

**JOHN FLORIO:  
A SCHOLAR “*THAT LOVED BETTER TO BE A POET THAN TO BE COUNTED  
SO*” AND INCOGNITO WROTE SHAKESPEARE’S WORKS (\*)**

[*Brief notes on Saul Gerevini’s book and Giulia Harding’s studies*] (\*\*)]

**Preface.**

As an ardent reader of Saul Gerevini’s book, Giulia Harding’s research and indeed the [www.shakespeareandflorio.net](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net) website, it is my pleasure to submit this article to this website, to be used for whatever purpose deemed suitable. In keeping with the immediacy and interactivity that characterises The Internet, my ideas are open to being reformulated, reworded and/or expanded upon. I urge you thus, to examine them benevolently, regarding them perhaps as food for thought; a few points upon which to ponder.

I wish to extend my warmest and most sincere congratulations to these two scholars for the findings of their research which sets out to unveil what is concealed behind Shakespeare’s work; i.e. a major, exhilarating collaboration between two superb artists, John Florio and William of Stratford.

In the interest of brevity, I am taking for granted that readers already possess a thorough knowledge of the work of these authors; indeed, this commentary is intended to merely put forward a few points for reflection on the work of these two scholars.

We shall, nevertheless, be exploring some essential elements of Florio’s life to support the case set out in this document.

This paper shall deal with the following areas:

1. The spiritual testament of John Florio (a scholar “*that loved better to be a poet than to be counted so*”) - John Florio’s mission and Aeneas’s mission as described in Virgil’s Aeneid (the “*myth of foundation*”) - John Florio’s key role in writing Shakespeare’s works in collaboration with William Shagsper of Stratford.
2. Hamlet’s doubt (“*to be or not to be*”).
3. The role of the character of Horatio in *Hamlet* and the influence of Horace on Florio’s universal and immortal poetical-and-cultural mission.
4. The study of Florio’s life and the delicate nature of such research.

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(\*\*) Saul Gerevini, *William Shakespeare, ovvero John Florio: un fiorentino alla conquista del mondo*, Pilgrim editions, 2008 (additional articles of the author can be read in this website [www.shakespeareandflorio.net](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net)); Giulia Harding’s research (including the articles “*Shakespeare’s fingerprints*”, “*Humphrey King and absolute Johannes Factotum*” “*Robert Wilson and Richard Tarlton – the mutual friends*”, “*Florio and sonnets*” and “*Florio and language*”, cited below) can be read in this website.

**1. The Spiritual Testament of John Florio (a scholar “*that loved better to be a poet than to be counted so*”) - John Florio’s mission and Aeneas’s mission as described in Virgil’s Aeneid (the “myth of foundation”) - John Florio’s key role in writing Shakespeare’s works in collaboration with William Shagsper of Stratford.**

It seems that Florio’s family was of Spanish origin and the relevant members had migrated to Italy (firstly to Sicily and then to Tuscany, Veneto and Lombardy; see Tassinari, ‘Shakespeare? E’ il nome d’arte di John Florio’, pg. 18) as a consequence of the “Dispersion” imposed in 1492, during the Catholic reign of Ferdinand and Isabel. Michelangelo Florio, John’s father, was probably born in Tuscany in 1518 (Michelangelo added the qualification “Florentine” to his name in a few of his publications, see, Tassinari, ‘Shakespeare? E’ il nome d’arte di John Florio’, pg. 17 onwards and pg. 36; John Florio the man who was Shakespeare, pg. 29), while John’s mother was probably English (see Gerevini, pg. 71). Consulting the basic biographical details of Florio’s life in [www.shakespeareandflorio.net](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net), we are reminded that *John Florio was born in London in 1553. His father, Michelangelo Florio was an erudite Italian of Jewish origin (“I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, limbs, senses, affections, passions; is he not fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, heal'd by the same means, warm'd and cool'd by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?”* rhetorically says the Jewish Shylock in Shakespeare’s “The Merchant of Venice”, Act III, scene 1, 58–68; see also Gerevini’s cited book pg. 248 onwards, paragraph “*Shakespeare and Shylock: the defence of the Jews*”), *who fled to London to take refuge from the persecution of the Inquisition. Michael Florio became prominent in English aristocratic circles and was highly regarded for his boundless knowledge and culture.*

*John Florio spent his childhood in Soglio, Switzerland to where his father had fled with his small family (Michelangelo, his wife and little John) around 1555 following the restoration of Roman Catholicism in England by Queen Mary I (Bloody Mary). For Protestants like Michelangelo Florio, London under Bloody Mary had become a very dangerous place. Thanks to influential friends of Michelangelo Florio, John was able to attend the University of Tubingen (John was registered in the matriculation act as “Johannes Florentinus”, a “floral” Latinized surname too, due to de fact that he was the son of Michelangelo “Florentinus” – see Gerevini, pg.20), Wurttemberg, where he was*

tutored by Pier Paolo Vergerio, a man of great culture who had embraced the Protestant faith. Vergerio was one of the most extreme activists of Protestantism. At around the age of twenty-two John Florio returned to his native land in possession of formidable education and experience. Tübingen was a highly Italianised centre of culture and although Florio was not awarded a degree by the University of Tübingen, his cultural education was immense and included the knowledge of several languages, both modern and ancient, which he learned from his father (apart from English and Italian: Latin, Ancient Greek, Hebrew, French and Spanish; Tassinari, Shakespeare?, pg. 122 and John Florio, pg. 98 – see Publications and abbreviations at the end of this document). *He quickly managed to move in the most exclusive aristocratic circles and soon became a reference point in the English cultural panorama. Indeed in 1578, at the age of twenty-five, he published his first book, First Fruits. This book, which was published shortly before Euphues by John Lyly, reveals how Florio made a considerable contribution to the birth of Euphuism in England.*

*In 1580, thanks to Burghley, he was able to enrol in courses as a ‘poor student’ at Oxford. He would be awarded a M.A. (Master of Arts) by Magdalen College, however according to Yates he had never been awarded a primary degree, just as he had not been awarded a degree by the University of Tübingen. His time at Oxford was very important because it was there that he met two people that were to become very influential; Samuel Daniel who later became a poet and Giordano Bruno. Samuel Daniel, one of the most mellifluous poets of the Elizabethan period, went on to become Florio’s brother-in-law as Florio married his sister, who, according to Mc Alpin, was called Rose.*

*From 1580 onwards John Florio would always be at the heart of the English cultural scene both as a prominent translator and as a supervisor of several literary works. In 1580 he translated ‘Viaggi’ by Cartier for Richard Hakluyt from the Italian version by Giovan Battista Ramusio: the translation of this book by Florio made it far easier for the English to embark on an exploration of the New World.*

*From 1583 to 1585 he was in close contact with the Italian Philosopher Giordano Bruno from whom he learned an immense amount, not just from a literary point of view but also from a philosophical point of view. The influence of Bruno was such that John Florio’s view of the world changed radically from 1585 onwards. The importance of this friendship is crucial to Florio, considering Bruno wrote his main works and especially those related to his revolutionary theory of the “infinite worlds” (“God is glorified not in one, but in countless suns; not in a single earth, a single world, but in a thousand thousand, I say in*

*an infinity of worlds*” - Bruno, “*De l’infinito*” 1584; and Hamlet will be “*a King of infinite space*”- Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2; see Gerevini, pg. 107) in London. We must bear in mind that this period coincides with the dawning of the colonization of the Americas and the expansion of the British Empire worldwide. Bruno not only shared the heliocentric theory, but also affirmed the existence of infinite solar systems as many as the stars in the universe; the globe, the surface of the earth, our world suddenly became “*a speck of dust*” in the universe (and words such as “world” and “globe” became a substantial part of Florio’s/Shakespeare’s life; see also footnotes 9 and 11 below, as well as pg. 17). In particular, during his brief stay in London, Bruno wrote six of his greatest works in Italian, which were published in London by J. Charlewood and dated 1584 or 1585 (J. Jones, pg. 2). During these years Florio was Secretary at the French Embassy in London where Giordano Bruno lived and was involved in intercepting messages from Mary Stuart, the Queen of Scotland, to the French Catholics. Within the French Embassy he performed different roles, including those of lawyer<sup>1</sup> and language teacher. We mustn’t forget that John Florio’s primary objective was to become the best language tutor in England, which he achieved with great success. Giordano Bruno left England in 1585 and John Florio was appointed personal tutor to the Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley, when the young Earl was studying at St. John’s College, Cambridge.

*Professor Tassinari (Shakespeare? pg. 218 and John Florio, pg.200), believes that around 1584 there is evidence that he wrote literary works under the name of John Soowthern, a meaningful pseudonym if interpreted as “John from the South”. Indeed, a collection of poetry known as Pandora, edited by John Soowthern was dedicated to the Earl of Oxford. In these years, according to Yates, Florio and the Earl of Oxford were close friends and Florio had also made friends with Anne Cecil, who apart from being the Earl of Oxford’s wife was Lord Burghley’s, Florio’s employer’s daughter.*

Florio and Giordano Bruno wrote the first version of Love’s Labour’s lost, around 1584, to demonstrate their ability to write plays to Philip Sidney. This is the view of John Harding, who dedicated long years of research to the Florio/Shakespeare relationship.

Florio started to prepare “World of Words” his (Italian-English) dictionary in the 1590s. (later expanded in 1611 as “New World of Words”, which reflects an encyclopaedic.

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<sup>1</sup> And here, on a purely personal note, allow me to express my utter pride to be able to count Florio as one of the lawyers, who, like me, works in the legal profession as a practicing lawyer. This legal background emerges in Shakespeare’s works; the issue is dealt with by J. Bate, “Soul of the Age”, 2009, pg. 323 onwards; Gerevini, pg. 397, and highlights Florio’s knowledge of law and the legal system as reflected in Shakespeare’s works. To conclude this point, I first encountered John Florio when I was fifteen years of age, while studying English literature; I was very impressed to learn that an Italian erudite (more correctly, the son of an Italian exile) had been highly appreciated for his literary works and dictionaries in the English Court.

knowledge based on reading hundreds of books), and as he himself said can be used by anybody, but mostly by scholars to tackle some pieces of literature which, in England before the publication of this dictionary, was utterly inaccessible for those who did not have a thorough knowledge of Italian. His enemies, upon publication of this dictionary, found themselves before a work which made Florio an undisputed authority in literature and theatre. In 1591 he published Second Fruits, a collection of six thousand Italian proverbs that didn't have any equivalent in English: many of these (if not all of them) reappear in Shakespeare's works.

In the “To the Reader” epistle of “*Second Fruits*” reference is made for the very first time to Florio’s “appellation” “Resolute John Florio”.

In the *Second Fruits* (in the first lines of its epistle “To the Reader”) Florio severely criticized Robert Greene’s *Mourning Garment* as follows: [this literary work occurs] “when everie bramble is fruitful, when everie mol[e]-hill hath cast of[f] [to be figuratively intended also as follows: “has brought out”, “has published”] the winter mourning garment...[so comparing Greene, the author of *Mourning Garment* in 1590, to a ‘mole-hill’; to put it crudely: a “dung-hill”, see Gerevini, cited book, pg.137].”

Gerevini, thus, has every reason to suspect (see his cited book, pg. 153 onwards, especially pg. 156-158, 163-164, 169, 183) that the following “invective”, dated 1592 and included in ‘Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit’ (whose contents are attributable to Greene) is Greene’s retort (also based on several other reasons, not least Greene’s envy of Florio’s success) to Florio’s criticism: “Yes, trust them not [*John and Will*<sup>2</sup>, in Gerevini’s - herein fully shared - interpretation]: for there is an upstart Crow [*John*], beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger's heart [*John*’s] wrapped in a Player's [*Will*’s] hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country...” (it is worth noting that such entire Greene’s quotation plays a very important “key” role in all Shakespeare’s “authorship” debates).

Indeed, as set out in detail by Gerevini in his cited book, Florio respectively: - (i) Was “dark-complexioned” (see his famous portrait published in the *World of Wordes* of 1611) and could remind us of the dark colours of a crow, while (as for the adjective “upstart”) he

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<sup>2</sup> Herein, for the sake of clarity (similarly, see also Gerevini’s cited book, pg. 27, 28), we refer affectionately to John Florio as “John”, and to William Shagsper of Stratford as “Will”. The name William Shakespeare appears for the very first time (after the *Second Fruits* of 1591) in 1593, in the poem “*Venus and Adonis*” dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriotesley (see Gerevini’s cited book, pg. 53 and 155; Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 81, John Florio, pg. 76). We fully agree with Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding’s thesis that the name William Shakespeare is to be understood as the pseudonym of the “close cooperation” between William Shagsper and John Florio (see also footnote 4 below and the last part of this paragraph 1) rather than the pseudonym of a single individual.

had deservedly risen to an enviable social and financial status as well as having earned respect and appreciation of his works (“‘Upstart’ is a word which entered the English language with the social mobility of the mid-sixteenth century. It means ‘one who has newly or suddenly risen in position or importance; a newcomer in respect of rank or consequence; a parvenu’” – see Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg.16; a “social climber” – see Gerevini, pg. 168 ). - (ii) Did not have (unlike Greene) the “feathers” of a University Wit (as we have already noted, he had never been awarded a primary degree). Indeed, Florio was a real “high-wire acrobat” of language (see Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg.121, John Florio, pg. 95) and reworked also other author’s texts, reusing in a different manner some particularly appreciated excerpts, but without plagiarizing them (see Gerevini pg. 191 onwards). He was a translator, a “go-between” and as such a “mediator”, because “Nothing can interrupt the transmission of knowledge, the desire for it, ‘the intertraffique of the mind’ as Daniel Samuel calls it, employing a wonderful word of Shakespearian-Florian coinage that effectively describes the spread of the treasures of knowledge in all lands, across all borders as we would say today, creating the most valid and precious variety of human commerce” (Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 131, John Florio, pg. 108). It is a high concept quite different from “plagiarism”, but such Florio’s view might have been misunderstood. The image of Florio, as the crow, and the accusation that he “beautified with our feathers” suggests (in his detractor’s view) that Florio may have been filching with his pen. Nashe, in his Preface to Greene’s *Menaphon* on 1589 (as reported also by Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg.16) “had gibed at writers and in particular “*The Italianate pen [Florio] that, of a packet of pilferies [thefts], affords the press a pamphlet or two in an age [while - as Nashe himself points out in the mentioned Preface – Virgil had spent twelve years writing his Aeneid], and then in disguised array vaunt Ovid’s and Plutarch’s plumes as their own*’ as well as at those who trick up the acting companies ‘*with their feathers*’ (the image of borrowed plumes is itself a borrowed plume, in that it is taken from a fable in Aesop concerning a crow with borrowed feathers, which the Roman poet Horace applied to literary thieves)” [“if forte suas repetitum venerit olim/grex avium plumas, moveat cornicula risum/furtivis nudata coloribus” “ if the birds (i.e. the poets victims of a theft) arrive in droves to take back their feathers, let the crow (i.e. the literary thief), denuded of the stolen feathers, be in derision” (Horace’s *Epistles* I, 3, verses 19-20). The “feathers” and their shot colours are also the allegory of Horace’s art in his “*Ars Poetica ad Pisones*”, verse 2] - (iii) Had a Tiger’s heart (“Resolute”!) and, as such, he was capable of scathing criticisms. - (iv) Worked in conjunction with Will (surely

a “born actor”), concealing his identity behind the shield of their pseudonym. - (v) Was very skilled in refining his own verses, even in accordance with the principles of Euphuism in England; as we have already noted, Florio made a considerable contribution to the birth of Euphuism in England. - (vi) Florio was indisputably the unique “absolute Johannes Factotum”, as we will try to briefly demonstrate. – a) Firstly, it is undisputed that John Florio was deeply keen on Latin literature and culture and loved his Latinized name of “Jo[h]annes Florius” (or “Johannes Florentinus”, as above mentioned), as also the Latin inscription on his famous portrait published in the World of Wordes of 1611 confirms. – b) Secondly, such name “*Johannes Florius*” had been “reworded”, in a disparaging way, by Hugh Sanford (a literato who supervised the second edition of Philip Sidney’s Arcadia of 1593 and who criticized the first edition of 1590, supervised by Florio), who, in 1591 (after Florio’s Second Fruits), had transformed it into “*Johannes Factotum*” (just like a factotum “servant”/ “familiar” / “famulus”). This is pointed out by Florio himself in “To the Reader” of the World of Words -1598 - as follows: “*This fellow, this H.S. [Hugh Sanford] reading...under my last epistle to the reader [Second Fruits of 1591] J.F., he made as familiar a word of F. [ i.e. he changed the Latinized surname of Florio starting with F. and rendered it as (transformed it into) “familiar” (“familiar” is an English noun deriving from the same Latin root of “family” and it has also the very same sense of the Latin noun “famulus”, which means the factotum “servant” of a Master or Patron)] as if I had been his brother* [the metaphoric sense of such latter sentence is the very clear Florio’s “retort” to H.S., which means something just like to the following: dear H.S., bear in your mind that - differently from me and unfortunately for you - you are not a factotum “familiar” and “famulus” in my Patron (Southampton)’s Family and Household; thus, we are neither at all part of a same Family, nor we are therefore just like two brothers; then, enjoy the poverty of your freedom out of “my Family”!]. Florio appears to be very disappointed while acknowledging this disparaging meaning and highlighting that H.S. “*made as familiar a word of F. as if I had been his brother*”. It is worth noting that “Factotum” is a Latin word, which is composed by an “imperative” verb construction (“Fac”, from the verb “facere”) and the word “totum” (“everything”); the expression (a Latin command) may be translated into English as follows: “Do/make everything I order you”. Indeed, the “factotum” was, in the ancient Rome, a “servant”/ “familiar”/ “*famulus*”, who was at “the beck and call” of his “Dominus” (his “Patron” or “Master”); to such purpose, it is worth confirming the clear disclosure of Florio, who, referring to his own surname changed by H.S. into “Factotum” (i.e., just a factotum

“servant” and “familiar”), pointed out that H.S. “*made as (transformed into) familiar ... word of F*”. [*John’s surname in his initials J.F.*]. Therefore, the “factotum” was ordered to solve any kind of his Master’s problems, in order to allow his Master to enjoy his life. Then, the “factotum” carried out many different activities and not seldom had very low-level duties. In turn, Florio further retorts, attributing, *inter alia*, to H.S. the disparaging names (with the same initials of H.S.) of “*Homo Simplex*” (which means also “simpleton”, “simple-minded man”, i.e. a person not very smart) and “*Hostis Studiosorum*” (i.e. “Enemy of the Scholars” and therefore enemy of Florio too; John was the “King” of the “words” and each of his expressions was carefully measured; which Patron could have cherished a person similar to H.S.?). Therefore, it seems indisputably documented also that “*Johannes Factotum*” was the “true reworded nickname” of the crow [*Johannes Florius*,], i.e., that peculiar “*Latin nickname Hugh Sanford came up with based on Johannes F.*” (the same conclusion was also briefly affirmed by Santi Paladino). To complete the picture, the word “Factotum” has also a second (ironic and humorous) meaning: such meaning is related to a very busy person who believes to be capable to solve any kind of problems and thinks to be almost omnipotent. See the different possible meanings of the word “factotum” in the website <http://www.sourcetext.com/sourcebook/essays/greene/OED.htm#anchor19074>, where such word is related, not only to a “servant” / “familiar” factotum, but also, according to a second meaning, to a “would-be”/ universal genius; see similarly “Dizionario della lingua italiana” Devoto-Oli, Firenze, 1971; see also entry on “factotum”, Wikipedia.- c) Thirdly, Greene, in 1592, in ‘Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit’, created a new “expression” involving also Florio’s appellative (“Resolute). Then, “Resolute Johannes Florius” became “Absolute Johannes Factotum”; thus, starting from Florio’s nickname “Johannes Factotum” (to him already attributed by Hugh Sanford) and “playing” on his appellative (“Resolute”, which was significantly changed to “Absolute”) [see also in this website Giulia Harding: “*Humphrey King and absolute Johannes Factotum*”, as well as “*Robert Wilson and Richard Tarlton - the mutual friends*”, where she refers to “ ‘*Resolute John Florio*’ (also known as ‘*Absolute Johannes Factotum*’) ”]. This peculiar new pun clearly seems to have been intended to convey two diametrically opposed meanings (the first “disparaging” and the second laudatory”, according to the two possible meanings of both “factotum” and “absolute”) :1) The first disparaging meaning could refer to someone who is “a full-time factotum servant (“familiar”) of a Master, at ‘his Master’s beck and call’ and, as such, taken up also with many various ordinary works of no account” (thus,

according to the meaning of “absolute”, in the sense of “full-time”), without any own special artistic skills (just like a factotum “servant”/ “familiar”, ready to do, at his Master’s beck and call, also every kind of low-level things) and therefore available for any kind of worthless works and especially (according to the criticisms of Florio’s detractors) plagiarizing other authors’ works. It is worth noting that Florio had been subjected to very similar criticisms from other envious poets (see Gerevini, cited book, pg. 166 onwards). In particular, Nashe, in his Preface to Greene’s Menaphon on 1589 attacked - as described above - Florio as a “plagiarist” (and this was also related to his too very fast literary production, while Virgil had spent twelve years writing his Aeneid) and also because Florio was one of those who “*run through every art and thrive by none, to leave the trade of noverint* (i.e. the activity of translation, as Nashe clarified in his Pierce Penniless) *whereto they were born and busy themselves with the endeavours of art*”. Florio himself, in his “To the Reader” of World of Wordes (1598), while mentioning the Latin poet Martial, confirms that “in another man’s book” (i.e. in Greene’s Groatworth of 1592) you can find the same “knavish name” (i.e. Johannes Factotum, the same name already attributed to Florio by H.S. on 1591); finally, Nashe (Greene’s close friend), in his Lenten Stuff on 1599, made again reference at the same time to the Latin poet Martial and to the “crow” - Florio - affirming that he [Nashe] “could pluck a crow”: the entire matter is particularly and keenly detailed by Gerevini (pg. 160 onwards), who points out that, while John and Will were under the Patronage of Southampton’s Family, Nashe unsuccessfully and several times tried to obtain such Patronage - as it clearly emerges from his The unfortunate traveller of 1594 - and died in poverty in Yarmouth. Furthermore, on 1593 John Eliot in his Ortho-epia Gallica attacked Florio, defining again him an “upstart crow” and pointing out the English fear of losing the full control of important literary fields (and Florio in 1598 retorted to Eliot, a literato, critic and journalist, regarding him as a “land[e]-critic” and “monster of man”). Therefore, Florio in 1598 (always in “To the reader” of World of Wordes) retorts to all these criticisms, saying: “Let H.S. hiss[e], and his [ac]complices [Nashe and Greene] quarrel, and all break[e] their gal[l], I have a great faction of good writers [Ben Jonson, Samuel Daniel etc.] who band[ie] with me”. To complete the picture, Greene (as well as Nashe and Hugh Sanford), were clearly envious of the well established John Florio (who was neither a “University Wit” nor an Englishman born and bred) and tried to “touch on a sore point”, pointing out that John, who received the protection of the noble and very powerful Southampton Family and Household, actually was “a full-time” (absolute) their factotum “familiar” at their “beck

and call” (e.g. tutoring the young Earl of Southampton Henry Wriothesley, when the young Earl was studying at St. John’s College, in Cambridge). Florio’s detractors were not be able to obtain (differently from Florio) the protection of a noble powerful Family and Household and then they tried to underline that Florio had become a kind of “a full-time” factotum “familiar”/ “servant” of his Patron, totally at “his Patron’s beck and call”; substantially Florio would have lost his freedom. These criticisms (basically founded on the envy for the well established Florio) evidence however a real and general problem (existing even from the ancient times of Maecenas), linked to the delicate and often difficult relationships between a literato or courtier and his Patron (see our footnote 9 below); such problem, indeed, affected Florio’s life too, because he had to “play” his role and act consequently, as further on better described in this document. Indeed, “Greene’s death in poverty ... would have been a stark reminder... One could not sustain a living as a full-time writer [*“carmina non dant panem”, “poems do not even give daily bread”*- see our footnote 9 below]. The only way of advancement was to gain aristocratic or court patronage” (see Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 17). 2) On the contrary, the second laudatory meaning probably refers to someone who is (at least in his own conceit) a divine playwright (a universal genius). “Absolute” is (according to the main meaning of such word) a typical divine attribute. The word “Absolute” - from the Latin “absolutus”- means a Supreme Being, by definition free from any inexistent superior entities or powers and not subject at all to inexistent (by definition) superior will. Certainly, according to this main meaning of “absolute”, the entire expression cannot be related to a factotum “servant” / “familiar” at his Patron’s beck and call! (the other ironic meaning of “factotum” shall indisputably apply). Within this framework, “absolute” is the key word - inserted instead of “resolute” - to fully understand the new pun and the whole new original expression (which was likely to have been deliberately and “wittily” – in a way typical of a “Wit” - created by juxtaposing the word “absolute” with the word “Factotum”), the “Absolute Johannes Factotum”: i.e. a person (“Resolute Johannes Florius”) that, at least in his own conceit, believes to be an *“absolute being”* capable of *“facere totum”*, an “omnipotent being”, an “absolute Maker of all”, just like the “absolute Creator” and then a “would-be” universal genius or divine artist (it is also worth noting that Florio himself had used a similar expression - related to the classical mythology, whose heroes and gods were immortalized by Ovid’s poems – *“Dominus fac totum”*; such expression was attributed, in the First Fruits of 1591, to the God “Love”, “the key-keeper of the world...the God of Gods...taking from Mars his sword, from Neptune his trident and from Juppiter his

thunderbolt...from Homer his verse and from Hercules his club. So like a Dictator he is *Dominus fac totum*, and who but he?" Just like "Love", Florio too had taken the "best flowers" from the main "divine artists" of his age and of the past (we cannot rule out that, also due to such framework, firstly H.S. and secondly Greene, making ironically use of the same Florio's expression, respectively called him "factotum" and "absolute [just like a Dictator] factotum"). Also in such case, the "Dominus Fac totum" is surely not the "Servant Factotum"; on the contrary, he is just an "Absolute Factotum", i.e., as Florio points out, a "*Dictator*". In the ancient Rome, the Dictator was "dictus" (appointed by the two "consuls") during a war (or other extraordinary situations) to substitute (for a limited period of time) the two "consuls" and ensure prompt and effective decisions. The Dictator was by definition "Absolutus", provided that his decisions were not at all subject to be shared with somebody else). Therefore, such peculiar new Greene's pun may have been aimed at displaying an overall paradoxical and burlesque image of John Florio: he is represented by his envious detractor (a University Wit, but not well established and destined to live and die in poverty!) as someone who is, although "a full-time (absolute) factotum servant ("familiar") of his Patron, at "his Patron's beck and call" and, as such, taken up also with many various ordinary works of no account", nonetheless, in his own conceit, is a ([at least] "would-be"/) universal "free" creative genius and divine artist and, as such, utterly stands out among and towers over all the other Elizabethan poets and playwrights. To briefly conclude this point (according to Florio's detractors' point of view), the crow (Florio) believed to be an absolute "free" creative genius, while he actually was a "full-time" factotum servant/familiar of his Patron (at his beck and call); which, we repeat, was – to some extent – the real true (John had to "play" his role and act consequently), as better detailed further on in this document. Therefore, Greene (who, unfortunately for him, was under the protection of no Patron and lived and died in poverty) teased metaphorically the crow Florio, substantially telling him something like the following: dear my poor Florio, currently you are no longer a "free" artist (as I am and as you too would like to be); you are now a mere "familiar", a mere factotum "servant" in your Patron's Family and Household, you are in the pay of your Patron and his "full-time" factotum, as well as you are entirely at his beck and call. Consequently, the main two themes of such Greene's quotation are the freedom (of someone who is "absolute") and the subordination (of someone who is a factotum "familiar") [further on we will compare, as a joke, Florio to Clark Kent, a subordinate journalist, destined to incognito become "absolute" under Superman's cloak; both of them were officially "subordinate" workers

(respectively a journalist and a literato schoolmaster), but they were capable to incognito become “absolute”, taking in an absolutely autonomous manner important decisions and incognito carrying out their special missions aimed at “helping” the “world”, in their different fields of action]. - (vii) Finally, Florio was almost certainly capable, with Will’s help, of shaking the stages of England in the best possible way and to be even “unique” (“the only”), just like a divine artist. Also in this case, Florio’s detractor precisely points out that such Florio’s quality (“the only Shake-scene in a country”) is to be intended as a quality exclusively pertaining to Florio’s “own conceit”; it means that, according to Greene’s attack, Florio was, in the light of all the above, exclusively a mere “factotum servant”. For the sake of clarity, the last sentence of Greene’s quotation has to be read in its entirety (“*and being [the crow] an Absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country...*”). In Florio’s detractor’s view, Florio is an absolute factotum (a mere full-time factotum servant); exclusively in Florio’s own conceit, Florio is “the only Shake-scene in a country”, i.e. the unique divine artist.

*Florio during these years had thus been subjected to extremely scathing, cruel criticism for both his work as a writer and as supervisor of other people’s work, by other authors such as Hugh Sanford and Thomas Nashe (such criticisms, just like Greene’s invective, had been essentially due to the envy at Florio’s success: John was too fast in producing literary works, it was insinuated that he plagiarized other poet’s works and so on - see Gerevini, cited book, pg.166 and 191).*

*His detractors felt such hatred towards him that they had gone as far as making death threats, as Florio stated just in 1591 (in the dedication “To the reader” of his “Second Fruits”). “We are not talking about death threats in any metaphorical sense”! “Coming out into the open would have been impossible and dangerous and ...something he never wanted to do.” His work as a playwright could only ever have been “underground” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg 27, 51 and 80; John Florio, pg.75, 76).*

Florio thus, had reached the outer limits of what he was allowed to do as a schoolmaster. Florio was of Italian origin on his father’s side and the teaching of Italian, coupled with Florio’s flair for any work correlated to language instruction could be “justified” in some way in English cultural circles. Any literary production, however, was certainly not welcome and indeed met with fierce disapproval. Furthermore, as mentioned, his works (*Fruits and World of Words*) could hardly be considered mere teaching aids for the tutoring of the Italian language.

He had thus already “overstepped the mark” beyond the only role allowed to him, as it were and had aroused resentment and ill-feeling, especially among the “University Wits”, the learned graduates who could not bear his well-deserved success.

These must have been truly trying years for Florio, who must have meditated long and hard on the difficulty of expressing himself as a poet and playwright and fulfilling the cultural mission that was commensurate with all of his cultural baggage and creative abilities, which he felt as an irresistible, irrepressible vital necessity.

To renounce this *raison d'être* had been utterly unimaginable to Florio's mind, as it would have meant giving up the most profound of his very “being”.

Florio must have questioned time and again, how to fully develop his own mission as a poet; he had already attempted to remedy the situation by not using his own name for his writing, hiding behind, as we have seen, the shield of pseudonyms (“*Soowthern*”; Tassinari, Shakespeare, pg.218; John Florio, pg.200).

It is worth noting that secrecy was a precautionary measure vital for John and his father, for a complex series of reasons, including the fact that his father, Michel Angelo, too, with the Roman Inquisition permanently on his trail, had decided to live in secrecy. John and his father had the same problem in this respect! (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 23; John Florio, pg. 16).

Apart from the abovementioned reason, finally and fundamentally, John had decided to take on the mission of elevating the English language and the culture of England, but to do so incognito (and to be, therefore, the “hidden poet”!), for the author of the poems and plays (the man who was also responsible for the enrichment of vocabulary and style and ideas) could simply not be seen to bear a foreign name (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 23, 81; John Florio, pg. 16, 76; see also our footnote 12 below and the last part of paragraph 3 below).

Florio's “universal” concept of poetry (and in general of culture) was aimed at erecting, through poetry and culture, “monuments” capable of enduring forever (the word poetry derives from the ancient Greek verb “*poieo*”, whose meaning was “to make”, “to build” something); he was fulfilled by such an important mission and driven by the vital necessity to pass on the joy of his poetry for posterity to enjoy and appreciate.

The enduring “monuments” of his poetry would outlive Florio and a part of him (his poetry) was to survive forever, just like the Egyptian Pyramids. The result was the immortality of his universal poetry and culture!

It is worth recalling Florio's superb image of a cultural current (assimilated into a life-giving flow of water) that originates in Meridione, in the South (which had already been a major source that contributed to key civilisations including the Egyptian civilisation), that as Tassinari points out (Shakespeare? pg.10; John Florio, pg.14) "*rather than stagnate in a declining language and culture*" "*touched the culture of the Tudor age impregnating and transforming it.*"

Florio's mission was precisely to *make an impact on the Tudor culture, enhancing and transforming it*, through his poetry and culture. He did not want to be counted a poet, but he wanted to be a poet and leave his universal and immortal cultural mark for posterity. He had no interest in formal recognition (didn't want any recognition whatsoever, least of all economic - see also footnote 9 below); he merely wanted his poetry and culture to be universally appreciated. His foreign name had to remain "*hidden*" to avoid jeopardising the accomplishment of his poetic mission and the universal appreciation of his work.

Fortunately for Florio (though he had probably been looking for a lasting, effective solution to his existential predicament for some time), the "turning point" had come when he had met Will of Stratford (see pg. 174 onwards of Gerevini's cited book), with whom Florio had embarked on an extremely fruitful collaboration, that represented the perfect synergy between the ancient civilisations and a "stagnating" Mediterranean culture (Tassinari, Preface of his book Shakespeare?, John Florio, pg.14, see also footnote 10 below) and the emerging English civilisation which was undergoing something of an explosion due to the expansion of the British Empire.

Florio, as Tassinari points out (Shakespeare? pg. 119 onwards; John Florio, pg. 93), is a "*go-between*" (to use a term introduced by Florio himself, accustomed to the "*th'intertraffique of the minde*", as Samuel Daniel says, in the lines dedicated "*To my deere friend M. John Florio, concerning his translation of Montaigne*"; Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 128, 131; John Florio, pg.107), who was a bridge between past and future, between antiquity and the modern world.

Working in conjunction with Will must have been a crucial moment since it meant the merging of two excellent minds, that despite major differences, still had, in human terms, many points in common (as pointed out by Gerevini in his book, p 176 onwards) and whose abilities probably complemented each other; in a nutshell, what we call a "winning team" . This meant John no longer felt alone and forlorn among rivals who were envious

of his learning and of the power that he was gradually beginning to acquire following the authority he achieved through his tireless and impassioned work<sup>3</sup>.

It is at this time that Florio, must have made his definitive decision, though painful, infinitely rewarding for him: working with Will was exciting because it brought about the fusion of two great personalities, representatives from totally different worlds that, in the end, met and managed to produce something utterly innovative.

Nowadays, when we talk about inventions, they are regarded all the more innovative if seemingly diametrically opposed elements have been successfully correlated to achieve a productive outcome and this miraculous, much sought after, almost certainly painful, yet “successful fusion” between such completely distant and different worlds and conceptions must have been the true reason their work was a such a huge universal triumph.

We could also suspect that Florio’s existential dilemma may even have started from the painful death in Soglio of his father Michelangelo (as some recently discovered documents appear to testify, Michelangelo’s death is to be dated between 1573 and 1576; Tassinari remarks that Michelangelo signed many documents, in his capacity as Public Notary in Soglio until 1566; and subsequently “*One historian believes he died in Soglio before 1572, but for others he returned to England along with his son in around 1571*” - see Shakespeare? pg.18, John Florio, pg. 35; according to Giulia Harding, “*Robert Wilson and Richard Tarlton – the mutual friends*”, in this website, “*Michelangelo Florio died in 1576 at his parish in Soglio*”), who had suffered, similarly to John, the daily existential unease that comes with being in exile.

As mentioned above, John in 1591 (in “*To the reader*” dedication of his “*Second Fruits*”) refers to himself for the first time as “*Resolute*”.

It is worth noting that the antonyms of such a title (deriving from Latin “*resolutus*”, past participle of the verb “*resolvere*”) are “irresolute”, “indecisive”, “wavering”.

Florio unexpectedly calls himself “Resolute” in 1591. This brings to question why someone, at a given moment of his life, feels the uncontainable need to disclose his new “*status*”. In my view, we are exclusively talking about something that involves Florio’s inner feelings and emotions. Indeed, courage and decisiveness pervaded his whole life and behaviour. There are grounds to interpret Florio’s self-declaration as an implicit, yet clear confession of having previously been gnawed (just like Hamlet) by the painful worm of

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it should be born in mind that - coupled with the writing technique adopted by Florio (amply described by Saul Gerevini pg. 88; see also footnote 5 below) - John and Will’s way of working together “in unison” (which is still a subject being researched) on their literary productions (possibly even anticipating and often seconding the expectations and tastes of the public) may have contributed, indeed successfully, to their being able to produce literary productions in record time, something which was a source of intense irritation for their rivals, as pointed out by Saul Gerevini (see his cited book, pg. 166 onwards).

doubt and uncertainty and having finally resolved his existential dilemma. At long last, all of his innermost uncertainties had been dispelled and John could envisage a bright future. Working in conjunction with Will must have been the crucial moment, the resolution of John's dilemma.

Indeed, John and Will are, with good reason, suspected to be the authors of the Sonnet "*Phaeton*" which also happens to be published in the "*To the reader*" epistle of "*Second Fruits*", where John refers to himself for the first time as "Resolute".

This Sonnet may well have been one of the first results of their close cooperation, which allowed them to combine their different skills and efforts to create a joint work (see Gerevini, cited book, pg. 136 onwards, pg.150 and his article "*Phaeton*" in this website, who points out that William Minto - *Characteristics of English Poets from Chaucer to Shirley*, London 1885, pg.372-373 - also attributed the Sonnet to Shakespeare; see also Tassinari, who in accordance with what we argue in greater detail below - : 1) confirms the presence, in the Sonnet, of a "father-son" relationship; 2) attributes the Sonnet alternatively to (i) Michelangelo Florio [but the recent discovery mentioned above may lead us to rule out this hypothesis since Michelangelo's death in Soglio is to be dated between 1573 and 1576; which does not exclude that a preliminary text of the Sonnet had been most likely drafted by Michelangelo himself, the first author of the fine Sonnet, as may be deduced from the "to the reader" of World of Wordes of 1598] or to (ii) Florio himself - Shakespeare? pg. 126-127, John Florio, pg. 102-103). In the reworking of Michelangelo's preliminary draft of the Sonnet, John and Will assumed their precise roles: Will may have been represented by Phaeton and John by Helios, Phaeton's father (also taking into account that "Heliotropio" was John Florio's pseudonym in Giordano Bruno's *De la causa* dated 1583 - see J. Jones, *The Brave New World of Giordano Bruno*, pg. 21, in this website). This final text of the Sonnet should be inconsistent with its Michelangelo's 'authorship', considering that Michelangelo was John's father and he could not play the role of Phaeton (who is the son of Helios, the well known John's pseudonym). Therefore, John (Helios) was the father and the master and Will (Phaeton) the son and the pupil (see Gerevini, cited book, pg. 144 and his article "*Phaeton*" in this website). To conclude this point, the Sonnet was probably originally conceived and dedicated by a father to his son and finally reworded to be dedicated by the son/pupil to his father/master; a relationship son/father (even if in reverse order with respect to the previous suspected Michelangelo's draft) was however maintained. Gerevini also points out that, in this Sonnet, John and Will dealt with the theme of death and immortality in

Florio's literary work ("*Second Fruits*"): "*So when that all our English witts lay dead/ (Except the Laurell that is ever greene) / Thou [Florio] with thy frutes our barrenness o're spread*"; such theme is typical of Shakespeare's Sonnets- see the last part of paragraph 3 below. In addition, Gerevini points out that John and Will set out these verses in order to make an ironic poke at Greene, who would have been the only English University Wit destined not to die; thus, playing on the pun "*Except the Laurell that is ever greene*", which could also be interpreted as "*Except Greene, who is a poet Laureate*".

Therefore, to give a complete picture of the situation in the "To the reader" of "Second Fruits" in 1591: (1) John single-handedly "attacked" Robert Green referring to him in "The Mourning Garment" as a "mole-hill"; to put it crudely: a "dung-hill"; ii) John together with Will in the Sonnet "Phaeton" which is part of the same epistle, further "attacked" Robert Greene, lampooning him as a Poet Laureate who would be forever "green" (playing on his surname). Greene retaliated in his 'Groatsworth of Wit' dated 1592, as we have illustrated above (see Gerevini, cited book, pg. 137, 140 and 148).

Gerevini's theory regarding this (the cooperation of Will and John in the Sonnet "Phaeton") seems to be further reinforced by the fact that John is clearly emphasising a "crucial turning point in his life", while declaring in 1591 to have become "Resolute", and so, implicitly but clearly stating that he had finally resolved his dilemma.

This coincides with the beginning of his close collaboration with Will.

This friendship and collaboration seem to bestow new vital forces and energy to John, who appears, at long last, truly confident in his and Will's abilities.

Bate himself (as Gerevini underlines at pg. 179) points out a "crucial turning point" also in Will's life, in the period from 1592-4. "*Florio's presence in Southampton's household seems to have been of considerable importance for the development of Shakespeare's career...Florio was the obvious person to introduce Will to his sources [of Italian literature] for his plays. In the same period, phrases from Florio's Italian language manual, First Fruits, start appearing in Shakespeare's works* (see J. Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 55). Thus, a close cooperation between John and Will!

Just in 1593 (after the Second Fruits of 1591), the name William Shakespeare appears from the very first time in the poem "Venus and Adonis" dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriotesley (see Gerevini's cited book, pg. 53 and 155; Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 81, John Florio, pg. 76). We fully agree with Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding's thesis that the name William Shakespeare is to be understood as the pseudonym of the "close cooperation" between William Shagsper and John Florio (see also footnote 4

below and the last part of this paragraph 1) rather than the pseudonym of a single individual.

Bate's opinion confirms that John had become "Resolute" thanks to his close cooperation with Will!

As noted above, we could also have reason to believe that Michelangelo's death (to be dated between 1573 and 1576) had caused great distress to the twenty/twenty-three-year-old John, especially considering how Michelangelo had been a loving guide in John's life and education; John's cultural background was largely due to the careful influence of his father, who had been, in turn, an erudite highly regarded for his boundless knowledge and culture.

The reader must forgive my continual digressions including the literary ones, however at this point, it is crucial that we take a closer look, however briefly, at John's relationship with his father, Michelangelo. John was bound to his father by a symbiotic bond; they had travelled together in exile in Europe, coming into contact with stimulating cultures and mentalities. John's story is also Michelangelo's story.

A literary parallel is called for to understand the relationship of the two Florios.

The reference being made is to the legend of the escape of Anchises and Aeneas from their Homeland (Troy under siege by the Greeks), as superbly told by Virgil in his Aeneid (William Caxton gets credit for producing the first English translation of Aeneid in 1490, but Caxton's work was a translation in prose of a French paraphrase of the Aeneid; in turn, Thomas Phaer's translation, completed by Thomas Twyne in 1584, was in rhymed fourteen-syllable lines and was greatly admired by his contemporaries; it is worth noting that "*In a postscript to his first seven books of Aeneid, Thomas Phaer remarks that his native language [English] has often been regarded as 'barbarous': that will not be longer the case, he proposed, once Virgil, the most civilised of poets, is heard to speak English*" – see, J. Bate, *Soul of the Age*, pg.110-113).

John and Michelangelo also had an important "mission" to accomplish.

In particular, John's "cultural mission" (which we will talk about at length at the end of paragraph 3 below) was probably the same as his father Michelangelo had already advocated, who the son describes (in the "*To the Reader*" dedication of "*World of Wordes*" del 1598) as a "gentleman" (as was John), who distinguished himself from other men ("monsters of men, if not beasts rather than men").

During these long years of exile in Europe, who knows how many times they must have discussed, improved and perfected time and again, what their "cultural mission was".

To continue the parallel between John and Aeneas, Aeneas had escaped with his father Anchises and his son Ascanio from their native land to found a new city which was to dominate the entire world; John, in turn, along with his father, wanted to shape and elevate the culture and language of the English people, who were also set to dominate the whole world. There is huge resonance between the two characters, the legendary and the literary Aeneas and the historical figure of John (indeed, differently from Aeneas and Anchises, John and Michelangelo “were made of flesh and blood”!):

A) Both Aeneas and Anchises, and John and Michelangelo were exiles, forced to flee their homelands (Michelangelo from Italy, John from England, with his father, under the reign of Bloody Mary).

B) There is the “common mission”, along with their fathers. A mission that Aeneas and Anchises embarked on together and following the death of Anchises in Trapani (where there is a commemorative plaque) Aeneas accomplished by himself. The same can be said for John and Michelangelo. Both (Aeneas and John), so as to pursue their mission, used the memories of their respective deceased fathers to be warmly welcomed and encouraged by friends of their fathers (as is the case with Aeneas who is taken in by Evandro and in John’s case the support he received throughout his career from friends of his father). In the Bible (a book that is well known to Michelangelo, a Protestant Pastor and by John; see also footnote 12 below ), we find an example of an immense “common mission” in arriving at the Promised Land by Moses and Joshua (though Joshua is not Moses’ son); Joshua saw through to the very end, the mission which Moses had commenced.

Another example worth mentioning is Marco Polo, who, in 1271, set out, at the age of sixteen, to travel the “Silk Road” with his father Niccolò and his uncle Matteo; they had previously been to Asia between 1255 and 1269, for business, having been appointed to carry out an important diplomatic assignment by the Great Kublai Khan, Emperor of Chatai, which involved delivering a missive to Pope Gregory X. The boy, who had only met his father in 1269, had in his mind always been by his father’s side, learning avidly from an early age, within his family, the extraordinary stories of the places where his father had ventured that he so longed to explore and visit for himself, he asked his father and uncle if he could travel with them in 1271. He gradually became the “protagonist” of these “expeditions” and was entrusted with ever more important assignments for the Great Khan. In 1276 Marco was no longer a boy and had grown into a young man of 21, toughened by the harsh School of Explorers; the long and arduous journey had indeed been character forming. While his father and uncle continued to work as merchants, the

Great Khan immediately appreciated the qualities of the young boy: his intelligence, his ability to learn quickly. Indeed Marco learned to speak four languages at the Royal Court in Peking, he assimilated the customs of the Tartars, he held his own with the local archery champions. He almost became one of them; so much so, that the Great Khan appointed him to carry out special, delicate diplomatic and administrative assignments in areas within his empire in Mongolia, Cocincina, Tibet, Ceylon. He accepted posts as Provincial Governor (in more than one province), he carried out inspections in Burma and India and he signed Treaties. He was appointed Private Imperial Advisor and Commissioner. For 24 years, he travelled the length and breadth of China, visiting numerous cities, Palaces, bridges, Monasteries and experienced the local customs. Marco was skilled at reporting back accurately to the Royal Court on these assignments and on the places he had visited and proved to be capable and useful to the Court. Marco continued to work in the Court of the Great Khan for seventeen years and is now considered one of the world's greatest land explorers of all times.

I shall desist from giving any further examples.

In all of the examples given, be they of legendary or historical figures (Aeneas/Anchises, Joshua/Moses, Marco/Niccolò, John/Michelangelo), their mission was so “complex” and “overwhelming” for all of humanity that it took two generations, working together in “unison”, each day sharing experiences, emotions, thoughts...everything! If I may use a sporting allusion, there comes a time when one generation “passes the baton” to the next. Clearly, when running in a relay race, the runner who makes it past the finishing line, who finishes the races becoming the champion is not the sole winner; those who “ran” before him are also the winners. There is only one race, it is the “team” that wins, regardless of how large or small a contribution each of the “relay runners” made. The only thing that can be of any significance in all such cases is that all of the “relay runners” performed to the very best of their abilities to achieve a common goal.

As for John and Michelangelo, I believe there no is question whatsoever that, in general, John's “cultural mission” had been prepared, planned and shared by his father (whose death is to be dated between 1573 and 1576) as such, we can speak of a “common mission”; this is not the forum to decide on precisely what “influence” Michelangelo would have had. This would merit further and separate research. Within these very general terms and without taking away from the role play by Will, we can share Tassinari's opinion, to be related, in our view, to John's contribution to the poetry and drama of Shakespeare: it appears “to be the outcome of direct collaboration between Michelangelo

and his son, or at any rate to betray the influence of his life and experience in continental Europe” over English John’s enterprise. Tassinari also speaks about a “very close and symbiotic union between father and son”, so close that it “reflects the interpenetration of two talents and two generations, in what I think of as their ‘writing workshop’ ” (see Shakespeare? pg. 42 and 44, John Florio, pg. 35 and 36). By way of a mere example, Tassinari points out that John’s *First Fruits* of 1578 (a didactic book) “appears to derive from materials initially prepared by Michelangelo, perhaps during his early years as a teacher of Italian in London... the schoolmasterish tone, the strong dose of moralism, the frequent invocations of God...all point to the erudite preacher. We are also reminded of another component of *Shakespeare*, his religious and moralizing side” (“The content of the dialogues shows, among other things, that John Florio moved in the top levels of Elizabethan society, since life at court, and the queen herself, are both mentioned with nonchalance”); in the *Second Fruits* (1591) “the phraseology is much more ‘laic’” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 125, 126 and John Florio, pg. 101).

To conclude this point, it must be emphasised that there is no doubt that John possessed a thorough knowledge of the Bible (he himself made a note of this in writing, including the Bible as one of the “books” he read in the bibliography of *New World of Wordes*” del 1598; v. Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 145 and John Florio, pg.133) as did his father Michelangelo, a Protestant Pastor; without meaning to make somewhat sacrilegious comparisons, it cannot be denied that in each and every one of Shakespeare’s works (including Hamlet) echoes from the Holy Scriptures, which represent a constant “relationship” of “communion” and “dialogue” between the Son (on Earth) and the Father (in Heaven) in fulfilling the divine mission of Salvation. At one stage, Jesus even implored his father (in the weakness of his humanity) to “take away this chalice” (which was the “cross”, the culmination of his mission of Salvation) only to “return” to his “divine dimension” and accept as a glorious part of his mission the extreme sacrifice (“*fiat voluntas tua*”, “*Thy/Let your will be done*”, which is also the will of Jesus) - see Gospel of Mark, 14.36, Luke 22.42 and Matthew 26.42; the communion of Father and Son is such that “*all that is mine is yours, and all that is yours is mine...like you Father you are in me and I am in you*” - see Gospel of John, 17.10, 21.

C) The term “common mission” as a superior, even divine mission (in the case of Aeneas) compared to which everything else takes second place (Aeneas’s love for Dido, for John, formal external recognition of his merits). It is the “myth of foundation”. Anchises and Aeneas have to “found” a new city deriving from the union of two different peoples and

their respective cultures, which is destined to become immortal in time and dominate the world; Michelangelo and John too, in turn, wish to “found” a new culture and language which would also derive from the union of different cultures and languages and also was destined to spread throughout the world.

D) The “*pietas*”, which was for the ancient Romans devotion, love and respect for the Gods, the country/Homeland/Fatherland, the family and the dead. This emerges in Aeneas’s case: respect for the Gods and their will in the mission he has been assigned (how Aeneas gives up his love for Dido precisely to pursue his mission and tells the Queen that his father’s shadow beseeches him to set sail from Carthage); the devotion of a son towards Anchises, the father and the fatherly love for his son Ascanio (who was also called Julo and whose descendants were the Gens Julia, who would include the Kings of Albalonga, Romulus, Julius Cesar and Octavian Augustus). Aeneas gave his father a high burial and the following year (having set sail from Carthage) he held a commemorative funeral celebration in honour of Anchises on the anniversary of his death (an example of the “Pietas” of a son for his deceased father). John’s devotion to his father emerges clearly in the “*To the Reader*” section of “*World of Wordes*” in 1598 wherein John lovingly defines his father as a “gentleman” (as was John himself), who stood out from other men (monsters of men, if not beasts rather than men).

E) Anchises, after his death becomes the “tutelary deity” that watches over Aeneas, and his ghost appears several times to come to his son’s rescue, to help him overcome difficulties and give him counsel so that he should accomplish their “common mission”; as told by Aeneas, Anchises’s ghost had appeared to him in a dream to urge him to set sail from Carthage, leave Dido and resume his journey with a view to “founding” a new city; Anchises’s ghost reappears once again to Aeneas in his sleep when in Sicily the women, weary from the Pilgrimage, set fire to the ship. Anchises suggests to a “faltering” Aeneas that he should found a city in Sicily where the women, the elder and the sick could stay behind and should continue his journey only with the strongest and youngest; Anchises’s ghost appears to Aeneas at night to warn him to go, before heading to Lazio, to the underworld; again Anchises’s ghost points out to Aeneas (who had gone beyond the entrance to the underworld, which was situated, according to legend in Lake Avernus in the Campania region) the future glory of Rome, the descendents of the Kings of Albalonga, Romulus, Julius Caesar, Octavian Augustus (who would take the Roman Empire to the ends of the world) and exalts the civilizing mission of Roma and Aeneas, though distraught at not being able to embrace his father’s intangible ghost, leaves the

Realm of Darkness heartened and confident of the success of his “mission”. In a nutshell, the flowing spirit of Anchises watches over Aeneas to support him at all times to fulfil his mission. In the same way, something similar happened between John (after the death of his father) and the “flowing spirit of Michelangelo” in the mind of his son, as it clearly emerges from the “to the Reader” epistle of “World of Wordes” in 1598.

It should also be pointed out that the “comparison” between John and Aeneas takes on significant importance, considering that the English believed that both the ancient Britons and the ancient Romans descended from the Trojans (who had been defeated thanks to the deceit of the Greeks, the famous “Trojan horse”), sharing the same nature, the same virtues and the same moral principles; they thus claimed a sort of “brotherhood” with the Ancient Romans since the Roman world was synonymous with virtue, loyalty and resolve, as solemnly proclaimed in Shakespeare’s Cymbeline’s last: “*let A Roman and a British ensign wave Friendly together*” (see, Melchiori, Shakespeare, pg. 393-394). Shakespeare’s passion for the Trojan War is also evident in his work “Troilus and Cressida”.

To conclude this point, it is worth quoting some of J. Bate’s affirmations concerning the major influence Virgil (chosen by Dante as his master and guide in his “Divine Comedy”, considered to be a symbol of wisdom) had on Shakespeare’s works: “*Among poets, it was Virgil whom he most admired*”; “[in Stratford Grammar School] *Shakespeare was first introduced to Virgil in a way that his sense of the Aeneid seems to have been a series of great set-pieces - Dido’s farewell, the retrospective narrative of the sack of Troy and the death of Priam, Aeneas’ descent into the underworld - rather than a sustained narrative*” [Hamlet says: “One chief speech...I chiefly loved, ‘twas Aeneas’ tale to Dido” – Act II, Scene 2]; “*The story of the Trojan war fascinated Shakespeare, hardly surprisingly since it is the magnificent foundation of western literature.... The player in Hamlet recites his great set-piece on the death of Priam and the madness of grief-stricken Hecuba...The matter of Troy would have been somewhere [in Shakespeare’s works]...but in what form?*” (see, Soul of the Age, pg. 95, 109 and 146]. In our view, we may answer Bate’s question noting that we surely find the “matter of Troy” also in Hamlet’s father’s “flowing spirit”. Similarly, in fact, Anchises’s “flowing spirit” appears to his son Aeneas to support him (according to Virgil’s Aeneid) in the accomplishment of the common mission, giving him advice, clarifications and loving reassurances. In turn, also Michelangelo’s “flowing spirit” surely appeared, in some special ways, to his son John and was in any case always in his mind, as it clearly emerges from the “To the reader” epistle of the “World of Wordes” of 1598.

After this long digression, we can also emphasise that John's great distress at the loss of his father Michelangelo and the relationship they had are also at the basis of the relationship between John and Will.

As noted above, there is no question that, in the Sonnet "Phaeton", John (the Sun, the "Heliotropio") played a paternal role rather than a filial role toward Will (Phaeton).

This means that John had established a "father-son/master-pupil" relationship with Will.

But this time John played Michelangelo's role, which was the loving "father/master" role; it appears reasonable to suggest that John (also taking into account his feeling heart) may, to a large extent, have replicated with Will almost the same relationship he had with his beloved father (we can obviously extend, *mutatis mutandis*, the same concept to John's careful mission of schoolmaster, including to his daughter Aurelia - see Gerevini, cited book, pg. 46).

The pain John had experienced after his father's death had matured the thirty-eight-year-old erudite, who, in 1591, was ready to play his own father's role; we could even suspect that John was almost "identifying" with his beloved father.

John's playing his own father's role was paradoxically his supreme way of celebrating, commemorating, repeating and revitalizing the "unique", "special" and "symbiotic" relationship with his father; such commemoration seems to have the features of a religious celebration finding its deep roots also in the Catholic religion (it is worth noting that "Michel Angelo Florio's difficult, not to say tormented, relation to religion influenced his son John, yielding the contradictory portrait which scholars have given us of Shakespeare: a "secular" and religious soul at the same time" - see Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 29 ).

His father had passed away when John was too young; John had surely mourned such lamentable loss and had probably felt it was a cruel injustice.

John "embodied" his father's aspirations and the role he played as well as being his true spiritual heir; he treated Will as a son, as lovingly as Michelangelo had treated John.

Thus, through this new relationship, his deceased father would truly have lived on in John's memory each day. John would at always, have felt the lively, invigorating, loving and reassuring presence of his father Michelangelo at his side.

It is worth noting that metaphorically Will would have "fallen headlong" (just like Phaeton according to legend) without John's help (see Gerevini's very shrewd comment, cited book, pg. 144 and his article "Phaeton" in this website).

But this metaphor also applies to John; he too, in turn, would have "fallen headlong" without Michelangelo's help.

The abovementioned Sonnet “Phaeton” is a further confirmation that, when Michelangelo had passed away, John had been divested of his father’s help and protection and had metaphorically “fallen headlong”, just like Phaeton, according to legend.

John would have to face the very hard life of “an Englishman in Italiane” alone. Such a situation must not have been at all easy for the very young John, a boundlessly skilled erudite who was however, surrounded (just like his father) by envious rivals.

Michelangelo’s death had truly caused great distress to the too young John!

In any case (see also the “To the reader” epistle of “World of Wordes” in 1598, as hereafter better clarified), Michelangelo’s “flowing spirit” was always in John’s mind (see also Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 126-127 and John Florio, pg. 102-103). John’s filial role and devotion clearly emerge from the abovementioned epistle; John truly “embodied” both his father’s aspirations and role, as his father’s true spiritual heir.

John makes it very clear to us that he was in boundless debt of gratitude to his father; John had lived with his father “fundamental years of education, travel [the wandering through Europe], and formative experiences”, such as when he had lived in Switzerland, in a context full of religious, theological and philosophical turmoil (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 43 and 46, John Florio, pg. 37).

Furthermore, John (hiding himself, just like his father) had collaborated incognito in writing the Sonnet (for, as hereafter better detailed, he “loved better to be a poet than to be counted so”), hiding himself behind Will (Phaeton), and he continued to do so afterwards. Finally John would no longer be alone and forlorn among rivals; thanks to Will, he would be protected and helped. He felt that he himself and Will had constituted an “invincible and winning team”.

For seven long years there is no official record of any literary work by Florio.

*Following seven years of literary silence, Florio reappears with the publication in 1598 of his extraordinary work “A World of Words”.*

Precisely in the “*to the reader*” section of his book World of Words in 1598, Florio refers to “*a friend of mine that loved better to be a poet, than to be counted so*”.

On this point, I entirely share Tassinari’s belief that the “*a friend of mine*” is an expression with the following two different concomitant meanings (such multiple meanings, related to a unique expression or word, being typical of Florio/Shakespeare – see also footnote 11 below concerning the importance of “friendship” for John):

- a) According to the first meaning of such expression, this “friend of mine” is Michelangelo, John’s father. It is worth noting that John was bound to his father not

only by a mere “biological” relationship “father-son”, but, above all, by “Friendship”. Friendship, in John’s mind, is even more important than the mere “biological” relationship with his father; Friendship is the result of a “day-by-day mutual free choice” (by the way, “freedom” is another crucial concept for Florio/Shakespeare - see also footnote 9 below as for the “utterly free” “otia”), which entails the sharing of a common view of life, common values and interests, pain for being exiled (in the case of John and Michelangelo), in other words a spiritual communion.

In the light of the above, John could not have better expressed his spiritual communion with his father and his love for him, than by recognizing him “above all” as a “Friend”.

b) According to the second meaning of such expression, this “friend of mine” is John himself and more precisely “the other half of John Florio himself, the dramatist concealed inside the “lexicographer”, the poet who had no need to declare himself because, in the worlds of the Italian motto that John Florio added to the portrait published in the second edition of the dictionary in 1611, “chi si contenta gode” (“Who lives content hath all the world at will”, as Florio himself renders it in English in the Second Fruits. It is a telling motto from the man who had renounced the glory of Shake-speare)” (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? p.127, last sentence, pg.141, footnote 72; John Florio, pg. 103).

According to such second meaning of the above-mentioned expression, Florio resembles one of those friends, relatives or teenagers who, when explaining a delicate situation they find themselves in, chose to take cover behind the notion that they are speaking about “a friend of mine” trying desperately (and often, so awkwardly you feel for them) so as to “to throw us off track”.

Finally, it seems absolutely indisputable that both Michelangelo and John shared the painful life of the exiles and the same life philosophy.

The epistle “To the reader” confirms that John felt profoundly akin to his father and was indeed identifying with his father.

John was the true spiritual heir of his father, the executor of his father’s will and, as a consequence, we can say, in very general terms, that almost everything that may related to his father (for instance in “To the reader” epistle of the “World of Wordes” in 1598) might also reasonably apply to John himself.

To complete the picture, such “*friend of mine*” is described “*first as the author, “well experienced in the Italian”, of a project for a dictionary, then as the poet with “more skill in good Poetrie*”. Indeed “John tells us that 20 years earlier he had had the idea for his book when he saw a manuscript draft for an Italian dictionary from the hand of a gentleman of ‘worshipful account’ who was ‘well experienced in the Italian’”, who “hath in this very kind taken great pains, and made as great proofes of his inestimable worth”. John is really very proud of the works and activities of this “friend of mine”, his father Michelangelo “the author of that incomplete draft, which John takes over and finishes” (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? p.127, and John Florio p.103). As abovementioned, John (who had a “unique”, “special” and “symbiotic” relationship with his father), in the course of his life and by means of his works and activities, fully and always “embodied” his father’s aspirations and role (even “identifying” with his father), being he himself an erudite man of letters and a schoolmaster just like his father and being his father’s true spiritual heir as well as the executor of his father’s will.

John, in 1598, gives clear evidence of his father’s important role in his life and works as well as extols Michelangelo’s merits and “philosophy” of life; in doing so, John (the “hidden poet”) clearly demonstrates to fully share such “philosophy”. Obviously, John could not (and did not want at all) expressly declare that he incognito wrote literary works just like his father, but all the context leads to such clear, indisputable conclusion: John himself (just like his father, in exile and threatened) “*loved better to be a poet than to be counted so*”. John, through his father’s indirect reference, is clearly disclosing - to the extent possible - something very important of his own life and “view” of life. He unconditionally admired his father and his view of life.

It is a kind of actual and clear indirect confession of John himself, in his own words, that he also “*loved better to be a poet than to be counted so*” (without meaning to make somewhat sacrilegious quotations, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear”! - Gospel according to St Luke 8:8).

What we ought to finally stress here, is how this statement of such “*friend of mine*” (“*that loved better to be a poet than to be counted so*”) can be surely regarded also as John Florio’s concise “Spiritual Testament” left to posterity.

In 1598 Florio confirms, just like in “To the reader” epistle of “Second Fruits” dated 1591, to have resolved his long and painful dilemma (again declaring himself “Resolute”), for he had reached the gratifying conclusion that being a poet, creating along with Will, literary works which were universally acclaimed and being instrumental in elevating world culture

was the only meaningful mission for him and the fact that the official world did not formally acknowledge him as author/co-author of these literary works was of no consequence. “I LOVED BETTER TO BE A POET, THAN TO BE COUNTED SO”.

This is the message that Florio left to posterity.

A message of great depth, intended to pursue a specific “mission” infinitely more important than any formal recognition.

A solution to overcome the (well-founded) fear of envy, rivalry and hatred towards the “Italianised Englishman” (“*I am an Englishman in Italiane: I know they have a knife at command to cut my throate. An Italianised Englishman is the devil incarnate*”; from the dedication *to the reader* in *Second Fruits* in 1591) was found in this fruitful collaboration with Will (pg. 411 of Gerevini’s book), the winning team.

Clearly, only Will could offer Florio the invaluable contribution of both the Englishness of the name “Shakespeare”, which ensured his work would be accepted (see footnote 4 above) and the sensibility that Will, as a born and bred Englishman, must have had to “understand and anticipate” the tastes of the public, having grown up with a true sense of the English people at a time when English civilisation was going through a phase of incredible “explosion”, including the expansion of the British Empire (see the example of *The Tempest* that Gerevini points out in pp. 345-345 of his book, of the voyage in Prospero’s ship from Milan out to the sea - although this may have been somewhat arduous journey through the canals - it was an effective way of conjuring up, in an English audience, a positive image of life in London, from where you can sail out to sea from the River Thames, which brings the scene even “closer” to an English audience).

Only Will could move in London theatrical circles, which were deemed “disreputable” and frowned upon by the Puritans; a schoolmaster whose task it was to educate young English aristocrats would not have been allowed to do so (Gerevini, pg. 180; see also Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 78 and John Florio, pg. 72, who points out that “those who laboured in the commercial theatre had reputation of the lowest kind”).

Writing a new play was a “joint activity”, involving all the members of a theatrical Company, who were entitled to make comments and remarks (as Professor Jonathan Bate explains; see Gerevini, pg.344).

Will, once he had agreed a text with John, had to consult the members of his theatrical Company; without the modifications suggested by members, the play could not be performed! Therefore, Will had to “*make flights upon the bankes of Thames*” (as Ben Jonson refers; see Gerevini, pg. 426). While John had to attend the Court’s ceremonies,

Will was the “King” of such circles, where fundamental battles were fought in order to “negotiate” the best texts and ensure the success of the play. The plays were ultimately decided in such circles! Will (apart from his cooperation in “Sonnets” and poetry; see Giulia Harding and Gerevini, pg. 172 onwards) was actually a “born actor” and also possessed great powers of artistic intuition, authority and leadership, as well as uncommon managerial ability as a theatrical agent (Gerevini, pg 392); Will was furthermore one of the 8 registered “attached playwrights” in London, i.e. “those tied for long periods to one or more companies” (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 77; John Florio, pg. 71 ). He was indisputably a very skilled business man, who wisely invested his earnings (as attested by the deeds of land and houses he had purchased in Stratford) and ended his days in comfort as well as enjoyed considerable wealth (Gerevini, pg. 68, who points out that his wealth was due to his theatrical agent activities, see pg. 392); therefore, it is highly likely that he was, at the very least, able to secure the best solution and impose his wise will! Briefly, in such circles (inappropriate for John), Will fought the decisive battles to ensure the success of their plays!

Professor Mario Praz (see Encyclopaedia Treccani, edition 1949, entry on “Shakespeare”, volume XXXI, pg. 590) confirms that “*it is natural that a lot of his texts were to be properly rearranged (by means of cuts and interpolations) in view of their theatrical performance*”.

According to the greatest Shakespeare Italian scholar of our age, Professor Giorgio Melchiori (who was Professor Praz’s pupil and passed away at the beginning of 2009), the author’s theatrical texts were “reworked” in the “*prompt-book*”, to be used in the rehearsals. Will would have also detailed any features of each scene. “The scripts...were however continually readapted by the actors...on the basis of the audience response”. Theatre is in fact a collective creation undergoing changes each day, just like life (v. Melchiori, Shakespeare, pg. 11, 12, 16 and 22).

Furthermore, according to Giulia Harding, we have to acknowledge that at the beginning “*Florio was the master and Will the pupil*”, but “*in later works it is as if the two literally put their heads together and worked in tandem*” (see, article “*Shakespeare’s fingerprints*” in this website).

In addition to the abovementioned activities, Will “may well [also] have given...his energies in rehearsal to ‘directing’ the company, showing them how to translate... words into stage actions; his own acting roles were therefore likely to have been confined to brief cameos” (see, Jonathan Bate, The Genius of Shakespeare, 2008, pg. 7; as for Will’s

role of actor and theatre manager of Shakespeare's works, see also Tassinari, Shakespeare?, pg.78, John Florio, pg. 72).

Furthermore, J. Bate (Soul of the Age, pg.366) points out that Will and Augustine Phillips “constituted the business brains of the company [the Chamberlain's Men], the organizers who day in and day out knocked actors and productions into shape” (and Phillips left by will a large bequest to “my fellow” Will).

The “triune” nature of “Shakespeare”- constituted by 1 pseudonym and 2 contributors - (this is the “essence” of Saul Gerevini's and Giulia Harding's Florian theory; see Gerevini, pg. 180) is strongly testified in writing by Ben Jonson (a reliable and trustworthy witness) in the First Folio, where he clearly refers to the 2 contributors in the success of Shakespeare's works:

1) to Will (“*thou had small Latin and less Greek*”), that he surely knew very well (this is also the opinion of J. Bate, who points out that Will, as actor, “was in the cast of at least two of Jonson's plays” - The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 69; a written document testifies that Will played in Ben Jonson's comedy “*Every Man in his Humour*” premiered by the Chamberlain's Men in 1598 - see J. Bate, Soul of the Age, pg. 366-367; the relationship between Ben and Will is also confirmed in a passage of “*The Return from Parnassus Part 2*”- produced at St John's College during the Christmas vacation of 1601-02 - where both Jonson [who had “set himself up as the English Horace” - J. Bate, The Genius of Shakespeare 2008, pg.26 - and was called “*Horace the Second*” in “*The Return from Parnassus Part 2*” - see also our footnote 9 below] and Will are mentioned together - see Soul of the Age, pg. 377-379 onwards);

2) to his friend John, the great translator, man of letters, erudite and clandestine dramatist (“*a lance as brandished at the eyes of Ignorance*”; see also Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 85; John Florio, pg. 82), to be considered here, in the terms set out above a “*unicum*” with Michelangelo.

The precise roles of the 2 contributors, also in the light of Ben's written testimony, are the coherent purpose of the key research being done by Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding.

It is worth noting that J. Bate also clearly emphasises Florio's contribution to Shakespeare's work. “Because Shakespeare knew Florio and his works, the belief that Shakespeare's works were actually written by Florio is harder to refute than the case for any aristocrat's authorship”. The issue is not immediately dealt with at all by Bate, who merely acknowledges as follows: “The alternative possibility, that the plays must have been written by an Italian, has never found favour: perish the thought that the works of

Shakespeare might have been written by a foreigner... But because Florio was not an Englishman, the case for him has never made much headway. Except in Italy, of course, where one Santi Paladino published his ‘Un Italiano autore delle opere Shakespeariane’, publisher Gastaldi 1954 (see *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 94). Bate further acknowledges that some scholars pointed out that “the works of Shakespeare were written by the Anglo-Italian translator and dictionary maker John Florio” and that especially the English scholar John Harding “believes that Florio himself wrote the works of Shakespeare” (see *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 65 and 363).

At pg. 160 onwards, Bate finally comes to grips with the problem and creates the following *ad hoc* strict syllogism, based on two categories envisaged for poets (the “natural poets” and the “artful poets”) and aimed at definitively solving the issue, once and for all, to find a positive and conclusive answer concerning Shakespeare’s native Englishness:

1) “Shakespeare was the poet of nature, not art” (regardless of the opposite opinion that Jonson expressed in the First Folio [1623]: “*Shakespeare had held nature and art in Horatian balance*”- see *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg.30; i.e., in Jonson’s view, Shakespeare’s poetry was in line with Horace’s teachings aimed at “*combining nature with art*”; indeed, “*One of the arguments of Horace’s Art of Poetry [Ars Poetica] had been that the true poet combines nature with art*” ”- see *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg.26 and our footnote 9 below). Shakespeare is compared by Bate to a “bird singing in a wood”. Thus Shakespeare was a “natural poet”.

2) “The artful poet is cosmopolitan, able to draw skill from Greece or Rome and transfer it to Paris or London. The natural poet, by contrast, is native” [in our view, Shakespeare was indubitably, to some extent, artful; by way of example: *what about Shakespeare’s “Roman” plays such as “Julius Caesar” and “Anthony and Cleopatra”?* See also the last part of paragraph 3 below, where the issue of the “transmission of culture” is dealt with; it is worth noting that Bate himself wrote: “*All his career, Shakespeare went on translating source materials into his own language. Fragments of his school-room knowledge stud his work: allusions to Ovid, phrases from Cicero, tags out of Horace*”-see *Soul of the Age*, pg.100 ].

3) By way of conclusion of the syllogism, Shakespeare, in his capacity as “natural poet”, is to be an English “native” poet, i.e. not a foreigner.

We limit ourselves to merely stating herein Bate’s theory regarding this.

Certainly, of the “two contributors” to the works of Shakespeare” (as understood above to be the fruit of intense collaboration between John and Will), it was Will who could be characterised more as a “natural poet” (whereas John was a man of letters capable of completely representing” the world of his time, drawing from his boundless knowledge of the Classics and of Italian and European Literature). The portrayal of Romeo who has to take his leave of Juliette evokes profound emotions (apart from possible literary precedents) because the day is about to break to the song of the lark (and not to the song of the nightingale as Juliet tries to say! – “Romeo and Juliet” Act III, Scene 5), evokes bucolic love that could be more easily traced back to Will than to John; the same is true of the singing of the birds “The little birds doo sing”, in “Phaeton”. *“These images are often found throughout the work of Shakespeare who is especially attracted to the image of singing birds. We find dozens of such images in his works and many too in his Sonnets e.g. no. 73, 97, 98, 102, etc. Shakespeare is drawn to nature, to flowers and to singing birds, perhaps memories of ... [Will’s] childhood in the countryside of Stratford: other authors are not as naturalist and tend to avoid such images which can appear overly simplistic. Shakespeare, however has no qualms about this: in his writing singing birds are an imperative constant. In the eight line of Phaeton we find: “Herbs, gums, and plants do vaunt of their release”. Romeo and Juliet (2,3,16) offering the same images of “plants, herbs, stones” (see. Gerevini’s article “Phaeton” in this website and in the cited text, pg. 147 and 148).*

Bates himself, with regard to the relationship between John and Will says that “Shakespeare’s knowledge of matters Italian can be attributed to the presence of John Florio in the household of the Earl of Southampton” (see The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 94); this way Bate himself implicitly yet clearly acknowledges the existence of some kind of “complicity”, “cooperation” “support” or similar “relationship” between Will and John. Professor Melchiori points out that the plots of some Shakespeare’s works (such as Othello, The Merchant of Venice, Much Ado About Nothing, The Merry Wives of Windsor) had been drawn from literary Italian source materials, which had not yet been translated into English (see also Tassinari, who, in turn, quotes an Italian scholar Ernesto Grillo, *Shakespeare and Italy*, New York, Haskell House, 1973: “*English critics have tried to minimize the importance of the fact that four-fifth of Elizabethan dramas were based on Italian Novelle*”- Shakespeare? pg. 282, John Florio, pg. 290); in his view, a reasonable justification might be based on an intense information exchange between Will

and John Florio (see Melchiori, Shakespeare, pg. 476-477) and, therefore, on significant cooperation between them, just like Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding rightly argue.

Furthermore we can indisputably state that Will and John contributed to the success of their joint works, playing their own roles at the highest level!

Therefore, the “secret” cooperation between John and Will as well as John’s hidden identity were fundamental elements for the success of their plays (see also the last sentences of our footnote 11 below).

Finally, also in the *First Folio* of 1623 (containing their works) Ben Jonson (Florio’s devoted friend, as also testified by Ben’s dedication, written on a copy of his “Volpone” - see page 47 below; in turn, John Florio is present with his own 8 lines and his name at the foot of them, “among the 10 authors of laudatory verse found in the first page of *Volpone*”- Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 82) “made the decision not to reveal the true identity of Shakespeare (respecting the understanding between himself and Florio)” (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.84, John Florio, pg.79 and 80, and footnote 4 below of this document).

## **2. Hamlet’s doubt (*to be or not to be*).**

Hamlet’s doubt as set out by Shakespeare is undeniably linked to the autobiographical profile of Florio’s dilemma.

When Michelangelo had passed away, John had been divested of his father’s help and protection and had metaphorically “fallen headlong”, “distressed”.

After very hard times, finally in 1591 John resolved his existential dilemma and declared himself “Resolute” in “To the reader” dedication of “Second Fruits”.

Florio’s dilemma (and relevant “resolution”) is encapsulated in his “spiritual testament” of 1598 (in “*To the reader*” epistle of the “*World of Wordes*”), where we explicitly find out (in his own words) that he “*loved better to be a poet than to be counted so*”; then, his determination to incognito write literary works and plays.

Thus, Hamlet’s fundamental doubt “to be or not to be: that is the question” takes on an entirely new slant which is pregnant with meaning if we relate it to Florio’s life.

Hamlet pretends to be something he is not (pg. 297 of Gerevini’s book), and by doing so ends up “deceiving” the world.

Florio, meanwhile, was forced, as Greene put it to keep his “*tiger’s heart wrapped in a player’s hide*”; i.e. “to be”, to achieve his mission within the limits marked out for him, in a way that also proved extremely rewarding for him!

In short, the Shakespearian dilemma was, first and foremost, Florio's "dilemma".

Before 1591, when Florio declared himself "Resolute", we can imagine Florio, from an innermost, existential point of view (as above better clarified), "irresolute", "indecisive" and "wavering", in one word "distressed"; such an unexpected - declaration by Florio could be correctly interpreted as an implied but clear confession by Florio of having previously been gnawed (just like Hamlet) by the painful worms of existential doubt and distress.

Subject to further studies (on the basis of the recently discovered documents) confirming Michelangelo Florio's death between 1573 and 1576, we cannot rule out, as noted above, that John's "distress" was caused by the painful loss of his paternal guide; Michelangelo had always surely acted as a guide and was always present, reassuring, important and strong both in supporting John with his immense cultural background and in facing life with serenity. Notwithstanding their common "special status" of persecuted exiles; thanks to Michelangelo, his "old friends and protectors...supported the career of John", after John had returned to England in around 1571 (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.47, John Florio, pg. 38).

After his father's death, John was surely "distressed"; he had to face the hard life of an "Englishman in Italiane", without any help and was surrounded by envious rivals.

It is high time we tried to summarise and set out a list of some of the issues described above, in order to better understand a possible correlation between John Florio and Hamlet, as follows: 1) the existence of a "unique", "special", "symbiotic" "father-master/son-pupil" relationship between Michelangelo and John; John always "held communion" with his father, also after Michelangelo's death; 2) the charismatic figure of Michelangelo, defined (in the epistle "To the reader" of the "World of Wordes" in 1598) as a "gentleman" (just like John), who distinguished himself from the other men ("monsters of men, if not beasts rather than men", against whom John hurled his invective, also for the pains they had given to his father; this invective is comparable to the one hurled, in accordance with rhetorical style, by Anthony at Brutus and Cassius in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Act III, Scene 2: "So are they all, all honourable men". The meaning is exactly the opposite: the "honourable men", the "men of honour" the "gentlemen" ("honourable men", "men of honour" and "gentlemen" are synonyms), just like Michelangelo and John, are really "precious and rare stones" clearly distinguishing themselves from the others; the other men, just like Brutus and Cassius, are in turn ready to betray or even to kill (both in the strict sense of the word and figuratively); 3) the desire

to “disclose” who his father really was, who although found himself in a morally reprehensible situation (see Gerevini, pg. 299; in a letter, dated in early 1522, Michelangelo “revealed to his protector Sir William Cecil, also known by his title Lord Burghley, that he was responsible for an immoral act, having engaged in sexual relations with one of the women who frequented his church. Michelangelo was subsequently removed from his office”; but afterwards, Michelangelo “expressed his contrition” and gradually Cecil “accepted him back into the circle of his protégés and had him reinstated in his function as minister” - Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 39, John Florio, pg. 32). It is worth pointing out again that John’s best way to honour his father consisted of recognizing Michelangelo as “a friend of mine”; a person with whom (apart from a “mere biological relationship”) John shared common values, a common vision of life, pain for being exiled, in other words a spiritual communion, being Friendship the result of a day-by day mutual free choice” (see also footnote 11 below as for the importance of Friendship for John). John dearly wants to impress in the readers mind that his father Michelangelo, was actually a true “gentleman” and in so doing finally makes his father’s secret spiritual testament (which was also John’s) public: a “supreme message of love” of someone “*that loved better to be a poet than to be counted so*”. To continue the comparison (clearly within the limits of such comparisons-with a play of Shakespeare’s genius), Anthony in *Julius Cesar* behaves in a similar fashion. Anthony too (who, in turn, publicly points out that Caesar “*was my friend, faithful and just to me*” - just like John, who publicly declares his Friendship with Michelangelo) intended to “disclose” to the Roman People who Caesar really was, that he had been labelled an ambitious enemy of the people. Anthony too makes Cesar’s Testament clear to show the Roman people “*how Caesar loved you... you are his heir*”, thereby giving rise to the citizens exclamations against Brutus and Cassius (“*They were traitors, villains, murderers: honourable men!*” - see Act III, Scene 2); this testament also contains a supreme “message of love”, similarly revealing Caesar as someone “*that loved*”! (it is worth noting that both of the situations described above by Florio and Shakespeare echo Virgil’s very famous line “*Omnia vincit amor et nos cedamus amori*” “*Love conquers all; let us, too, surrender to love*” – Eclogues, X, 69; the sentence “*Amor vincit omnia*” had been also quoted by Geoffrey Chaucer – 1342-1400 – in his *Canterbury Tales*’ Prologue, line 163, where Chaucer describes the character of the Prioress, as follows: “*An theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene, On which ther was first write a crowned A, And after Amor vincit omnia*”; “*Amor vincit omnia*” is also the title of a famous painting by the artist Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio -1571-1610-, which

illustrates the cited line from Virgil's Eclogues); 4) Michelangelo's (John's father's) death (between 1573 and 1576); 5) John's feeling (presumably) that his father's death had been a cruel injustice and bitterness for the suffering caused to his father by the rivals; 6) John's consequent "distress"; 7) John's existential dilemma - as better described hereafter -, which had previously also been Michelangelo's dilemma: "*to be a poet but not to be counted so*"; 8) the situation of John, who is surrounded by his father's same (or similar) rivals (including the envious University Wits); 9) John's filial role and devotion ("Pietas" also towards the dead father); 10) the common mission" along with his father Michelangelo (a common project comparable to that of Anchises and Aeneas); a mission that John and Michelangelo began together and which after the death of Michelangelo, John fulfilled on his own; 11) the "common mission" as a "superior", even "divine" mission" (in the case of Aeneas), compared to which everything else "takes second place" (for John no formal recognition as a poet is of no consequence; for Hamlet "passing himself off as lunatic" is not a problem"); 12) John, "embodying" his father's aspirations and role (even "identifying" with his father), being he himself an erudite man of letters and a schoolmaster just like his father (see Gerevini, pg. 391) and being his father's true spiritual heir as well as the executor of his father's will; 13) Michelangelo's "flowing spirit", (just like Anchises's spirit, a "tutelary deity", who appears from time to time to his son to help him in times of difficulty), who is constantly in John's mind with his charisma and is always a vivacious, invigorating, loving and reassuring presence at John's side, able to provide John with all the necessary force to face the hard rigours of his mission.

It is utterly clear that Hamlet's "dilemma" and "mind" remind us of John's own dilemma and mind! Just as the influence of the Virgil's Aeneid on Shakespeare's Hamlet is patently clear!

We repeat, once again, that working in conjunction with Will must have been the crucial moment, the "turning point" of John's life and the resolution of John's existential dilemma.

He had finally shaken off all his doubts, fears and "distress" and had reached, after having bravely experienced great pains, the mature "status" of "Resolute".

In fact, we literally find in Florio the very same dilemma as Hamlet's, conveyed using essentially identical wording! *To be a poet but not to be counted so*.

Of the two options "*to be or not to be a poet*", Florio chose the more satisfying one of ("*loved better*") being a poet; a choice he made in the most profound manner possible and which he cherished as a mission.

Florio's love ("*he loved better*") is altruistic and certainly not intended as a boast or as a way of seeking formal external recognition (probably, in my humble opinion, not very far from the Christian concept of love, as described by St. Paul in the First Letter to the Corinthians).

The only way of "being" what Florio aspired to be was actually to "settle for less", to "be", to fulfil his mission within the limits of what was possible.

Indeed, Florio himself had chosen his motto (which is directly linked to what we have defined as his "Spiritual Testament") "*Chi si contenta gode*" which can be roughly translated as "He who contents himself, enjoys" (the same translation is suggested in <http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/3802/Florio-John-c-1553-1625.html>), which appears in his famous portrait, which was published in the introduction of the second edition of his dictionary in 1611.

In the next paragraph, we shall make an in-depth analysis of the meaning of the Italian reflexive verb "contentarsi" and furthermore see that the meaning of this motto is in no way in the spirit of a defeatist attitude; it is in actual fact, a flair for unfailingly seizing the opportunities that invariable present themselves to each of us rather than "seeing the glass as being half empty."

Florio, in order to be a poet/playwright had to considered not "to be counted so" which dictated that he had to hide behind the guise of an actor; that Florio pretend to be a mere courtier schoolmaster, something other than what he truly was (a key co-operator in Shakespeare's writing); a sort of Clark Kent, a diligent subordinate journalist, even willing to conceal his identity under Superman's cloak<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Just so as to follow on this merely playful and only partly fitting parallel (between a great historical figure and a fantasy character, for that matter), we can say that Florio, could act out on a daily basis (apart from the eventful period he spent at the French Embassy) the role of the contrite schoolmaster of English Aristocrats, when he donned the "player's hide" becoming Shake-scene (as Greene put it; see Gerevini pg.170) "who stormed the stage" was an irresistible and engaging force of creativity and subsequently becoming "Shakespeare" (Gerevini pg.169). Then, paradoxically, Florio's "not being a poet" (see J. Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 57) was his "loved and cherished" appearance which enabled him "to actually be a poet". It must be pointed out however, that William Shakespeare is not a pseudonym that was created to conceal a mysterious character but rather the name of the intense collaboration between Will Shagsper of Stratford and John Florio (see "questione shakespeareana", in [www.shakespeareandflorio.net](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net)). Regarding the meaning of the word Shakespeare, "*shake-speare*", where the Author's pen is symbolized by a spear, figuratively "*used to wage battles on all fronts of culture*"; see Tassinari, *Shakespeare?*, pg. 45; "*to shake a lance/ As brandish'd at the eyes of Ignorance*", as Ben Jonson said in the First Folio of 1623; see "chi era Shakespeare", in this website, Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg.85, John Florio, pg. 82 - who especially emphasises the correlation between such sentence and Florio's extraordinary culture - and Gerevini pg. 44 and 246; see also Encyclopaedia Treccani, edition 1949, entry on Shakespeare, written by Mario Praz, pg.585 onwards). A further and final point on this, the US Supreme Court took an impassioned interest in the question of authorship in early 2009 (it appears the US Supreme Court President is particularly interested in this centuries-old diatribe!). This Court of law (as massively reported in the media) handed down the verdict that "Shakespeare is a pseudonym". One judge in particular from the Supreme Court (Ruth Bader Ginsburg) drew scholars attention to the importance of John Florio!(see: "archivio articoli" in [www.shakespeareandflorio.net](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net); <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2009/04/the-verdict-is-in-justice-tevens-on-shakespeare.html>).

Just like Clark Kent, Florio too:

- (i) wanted “to be”, to incognito (in an absolutely autonomous manner, together with Will) achieve the fulfilment of his own abilities and “superpowers”<sup>5</sup> (and thus make himself useful, insofar as universally acclaimed for his work);
- (ii) did not want his true identity to be revealed insofar as this would have worked to the detriment of his “being”, of his fulfilling his mission.

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At an earlier date, on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1987 three Justices of the US Supreme Court (Harry Blackmun, William Brennan and John Paul Stevens) had already been involved in the same issue and in particular they had been appointed judges by the American University in a Moot-Court Hearing on Shakespeare authorship (“William Shakespeare or Edward De Vere?”). In our view, it is worth noting that Justice Stevens (who, before studying law in 1945, studied English literature and graduated in 1941) expressed in his opinion, *inter alia*, the following: “I have lingering concerns about some of the gaps in the evidence: the absence of eulogies at the time, in 1616, when Shakespeare died; the absence of writing about Shakespeare during his life; even though there is some evidence, the evidence that does exist is somewhat ambiguous and hard to understand, and it seems to me that one would expect to find more references in people's diaries or correspondence about having seen Shakespeare somewhere or talked to someone who had seen him. And so there is this sort of gnawing uncertainty about the gap, and I think that's part of what has made all of these different people suggest that this extraordinary person must have been someone else”; such opinion is also reported and fully shared by Professor Martino Iuvara, “*Shakespeare era Italiano*”, Associazione Trinacria, Ragusa 2002, pg. 23); the opinion is available on the web site: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/debates/americanudebate.html>. Recently, on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009 the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society announced that the two organizations have jointly presented the 2009 “Oxfordian of the Year Award” to John Paul Stevens, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Justice Stevens has long doubted whether William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon is the real Bard. In a recent article published by The Wall Street Journal (April 18, 2009 and largely diffused by the media, see <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123998633934729551.html>), Justice Stevens expressed his view that “the evidence that (Shakespeare of Stratford) was not the author is beyond a reasonable doubt.” We can read, in such article, the following: “In a visit to Shakespeare’s birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon, Justice Stevens observed that the purported playwright left no books, nor letters or other records of a literary presence. ‘Where are the books? You can’t be a scholar of that depth and not have any books in your home,’ Justice Stevens says. ‘He never had any correspondence with his contemporaries, he never was shown to be present at any major event - the coronation of James or any of that stuff. I think the evidence that he was not the author is beyond a reasonable doubt.” We can fully share Justice Stevens’ reasonable opinions and concerns. To complete the picture, we can note that no evidence has been found even on Shakespeare’s ability to write: none of his letters have been found and no proof exists on his attendance at the local Grammar school (see Gerevini, cited book, pg. 38 and 41; see, similarly, Tassinari, who points out that Will “was born from a family of illiterates, in a village without culture, with a brief rudimentary education” - see John Florio, pg. 63, Shakespeare? pg.88-89). Also Ben Jonson’s affirmation *“thou small Latin and less Greek”* (addressed to Will, in the First Folio of 1623) by no means testifies Will’s ability to write; Ben’s sentence might merely mean that Will was able to understand a few Latin words (for instance those heard in Church during some religious ceremonies) and even fewer Ancient Greek words (such as “polis”, “basilikon” and other words frequently used in the plays). Indeed, “There exist no letters written by William Shakespeare, a man for whom letter-writing, to judge by the plays bearing his name, was an essential activity. The fact that he resided at Stratford for long periods should have been the occasion for him to write and receive letters frequently. Yet, the only letter addressed to William Shakespeare (and never sent) was an ordinary business letter from a certain Richard Quiney of Stratford: You shall friend me much in helping me out of all the debts I owe in London...and if we bargain further you shall be the paymaster yourself (see Tassinari - Shakespeare? pg. 89 and John Florio, pg. 337- ,who makes reference to the scholar Diana Price, Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography, Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 2001, pg. 301 onwards). J. Bate – The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 134 – confirms that Richard Quiney “in 1598 wrote the only surviving letter addressed to William Shakespeare, a request for a financial loan”. The frustration of the absence of any letters or other documents under Shakespeare’s hand drove the “Stratfordian” Henry Ireland to fabricate “evidences” in 1795; he fabricated a series of false letters, some of which addressed to the Queen. The fraud was discovered by Edmond Malone (an Irish Shakespearean scholar and editor of the works of William Shakespeare), who wrote a very detailed paper, “*An inquiry into the Authenticity of certain Miscellaneous Paper and Legal Instruments*”, on the matter in 1796. The forger confessed and admitted that the forgery was a desperate response to his sheer frustration. The “Ireland affair” aroused a great deal of interest in England (see Gerevini, book cited, pg. 41). See also Tassinari (Shakespeare? pg. 90, footnote 48, and pg 95, John Florio, pg. 338, footnote 428), who points out that “According to Price and others, the most

It is modern man's debut in existentialism; each person has their own "role" and must play their part (quoting Shakespeare: "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women, merely players" - "As You Like It", Act II, Scene 7; see also footnote 9 below; J. Bate points out that Shakespeare "*returned...persistently to the image of the world as a stage and man's life as the enacting of a series of parts*", see *Soul of the Age*, pg. 366; chapter 8 of Bate's *The Genius of Shakespeare* is significantly entitled "*All the world his stage*"). Within these roles however, oftentimes we express only part of our inner selves, "*only a small part of a much larger whole*" (in accordance with Giordano Bruno's vision of "Unity" - "*everything is one*"-; see Julia Jones, "*The Brave New World of Giordano Bruno*", pg.7 onwards, in this website); in order to express other aspects of ourselves (which are frequently the most important) we resort, on occasion, to "masks".

Only at the end of his Florio/Shakespeare work can he remove this thorn from his side and regain his true identity (albeit partially) in *The Tempest*, where the issue of linguistic identity also pervades.

In short, *Hamlet*, the play about existential doubt and modern man's need to pass himself off as something he is not, by "wearing a mask".

*The Tempest* is the revelation of deceit and the regaining (albeit partial) of one's identity<sup>6</sup>.

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notorious of these forgers was John Payne Callier (1789-1883), the composer of documents relating to Shakespeare's co-ownership of the Globe and the man responsible for planting various 'finds' in institutions like Bodleian Library or the Dulwich archives to which he had free access. Another note forger was Henry Ireland (1777-1835), who fabricated manuscripts of King Lear and parts of Hamlet, not to mention various documents, letters and catalogues (Price, book cited, pg 227-228). It is legitimate and logical to suppose that these two individuals were not the only Shakespearian zealots to take matters into their hands by creating new material, and more than that, by destroying documents compromising for the Stratfordian identity".

<sup>5</sup> You only have to think of his incredible knowledge of literature (proportional to his immense library), linguistics (Florio was a "high-wire acrobat of language" a linguistic funambulist according to Tassinari Shakespeare? pg. 121, John Florio, pg.95; on his literary and linguistic creative skill see also Gerevini, pg. 258 onwards; Giulia Harding, "*Florio and language*", in [www.shakespeareandflorio.net](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net)), not to mention the mnemonic techniques he learned from Giordano Bruno (Gerevini, pg. 118; "*the boundlessness and almost unlimited power of the human mind...the capacity to comprehend the infinity of the whole reality as a unitary process*"; see J.Jones, cited article, pp. 8, 14), which were, in turn, based on c.d. "Loci Ciceroniani", considering that Cicerone, to memorise his speeches in the Senate, associated subjects to the places (those he was familiar with and were easy to memorise) he encountered as he walked from his home to the Senate (a bench, a fountain, a flight of steps etc.); these were the folders of his "brain's computer" to which he associated each element of his speech. Still today, when we make a speech (be it in English or Italian) perhaps without realizing it, we follow in Cicerone's footsteps, using expressions such as "*in the first place*", in the second place etc., to separate and structure the different elements of our speech. As for Florio's "*Shakespearian vehemence and linguistic inventiveness*", see in the first lines of the "To the reader" of "World of Wordes" of 1598, the expression "*wordes like swords*" (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 127, John Florio, pg.103). Florio's immense love for "words" can be appreciated by reading the following definition of "word", referred to in the abovementioned document: "*A good word is a de[a]w from heaven to earth: it is a precious balme, that has sweetnesse in the boxe, whence it comes, sweetnesse and vertue in the bodie, whereto it comes: it is a golden chaine, that linkes the tongs, and eares, and h[e]arts of writers and readers, each to other*".

<sup>6</sup> *The Tempest* is defined as "...a coded tale about the author's identity", "*the coded tale of his own life*", the Apocalypse of Identity. It is the story of the author, told by a poet "who had *something to hide*, and which he therefore camouflages and conveys in symbolic terms" (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 301, 303; John Florio, pg.311, 314).

Florio's biographic profile reinforces and substantiates these plays which are otherwise difficult to fully understand.

In conclusion, apart from what has been mentioned above, it seems to me, that the universally famous "*to be or not to be*" could be revisited and given renewed thought in the light of the emerging importance of Florio in Shakespeare's work; a new reading of this existential dilemma in the light of Florio's life and philosophy.

### **3. The role of Horatio's character in *Hamlet* and the influence of Horace on Florio's universal and immortal poetical-and-cultural mission.**

On reading *Hamlet*, we encounter a character called Horatio, Hamlet's close and trusted friend. The "man in the street" may well spontaneously ask "what's a character called Horatio doing in an English play?" (Horatio Nelson hadn't been born at this time...).

Horatio's character is described by Hamlet in these few short words: "A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards hath ta'en with equal thanks" (Act III, scene, II).

Horace, Roman poet who lived in the court of Maecenas, in one of his Odes (*Odes, II, 3, 1-2*) dedicated to Dellio (a poet friend of his), expressed as follows the life philosophy he drew from Epicureanism: "*Aequam memento rebus in arduis servare mentem, non secus in bonis*" which translates as "*Remember to maintain the very same serene spirit in both times of difficulty and in favourable circumstances*".

Horace ironically represented himself as "*Epicuri de grege porcum*" – "*pig of Epicurus's swine herd*" (Epistle to Albio Tibullo, I, 4), i.e. as a follower of Epicurean philosophy.

Indeed Epicurean philosophy considered ultimate happiness to be "Ataraxia" i.e. a truly serene, sober and measured state of mind not perturbed by either success or unlucky events.

Hamlet's Horatio shares the same philosophy as Horace; Shakespeare's text translated exactly the same concepts that were described in Horace's Latin version. For the sake of clarity, it is also to be considered that (i) both the name Horace (ancient Roman poet) and the name Horatio (character in *Hamlet*) translates into Italian as Orazio (ii) Florio/Shakespeare was an author that "*wrote in English but thought in Italian*" (see Gerevini, pg.179; his "mind" having been largely educated by the Roman and Italian literary works, as his dictionaries - and the books he had read - clearly and objectively demonstrate; in addition, it is worth noting, among the countless pieces of evidence of "Italianness" in Shakespeare's works, we find in *Cymbeline* - Act V, Scene 5 - the following "so intimate vibrations and words that no native genius would have intuited

them: ‘*Mine Italian brain*’, which is the brain of one who feels Italy inside him” - see Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 295, John Florio, pg. 307).

“Horatio, thou art e’er as just a man as e’er my conversation cop’d withal...For thou hast been as one in suffering all, that suffers nothing”. Horatio is thus the personification of “Ataraxia” the ability to maintain an inner equilibrium and measure in any situation.

According to Giorgio Melchiori (see his cited book, *Shakespeare*, pg. 391), *Hamlet* would need a special in-depth analysis of the “*sense of “Roman-ness” that is exalted as a model of virtue, courage, resolve, loyalty and total devotion*” (see Gerevini, pp. 300, 301 who points out also that “*all the plays that were written by Shakespeare on ancient Rome...show that his knowledge of this culture, in the same way as his knowledge of Latin languages was immense*”; Diana Price, reports the opinion of a Latinist, Christina Smith Montgomery, who points out that in Shakespeare’s works “The number of *Latin derived words varies considerably. In the earlier plays there are between two and three hundred in each play, while in the later plays the numbers are more than trebled [...]* Shakespeare’s most inspired passages are the results of his subconscious assimilation of the Latin language and Latin Literature” - see Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 260 and John Florio, pg. 245). In *Hamlet*, Horatio himself expressly states (Act V, scene 2) “I am more an ancient Roman than a Dane” (“The Roman world was synonymous of Virtue”- Gerevini, pg 303) Horatio is Hamlet’s trusted friend and, through Hamlet’s admiration for Horatio, Florio/Shakespeare reveals his own admiration for Horace and for his concept of life; it is to Horatio that the dying prince entrusts the task “*to tell my story*” that ends tragically in a duel with Laerte.

Taken from this perspective, Horatio is the personification of the bond of friendship at its highest level, which is along exactly the same lines as Horace’s concept of the importance of friendship (we can see, *inter alia*, the *Ode to Dello*, a poet friend of his, and the *Ode to Pompeo Varo*, his fellow scholar in Athens) and for the original Epicureans insofar as “original Epicureanism practiced and extolled the virtues of Friendship as the sole form of spiritual communication”; they, apart from advocating honesty, prudence and justice in dealing with the others, defined friendship (with an oxymoron) as a “*free bond*” unlike the “*binding relation*” as set out by social organisation (E. Paolo Lamanna, *Nuovo sommario di filosofia*, vol. I, Firenze, 1971, pg. 120). The “XXVII Capital Maxim” (one of the forty latter-chosen Maxims that contained elements of Epicurean Philosophy) stated, furthermore that “Of all of the good things that can be obtained through wisdom to achieve happiness, the greatest of these is friendship”.

“He was my friend, faithful and just to me” says Anthony (of Cesar) in Shakespeare’s “Julius Caesar” (Act. III, Scene 2), who is referring once again to friendship.

Furthermore Shakespeare solemnly proclaims in Cymbeline’s last: “let A Roman and a British ensign wave Friendly together”. Thus, considering that the English believed that both the ancient Britons and the ancient Romans descended from the Trojans (who had been defeated thanks to the deceit of the Greeks, the famous “Trojan horse”), sharing the same nature, the same virtues and the same moral principles.

We cannot fail to mention, regarding friendship, that Florio himself truly cherished the value of friendship; apart from his friendship with Will, we need only remember his friendship with Giordano Bruno, with Ben Jonson and with the Earl of Essex that was unflinching, even when the Earl of Essex fell into disgrace (which was not true of Francis Bacon as Gerevini points out; see pg.312, 313 – see also as for the importance of friendship for Florio, footnote 11 below).

To conclude this point, it is worth noting again that John considered Friendship as the most important kind of relationship, even more important than the mere “biological” relationship “father-son”. To such purpose, John could not have better expressed his spiritual communion with his father and his love for him than by recognizing Michelangelo “above all” as a “Friend”; being Friendship the result of a day-by-day mutual free choice, which entails the sharing of a common view of life, common values, interests, pain for being exiled (in the case of John and Michelangelo), in other words a spiritual communion.

The coincidences abound and if we closely examine Horace’s aphorisms, they become all the more startling. Indeed, the more you read the intriguing story of Florio/Shakespeare, the more the possibility of a connection emerges with Horace’s ideas which can be summed up with the following three well known aphorisms:

- “Aurea mediocritas” (in English “The Golden Mean”): this does not mean mediocrity in the way we understand it nowadays.

*Mediocritas* in Latin was understood to mean a way of life to follow or intended as a way of shunning excesses in constant pursuit of a sober and measured “Mean” (Golden and thus precious)<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> *In the Ode dedicated to Licinus, who may have been the adoptive brother of Maecenas’s wife, we find the concept of “aurea mediocritas”. (Horace Odes II, 10,5). “It’s better to live, Licinius, neither always pressing out on the deep nor, trembling and cautious, hugging overly close to the dangerous shoreline. Whosoever cherishes the golden mean safely avoids the squalor of a hovel and discreetly keeps away from a palace that excites envy. Most often it is the huge pine that is shaken by the wind, and the highest towers that fall the greatest fall, and the tops of mountains that attract the lightning”* (translation by Peter Saint-André, [http://books.stpeter.im/fire/horace2\\_10.html](http://books.stpeter.im/fire/horace2_10.html); Scholasticism expressed a similar concept, derived also by Aristotle, saying: “In medio stat virtus”, i.e “virtue is the mean”). The image of the huge pine is very evocative; it towers over the other trees however it is more exposed to the devastating fury of the wind

It was regarded as the ultimate objective which was exceedingly difficult to achieve yet which ensured “being” and fulfilment in the most positive and realistic sense.

As Saul Gerevini points out (see pg. 323 of his cited book) “*In Florio’s writings we find precisely that, it is not drinking or smoking that are, in themselves, reprehensible but rather excessive consumption...*”.

*Aurea mediocritas* was thus regarded as a virtue that was rather difficult to pursue, that entailed moderation in all things, since happiness cannot be achieved through excesses.

*Aurea mediocritas* meant achieving moderation in all things without ever veering towards excess, as the poet himself recommended when he stated *est modus in rebus, there is a proper measure in things*, i.e. the golden mean should always be observed (Horace, Satire I, 1, verse 106).

Again Horace, along the same lines, invites us to “vivere contentus” (“to live content”), accepting our own lot (Satire, I, 1, verse 3, notwithstanding Horace’s invitation to “seize” any opportunities that each situation inevitably presents, as better detailed below, in our commentary on Horace’s aphorism “*carpe diem*”), and to “vivere contentus parvo” (“to live content with little”- Satire, II, 2, verses 1 and 110; see also Odes, II, 16, verse 13, concerning to “*vivere parvo bene*”, “to live well with little”)<sup>8</sup>.

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that could uproot it. Horace advocates a life of restraint whereby it is preferable not to stand out in order to elude the “destructive force of the wind” (that in practice can take the form of other people’s envy; such image of the huge pine is also echoed in Shakespeare’s “Cymbeline” - Act IV, scene II - where “The wind has the capacity not to move a violet but to flatten a mountain pine”; see J.Bate, “Soul of the Age”, 2009, pg.54). The concept of “*aurea mediocritas*” derives from the Epicurean conception related to moderation and control of passions; “*passions, hopes and fears should be governed by reason*” in order to reach the “*equilibrium*”: all of which was “*an absolute characteristic of Florio*” (Giulia Harding, “*Florio and the sonnets - Part two*”, pg.3, in this website; she refers to the “Neo- Stoicism”, which was in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century a “*mixture of Stoic ideas with [inter alia]...Epicurean notions*”, v. Lopez-Pelàez Casellas “*The Neo-Stoic revival in English literature in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century: an approach*”, pg.94, dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/fichero\_articulo?codigo=1700539. Also Jonathan Bate underlines the influence of Epicureanism on Shakespeare’s world (Soul of the Age 2009, pg. 413 onwards; as for the Epicurean value of friendship, defined by Bate as the “*cardinal Epicurean virtue*”, see pg. 415 and 423). The entire chapter 24 of Soul of the Age is dedicated to “Shakespeare the Epicurean”. Bate points out that Shakespeare would have discovered many Epicurean ideas when he read Montaigne, who referred to many Epicurean concepts also quoted by the Roman poet Lucretius (pg. 415). In accordance with Epicurean philosophy, “*The good life is...to be achieved ...through the pursuit of the pleasure – with the proviso that over-indulgence of the appetites will not bring enduring happiness*” (Bate, pg.415). “*Pleasure may require us to limit our desires. Mental pleasures are greater than physical ones because they are not enduring*” (Bate, pg. 414).

<sup>8</sup> Horace’s concept derives from the Epicurean conception; indeed, Epicureo in his “Epistle to Mycenaeans” on happiness stated that “it is fitting that we be content with little...abundance is relished all the more if we are not dependant upon it”. The same concept is echoed in the words “*parva sed apta mihi*” (“small but suitable for me”) which is part of a composed “distich”-which made up the inscription that was hung in his home in Ferrara - by Ludovico Ariosto, as a noted, great fan of Horace and of his concept of “*modus vivendi*” (“way of life, one’s concept of life, measure in living”, which are also echoed in Ariosto’s Latin poems and Satire) as well as an author who was certainly known by Florio given that he was expressly mentioned in the list of authors he read when researching for his dictionary *New World of Words* (what’s more, “*Furious Orlando is one of the elements that triggers Hamlet’s madness: Orlando is mad and his furious madness contaminates European literary production*”- Gerevini, pg. 300). The notion of a “sober” home that would not arouse envy had been specifically dealt with by Horace, precisely in the Ode concerning the concept of “*aurea mediocritas*” (see footnote 7 above). Horace’s opinion was that one’s home should not arouse envy but nor should it be crumbling (“*caret obsoleti sordibus tecti*”); Ariosto reaffirms that he is satisfied to

This is thus an invitation to live life without excesses, a “frugal life” and so be content with what may seem little (but which is certainly better than nothing!).

Essentially, settle for and be content with, the little you have, or what to you seems little (including the gift of good health and life itself) that you have and limit your needs to the essentials (“*parvum parva decent*”, which may be translated as “he who contents himself, lives content with little”, i.e. with the essentials - Epistles, Book I, epistole 7 “To Maecenas”, line 44).

Indeed, such a way of seeing things fits Florio like a glove. His motto “*Chi si contenta gode*” reflects in few words Florio’s philosophy of life and just translates Horace’s concept of “*vivere contentus*” or “*vivere contentus parvo*”.

Florio was a supreme master of popular Italian mottos (that “Were never before brought out of Italy”; see the last lines of the mentioned Sonnet “Phaeton to his friend Florio” in the epistle To the Reader of Second Fruits), which throughout centuries passed on, primarily through oral tradition, “*pearls of wisdom*” and “*frutes, flowrets of moralities*” (as Florio himself considered them, as Gerevini points out in his cited book, pg. 298 and 140; see also Tassinari, Shakespeare? Pg.126, John Florio, pg.102) as the two “*Fruits*” collections show; they set out to develop, enhance and consolidate the use of mottos in written English where they had no equivalent.

Regarding this, we can reiterate that the motto adopted by Florio (“*Chi si contenta gode*”) encapsulates and perfectly captures the sober wisdom of the ancient poet Horace and of his “*Vivere contentus parvo*”!

We can add that, in Italian, the reflexive verb “contentarsi” is related to a sense of measure, limitation, restraint, moderation, sobriety, self-control (see Dizionario della lingua italiana Devoto - Oli); all of which are related to the “*aurea mediocritas*” aphorism. This Italian reflexive verb is, in turn, etymologically linked to the verb “*to contain*”, related to the capacity to figuratively hold, control and restrain emotions, desires, passions etc.

It is not very easy to translate the meaning of such reflexive verb into English; in our view, we have to limit ourselves to translating it “*as it is*” in the Italian language. And “contentarsi” means the reflexive English verb “to content oneself” (see entry on “to content” in Dizionario Inglese-Italiano e Italiano-Inglese Ragazzini) in the abovementioned sense linked to the words limitation, moderation, self-control, restraint etc. In the light of the above clarification, it remains confirmed and reinforced the

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have a small house “*sed non sordida*” (using an expression very similar to Horace’s).

translation proposed in paragraph 2 above (“*he who contents himself, enjoys*”) and directly related to the “*aurea mediocritas*” aphorism as well as to the concept of “Ataraxia”, which was deemed the only way, in accordance with the Epicurean philosophy, to reach ultimate happiness.

By the way, it is worth noting that “self-control”, which is a quite typical - generally recognized - English virtue, is not very different from Ancient Roman concepts of “equilibrium and measure” (“*est modus in rebus*”).

Finally, Florio himself freely rendered his Italian motto (“Chi si contenta gode”) into English in *Second Frutes* (the sentence is uttered, in Florio’s work, by Giordano Bruno) as follows: “*Who lives content hath all the world at will*” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 141, footnote 72; John Florio, pg.103).

In these brief notes alone, it is the fourth time we encounter the haunting word “world” (Florio’s “*World of Wordes*”; Globe Theatre’s motto “*The whole world is a playhouse*”- translation of the Latin version “*Totus mundus agit histrionem*”; Shakespeare’s quotation “*All the world’s a stage*”), which echoes Bruno’s concepts concerning the new role of our world (a “speck of dust”) within the “infinite worlds” (see also pg 3 above and footnote 9 below).

It is also worth noting that Florio’s “*to live content*” literally translates Horace’s “*vivere contentus*”!

Florio’s portrait (reproduced in the edition of 1611 of the World of Wordes) includes this motto, the Latin inscription “*Jo[h]annes Florius*”, as well as very Brunian sun or sunflower figures as a heraldic symbol. It is worth noting that the sunflower is linked to the pseudonym (“*Heliotropio*”) that Bruno, the “old fellow Nolanus”, attributed to John Florio in his work “*De la causa*”; since “*heliotropism*” (the motion of flowers or leaves towards the sun) is the main feature of the sunflower. Sunflower and “*heliotropism*” symbolize the Copernican heliocentric theory, which Bruno firmly asserted together with his own original theory of the infinite worlds.

According to Yates, Florio’s portrait represents “a sharply cut face, with neatly pointed beard, mobile mouth, horizontal nervous furrows across the brow, and wide open eyes... The expression is alert, intelligent and guarded”. The following lines of Latin appear beneath the portrait: *In virtute sua contentus, nobilis arte, / Italus ore, Anglus pectore, uterque opere / Floret adhuc, et adhuc florebit; floreat ultra / FLORIUS, hac specie floridus, optat amans / Tam felix utinam* (Content with his own worth, noble in his art, / Italian in tongue, English at heart, both at once in his work / he flourished still and will

flourish in the future./ He who loves him desires that FLORIUS, florid in this portrait, may continue to flourish./May he continue to be so content). That he wrote them himself is perhaps suggested by the allusion to his bicultural nature, half-Italian and half-English, and by the inevitable concluding quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Such lines of Latin testify the moment of maximum satisfaction for the author (who really hopes for its continuation), who occupied a position of great favour at Court (Tassinari; Shakespeare? pg. 141; John Florio, pg. 128).

Florio's motto ("Chi si contenta gode"), in our opinion, does not express a defeatist vision but rather the desire to seize something positive out of each and every situation in life and to see elements that bring satisfaction and optimism. In Italy there is a saying "*il meglio è nemico del bene*" which translates as "*the pursuit of perfection takes away from what is good*". Therefore, if we aspire only to "perfection" we run the risk of not seizing the good things that are within our reach (and so doing a disservice to what is good, in the pursuit of impossible perfection that doesn't exist in this world).

The example of the publication of his Sonnets (as beautifully reconstructed by Giulia Harding) on the occasion of James I's birthday shows how Florio was even willing to publish material that had not been properly proofread (and so with some errors) just to achieve his objective (to please the Queen, on the day of the King's birthday); what's more, doing his utmost to "embellish" the publication with decorative straps and taking great care of the Sonnet that would be the "gem" of the collection as it was written by the Queen herself.

Horace advocated, in short, shunning excesses, "being" oneself, self-fulfilment and relishing all that one can (realistically) enjoy.

Florio, also towards the end of his days, "*contented himself*" (lived content), notwithstanding all courtiers' "pensions" were suspended by law, due to the financial difficulties resulting from James I's disastrous administration (Gerevini, pg.390). After 1619 (when his beloved Queen Anna passed away), Florio retired to Fulham (an area of south-west London) where he died of the Plague in October 1625 (see Gerevini, pg. 401). He was lovingly nursed by his second wife Rose Spicer (married in 1617; "*never had husband a more loving wife, painfull nurse, or comfortable consort*" as Florio underlined in his will, "*written with [his] owne hand*"; see Gerevini, pg. 395, 396; Florio really appears "romantic and poetic" with his "*dearly beloved wife Rose Florio*", see Gerevini, pg. 395). In his will (on July, 20<sup>th</sup> 1625) he left to the Earl of Pembroke (to the same Pembroke, Heminges and Condell - two of the main actors of Shakespeare's

Company - had dedicated in 1623 the First Folio, published - together with Jaggard - by Edward Blount, the usual publisher of Florio's works!- see Gerevini, pg. 397) his Italian, French and Spanish books (“*about three hundred and fortie*”), his “*perfect dictionary*” and other Italian and English volumes (including “*ten of his dialogues, written collections and rhapsodies*” ...), as well as a “*jewell*” received as precious gift by Queen Anna; Florio could never have thought of depriving himself of such a sentimental value! It is worth noting that all traces of his vast library have been lost with the exception of two books: the first was a copy of a book related to Chaucer's works and the second a copy of the Ben Jonson's “*Volpone*” with the following dedication: “*To his loving Father and worthy Friend Master John Florio. Ayde of his Muses. Ben Jonson seales this testimony of friendship and love*” (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 85 and 94; John Florio, pg.81).

Despite his financial difficulties (see his letter sent to Cranfield - currently kept in *Public Record Office-The Sackville Papers* - in order to look for a “schoolmaster” job; see Gerevini, pg. 390, 391), deep inside Florio felt proud and truly satisfied (“Content with its own worth , noble in his art” as set out in the lines beneath his portrait) to have contributed to the success of his fundamental mission (loved better!) and also during the period spent in Fulham he worked on two important initiatives: the translation into English of Boccaccio's Decamerone and his cooperation in the First Folio (1623), where all Shakespeare's works are collected (Gerevini, pg.394 and pg.397 onwards). He also revised his dictionary in view to its third edition; after Florio's death, Giovanni Torriano, Florio's pupil, further revised and improved Florio's dictionary in 1659 and a second edition of such new dictionary was published in 1688 (*Dictionary Italian and English , First compiled by John Florio, London, Holt and Horton, 1688*, kept also in the Library of Crusca Academy in Florence; see Gerevini, pg. 392; see John Florio's Contribution to Italian-English Lexicography, by D. J. O'Connor © 1972; see also the website <http://213.225.214.179/fabitaliano2/dizionari/corpus/schede/0029383.htm>).

- “Carpe diem”: is closely tied to the previous concept (Odes, I, 11; 8; in English “*seize the day*”). It means managing to find each day the positive side of situations and even in the most critical situations identify and seize the opportunities that invariably exist and allow us to “be”, to find fulfilment, to take positive action immediately, in the present and to derive pleasure from doing so; it means to always see the “glass half full” and take on the changes that each day (which is always different from the day before) brings, and look at changes, not with the worried eyes of those who fear the new but rather with

our minds and eyes focused on the great opportunities that each change inevitably opens up. Thus, also in accordance with J. Bate's opinion - *Soul of the Age*, 2009, pg.425 -, related to "...the following ideas of Epicurus in Shakespeare's reading of Montaigne. The view that true wisdom involves being content to live in the moment rather than reflect anxiously on the past and the future"; which, once again, is echoed in the motto adopted by Florio "He who contents himself, enjoys.

As for the second half of Horace's aphorism "*quam minimum credula postero*" ("*place no trust in tomorrow*") which is directed at an imaginary maiden called Leuconoe which means "Pure mind" according to its ancient Greek etymology), in my view, this most certainly does *not* mean to take no interest in the future but only to be clear that we live only in the moment, that favourable opportunities should be seized immediately and as they say, "*don't put off till tomorrow what you can do today*". According to this logic, tomorrow you may no longer have the same possibilities that are available to you today to undertake an initiative that will benefit you, possibly putting off such an initiative in the hope of something even better coming up in the future; but, by doing so, as we have already pointed out, if we aspire only to "perfection" we run the risk of not seizing the good things that are within our reach. Indeed we should also bear in mind that others may move more promptly than we and "others may seize the opportunity" taking it away from all those who did not seize it promptly, according to the logic of "*the first mover's advantage*".

Seize thus, each day the opportunities that arise! Who more than Florio, a Jew in exile, could adhere to such a life maxim to survive and "be" as far as is possible!

From the point of view described above, we can safely say that Florio not only managed to "seize" opportunities but also to make them more favourable in advance and even promote opportunities like, for instance, when he argued in favour of the expansion of the British Empire, "alerting the crown to the opportunities for colonization in the Americas" (see Gerevini, pg. 355; Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 245; John Florio, pg. 229) which would make it easier to spread the culture of which, along with Will, he was the creator and the bearer.

- "Lathe biosas": is normally translated from the ancient Greek as "live unobtrusively" (see Horace's Epistles, I, XVII, 10: "*nec vixit male qui natus moriensque fefellit*", "*nor has he lived ill, who from birth to death passed hidden, unknown and unobserved*"). This precept is the complement to the two previous ones and is closely linked to them.

Horace advocated living, “being” whereas often “standing out” only serves to arouse envy and prevents man from being himself and from achieving his mission (“*a friend of mine that loved better to be a poet, than to be counted so*”). Living unobtrusively means achieving fulfilment with one’s own “being”, pursuing what interests us and what we derive pleasure from, being careful that “standing out” does not undermine in any way the fulfilment of “being”; a vision in keeping with, what nowadays we call privacy, the respect of one’s own “being” and at times achieve fulfilment beyond any external or formal recognition<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> The same concept, related to the Epicurean philosophy, is expressed by J. Bate with respect to Shakespeare: in particular, Bate underlines the poet’s “*resistance to the pursuit of public glory and posthumous fame - summed up in the Epicurean precept that would have been the perfect motto for Shakespeare: ‘HIDE THY LIFE’*” (J. Bate, “Soul of the Age”, 2009, pg. 425; see also J. Bate’s article of 6 August 2009, ‘*Hide thy life: the key to Shakespeare*, where he finally underlines that “*Shakespeare has been allowed to hide his life for too long*”; such article is available at <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=407629>; we fully agree with Bate: it is high time Shakespeare - to be intended, in our view, the name of the intense collaboration between Will Shagsper of Stratford and John Florio, see footnote 4 above - were no longer hidden! Hopefully, the extent and features of such collaboration are to be the specific purpose of further future studies and research). But - in the light of what is explained in this document - we suggest that such precept would have been the perfect motto for Florio, in addition to the famous motto actually adopted by Florio! It is worth noting that just in the first page of his cited book “Soul of the Age”, the following pregnant words stand out as a kind of epigraph related to Shakespeare’s “mind”: “*‘HIDE THY LIFE’ - Motto of Epicurus, quoted in Michel de Montaigne, ‘Of Glory’, translated by John Florio (1603)*”. We can confirm that it really makes more sense to associate this motto with John Florio (whose literary contribution to Shakespeare’s works actually remained hidden; being just Florio – precisely as the title of this document summarizes - the scholar that “LOVED BETTER TO BE A POET THAN TO BE COUNTED SO”, which can be regarded as Florio’s real “spiritual testament”; Florio, the man who had renounced the glory of Shakespeare, is rightly defined as the “hidden poet”, the “clandestine dramatist” by Tassinari, Shakespeare, pg. 82, John Florio, pg.16, 79, 88, 103), rather than with Will (who - as for his posthumous fame - indisputably became, as well known, worldwide extraordinarily celebrated due to the works associated to his name; furthermore, “the first print edition of plays to bear Shakespeare’s name...appeared in 1598”- see J. Bate, The Genius of Shakespeare, pg.22). To conclude this point - on the basis of the content of this document - in our opinion this motto fits Florio like a glove! However, it is finally worth noting that, thanks to J. Bate, is probably the first time (or one of the first times) the name of John Florio stands out in the first page of a book written by an English scholar about Shakespeare (and Florio’s name is also cited a good seventeen times in such book!).

Furthermore, according to the concept of the “golden mean”, it is better to live, as the Epicureans advocate, in a serene manner rather than standing out and being noticed, as in the image (see footnote 7 above) of the huge pine tree, sheltered from the fury of the wind and refraining from living in lavish palaces that would also lead to arousing envy. It is in keeping with such a reserved and moderate life related to the concept of “*lathe biosas*” as well as the importance in Epicurean vision of amicable relationships which bring forth Horace’s creative “*otium*” (“*otia liberrima*”, “*utterly free*” “*otia*” according to Horace, who intended to point out that the main feature of “otium” was really the pursuit of inner freedom”- Epistles, Book I, epistle 7 “To Maecenas”, line 36; Horace, who had been retired to his loved countryside and had been requested by Maecenas to come back to Rome, retorted that he was ready to give back the farm received as gift by Maecenas, rather than to lose his freedom). Also Jonathan Bate, Soul of the Age, 2009, underlines the importance of Horace in Shakespeare’s world (see, pg. 84, 89, 100, 145; at this age Horace’s poems were already translated into English and Horace and the other classical authors were illustratively quoted by John Lily in the *Short Introduction of Grammar* - the set text for Latin teaching in Grammar schools, introduced by a royal proclamation of Edward VI - see “Soul of the Age”, 2009, pg.112, 83, 84, 89); English poets’ admiration for Horace was such that “*Jonson set himself up as the English Horace*”, whose Art of Poetry “*combined nature with art*”- J. Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare 2008, pg.26* (Horace is mentioned a good twelve times in the cited Bate’s books, *Soul of the Age* and *The Genius of Shakespeare!*). Horace would retire to the calm and privacy of his farm in Sabina to do what he truly loved i.e. reading high-brow literature, studying, writing and engaging in stimulating, pleasant conversation with trusted friends: a far cry from how we view idleness nowadays! Back then (generally for the ancient Romans) “*otium*” referred to all activities that allowed individuals to pursue inner freedom and find true fulfilment through their love of art and culture (while, “*nec-otium*” was an activity other than “otium” - “*non-otium*”-; it strictly consisted in a “working/business activity” and constituted the etymological root of the verb “to negotiate”; roughly, “otium” included “freely chosen” cultural, creative and often important activities, “*nec-otium*”, the job and the role related to the necessities of life or to a public office; for completeness, it seems that, during the post-industrial society, the boundaries

This is a typical theme in *Hamlet*, however Florio's entire life seems to be characterised by "being", even if it meant wearing "masks" ("*in disguised array*", as Nashe said; see Gerevini, cited book, pg. 271), even "in hiding". Traces of Florio are, in a way, "indelible" (see the copper decorative strap that ornaments Shakespeare's Sonnets, as revealed by Giulia Harding) and his "masks" often didn't manage to protect him, as in the case of the attacks by Robert Greene, who spotted the "paw" of Florio who was trying to hide behind "*the skin of an actor*". Statements by

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between job, study and game have been partially dissolved - see De Masi, *L'ozio creativo*, 1995; the said distinction - otium/nec-otium - is set out, in very general terms, also by J. Bate, *Soul of the Age* 2009, pg. 13, who - pg.149 - underlines that Will would reread and meditate upon Florio's Montaigne translation in his "*otium*" at Stratford; recently, see, on the matter, Isabella Nuovo, "*Otium e negotium*", 2008). Indeed, Horace too felt it his noble mission to refine and elevate Roman culture which at the time had a universal scope; the same worldwide mission Florio had for English culture and the English language (Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 23, 219; John Florio, pg.16, 201) through colonial expansion (also Florio/Shakespeare's title of "World of words" of 1598 - apart from the "pun" - just like the name given to the "Globe Theatre" -1599- remind you of universality as a well as of Bruno's theories of "infinite worlds" and, as for "World of words", of "unitary": "letters, syllables", words are "parts related ...to the whole"; see also J.Jones, pg.23; it is worth noting that the naming of Globe Theatre is linked to its crest - displaying Hercules bearing the globe on his shoulders - and its motto inscribed above the entrance door - "*Totus Mundus Agit Histrionem*", "The whole world is a playhouse", the whole world play-acts; this motto was slightly re-worded by Shakespeare in his work "*As You Like It*", Act II, Scene 7, as follows: "*All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players*").

We mustn't forget that, similarly, Florio too, devoted himself to his "loved" poems and plays in the "spirit of otium", when not on duty as a "schoolmaster" or a "courtier"; it is worth noting that such duties were remunerated (see Gerevini pg. 317), while, according to a very famous ancient Roman "motto", "Carmina non dant panem", "Poems do not even give daily bread". The supreme poets of the past too had been permitted to freely write their masterpieces, thanks to the "protection" of a "patron of the arts" or a "court". Virgil and Horace themselves had been allowed to be poets just thanks to the protection of the most famous "patron of the arts" of all time, the wealthy Maecenas. Ludovico Ariosto had been a "courtier" poet and Dante Alighieri himself (see also footnote 12 below), who had been banished from his native Florence, lived in exile and described in his "*Divine Comedy*" - Paradiso, XVII, lines 55-60 - his inner pain in wandering through the Italian "courts", longing for the asylum and protection necessary to accomplish his "divine" poem, as follows: "*You shall leave everything you love most: this is the arrow that the bow of exile shoots first. You are to know the bitter taste of others' bread, how salty it is* [metaphorically, "how stiff the price of such bread!"], underlying the painful aspects of "courtier life"] and know how hard a path it is for one who goes ascending and descending others' stairs" (such words were uttered by Dante's great-great-grandfather Cacciaguیدا, predicting Dante's painful future of exile; it is a "prophecy" "*post eventum*", "*after the events*", typical of Dante and Virgil - translation into English from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dante\\_Alighieri#Exile\\_and\\_death](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dante_Alighieri#Exile_and_death) l).

Florio too was allowed to incognito and freely devote himself to his "loved" poems and plays, just thanks to his remuneration as a schoolmaster and courtier; such remuneration and Florio's "apparent" status of a mere schoolmaster and courtier (see J. Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 57) were actually Florio's "keystones" for his "hidden" activity as a poet. Within this context, Florio must have devoted himself in an intimate and private sphere to what he most loved and was most passionate about ("*loved better*"), in spite of the hostility of his rivals, i.e. to the writing of poetry and plays; and he did so in a private setting of quietness and serenity, away from prying eyes. We also have reason to believe that in this "edifying space" devoted to his innermost love of art, Florio would have engaged in creative conversations with trusted friends, not least Will of Stratford. Fruitful exchanges of opinion between two people that were so very different, yet who complemented each other and shared common passions and feelings, must have been highly enjoyable, happy moments of enthusiasm in the spirit (especially for Florio) of "*otium*" to be understood as a diversion from one's everyday routine, the enjoyment of man's true pleasures and the fulfilment of his truest and most intimate aspirations.

And in a setting of such productive, yet fun and playful exchanges (since "He wins every hand he who mingles profit with pleasure", "*Omnem tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci*" - Horace, *Ars poetica*, 343) which also put into practice the Epicurean concept that extolled the virtues of friendship as "the only form spiritual communication can take" whereas relationships other than friendship expose you to envy and do not lead to happiness. It is in such a context that the relationship between John and Will ought to be explored, a relationship that was conducted in the joy and serenity of "discretion" and in the knowledge that both were satisfying their -needs to instil the immense creativity and culture they possessed, especially when they "worked together" in literary works for all humanity. They were master carriers of culture; fulfilled by such an important mission and driven by the vital necessity to pass on the joy of their poetry for

Florio/Shakespeare (whereby he apologised for his “*unpolished/untutored lines*”; see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pp. 134, 135; John Florio, pg. 119) was a way of “disguising” himself and playing down his writing that was almost certainly not unpolished; he never “blew his own trumpet” nor paraded his proficiency in any way. He avoided (in far as possible) his talent becoming an obstacle to his own self-fulfilment, to his “being”.

If I may, at the risk of boring my readers, I’d like to share a few further thoughts on the aphorism “*lathe biosas*”.

Literally it means “*hide yourself while living*” (such sentence can also be translated into English, as follows, according to the same ancient Greek root of “*lathe*”: “*be latent while living*”). Anyone who has studied ancient Greek will know that the suggested translation for the imperative of *lanthano* (*lathe*), followed by the participle of any verb [in this case of *bioo*, “to live” (“biology” is the science related to life), whose participle is *biosas*], follows a precise rule which consists in transforming the participle in imperative and the imperative in participle; the translation consequently, in this instance is “*live hiding yourself (in hiding)*”. Epicurean and Horace’s aphorism is the classic example used to illustrate this grammar rule; as a consequence, there can be no doubt that Florio (who was also an expert on ancient Greek) was familiar with this aphorism, as he would have been with the fundamentals of Greek philosophy and Latin literature, including the Supreme poet Horace.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, it is indisputable Florio would have been very familiar with Florio this aphorism, taking also into account that this Epicurean motto was also quoted in the “Essays” (“Of Glory”) by Michel de Montaigne (ardent admirer of Horace!) and was translated into English by Florio himself as “HIDE THY LIFE” (see also footnote 9 above). Indeed Florio truly appreciated Montaigne’s “Essays”, where he could also find some of Horace’s concepts (such as the Epicurean motto “Hide thy life”) which were very close to his own existential dilemma; around 1597 (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 151; John Florio, pg. 139), Florio, “*the hidden poet*”, “*the clandestine dramatist*” (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 85, John Florio, pg. 16, 79,

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others to enjoy and appreciate.

<sup>10</sup> Recognising in Florio/Shakespeare Horace’s (who in turn borrowed from the Greek philosophers) wisdom further bears out Florio/Shakespeare’s image of a cultural current (assimilated into a life-giving flow of water) that originates in Meridione, in the South (which had already been a major source that contributed to key civilisations including the Egyptian civilisation), that as Tassinari points out (Shakespeare? pg.10; John Florio, pg.14) “*rather than stagnate in a declining language and culture*” “*made an impact on the Tudor culture, enhancing and transforming it.*” Thus, “Shakespeare’s works emerged from the “heart of Europe” and were mostly founded on Humanism and Renaissance (firstly of Italy, as well as of France)” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.18; John Florio, pg.14).

88, 103), began working on translation of the “Essays” into English. Thus, “pearls of wisdom” of the Supreme Roman poet Horace (including the motto mentioned above as well as the aphorism reminding us “to be content to live in the moment”, to “seize the day”) were widely quoted by Montaigne’s “Essays”; furthermore, thanks to Florio’s masterly translation of the “Essays” into English and Florio’s contribution to Shakespeare’s works, such “pearls of wisdom” spread worldwide, profoundly permeating culture throughout the world (see also footnotes 10 above and 12 below). From a different point of view, it is worth noting that the literal Greek construction of this motto (“*hide yourself [be laent] while living*”) dictates (imperative) not to be conspicuous (for as long as you live, to live, to survive, to fulfil one’s true self, one’s own mission).

The aphorism was created in the Epicurean world to prevent philosophers (although encouraged to cultivate friendship) from *getting noticed* in a group and therefore being liable to being *tainted* by the reigning corruption in society.

On closer inspection, this aphorism can even be regarded as the aphorism of camouflage or protective mimicry, a technique that is extremely widespread in nature to ensure the survival of the species.

If you want to “be” and to survive, you should not stand out, you must disguise yourself, you must hide behind something or someone (according to one of Florio’s motto, “*anonymity is a very good protective measure!*” - Gerevini, pg. 216).

You should not be like the huge pine tree, standing out and towering over others and for that reason, more exposed than everyone else to the fury of the wind that can easily uproot the pine tree, as described by Horace in his Odes with this evocative imagery (where the fury of the wind especially symbolizes the envy of the others - see footnote 7 above).

This survival technique of disguising himself seems to be at the heart of Florio’s life and thus Hamlet’s dilemma, in the light of this, becomes pregnant with meaning.

If we also consider Florio’s work as a spy (the famous letters sent by Mary, Queen of Scots, that were opened and resealed, so that the intrusion would not be detected! – S. Gerevini, pg. 95), this very much entailed “being” inconspicuously; similarly, if we consider his secret participation in the “School of Night” and in Palace affairs, including his involvement in the preparations for Princess Elizabeth’s wedding ceremony not to mention his influential role as private secretary to Queen Anne (“The Groom of the Privy Chamber”) from 1603 to 1619 (Gerevini, p. 317; Tassinari,

Shakespeare? p. 95, John Florio, pg. 227; Encyclopaedia Treccani,- 1949 edition, entry on Giovanni Florio).

In general, Florio spent his entire life “being” without being conspicuous, so much so that the fruits (his literary works) of his true self are numerous, whereas any hint that might enable these literary works to be traced back to him were so carefully “disguised” that trying to reveal that he actually wrote such works is far from straightforward and 400 years later, the task of deciphering the intricate puzzle of his disguise are in full swing.

*Hamlet* thus extols the virtues of “camouflage”; *The Tempest* is the (partial) regaining of one’s identity.

By way of conclusion of this paragraph (and before concluding these notes in the next paragraph), allow me to make an entirely incidental comment on the character of Horatio in *Hamlet*. Just like the reconstruction proposed above, Horace’s philosophy can be connected to Florio’s “mind” and his life story as well as to the exaltation of “friendship” (in the play between Hamlet and his trusted friend Horatio and in real life between John Florio and Will of Stratford<sup>11</sup>), as the “*sole form of spiritual communication*” allowed, according to the Epicurean concept.

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<sup>11</sup> To further expand on this, the character of the “trusted” friend Horatio (apart from incarnating Horace’s “wisdom”) is the “personification” of “friendship” and is also a more specific reference to (apart from Will) Giordano Bruno, his “old fellow” as argued by Gerevini, with whom Florio had shared the secret that he participated in “School of Night” and also his experience at the French Embassy; indeed Hamlet, speaking to Horatio makes an undisputable reference to Bruno’s theory of “*infinite worlds*” (see also Julia Jones, cited article, pg.21, in this website: “I will only mention...the famous line with strong Brunian overtones made by Hamlet: ‘There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.’”- Hamlet, Act I, Scene 5, lines 166-167; it is worth noting that Hamlet was published the year after Bruno’s death in Rome on 17 February 1600 during the festivities to celebrate the new century)! However it is equally true that Florio/Shakespeare, as pointed out by Gerevini (see for instance pg. 247) is an old hand at the playful use of words, their multiple meanings and double entendres. Besides, one does not exclude the others. Furthermore, in Hamlet, Horatio addresses the dying Hamlet using similar words (according to critic Edmund Malone) to those used by the Earl of Essex before his execution on 25th February 1601: “Good night sweet Prince and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest” (Act V, scene II). M. Praz (Preface to “Shakespeare - tutte le opere”, Firenze 1964, publisher Sansoni, pg. XII) explains how the Earl had uttered the following words: “When my life separates from my body, send your blessed angels and take my soul to the joyful heavens” (see also Gerevini, pg. 312 and 313). In conclusion, in Hamlet, through Horatio there is the symbol of friendship, a clear reference to Florio’s dearest friends, Giordano Bruno and the Earl of Essex, whereas any reference to Will could only be implicit and deliberately discreet, in the light of Florio’s need and desire to “hide away” this relationship so as not to be exposed to his rivals’ envy. For the sake of clarity, such vital need of “secrecy” forced Florio (the hidden poet) not only not to reveal his relationship with Will, but also, if necessary, to disown it anyway. In the light of the above, it is no surprise if we do not find “direct evidence” of the mentioned relationship between John and Will, especially taking into account that such hidden relationship was destined to remain “secret” in order to provide John with all the protective measures which were necessary to allow him to serenely carry out his poetic mission; within such framework, any such evidence would have been accurately concealed just like the name of John in Shakespeare’s works (such a secret relationship could have also offered some benefits to John, who would not have been directly exposed to possible criticism of the spectators). Finally, even if some direct evidence had survived, it would be most likely destroyed by the Shakespearian zealots, who indeed created new false materials, and more than that, destroyed documents compromising for the Stratfordian identity (see footnote 4 above and Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 90, footnote 48 and pg. 95, John Florio, pg. 338, footnote 428).

Indeed, by emphasising here just some of the profiles we have explored above (in the text and in the footnotes), it turns out that the motto that Florio had chosen as his own personal motto (“*Chi si contenta gode*”) fully echoes Horace’s concept of “modus vivendi” (“*Vivere contentus parvo*”), whereas the amicable cooperation with Will “away from prying eyes” is a thrilling, joyful and rewarding relationship that illustrates what Horace and the Romans referred to as “*otium*” (see in detail in footnote 9 above), i.e. study, reading, pleasant and stimulating conversations with trusted friends which allowed individuals to find true fulfilment, to be themselves through their love of art and culture in a private sphere.

Such cooperation in unison may also have enabled them to cut down the time it took to write a literary piece to record levels, something which intensely irritated their rivals (see footnote 3 above).

In the light of what has been revealed above, it seems irrefutable that the character of Horatio in *Hamlet*, self-declared and avowed ancient Roman, should be traced back to Horace: to Florio/Shakespeare’s admiration of his concept of a “*sober and measured*” life and of “*living unobtrusively*” (“*lathe biosas*” meaning, as explained above, both a way of acting away from prying eyes by working with Will, and a veritable camouflage to ward off his rivals’ envy) as well as the concept of “*vivere contentus parvo*” of Epicurean origin (i.e. of “chi si contenta gode”, “he who contents himself, enjoys”; see also footnote 8 above) that refers to the aphorism of “*The Golden Mean*” of the supreme Roman poet Horace and to his view of being content to live in the moment (“seize the day”).

The concept of “*vivere contentus parvo*” was later used by Ludovico Ariosto, who too was a poet, well known to Florio, and was also an admirer of Horace (see footnote 8 above).

To conclude this point, Horace thus (see also footnote 10 above), who incarnates the highest level of “equilibrium, measure and virtue” of ancient Rome, it appears clear here that he was a beacon of great wisdom - who in turn also borrowed from Greek Epicurean Philosophy - which illuminates (also thanks to Montaigne and Florio’s translation of the “Essays”) Florio/Shakespeare’s poetry and by extension, culture across the globe, given the rise of the English language through the expansion of the British Empire.

What’s more, Horace had taken on the noble mission of elevating Roman culture and dignity of the leading Roman people, also through ethics, “to a sphere of universality

and immortality”, and to such purpose removing any residual “traces of roughness” (“*vestigia rursus*”) of the past (see Enzo Nencini, *Literarum fastigia*, publisher Principato, Milano, 1972, page 159 and Horace’s *Epistles, II, 1, 160*; Horace’s concept of a man “*Integer vitae scelerisque purus*”, “Irreproachable in his life and free from blame”- *Carmina I, 22*- was also quoted by Shakespeare in his *Titus Andronicus*, Act IV; Scene 2 and by John Lily in his *Short Introduction of [Latin] Grammar* - see also J. Bate “Soul of the Age”, pg. 84 and our footnote 9 above; in line with Horace’s concept Shakespeare’s presumed motto “*not without right*”, mentioned by Bate, Soul of the Age, pg. 378 could also appear).

Just like Florio who pursued the mission of elevating the English language and the culture of England above the others (bestowing them with their own original distinctiveness, see Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 23, 86, 219; John Florio, pg. 16, 201), also with the help of Will of Stratford (see Gerevini) the “true” representative of English culture which at a time was undergoing a “phase of explosion” through British colonisation and the spread of the English language worldwide.

Florio’s mission was precisely to make an impact on the Tudor culture, enhancing and transforming it, by means of his poetry and culture (see Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 10; John Florio, pg. 14). He did not want to be counted a poet, but he wanted to be a poet and leave his universal and immortal cultural mark for posterity.

It is worth noting that Florio’s desire to immortalise his poetry was shared by both Horace and Shakespeare.

Horace, in his world-famous Ode, “*Monumentum aere perennius*” (*Odes, III, 30*), extolled the immortality of Poetry, declaring himself proud to have completed his important poetic mission: “*Exegi monumentum aere perennius/ regalique situ pyramidum altius/ quod non imber edax, non Aquilo inpotens/ possit diruere aut innumerabilis/ annorum series et fuga temporum./ Non omnis moriar multaque pars mei /vitabit Libitinam:...*”

“I have erected a monument [my Poetry] outliving more than bronze [Note: the metal used for the bronze statues erected in honour of important figures] and higher than the Pyramids of ancient Egyptian kings. The corrosive rain cannot obliterate this monument. Nor the North Wind raging can destroy it. Nor can the years, nor can the ages passing. Some part of me will live [my Poetry] and not be given over into the hands of the goddess of death Libitina”.

Shakespeare, in his Sonnet No 55 (considered “a wonderful and superb Sonnet, one of the best of Shakespeare’s Sonnets”- see Melchiori, Shakespeare, pg. 244) expressed the same concepts, to honour the memory of a friend, as follows: “Not marble, nor the gilded monuments/ Of princes, shall outlive this powerful [immortal] rhyme; /But you shall shine more bright in these contents [in the verses of my immortal, powerful Poetry] /Than unswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time. /When wasteful war shall statues overturn, /And broils root out the work of masonry, /Nor Mars [god of the war] his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn [my Poetry]/The living record of your memory. /'Gainst [Against] death and all-oblivious enmity/ [By means of my Poetry] Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room/ Even in the eyes of all posterity ...” (full text of all Shakespeare’s Sonnets, duly commented, is available in the website <http://www.shakespeares-sonnets.com/> ). Then, Shakespeare’s immortal Poetry shall outlive in spite of death and through it shall outlive also Shakespeare’s celebrated young friend.

It is worth noting that in both Horace’s and Shakespeare’s abovementioned quotations, Poetry itself is considered a memorial “monument” (such image is however to be figuratively intended: see Horace’s “*monumentum*”; see Shakespeare’s “*living record of the memory*”) and as such, it is comparable to other monuments, which are respectively the following in the Horace’s Ode and in the cited Shakespeare’s Sonnet: 1) the bronze statues in honour of famous figures [Poetry is also considered higher than the Egyptian Pyramids]; 2) the marble monuments [marble was used for statuary and monuments including important tombs] or the gilded monuments [gold-plated memorial monuments were widely also used in churches] in honour of princes [royal sons or daughters].

In both cases, Poetry is more “powerful” (English translation of Horace’s concept of “*perennius*”), i.e. destined to outlive more than the other monuments and as such it is able to be immortal and also to confer immortality to its author (in Horace’s Ode) or to a young friend of the author (in Shakespeare’s Sonnet) and in general to the facts extolled by it (see Melchiori, Shakespeare, pg. 245).

Indeed, poems (and thoughts) are destined to be passed on to posterity in different, easier ways than the other “monuments” (orally in the ancient times and then by means of copies written by hand or printed) and so they are capable of surviving in spite of the passing of times and the fire of the war.

Therefore, Professor Mario Praz (see Encyclopaedia Treccani, edition 1949, entry on “Shakespeare”, volume XXXI, pg. 588) points out that Shakespeare’s Sonnet No 55 (which shares its theme with that of several others Sonnets such as, Sonnets No 18, 19, 65, 81, 107, 123, concerning the opposition of the power of Poetry to death; such Sonnets has been extensively studied by Alessandro Serpieri, “*I sonetti dell’immortalità*”, 1975, as mentioned by Melchiori, Shakespeare, pg.245) largely translate the same concepts expressed by Horace in the mentioned Ode III, 30; he also notes that Horace’s concepts were frequently adopted also by the poets belonging to the French group of the “Pléiade” (see also our footnote 12 below).

In turn, Florio too was truly proud of his Poetry and important mission, which made an impact on the Tudor culture at the right time, enhancing and transforming it.

Thus, Florio too left his universal and immortal cultural mark for posterity, in accordance with his image of the “cultural current” (assimilated into a flow of life-giving water) which originated in the South (which had already made important contributions to key civilisations such as the Jewish, Chaldean, Egyptian and Greek civilisations) and arrived at the right time in England, so preventing it from “becoming stagnant in a declining language and culture” (see Tassinari, Shakespeare?, pg. 10, John Florio, pg. 14 and 23; see also our pg. 45 above and our footnote 10 above).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Within the above described framework, Dante Alighieri ought to be mentioned; indeed, he similarly pursued the mission to elevate, in the area corresponding to the present day Italy, the culture, as well as transforming the “vulgar tongue” into a literary modern language. As for the relationship between Dante’s works and Shakespeare’s, see: Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 145, 266 onwards, John Florio, pg.133, 249 onwards; Gerevini, pg. 265, 360, 361. The original text of the “Divina Commedia” (translated into English many years later, in 1802!), was well known to Florio, who considered it (similarly to other of works of Dante’s) the “*hardest but commented*”; indeed, Florio had read four comments of Dante’s works, including Boccaccio’s; Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.145, 262, John Florio, pg.133, 249; Gerevini, pg. 212. It is undisputed that among the works of Shakespeare and those of Dante there is a significant similarity, such as the themes concerning divinely founded monarchy and love (see Paolo and Francesca and Romeo and Juliet; Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 268, 269, John Florio, pg. 251, 252; Gerevini, pg. 210, 212; J.Jones, pg.22). Therefore Dante was the “hardest” for a “schoolmaster of the Italian language” as Florio was, and understandable exclusively through the comments of his works. Let alone the “others”! Just like Dante, Florio too pursued the mission of elevating the “rude” and “unpolished” English language (considered by Florio as his “*sweet mother tongue*”; Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.137; John Florio, pg.124,125; but it is worth noting that some Latin words -reproduced in the edition of 1611 of the World of Wordes – “Italus ore”, “Italian in tongue” - evidence that English was not Florio’s mother tongue and Florio, in order to overcome his difficulties, studied it “with passion and perseverance”, as it emerges from the “Epistle Dedicatorie” to the “World of Wordes” in 1598 - see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.47, John Florio, pg. 38), which nobody spoke in the European Continent and which “*passee Dover, it is woorth nothing*” (see Florio, *First Fruits*, XV dialogue, 1578; “The English language was still the Cinderella of Europe, a language that practically no one on the continent could speak”- Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 35, John Florio, pg. 28; Gerevini, pg. 379), transforming it into a “polite” literary language and “refining away some of the English barbarism”, as underlined by the scholar Frances Amelia Yates (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 53, 199, 218, 219; John Florio, 44, 181, 201 (English “politeness” is surely in debt of gratitude with Florio); in France, in the period 1550-75 Pierre Ronsard and Joaquin Du Bellay were the leading lights of the Pléiade, a political, cultural and poetical initiative on the part of a group of poets who promoted a movement to elevate the French literary language and make it the universally accepted heir to the classical tradition; Florio, in turn, between the end of the 1570s and throughout the 1580s was among the main proponents of “euphuism” a literary and “political” movement the ultimate goal of which was to elevate the language and culture of the English; Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 16, 53, John Florio, pg. 44, 178). To such purpose, Florio created and invented many new words (it is worth noting that the *New World of Words* contained

According to John Florio's image of the flow of life-giving water which originated in the South, the Greeks received "*their baptizing water from the conduit-pipes of the Egyptians*", who had received it in turn "*from the well-springs of the Hebrews or Chaldees*".

This very concept had been clearly expressed long before by Horace himself regarding the "cultural current" which "flowed" from the Greeks to the Romans, as follows: "*Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis intulit agresti Latio*" (Epistles, II, 1, 156-157) "*Conquered Greece conquered the savage conqueror [Rome] and brought arts into agrestic Latium [Rome]*" (Professor M.W. Isenberg - University of Chicago -

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about 70,000 Italian words translated into about 150,000 corresponding English words, on the basis of the reading of more than 250 books, precisely listed in his dictionaries; while the Dictionary of "*Crusca*", published in 1612 - a year after Florio's work -, contained about 28,000 words, being exclusively based on the works of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, in accordance with the criteria issued by Bembo; Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.138; John Florio, pg. 124, 125; it is also worth noting that, "The collection of so many English equivalents for each Italian word must have involved at least as wide a reading in English as in Italian"-Yates; "Florio in effect read "everything" in English from the primordial stage down to his own time", poetry, history, religious literature, theatre, texts on science, technology and pastimes; Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 139, John Florio, pg. 126). Indeed, his dictionary must be also considered the first complete English dictionary of the English modern language! His vast private library (which also contained the Bible translated into Italian by Diodati; later on translated into English in Geneva, published in 1560 and well known to Florio, given that his father was a Protestant minister; Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.145, 237-239, John Florio, pg. 133, 220-222; "*Florio worked on the drafting of the Bible issued by James I*" and translated into Italian the "Basilikon Doron" of James I, with a dedication to his King, containing his Italianised signature "Giovanni Florio"; Gerevini, pg.296, 318; Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.245; John Florio, pg. 228, 229, where Tassinari underlines that "James I, the monarch who laid the basis for imperial Great Britain with the union of the two crowns, is hailed as a Caesar by John Florio"), left to Earl of Pembroke in Florio's will (Gerevini, pg.394; the will of Florio is available in "Downloads" of this website), his masterful translation into English of the Essays of Montaigne published in 1603 (the relevant "*Epistle Dedicatorie*" can be read in the appendices of Tassinari's cited books; "*And in 1603, English men and women with small or no French had John Florio to thank, for in that year Montaigne spake English*"-J. Bate, Soul of the Age, pg.110), his translation into English of Boccaccio's Decamerone, published anonymously in 1620 (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 65, John Florio, pg.56), revealed Florio as the greatest scholar in the Court of King James I and "*supervisor of cultural activities at court*" (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 97; John Florio, pg.227), as well as advisor to the Queen Anne in her role as patron (Gerevini, pg. 317). Let us be quite clear about it! John Florio - just considering the sole works that can be explicitly, directly and indisputably associated with his name - must be rightly and deservedly counted among the greatest exponents of the world literature of all time! Florio was also the greatest translator of all time, just as Noble confirmed that "*Shakespeare was fond of paraphrase, like a man that loves words and tries his hand at free translation into English from Latin or French, so he often took his Biblical phrase and turned it expressing the same thought otherwise*" and Bible culture pervades all his theatrical writing (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 202; John Florio, pg.221); bearing in mind that expressed by Samuel Daniel and Florio: "*You cannot forget that which Nolanus [Giordano Bruno] ...truely noted by chaunce in our schooles, that by the helpe of translation, al sciences had their offspring*" (Gerevini, pg. 101). "*The works of Shakespeare of Italian subject bear testimony to a diffused knowledge of the Italian Renaissance in which Florio was its main spreader in the English Court*" (see, Encyclopaedia Treccani, edition 1949, entry on Giovanni Florio, written by Maria Frasccherelli). "*Shakespeare's knowledge of matters Italian can be attributed to the presence of John Florio in the household of the Earl of Southampton*", see J. Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 94; which - we note - however implied any kind of "complicity", "cooperation" "support" or similar "relationship" between Will and John. Furthermore, Florio's translations, dictionaries and works extraordinarily interlinked the Italian and English languages (Gerevini, pg.19). The language is for Florio (such as for Dante and Du Bellay) "*an instrument of creativity and power at the same time*" (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.16; John Florio, pg.210). In addition, "*banishment*", exile, is a main theme in Shakespeare's work (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.224 onwards; John Florio, pg. 205 onwards).

Finally, Florio/Shakespeare too (just like Dante in Italy) elevated the English culture, by means of their works (Gerevini, pg. 379); their works, thanks to the importance acquired by the English language as a consequence of the expansion of the British Empire, successfully spread worldwide, deeply informing the global culture.

points out that “The transmission of Greek culture to Roman civilization has been made proverbial in such immortal verses of the Roman poet Horace” - see the site <http://www.jstor.org/pss/265659> ).

This way, the declining Greek civilization transmitted its culture to the Roman civilization, which was undergoing something of an explosion due to the expansion of the Universal Roman Empire. Similarly, the Mediterranean culture was assimilated into Tudor England (see also footnotes 10 and 12 above), which was very close to the colonization of the Americas and to the expansion of the British Empire worldwide; while the Mediterranean (which had previously been the “heart” of the so called “known world”) was, after the discovery of America, inevitably destined to no longer be the hub of exchange of goods, people and culture.

Then, “*nothing new under the sun!*”

Thus, Florio’s flowing universal “cultural current” which had manifested itself in the past and shall continue to display all its “powers”. “John Florio is perfectly aware of the universal nature of the acquisition and transmission of knowledge and art” (see Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 42, Shakespeare? pg. 51).

In the light of the above, we can clearly confirm that Horace’s Ode “*Monumentum aere perennius*” (written by this Roman Supreme Poet, who enhanced and refined Roman culture and was significantly inspired by the Greek culture, as well as addressing very important themes such as immortality of Poetry and universality of Culture, the latter clearly symbolized in the Ode by the reference to the ancient Egyptian civilization and Pyramids) seems to be, together with Horace’s abovementioned verses contained in his Epistle II, 1, 156-157 (“*Graecia capta...*”), the basis of Florio/Shakespeare’s image representing the “cultural current” which originated from the Mediterranean and then touched the culture of the Tudor age.

Thus, such Ode and Epistle are to be considered in our view, fundamental documents to fully understand the origin, the aim and the content of Florio’s universal and immortal poetical-and-cultural mission, which was ultimately profoundly influenced by Horace’s thought wisdom and concept of life.

To conclude, everything that appears in this paper clearly emerges as the influence of Virgil and Horace on Shakespeare’s works becomes pregnant with meaning and clear if we relate it to John Florio’s life and the “universal” and “immortal” mission he accomplished.

#### 4. The study of Florio's life and the delicate nature of such research.

Florio's fear (which was proportional to the wall/shell he deliberately chose and built around himself as camouflage) was (probably even for centuries after his time) that being recognised (*to be counted*) as the author/co-author of Shakespeare's work would undermine the usefulness and universality of his poetry and thus jeopardise his love/mission of being a poet "over all else" precisely of someone who "*loved better to be a poet*".

Moreover, those who work on the historical reconstruction of Florio's work, face the paradoxical predicament that, in a sense, what they are doing may well be against Florio's will.

To take this notion to its very limits, it feels almost as though the revelations made by these scholars are in some way, a sort of "profanation".

Florio did everything in his lifetime to conceal his identity.

His "Spiritual Testament" is precisely the desire that his secret *not* be revealed.

As we have already said, just like Clark Kent, Florio too:

- (i) wished "to be", to achieve incognito (in an absolutely autonomous manner, together with Will) the fulfilment of his own abilities and "superpowers"<sup>13</sup> (and so be universally useful and appreciated for his work);
- (ii) did not want his true identity to be revealed insofar as this would have worked to the detriment of his "being", of his fulfilling his mission.

His true wish, Florio's real spiritual testament, it is worth mentioning once again, can be considered the few words he included in the *to the reader* section of the "World of Words" in 1598:

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<sup>13</sup> You only have to think of his incredible knowledge of literature (proportional to his immense library), linguistics (Florio was a "high-wire acrobat of language" a linguistic funambulist according to Tassinari Shakespeare? pg. 121, John Florio, pg.95; on his literary and linguistic creative skill see also Gerevini, pg. 258 onwards; Giulia Harding, "*Florio and language*", in [www.shakespeareandflorio.net](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net)), not to mention the mnemonic techniques he learned from Giordano Bruno (Gerevini, pg. 118; "*the boundlessness and almost unlimited power of the human mind...the capacity to comprehend the infinity of the whole reality as a unitary process*"; see J.Jones, cited article, pp. 8, 14), which were, in turn, based on c.d. "Loci Ciceroniani", considering that Cicerone, to memorise his speeches in the Senate, associated subjects to the places (those he was familiar with and were easy to memorise) he encountered as he walked from his home to the Senate (a bench, a fountain, a flight of steps etc.); these were the folders of his "brain's computer" to which he associated each element of his speech. Still today, when we make a speech (be it in English or Italian) perhaps without realizing it, we follow in Cicerone's footsteps, using expressions such as "*in the first place*", in the second place etc., to separate and structure the different elements of our speech. As for Florio's "*Shakespearean vehemence and linguistic inventiveness*", see in the first lines of the "To the reader" of "World of Wordes" of 1598, the expression "*wordes like swords*" (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 127, John Florio, pg.103). Florio's immense love for "words" can be appreciated by reading the following definition of "word", referred to in the abovementioned document: "*A good word is a de[a]w from heaven to earth: it is a precious balme, that has sweetnesse in the boxe, whence it comes, sweetnesse and vertue in the bodie, whereto it comes: it is a golden chaine, that linkes the tongs, and eares, and h[e]arts of writers and readers, each to other*".

I "LOVED BETTER TO BE A POET, THAN TO BE COUNTED SO" (this is unquestionably his profound philosophy, although it may be said that he shared this philosophy with his father Michelangelo, who, in all likelihood, considering he too was exiled, had similar experiences to John's).

A tricky situation indeed!

Florio built his own "tomb", his "hiding place" and now someone is trying to profane it!

It's as though we were contending with something not unlike the ancient Egyptians' curse of those who profane their tombs.

Clearly, as I said, we are taking this notion to its very limits and we are provoking, exaggerating, no doubt excessively, however something tells us that we ought to, in some way, reassure Florio's "flowing spirit" (allow me this allusion to *Hamlet*).

Florio can rest assured that the "disclosure" of his identity and origins, as well as the contribution he made, along with Will, to Shakespeare's work, no longer jeopardises the accomplishment of his poetical mission and the universal appreciation of his work.

He can also rest assured that such a disclosure no longer exposes him to the maliciousness of his detractors.

Consequently, any such historical reconstructions and "divulgateion" of what really happened must be conducted with particular sensitivity, especially considering Florio's crystal clear desire for being inconspicuous and should be careful to, in no way, detract from Florio's only real ambition to achieve universal appreciation and acknowledgement of his poetry, which was intrinsically his aspiration of being a poet. Historical research that fails to respect Florio's Spiritual Testament and the intentions of his mission of love of his work would be downright unacceptable.

I believe these clarifications, which are intended to clearly set out the sense of Florio's mission of love and his calibre as an artist, may prove very useful and serve as a preface for an informed acceptance by any public of the coherent purpose of the key research being done by Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding.

At the risk of appearing overly repetitive, it's worth firmly stating that Florio was a "*citizen of the world*" (he was born in London but spent his childhood in the small Swiss municipality of Soglio and attended the German University of Tübingen, his mother was probably English, his father Italian, his grand-parents probably Spanish!),

a “*go-between*” (to use a term he himself coined) who aspired to spread his labour of love throughout the world (I LOVED BETTER TO BE A POET)<sup>14</sup>.

To send forth his words of civilisation and love throughout the world, Florio seized and promoted the opportunity that the expanding British Empire offered, making it possible to divulgate his work in a language that was understood throughout the world. A historical reconstruction that set out to merely make nationalistic claims of authorship would take us away from Florio rather than bring us closer to one whose wish was to devote his life to the highest form of a universal and immortal Poetry that knows neither boundaries nor nation states.

A sincere Fan of John Florio,  
Massimo Oro Nobili

#### Bibliography and abbreviations:

This document was written in June 2009 in relation to the key studies written by Saul Gerevini (*William Shakespeare, ovvero John Florio: un fiorentino alla conquista del mondo*, Pilgrim editions, 2008) and Giulia Harding, as listed in footnote (\*\*\*) on page 1 above.

In February 2010, without prejudice to its original content - and thanks to Saul Gerevini’s encouragement - the document was significantly updated, reviewed and extended.

Furthermore, this new revised edition: (i) takes for granted the fact that the death of John’s father is to be dated between 1573 and 1576 (as some recently discovered documents - pending verification - testify) and (ii) makes reference, for the benefit of the readers of this website, to the following studies (some of which recently published and others which had not previously, be it fully or partially, been considered by the author):

- Bate Jonathan:
- *The Genius of Shakespeare*, 2008;

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<sup>14</sup> Florio/Shakespeare’s work is intentionally “universal” and, paraphrasing “his own” words (“All the world is a stage” – “As you Like It”, Atto II, Scena 7, which translates the Latin Globe’s motto), we can surely state that “All the World [was] his stage”, just like Bate points out (*The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 216 onwards). Furthermore Bate highlights that [Florio/] Shakespeare himself asked: “What is my nation?” (Henry V, Atto III, Scena 2) “What if [Florio/] Shakespeare asked that question now?” We would reply (just like Bate) “that his has been many nations and can potentially be every nation, and that is why he matters more than any other writer there has ever been” (*The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 221).

- *Soul of the Age - The Life, Mind and World of William Shakespeare*, 2009. (abbreviated in the document as “*Soul of the Age*”).
- Frasccherelli Maria, Encyclopaedia Treccani, edition 1949, Volume XV, pg. 564, entry on *Giovanni Florio*.
- Iuvara Martino, *Shakespeare era italiano*, Associazione Trinacria, Ragusa 2002.
- Jones Julia, “*The Brave New World of Giordano Bruno*”, in this website.
  - Melchiori Giorgio, “*Shakespeare, Genesi e struttura delle opere*”, publisher Laterza, Bari, 2008 (abbreviated in the document as “*Shakespeare*”).
  - Paladino Santi, “*Un Italiano autore delle opere Shakespeariane*”, publisher Gastaldi, 1954.
- Praz Mario:
  - Encyclopaedia Treccani, edition 1949, Volume XXXI, pg.588, entry on “*Shakespeare*”;
  - Preface to “*Shakespeare - tutte le opere*”, Firenze 1964, publisher Sansoni).
- Tassinari Lamberto:
  - *Shakespeare? E’ il nome d’arte di John Florio* (abbreviated in the document as “*Shakespeare?*”), 2008;
  - *John Florio, the man who was Shakespeare* (abbreviated in the document as “*John Florio*”) 2009 [for English speaking people]. “THE END OF A LIE” is the “subtitle” contained in the wrapper of the book.

#### Note

In “Downloads” of this [www.shakespeareandflorio.net](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net) website, the following documents (mentioned in the article above) can be read: 1) *Second Fruits*, 1591 the Epistle Dedicatorie; 2) *Second Fruits*, 1591, dedication To the Reader; 3) *World of Wordes* 1598, the Epistle Dedicatorie; 4) *World of Wordes* 1598, dedication To the Reader; 5) *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit*, 1592; 6) *Florio’s will*, on July, 20<sup>th</sup> 1625.

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