-two times within the play, Verona and Venice have five mentions each, Mantua four mentions, and Rome two passing mentions. Although the location of Rome does not fit the stereotypical artistic Renaissance Italian city, it may show Shakespeare acknowledging the power behind the great city early in his career as a playwright, perhaps foreshadowing the affinity with the city and its history in the works to come. D'Amico notes that to 'create the urban settings of Venice, Verona, or Padua, Shakespeare drew on characteristics of the parishes and wards of London shared by the Italian communes',³⁵⁵ thus giving his audiences identifiable characteristics that would allow them to feel as though the landscape of the narrative was 'exotic' but not wholly alien.

³⁵⁵ D'Amico, pp. 9-10.

It is evident that Shakespeare had a few favourite Italian locations that he was drawn to using more frequently than others. That, or he was simply following another trend set by his contemporaries, or the political conversations that were occurring at the time which reflected the areas of Italy he used within his narratives. Although Venice, Verona, and Rome, are some of the some of the more famous of Shakespeare's Italian settings, his Italianate plays have other locations that are usually glossed over or given less importance due to their minimal effect on the narratives themselves.

There are six references to Genoa within Shakespeare's canon, four of these references appearing in *The Merchant of Venice*. This is not a wholly surprising development as Genoa was a growing centre of trade during the sixteenth century; attempting to rival the power accumulated by Renaissance Venice. Thus, the city was poised to be another trade and financial power emanating from Italy ready to threaten England. Although a few English writers saw the potential of Genoa reflected in their works, for example: John Marston's *The Malcontent* (1603), John Day's *Law Tricks, or Who Would Have Thought It?* (c. 1604-05), and Thomas Nashe's *Quaternio* (1549), it was not a location that many writers flocked to use. Shakespeare's references to Genoa within *The Merchant of Venice* appear to be characters waiting from information from the Genoese, for example when Shylock says 'How now, Tubal, what news from Genoa? Hast thou / found my daughter?' (III.1.72-3), and when Tubal responds 'Yes, other men have ill luck too. / Antonio, as I heard in Genoa' (III.1.89-90). It is ironic to consider that Shylock's daughter, Jessica, flees to Genoa, the suspicious enemy of Venice, with a Catholic man, Lorenzo, an enemy of her father. The role of the Genoese as informants can also be seen within plays that are not Italianate in nature: for example, in *King Edward III* when Lorraine says 'The garrison of Genoaes my Lorde' (III.4.3). These examples may show that Shakespeare was aware of the growing infamy of Genoa and wanted to include instances of this within his narratives to showcase his growing knowledge of

Italian geography and political stances, or he wanted to add a location he had known about in passing just as means to add to the list of Italian locations under his belt.

Of the use of Genoa, Lovascio writes that:

Genoa clearly emerges as yet another riveting case in which the fictional Italian construct seems to have influenced to some extent the plays' dramatic worlds by acting as imaginary complement to the complexities of early modern English reality'.³⁵⁶

Genoa, however, was not the only “secondary” Italian location used by Shakespeare; *Much Ado About Nothing* is set in late sixteenth century Sicily, which includes an oxymoronic war between the couples that lends to the romantic comedy nature of the play. Claire McEachern writes that the play is:

Undoubtedly the most socially and psychologically realistic of his comedies, in its portrait of the foibles and generousities of communal life. Shakespeare represents a world governed, even poisoned, by male rivalry, in which conventions of gender and status shape emotional attachments, in which men and women fear each other, and in which only the most accidental of providences can save an innocent woman from the effects of slander, and a man from death by combat.³⁵⁷

The plot of woman being unjustly slandered within society was not an uncommon within plays of the Early Modern period; with Shakespeare's source for *Much Ado* suspected to be the fifth Canto of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516), which was itself probably based on *Tirant lo Blanch* (1490) by the Valencian Juan Martorell. Ariosto's narrative is set in Scotland, with his characters making their way through the Scottish landscape as the Canto progresses: 'Ne la casa del re di lui diversi / ragionamenti e in tutta Scozia fersi' [*In the palace of the King, making different / arguments from all of Scotland*].³⁵⁸

In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare is able to reflect the disdain Polixenes has for the Italian location, perhaps subtly reflecting the attitude of the English towards Italy as a whole:

³⁵⁶ Lovascio, *Renaissance Studies*, p. 363.

³⁵⁷ Claire McEachern, 'Introduction', in *Much Ado About Nothing*, William Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 1.

³⁵⁸ Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, ed. Cristina Zampese (Milan: BUR, 2012), p. 96.

exotic and admirable, but dangerous, nonetheless: ‘Of that fatal country, Sicilia prithe speak / no more, whose very naming punishes me with the / remembrance of that penitent (*WT* IV.2.20-2). Of the contrast between the themes of the play, Phillip M. Weinstein writes that ‘on one hand the frolic and festivity, the frank and healthy attitude toward love in the pastoral scene are surely preferable to the jaded and stifling atmosphere of sensuality, grief, and death that broods about Leontes and “that fatal country of Sicilia”’.³⁵⁹ This, once again, shows the audience that Sicily should be admired at a distance, but never fully accepted by the English due to the Italian connection to Catholicism and general military and trade power.

This thesis has shown that Shakespeare was not the best geographer: this is evident when looking at many of the geographical examples of his use of Italy that I have discussed thus far. However, it may also be worth considering that Shakespeare could have also been using Italian locations purely because he saw them on a map or because he was told about them through his contemporaries or acquaintances. If we consider, for example, the location of Mantua within *Romeo & Juliet*, it once again appears as a somewhat random location for the valiant Romeo to be exiled to. Although Da Porto is credited with the addition of Mantua to his reworked version of Salernitano’s original tale, Shakespeare chose to keep this unassuming location. Thomas writes of Mantua that:

The 193hem of it selfe is very fayre and stronge, and standeth richelly, by reason the 193hem ai193a about are plaine, and no lesse plentiful than the other partes of Lumbardie be. [...] And as for notable 193hem ai193a in *Mantua*, other than suche as be vniuersall in the goodly citees of Italie, I finde none, sauynge certaine propre lodgeynges that the Duke *Federico* deceased, hath made on the southe part of his palaice: whiche vndoubtedly are galaunt and rilche. Wherefore procedyng now to the originall of the citesins and 193hem, with the successe therof hitherward{is}.³⁶⁰

This description further emphasises how unassuming Mantua is to an English traveller who has previously travelled to grandiose locations such as Venice and Rome. Even though we

³⁵⁹ Phillip M. Weinstein, ‘An Interpretation of Pastoral in The Winter’s Tale’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 22 (1971), 97-109 (p. 101).

³⁶⁰ William Thomas, *Historie of Italie* (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1977), p. 70.

should not credit Shakespeare with the decision to use Mantua as this has been credited to Da Porto, we can speculate why he chose to keep the location rather than change for another Italian location like he did with some of his other Italian sources. Shakespeare may have chosen to keep Mantua out of sheer laziness, or because the descriptions of the city matched a location he deemed suitable for an exile. To credit the playwright's intelligence, he may have discovered how mundane the city was through various means and kept Da Porto's locations unchanged. To those in his audiences that were aware of the general geography of Italy, they may have found the use of Mantua humorous due to its dull nature.

With consideration then of Italy's dual-presence as both familiar and exotic, this chapter will now focus upon Shakespeare's portrayal of Verona and Venice in *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Othello*. In doing so I seek to examine the purpose of these locations, the depth and detail provided by Shakespeare, and the way in which their cultural reputation feeds into the thematic structure of each play.

4.2 Shakespeare's Venice

Shakespeare began writing about the city of Venice during a time when it was experiencing a 'shift from a centre of information about the world (especially the East) to a centre of information about itself'.³⁶¹ This transition caused the city to become the legend we know it to be in Shakespeare's plays and beyond. Bassi and Tosi describe the city as a "myth", further commenting that 'before it started disseminating in profusion idealized and virtual Venices, the real city had based its fortunes on diversity (of people, merchandise, political forms, information, etc.), a diversity that has been alternatively (and sometimes, perhaps, even in

³⁶¹ Peter Burke, 'Early Modern Venice as a Centre of Communication and Information,' in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilisation of an Italian City-State, 1297 – 1797*, ed. By John Martin and Denis Romano (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 391.

Shakespeare, simultaneously) interpreted positively or negatively as opulence, confusion, paradox, mixture'.³⁶² David C. McPherson describes Renaissance Venice as 'both a city and a world', encapsulating the greater significance of its reputation but also noting the remarkable influence it had upon other cultures, as Tosi and Bassi corroborate.³⁶³

The cultural geography of the Republic can indeed be perceived as an accumulation of traditions, myths, values and anti-values which is constructed along primarily narrative lines (as in travellers' reports for examples) as well as dramatic ones, with the extraordinary impact of early modern plays set in Venice.³⁶⁴

As they further note, 'Venice is indeed one of the main strands of the Italian intertext, a discursive and imaginative space which creates and is in its turn created and enriched by the eclectic use of a number of 'sources proximate'.³⁶⁵ It is unsurprising then that Shakespeare would also be inspired by the city given the proliferation of materials around him that referenced it. Venice was 'a landscape that Shakespeare found described in innumerable written and oral sources, ranging from travellers' reports to maps, from translations of Venetian political treaties to possible conversations with the Anglo-Italian cultural mediators of the time such as John Florio and Phillip Sidney, and perhaps even with the Venetian merchants living in London'.³⁶⁶

Shakespeare thus makes use of the landscape and values that encapsulated the city at the time, choosing to portray both the idealistic view of the city, as well as its more unvirtuous dealings, such as the slums or rampant prostitution. The link between the English and the Venetians is one of admiration, jealousy, and apprehension; the English never fully trusting

³⁶² Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi (eds), *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare* (London: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 1-2.

³⁶³ David C. McPherson, *Shakespeare, Jonson, and the Myth of Venice* (Cranbury: Associated Press, 1990), p. 13.

³⁶⁴ Tosi and Bassi, p. 2.

³⁶⁵ Tosi and Bassi, p. 6.

³⁶⁶ Tosi and Bassi, p. 3.

the Venetians due to their undisputed power and Catholic tendencies. This unusual relationship is documented by scholars such as Margaret L. King who writes that ‘certain aspects of the city’s reputation became so powerful that, in aggregate, they may justifiably be called the *Myth* of Venice, and that England was the country in Northern Europe in which this *Myth* was most strongly felt’.³⁶⁷ This general feeling was somewhat translated into the Venetian narratives of Shakespeare, as his portrayal of the city was ‘not the product of poetic invention, but a mirror of reality’ [nicht Erzeugnis dichterischer Erfindung, sondern ein Spiegel der Wirklichkeit].³⁶⁸

The sovereign state of Venice served as the epicentre of trade from Europe to north Africa and the East from before Shakespeare’s time through to 1797. Early Modern English writers, travellers, and curious members of the public would have all been familiar with William Thomas’ *Historie of Italie* (1549), whose travels to Italy have been mentioned in the introduction to this thesis. This long work was vital for those who wanted to learn about the history of Italy as well as its manners, customs, and politics; these are all elements of the country that Thomas experienced first-hand during his residency in Italy in 1544 before being ‘exiled for his strong Protestant convictions in Henry VIII’s last years’.³⁶⁹ The common notion that England looked to Venice as a source of inspiration, but never feeling completely comfortable with the powerful city in the Catholic country is further reinforced when reading through the points made within Thomas’ book. For example. ‘the elaborate checks and balances of the Venetian constitution and the high value placed upon liberty by the people, so that it is counted villainy to refer to superiors as lords or masters [...] the Great Council

³⁶⁷ Margaret L. King, *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 174.

³⁶⁸ Theodore Elze, *Venezianische Skizzen* (Munich: T. Ackerman, 1899), p. 80.

³⁶⁹ Hadfield, p. 48.

resembles the English parliament, but places greater emphasis on liberty of conscience because all important decisions are taken through the use of the ballot box'.³⁷⁰

During the 1600s, Venice was 'viewed in London as a major trading rival'³⁷¹ thus, when penning his two Venetian narratives, Shakespeare knew that they would garner 'a greater local interest than when he placed comedies in such almost fictitious cities as Ephesus or Messina'.³⁷² Although more explicitly referenced in his Italy plays, the mention of Venice is also present within Shakespeare's other plays, for example in *Richard II* when Norfolk 'retir'd himself / To Italy, and there at Venice gave / His body to that pleasant country's earth' (IV. i. 96-8). Another example is present within *Love's Labour's Lost* when Holofernes enthusiastically declares, 'as the traveller doth of Venice: *Venechia, Venechia, / Che non te vede, che non te prechia* (IV. ii. 95-8).

Shakespeare sets two plays in Venice, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*; using the city itself as well as the Venetian *terra firma*. When crafting his Venetian narratives, Shakespeare would have had access to ample materials that described the landscape of the city. Although many examples of Venice describe it as a centre for military and trade affairs within Europe and the East, descriptions of Venice being an unvirtuous and dirty location were also available to Shakespeare. As mentioned previously within this thesis, William Thomas' *Historie of Italy* would have been a text available to the playwright or one of his peers.

Within his chapter on Venice, Thomas writes about the less virtuous side of the great city:

For he that beholdeth the place, where Uenice standeth, and would imagine it to be without any buil|dyng or habitacion, shoulde saie it were the rudest, vn|meerest, and vn|holsoimest place to builde vpon or to en|habite, that w^ore againe to be founde throughout an whole worlde: It standeth open vpon the maine sea, foure miles from the 197hem ai maine lande, in suche a mal|rishe, as at euery low water leaueth the muddy ground vncouered, and at euery full sea drowneth it cleane.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ Thomas, pp. 78-88.

³⁷¹ McPherson, p. 42.

³⁷² William Shakespeare, *Othello* ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (London: Thomson, 2006), p. 9.

³⁷³ Thomas, p. 73.

Shakespeare's Venetian narratives also display some of these qualities within them, with the city being the backdrop for the downfall of military men, instances of usury, and endless temptations for both men and women. The reputation of Venice within England was used to Shakespeare's advantage when crafting narratives in or around the city; Thomas Coryate described Venice as 'most glorious, renowned, and Virgin Citie of Venice'.³⁷⁴ The image of the Italian city being a place of extreme beauty, wealth, and power worked in favour of Shakespeare's Italian plays, as his characters did not appear to be out of place within the location. However, although Venice was a trading and military powerhouse, its reputation was prone to negative reception due to the adulterous activity occurring within the city – publicity that Venice was unable to quell. Roger Ascham was perplexed by the Venetian immorality and vice, particularly when it came to marriage customs: 'it is counted good policie, when there be foure or five brethren to one familie, one, onelie to marie: and all the rest, to waulter, with as little shame, in open lecherie, as Swyne do here in the common myre'.³⁷⁵ This reputation was echoed within English works, for example within John Day's comedy *Humour Out of Breath* (1608), where he described Venice as 'the best flesh-shambles in Italie'.³⁷⁶ Regardless of its juxtaposing reputations and the threat of Catholicism, Venice proved a successful location for Shakespeare; irrespective of whether his narrative was comical or tragical.

The ethnic diversity of Venice allowed Shakespeare to easily insert outcast characters into his narratives. Levith and Bandura note that as 'a major international seaport, Venice as one of the truly cosmopolitan cities of Europe, with many nationalities crowding its narrow streets and canals. In the best interests of the economy, its government was necessarily liberal

³⁷⁴ Thomas Coryat, *Coryat's Crudities Hastily gobbled up in fives Monthes travells in France, Savoy, Italy [etc]* (1611), 2 vols (Glasgow: James MacLehose, 1905), I, p. 2.

³⁷⁵ Roger Ascham, *The Schoolmaster* (London: Cassell and Company, 1894) pp. 43-4

³⁷⁶ John Day, *Humor Out of Breath*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (London: The Percy Library 1860), p. 25.

and, in general, religiously tolerant'.³⁷⁷ As an Englishman in the reign of Elizabeth I, Shakespeare would be expected to show contempt for the Catholics, but in *The Merchant of Venice* he portrays them as the heroes instead, based upon their hatred for the Jewish people, specifically Shylock. *The Merchant of Venice* is one of Shakespeare's earliest Italian plays; confusing modern audiences by hiding a tragical sub-plot within the extravagant and comical main plot. Shylock as a character would have most certainly been hated by Renaissance audiences, not only due to his religion, but also due to his 'unfair' treatment of Antonio; modern audiences, however, have come to sympathise with the Jew, understanding that his actions derived from a series of tragical events and a history of being an outsider within a city that used him and isolated him. The treatment of Shylock helps us to understand how the playwright viewed Venice and Italy as a whole. The location of Venice was an ideal backdrop for Shakespeare to depict these complex issues, especially tragical issues; it could be a place of economic freedom and prosperity, or the dwelling of cruel murderers and the socially outcast. Shakespeare could turn Venice into anything he desired – 'Italy and not Italy, England, or even 'Hell''.³⁷⁸

The Merchant of Venice contains its action within the walls of Venice, save those scenes at Portia's house in the fictional town of Belmont; however, regardless of its contained action, with only seventeen direct mentions of Venice within the whole play, a reader might forget the Italian setting. But quantity is not the only measure of the location's significance, an audience member may well have a more overarching sense of the location dependent on the director's choice, whilst the title itself strongly positions the backdrop as a key element of the story. How accurately Shakespeare represents Italy within his Italianate narratives has

³⁷⁷ Murray J. Levith and Albert Bandura, *Shakespeare's Italian Settings and Plays* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 14.

³⁷⁸ Levith and Bandura, p. 15.

been a constant question throughout this thesis; though the answer may not be as straight forward as one would like, we can use possible sources and clues from his narratives to assist us in finding an answer. *The Merchant of Venice*, as the title suggests, is entirely set in the city of Venice, allowing Shakespeare to mould the location as he pleased. Antonio's wealth and trade connections are constantly referenced throughout the play, with Shylock stating that '[...] he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the indies; [...] he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath, squand' red abroad' (*Merchant*, I.3.18-21). These trade locations are further highlighted by Bassanio later in the play: 'From Tripolis, from Mexico, and England, / From Lisbon, Barbary, and India' (III.2.268-69), expanding on the 'other ventures' mentioned by Shylock. Antonio's status as merchant and subsequent trade with major ports around the world indicates that Shakespeare was familiar with Venetian trade routes or had come into contact with those that were. He may have drawn Antonio's cargo and trade routes from Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, where Barabas' cargo is of similar nature departing from the port of Alexandria: 'Mine Argosy from Alexandria, / Loaden with Spice and Silks, now under sail, / Are smoothly gliding down by Candy shore / To Malta, through our Mediterranean Sea' (I.1.44-7).³⁷⁹

The detail that Shakespeare gives to Antonio's ships, cargo, and trade routes may have come from Italian merchants he saw docked regularly along the estuary of the river Thames in London. It is likely that Shakespeare saw these ships often as he worked along the Thames during his time at The Rose as well as The Globe. Moryson describes them as 'from five hundredth to twelve hundredth Tonne [...] being built large in the Wast and Keele for Capacity of Merchandize [...] ships are heavy in sayling and great of burthen and the Governors' & Mariners not very expert, not bold'.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, ed. James R. Siemon (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), p. 12-3.

³⁸⁰ Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary*, 4 vols, ed. Charles Hughes (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967), III, pp. 455-6.

Although Shakespeare was somewhat accurate in his portrayal of a Venetian merchant in the character of Antonio, he may have struggled with his portrayal of Shylock the Jew. The existence of the Jewish slums within Venice was well known, with the Venetians confining the Jewish people to a small section of Venice during certain hours. At a glance, this may evoke feelings of outrage among modern audiences, it is important to note that many scholars, both pro-Jewish and vice versa, have noted that the Jewish population was treated better in Venice than in any other Italian city. Sansovino writes that:

Questi per il negotio, sono opulentissimi & ricchi, & dimorano più volentieri in Venetia ch'in altra parte d'Italia. Perciochè non si usano loro violenze ne tirannidi come altrove, & sono sicuri in ogni occorrenza della facultà loro [...] perciochè riposandosi in singolarissima pace, godono questa patria quasi come vera terra di promissione.³⁸¹
 [These [Jews] in the business of trading, are opulent and rich, and would stay in Venice rather than in other places of Italy. Because violence and tyranny are not used on them as elsewhere, and they are secure in their every need concerning their livelihood [...] Because they are living peacefully, they enjoy this country as if it were the Promised Land]

It is improbable that Shakespeare was aware of the complexities of the Venetian justice of political systems in such a detail that he was able to replicate them accurately within his narrative. Even within his source of *Il Pecorone*, the reference to the Jewish settlers and the law surrounding them are mentioned in far less detail than that in *The Merchant of Venice*, for example when Salario reports that: 'plies the Duke at morning and at night, / And doth impeach the freedom of the state, / If they deny him justice' (*Merchant*, III.2.277-79). Shakespeare may not have been as aware of the certain "freedoms" allocated to the Jewish people within Venice, but he was most certainly familiar with shameful discrimination against them which he emulated within the Venetian setting of the play. Although Shakespeare may not have known the exact details of these acts of discrimination, he was certain to emulate them to a certain degree within his narrative, much to the pleasure of his

³⁸¹ Francesco Sansovino, *Delle cose notabili della città di Venetia* (Venice: Apresso Felice Valgrisio, 1587), p. 121.

audiences. The abuse of Shylock within *Merchant* can be seen as Shakespeare's attempt at replicating the humiliation inflicted on the Jewish people by the Venetians, even down to the signature cloak used by Shylock to identify himself as different from the other characters on stage. It is important to note that Shakespeare's interpretation of the Jewish garbs varies widely from the description given by travellers, for example Thomas Coryat notes that 'every one of them whatsoever he be, man or childe, weareth a kind of light yellowish vaile, made of Linsie Wollsie over his shoulders, something worse then our courser Holland, which reacheth a little beneath the middle of their backes'.³⁸² Regardless of how accurate Shakespeare's representation of the Jewish identifiers are, he was able to emulate both the "freedoms" and discriminations experienced by the Jewish people living in Venice within his narrative. However, Rosa Maria Colombo disagrees with this notion, instead writing about an important link between Italy and England that surfaces within *Merchant*:

Venezia è per lo Shakespeare del *Merchant* una metafora 202hem ai202ate a celebrare l'inghilterra di Elisabetta: modello di un costume fondato sui 202hem ai e gli incontri cosmopoliti, dove l'embrionale economia mercantile non significa ancora Sistema mercantile; dove anzi la civiltà dell'essere e quella dell'avere confluiscono in una sorta di sofisticato equilibrio rinascimentale fra valori civili e momento istituzionale, fra teatro e morailtà: il travestimento, la metamorfosi di Porzia sta infatti a sublimazione anche della finzione teatrale.³⁸³

[Venice is for the Shakespeare of Merchant, an appropriate metaphor to celebrate Elizabeth's England: a model of a tradition founded on traffic and cosmopolitan encounters, where the embryonic mercantile economy does not yet mean mercantile system; on the contrary the civilization of being and that of having converged in a sort of sophisticated Renaissance balance between civil values and the institutional moment, between theatre and morality: the disguise, the metamorphosis of Portia is in fact also a sublimation of theatrical fiction]

Overall, the Venice portrayed within *The Merchant of Venice* is one that accurately emulates the colour, history, and vices present within the city during the Renaissance. Unlike in *Measure for Measure*, where the location of Vienna appears serves no true connection to the

³⁸² Coryat, I, p. 372.

³⁸³ Rosa Maria Colombo, 'Venezia nel *Volpone* e nell'*Othello*', in *Shakespeare e Jonson: Il Teatro Elisabettiano Oggi*, ed. Agostino Lombardo (Roma: Officina, 1979), pp. 95-112 (pp.99-100).

play, Shakespeare was able to capture the details of Venice for his audience to experience. Though it is important to note the hypothesis that, an early version of *Measure for Measure* was set in Italy, as first suggested by Gary Taylor: ‘In 1986 the Oxford Shakespeare identified Middleton as the probable author of the added material in 1.2’.³⁸⁴ The connection to Middleton thus provides us with somewhat of an explanation for the location choice of Vienna in *Measure*, as:

In 1621, for Middleton and Middleton’s audiences, Vienna would have been immediately recognizable and resonant geographical, political, and poetic signifier. In 1604, for Shakespeare and Shakespeare’s audiences, Vienna would have meant nothing – or the wrong thing. Moreover, Shakespeare in 1604 would have had to deliberately and self-consciously intrude that meaningless setting into his play. *None* of the many known sources and analogues for *Measure* sets it in Vienna. Not one.³⁸⁵

This subsequently brings forth the questions of where Shakespeare has originally set *Measure* if Vienna was Middleton’s posthumous choice. According to Taylor’s hypothesis the answer is obvious: Italy. Taylor gives many examples of adaptations that set the play in Italy, including Davenant’s 1662 theatrical adaptation, Pushkin’s 1833 adaptation, Wagner’s 1834-36 opera adaptation, the BBC’s 1979 adaptation, and Alistair Fox’s 1997 book, *The English Renaissance*, where he included among “the Italianate plays of Shakespeare”.³⁸⁶ Taylor’s hypothesis makes many compelling links between *dramatis personae* list and common Italian names, some of which he used in other plays, such as ‘Vincentio’ and ‘Lucio’. Ultimately, Taylor deduces that ‘Shakespeare, writing *Measure*, was thinking of Italy, not Germany’.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴ Gary Taylor & John Jowett, *Shakespeare Reshaped 1606-1623* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 186-226.

³⁸⁵ Gary Taylor, ‘Shakespeare’s Mediterranean’, in *Selected Proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress, Valencia, 2001*, ed. by Thomas Clayton, and Susan Brock (Delaware: Delaware University Press, 2004), pp. 243-269 (p. 250).

³⁸⁶ Taylor notes: Alistair Fox, *The English Renaissance: identity and representation in Elizabethan England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 205-11, Richard Wagner, *Das Liebesverbot oder Die Novize von Palermo*: see Bryan N. S. Gooch, David Thatcher, et al., *A Shakespeare Music Catalogue*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, no. 7805, and Zdeněk Stříbrný, *Shakespeare and Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 42.

³⁸⁷ Taylor, *Shakespeare’s Mediterranean*, p. 251.

Thus, returning to *Merchant*, we can see in Shakespeare's text a deep engagement with Italy's culture as much as the location. Although Levith writes that 'Volpone presents a more detailed picture of Venice than *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* combined', nonetheless Venice remains a significant element of *Merchant*.³⁸⁸ Shakespeare's Venice, and arguably, Italy, is an amalgamation of narratives he read, accounts of Venice dictated to him, and information that he learnt through means such as his suspected lessons with John Florio. In *Merchant*, Shakespeare uses two distinct locations within Venice: the city proper and Belmont. For his audiences, Belmont would be symbolic of the rialto, and they would associate Portia with members of higher Venetian society. However, the Venice that the rest of the characters inhabit is once again a location that has a veil of unruliness covering its immense political and economic powers. Levith writes that:

The settings in *The Merchant of Venice* reflect two worlds. Venice and Belmont suggest the schizophrenic love/hate relationship Renaissance England had with Italy. For if the 'Venetian' side of Italy was perceived as fallen, one false religion and immorality (courtesans, Machiavelli, the Pope), the 'Belmont' side conjured up music, classics, the poetry of Petrarch, the gentility of Castiglione – in a word, humanistic learning and culture'.³⁸⁹

This highly cultural and powerful version of Venice was what the English were striving to emulate or be a part of. Shakespeare was bridging the gap between England and Italy within his play, attempting to find a common ground that these characters could survive in. As with many of Shakespeare's Italian settings, we can see a certain reflection of England within the setting; Venice is no different. Tosi and Bassi note that

Shakespeare's Venice could be utilized without bothering with Italian sources, at a time when in fact the historical background of literary works was at best taken for granted. Such a metaphorical view could then be taken to the angiocentric extreme of suggesting that if you scratched the surface of Shakespeare's Venice you could easily find Shakespeare's London.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁸ Levith, p. 16.

³⁸⁹ Levith, p. 23.

³⁹⁰ Tosi and Bassi, p. 5.

Belmont and the rest of the Venetian city can be viewed as representing both a newer and older version of England. According to Levith:

Commercial Venice thus would be the commercial London of the late sixteenth century, a thriving port metropolis. The merchant venturer is king here; fortunes are made and lost by courageous individual risk takers, and even foreigners might be rich. Social and economic mobility is possible. Belmont, on the other hand, would recall older England – the estates of the landed aristocracy with family wealth and name.³⁹¹

Despite these seeming similarities between Venice and England, I feel as though the location is still far enough removed to stand alone within Shakespeare's canon. It still follows a more "Italian", and arguably "European" way of life, being more liberal while also adhering to the Catholic ideologies that are present.

We get an equally distinct sense of Venice in *Othello* wherein the first scene Brabantio shouts the words 'This is Venice' (I.1.106-06), arguably causing the audience to keep an awareness of the location throughout the duration of the play; further rooting them within the walls of the city themselves. Unlike in *The Merchant of Venice*, the insistence on the location from the outset is crucial in order to keep the political and historical background of the city constantly in the foreground of the play. The more contemporary setting of Venice in the middle of the Venetian-Ottoman war would have been fresh in the minds of his educated audience members, with many knowing that Cyprus had been taken by the Turks thirty-two years earlier. When writing *Othello*, Shakespeare chose to ignore the wealth, beauty, and trade links that made the city so famous, instead choosing to focus the narrative on a location that was a war, concerning himself with political jargon and the Venetian government. Alvin Kernan writes that:

Renaissance Venice was known for its wealth acquired by trade, its political cunning, and its courtesans; but Shakespeare, while reminding us of the tradition of the

³⁹¹ Levith, p. 23.

“supersubtle Venetian”, makes Venice over into a form of *The City*, the ageless images of government, of reason, of law, and of social control’.³⁹²

Let us not forget, however, that other Italian cities, ‘most notably Venice and Rome, were also highly notorious for their courtesans’ number and skill’.³⁹³ Much like its Venetian predecessor, *Othello* also has two distinct locations: Venice and the ‘warlike isle’ (II.3.57) outpost of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean. Cyprus belonged to the Venetians before it was lost to the Ottoman Empire on the first of August 1571, leaving Venice wounded and the rest of Europe looking on in surprise and intrigue at what was to come next for the powerful Italian city. Shakespeare may have chosen to set his play in a time when Cyprus was still Venetian in order to amplify the stark difference between the city and the outpost: Venice is the location of refinement, sophistication, and governance, whereas Cyprus is a state of anarchy-like behaviour. Brabantio is incredulous when he is awoken by Iago and Roderigo saying ‘This is Venice; / My house is not a grange’ (I.1.103-4), or when Lodovico exclaims ‘My lord this would not be believed in Venice (IV.1.241) after Othello strikes Desdemona while in Cyprus, suggesting that thievery and domestic violence is not possible in such a civilized city such as Venice and can obviously only occur on such a lawless outpost such as Cyprus.

In both plays we see Shakespeare engage with the location on a deeper level beyond simple name-dropping of towns and cities. There are instances where Shakespeare appears to mock the Venetians and their political system; the Duke in *Merchant* has been legally bound by Shylock and thus is unable to help Antonio, and in *Othello* the Duke is portrayed as weak. Shakespeare’s portrayal of the Dukes in his Venetian plays could reflect the Early Modern English views on the Doges of Venice, reminding his audiences that even though the play is

³⁹² William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Alvin Kernan (New York: New American Library, 1963), pp. xxv-xxvi.

³⁹³ Lovascio, *Renaissance Studies*, p. 359.

set in an exotic location, it is still a Catholic state and does not adhere to the same rules as the English. Rosa Maria Colombo describes *Merchant's* Venetian location as:

Cornice scenografica e concessione, certo, a una moda italianata di corte [...] Si contrapponeva al consueto modello mediterraneo, esotico e “machiavellicamente” corrotto, come programma di civiltà: era l'immagine di un'altra Italia, quella mercantile e umanistica di cui, nell'incombere della Controriforma e nel dilagare dei conflitti fra monarchie cattoliche, la Venezia tardo-cinquecentesca sembrava conservare l'orgogliosa armoniosa, in cui la legge era sovrana, sì che nemmeno il doge poteva modificarla.³⁹⁴

[Scenic setting and concession, of course, to an Italianate court model [...] It was opposed to the usual Mediterranean model, exotic and “Machiavellian” corrupted, as an archetype of civilization: it was the image of another Italy, the mercantile and humanistic one of which, in the looming Counter-Reformation and the spread of conflicts between Catholic monarchies, late sixteenth-century Venice seemed to preserve the harmonious pride, in which the law was sovereign, so that not even the doge could modify it.]

During the period when Shakespeare was penning both *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, Venice welcomed two Doges: Pasquale Cicogna (1509-1595) and Marino Girmani (1534-1605). Both Doges were considered controversial during their time in power; Cicogna broke tradition by scattering silver coins as opposed to gold ducats during his coronation, and Girmani began a lengthy quarrel with Papacy which remained unresolved after his death and thus placed Venice into a Papal Interdict. It is likely that Shakespeare used both Cicogna and Girmani as an indication of a typical Doge and the English stereotypes connected to the position during the Renaissance; there is a clear difference between the two historical doges, and they show the potential for a Doge to be strong or ineffective, qualities which can be seen in the contrasting Doges of *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

What Shakespeare's two Doges share is the idea of them as a ruler, and the potential flaw that is associated with this post; by being elected rather than having the Divine Right of Kings to support their position as ruler of the state, the opportunity to second-guess their

³⁹⁴ Rosa Maria Colombo, p. 98.

power arises. A doge was the senior-most elected head of the city-state's aristocracy, a position predominantly associated with the republic states of Genoa and Venice; it is important to note that the doge was not a duke, nor the equivalent of a hereditary duke. Interestingly, Shakespeare writes the name of the state ruler in his later Italian plays as 'duke' rather than 'doge'; though we can speculate that this was a creative choice, or the playwright's own translation, it is more likely because of the word doge being commonly translated as 'Duke' in Early Modern English.³⁹⁵ The translation makes the position of the leader more recognisable to English audiences who were not accustomed to the role of a doge. Equally, in *Othello*, Shakespeare adds the position of a strong military commander to the position of the Doge, something that was not traditionally associated with Venetian Doges, as they tended to be members of the higher aristocracy of the city. Shakespeare may have chosen to portray his Duke after the unreliable Doges in Venice, to show his audiences how a city can fall into a state of disarray and confusion without the leadership of a monarch or Royal lineage, thus cementing the idea that the exotic location of Italy was both sinful due to their Catholic religion, and somewhat unorganised due to their lack of a monarchy – a stark difference to Renaissance England.

Though *Othello*, like *Merchant*, also includes Venice in its full title, here it can feel like misdirection as Shakespeare chose to set only the first act of the play within Venice before moving to the strategically owned Venetian offshore location of Cyprus for the remainder of the action. In doing so, Shakespeare frees Othello and Iago of some of the legal and moral constraints of the city, allowing the environment of the less secure Cyprus to facilitate Iago's plan. Simultaneously, however, whilst the characters may spend the majority

³⁹⁵ See George Abbot, *A Brief Description of the Whole World* (London: Sheares and Playfere, 1664), p. 111, or John Florio, *Worlde of Wordes* (London: Hatfield, 1598), p. 111.

of drama outside of Venice, in their actions and ideals they remain Venetian. In *Othello*, the characters are shown to have multiple sides to them, somewhat mimicking the great city – Brabantio appears to be a sophisticated and modern Venetian but fails to understand how his daughter can love a Moor, Cassio is shown to be a polished gentleman when truly he is a drunkard, Emilia is described as a delicate gentlewoman who strongly opposes adultery but would sell herself if the payoff was high enough. Even the Moor himself is doubled by Shakespeare as appearing to be a professional soldier with a copious amount of self-control, who is truly an unmoved soldier who seeks out revenge upon his own wife instead of confirming whether the rumours about her are true. By giving his Venetian characters two distinct sides, Shakespeare is connecting them to Venice, but subtly showing that both the city and inhabitants have two sides; that of an admirable Italian location with honest characters, and the lawless city with characters who are only interested in their own ulterior motives – sides that will ultimately lead to their tragic downfall.

James Howell balances the double-sided city in his *Instructions for Foreign Travel* (1642):

The *Italian*, being the *greatest embracer of pleasures*, the greatest Courtier of Ladies of any other. Here he [the young traveller] shall find Vertue and Vice, Love and Hatred, Atheisme and Religion in their extremes; being a witty contemplative people; and *Corruptio optimi est pessimal*. *Of the best wines make your tartest vinegar*.³⁹⁶

The lascivious nature of Venice is used by Shakespeare within his Venetian narratives, for example, when Othello exclaims to Desdemona that ‘I took you for that cunning whore of Venice’ (IV.2.89), he was referring to the notorious Venetian courtesans; a phrase that would have garnered recognition from the educated members of Shakespeare’s audiences.

Despite all its shortcomings, Venice was one of the most favourable Italian locations for the English in terms of Italo-English relations. McPherson speculates that this is because:

The alternatives [were] less palatable from a religious and/or political point of view. After all, Rome was the seat of the Pope, Naples was long associated with Spanish

³⁹⁶ James Howell, *Instructions for Foreign Travel* (London: English Reprints, 1868), p. 105.

power, and Florence was the home of Machiavelli. The patriotic Englishman really had little choice.³⁹⁷

4.3 Shakespeare's Verona

Though Verona is directly referenced in the title of Shakespeare's earliest play, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the city is most readily associated with *Romeo and Juliet*. Similar to *Antony and Cleopatra*, the play, though a tragedy, is written with a comical structure: rather than a central hero with a tragic flaw, instead, the action is largely dictated by miscommunication and quirks of fate, and many of the character types are those traditionally found in comedies. Italian tragedy is defined by G. K. Hunter as being 'centred on the figure of the tyrant, seen together with his (often female) victims. [...] he can indulge in himself and promote in others the personal violence's of jealousy, suspicion, anger, and revenge'.³⁹⁸

When we consider Hunter's definition in relation to *Romeo & Juliet*, it is apparent that the play does not fit the themes present within Italian tragedy; regardless of this, scholars have categorised it as such, even though we could argue it is a significant contrast to his only preceding Italian tragedy *Titus Andronicus*. Similar to Lucentio's speech in *Shrew*, Shakespeare begins *Romeo and Juliet* with a description of the location, and the prominence of this in the play once again asserts the potential that these locations have as exotic backdrops and enticing environments to draw an audience in. However, here the opening speech of the chorus has a further purpose beyond virtual tourism; his description of both the city and the feud are interchangeable: 'fair', 'unclean', and 'ancient' describe both the tragedy that is about to unfold due to the grudge held by the Capulet and Montague families, and the city and the antiquities found within (such as its amphitheatre). The 'ancient' theme continues throughout the play for example, 'ancient lady' and 'ancient damnation', thus

³⁹⁷ McPherson, p. 50.

³⁹⁸ G. K. Hunter, 'Italian Tragicomedy on the Renaissance Stage', in *Renaissance Drama*, 6 (1973), pp 123-48, (p. 130).

Shakespeare's initial description of 'fair Verona' contradicts the actions of the characters on the stage. The ancient feud eroded the tranquillity and authority of the city, showing the audience another side to Italy – a side that was heavily reliant on revenge, a theme that is central to his other tragic Italian narratives. This theme of vendetta prevalent within Shakespeare's Italian tragedies can be linked to an idea raised by John Florio in *Second Frutes* (1591): 'If any man wrong thee, wrong him againe, or else be sure to remember it'.³⁹⁹ This link to Florio further supports the notion that Shakespeare was familiar with both Florio and his works, an idea previously raised in this thesis, further fortifying their professional relationship.

Renaissance Verona 'represented itself as the Second Rome'⁴⁰⁰, due to the city having a large presence of Roman antiquities, and through history has tried to self-promote this connection to Rome many times. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Verona was under the rule of the Della Scala family; the city flourished with new artistic tendencies, but this harmony was disturbed when Venice regained control of the city and added it to its territories. As a location, Verona is free of the more dubious aspects that haunt Venice; it is not overshadowed by the reputation of courtesans roaming the city, murderers walking freely, and immigrants negatively influencing the inhabitants. Comparatively then, Shakespeare's Verona offers a more romantic and alluring backdrop akin to a fairy-tale setting, fostering true love that will overcome any adversary. This has become a self-fulfilling prophecy, for today Verona's tourist board is quick to capitalise on impressions of the city as romantic thanks largely to Shakespeare's play. It is evident that Shakespeare's narrative has left its mark on the city, with a large percentage of its tourists flocking to see Juliet's balcony, write

³⁹⁹ John Florio, *Second Frutes*, p. 19.

⁴⁰⁰ Francesco Marcorin, *Crafted Identities: Renaissance Verona as a Case Study* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 1.

her letters, and hold ceremonies at her grave. The impact of Shakespeare on Verona's tourist industry is not replicated in Venice, where only minor mentions of Shakespeare and his plays can be found, instead choosing to revel in its artistic Renaissance fame with modern tourists. The Italian locations of Shakespeare's Italianate tragedies help us understand his relationship, understanding and appreciation of Italy as a whole; his choice of location exposing his thoughts of where his comedies and tragedies would work best. However, as we have explored within this thesis, Shakespeare relied heavily on sources for the majority of his Italian narratives, the presence of these sources poses another intriguing question: Did Shakespeare's sources influence his choice of location when writing the Italian tragedies?

Throughout this thesis, sources have been crucial in understanding Shakespeare's relationship with Italy; the investigation into his tragic locations is no different. When discussing the tragical plays, their location, structure, and characters in relation to how Italy was being portrayed, the sources used by the playwright give us an important insight to what he decided to change, adapt and remove from the narratives he chose to take inspiration from. Furthermore, understanding how Shakespeare's visions of Italian locations differ from those portrayed by the writers of his source materials, opening the discussion to comments about how the English viewed different Italian locations and what the difference between the Italian locations tells us about how they were viewed by Shakespeare, his audiences, and his contemporaries.

Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* was adapted from multiple sources by Shakespeare, the majority of which were Italian novellas. The names of the feuding families, both Capulets and Montagues respectively, are credited to a mention within canto six of Dante's *Purgatorio* (1320): 'Vieni a veder Montecchi e Cappelletti, / Monaldi e Fillipeschi, uom senza cura: /

color già tristi, e questi con sospetti!’(106-8) [*Come and see, you who are negligent, / Montagues and Capulets, Monaldi and Filippeschi: / One lot already grieving, the other in fear*].⁴⁰¹ However, Dante’s mention of the feuding families was less of a romantic allegory, and more of a political commentary on the downfall of the territories of Florence, Lombardy and the Italian peninsula as a whole. Historically, the names Montecchi and Cappelletti can be traced back to families of political importance during Dante’s lifetime; the Cappelletti being from Cremona and having their conflicts within the region of Lombardy, whereas the name Montecchi was associated with the name of a political party in Verona. Interestingly, even within the brief mention of the families in Dante’s allegorical poem, the location of Verona is prevalent; this has a significant impact on our understanding of the city’s use in Shakespeare’s narrative, removing the immediate decision for him.

However, there is a counterpoint to this. For although it can be argued that Shakespeare may have read Dante through the assistance of John Florio and his extensive library of Italian narratives, it is unlikely that Dante alone was the source for *Romeo & Juliet*. It is believed that one of the main influences for the play came from Tommaso de’ Guardati, or more commonly known by his pen name Masuccio Salernitano, in his thirty-third novella in *Il Novellino* (1476). As with the several sources for *Twelfth Night*, this may be a direct influence, or a starting point for subsequent iterations, adding, or altering elements in order to refine the narrative until Shakespeare brought the story to mainstream London audiences. When looking at the Salernitano’s source in detail, it is evident that Shakespeare was actively taking plot inspiration from the Italian novella; for example, two lovers from feuding families, the exile of one of the lovers, faking a death, and the tragic demise of two young individuals facilitated by the hatred of their respective families. Regardless of these explicit

⁴⁰¹ Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, ed. Piero Gallardo (G. B. Petrini: Torino, 1977), p. 61.

similarities, there are notable differences between the two texts that are important to investigate in order to understand Shakespeare's use of Italian sources as well as the Italian location. Both Salernitano and Shakespeare begin by outlining the location of their tales:

ARGOMENTO: Mariotto sense, Innamorato de Ganozza, como ad omicida se fugge in Alessandria: Ganozza se fenge morta, e, da sepultura tolta, va a trovare l'amante; dal quale sentita ;a sua morte, per morire anco lui retorna a Sienna, e, cognosciuto, e priso, e tagliatole la testa; la donna nol trova in Alessandria, retorna a Siena, e tole l'amante decollato, e lei supra 'l suo corpo per dolore se more.⁴⁰²

[Mariotto, in love with Ganozza, knows he must escape to Alessandria with haste; Ganozza fakes her death, and, upon being removed from her temporary tomb, goes in search of her lover; who has heard about her death and wishes for his own, he returns to Sienna to die alongside her, where he is recognised and decapitated; the woman does not find him in Alessandria, thus returns to Sienna, and upon discovering her headless lover, she succumbs and her body dies of pain.]

[Enter Chorus]
Two households, both alike in dignity
(In fair Verona, where we lay our scene),

In his chorus, Salernitano outlines the tale of Mariotto and Ganozza; giving his readers a summary of the tragedy that they are about to read, making the tragic and gruesome elements stand out in order to create a sense of intrigue. Within the initial chorus of the novella, we are also introduced to the two locations that are central to the action of the plot: Sienna and Alexandria. The locations for the main action of the novella and the location for Mariotto's exile are located in different regions of Italy, perhaps in order to show how extensive the distance of the two lovers, or to juxtapose the locations of Siena and Alexandria.

It is not until 1524 and the publication of Luigi Da Porto's *Giulietta e Romeo* in *Historia Nuovamente Ritrovata di Due Nobili Amanti* that the location of Verona is introduced to the narrative of the tragical lovers. Da Porto is also credited with the addition of

⁴⁰² Masuccio Salernitano, *Il Novellino*, ed. Roberto Di Marco (Sam Pietro Editore: Bologna 1968), p. 242.

the names of Romeo and Juliet, the appearance of pivotal characters such as Friar Lawrence, Mercutio, and Tybalt, as well as the secondary characters of the nurse and faithful servant. More basic elaborations on the plot are also attributed to Da Porto, for example, Romeo being left by his mistress, the meeting of the lovers a dance held at the house of Juliet, the appearance of the balcony, the killing of Juliet's cousin by Romeo, and the reconciliation of the feuding families after the suicides of the two young lovers. It is evident then, that Da Porto perfected the narrative taken by moulding the characters into more distinguished figures, and relocating the action to a location that was better-known and capable of holding the tradition of the story of the lovers; perhaps even returning to Verona in order to keep with the tradition of the Montecchi family that Dante had outlined years prior. Thus, the connection to Verona was first made by Da Porto, not Shakespeare, who acquires the location from either Da Porto, or one of his other subsequent sources – namely Bandello or Arthur Brooke's (1493-1563) *Romeus and Juliet* (1562). With Brooke's narrative also predominantly deriving from Bandello's novella.

The first mention of the location of Verona within Da Porto's narrative can be seen in the full title of the novella itself: *Storia di Giulietta e Romeo, Con La Loro Pietosa Morte Avvenuta già in Verona Nel Tempo Del Sig. Bartolomeo Della Scala*. The title explicitly tells the readers that the tragical death of two individuals occurs in Verona, even though their relation to one another is not yet known by the reader, they are made aware that on the following pages a loss of life will unfold on the streets of Verona. The title of the novella may appear to be strange at first, this is due to the fact that Da Porto claimed that his novella has an historical element to it; stating that it occurred a decade prior to that of Salernitano, during the time of Bartolommeo dalla Scala, a lord of Venice from 1301.

In a similar fashion to Salernitano, Da Porto also mentions the location of his novella within the prologue, setting the scene for his readers: ‘e, come quasi tutti que’ di Verona [...]’⁴⁰³ [*and, like almost all those of Verona*]. Although Da Porto acknowledges the setting in his prologue it does little to set the scene for the novella, however, within the first few lines of the narrative, the location is made more prominent: ‘in Verona sotto il già detto signore le sopradette nobilissime famiglie di valorosi uomini, e di ricchezza ugualmente dal 216hem , dalla natura, e dalla fortuna dotate’⁴⁰⁴ [*in Verona under the lord, the noble families of valiant men, and of wealth equally from heaven, from nature, and from gifted fortune*]. Da Porto’s narrative is also credited with the addition of Mantua as the location for Romeo’s exile after murdering Giulietta’s cousin: ‘Indi a pochi giorni Romeo, che nel monasterio di Frate Lorenzo era fin allora stato nascosto, si partì, ed a Mantova come morto si ridusse’ [*Then, after a few days Romeo, who in the monastery of Friar Lorenzo had been hidden until then, left, and in Mantua he was declared as dead*].⁴⁰⁵ Thus, the theory that Shakespeare knew enough about northern Italy and its geography when writing *Romeo & Juliet* may not be entirely true, as one of his possible sources took it upon himself to change the location, thus the change occurred before Shakespeare adapted the narrative for the English stage. Further to this, in Matteo Bandello’s interpretation of the story of Romeo and his lover Juliet, *La sfortunata morte di dui infelicissimi amanti che l’uno di veleno e l’altro di dolore morirono, con varii accidenti* found within the second part of his *Novelle* (1573), also places the action of the narrative within both Verona and Mantua; fortifying the notion that although Shakespeare’s infatuation with Italy was extensive, it does not necessarily mean that he was familiar with its geography. I should add, that while the choice of location serves as a useful aid in identifying potential sources, it should not be used to detract from Shakespeare’s

⁴⁰³Luigi Da Porto, *Storia di Giulietta e Romeo, Con La Loro Pietosa Morte Avvenuta già in Verona Nel Tempo Del Sig. Bartolomeo Della Scala*, ed. Elisa De Angelis (Milano: Gaspere Truffi, 1831), p. 6.

⁴⁰⁴ Da Porto, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁵ Da Porto, p. 10.

inventiveness. Just as Rome was fixed as the location for the Roman plays, here in *Romeo and Juliet* we can see, as in those, how Shakespeare attempts to offer a fuller description and atmosphere which pushes the location beyond a name to a full environment. Shakespeare's portrayal of Verona is accepted by the city as being authentic, and this is a sentiment shared by scholars; Lucy Simpson writes that 'no play more strikingly illustrated Italian life and influence'.⁴⁰⁶ This devotion to the accuracy of Italian culture by Shakespeare can be seen throughout the play, even manifesting itself in religious references: traditionally, Italians often buried their dead in family tombs, this is reflected when Friar Lawrence tells Juliet about her impending "death": 'Then, as the manner of our country is, / In thy best robes, uncovered on the bier, / Though shalt be borne to that same ancient vault / Where all the kindred of the Capulets lie' (IV.1.109-12). This example shows that this is in stark contrast to the English who were commonly buried in graves that were dug next to each other to signify a family burial plot, thus Shakespeare must have known a certain amount about the Italian burial culture, and what the protocol would be for a wealthy family such as the Capulets. Levith writes that 'the Italian element in *Romeo and Juliet* is rooted in details of contemporary history and custom, and the shared theme of learning and experience common in most of Shakespeare's Italian plays'.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Lucy Simpson, 'Shakespeare and Italy' in *The Secondary Heroes of Shakespeare and Other Essays*, ed. Lucy Simpson (London: Kingswood Press, 1951), p. 89.

⁴⁰⁷ Levith, p. 60.

4.4 Sources for Shakespeare's Venice

Shakespeare's knowledge of Venice has impressed scholars for many centuries; with some, such as Karl Elze, using his portrayal of the city as a reason to confidently speculate that the playwright did indeed travel to Italy: 'the disbelievers in an Italian journey of Shakespeare cannot account for his knowledge by any other means than that of oral communication'.⁴⁰⁸

Although I am of the belief that Shakespeare did not travel to Italy, and I have attempted to prove such in this thesis, I can understand why certain scholars still gravitate towards the idea that the playwright travelled to Italy. However, his portrayal of Venice as a location is something that could have been achieved without leaving the familiar shores of England as there were ample materials for Shakespeare to consult on the country, as well as discussion he would have had with his contemporaries who did travel, or with Italians that he may have encountered while in London as 'the Italian expatriate community in London was sizeable'.⁴⁰⁹

These methods of knowledge acquisition would have given Shakespeare a rounded view of the city. As discussed in the introduction, the majority of Venice's wealth was accumulated through trade with the East. Paolo Paruta says of the city's origins that:

There was not any City famous for merchandising in the Levant, whither the Venetian Ships and Merchants did flock [...] through whose hands the most precious Merchandise of those Countries past, to the great advantage of the City, and of her private Citizens'.⁴¹⁰

This is something that Shakespeare accurately represents when Salerio says '[...] touching but my gentle vessel's side, / Would scatter all her spices on the stream, / Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks' (I.1.33-5).

⁴⁰⁸ Karl Elze, *Essays on Shakespeare*, trans. L. Dora Schmitz (London: Macmillan, 1874), p. 280.

⁴⁰⁹ Sergio Rossi, "Note sugli Italiani in Inghilterra nella età del Rinascimento" in *Saggi sul Rinascimento*, ed. Sergio Rossi (Milano: Edizioni Unicolpi, 1984), pp. 55-115 (p. 56).

⁴¹⁰ Paolo Paruta, *The History of Venice*, trans. Henry Earl of Monmouth (London: Abel Roper, 1658), p. 202.

Andrew Hadfield writes that ‘the importance of Venice as a symbolic beacon of political liberty throughout Renaissance Europe is well attested, as is the influence of this myth in contemporary Britain’.⁴¹¹ The playwright’s Venetian narratives have two distinctive locations – the first being an area where merchants and gentlemen conduct their business, and the school where the sinful allure of the courtesans and outliers would dwell. The lure of Venice is explicit within *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*; depicting how one city can adapt to fit both comical and tragical narratives. Hadfield further notes that the ‘Venetian constitution in particular were not simply generous encomia to an admired city-state and important ally, but, as often as not, ways of criticising a repressive government at home and attempts to formulate an alternative political vision when direct comment was difficult’.⁴¹²

When considering the use of location in relation to Shakespeare’s Venetian plays, the question to whether the playwright chose the location himself, or whether he is simply replicating the location nominated in the source-text, becomes less hypothetical. Muir notes that plays located in Venice were not uncommon before Shakespeare and his contemporaries appropriated them, for example ‘*The Venesyon Comodye* (acted 1594) and Dekker’s *The Jew of Venice* (of unknown date), may have some connexion with Shakespeare’s play, but nothing is known about them beyond their titles’.⁴¹³ Thus, the location of Venice was not unknown to English dramatists, rather a location that was associated with trade, Catholics, and Jews. The comical background that Venice sets in *Merchant* is broken when the narrative shifts to the tragical subplot of Shylock and his fight for recognition, turning the streets of the city into pathways difficult for outsiders to traverse without being mocked or abused. Although this abhorrent torment of the Jews was seen as an addition to the comical nature of the play by Early Modern audiences, modern audiences and scholars understand the tragical aspect

⁴¹¹ Andrew Hadfield, ‘Two Representations of Venice in Late Tudor and Early Stuart England, *Parergon*, 15 (1998), 47-9 (p. 47).

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Muir, *Shakespeare’s Sources*, p. 47.

within the character of Shylock, in doing so, the location of Venice becomes a never-ending city of torment for those who are not white Italians. Although Shylock himself does not hold much importance to the city in which he resides, he holds a grudge against the Christian inhabitants, making multiple comments on his hatred for them. However, towards the end of his tragic narrative arc, Shylock gives a singular mention to the Renaissance city: ‘An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven! / Shall I lay perjury upon my soul? / No, not for Venice!’ (IV. i. 234-6). Shakespeare may have wanted to show the importance the Jew held for the oath he made, regardless of the return, nothing would be enough to fulfil his oath apart from what he himself has outlined in the contract. Due to the isolation that the city has caused for the Jewish people, Shylock wanted his revenge on those that wronged him, seeing Antonio as the embodiment of Venice. His views on the city juxtapose those of the other characters within the play, even his own daughter, who by birth is Jewish but converts to Christianity in order to marry her lover, who view the city as a place in which they can play, work, and fall in love. For the comical characters within *The Merchant of Venice*, the location provides a different experience than that of Shylock, who loses his family, identity, and business to the city that he tried to make his home. When understanding Venice from Shylock’s point of view, it is important to note that ‘no Jew residing in Venice in the sixteenth century would have been regarded as a Venetian. He, or she, would be a foreigner, permitted residency in the city by acquiescence of the Venetian state’.⁴¹⁴ This segregation of the Jewish people had already occurred in England during the late thirteenth century, similarly they were also forced out of Spain and Portugal. Thus, Venice appeared to be even more of a melting pot of cultures to the English audiences, as the Jews of Venice were segregated to an area of the city named ‘the ghetto’. Although allusions to the ghetto itself are present within *The Merchant of Venice*, the word ‘ghetto’ itself is not mentioned anywhere in Shakespeare’s canon; the

⁴¹⁴ Roe, p. 125-6.

location of the ghetto once again juxtaposes the comical and friendly location of Venice that turns Italy into an openly anti-semitic location that removes all romantic and exotic titles it may have acquired.

The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice as a title sets up an expectation of location for the audience, who come to anticipate a tragedy in a well-known city. Perhaps this explains why Venice features so prominently in the play's title when so much of its action occurs elsewhere. When penning *Othello*, Shakespeare turns Venice from a comical backdrop with a tragical vein, into a violent arena in which a plot of murder and revenge is first conceived. While *Merchant* opens initially with a typical comic dialogue concerning love and courtship, *Othello* drops the audience mid-dialogue between Roderigo and Iago, creating a sense of uneasiness and mystery on the streets of Venice from the outset. The proposed narrative source used by Shakespeare is speculated to be Giraldi Cinthio's novella VII, subsequently titled 'Un Capitano Moro' by both readers and scholars alike, found in decade 3 of *Gli Hecatommithi* (1565). The prologue of the novel provides a synopsis of a familiar narrative involving a Moorish military captain and his marriage to a venetian woman, Disdemona [sic], which is plunged into tragedy when she is accused of adultery:

Un capitano Moro piglia per mogliera una cittadina Veneziana: un suo 221hem ai l'accusa di adulterio al marito: cerca che l'affieri uccida colui, che egli credea l'adultero. Il capitano uccide la moglie: è accusato dall'alfieri. Non confessa il Moro, ma essendovi chiari indizii, è bandito; e lo scellerato 221hem ai, credendo nuocere ad altri, procaccia a sè la morte miseramente.⁴¹⁵

[A Moorish captain takes a Venetian citizen as a wife: one of his ensigns accuses her of adultery towards her husband: thus the ensign attempts to kill he who he deems to be the adulterer, the captain kills his wife; and is accused by his ensign. The Moor does not confess, but since there are clear clues, he is banished, and the wicked ensign, believing he would harm others, succumbs a miserable death.]

⁴¹⁵ Giambattista Giraldi Cinthio, *Gli Ecatommithi* (Turin: Cugini Pomba E Comp. Editori, 1853), p. 64.

Cinthio was a source that Shakespeare returned to often, using the fifth story from the eighth decade as inspiration for his *Measure for Measure* (c. 1604), and, as I have argued in the previous chapter of this dissertation, he perhaps returned to Cinthio as a source for *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1607). Shakespeare follows the Italian source closely, leaving the setting of the narrative mostly unchanged, using both Venice and Cyprus as backdrops for the action of the play. Shakespeare's Moorish Captain does not fully understand the customs of the location he is placed in, these behavioural errors can be 'framed from his perspective, the point of view of an immigrant, rather than from a perspective of the society that Othello enters'.⁴¹⁶ This inept understanding of the Italian location and the mannerisms by the Moor can also be a reflection of Shakespeare's own knowledge of the location he was writing about, showing inherently English attitudes through Othello's mistakes, thus creating an invisible connection between the dark-skinned antihero and his audiences.

Towards the beginning of the novella, Cinthio describes the couple as being content with their marriage in Venice: '[...] e vissero insieme di sì concorde volere, ed in tanta tranquillità, mentre furono in Venezia, 222hem ai tra loro non fu, non dirò cosa, ma parola men che amorevole' [*they lived in such harmony and peace in Venice that no word ever passed between them that was not affectionate and kind*].⁴¹⁷ By depicting the backdrop of the narrative as a harmonious location, Cinthio subtly suggests to the reader that the downfall of the characters is due to their skewed morals, and not with the city itself. Domestic harmony was a thing of rarity within the novella tradition, especially in the mostly unheard-of instances of intercultural marriages. Shakespeare, on the other hand, starts the narrative by showing his audience that Othello is an outsider in the Venetian society, and that misplaced

⁴¹⁶ Alberto Cacicedo, 'Othello, Stranger in a Strange Land', *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, 18 (2016), 7-27 (p. 19).

⁴¹⁷ Cinthio, *Gli Hecatommithi*, p. 65.

within the location, regardless of his status as captain. When Iago warns the Moor about his wife, and urges him to ‘observe her well’, he gives the reason as:

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. (III.iii.204-7)

Through Iago’s response, Shakespeare shows that although Othello is well-liked in Venice and has spent a great deal of time in the city, he will never truly be fully integrated into it to the extent that Iago is, a Venetian from birth. Bassi notes that ‘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’.⁴¹⁸ Thus, despite both the location and the antihero being considered “exotic” to Renaissance audiences, Othello appears to be misplaced within the multicultural metropolis of Venice. Despite Shakespeare’s depiction of Othello against the Venetian background, attempting to intergrate him into the society by obtaining a higher status through his marriage to a Venetian woman, and the employment from the Venetian Republic. Othello was personally and professionally distant from the location, fitting European views at the time, even though he was admired by those he lived with: ‘A very valiant Moor, who because he was personally courageous and had given proof in warfare of great prudence and skilful energy, was very dear to those Venetian lords, who in rewarding virtuous actions advance the interests of any republic’.⁴¹⁹ Shakespeare encapsulated the “otherness” of both his Moorish Captain and the location, depicting through Iago and other Venetian characters the attitudes of Renaissance Venetians towards cross-cultural diversities and ethnicities.

⁴¹⁸ Bassi, p. 1.

⁴¹⁹ Cinthio, *Gli Hecatommithi*, p. 64.

Regardless of his difficult integration into Venice, Shakespeare allows Othello and the action of the play to move offshore to the location of Cyprus, setting the majority of the narrative outside of Italy. At first glance, this may appear to be Shakespeare attempting to move the violence and moral downfall of the characters to a location that was not as lustfully driven as Venice, however, upon further consideration, the shift in location to Cyprus proves to be more interesting. Cyprus was a strategically important location to the Venetians from circa 1489 to 1570 during their wars with the Ottoman Empire, as a result, Cyprus was continuously raided and attacked. Marie Viallon notes that ‘Cyprus was debatably one of the most ferociously disputed places in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean’.⁴²⁰ By the time Shakespeare came to inherit the story of the Moor of Venice, the Ottoman Empire had already taken control of Cyprus from the Venetians. His choice to move the violence and moral downfall of Othello to Cyprus may be an attempt to show the violence of the offshore location.

This moving of locations is in stark contrast to *The Merchant of Venice*, where Shakespeare chose to concentrate on the location of Venice and the Jewish ghetto, ensuring that the violence occurred within the city walls, and the love scenes outside Venice. In doing so, a hostile image of Venice is created, irrespective of the fact that the play is formally a comedy.

⁴²⁰ Marie Viallon, *Politique et Religion en Europe*, ed. Paulo Sarpi (Paris: Éditions Classique Garnier, 2010), p. 202.

4.5 Getting Sicily wrong in *The Winter's Tale*

Thus far this chapter has aimed to show how deeply Shakespeare engages, on occasion, with the Italian locations in his plays. But it would be disingenuous not to acknowledge where that interaction is shallower. The clear blunder of Bohemia's non-existent shoreline in *The Winter's Tale* (1611) suggests that, for all of Shakespeare's invested use of international locations elsewhere, it was not a constant feature of his work. The play is described by F. R. Leavis as 'one of the 'romantic' plays; the adjective implying, among other things, a certain fairy-tale licence of spirit, theme, and development – an indulgence, in relation to reality, of some of the less responsible promptings of imagination and fancy'.⁴²¹ We can identify a source for the text – Robert Greene's *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time* (1588) – which might seem an explanation for the Italian location but with complications. The re-titled *Dorastus and Fawnia* (1607) was 'gaining popularity'⁴²² during the period when Shakespeare was penning his own version. Greene's version of the tale sees the King of Bohemia, Pandosto, accuse his wife, Bellaria, of adultery with his friend, the King of Sicilia; and, as a result, causes the death of his wife and son before sending his infant daughter to die at sea. Greene's version is arguably darker than that of Shakespeare, with themes of suicide, and murder, whereas in Shakespeare's version, Hermione is brought back to life from apparent death to give the play an uplifting ending. The majority of the narrative elements and locations were kept the same by Shakespeare. Derek Traversi notes that the play is 'a supreme instance of Shakespeare's poetic complexity – of the impossibility [...] of considering character, episode, theme, and plot in abstraction from the local effects, so inexhaustibly subtle in their inter-

⁴²¹ F. R. Leavis, 'Shakespeare's Late Plays' in *Shakespeare Criticism: 1935 – 1960*, ed. Anne Riddler (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 132-141 (p.134).

⁴²² John Pitcher (ed.), William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), Introduction, p. 99.

play, of the poetry, and from the larger symbolic effect to which these give life'.⁴²³ Although the playwright embellished and modified elements of Greene's narrative, *The Winter's Tale* serves as an example of Shakespeare's readiness to dismiss the importance of having a geographically correct location and instead reduce it to a name, disregarding any accuracy that might be central to the location. While I have argued in this thesis that Shakespeare frequently used elements of Italian culture within his works, it does not negate the fact that he misused Greene's work: representation of Italian ideals and culture was not a constant absolute for Shakespeare.

In Shakespeare's version, he mixes up the locations and kings outlined by Greene, with 'the direction of the play being inverted',⁴²⁴ choosing to have the Leontes King of Sicilia, jealous of Polixenes, the King of Bohemia:

OFFICER

Reads Hermione, queen to the worthy Leontes,
King of Sicilia, thou art here accused and arraigned
of high treason, in committing adultery with Polixenes,
King of Bohemia, and conspiring with Camillo
to take away the life of our sovereign lord the King, thy
royal husband; the pretense whereof being by circumstances
partly laid open, thou, Hermione, contrary to
the faith and allegiance of a true subject, didst counsel
and aid them, for their better safety, to fly away by
night. (III. 2. 13-22)

The switching of countries results in a conflict between plot and fact; the first mention of the geographical location of Bohemia by Antigonus: 'Thou art perfect, then, our ship hath touched upon / The deserts of Bohemia' (III. 3. 1-2), described the country as having a shoreline, as well as being a wild and inhabited land. This error might appear to be a genuine one on the part of Shakespeare and one which has been frequently called out, as early as Ben Jonson in 1619, who said that 'Shakespeare in a play brought in a number of men, saying

⁴²³ Derek, A. Traversi, *Approach to Shakespeare* (London: The Bodley Head, 1969), p, 445.

⁴²⁴ Pitcher, p. 99.

they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where there is no sea nearby some 100 miles'.⁴²⁵

When David Laing edited *Jonson's Conversations* in 1842, he attempted to defend Shakespeare by suggesting that Jonson was instead talking about *The Tempest*. This optimistic manipulation of the facts is not an isolated occurrence but one that subsequent critics have occasionally adopted to maintain Shakespeare's reputation as a genius John Pitcher goes to great lengths to excuse Shakespeare, arguing that the mistake 'shouldn't lead us to think that Shakespeare had no sense of geography' but rather that it is 'serious play' on Shakespeare's part to have 'turned his source upside down' to make 'another of the plays "preposterous" inversions'.⁴²⁶ While this might well be correct, it feels enthusiastic on Pitcher's part to defend Shakespeare in this way. We cannot wholly rule out the idea that Shakespeare made a mistake; if so, it is likely to have been made in haste as Bohemia's lack of shoreline was well known, and there were materials available to him that would have helped to clear up any confusion with location, such as Ortelius' detailed map of Bohemia within his *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* [Theatre of the Whole World] which widely circulated at the time, as discussed in chapter 3. However, as easy as it is to attribute this mistake to Shakespeare due to his perceived lack of education, the error of Bohemia's shoreline can also be found within Greene's narrative: 'desirous to shew that neither tract of time nor distance of place could diminish their former friendship, provided a navy of ships and sailed into Bohemia to visit his old friend and companion'.⁴²⁷ *Pandosto* was 'reprinted more than a dozen times before 1642',⁴²⁸ it had also been abridged, adapted, and translated into French; thus, it is safe to assume that at the time Shakespeare consulted it, the story was familiar to Early Modern readers and writers alike. Thus, the mistake also made by Greene in assuming

⁴²⁵ Ben Jonson's *Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden*, ed. R. F. Patterson (London: Blackie & Son, 1923), p. 20.

⁴²⁶ Pitcher, p. 100.

⁴²⁷ Robert Greene, *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time* (London: Thomas Cadman, 1588), p. 4.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

Bohemia had a shoreline should be given more weight when discussing Shakespeare's own mistake; this can be seen as proof that Shakespeare looked at his source materials in a decent amount of detail. In the case of *Pandosto*, *The Winter's Tale*, and the non-existent shores of Bohemia, we can assume that the playwright was simply using Greene's description of the country rather than checking the information. If this is true, it makes Shakespeare's inversion of the locations more perplexing as he would have had easy access to Greene's text and would have read it with a certain amount of detail, which I have proven he did with the majority of his source-texts, both English and Italian, within this thesis. Pitcher's idea that this is an intentional joke is bizarre and, ultimately, would be a fairly poor joke if it were.

But nor should we use this moment as an opportunity to expose Shakespeare's ignorance, but rather his indifference to the geopolitical specifics of this play. As ever, it is always wise to remember that this is a play, not a travel narrative, nor an educational lecture: Shakespeare's priority was telling a story and details of location in this instance are incidental. In turn this need not then be used as evidence of Shakespeare's lack of interest more generally but serves to highlight by contrast those moments when he does pay more attention to the location of his plays, as has been shown elsewhere in my thesis.

As well as the confusion of central plot locations, Shakespeare also changes the internal geography of each location: for example, the feast scene in *The Winter's Tale* is particularly devoid of any explicitly foreign imagery, instead evoking a traditional Warwickshire scene:

PERDITA

Sir, my gracious lord,
To chide at your extremes it not becomes me –
O, pardon that I mean them. Your high self,
The gracious mark o'th' land, you have obscured
With a swain's wearing, and, poor lowly maid,
Most goddess-like pranked up. But that our feasts
In every mess have folly, and the feeders
Digest it with a custom, I should blush
To see you so attired; swoon, I think,

To show myself a glass. (IV. 4. 5-13)

This imagery of a sheep-shearing festival is described by Pitcher to be ‘straight from Shakespeare’s Stratford’.⁴²⁹ Anglicising foreign locations is an idea prevalent within this thesis, with examples strewn across the playwright’s canon: in chapters three and four, I looked at how Shakespeare moulded the Roman and Italian locations to fit a more English perspective. The Anglicising is not the only questionable geographical change that Shakespeare makes within *The Winter’s Tale*; the description of the locations of Sicilia and Bohemia are also cause for further investigation.

The Winter’s Tale introduces us to the courtly world of Sicilia, ‘a place somewhere in time and space between the Italian Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and the ancient Sicily identified with Greece via the oracle on the isle of ‘Delphos’ consulted by the Greeks Cleomines and Dion’.⁴³⁰ This is yet again another example of Shakespeare blurring his locations, and using what he needs; just like his use of sources, so too Shakespeare is not bound by geographical region, but adapts, edits and shapes for his purpose. Accordingly, the location of Sicilia is not explored in explicit detail by Shakespeare, apart from an oddly specific reference made by a Lord: ‘Behind the tuft of pine I met them.’ (II. 1. 34). Unlike Shakespeare, Bandello chose to make the importance of his location of Messina, and in turn Sicily, explicit for his readers; ensuring the courtly power of the city is known early in the narrative: ‘meglio attendere ale cose della guerra ritirò la reina contutta la corte a Messina, come in quella città che è per incontro a l’Italia e da la quale coli breve tragitto si passa in Calabria’⁴³¹ [*it is*] better to attend to the matters of war, the queen withdrew with the whole court to Messina, as the city was opposite Italy and thus it was a brief journey to Calabria].

⁴²⁹ Pitcher, p. 100.

⁴³⁰ D’Amico, p. 113.

⁴³¹ Bandello, ‘Novella XXII’, I, p. 236.

Bandello makes an effort to describe the landscape in which his characters find themselves, including the general geography of Italy; his Italian readers would have been familiar with the southern territories of Italy even if they were not considered to be as intellectually enriched as the northern states.

Shakespeare, however, makes no effort to describe the landscape or people of Sicilia, appearing to forget that it is an Italian territory in the Mediterranean, instead giving these warm and inviting qualities to Bohemia, which was a landlocked country in the modern-day Czech Republic. Roger Warren quotes director Peter Hall who argues that ‘Shakespeare saw Sicilia as a country of hot passions rather than as the home of literary pastoral’.⁴³² The argument of religion has been used throughout this thesis; however, it is interesting to note that at the time of Shakespeare’s authoring of *The Winter’s Tale*, Bohemia was a Protestant state, whereas Sicilia was a Catholic state. References to the Bible and Christian values can be found within the narrative, with the Clown appearing to mock Puritans in act 4: ‘[...] but one Puritan amongst them, and he sings psalms to horn- / pipes’ (IV. 2. 44-5). The hornpipe was used to create dance-tunes that were despised by Puritans, but it could be Shakespeare using the clown to mock the Puritans as they were often ‘portrayed as singing in high nasal tones’.⁴³³ These examples make it unclear whether Shakespeare was appealing to a Catholic or Protestant Christian ideal. It is interesting to note a potential influence of Bandello once more here. When attempting to understand Shakespeare’s use, whether correctly or not, within *The Winter’s Tale*, it is difficult to ignore the argument of sources, which is a topic that this thesis has shown to be complex and controversial to traverse when it comes to Shakespeare. Although Greene’s novella has been identified as the most likely source, scholars such as Martin Mueller and Thomas E. Mussio have also mentioned Bandello’s

⁴³² Roger Warren, *Staging Shakespeare’s Plays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p. 95.

⁴³³ Pitcher, p. 254.

novella twenty-four, or more commonly referred to as *Timbreo and Fenicia* (1554) as a possible Italian source for the play. The return to Bandello for narrative inspiration by Shakespeare would surely create links between *The Winter's Tale* and the previous plays with elements taken from Bandello, namely a return to the Claudio-Hero plot from *Much Ado*; this is not surprising to see, as it is possible that Shakespeare 'recycled' elements that he thought were successful from his earlier plays into his late plays, especially if they share source material.

Bandello's narrative also displays religious imagery that may have been picked up by Shakespeare, Mussio notes that 'the Italian Fenicia's greater emphasis on her family, forgiveness of Timbreo, and the will of God distinguishes her from Belleforest's more dramatic, self-absorbed heroine'.⁴³⁴ The similarities between Bandello and Shakespeare's more forgiving themes, we can speculate that the playwright was drawn to the Italian narrative over the French translation due to him wanting to stay true to his source material and depict the subtle Catholic ideals through the actions of his characters. Thus, using the exoticism of the religious Italian characters from Bandello, while keeping them far away from England on the shores of Sicilia.

The main similarity to Bandello is to be found in Hermione, as Shakespeare makes the decision to not let her die when she became unconscious following the news of her dear son's death, but to revive her, albeit in a different form. In a similar vein to Shakespeare's continued use of Plutarch, his return to Bandello for multiple narratives can be seen through his reuse of characters. Remnants of Bandello's Fenicia, and her return after death, can be seen in Hero, Desdemona, Cordelia, and Hermione; 'in each of these cases a very specific literary text becomes a source of activity, reflection, and revision, and by being the

⁴³⁴ Mussio, p, 217.

playwright's companion for a number of years, comes to define part of his career'.⁴³⁵

Timbreo and Fenicia may be a source for *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Cymbeline*, but 'the more powerful ties lie between Bandello's story and *The Winter's Tale*'.⁴³⁶ The similarities between Shakespeare and Bandello are interesting, such as the statue form that both Fenicia and Hermione are entombed in, and the sentimental climax both narratives adopt to stress the importance of forgiveness. Hermione's return to life does appear in Greene's original in providing an even happier triumph for time, Shakespeare has returned to familiar ground and his oft-used trope inherited from Bandello. Taylor writes of this that 'Greene's story can be of no use to Shakespeare so far as the Hermione story is concerned, though it continues to be of use to him as to the Perdita portion of the plot'.⁴³⁷ Along with the more obvious similarities of location and the shared characteristics of the female characters, there is also a striking similarity between the names of the two protagonists: Leontes and Lionato. Mussio notes further similarities as being:

The man's jealousy and hasty condemnation of the woman, her initial defensive reaction to the charges, her later deathly faint and death caused by his outrageous suggestion, the people's sympathy for the lost woman, the man's repentance and servitude to her memory, and her return in a different form.⁴³⁸

When looking in detail at how Shakespeare uses different elements from his sources, it is important to note that the revival of the female character is missing from Greene's retelling, and thus shows another example of where Shakespeare returned to the relative safety of Bandello and trusted him enough to include a pivotal element into his narrative. Due to this apparent consideration for reconciliation and forgiveness that becomes a central theme to Shakespeare's narrative, we can assume that the divergence from Greene's narrative and

⁴³⁵ Martin Mueller, 'Shakespeare's Sleeping Beauties: The Source of "Much Ado About Nothing" and the Play of Their Repetitions', in *Modern Philology*, 3 (1994), 288-311 (pp. 292-3).

⁴³⁶ Mueller, 'Shakespeare's Sleeping Beauties', p. 299.

⁴³⁷ George. C. Taylor, 'Hermione's Statue Again: Shakespeare's Return to Bandello', in *The Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, 13 (1938), 82-86 (p. 82).

⁴³⁸ Mussio, p. 214.

subsequent link between Bandello and Shakespeare is somewhat stronger in *The Winter's Tale* than it is in *Much Ado*. Thus, at this point, *The Winter's Tale* appears to be a blend of different elements from *Much Ado*, Greene, and Bandello, but it is vital that we briefly consider the materials that influenced Greene. Fernando Ferrara has argued the importance of Boccaccio, Bandello, and Cinthio in Greene's artistic formation, detailing that 'Bandello and Boccaccio freed him from the shackles of a too complex and artificial style'.⁴³⁹ This not only indicates that the influence of Italian literature on Shakespeare can be found within multiple channels and can be found even within his English sources. When considering Greene as a source for Shakespeare in particular, it is important to note that he was well versed in Italian as well as being aware of a range of Italian texts: 'Greene era un "inglese Italiano" che conosceva la letteratura italiana e che, a quanto pare, appena laureato fece anche un viaggio in Italia'⁴⁴⁰ [*Greene was an "English-Italian" who knew Italian literature and who, apparently, made a trip to Italy as soon as he graduated*]. Many of Greene's works, including *Pandosto*, are based on Italian models.

Greene's use of Italian sources and his intimacy with the culture positions him as a quasi-Italian source, or at least one with relevant Italian influences; in turn then, Shakespeare's use of Greene unwittingly builds upon these earlier influences so that despite the infamous geographical errors, *The Winter's Tale* has a more reliable Italian heritage than we might first think. The influence of Italy and its literature was inevitable for Shakespeare when so many of his peers and forebears were already using Italian sources. As compelling as the similarities between Shakespeare, Greene, and Bandello are, the complexity, and unavoidable uncertainty that we are faced with when working with sources, is a topic that I have

⁴³⁹ Fernando Ferrara, *L'opera Narrativa di Robert Greene* (Venezia: La Goliardica, 1957), p. 59.

⁴⁴⁰ Charles Speroni, "Un'ignota Fonte Italiana di Robert Greene", in *Comparative Literature*, 14 (1962), 366-376 (p. 370).

attempted to portray in chapter 2 of this thesis. The identification of sources is always to be treated with caution, but what is evident here is that whether direct or indirect, Italian culture is regularly informing Shakespeare's playwriting.

Interestingly, Belleforest translated Bandello's *Timbreo and Fenicia* into French in 1571, causing Shakespeare to have another possible version of the tale to consult when writing *The Winter's Tale*. However, Belleforest altered the tone of Bandello's original narrative, causing Hermione's character to transform into a stubborn and vengeful individual. Mussio notes that Shakespeare 'draws from Bandello's treatment of important themes in *The Winter's Tale* like rivalry, honour, repentance, regeneration, and forgiveness more often than from Belleforest's or Green's handling of these themes',⁴⁴¹ which shows the playwright's readiness to return to past sources rather than translations, regardless of how loose the influence was on Shakespeare's own work.

In the earlier Italianate plays, there are elements in which Shakespeare is introducing, almost educating, his audience, though this is unlikely to be his primary intention; here, the obvious geopolitical error *The Winter's Tale* shows us that this was almost certainly not a priority. Instead, the use of Italy here is to show the exoticism of the overseas Italian location with its magical realism and otherworldly qualities, rather than being rooted in political criticism. Sicilia is a location that Shakespeare put minimal thought into, even if Greene had already laid out the blueprint for him and serves as a reminder for as much as we can find an involvement between Shakespeare's plays and Italy, Italy need not be an essential element to his plays, nor is he invested full detailed engagement every time, but as and when it takes his interest. Sicilia is a location rooted within a more-courtly location with the constant mention and links to Kings, Queens, and the court. This courtly stereotype can also be found within *Pandosto*, as Greene also concentrated the mentions of royalty and the court to Sicilia: "this

⁴⁴¹ Mussio, p. 212.

sight so relived his spirits that he drew nigh, with more judgment to take a view of her singular perfection, which he found to be such as in that country attire she stained all the courtly dames of Sicilia', and 'the noblemen of Sicilia being gathered together they made report of their embassy'.⁴⁴² In contrast, Bohemia has a more pastoral focus, with consequent implications of the land supporting this, thus further showing that the location is interchangeable in this instance. Again, the superficial use in *The Winter's Tale* does not detract from his use of Italy but instead serves as a contrast to emphasise the significance of the plays and the moments when he does; echoing D'Amico's point that 'there is no space between the inner world of Sicilia's jealous fantasies and the outer world of the oracle and of pastoral Bohemia'.⁴⁴³

4.5 Conclusion

The use of the location in Shakespeare's later Italian plays is important in order to further understand his relationship with the country and its literature. By looking at four of his most prominent later Italian narratives, the locations of Verona, Venice and Sicily are used in contrasting methods, and for contrasting reasons. While Shakespeare uses popular notions of Verona and Sicily, ultimately, he uses them predominantly as a generic Italian location, using many examples of exoticism without any defining geographical features mirroring his early Italian comedies. In marked contrast, Venice was a more identifiable location with specific geographical markers that were of importance to either the characters or the action of the play.

During the period when Shakespeare was penning *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, Venice was a state that in many ways mirrored London as well as being one of its

⁴⁴² Greene, p. 22-5.

⁴⁴³ D'Amico, p. 55.

fiercest competitors: it was a prominent state with a considerably large population of 150,000 people, it was a cultural hub including English, Spanish, Greeks and Turks, and Christians, Moors and Jews, it was an important Mediterranean trade port and held a meaningful role within maritime affairs. The reason why Shakespeare was attracted to this location, sources aside, is evident when the qualities of the city are examined. Holderness notes that the 'English perspective of Venice was one of admiration for its political stability and its economic power as a maritime centre of commerce in the Mediterranean region'.⁴⁴⁴

What is clear to see, is that Shakespeare has a clearer sense of what constitutes the Venetian cultural identity. Though this can lean into stereotypes, there is as strong association with Venice and both commerce and the military. It is plausible that Shakespeare's greater understanding of Venice's reputation stems from the presence of venetian merchants in London. Shakespeare may not have been to Venice himself but is likely to have met Venetians which is also true for his audience. In contrast Verona, or Padua or numerous other Italian locations lacked that strong merchant trading route with London, consequently it left less of a distinct impression upon English society.

It may also be interesting to consider why the majority of Shakespeare's plays are set within the northern locations of Italy, largely avoiding the southern territories apart from *The Winter's Tale* which sets its action in Sicily, and *The Tempest*, which has a non-existent location but alludes to being in close proximity to southern Italy. Yet even here, the characters themselves are identified as King of Naples and Duke of Milan, both significant states with stronger resonance for an English audience. The powerful northern medieval city-states such as Florence, Milan and Venice enjoyed aspects of diplomacy and independence,

⁴⁴⁴ Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare and Venice* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 25.

however, they were in constant competition and war with each other for new territories both inland and offshore and establishing new trade routes. Due to the wealth obtained by these cities through trade, the image of powerful families and members of the aristocracy created an almost perfect location for Shakespeare and many of his contemporaries to set their narratives. Southern Italy was a territory that was considered less powerful, less wealthy, and less cultured than the northern states, however, this did not deter Shakespeare from exploring the location of Sicily.

The aforementioned mirroring of London and Venice is important to consider as there is a likelihood of Renaissance London receiving visiting merchants and traders from Venice, rather than travellers from Verona, Padua, or Sicily, as both cities are key ports for trade. The influence that Shakespeare has on Italy is evident in many instances, particularly within the tourism sector of the playwright's famous Italian locations. Visiting Verona allows tourists to visit important Shakespearean monuments such as Juliet's house, complete with its famous balcony, Romeo's house, and Juliet's grave. Many of the tourist websites and tour guides note that Shakespeare did not visit these locations, but prefer to lean into the idea that these locations influenced the English playwright through third-party methods, allowing them to capitalise off of the famous Italianate love story. With love letters being posted to Juliet, and marriage proposals being planned out months in advance in order to have the opportunity for a couple to declare their undying love with the backdrop of Verona, ignoring the tragic end of the lovers in all iterations of the tale.

Venice, on the other hand, is not automatically considered a hotspot for Shakespearean tourism, but this does not mean that city is unable to capitalise on their link to the English playwright. Tours of Venice showcasing the important locations described in *The Merchant of Venice* are available, as well as tours alongside actors re-enacting some of

Shylock's most famous scenes within the play. It is interesting that the Venetians have decided to capitalise off of the most abused character in the narrative, using his tragic end as a way to engross and gain sympathy with tourists. Some of the most powerful speeches within the play come from the outsider character of Shylock, thus it is understandable that an audience would be captivated by his melancholic and vengeful words while walking around the beautiful Venetian city.

Even though Sicily is not the first Italian location that comes to mind when discussing Shakespeare's plays – especially given Shakespeare's handling of it in *The Winter's Tale* - it too has appropriated Shakespeare just as Shakespeare has appropriate the Italian locations. This thesis has been explicit in denouncing any conclusions that have deduced that Shakespeare went to Italy, but Sicilians take this idea further than most: they believe Shakespeare *was* Italian. In his book *Shakespeare era Italiano* (2002), Sicilian professor Martino Luvara claims that Shakespeare was born in Messina with the name Michelangelo Crollanza. His parents were not John Shakespeare and Mary Arden but were Giovanni Florio and Guglielma Crollanza.⁴⁴⁵ Crollanza translates to Shake (crolla) and Speare (Lancia), adding fuel to the burning fire of Shakespeare authorship conspiracy theories.

While Sicily is also embracing its connection to Shakespeare, unlike Venice and Verona, they are more interested in proving that Shakespeare was Italian. As Da Mosto states in his documentary: 'Messina is a town determined to reinvent history and claim the bard for Sicily'.⁴⁴⁶ The people of Messina find a certain pride in thinking that a great playwright could have been Italian, and scholars such as Fabio Bagnasco go as far as stating that Shakespeare fell in love with a woman called Julietta, moved to Venice where he lived in a dwelling owned by a merchant named Othello, who killed his wife out of jealousy.⁴⁴⁷ As a general rule

⁴⁴⁵ Martino Luvara, *Shakespeare Era Italiano* (Ispica: Associazione Trinacria, 2002), p. 10.

⁴⁴⁶ Francesco Da Mosto, 'Land of Love', *Shakespeare in Italy*, BBC 4, first transmitted 3rd May 2012.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

then, it can be said that Italians as a whole have a sense of ownership towards Shakespeare regardless of whether they are Venetian, Veronese, Tuscan, Roman, or even Sicilian; with this love for the playwright manifesting itself through appropriations, false pretences of locations, and myths of Italian legitimacy. Thus, the Italians owe Shakespeare just as much as Shakespeare is indebted to the Italians.

Conclusion

Thus far in my thesis, I have charted the progression of Shakespeare's involvement with Italian sources and locations. In doing so, and progressing through the chapters from his early works through to the more mature plays, I have implied an evolution in his sophistication and interrogation of Italian culture. Robert Henke notes that what connects Shakespeare to the Italians is the 'largely independent but strikingly parallel dramaturgical practices [...] because it is unlikely that Shakespeare suddenly felt a need to consult Italian theory at the end of his career; parallel because the English playwright was working with the same generic modal configurations as the Italians, writing plays for a Blackfriars theatre audience that, despite its wider social and economic net, resembled Italian courtly audiences in some important respects'.⁴⁴⁸ Marrapodi similarly writes of the 'otherness of Italy as a powerful storehouse of cultural, political, and ideological models which are assimilated and transformed into representational strategies of characterization in the theatre, alongside a concomitant use of contrastive stage-worlds functioning as a cover for projected English vices and domestic anxieties'.⁴⁴⁹ Italy provided a mirror to England, one which Shakespeare used frequently and, it might seem, with growing confidence.

We can see this engagement in *The Tempest*, the last Italianate and last solo play in Shakespeare's canon. In contrast to many of the other plays discussed in this thesis, there is no direct source for the play; instead, we must look for general themes and inspirations, some of which have been identified by critics such as Donna Hamilton, Bate, and Bullough as

⁴⁴⁸ Robert Henke, "'Gentleman-like Tears': Affective Response in Italian Tragicomedy and Shakespeare's Late Plays' in *Comparative Literature Studies*, 33 (1996), 327-49 (p. 327).

⁴⁴⁹ Michele Marrapodi, 'Appropriating Italy: Towards a New Approach to Renaissance Drama', in *Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare & his Contemporaries*, ed. Michele Marrapodi (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1-12 (p. 4).

being Virgil's *Aeneid* (19BC), Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8AD), William Strachey's *True Repertory* (1610), and Michel de Montaigne's *of the Caniballes* (1580). The lack of definite source for the play, let alone an Italian source for the play, provides an interesting dilemma: why did Shakespeare return to Italian characters who constantly mention Italian locations while being on an elusive enchanted island? This is a particularly significant question given the lack of a direct source; whereas the location of *The Winter's Tale*, though inversed, takes its inspiration from Greene, the location for *The Tempest* is entirely Shakespeare's own choice. Ultimately, as Mueller notes, *The Winter's Tale* 'results from Shakespeare reading Greene's *Pandosto* with a strong sense of unfinished business in Bandello's story'.⁴⁵⁰

It can be argued that the playwright wanted to reuse the exoticism and othering of the characters that the Italian links provided, thus also avoiding any possible conflict from the mention of English political parallels. In chapter 1, I mentioned how Italy was used as a cultural influence in terms of the popularisation of Italian literary influences; this can be seen in *The Tempest*, as Shakespeare chooses to give stereotypical Italian names to characters who display traditional English behaviours to make his play appear more proper, or more valuable as a piece of literature. After the frenzy of I.1, we are afforded the opportunity for exposition in I.2. The audience has been left with several questions after the drama and confusion of the opening scene, with the majority of characters unnamed and unidentified. Thus, in I.2, we are provided with the necessary information and framework upon which to build our understanding of the play. It is therefore of great interest that at this moment we are brought, via Prospero's account of his past, to the Italian court:

PROSPERO

Twelve year since, Miranda, twelve year since,
Thy father was the Duke of Milan and
A prince of power.

⁴⁵⁰ Mueller, p. 300

Like all plays of the era, it was designed for a bare stage, and thus location is created by description, not backdrops. We are reliant upon what we are told to populate the stage. In this moment of explanation, we do not get a description of the island but of the court of Milan: that is, therefore, where the audience begins the story. Prospero's retelling of his brother's betrayal centres the action of the story on Italian politics:

PROSPERO
To have no screen between this part he played
And him he played it for, he needs will be
Absolute Milan. Me, poor man, my library
Was dukedom large enough. Of temporal royalties
He thinks me now incapable; confederates,
So dry he was for sway, wi'th' King of Naples
To give him annual tribute, do him homage,
Subject his coronet to his crown, and bend
The dukedom yet unbowed (alas, poor Milan)
To most ignoble stooping. (I.2.108-16)

Why are these characters Italian? By designating Prospero as the Duke of Milan and Alonso as the King of Naples, Shakespeare strikes a balance between the near and the distant. *The Tempest* is able to be set within a contemporary timeframe yet be removed enough to have both the desired element of exoticism and the relative safety of deniability. Setting this political action abroad allows Shakespeare to avoid any direct comparisons with contemporary English politics nor weigh his fantastical story down with sincere contemplation of court machinations and diplomacy. The Italian region and its status not as a unified country but a diverse collection of states, both similar and different. Thus, Italy is not just a convenient, distant shore but the location is one that specifically suits the needs of Shakespeare's plot, for it allows the near unity of Naples and Milan as sympathetic states but distinct, nonetheless. As discussed previously, cities and towns in the north of Italy feature more prominently in the English psyche due to their increased trade routes with London as well as their connections to universities and their cultural significance as locations visited by English travellers abroad.

Despite its more southerly location, Naples still stood prominent, albeit as an anomaly, thanks to its political weight in the Mediterranean. Shakespeare's audience may have had differing levels of familiarity with Milan and Naples; southern Italy, encompassing Naples, may have been viewed as 'being an enemy' (I.2. 121) in England because of its lack of humanistic relevancy that was so yearned for by English academics.

In II.1 Shakespeare expands upon the political narrative of the text in the discussion between the Lords, which affords us our greatest clue of the location of Prospero's Island. When Gonzalo speaks of being 'in Africa, at the marriage of the King's fair daughter Claribel to the King of Tunis' (II.1.71-2) we are able to ascertain that their journey has taken them from Africa towards Italy. A royal shipwreck had closer connotations as James I and his wife, Queen Anne, had sailed through difficult storms in 1589 with him subsequently blaming the weather upon witches. So, it may be this offered some inspiration along with Strachey and his account of the sinking of the *Sea Venture* in 1609. Shakespeare had previously mentioned the shipwreck in I.3 of *Macbeth*: 'Though his bark cannot be lost, / Yet it shall be tempest-tossed' (I.3.24-5). In short, Shakespeare takes the idea of shipwrecks but is not bound by the specifics of location and the whereabouts of Prospero's Island remain an intentionally allusive mystery. Relocating this to somewhere upon the route from Tunisia to Naples offers sufficient context without specifics, but also further elaborates the political landscape of the play.

ALONSO
Would I had never
Married my daughter there, for coming thence
My son is lost and (in my rate) she too,
Who is so far from Italy removed
I ne'er again shall see her. O thou mine heir
Of Naples and of Milan, what strange fish
Hath made his meal on thee. (II.1. 108-14)

Such details are not necessary to the immediate plot; ultimately Alonso's daughter is quickly dismissed by Antonio and Sebastian when he plots for the crown. The specifics here are not essential to plot, but rather colour to add to the scene. An exotic flavour to proceedings, yet one with real connotations for the audience. Shakespeare's last play is populated by Italians.

However, by considering the characters of Stephano and Trinculo, it is visible to see how Shakespeare was using Italy at surface level in order to add value to his play, as these characters are stereotypically English by nature, mention England within their speeches, and appear in the most 'English' scene within the play. In II.2 of the play, Caliban and Trinculo both become intertwined under a gabardine, while a drunk Stephano arrives assuming that the entangled pair are a monster with four legs and two mouths. This scene provides the comic relief that is common within scenes set in an English pub; the excessive drinking, confusion, and general buffoonery attesting to this. Although supposedly a Neapolitan jester, Trinculo refers nostalgically to England, making comments that would have been easily understood by Shakespeare's English audience, making them feel less alienated while watching a play set in an unknown land inhabited by enchanted characters and exotic Italians:

TRINCULO

Were I in England now (as
once I was) and had but this fish painted, not a holiday
fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would
this monster make a man; any strange beast there makes
a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame
beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian. (II.2.27-32)

Trinculo mentions England fondly in his speech, making clear references to the currency as well as subtle references to English pastimes, such as sideshows with native Americans put on show to be gawked at as entertainment. This moment appears to have an almost political overtone, as it may show Shakespeare's views on the exploitation of the Native Americans being brought back to England from colonised areas such as Virginia to turn a profit for their captors. Trinculo's cynical highlighting of the English public's reluctance to give money to a

beggar in contrast to their eagerness to pay ten times as much to see a dead Indian highlights the almost ridiculous romanticism of the foreign and exotic.

The use of alcohol and drunkenness is reminiscent of English comic characters; although the trope of mistaken identity is common within a number of Shakespeare's Italianate plays, such as *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*, however, what makes this scene within *The Tempest* different is the inclusion of excessive amounts of alcohol that appear to cloud the common sense of that character, and thus giving them more of an English behavioural trait. The relatable, low-brow English humour within this scene is directly contrasted by the scenes of a serious nature that are set within an Italian framework. The duality and distinction between high culture and low culture is evident when examining the characters and scenes they are placed in; having Italian names does not necessarily indicate that characters are going to behave like educated Italian nobility but rather lowly English drunkards. This illusion of the larger Renaissance framework or sixteenth and seventeenth-century culture was something for English audiences to aim for when seeing how the two cultures behaved side-by-side; audiences would want to be, or think of themselves as the noble characters but associate more with the comic characters. Therefore, it is telling and understandable that the comic characters would adopt more English personalities.

Stephano and Trinculo's quasi-Italian, quasi-English identity offers the perfect analogy for Shakespeare's continued use of Italy in his dramatic works. In these characters, Shakespeare adopts the veneer of Italy but with the beating heart of the English beneath it. Henke comments that:

Shakespeare unhitches pastoral from generic constraints in his late plays and uses it as a kind of hinge between tragedy and comedy, one that strikes a middle register between tragic and comedic affective registers. In the Wales scenes of *Cymbeline* and in the Bohemia scenes of *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare uses the mode selectively and expressively. In *The Tempest*, he uses pastoral as a kind of "landscape

of the mind” and as a licensed space of imagination and magic congruent, in fact, with the contemporary practice of the *commedia dell’arte*.⁴⁵¹

Shakespeare uses Italy but is not controlled by it. Like *The Taming of The Shrew* before it and the framing of Katherina and Petruchio’s Italian romance within the context of Christopher Sly and the English country house, here in Stefano and Trinculo we see the successful fusion of Anglo-Italian ideals within Shakespeare’s imaginative realm. Shakespeare was inspired by Italy, drawn to Italy, and enthralled by Italy, much as many of his countrymen were. E Chaney declares that ‘there can surely be few topics more worthy of study than the history of how contact with Italy civilized Britain’.⁴⁵² It is unsurprising then to see Italy, this cultural pioneer from the continent, continue to influence the English Renaissance in Shakespeare’s works and elsewhere. As has been shown in this thesis, his growing confidence and engagement with source-texts, both Latin and Italian, influenced by common theatrical trends, and his specific relationship with John Florio, Shakespeare infuses his plays with the Italian spirit, whilst simultaneously building a national English identity. In doing so he absorbs the influences of Italy but shapes them to the needs and tastes of his English audience. Recognising the Italian heritage in Shakespeare’s works does not diminish his creativity but better highlights his manipulation of sources and mastery over source-texts to produce works both Italian and English in nature, transforming the heritage of the continent into a new vein of English drama. Shakespeare did not go to Italy; he brought Italy to us.

⁴⁵¹ Henke, pp. 331-2.

⁴⁵² Edward Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations since the Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. xi.

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