

**THE GENESIS OF HAMLET'S SOLILOQUY (YATES, 1934) -THE TWO FLORIOS**  
NEW NOTES ON JOHN FLORIO, TO FURTHER CONFIRM THAT HE ('LITERARY ASSOCIATE' OF  
WILLIAM - ENC. BRIT.1902, 9TH ED.), WITH THE SUPPORT OF HIS FATHER, MICHELANGELO,  
INCOGNITO WROTE THE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE TOGETHER WITH WILLIAM OF  
STRATFORD (\*).

[On the occasion of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of John Florio's 'The Queen Anna's  
New Worlde of Wordes' (1611) (\*\*)]

## **Preface**

These brief notes are a follow-up on a previous document which is also available on this website [www.shakespeareandflorio.net](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net) ("John Florio, the scholar 'that loved better to be a poet than to be counted so' and incognito wrote Shakespeare's works").

In our previous document, as an initial approach, we considered the two Florios as a "unicum" (see page 35 of the abovementioned document), given the close cooperation between father and son. This second article on John Florio, sets out to further describe the role of Michelangelo, John's father, an erudite Christian pastor and is no more than an introduction to this key figure. This role of Michelangelo Florio merits a great deal of further study. |

Moreover, some issues, which were discussed in great detail in my previous document, are only mentioned briefly in these notes. It may be therefore worth referring back to this previous document to gain greater insight into these issues.

Both these notes and the previous document are available in English and Italian and are based on the findings of research conducted by Saul Gerevini ("William Shakespeare, ovvero John Florio: un fiorentino alla conquista del mondo, Pilgrim editions, 2008) and Giulia Harding (whose research can be read in this website).

These personal and rather impromptu notes are the result of ideas that were prompted by some authors (Manfred Pfister, *Inglese Italianato-Italiano Anglizzato: John Florio*, in *Renaissance Go-Betweens. Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Andreas Hofele - Werner von Koppenfels, Berlin, New York, 2005 and Donatella Montini, *John/Giovanni: Florio mezzano e intecessore della lingua italiana*, in *Memoria di Shakespeare*, VI, Roma, Bulzoni, 2008) whom I have been reading recently and to whom I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks.

Special thanks should go to Professor Piero Boitani, who has recently written an excellent book in Italian, "Il Vangelo secondo Shakespeare", "The Gospel according to Shakespeare", Mulino publisher, Bologna, 2009, a real "shocker" (in the words of Giorgio Melchiori, who read some

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(\*)These notes are dedicated to my father, who passed away almost twenty years ago, the most skilled (along with my grandfather!) lawyer I have ever known. He was a keen scholar an expert in philosophy, the life and works of Horace (one of the greatest Roman poets, who lived between 65 BC and 8 BC), and a true "guardian angel" of family values.

(\*\*) This article was translated from Italian into English by Eva McNamara, to whom the author of this article would like to express his sincere thanks.

“passages” from it), which truly opens up Shakespeare’s entire works to new interpretations.

Reading this book sheds new light on the interpretation I am proposing of the genesis of Hamlet’s world-famous “monologue”, in which the “pathos” and the intensity of author’s emotional participation reach their peak.

In this regard, the study of Santi Paladino (a Calabrian Italian journalist, who was born in Scilla – in the Strait of Messina – in 1902 and died in 1981) published in 1955 *Un italiano autore delle opere Shakespeariane*” (published by Gastaldi, Milan), on the possible Italian origin of Shakespeare, further supports this argument. After almost 60 years, this study, still has to be regarded as a very relevant book (Santi Paladino’s niece was kind enough to give me a copy of this rare book). It is worth noting that the English scholar Frances Amelia Yates, in her book, “*John Florio. The life of an Italian in Shakespeare’s England*”, Cambridge University press, 1934 (the first paperback edition was printed 75 years later, in 2010!), expressly referred to Santi Paladino’s 1929 book “*Shakespeare sarebbe il pseudonimo di un poeta italiano*” “*Shakespeare would appear to be the pseudonym of an Italian poet*”; she even (as Tassinari points out) “lets it slip that ‘*there may be some truth*’ in Paladino’s hypothesis”, indeed making specific reference to some speculation concerning Michelangelo’s pilgrimage.

The more you study the life and work of John Florio and his father Michelangelo (what we have been trying to do here diligently, in our own, humble way), the more you gain an understanding of Shakespeare’s true self and of his works which reflect the “palpitating” feelings and emotions experienced by real men, in flesh and blood and whose genesis, would otherwise be quite incomprehensible!

Furthermore, in all the works published under the name of Shakespeare, you will always find, without exception, a hint of the presence of the two Florios (who had an intimate knowledge of all the most “powerful” figures of the time)!

Given this, the entry for “Shakespeare” in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (Ninth Edition, 1890) sets out a theory about the ‘Literary Association’ between William of Stratford and Florio that we wholeheartedly subscribe to.

Moreover, a careful reading of Yate’s cited book shows us how she, in 1934, definitively resolved the question of authorship, “camouflaging” her ‘discovery’ in an ‘overlooked’ footnote; particularly regarding *the genesis of Hamlet’s world-famous soliloquy*. I had been wondering for forty-four years (i.e. since I was fourteen and learnt the soliloquy by heart) why the anguish of the author was so very ‘extreme’. Now I am finally satisfied that I understand the terrible torments experienced in by the author which explain the existential questionings of the soliloquy!

A really gripping story emerges from this research; the story of two generations of scholars, characterized by “terrible” experiences, by “human falls”, but in general by a truly great “synergy” in pursuing their common cultural mission! And, at long last, their lives are perfectly “mirrored” in the works of Shakespeare.

According to my father’s teaching, I have tried to pursue “with love” this very interesting research.

A sincere thanks to the wonderful “team” of this website (including Corrado Panzieri, who gave some useful suggestions on Michelangelo Florio’s life), which, it is worth noting, Saul Gerevini effectively and authoritatively coordinated and without which, this humble essay would not have been seen the light of day.

Finally, special thanks to the brilliant American economist Frank Andrade (who recently became an Italian citizen), with whom I have had many opportunities to exchange valuable ideas on this document and who encouraged me to complete this essay.

This paper shall deal with the following areas:

1. The “go-betweens” and the transmission of culture.
2. John, a name that is no coincidence, that “firebrands” his life. The importance of this name in the Christian world.
3. Anchises/Aeneas and Michelangelo/John Florio.
4. Brief comments on the “authorship” of Shakespeare and on the “judgment” of the Supreme Court of USA of 2009. The lack of handwritten Shakespeare’s documents.
  - 4.1. *Brief comments on the “Authorship” of the works of Shakespeare.*
  - 4.2. *The “judgment” of the US Supreme Court in 2009. The lack of handwritten documents of Shakespeare.*
5. John Florio wrote the finest of Shakespeare’s sonnets (poetry and immortality).
6. The importance of Horace’s influence on Florio’s and Shakespeare’s works. Horace’s motto “*vivere contentus parvo*” and John’s Motto “*Chi si contenta gode*”. Horace as a “Go-Between”.
7. The two Florios: Michelangelo and John, a “unicum”, involving two generations for a “common mission”.
  - 7.1. *The study of the lives of the two Florios: a fundamental “key” to understanding their works, just like happens with other great poets. The example of Giacomo Leopardi.*
  - 7.2. *The origins of the two Florios. The Inquisition and Michelangelo’s imprisonment in Rome for heresy (since 1548). The death sentence. His daring escape on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1550. Two years of meditation and physical and moral pain of a person that is “doomed to die”. The genesis of Hamlet’s soliloquy (the question is explored further in §7.23). In 1934, Yates definitively solved the question of Authorship in an overlooked footnote of her book on John Florio (see also §7.17.2).
    - 7.2.1 *Finally Michelangelo regained his Freedom. His “renascent life” in a passage of his Italian work “Apologia”(1557). The passage is the continuation, in Italian, of the real life story, told to us by the same author of Hamlet’s soliloquy.*
    - 7.2.2. *In 1561, Michelangelo wrote the contents of Hamlet’s soliloquy, in a passage of his Italian volume dedicated to the life and death of Lady Jane Gray. He told Jane “ the outrages, the scorns [scorni] and the torments” he had endured in the Roman dungeons. In 1934 Yates “discovered” the truth on the Authorship and “camouflaged” it in an “overlooked” footnote (in Italian language) of her book on Florio.**
- 7.3. *Michelangelo’s arrival in London (1550). His activities as schoolmaster of many prestigious representatives of the English upper class.*
- 7.4. *Michelangelo’s “Act of fornication”(1552).*

- 7.5. John Florio's birth (1553). Michelangelo's "famigliuola" "small family": its vicissitudes just like the ones of the "Holy Family".
- 7.6. John's childhood (in Soglio) and his early education. Michelangelo's activities in Switzerland.
- 7.7. John and Michelangelo back in England. The "long-standing controversial issue" of the date of Michelangelo's death.
- 7.8. "First Fruits" (1578). The Preface and the importance of Michelangelo's support.
- 7.9. From 1580 to 1582.
- 7.10. John's friendship with Giordano Bruno in London (1583-1585). The importance of this friendship.
- 7.11. "Second Fruits".
- 7.12. The "turning point of his life". John Florio became "Resolute" (1591), his appellation, coinciding with his fruitful cooperation with William of Stratford.
- 7.13. The reasons behind John's and Michelangelo's decision to be incognito poets and playwrights.
- 7.14. The cooperation of the two Florios with William of Stratford in the Sonnet "Phaeton" (1591). Who is the "friend of mine that loved better to be a poet than to be counted so"? All three "contributors".
- 7.15. John Florio and Friendship.
- 7.16. The "common mission" of the two Florios. A "superior" mission, involving, for its "complexity", two generations". The enhancement of the English language and culture. Brief notes on the thesis of Santi Paladino (from 1955 book) and on the thesis of Tassinari, about the relationship between the two Florios.
- 7.17. The relationship between John Florio (to be considered as a "unicum" along with Michelangelo) and William of Stratford. The theory of the "Literary Association" between William and John, supported by Encyclopaedia Britannica ("Ninth Edition", 1890). It coincides with the thesis of Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding about an "intense collaboration" between John and William. Our theory on Holofernes.
- 7.17.1 The Role of the "Reader", when reading the works of Shakespeare.
- 7.17.2 The book by Yates on John Florio, published in 1934. It confirms the "connection" between Florio and Shakespeare.
- 7.18. The thesis of Santi Paladino in his article published in the newspaper "L'Impero" No. 30 on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1927 and in his book "Shakespeare sarebbe il pseudonimo di un poeta italiano?", Borgia Publisher 1929. The dissolution, in Italy, of the Shakespearian Academy in 1930.
- 7.19. "Worlde of Wordes" (1598). The dedication.
- 7.20. Some brief comments on the Sonnets.
- 7.21. The Gospel according to Shakespeare. The extraordinary knowledge of both Florios' of the Holy Scriptures' The "dew" (the divine "Word") becomes flesh and flesh once againturns into dew.
- 7.22. The translation of Montaigne's Essays. Shakespeare's debt to John Florio. The Tempest, an indisputable finally disclosed autobiography of the two Florios.

- 7.23. *The two Florios and Hamlet. At long last, a well grounded theory on the genesis of the famous “soliloquy”: the anguish of a man sentenced to death, a person “doomed to die”, who was awaiting imminent execution.*
- 7.24. *The “triune” nature of “Shakespeare”. The written testimony of Ben Jonson in “First Folio” (1623), “overwhelming” evidence in favour of the “Florian” theory. The “mystery” of the portrait of Shakespeare by Martin Droeshut, on the front page of “First Folio”.*
8. Giordano Bruno coined the expression “This theatre of the world”.
9. Shakespeare (i.e. “the Absolute Ioannes Factotum”) and Florio’s three names: John, Giovanni, Ioannes.
- 9.1. *The names John and Giovanni.*
- 9.2. *The “Epistle Dedicatorie” of “Queen Anna’s New Worlde of Wordes”. A passage of unbelievable creativity. The “travels of Florio’s mind” and the “travellers” of Hamlet’s soliloquy.*
- 9.3. *John Florio, the “Resolute Ioannes Factotum” and the passage of Greene concerning the “Absolute Ioannes Factotum”; a fundamental passage in the studies on Authorship of the works of Shakespeare. The role of the two Florios.*
- 9.4. *The third name: “Ioannes Florius”.*
- 9.5. *The portrait of John in 1611. The writings: “Praelector Linguae Italicae”, “Chi si contenta gode”, “Italus ore, Anglus pectore”.*
10. “Pay attention, Florio is about to speak” from his portrait.
11. The dictionary of 1611. The hope that Florio's dictionary and “Fruits” be studied in Italian schools. Should Florio’s dictionaries and “Fruits” be regarded as Italian literature that was produced abroad? Or as English literature, profoundly influenced by Italian literature? Or are they a “third” genre?
12. Brief conclusions.

## **1. The “Go-Betweens” and the passing on of culture.**

Studies related to John Florio consistently refer to the concept of a “go-between”, a sort of “messenger” that transmits culture from one country to another. “The activities of a go-between always involve movement ... the crossing of borders” and the “go-between ... inhabit ... the ‘liminal’ spaces of ‘passages’ ... ‘contact zones’ , “third-space”<sup>1</sup>. But obviously, this transmission of culture is not merely passive-it actually ends up creating a new culture, different from that of the country of origin and the host country<sup>2</sup>. It entails “constantly crossing the borders, so that even the notion of ‘border’ is challenged” and it places itself “*between two radically incongruous world images*”<sup>3</sup>.

We mustn’t forget that first undeniable evidence of the transmission of culture in Horace’s world-famous verses which refer to “cultural current” that “flowed” from Greece to Rome. This concept had been clearly expressed 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 - 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 passed on 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 and Stuart England, which was very close to the colonization of the Americas and to the expansion of the British Empire worldwide. Then, “nothing new under the sun!”<sup>4</sup>

Superb and along the same lines, is similarly, the image that John Florio expresses (mentioned several times by Lamberto Tassinari in his works) on the “cultural current”. It originated from the South “and the Greeks drew their baptizing water from the conduit-pipes of the Egyptians, and they”, in turn, “from the well-springs of the Hebrews or Chaldees” (see “The Epistle to the courteous Reader” in “Florio’s translation of Montaigne’s Essays”, published in 1603).

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<sup>1</sup> Manfred Pfister (*Inglese Italianato-Italiano Anglizzato: John Florio*, in *Renaissance Go-Betweens. Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Andreas Hofele - Werner von Koppenfels, Berlin, New York, 2005, pg. 32-33) and Donatella Montini (*John/Giovanni: Florio mezzano e intecessore della lingua italiana*, in *Memoria di Shakespeare*, VI, Roma, Bulzoni, 2008, pg. 48).

<sup>2</sup> Manfred Pfister (op.cit, pg.33) tells us that the word “go-between” was first used by Shakespeare (in his “Merry Wives of Windsor” – 1599-1600 – II.2.232-233) and then defined by Florio in his dictionary of 1611. Andreas Hofele, *Renaissance Go-Betweens*, 2005, Introduction, pg. 11 pointed out that “John or Giovanni Florio emerges as the exemplary figure, who, as it were, internalized his father’s move from Italy to England in order to adopt an ‘in-between identity’ of his own”. The same author told us (pg. 12) that “competent printing of Italian books was no problem in London”, such as the case of Giordano Bruno patently shows, who “felt no need for translation” of his vernacular works.

<sup>3</sup> Montini (op.cit. pg.47). In turn, Montini makes reference to: J. Gilles, *Shakespeare and the geography of Difference*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.37; M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London, Routledge, 1992; S. Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions. The Wonder of the New World*, Chicago, The University Press, 1991, pg. 119-51.

<sup>4</sup> Alessandro Citolini (*Lettera 4r*) claimed that, “the Trojans, the Greeks, and other peoples .... had come to Italy and remained there and from them issued the Roman People, who were [then] however no longer Trojan or Greek, but Italian”. According to Wyatt, *The Italian encounter with Tudor England*, Cambridge University press 2005, pg. 208 and footnotes 23-26, “Citolini acknowledges the incessant interpenetration of cultures as a fundamental mark of the way that they function ... he recognizes, as Bembo does not, that the ancient Romans themselves were a genus grafted from exotic foreign plants onto a native stock ... the model of cultural translation described here is also a fitting one for the migration of Italians and their culture to England, a process that ended with the similar assimilation of “foreign” Italians into the emerging English nation”.

John Florio knows perfectly well the mechanisms of passing on culture, which Horace had so well “carved” in his immortal verses; and Florio’s image is understandable in its fullness only by reference to the immortal verses by Horace, of which it constitutes a sort of integration, pointing out that, “back” in time, the same Greeks were themselves dependent on the culture of other previous civilization.

In addition, it is worth noting that in the same Epistle, in previous lines, Florio very clearly defines the function of a “go-between”, drawing on the words of the greatest thinker and friend he had ever known, Giordano Bruno: “*My olde fellow Nolano told me, and taught publikely, that from translation all Science had it’s of-spring*”. This means, first, that every science has its own language: mathematics “expresses” the world in numerical terms and figures; logic, through the consistency of the assumptions with the conclusions of speech; music, through the transposition in sounds of emotions and state of mind otherwise inexpressible. This also means, in a broader sense, that “translation” (from Latin verb “transferre” and its participle “translatum”), as the transmission of culture, is fundamental to scientific and cultural progress. No one can be accused of plagiarism if, for the purpose of his own creative work, has considered the pre-existing cultural heritage. It is said in Italy, in a very colourful manner, that it is quite inappropriate to “discover boiled water”, since only a complete “ignoramus” could do so! Florio ends his sentence concerning the birth of Science (i.e. Knowledge), claiming that: “Likely, since even Philosophie, Grammar, Rhethorike, Logike, Arithmetike, Geometrie, Astronomy, Musike, and all the Mathematikes yet holde their name of the Greekes” (see Florio’s “Epistle to the curteous Reader” in “Florio’s translation of Montaigne’s Essays” published in 1603).

Such branches of knowledge bear, in their own names, the mark of the Greeks and their etymologies could not but fascinate Florio, along with his Father Michel Angelo, the ultimate expert of “words” and of the “etymon” of the various roots that constitute the same language. Immediately afterwards, Florio adds and clarifies, as already mentioned, that the Greeks too were in turn dependent on the cultures of other civilizations. Therefore, a culture that, from the Jews and Chaldeans, and the Egyptians, it reaches the Greeks and subsequently the Romans (to close the limited “circle”, here purely considering the mentioned passages by Florio and Horace).

The Go-betweens were, as noted, cultural intermediaries, and therefore often possessed immense cultural knowlegde. They “reworked” so many texts and knowledge, that finally “etched” in their own memories so much information and they reused it albeit “unconsciously”. It is a very delicate “phenomenon” which has also been studied from a legal standpoint; and, as a lawyer, I wish to point out that it is a much “disputed” standpoint during the negotiations of certain contracts. Briefly, it is not uncommon for the parties of a contract to regulate such clauses for technological project jointly carried out by their employees that included a mutual exchange of confidential information and knowledge. On the basis of this clause “confidentiality” may not provide for the confidential information that is retained in the memories of the employees. On the basis of such a clause (whose obligations are however to be fulfilled in good faith and to be carefully considered), the parties may contractually consider that the confidentiality obligations, after the expiry of the information exchange period, may not be related to the confidential information which has been “etched” in the unaided memories of the employees, becoming a kind of “personal heritage” of such employees, an “inseparable” part of their own “persons”, “minds”, “brains”; so that such employees are entitled to

lawfully use it (albeit unconsciously) for future research, once the joint project has been completed. Also in this case, we find a kind of “third- space” (the “brain” of the employees in question), different from the two contractors’ intellectual property. The parties often insert in such “confidentiality agreements” a provision (aimed at preventing each other from “getting around the obstacle”), which prohibits, for a limited period of time (of course), the mutual possibility of hiring the other party’s involved-in-common-projects employees (and relevant “brains”); thus, to prevent so-called “industrial espionage”.

These are the modern technological “Go-betweens”!

The study of Manfred Pfister (op.cit., pg.33) gives us some interesting cultural explanations, pointing out that the first “go-between” would have been the Greek god Hermes, the messenger of the gods, who was intercessor between the gods and the mortals and revealed to the latter the real intentions of the deities (from which the word “hermeneutics” originated, science or art of interpretation, ...essential “word” for lawyers!).

I would like to add that, in the Christian world, the messengers of God are the angels, which, in ancient Greek, means “messengers”.

Therefore Michel Angelo’s vocation as a “go-between” is even recorded in his name. Indeed, according to the Romans, “*Saepe nomina hominibus addicuntur*”, “often the meaning of names fits those who bear the name”. To be more precise, the Angel Michael (one of the three Archangels together with Gabriel and Raphael) revealed to the elderly Sarah (ninety years old), wife of Abraham (at the time, one hundred years old), the imminent birth of her son Isaac and spoke to Abraham about sacrificing of Isaac.

## **2. John, a name that is no coincidence, that “firebrands” his life. The importance of this name in the Christian world.**

The name John/Giovanni Florio was no mere coincidence and there is objective evidence to support this argument.

The most incisive studies on John Florio (Manfred Pfister, op.cit, pg. 37 and 38) repeatedly emphasise the importance of the name Giovanni, given to him by his father Michelangelo, with deliberate references to the religious significance of this name in the Christian world.

This name has a very specific role in the revelation of Christ. Michelangelo, a Catholic and later Protestant pastor as well as proficient preacher and scholar of the Old and New Testaments, was well aware of all its implications.

The name John is, first and foremost, connected to John the Baptist, the greatest herald of the Messiah. The same Angel (not Michael, but Gabriel) announced the birth of John the Baptist to Zachariah (indeed, the Angel ordered him to give his son the name of John), husband of Elizabeth (elderly and barren), and announced the birth of Jesus Christ to Mary. John the Baptist, six months older than Jesus, according to the Gospels, leapt for joy in Elizabeth’s womb when the Virgin Mary came to visit her when she was already expecting Jesus.

He was a kind of “ferryman” who “interceded” (the English Court of Queen Elizabeth and James I would have described him as a sort of “go-between”) between the word of the Old Testament and the “Gospel” announced by Jesus Christ. He is the “voice” that actually cried out the words of God’s salvation (“*vox clamans in deserto*”, “a voice crying out in the wilderness” – Gospel of Matthew, 3, 3) and Jesus himself wanted to be baptized in the waters of the River Jordan by John the Baptist who, on this occasion, proclaimed that Jesus was the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”. John the Baptist “came for testimony, to testify to the light” (Gospel of John, 1, 7) and “he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children” (Gospel of Luke, 1, 17).

Then, there is John the Evangelist, one of the Lord’s favourite disciples, who began the very famous prologue of his Gospel with the words “In the beginning was the Word [in Greek, *logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. John was the Evangelist of the “Word” that came down to earth and became flesh (“The Word became flesh and ... We have seen his glory, the glory of the Only Begotten Son, who came from the Father” – Gospel of John, 1,14), to intercede between God and the world.

The name given to his son is an “indelible mark” that he will bear from the very day he was born, an eternal sign of the future his father predicted for his son, that of “mediator” of words and culture, a true “high-wire acrobat of language”.

And we certainly cannot say that the son didn’t live up to his father’s expectations or that the father could not be proud of his son!

John was to find “infinity” in words (“infinite in words”), as Samuel Daniel (poet and John Florio’s brother in law) said in his dedication to Florio for the translation of Montaigne’s *Essays* by Florio in 1603.

He was to find the infinite capacity of language, which led him to become very closely and indisputably associated with Giordano Bruno and his “infinite worlds”.

In the “Epistle Dedicatorie” of the 1598 *World of Wordes*, Florio explains the meaning of the title of his “*A Worlde of Wordes: since as the Universe containes all things, digested in best equipaged order, embellisht with innumerable ornaments by the universall creator*”. Florio himself, therefore, by compiling the dictionary, did something similar by creating a universal order for words “embellishing” and refining them as much as possible; and implicitly he was also a sort of great “universal creator”. Again, this is the echo of the Universe and of its infinity according to Bruno’s theories.

We find the “mark of his name” once again in Florio’s immense love of “words” and in the definition of “words” that appears in the “To the Reader” of the 1611 edition of *World of Words*: “*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*”.

Thus, a “divine, Pentecostal” vision of words, “that come down from heaven and penetrate minds, renewing them, puts them in communication with one another” as rightly pointed out by scholars (Donatella Montini, *op.cit.*, pg. 56), almost comparable to the descending “tongues of fire that

separated and came to rest on each of” the apostles on Pentecost and “All of them were filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak in other tongues[a] as the Ghost enabled them” (Acts of the Apostles, 2,3-4).

Indeed “words” and “tongues” virtually lived within the two Florios. Michelangelo was first and foremost a teacher but he was also an assistant and tutor to the *crème de la crème* of the English aristocracy, then, twenty years later it was his son’s turn (the younger generation taking the “baton”, as it were, from the older generation, in a kind of “relay race”). John became the foremost figure in the spreading of Italian and European Renaissance culture in England.

Michelangelo was a polyglot; apart from Italian, he knew Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Spanish and English. As Frances Yates said (in her 1924 book on John Florio) he was clearly his son’s first teacher and it was from him that John started learning these languages.

The names of father and son created from the very beginning a “symbiotic” relationship between the two great scholars; they had travelled together, “exiles”, throughout Europe, entering into contact with stimulating cultures and mentalities. John’s life and Michelangelo’s life had many points of contact!

### **3. Anchises/Aeneas and Michelangelo/John Florio.**

Their vicissitudes have some similarities with the legend of the escape of Anchises and Aeneas from their homeland (Troy, taken following the duping by the Greeks), as masterfully told by Virgil in the Aeneid (one of Shakespeare’s most loved poets). Also John and Michelangelo had to accomplish a very important “mission”.

It is the “*myth of foundation*”. Anchises and Aeneas had escaped from their native land and had to found a new city deriving from the union of two different peoples and their respective cultures, which was destined to become immortal in time and dominate the world; Michelangelo and John too, in turn, wished to shape and elevate the culture and language of the English people, who were also set to dominate the whole world, and to “found” a new culture and language, which would also derive from the union of different cultures and languages and was also destined to spread throughout the world.

There is a “*common mission*”, along with their fathers. A mission that Aeneas and Anchises embarked on together and which following the death of Anchises, Aeneas accomplished by himself. These missions were so “complex” and “overwhelming” for all humanity that it took two generations (where both father and son were exceptional), working together in “unison”, each day sharing experiences, emotions, thoughts...everything! The “common mission” becomes a “*superior mission*”, even a “divine” mission, to which all else takes second place (Aeneas’s love for Dido, for the Florios, the formal external recognition of their merits).

Both (Aeneas and John), so as to pursue their mission, were also supported 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 Michel Angelo).

In this respect, J. Bate points out that “The story of the Trojan war fascinated Shakespeare, which is hardly surprisingly since it is the *magnificent foundation of western literature*” (Soul of the Age, 2009, pg. 146).

Anchises, after his death becomes the “tutelary deity”, who 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”.

Michel Angelo and John (just like Anchises and Aeneas) shared the common experience of being exiles and being both devoted and confined to their official roles (as “schoolmasters” of the Italian language) which forced them to be incognito poets, concealing their identity behind the shield of their pseudonym; thus, taking also into account that they “loved better to be a poet, than to be counted so” (see in greater detail in my previous article mentioned in the preface above). However their poems and dramas, as well as the culture they passed on, were destined to become immortal.

#### **4. Brief comments on the “Authorship” of Shakespeare and on the “judgment” of the US Supreme Court in 2009. The lack of handwritten documents by Shakespeare.**

##### ***4.1. Brief comments on the “Authorship” of the works of Shakespeare.***

Important Institutions such as the Brunel University of London and have set up special authorship courses. Meanwhile distinguished representatives of the world culture have signed an *ad hoc* “Declaration of Reasonable Doubt about the Identity of William Shakespeare”<sup>5</sup>.

It goes without saying that for about 400 years everyone had a free and bona fide belief (according to one’s knowledge) on the “mystery” of Shakespeare.

In the course of the years, some figures, such as Dickens, Whitman, Hawthorne, Twain, James, Chaplin, Woolf and Sigmund Freud affirmed that *Shakespeare* was not the man of Stratford!

Mark Twain wrote a book on the issue, “*Is Shakespeare Dead?*” (freely available on the website [www.pagebypagebooks.com/Mark\\_Twain/Is\\_Shakespeare\\_Dead/](http://www.pagebypagebooks.com/Mark_Twain/Is_Shakespeare_Dead/)), where he supported the case for Bacon’s authorship.

Suffice to mention the words of the American writer Henry James (1843-1916):

*“I am ‘a sort of’ haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practised on a patient world”.*<sup>6</sup>

The issue of the “authorship” of the works of Shakespeare is currently dealt with by major contemporary scholars of Shakespeare.

One of the greatest American Shakespeare scholars, James Shapiro recently published a book “*Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?*”, New York, paperback edition 2011, to contest the

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<sup>5</sup> See the link <http://www.doubtaboutwill.org/declaration> .

See also the link: <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/courses/arts/shakespeare/en5518> .

See finally the link: <http://www.authorshipstudies.org> .

<sup>6</sup> The sentence was written by Henry James in a letter to Miss Violet Hunt, August 1903 in *Letters*. The issue was pointed out by Tassinari, Shakespeare?, pg. 18 and footnote 4, John Florio, pg.14 and footnote 1.

candidatures of Francis Bacon and Edward de Vere as possible authors of the works of Shakespeare. *John Florio is explicitly mentioned, in the Prologue, among the candidates for the 'authorship', at pg. 2 of such edition of this book*<sup>7</sup>.

One of the leading English Shakespeare scholars, Jonathan Bate, points out that: "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*".<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, no work has been written to demonstrate that Florio *was not* Shakespeare!

*"The alternative possibility, that the plays must have been written by an Italian, has never found favour"*. And Bate clearly explains the reasons: *"perish the thought that the works of Shakespeare might have been written by a foreigner... But because Florio was not an Englishman[born and bred], 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 1955*<sup>9</sup>.

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"*.<sup>10</sup>

Bate makes us clearly understand the nationalistic reasons for which the figure of John Florio is too *"dangerous"* for the Stratfordian authorship of Shakespeare and that knowledge of this extraordinary man had thusfar deliberately been confined to the "experts".

Bate, in the following pages<sup>11</sup>, tries to establish the Englishness of Shakespeare. He 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"<sup>12</sup>; 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"<sup>13</sup>)". Shakespeare is compared by Bate to a "bird singing in a wood". Thus Shakespeare was a "natural poet".

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<sup>7</sup> See the following website, concerning the 2010 edition, where John Florio is cited at page 4 of the Prologue:

<http://books.google.it/books?id=W8KtHtT3jNYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Shapiro+Contested+Will:+Who+Wrote+Shakespeare> .

At the same time, the director Roland Emmerich (director of many successful movies, such as "The day after Tomorrow") is directing the movie "Anonymous" (with Vanessa Redgrave). "Anonymous" is an upcoming historical thriller that will be released in cinemas in the United States on 30 September 2011 (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous\\_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous_(film)) . There the media will first break the "taboo" of Shakespeare as the "author" of the works attributed to his name; the movie supports the thesis of Shakespeare as a mere "pseudonym" and points out that just de Vere was the true author of the universal works of the Bard.

<sup>8</sup> The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 94.

<sup>9</sup> The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 94.

<sup>10</sup> The Genius of Shakespeare, pg.65 and 363.

<sup>11</sup> The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 160 onwards.

<sup>12</sup> The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 30.

<sup>13</sup> The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 26.

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 indisputably also artful; by way of example: what about Shakespeare’s “Roman” plays such as “Julius Caesar” and “Anthony and Cleopatra”? It is worth noting that Bate himself wrote in his following book: “*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*”<sup>14</sup>].

3) By way of conclusion of the syllogism, Shakespeare, as “natural poet”, must be a “native” English poet, i.e. not a foreigner.

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

#### **4.2. The “judgment” of the US Supreme Court in 2009. The lack of documents handwritten by Shakespeare.**

As a lawyer, I would like to report that the US Supreme Court took an impassioned interest in the question of authorship in early 2009.

This Court of law (as massively reported in the media) handed down the verdict (taken by the 9 justices in office and 3 retired justices) that “Shakespeare is a pseudonym”.

It was suspected that De Vere was the mostly likely author of the works of Shakespeare.

As massively reported on the Internet and in the newspapers (see, in Italy, *La Repubblica* on April 19<sup>th</sup> 2009, “The last judgment of the Supreme Court ‘Shakespeare’ was a pseudonym”<sup>15</sup>), the proponent of this intellectual initiative, which has occupied the minds of the elite of the overseas lawyers for years, was Paul John Stevens, Dean of the Court (now retired), appointed in 1975.

Stevens is an *Anglist manqué*, because he abandoned the doctorate in English Literature in 1941 to enter the Navy and studied Law after the war.

But this ancient passion never left him, because, as also reported by the Wall Street Journal on 18 April 2009, he involved his colleagues in an intellectual “*divertissement*” that has been going on for over twenty years. William Shakespeare is likely to be the pseudonym of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford.

Stevens says that Shakespeare was a “pseudonym” and this belief is “*beyond a reasonable doubt*”, according to the “formula” used in the Courts in relation to the culpability of an accused person.

Other justices shared Stevens’ thesis, others abstained<sup>16</sup>.

One Justice in particular from the Supreme Court (Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the first female Jewish Justice of the US Supreme Court) drew scholars’ attention to the importance of Florio! Justice Ginsburg provided a March email from her daughter Jane, a law professor, at that time in Rome. Jane Ginsburg wrote she recently saw an Italian television program postulating that “*Shakespeare was Sicilian and Jewish, sort of.*”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Soul of the Age, pg .100.

<sup>15</sup> The article is freely available in this website [www.shakespeareandflorio.net](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net) (section “articoli di stampa”).

<sup>16</sup> The returns of the voting are freely available in the following website <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123998633934729551.html> .

<sup>17</sup> See the website <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123998633934729551.html> .

At an earlier date, on September 25th, 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?”).

Justice Stevens said 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”*<sup>18</sup>.

Recently, on November 12th, 2009 the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society (the two main American institutions which for years have been promoting the candidature of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, as the true author of the works attributed to Shakespeare) announced that they had jointly presented the 2009 “Oxfordian of the Year Award” to John Paul Stevens, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court<sup>19</sup>.

Justice Stevens had long doubted whether William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon was the real Bard. In his cited article published by The Wall Street Journal (on April 18<sup>th</sup> 2009)<sup>20</sup> which received broad coverage in the media, Justice Stevens expressed his view that “the evidence that (Shakespeare of Stratford) was not the author is beyond a reasonable doubt.” We 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.’”*<sup>21</sup> We can fully share Justice Stevens’ reasonable opinions and concerns.

As a lawyer, however, I point out that real criminal offences were committed over time on the problem of “authorship” and investigations were instigated (real proceedings, unlike the “moot hearing” of the US Supreme Court).

The main point is that, no evidence has been found even on Shakespeare’s ability to write (another further, unresolved question remains on his ability to even “draw” his own signature!): none of his letters have been found and no proof exists on his attendance at the local Grammar school<sup>22</sup>. Scholars point out that Will “was born from a family of illiterates, in a village without culture, with

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<sup>18</sup> This “opinion” of the Justice Stevens was rendered in 1987, in “Moot Court Hearing”, and is freely available in the following web site <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/debates/americanudebate.html> .

This opinion is fully shared also by Professor Martino Iuvara, “*Shakespeare era Italiano*”, Associazione Trinacria, Ragusa 2002, pg. 23.

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.shakespeare-oxford.com/?p=257>

<sup>20</sup> See <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123998633934729551.html> . Also Charles Chaplin (see Gerevini, pg. 30), after a visit to Stratford said: “That such a mind ever dwelt or had its beginnings there seems incredible ... In the work of the greatest of geniuses humble beginnings will reveal themselves somewhere, but one cannot trace the slightest sign of them in Shakespeare”.(see Charlton Ogburn, Harvard Magazine 1974, freely available in the following website: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/debates/ogburnarticle.html>).

<sup>21</sup> See <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123998633934729551.html>

<sup>22</sup> See Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 38 and 41.

a brief rudimentary education”<sup>23</sup>. 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 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*’. This is pointed out by Tassinari<sup>24</sup> and J. Bate<sup>25</sup>, who confirms that Richard Quiney “in 1598 wrote the only surviving letter addressed to William Shakespeare, a request for a financial loan”.

According to my strictly personal opinion, the passage described in “The Merry Wives of Windsor” (Act IV, Scene i), where a schoolmaster is giving a Latin lesson on the very first “rudiments” of Latin to some pupils including a boy called William, can only be interpreted in the light of the whole context, characterized by the above mentioned absolute lack of evidence. I believe that, in such a framework, the passage might also be reasonably deemed as a well “deserved” scholastic recognition, just like a “honorary degree” properly attributed to a gifted artist as William indisputably was!

The frustration of the absence of any letters or other documents written by Shakespeare drove the “Stratfordian” Henry Ireland to fabricate “evidence” in 1795; he fabricated a series of false letters, some of which were 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<sup>26</sup>.

“According to Price and others, the most notorious of these forgers was John Payne Callier (1789-1883), the author 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.

It is legitimate and logical to suppose that these two individuals were not the only Shakespearean zealots to take matters into their own hands by creating new material, and more than that, by destroying documents compromising for the Stratfordian identity”<sup>27</sup>.

## **5. John Florio wrote the finest of Shakespeare’s sonnets (poetry and immortality).**

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<sup>23</sup> See Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 63, Shakespeare? Pg.88-89.

<sup>24</sup> See Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 89 and John Florio, pg. 337, who, in turn, makes reference to *Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography*, Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 2001, pg. 301 onwards, by the scholar Diana Price.

<sup>25</sup> *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 134.

<sup>26</sup> See Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 41.

<sup>27</sup> See Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 90, footnote 48, and pg 95, John Florio, pg. 338, footnote 428.

At this point, we emphasize that we “discovered” an interesting “passage” in Florio’s works, which appears, in our humble opinion, to be very important and provides some new hints.

We refer to the fact that, in the “Dedication” to Master Nicholas Saunder of Ewel, in *Second Fruits* (1591)<sup>28</sup>, eighteen years before the publication of “Shakespeare’s Sonnets, never published before” in 1609<sup>29</sup> (we are well aware that the manuscripts of some sonnets circulated prior to this date, but, in any event, Florio’s passage, accurately dated, ought to be considered!), John Florio says:

“I have consecrated my slender *endeavours*, wholly to your *delight* which shall stand for an image and *monument* of your worthnesse *to posteritie*.”

Shakespeare, in his Sonnet No 55 - which was considered “a wonderful and superb Sonnet, one of the best of Shakespeare’s Sonnets” (see Giorgio Melchiori, *Shakespeare, Genesi e struttura delle opere*, Bari, 2008, 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 survive in spite of death and through it o Shakespeare’s celebrated young friend shall also survive.

Thomas Thorpe (who published Shakespeare’s Sonnets) made clear reference (in his dedication of the Sonnets to the Earl of Pembroke) to “*eternitie promised by our ever-living poet*”<sup>30</sup>; i.e., to Horace, who, in his Ode “*Exegi monumentum aere perennius*” claimed: “I have erected a monument [my Poetry] outliving more than bronze [Note: the metal used for bronze statues erected in honour of important figures]”(Odes, III, 30) had also added that, thanks to his poetry (a

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<sup>28</sup> See such dedication in the pdf ‘John Florio second fruits’ in the following link [http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=11&Itemid=27&limitstart=20](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=11&Itemid=27&limitstart=20)

<sup>29</sup> See Melchiori, *Shakespeare, Genesi e struttura delle opere*, Laterza ed., Bari, 2008, pg. 242, who pointed out that the work was registered by the publisher Thomas Thorpe in the Stationer’s Register on May 20th 1609. It is also worth mentioning the study by Giulia Harding “Florio and the Sonnets - Part One”, in this website, where she gives substantial evidence about the publication, on June 19th 1609, of the Sonnets on the occasion of the 43rd birthday of King James I. According to Harding, the Sonnets also included a sonnet written by the Queen herself; she wanted to give her own gift to the King, on the occasion of his birthday, thus, accelerating the publication of the Sonnets. Florio may have been the person (factotum) who as always, on the Queen’s request rapidly published the Sonnets. Florio used his “decorative straps”, the same he had used in his translation of Montaigne’s “Essays”. He used again his “*unique*” German-made engraved copper blocks (*an indelible and indisputable hint of Florio’s hand!*); they (unlike English wooden perishable blocks) could be reused repeatedly. Finally, in his “Golden Fleece”, William Vaughn told us that, on June 19th 1609, on the occasion of the King’s 43<sup>rd</sup> birthday, Florio recited some verses of the Sonnets before the King himself, who was properly satisfied.

<sup>30</sup> See the dedication in Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 332: “To the only begetter of these insuing sonnets, Mr. W.H., all happiness and that *eternitie promised by our ever-living poet* wisheth the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth. T.T.”

“monument” that lasts more than other monuments): “Non omnis moriar multaque pars mei /vitabit Libitinam” “I will not entirely die, but great part of me [my Poetry] will become immortal, and it will not be given over into the hands of the goddess of death Libitina”<sup>31</sup>.

The peculiarity of Shakespeare’s Sonnet No 55 is that this Sonnet (differently from Horace’s Ode) does “*not follow the classical convention of claiming immortality for the poet*”<sup>32</sup>; but it “claims immortality for the poet’s beloved”, i.e. for the young Shakespeare’s friend, whose praise is celebrated in the Sonnet and to whom the Sonnet is dedicated. “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”. Then Shakespeare’s Poetry shall survive the wars and shall be the living record of your memory [i.e. of Shakespeare’s young friend’s memory] against the death and oblivion and *you will survive* [thanks to my Poetry] and *your praise* shall be in the eyes of “*all posterity*”.

We find the very same words and concepts, eighteen years earlier, in the “Dedication” of John Florio’s “Second Fruits” to Nicholas Saunder of Ewel; Florio’s “Second Fruits” (the results of Florio’s “endeavours”), “*shall stand for an image and monument of your worthinesse to posteritie*”.

*The literary work of Florio (Second Fruits) is an immortal “monument” just like Shakespeare’s Poetry.*

*In both cases, Florio and Shakespeare claim immortality for the figures to whom they dedicated their “monuments”; such monuments will render immortal “your worthiness” (concerning Nicolas Saunder) and “your praise” (related to Shakespeare’s friend) to “posterity”.*

We could also wonder about such “*deviation*” from classical convention; and we could also suspect that, as far as Florio was concerned (apart from his official works linked to his role of Italian Schoolmaster, just like the Second Fruits), immortality for a “*hidden poet*” could not have made sense at all. Hence, immortality for the Poem and, thanks to it, immortality not for the poet (who is “*hidden*”), but for the figure who is celebrated in the poem.

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<sup>31</sup> 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”. Horace had masterfully “carved”, in his Ode “Monumentum aere perennius” (Odes, III, 30), the power of Poetry and literary and cultural works, of defying time and assuring immortality to the author and/or to the content of his works; Horace’s Ode was clearly the basis of Sonnet No. 55 by Shakespeare “Not marble, nor the gilded monuments”.

According to a “universal” concept, poetry and poems (from the ancient Greek verb “poieo”, whose meaning was “to make”, “to build” something) really are “monuments”, as such comparable to other monuments and capable of enduring and outliving the other monuments (such as bronze statues, gilded monuments). “Textes, poems, sonnets ... survive alone by being read, quoted, translated, performed, and only to the extent that they are attentively and intensively read, studied and performed do they remain a crucial and canonical part of our cultural memory” (Pfister, Introduction to his last edition of the Sonnets of Shakespeare).

<sup>32</sup> J.Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, 2008, pg. 63. Similarly, also Melchiori, *op. cit.*, pg. 245.

The same theme is celebrated in the Sonnet 81: “Your monument shall be my gentle verse ... You still shall live,-*such virtue hath my pen,- ...*”. At long last, *an explicit reference to the “pen”, the fundamental “work tool” of a writer!*

It is worth noting that, according to Professor Mario Praz (see Encyclopedia Treccani, edition 1949, entry on “Shakespeare”, volume XXXI, pg. 588), 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 have been extensively studied by Alessandro Serpieri, “I sonetti dell’immortalità”, 1975, as mentioned by Melchiori, *Shakespeare*, cit. pg.245) largely translates the same concepts expressed by Horace in the mentioned Ode III, 30; he also notes that Horace’s concepts were frequently adopted also by poets belonging to the French group of the “Pléiade”.

Also Melchiori (op.cit. pg. 243-44) makes reference to Horace’s Ode (Odes, III, 30), pointing out that (1565-1647), an English scholar, in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598), already alluded to the “*sugared Sonnets*” of Shakespeare, some of which were already circulating “among Shakespeare’s *private friends*”.<sup>33</sup> Meres quotes, in a passage of his cited work, the first five verses of such Horace’s Ode and Melchiori (op., loco cit.) wonders whether Meres’s work was written before or after Shakespeare’s Sonnet No.55.

According to Manfred Pfister (Introduction to its latest edition of Shakespeare’s Sonnets Global) the Sonnet No. 55 “*speaks of its own powerful presence in this world until the end of history*”; in my personal view, poems and “good words” (also in accordance with Florio’s expression “*a good word is a dew from heaven to earth*”) share a kind of divine nature in defying the centuries and time. “The insistent comparison or *paragone* of poems and monuments in Shakespeare’s cycle emphasises again and again the performative surplus value of moving poetic speech over lifeless statues” (Pfister, op.loco, cit.). The same concepts, as Pfister points out, are also expressed (as already above mentioned) in the Sonnet No 81: “Your monument shall be my gentle verse” i.e. you will become immortal thanks to my “gentle verse” and not thanks to other monuments. In my view, in this context, Poem and Poetry (from the ancient Greek, “poieo”, which means “to build” “to make”) *per se* fall into a more general category, the “monuments”, and as such, are comparable to other kinds of monuments (bronze statues, marble monuments, used for statuary and important tombs, gilded monuments, widely also used in churches). Therefore, there is a relationship of “genus”/“species” between monuments and poetry. Monuments are the “general category” and poem is a “special category” of monuments. Indeed Horace and Shakespeare compared poetry and bronze statues, poetry and marble, since poetry, marble and statues are different kind of monuments.

*Horace, Florio, Shakespeare!*

In short, one of the most famous of Shakespeare’s Sonnets, the Sonnet No.55, had substantially already been written by Florio in 1591!

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<sup>33</sup> Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.231, John Florio, pg.212.

Perhaps it would be worth reading the texts of Florio with greater attention, because there we could find many other surprises! *And the study on the works of Florio always ends up by leading again to the works of Shakespeare!*

## **6. The importance of Horace's influence on the works of Florio and Shakespeare. Horace's motto "vivere contentus parvo" and John's motto "Chi si contenta gode". Horace as a "Go-Between".**

In the light of what we described in the previous paragraph, we can point out the importance of Horace for Florio (and Shakespeare!), taking into special account, as mentioned above, that Horace masterfully expressed *the phenomenon of the transmission of culture* in his world-famous lines: "*Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis intulit agresti Latio*", "Conquered Greece conquered the savage conqueror [Rome] and brought arts into agrestic Latium [Rome]" (Epistles, II, 1, 156-157).

It is worth noting, finally, that John's father, Michelangelo Florio, was an exceptionally knowledgeable about Greek-Roman literature (and was also, in this respect, the incomparable Master of his son!), so that at a very early age he was in Athens giving lessons on Greek-Roman history, on which he was a great expert (according to Santi Paladino, "*Un italiano autore delle opere shakespeariane*", Gastaldi editore, Milano, 1955, pg. 19).

Nor can we underestimate that Horace himself was the only son of a really loving father, "*Pater Optimus*", who had focused on his son, his affectionate care and his ambitions. His father himself had brought him up, telling him which "exempla" to follow, and those which Horace should shun, as well as exhorting him to live in a moderate and frugal way; he had to live content with the little his father could afford<sup>34</sup>, according to one of Horace's mottos "*Vivere contentus parvo*"<sup>35</sup> (similarly Florio's motto will be "*Chi si contenta gode*", freely translated by Florio himself as "*Who lives content hath all world at his will*"). So his father had educated him with his advice. And Horace lived in a "*sober*" manner, in accordance with his aphorism "*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>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Satire, I, 4, 105-108 and 120.

<sup>35</sup> Satire, II, 2, 1 and 110.

<sup>36</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's 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 and however it is more exposed to the devastating fury of the wind 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*

The young Horace studied in Rome and his father accompanied him to school<sup>37</sup> and ensured that his son was always virtuous. When Horace was twenty years old (45 B. C.), he studied in Athens, where there was a circle of young Romans, including Marco Cicero (son of the very famous Orator), eager to pursue their education in the field of philosophy and art through the study of the great Greek philosophers and poets, Archilocus, Sappho, Alcaeus, Anacreon and Pindar. He fought the famous battle of Philippi, siding with the Republicans Brutus and Cassius against Anthony and Octavian (42 B. C.) and, after the amnesty of 41 B. C., came back to Rome. The Romans confiscated the house and farm of his father (a “freedman”, “poor owner of a small farm”, “*macro pauper agello*”<sup>38</sup>) and, after some difficulties, his poetry was appreciated by precious friends such as Virgilio was; finally Maecenas called on Horace to be part of his cultural circle.

What’s more, Horace had taken on the noble mission of elevating Roman culture and the 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 ruris*”) of the “*agreste Latium*” (see Enzo Nencini, *Literarum fastigia*, publisher Principato, Milano, 1972, page 159 and Horace’s Epistles, II, 1, 160).

Finally, we can consider that Horace acted as a true “cultural mediator” (between Greek and Roman culture), and, by considered the role he played could be described as a true “go-between”; in the broadest sense of the term.

## **7. The two Florios: Michelangelo and John, a “unicum”, involving two generations for a “common mission”.**

### ***7.1. The study of the lives of the two Florios: a fundamental “key” to understanding their works, just like with other great poets. The example of Giacomo Leopardi.***

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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](http://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/fichero_articulo?codigo=1700539)

Jonathan Bate too 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 made reference 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, op.cit. pg.415). “*Pleasure may require us to limit our desires. Mental pleasures are greater than physical ones because they are not enduring*” (Bate, op.cit. pg. 414).

<sup>37</sup> Satire, I, 6, 81. “*He himself played the part of guardian, absolutely incorruptible; he accompanied me to all my classes*”.

<sup>38</sup> Satire, I, 6, 70. Horace claims:“ *For if nature commanded us at a certain age, to rewalk the paths of the lives we’d lived, and choose other parents, appropriate to our accomplishments, I’d be happy with my own and would not choose for myself a father honoured with elective office*” (Satire, I, 6, 93 onwards). We do not have any information about his mother, while some information about his wet nurse. Horace’s ideas were appreciated by Dante, Parini and Manzoni, and it was interpreted by Christianity. Someone, who believed that his thoughts might be in line with the Christian principles, hypothesised that his father was Jewish. Apart from this hypothesis, in any case, Horace firmly declared that, without such a father, he would not have been the person he was (“If, honest and innocent, I can brag about myself a bit, If my friends love me - *I have my father to thank for this*”, Satire, I, 6, 69-71 “*I’d be an idiot to complain about a father like that*”, Satire, I, 6, 89; “*My purity of heart, the root of virtue, he preserved - not only from misbehaviour, but also from the appearance of impropriety ... But seeing where I’ve come, I owe him even greater praise*”, Satire, I, 6, 82-88). The English translation of the above quoted verses of Horace’s Satire is freely available in the following website <http://abacus.bates.edu/~mimber/Rciv/hor.ser.1.6.htm> .

The study of the lives of the two Florios, father and son, is fundamental in understanding their works (even those that are known under the very famous pseudonym of Shakespeare).

The emotions that emerge from these works are very real and were experienced by men in the flesh!

We can refer, for instance to Giacomo Leopardi, an Italian world-class poet, whose works may be “fully understood” only through “an examination of his human and cultural formation, which takes account of all the data, including psychological of his personality and all of the components that shape his personality” to be able to interpret his work “capable of reflecting all the nuances and perhaps the contradictions of his real experience”, given that, without author’s life being placed in its historical context “the suffering and the fantasies of the poet would not exist, nor would artistic works,... nor reflection of feelings”<sup>39</sup> in poetic creations. Clearly, the works of Leopardi could not be appreciated without the know something about of his “native Village” “Borgo natio” (Recanati) and of his father, the Count Monaldo, a literate and scholar (certainly not comparable to his son!<sup>40</sup>), with high cultural ambitions and proud of his son’s ability, with whom he maintained, although with differing views, an affectionate correspondence. The Count (everyone has his own limits!) was absolutely incapable of managing the family assets (which led them to the brink of disaster), so that his wife Adelaide Antici, a strong and strict woman, later managed of the family estate. But Monaldo was of undisputed merit of having, with large expenditure, set up and placed in his house a rich, valuable and well selected library, which in 1812 he would open to his friends and fellow citizens. This library was to become the real “teacher” for Giacomo Leopardi, where he “studied alone” for seven long years, during the period he himself called “*mad and very desperate study*”, which absorbed all his energies and caused serious damage to his health.

It is worth highlighting the importance of this library and the considerable effort required to set it up.

To be more precise, it is an indisputable merit of Monaldo to have set up, in the course of his life, such very important library! The careful selection and purchase of the precious books he collected, with great enthusiasm, skill and abnegation (that entailed travelling, negotiations, costs) was entirely his own merit!

Personally, I really wonder whether Giacomo Leopardi would have written what he wrote and would have become the figure he is, without the library which his father collected with the utmost skill and love.

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<sup>39</sup> These are the words of one of the leading Italian scholars of Italian literature in the XX century, Natalino Sapegno, in *Letteratura italiana* (directed by Emilio Cecchi and Natalino Sapegno), vol. VII, pg. 736 and vol. I, pg. IX, Italy, Garzanti publisher, 1982.

<sup>40</sup> He wrote a work “Dialoghetti sulle materie correnti nell’anno 1831”, which was successful (six Italian editions in five months and many translations into other languages, being the work appreciated in many European Courts); he supported ideas which were not in line with Giacomo’s. The work was published in January 1832 under the pseudonym of “1150”, MCL in Roman numerals, coinciding with the initials of “Monaldo Conte Leopardi”. The Count bequeathed his many earnings to his printer (Nobili).

In other words, what would the life of Giacomo have been without this library and the necessary “nourishment” for “satisfying” his cultural “hunger”<sup>41</sup>? What would Giacomo have done with his life, had his father been a perfect manager of his estate without any interest in culture?

Our intention to not diminish the work of Giacomo in any way (of course not!) but simply to point out how he enjoyed the convenience of having a vast library which, at that time only a few Universities in the world would have been able to afford!

In 1826, Giacomo Leopardi wrote to Carlo Pepoli as follows: “ I had no teacher, with the exception of the knowledge of the basic rudiments ... but I had the possibility to *use a vast library which had been collected by my father, who was very fond of literature. In this library I spent most of my life, for as long as my health, ruined by my studies, allowed me. When I was ten years old I started studying, without any tutor, and ever after that, I tirelessly continued my studies, and I entirely devoted my energy to them*”<sup>42</sup>.

“... *Leopardi's love for studies and books was due to his father ... and his father's family library*”<sup>43</sup>.

When Monaldo was thirteen years old<sup>44</sup>, he started collecting books, often “through the acquisition of entire libraries”. In 1798 (Giacomo's year of birth), “many books appeared in the market due to the dissolution of many monasteries” due to the establishment of the Repubblica Romana. In 1799, Monaldo bought many books from a French ship<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, Monaldo bought the libraries of dead doctors and philosophers, as well as of Capuchin friars.<sup>46</sup> In 1795, six thousand books were collected in the first room of the library, where Giacomo studied; other thousands were collected in the other three rooms<sup>47</sup>. In 1812, the books were twelve thousand, in 1839, fourteen thousand<sup>48</sup>.

“*While collecting his library, Monaldo ... had in mind his children's education*”<sup>49</sup>.

Monaldo was really proud of his son Giacomo, “*who carefully read and studied all the twelve thousand books of his library*” (letter from Monaldo to Carlo Antici in January 17<sup>th</sup> 1815).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> In Italian, we could say “sfamarsi” with the books, in accordance with the words of a young Italian poet, Jacopo Gerevini, “Mastro Parolaio”, in this website.

<sup>42</sup> See Elisabetta Benucci, “*Io gli studi legiadri talor lasciando e le sudate carte*”. *La biblioteca di Palazzo Leopardi a Recanati*”, in “*Biblioteche nobiliari e circolazione del libro tra Settecento e Ottocento*”, Perugia, Conference proceedings 29-30 June 2001, edited by Gianfranco Tortorelli, Pendragon, 2002, Bologna, pg. 162 and footnote 10. The relevant text is partially available in the following website [http://books.google.com/books?id=W7EZOKY8uYC&pg=PA161&lpg=PA161&dq=biblioteca+monaldo+leopardi&source=bl&ots=uWHke8MIgs&sig=y\\_r8IDp98hBilQ31t2t1nCdsYIXo&hl=en&ei=4L2LTbOXD8PssgbdkKyZCg&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=8&ved=0CFYQ6AEwBw#v=onepage&q=biblioteca%20monaldo%20leopardi&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=W7EZOKY8uYC&pg=PA161&lpg=PA161&dq=biblioteca+monaldo+leopardi&source=bl&ots=uWHke8MIgs&sig=y_r8IDp98hBilQ31t2t1nCdsYIXo&hl=en&ei=4L2LTbOXD8PssgbdkKyZCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=8&ved=0CFYQ6AEwBw#v=onepage&q=biblioteca%20monaldo%20leopardi&f=false)

<sup>43</sup> See Elisabetta Benucci, op.cit.,pg. 162.

<sup>44</sup> See Elisabetta Benucci, op.cit.,pg. 166.

<sup>45</sup> See Elisabetta Benucci, op.cit.,pg. 167.

<sup>46</sup> See Elisabetta Benucci, op.cit.,pg. 168.

<sup>47</sup> See Elisabetta Benucci, op.cit.,pg. 169.

<sup>48</sup> See Elisabetta Benucci, op.cit.,pg. 163.

<sup>49</sup> See Elisabetta Benucci, op.cit.,pg. 161. “It is worth noting that Giacomo was also entitled, thanks to his father, to use other library in Recanati, such as those of the aristocratic families Antici, Roberti, Politi, of Joseph Vedgel and of the seminary (op.cit., pg.162, footnote 8).

<sup>50</sup> See Elisabetta Benucci, op.cit.,pg. 163, footnote 11.

“New and important studies on Monaldo Leopardi, his figure and works ...had been promoted by the National Center of the Leopardian Studies and by Leopardi Family since 1997, on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Count Monaldo”<sup>51</sup>; thus, *to clearly understand the real role and importance of Monaldo in the life and works of his son Giacomo*. Monaldo always had a lovely written correspondence with Giacomo (apart from some differences in points of view); he outlived his son (who died on June 14<sup>th</sup> 1837) by ten years, and, as his will in 1939 clearly shows, he truly loved his son dearly: “On *each June 14th* , *on the occasion of the anniversary of my lovely son Giacomo’s death* ...ten masses for the repose of his soul shall be perpetually celebrated ...”<sup>52</sup>

In the light of the above, I believe that Monaldo and Giacomo (of course their roles were different from Michelangelo and John’s) had however carried out a “common cultural mission”, whose most important results were the works of Giacomo; but his works are surely based on a work, aimed at collecting the books for the library, which his father carried out with love and skill! The works of Giacomo are the result of a common project, involving two generations profoundly bound by high cultural interests (apart from some possible different points of view)! Both generations played a fundamental and essential role for the successful results!

***7.2. The origins of the two Florios. The Inquisition and Michelangelo’s imprisonment in Rome 1548 for heresy. The death sentence. His daring escape on May 6th 1550. Two years of meditation and physical and moral pain of a person who “doomed to die” The genesis of Hamlet’s soliloquy (the issue continues in §7.23). In 1934, Yates had definitively solved the question of Authorship in an overlooked footnote in her book on John Florio (see also §7.17.2) .***

According to Lamberto Tassinari<sup>53</sup>, the origins of John Florio’s family are in “that earthquake human, cultural and intellectual which had been the expulsion of the Jews from Catholic Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492 ...It is almost certain that in this period Michel Angelo Florio’s family members started wandering and came to Italy together with thousands of other Jewish families and, *at first, perhaps to Sicily* and then to other regions, such as Tuscany, Veneto and Lombardy”.

“It would appear that Michel Angelo Florio was born around 1518 in Tuscany (whether in Florence, Siena, or Lucca is unclear) to parents of Jewish origin who had converted to Catholicism. He adds the qualification “Florentine” (*fiorentino*) to his name in a few of his publications, but as Yates suggests, he might have done so to merely enhance his own origins with the luster of a great city [“in order to gain credit with scholars”, Yates, op.cit., pg. I]. Orphaned as a youth, he was educated in Trento area and became a Franciscan friar. Some sources, however, state that he was born in

<sup>51</sup> See Elisabetta Benucci, op.cit.,pg. 163, footnote 12.

<sup>52</sup> See [http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monaldo\\_Leopardi](http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monaldo_Leopardi)

<sup>53</sup> *Shakespeare? E’ il nome d’arte di John Florio*, 2008, pg. 18.

Valtellina, because it was there that local chronicles first begin to mention him” (Tassinari, John Florio, pg.29, Shakespeare? pg.36). He, after many experiences (which we will shortly describe), became prominent in English aristocratic circles and was highly regarded for his boundless knowledge and culture.

Therefore, 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 wonders the Jewish Shylock in Shakespeare’s “The Merchant of Venice”, Act III, scene 1, 58–68).

Michelangelo himself stated in his “Apologia”: “If you tell that my origins before the baptism are Jewish, I will not deny it at all”. Michelangelo was Jewish however he was baptized as a Christian, became a Franciscan friar later adhered to the Reformation and finally fled to London to take refuge from the persecution of the Inquisition.

Yates tells us how (op.cit. pg. 2) Michelangelo “had been a Franciscan” and in his *Apologia* [which was written in Italian; these quoted passages were translated into English by Yates; the original Italian version is reproduced in the Italian version of this essay] he said: “*Unhappy indeed was my state when in the Franciscan habit I was buried in infinite superstitions or rather idolatries against my conscience; more than sixteen years ago I knew by God’s grace a great part of the truth, and forced myself in Faenza, Padua, Rome, Venice and Naples to give some proof of it*” (Apologia, pg. 13; Michelangelo also made reference to his stay in Florence on pg.72-73). According to Yates (op.cit., pg.2-3) “His conversion to the new doctrines seems to have begun about 1541. The towns he mentions were all early centres of the Reformation in Italy, particularly Venice and Naples.”

Indeed, *Friars* play “*an odd and unusual role in Shakespearian theatre*” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 36, John Florio, pg. 29). We need only mention the epilogue of “Romeo and Juliet”, which features not one but two Franciscan Friars. Friar Laurence says, at the end of the drama: “Then gave I her,-so tutor’d by my art,- A sleeping potion; which so took effect As I intended, for it wrought on her The form of death: meantime I writ to Romeo That he should hither come as this dire night, To help to take her from her borrow’d grave, Being the time the potion’s force should cease. *But he which bore my letter, Friar John, Was stay’d by accident*”. (Act V, scene iii, 264-72). Another friar, Friar Francis, appears in “*Much Ado About Nothing*”.

Michelangelo’s role as Christian preacher is a *fundamental element* to understanding the whole Shakespeare’s work, which is always “*pervaded*” by the Holy Scriptures and Gospels. Behind Shakespeare’s work there is a “mind” which, *perhaps unconsciously*, continuously uses the Scripture; which could be justified only by referring to “a culture that goes beyond religiosity to become a *forma mentis*, a binding spell of sorts, of the kind that can only befall a ‘professional’ of the Scripture, someone who has studied it for years, used it daily as part of his *métier*, and still does so in order to demonstrate, convince, educate” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 238, John Florio, pg. 221).

“The only scholars to have studied Michel Angelo Florio, if only in a cursory fashion, are a few historians of the various reform movements in Italy. This silence from the scholars of *Shakespeare* is a fundamental element for supporting the Stratfordian identity: *avoid the two Florios and disregard the few crucial studies that mention them*. There is no monograph on Michele Angelo Florio, and the only biographical account is the 20 or so pages that Yates dedicated to him in 1934 at the start of her book on John Florio. *Hence Michel Angelo Florio barely exists for historical studies, as a preacher, as a diffuser of Italian language and culture in pre-Elizabethan England, and finally as the father of John*. And In Italy Michel Angelo Florio is a minor figure among reformed preachers compared to such better-known individuals as Fausto Sozzini and Bernardo Ochini. He wandered Italy, preaching under the name Fra’ Paolo Antonio, and in Naples he may have come into contact with the ideas of the Reform and converted to the new faith and becoming actively committed to it.

In particular he became part of the circle of Juan De Valdès [a Spanish theologian, who was friend of Erasmus from Rotterdam and in 1536 set up “*Alphabeto Cristiano*” , a centre of spirituality and theological forum, in Naples, to which, inter alia, Bernardo Tommassini, aka Ochino, Pier Martire Vermigli and Giulia Gonzaga also belong to].

Michel Angelo Florio was regarded as a highly learned and eloquent, but of unstable spirituality, whose preaching of the gospel was notable for its great courage and frankness. These gifts soon provoked a reaction from the Catholic Church, despite the relative tolerance in Italy for the ideas of the reformers” (Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 37, pg. 43, footnote 23, John Florio, pg. 29-34 and footnote 21).

“In the earlier years of the sixteenth century, in Italy as elsewhere, the new opinions were allowed some toleration. Then the authorities took fright and began trying to check their spread by force. About the time that Michael Angelo left the fold the Inquisition was set up in Italy, so that his preaching was not without danger. In 1548 he was arrested and kept in prison in Rome for twenty-seven months” (Yates, *op.cit.*, pg. 3).

His prison was probably Tor di Nona (between the via dei Coronari and the Tiber), since from the early 15th century, the tower acted as a pontifical prison. Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571) had experienced the ill-famed dungeon’s terrible lightless cells, one of which was known as “the pit”, while another was a torture chamber. Benvenuto had been in daily expectation of death , daily being informed of the execution of other prisoners; the intercession of Pierluigi Farnese’s wife, and especially that of the Cardinal d’Este of Ferrara, eventually secured Cellini’s release around 1540<sup>54</sup>. Giordano Bruno too would have been imprisoned here *before being burned alive* in Campo de’ Fiori<sup>55</sup>.

*After more than two years of imprisonment, Michelangelo was brought to trial and condemned to death. But “The death sentence had already been decreed by Inquisitors”* (Paladino, *op.cit.*,pg 17).

He managed to avoid execution by escaping from prison on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1550<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benvenuto\\_Cellini](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benvenuto_Cellini)

<sup>55</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tor\\_di\\_Nona](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tor_di_Nona)

He had been imprisoned for about 27 months, from February 1548 until May 1550. Regarding his detention he wrote: “*Why did Pope Paul III and his Cardinals [some names follow; you can read them in the original Italian text hereinbelow] keep me prisoner for 27 months? Why did they so mercilessly torture me?*” “Perché mi tennero papa Paolo III, il Cardinal ch’iettino oggi Anticristo, il Cardinal di San Jacopo, Santa Croce e lo Sfrondato, 27 mesi prigionio in Roma Perché con tanta crudeltà mi tormentarono?” (Apologia, pg.73)<sup>57</sup>.

7.2.1 Finally Michelangelo regained his Freedom. His “renascent life” in a passage of his Italian work “Apologia”(1557). The passage is the continuation, in Italian, of the real life story, told to us by the same author of Hamlet’s soliloquy.

Indeed, “The fullest source of information on Michel Angelo is a text he wrote himself and published in 1557: ‘*L’Apologia di M.Michel Angelo Fiorentino, ne la quale si tratta de la vera e falsa chiesa, de l’essere, e qualità de la messa, de la vera presenza di Christo nel Sacramento, de la Cena; del Papato, e primato di S. Piero, de Concilij e autorità loro:scritta contro a un eretico*’ (The Apology of Messer Michel Angelo the Florentine, which deals with the true and false Church, with the essence and quality of the mass, with the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of communion; with the papacy and the primacy of Saint Peter, and with the church Councils and their authority; written against a heretic). He did so to defend himself against an attack on him by a Franciscan, Bernardino Spada, who had branded him a heretic and a Jew” “Only fresh scholarly research and deeper biographical excavation will bring forth new information and shed light on the gaps in what we currently know about him” (Tassinari, John Florio, pg.30-31, Shakespeare? pg.37-38).

Yates (op.cit., pg. 3-4) pointed out that Michelangelo “might now have ended his career *at the stake* in Rome had he not managed to escape. The thrilling story of his adventures is best told in his own words. ‘*I tell thee then that in the year 1550 on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May I fled from Rome and stayed one day and two nights in the house of a person of good position. I left there on the 6<sup>th</sup> , two hours before day, and went by way of the Abruzzo to Naples, having discarded the friar’s habit. In Naples I remained for ten days with religious and Christian persons and was there provided with sufficient necessaries of life to last me for many days and months. I left Naples on Whitsunday and, accompanied by the letter-carrier, went into Apulia, where I remained for two months, well received and cared-for by the Christian brethren. From Apulia I departed on the first of August and went by sea to Venice where I stayed for 17 days, and spoke with two of your friars whose names I conceal in order not to get them in trouble[ for the same reason, of course, Michael Angelo did not make any mention whatsoever of those who helped him to gain his freedom!]. I left Venice on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September and passing through Mantua, Brescia, Bergamo, Milan, Pavia and Casale Monferrato reached Lyons. From Lyons to Paris, and thence into England, and I arrived in the famous city of London on the first of November of that same year 1550, and remained there until the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 1554*’ (Apologia, pp.77-78).

<sup>56</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo\\_Florio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo_Florio), Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.37, John Florio, pg.30, <http://www.riforma.net/storia/florio/index.htm>

<sup>57</sup> See <http://www.riforma.net/storia/florio/index.htm>, footnote 3, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo\\_Florio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo_Florio), Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.37, John Florio, pg.30.

We could also speculate that Michelangelo's escape was organized by French Renée de France, Duchess of Ferrara (1510 - 1574), an important figure in the history of the Protestant Reformation both in Italy and in France<sup>58</sup>. She was the second daughter of Louis XII of France and Anne of Brittany and was married in 1528 to Ercole d'Este, who became Duke of Ferrara in 1534. Renée's court at Ferrara became a refuge for Protestants (including Calvino; she also was linked to Juan Valdès in Naples) and she organized their escape from Inquisition prisons.

Michelangelo was "marked" for life by the suffering of this inhuman experience: the harassment suffered in the Roman jail, the torture, the moral and physical "agony" that he suffered, being informed on a daily basis of the execution of other prisoners; firstly waiting for the trial (for two years), then the judgment (which he already envisaged as a "death sentence"), then the "execution", which he managed to escape by a hairbreadth, through a daring break from jail.

He had actually "come face to face with death" and had spent more than two years in solitude, without any comfort, analysing the true emotions of a "person doomed to die", including the temptation to commit suicide, which was only restrained by the Christian fear of performing an act which could have merited even more painful suffering in the afterworld than the worldly suffering: the "perpetual Hell-fire"!

The passage of Michelangelo, who described the hours, the days and the months immediately after his escape *brilliantly, reveals extremely intense emotions! The "extraordinary" sense of a "regained Freedom", of the fresh "open air" of the morning; Michelangelo seems to be "savouring once again" the joys, however modest, of a "normal" life, as an "immense gift".*

*Michelangelo luckily left the feeling of "imminent death" in his terrible dark cell, from which he had miraculously managed to escape!*

*This passage reveals the feeling of a miracolously "renascent life" which "parallels" the intensity of the emotions of Hamlet's soliloquy, which by contrast are describing the acute suffering of being in the throes of death!*

*It is the "reverse side of the same coin"!*

*The immense feeling of joy which emerges from this passage helps us understand ("by contrast") the agony that Michelangelo felt in the past. The passage is the continuation, in Italian, of the real life story, told to us by the author of Hamlet's soliloquy!*

*Moreover the entire passage is fully "pervaded" by a deep sense of religiousness and thanksgiving.*

"Vivere contentus parvo", "carpe diem", the sense of Friendship, "HIDE THY LIFE" are also truly experienced here!

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<sup>58</sup> See <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/498078/Renee-of-France> By way of example, by her intercession, Paolo Ricci (called "Camillo Renato", 1500-1575) was released in Ferrara after having been arrested in 1542; also Paolo Ricci had attended the cultural circles of Juan de Valdès. See [http://www.eresie.it/it/Renato\\_Camillo.htm](http://www.eresie.it/it/Renato_Camillo.htm). "Camillus Rensus, the Sicilian, was a well-known Antitrinitarian, who lived and taught at Chiavenna (which commands the entrance to the Val Bregaglia) for some time (Yates, op.cit., pg. 15).

At long last, Michelangelo sees the “sun”, the “infinite beauties of creation” once again ... he came out of a dark and distressing “tunnel”!

His pilgrimage, his travels are experienced through the “bewitched” eyes of a miraculously “reborn” human being, like a “wide-eyed” child!

His tireless “travels” are in response to his long “having laid motionless” in the prison ... these “travels” are completely different from the “journey” towards the death, “the undiscovered country, from whose bourn /No travellers returns”!

And I “hold back” further comments, even though the emotions are really many and intense and surely merit further analysis in the future!

7.2.2. In 1561, Michelangelo wrote the contents of Hamlet’s soliloquy, in a passage of his Italian volume dedicated to the life and death of Lady Jane Gray. He told Jane “ the outrages, the **scorns** [**scorni**] and the torments” he had endured in the Roman dungeons. In 1934 Yates “discovered” the truth on the Authorship and “camouflaged” it in an “overlooked” footnote (in Italian language) of her book on Florio.

However, further information is *crucial* in order to clearly understand the entire situation.

Yates (op. cit. pg. 7-10) pointed out that Michelangelo’s volume, “*Historia de la vita e de la morte de l’Illustriss. Signora Giovanna Graia*”(1561), “known in English history as Lady Jane Grey” (a book “*hitherto, completely overlooked*”!) [Michelangelo had been the teacher of Jane], “describes a conversation which he once had with Jane, no doubt during an Italian lesson [the following is Yates’s translation of the original Italian text, with some my adjustments]. ‘*One day I was recounting to her the outrages, the scorns, the torments which I had endured for the space of twenty-seven months in Rome under Paul and Julius II for having there, and in Naples, and in Padua, and in Venice preached Christ without disguise, I myself saw her weep with such deeply felt compassion that it could well be seen how much she had true religion at heart. And raising her eyes to heaven she said, ‘o God, if I displease Thee not with this my petition, do not suffer it any longer that the world should abuse Thy servants thus’*”. “Io stesso contandole un giorno, gl’oltraggi, gli scorni, et i tormenti ch’in Roma per lo spazio di XXVII mesi sotto Paolo, et Giulio III, sofferti hauea. Per hauer iui [io], et in Napoli, et in Padoua, et in Venegia predicate Christo senza maschera; la uidi con si sviscerata compassione lagrimare, che ben si conosceua quanto gli fosse à cuore la uera religione; et alzati gl’occhi al cielo, disse, Deh Signore, s’io non ti offendo con questa mia dimanda, non patir piu ch’el mondo faccia tanti stazii dei tuoi” (pp. 27-28) (Yates, op.cit., pg. 9 and pg. 10, footnote I; Michelangelo confirms that his imprisonment was due to his having preached the new ideas of the Reformation).

Here Michelangelo had already written in Italian in 1561 the contents of the famous soliloquy (Act III, Scene i, 63 onwards)! He had confessed his drama to his very sensitive pupil as in a kind of “psychoanalytic session”; and the pupil had shared, with her tears, in his tremendous experience! My very personal impression is that Michelangelo probably involved his sensitive pupil in such palpitating emotions on several occasions. He really needed the love and affection of a sensitive woman to “recover” or to at least bear his agonizing “nightmare”.

This is a really very delicate and impressive image! The pains suffered by Michelangelo were shared by a young and very sensitive Lady, destined to become (for nine days) Queen of England and, then, destined to a violent death! It is something similar to the painful story which Aeneas told Queen Dido (likewise destined, according to the myth, to a violent death). Aeneas (unlike Michelangelo) appeared to be initially reluctant to tell his story concerning the violence of Troy's fall and the subsequent vicissitudes: "*Infandum Regina iubes renovare dolorem*" "Unspeakable, Queen, the grief you order me to renew", (Aeneid, Book II, 3). However, the opportunity to disclose to a very attentive "person" or "audience" their own woes most likely gave Michelangelo and Aeneas some relief from their pains! (finally, no doubt that the erudite Michelangelo was fully aware of this indisputable "parallelism" with the mentioned passage of Aeneid, while writing his passage concerning Lady Gray!).

Even just two Italian words "oltraggi" and "scorni" (which are set forth in the mentioned Italian passage by Michelangelo) are merely translated into English in the famous soliloquy: "outrageous" (which becomes an adjective in the soliloquy, instead of "outrages"; see verse 65) and "scorns" (see verse 77)!!! And they are not really "commonly used" words!!!

A for the "torments", we did not find any word in the soliloquy having the same "root" ... but so many torments (slings, arrows, troubles, heart-ache, natural shocks, calamity, whips, contumely, pangs, insolence, spurns, fardels) are listed in the passage that we "are really spoilt for choice"!

In my personal view, Yates fully understood the full extent of the situation. She clearly associated the Italian word "scorni" with that really "unique" and strange word which appears in the soliloquy and forever really remains imprinted on every reader's mind: "scorns" (in "World of Words", 1598, "scorno" was translated into English by Florio as "skorne, mock, front" – see the link <http://www.pbm.com/~lindah/lorio1598/380.html>; in his "Queen Anna's New World of Words", 1611, "scorno" was translated as "skorne, mocke [not "mock" as in the previous dictionary], front, shame, dishonor"-see link <http://www.pbm.com/~lindah/lorio/496.html>; it is worth noting that the final "e" [which is "silent" and therefore does not affect the pronunciation of the word, which remains the same] in "mock" is subject to insignificant changes in the different two dictionaries (the same should be said for the two different versions "skorne" and "skorne", while the soliloquy used the plural version of "scorn"); to further clarify "scorno" is a "compound" Italian word and the root of this word is the Latin "cornu", i.e. the English "horn"; "scorno" literally means in Italian "the frustration due to a defeat" – *Dictionary of the Italian language, Dizionario della lingua italiana, written by Devoto-Oli, Florence 1971* -, when somebody has metaphorically broken his horns in a fight; it is linked to the fights of the beasts with horns; the word "scorno" derived from the Italian verb "scornare", -in English "to scorn", according to Florio's dictionaries - whose meaning is "to break the horns", with a subtractive "s" prefix and the Latin word "cornu" – see Devoto, *Etymological Dictionary, Dizionario Etimologico*, Florence, 1968; in the soliloquy, "scorns of time" mean "the frustrations deriving from flying time, passing youth" – see also some Shakespearian quotations, on the matter, at the end of § 7.7. below) .

In this context, the word "scorns" constitutes Michelangelo's indisputable signature on the soliloquy!

In my view, Yates intentionally, “camouflaged” this “strange” Italian word in a footnote (in a very small print, likely destined to be overlooked by the scholars, also for its Italian language) and rendered it into English, in the text, as “insults” (an approximative synonym). If she had rendered “scorni” into English (in the text) as “scorns” (*just like in the soliloquy*), this would have caused a “deflagrating” impact for every readers of Shakespeare!

Personally I express my heartfelt sympathy to Yates, who had to take such a “troubled” decision in such a delicate situation. Frankly, I would not like to have been in her shoes. Yates prepared some well ordered evidence for a future scholar (she herself said in her Preface! “*I hope that it may eventually be possible, in the light of this fuller knowledge, to reach a definite conclusion upon the vexed question of Florio’s relations with Shakespeare*”). She was not in a position, for reasons we we can sense, to openly “reveal” her discovery. However, Yates undoubtedly takes all the credit for this (rightly “camouflaged”) “discovery”!

*As a lawyer I am fully satisfied; not only the facts but also the words and their meaning are proof of an indisputable “discovery”!*

As the Roman saying goes “*intelligenti pauca*”, which means “few words for a clever person”.

I have nothing further to add other than to say that you can find some information on Yates and her op. cit. in § 7.17.2, while the genesis of the soliloquy is dealt with in detail in § 7.23.

As mentioned, Michelangelo abandoned his Franciscan habit and moved first to Abruzzo, then Naples and finally to Apulia where he boarded a ship for Venice; then he was in Mantua, Brescia, Bergamo, Milan, Pavia and Casale Monferrato. This stormy period came to an end when he left Italy and went to Lyon, then Paris, and finally to England (see Tassinari Shakespeare? pg.37, John Florio, pg. 30 and <http://www.riforma.net.storia/florio/index.htm>).

### ***7.3. Michelangelo’s arrival in London (1550). His activities as schoolmaster of many prestigious representatives of the English upper class.***

“THE ADVENTURE HAD BEGUN on the first of November 1550, when an Italian exile with Jewish forebears, Michel Angelo Florio, an ex-friar and Reformed (that is, Calvinist) preacher sought by the Inquisition, crossed the English Channel and disembarked under the grey skies of London”. This way, Tassinari describes Michel Angelo’s arrival in London (Shakespeare? pg. 33, John Florio, pg. 27).

At that time Edward VI was king. “It is striking that, even though he may have brought letters of introduction, he was able to establish connections in a short time with many prestigious representatives of the English upper class” (Shakespeare? pg. 38, John Florio, pg. 31).

A “member of the high aristocracy with whom Michelangelo was in contact was Henry Herbert, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Pembroke”; in 1553, Michel Angelo dedicated a manuscript work (one of the two manuscripts that survived, among the many manuscript collected by Michel Angelo during his pilgrimages) to “signor Arrigo Harbart”, that is, to Henry Herbert. According to Santi Paladino (op.cit. pg. 19; see also Tassinari Shakespeare? pg. 41 and 56 and John Florio, pg.35 and 48), Michel Angelo was the Italian language schoolmaster of Henry Herbert and of Lady Jane Grey.

Lady Jane Grey was one of Michelangelo's prestigious pupils; she was "daughter of the Duke of Suffolk, in whose residence Florio had lodged; not long after she was destined to sit for a brief period on the throne of England.

"Suffolk was well known for his sympathy with the religious exiles, and it would seem from what follows that Michael Angelo was a particular favourite" (Yates, op.cit., pg. 10). Indeed, Michelangelo revealed as follows his indebtedness to the Duke of Suffolk in his *Apologia* (pg. 44; Yates's translation from the Italian text). "If I had been of his own blood, one of his dearest and nearest relations, he could not have shown me greater kindness nor honoured me more, with that sincere and truly divine charity which he had towards all those who found themselves persecuted for Christ's sake by Antichrist".

Yates reveals how (op.cit., pg. 10-11) "Another English lord of whom Michael Angelo speaks as having been 'extremely kind to foreigners' is the Earl of Pembroke [Henry Herbert, 'Arrigo Harbart'] to whom he had dedicated his work on the grammar rules. [Regole de la lingua Thoscana]. Pembroke's first wife was Jane's sister Catherine Grey and so he was also a member of the Duke of Suffolk's faction. The head of that faction was, of course, the great John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland".

Hence, as a supporter of the faction of the Duke of Suffolk, Michel Angelo must perforce have been close to its leader, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, the man who had convinced Edward VI to designate Lady Jane, his daughter-in-law, as his successor in the event of his death. Indeed, so close was he that, according to Yates, he identified with the Dudleys. Further proof of this attachment is the fact that the Italian translation of the Bishop Ponet's *Catechism*, made at Dudley's wish, was dedicated by Michel Angelo to 'Signore Giovanni Dudele degnissimo Duca di Nortamberland'. Neither the publisher of the book nor the date of publication is given. At the back of it are to be found Italian translations of certain prayers that Edward VI recited on his death bed, around which there gathered an inner circle of nobles - and Michel Angelo Florio. That was the social level the Italian exile had reached, three years after his arrival in England (Tassinari Shakespeare? pg.56 and John Florio, pg.33).

Yates (op.cit. pg. 11-12) says that Michelangelo wrote the following about his translation of this *Cathechism*. " *In this little work I do not profess to be a writer of pure Tuscan, but only a sincere exponent of the word of God*". Michael Angelo believes that a translation should give the sense of the original but need not be absolutely literal. For this reason he had sometimes added words of his own to make the sense clear. It is curious to find him already formulating precepts for the guidance of a translator which correspond with John Florio's subsequent practice". It is also worth noting that Michelangelo wanted to be recognized not only as a writer but also and "especially" as a "sincere exponent of the word of God".

"In 1563 Michael Angelo dedicated his Italian translation of Agricola's work [Giorgio Agricola's great work on metallurgy, *De Re Metallica* –see Yates, pg. 22] to Queen Elizabeth ('enamoured of the Italian language and .... intellectually interested in Ochino's theory of predestination'), and this may indicate that he had come into contact with her in England. Michael Angelo had begun in that generation the work which his son was to continue in the next. By inculcating a taste for the Italian

language and culture in pupils whose exalted rank made them the leaders of the nation, father and son did much to plant in England those Italian influences which helped to mould the English Renaissance.[ 1)] The Italianate colouring of the generation contemporary with Michael Angelo is blended with theological influences. The church party in power under Edward VI was in close sympathy with the Italian branch of the Reformation.[2)] In John Florio's time Italian influences in England are not doctrinal but humanistic and cultural, and John devoted his whole time to the language-teaching which in his father's life was subsidiary to theological interests" (Yates, op.cit., pg. 8-9).

It is finally worth noting that "Particularly active in organizing assistance for expatriates and their religious congregations were Archbishop Cranmer, Sir William Cecil ... And it is here, with Sir William Cecil, also known by his title Lord Burghley, a key figure in the establishment of literary reputation of an author named *Shakespeare*, that the dense web of names, facts, and dates in which the lives of the Florios and the name of *Shakespeare* are bound up, begins to be woven. It was thanks precisely to the interest and help of Lord Burghley that Michel Angelo rapidly became pastor of the reformed Italian church in London" (Tassinari *Shakespeare?* pg.38-39 and John Florio, pg.31, as well as, <http://www.riforma.net.storia/florio/index.htm>) in 1550.

#### **7.4. Michelangelo's "Act of Fornication" (1552).**

In a letter "dated early in 1552, ... Michel Angelo Florio reveals to his protector Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley [Secretary of State], that he was responsible for an immoral act, having engaged in sexual relations with one of the women who frequented his church. Michel Angelo was subsequently removed from office". But successively he wrote "an extremely clever letter", in which Florio "expressed his contrition and gradually Cecil ... accepted him back into the circle of his protégés and had him reinstated in his function as minister"<sup>59</sup>.

Yates (op.cit., pg. 6) pointed out that this "*letter reveals a grave matter. In it Florio implores forgiveness for some serious moral lapse of which he has been guilty and which has caused Cecil to withdraw all his favour from Florio. Florio cites examples from the Old testament of sinners whom God forgave and entreats Cecil's mercy, for if he is forced to fly the kingdom he will be obliged either to offer his flesh and blood to the enemies of the Gospel or to deny the truth of it. This letter was written early in 1552* [Yates, op.cit. pg. 6, footnote 2, clarifies that "The letter is dated 'X Kal. Februarii' with no year. A contemporary endorsement is 'January.1551', i.e. 1552 according to modern reckoning"]. *John Strype* ("Ecclesiastical Memorials", II, pt 1, 378, "Life of Grindal, p.160 and "Memorials of Thomas Cranmer", I, 345) *makes it clear that the offence had been 'an act of fornication'. Florio was deposed from his ministry and obliged to go through a form of public penance. Cecil had intended to inflict 'some severe punishment upon him; which seemed to be banishment out of the nation, or at least turning him out of his family, where he seems to have been entertained'. But Florio's skilfully argued letter evidently had a mollifying effect, for we learn from Strype that "In fine, Florio got over this brunt, and recovered mild Cecil's favour; for I find, a year after, our Archbishop wrote to Cecil to further a certain business of Michael Angelo at court, as*

<sup>59</sup> See Gerevini, *William Shakespeare, ovvero John Florio: un fiorentino alla conquista del mondo*, Pilgrim edizioni, 2008, pg.72 onwards; see also Tassinari: *Shakespeare? E' il nome d'arte di John Florio*, Giano Books, 2008, pg. 39; *John Florio, the man who was Shakespeare*, Giano Books, 2009, pg. 32. The vicissitude is described by Strype, "Memorial of Thomas Cranmer", I, 345.

*much as he could". Florio also seems to have been later restored to his ministry. Florio's moral failure at this point of his career was perhaps connected with his spiritual instability".*

Yates (op.cit., pg. 13) pointed also out that, as for "*Florio's moral 'lapse', it seems highly probable that one of the conditions upon which forgiveness for this was granted would be the regularisation by marriage of his connection with the woman. It is thus possible that Michale Angelo's wife was an English-woman* [Yates, clarified that "In the Simmler collection of manuscripts there is a page of notes in Latin on Michael Angelo's *Apologia* ... the writer of these notes adds, "De Uxore, quae Angla fuisse videtur ... but it does not appear that he had any other source of information, besides the *Apologia* ..." - see op. cit.,pg. 13, footnote 2]; *on the other hand, she may have been another Italian refugee, as John Aubrey assumes."*

Therefore, Michelangelo probably married the woman, whose name we do not know, and so John was born<sup>60</sup>. Michel Angelo was not very young at that time (he was probably 34 years old) and his first choice had been to devote himself to his religious office and not to marry.

Michelangelo, in his *Apologia* made reference to his "*Famigliuola*" and "*One member of this little family was certainly the infant John Florio, for both Anthony Wood and Aubrey state that John was born in London and he hints himself that this was so. John's age is given on his portrait as fifty-eight in 1611, making the birth-year 1553*" (Yates, op.cit. pg. 13-14).

It is here necessary to analyse "mercilessly" the facts, to understand the psychological framework that must have characterized the lives of the two Florios.

Michelangelo, a Christian pastor and preacher, would have given a good example to others with his life and actions, not only with what he preached.

He had seriously "sinned" against God and men due to his "act of fornication" outside of marriage, which was contrary to the laws of God.

He is guilty, he is "marked for life" by this scandalous episode, notwithstanding finally having gained indulgence, not without difficulty, as described above.

He christianly made an act of contrition, but his more serious offense, as he knew, was against his unborn child.

What would have he told his son some day ... " "your parents had lapsed into sin, an act of fornication made against the laws of God!"

I repeat, this feeling must have been much stronger because Michelangelo was not a "common" man, he had voluntarily devoted himself to the role of a Christian pastor and preacher and should have given a good example, with his life and deeds (not only his words), to the "flock" who attended his church.

*This was why it was a serious scandal and was strongly condemned.*

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<sup>60</sup> Gerevini, op. cit., pg.72.

Many times he had told the believers the parable of two sons (Gospel of Matthew, 21,28), where Jesus says that it is the actions that count (with reference to a son, who despite having said “Yes Sir”, then did not go to work in the vineyard, while the other son, who said “I do not want to”, then repented and went there). *Actions speak louder than words!*

*In short, a preacher by profession “who does not practise what he preaches” is the most ignominious example that could exist!*

Michelangelo was justifiably worried that the “sins of the fathers will fall upon their sons”. He is ready to personally pay his reckoning, but he would have literally felt dead if his only-begotten son should be, even for a moment, “ashamed” of the “sin” of his parents.

Having (even if in a mere indirect way) involved in this scandal also an “innocent” child was unacceptable to him. And certainly the words of Jesus, in this respect “inflexible”, resounded in his ears: “It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea than for him to upset one of these little ones [innocent children]. Be on your guard!” (Gospel of Luke, 17, 2-3). But immediately afterwards, the same Gospel says: “If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him” (Luke, 17,4).

In fact, Michelangelo, metaphorically, spent his life imploring his son for forgiveness, to whom he clearly explained that the love for John’s mother was sincere and deep and it represented his real and unique means of “salvation” after the pain and affliction of being orphaned as a youth and especially his harsh imprisonment in Rome for two years, the tortures as prisoner awaiting trial (unfortunately with a foregone outcome) and finally to the inexpressible distress and “agony” linked to the cruel death sentence of the Inquisition. It was a terrible experience to await execution, being “doomed to die” and feeling the “suspense” of travelling from life and venturing into the unknown of death.

Already in the choice of his son’s name, Michelangelo left a clear hint of his need for “redemption”, because he wanted it to be John, since Jesus himself had said: “I tell you, *among those born of women, no one is greater than John*” [the Baptist] (Luke, 7,28).

John should have always “held his head high” and should have been “*the greatest*”, according to Michelangelo’s dreams and aspirations.

And John fully and perfectly understood the drama of his father (and of himself) and, at all times in his life, forgave his father, who, after the bewilderment of his sin, had done everything in his power for the good of his own son. John, in turn, did everything for the good of his father, according to the “pietas” (the Roman filial love and devotion). He actually became, meeting his father’s wishes, “the greatest”. He almost identified with him, he followed his father’s footsteps “bewitched” by the “schoolmaster” of the Italian language and aspired to become and actually did become the “*Praelector Linguae Italicae*”.

Furthermore, Michel Angelo begged John to fight (for the common interest of their whole family) for their family’s “redemption” and this especially through the demonstration that John really was “the greatest”, also availing himself of his father’s wide knowledge, books, materials, experience and friends. And John made all his efforts for his father’s redemption and was always grateful and

thankful to his father for the love and the work in unison, the patient teachings and all kinds of support he gave.

“After this scandalous episode, Michelangelo Florio’s star had completely fallen and the stain of his reputation ... fell on his son John ... John Florio, was the son of someone who has fallen into disfavour. He succeeded in turning this “stain” inherited from his father into a fine opportunity for success and never did anything in his life (apparently), which would question his fervent “Puritan zeal” and his “morality”. He made every effort humanly possible to redeem himself and the figure of his father as well as not to fall out of grace with his powerful patrons, as his Father had. *Florio “redeemed” the “guilt” of his father*, giving him back honour and dignity, through his intense work”<sup>61</sup>.

John (at the risk of appearing blasphemous) must have appeared to Michelangelo almost as “his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son” (Gospel of John, 1,14), his pride, delight and consolation, as well as the unique family member capable to really “redeem” their “besmirched” family name, by John’s being “the greatest”, also thanks to Michelangelo’s support.

This is, in my opinion, a possible and fundamental psychological reference framework.

#### ***7.5. John Florio’s birth (1553). Michelangelo’s “famigliuola” “small family”: its vicissitudes just like the ones of the “Holy Family”.***

John Florio was born in London in 1553, the year after the above mentioned exchange of letters (in 1552) between Michelangelo and Cecil.

Following what is substantially reported in this Website ([www.shakespeareandflorio.net](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net)), after Mary the “Bloody” ascended the throne in 1554, she restored Catholicism in England and created a climate of terror for Protestants. For Protestants like Michelangelo Florio, London under Bloody Mary had become a very dangerous place.

Michelangelo, in 1554, fled England together with his “*Famigliuola*” “Small family” (made up by Michelangelo, his wife and little John), travelling around Europe; so Michelangelo defined his family in his “Apology” published in 1557<sup>62</sup>, with an expression that clearly reminds you the wandering “Holy Family”, which was made up of father, mother, and child (Jesus, Mary and Joseph).

The “*Famigliola of Jesus*” is a typical expression associated with the Holy Family and highlights the small dimension of this unique family, “*focused*” on the “*Father’s Only-Begotten Son*” (“the glory of the Father”), whereas, at that time, families were normally larger.

According to the Christian doctrine, the Holy Family is considered as a fundamental model for other families, where the bonds of affection, love, and understanding are expressed and lived and which families are called upon to renew continuously. Thus, the Christian doctrine extols the family

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<sup>61</sup> Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 73.

<sup>62</sup> Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 72.

as the core unit capable of “protecting”, in a “communion of love”, its members from external adversity. All family members share the responsibility of protecting one another and contributing to the good of the family. This must always be borne in mind, in order to understand the two Florios. Michelangelo, having named his son John, shows how his “famigliuola” (after the morally deplorable mentioned event) lives intensely according to the values of love and sympathy, which is not unlike the perfection of the “Famigliola of Jesus”. In short, *the resipiscence of Michelangelo is real and lively!*

All these reflections are not aimed at a mere and sterile “display” of passages from the Gospels. They are absolutely essential to understanding the whole psychological context! The Gospels were the “*daily bread*” for Michelangelo (who, at first, was a Catholic Franciscan friar and then a Protestant pastor), in his office of a Christian preacher! *His mind was truly permeated with the Holy Scriptures!*

It is indeed indisputable that, the story of these two “famigliuole” “small families” was objectively characterized by very *close similarities*.

Jesus too was Jewish and “the fact that the Jewish people had to ‘*wander not to die*’ will be a constant issue in Michelangelo Florio’s life, who in his wanderings took little John along” (Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 252).

As soon as the “children” were born, both small families were forced to flee in order to shelter from the fury of a King (Herod) or a Queen (Bloody Mary) who wanted to slaughter, respectively, Jewish children and Protestants<sup>63</sup>. Only after the death of the King and the Queen, were the “small families” able to get back home.

As for Michelangelo, he fled England a few days after the execution (on February 12<sup>th</sup> 1554) of Lady Jane Grey (Queen for few days and Michelangelo’s favourite pupil<sup>64</sup>) “*In February 1554 a royal edict proclaimed that all strangers must avoid the realm within twenty-four days. ... In March 1554, evidently in obedience to the February edict, Michael Angelo Florio left England. At this point we can resume the account of Florio’s movements which he gives in the Apologia.*

*‘... and remained there [i.e. in London] until the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, 1554, and having departed thence, (when that impious, cruel, brazen Queen Iezabel had stolen that realm from Christ and given it as a prey to Antichrist) , with my (‘famigliuola’) little family I came through Antwerp into Germany, and*

<sup>63</sup> The angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him (Gospel of Matthew, 2,13). “But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child’s life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene” (Gospel of Matthew, 2,19-23). The translation into English of such passages of the Gospel of Matthew is freely available in <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+2&version=KJV>

<sup>64</sup> See Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 33, who makes reference to Michelangelo’s Apologia. Indeed, Michelangelo was very angry with the Spanish Queen Isabel of Castile, who was responsible for the Dispersion in 1492. Michelangelo, in 1561, wrote a work in honour of Lady Jane Grey (“*Historia de la vita e de la morte de l’Illustriss. Signora Giovanna Graia*”).

stayed in Strasbourg [Argentina] until the 6<sup>th</sup> of May, 1555 and having departed from thence at the call of the Grisons lords, I arrived here on the 27<sup>th</sup> of the said month [May 1555]’.

‘Here’ is no mystery, for it is clear from the address to the readers [of the *Apologia*] that Michael Angelo was now pastor of the reformed church of ‘Soy’ in the ‘ual di Bregaglia’. To this day ‘Soy’ is the local name for Soglio, a tiny village of the Val Bregaglia in the Grisons Canton of Switzerland .. Michael Angelo was the second, not the first pastor of the reformed church of Soglio. The De Salis family had local influence, and Frederick de Salis may have been one of the ‘Signori Grigioni’ who ‘called’ Florio from Strasbourg to the Grisons.” (Yates, op.cit. pg. 13-16).

In brief, Michelangelo himself, in his “Apology”, tells us that he and his “famigliuola” fled England on March 4<sup>th</sup> 1554; they “fled to Strasbourg by way of Antwerp, and remained there until May 6<sup>th</sup> 1555”. “On May 27<sup>th</sup> 1555, they reached Soglio”, in the Canton of the Grisons (very close to Lombardy), a mountain village in Val Bregaglia, where Michelangelo was a preacher in the local Protestant parish church<sup>65</sup>.

#### **7.6. John’s childhood (in Soglio) and his early education. Michelangelo’s activities in Switzerland.**

John, therefore, from the age of two, spent his childhood in Soglio, where his father taught him perfectly the Italian language, as well as different languages and dialects, including the Tuscan language.<sup>66</sup>

It may appear clear that “everyday conversation” in his family with his father was in Italian. This would also be supported by the scholars, who infer that John Florio was “an Englishman with an Italian inflection or streak”<sup>67</sup>. In the “Epistle Dedicatorie” to a Worlde of Wordes, John himself confesses, moreover, that he had applied himself to the study of English for many years, and with the most absolute dedication, passion and perseverance; this confession could also be due to his modesty, but, most likely, could be due to the fact that the study of the English language, which was not John’s mother tongue, implied significant efforts and difficulties for him. To be honest, he refers specifically to his great efforts in rendering words of different Italian dialects and idioms into English.

“It was a far cry from the fevered scenes Michael Angelo had witnessed in London to the crystalline stillness of Soglio ... The ‘famigliuola’ was with him here, for he says in the *Apologia* that at Soglio ‘a sufficient living is provided for myself and for my little family’. But Michelangelo speaks regretfully of the great Italian cities which he has known, comparing their amenities, ‘which cannot be enjoyed without denying God’, with the ‘hard and rugged rocks’, the ‘sterile mountains’ of Rhaetia. In this tiny mountain village John Florio must have spent his childhood, in considerable

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<sup>65</sup> See Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 33. Michelangelo “had been called to act as preacher to the De Salis family. The De Salis, who were powerful lords in the canton of the Grisons, had built up an important centre there for the diffusion of the Protestant doctrine”.

<sup>66</sup> See Gerevini, op. cit., pg.72. Similarly, Pfister, *Inglese Italianato* cit, pg. 36 (“All John Florio’s activities in England as teacher, lexicographer and translator and his contacts with the English court and with prominent literary figures of Elizabethan Oxford and London depended on his being Italian”).

<sup>67</sup> See Michael Wyatt, *Giordano Bruno’s Infinite Worlds in John Florio’s World of Words*, in *Giordano Bruno Philosopher of the renaissance*, edited by Hilary Gatty, 2002, pg. 188. Also Pfister, *Inglese Italianato* cit. pg. 36, makes reference to Florio’s “Italian inflection or streak”.

poverty yet not without educational advantages. Michael Angelo was well qualified to teach his son the rules of the Tuscan tongue. He could also instruct him in Latin and English and probably in French, for we know from the *Apologia* that Michelangelo had visited Lyons and Paris and in the same book he claims acquaintance with Cologne. Before going to England Michelangelo may have been employed on political business by the French government, like Vincenzo Maggi whom he seems to have known ...According to F.C. Church (*The Italian Reformers, 1534-1564, 1962, pg.188*) Michael Angelo Florio spent two years at Maggi's house in Venice, apparently after his imprisonment and before going to England. This does not quite tally with Florio's own account of his movements" (Yates, op.cit. pg. 16 and footnote 4).

John makes it very clear to us that he was in boundless debt of gratitude to his father; "little John had lived with his father" "fundamental years of education, travel [the wandering around Europe], and formative experiences", such as when he had lived in Switzerland, "in an environment rich in religious, theological and philosophical ferment. The origin of the *extraordinary biblical and juridical knowledge of Shakespeare* lies here: in the life and profession of the elder Florio, a pastor above all, but a writer and a *notary* as well"<sup>68</sup>.

"The *preacher Michel Angelo Florio was certainly steeped in the Bible*: he was in Switzerland, not far from *Geneva*, during the exact period when Protestant academics and literati in exile from Marian's England were at work there on the most popular and successful translation of the Bible into English, 'the most interesting of all versions' (Thomas Carter, 'Shakespeare and Holy Scripture, with the version he used', London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1905, pg.1), the one that Shakespearian criticism regards as *the Bible of the Bard* ...but one wonders whether Michel Angelo Florio, whom had held a place of some prominence at the court of London a few years earlier, may not also have had some contact with that circle of Protestant translators. The hypothesis is not exorbitant ...". "As Naseb Shaeen ('Shakespeare's Knowledge of Italian', Shakespeare's Survey, 47, 1994, pg. 264) reveals, most of the passages cited in the plays were not to those biblical books that were used in the liturgy or to the translation recited in church, but rather to the widely distributed Geneva Bible first published in 1560" (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.237-38, John Florio, pg. 220-21).

To conclude on this point, we briefly point out that Michelangelo, "along with the pastors Gerolamo Turriano and Pietro Leone, adopted the Socinian, Anti-Trinitarian views of the reformer Bernardino Ochino, according to which remission of sin is obtainable through the Father, but not through the Son. The Rhaetian Synod of Chur [the capital of the Canton of Grisons] reacted swiftly: accused of heresy, the three were ordered to present themselves before the Synod in June 1561 and account for their stance. The main burden of preparing the defense fell on Michel Angelo ... who was in contact with many people in these months ... The result was that he became well known in the Protestant world and it was he who spoke for the defense when the Synod finally met at Chur in June 1561. The three were condemned for heresy, and sources report that Michel Angelo defended himself and the other two with his habitual vehemence (Yates, op. cit., pg. 18). Florio and Turriano were forced to recant in the end, and the third co-accused was forced to flee to another country (see Tassinari Shakespeare? pg. 43-44, John Florio, pg. 34).

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<sup>68</sup> See Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 43 and 46, John Florio, pg. 37.

Michelangelo had been the teacher of Jane Grey (who he regarded as the best of his pupils), who had become Queen of England “for one week” (since 8 July 1553 to 18 July 1553), a young woman full of intelligence and desire to learn, whom Michelangelo always remained sincerely very fond of. Michelangelo and his “famigliuola” “small family” fled England on March 4th 1554, a few days after the execution (on February 12th 1554) of Lady Jane Grey. In her honour, in 1561, “Michelangelo wrote a heartfelt appreciative work, ‘*Historia de la vita e de la morte de l’Illustriss. Signora Giovanna Graia*’, written seven years after her death, but only published in Venice in 1607 (though the place and date of publication appears to be false – Yates, op.cit. pg. 9, footnote 1). Of the many manuscripts accumulated by Michel Agnolo during his pilgrimages, only two have survived, both dedicated to high-rankig pupils. The first, from 1552, is addressed to ‘Signore Arrigo Harbart’, that is, to Heby Herbert, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Pembroke; the second, undated and bearing the title *Regole et Institutioni della lingua Thoscana*, has its dedicatee ‘Signora Giovanna Grey’ once again. In the preface to the *Historia de la vita e de la morte de l’Illustriss. Signora Giovanna Graia*, the publisher declares that the manuscript was found in the home of someone who had once a benefactor of the author. *Where did the other manuscripts end up?* Who was this benefactor? Could these have been some of the creative works, the sonnets, comedies and tragedies that John, in collaboration with his father, translated and revised later, using the pseudonym *Shake-speare*? The skills and personality of *Shakespeare*, as they emerge from his writing *reflect the interpenetration of two talents and two generations, in what I think of as their ‘writing workshop’*” (Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg.41-42, John Florio, pg.35-36).

Michelangelo was deeply shaken by the execution of his very young and favourite pupil and “relieved” his own “agony” in a Roman jail: unlike Michelangelo, who had miraculously escaped death, for her the death sentence relentlessly intervened!

Thanks to Michelangelo Florio’s influential friends, John was able to attend the University of Tubingen (In his matriculation document, John appears as as “Johannes Florentinus”, a “floral” Latinised surname too, due to the fact that he was the son of Michelangelo the “Florentine”<sup>69</sup>), where “he was steered at a tender age toward a pastoral career under the guidance, if only for a short time, by Pier Paolo Vergerio<sup>70</sup>”, 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.

Tubingen was a highly Italianised centre of culture and although Florio was not awarded a degree by the University of Tubingen, 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<sup>71</sup>).

“Wood and Aubrey both say that John Florio was educated abroad but they do not specify where, and it has generally been assumed that it was in Italy. But a son of Michael Angelo Florio could not visit the cities of Italy without denying God. *It begins to look as though John Florio, from whom*

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<sup>69</sup> Gerevini, op. cit., pg. 20. See also Yates, op.cit., pg.21.

<sup>70</sup> See Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 43 and John Florio, pg. 34.

<sup>71</sup> See Tassinari, *Shakespeare?*, pg. 122 and John Florio, pg. 98.

several have supposed that Shakespeare learnt much of what he knew about Italy and Italian towns, may never have set foot in Italy itself at all” (Yates, op.cit., pg. 21; see also Montini, op.cit., pg. 49).

### **7.7. John and Michelangelo back in England. The “long-standing controversial issue” of the date of Michelangelo’s death.**

John Florio “returned to England in around 1571” (Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 35, Shakespeare? Pg. 47, Yates, op.cit., pg.27, Panzieri, in the article published in this website “Il mistero della morte di Michel Agnolo Florio”, pg.4). According to Panzieri, “in that year he would have met Philip Sidney, who had just completed the courses at Christ College, Oxford, and it may have been he precisely who suggested he spend a period of time in studying in Padua, which, at that time, was customary for the scions of well educated nobles”. “By 1576 he was the tutor in Italian and French to Emmanuel Barnes, the son of the bishop of Durham” (Yates, op.cit. pg. 26-27). “It was perhaps as early as 1576 that he was appointed as a language instructor (Italian and French) for professors at Oxford, while spending much of his time in London.” (Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 43). “It was the old friends and protectors of Michel Angelo whom we soon find supporting the career of John”. “The rapidity with which John found acceptance in aristocratic circles is the best proof of the fact that his father was with him” (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 47, John Florio, pg. 35 and 38; Yates, meanwhile, claimed that Michael Angelo’s death “must have occurred some years before 1572” - op.cit., pg. 25). According to Santi Paladino (op.cit. pg.60), Michelangelo “died in London at an old age in 1605” (see, also Tassinari, John Florio, pg.35) and the issue has been specially investigated by Panzieri (“Il mistero della morte di Michel Agnolo Florio”, pg.1 in this website). Panzieri makes reference to a book, “Die Pfarrer der evang. Gemeinden in Graubunden und seinen ehemaligen Untertanenlanden”, published in 1935, where the Protestant pastor Jak. R. Troug of Chur listed the names of the titular pastors of the Evangelical Churches in the Canton of Grisons from the XVI to the XX century. At page 214 it emerges - in old German language – as follows:

*“1555 – 1577 Mich. Angelus Florius, Florentine, imprisoned in Rome, then exile in London from 1550 until 1554, successively from Berna (with) Ochino from 1554 until 1555, arrived in Soglio from Antwerpen on May 27th 1555, moved to London in 1577. – ([Wrote] Apologia).*

1555 is the year when Michel Agnolo was appointed titular pastor and 1557 is the year when he ceased from his office. A previous document (stating the date of the death of Michel Agnolo Florio in 1576) has proved unfounded, as a consequence of an in-depth study of Panzieri. Then, such date was wrongly indicated (as one of the possible dates of Michel Agnolo’s death) also in my previous article, cited in the Preface. Santi Paladino also (“Un Italiano autore delle opera di Shakespeare”, 1955) believes that Michelangelo did not die in Soglio, but lived until 1605 (op.cit. pg. 20 and 60).

According to Panzieri (op.cit., pg.8), “ Grounded justifications support the conclusion that Michel Agnolo lived at least until the end of the XVI century”. It means that “Michel Agnolo could support his son John in the translation of some material produced in Italy and in Soglio (notebooks, notes, transcriptions, collections of aphorisms and proverbs, sonnets etc.). His cooperation was absolutely

essential for John, who had not lived for a long time in the Italian places where many different dialects were spoken in the various Italian states, which existed at that time; it was Michel Agnolo who taught John these skills and knowledge of old Italian customs, because John knew the European languages but certainly not the Florentine language very well and especially the local idioms such as the dialects of Sicily, Veneto and Lombardy”.

Shakespeare’s description of King Lear could, to some extent, be related to Michelangelo: “Pray, do not mock me/ I am a very foolish fond old man/ Fourscore and upward, not an hour more or less; /And, to deal plainly,/ I fear I am not in my perfect mind” (Act IV, Scene vii, 59-63 – translation by Boitani, il “Vangelo secondo Shakespeare”, 2009, pag. 54). Hamlet himself (Act II, Scene ii, 197-200) says: “that old men have grey beards that their faces were wrinkled ... and they have a plentiful lack of wit”. Apart from these quotations, it is worth noting that Michelangelo was surely very sensitive, perhaps because of the torture and humiliation he endured, and he possessed an indisputable powerful creativity, which John inherited.

Certainly, after the famous “act of contrition” “*Michelangelo* was deeply ‘hurt’ and the documents of the time points out his ‘moral failure’ and ‘spiritual instability’. Then, Michelangelo devoted himself to teaching the Italian language and – according to Tassinari and Santi Paladino – he *probably drafted some poems and plays that, thirty years later, were published under the pseudonym of Shake-speare, thanks to the translation, reworking and improvements of his cultured son John*” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 39).

According to Panzieri (op.cit.) and Santi Paladino (op.cit. pag.131), “An English Chronicle of the time, dealing with the venerable Michel Agnolo Florio, quoted the following sentence by the octogenarian preacher: “My time is almost over, since *I am beaten and chopped with tanned antiquity*” and, in the nearly contemporary Shakespeare’s Sonnet No 62, you can read the following: “But when my glass shows me myself indeed,/ *Beated and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity*”.

After this important clarification, it is worth noting that John quickly managed to move in the most exclusive aristocratic circles and soon became a reference in the English cultural panorama.

### **7.8. “First Fruits” (1578). The Preface and the importance of Michelangelo’s support.**

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.

“John Florio’s *First Fruites* is above all a didactic book, an Italian grammar comprising 44 dialogues laid out in order of increasing difficulty, which appears to derive from materials initially prepared by Michel Angelo, perhaps during his early years as teacher of Italian in London. After their return to London from the continent ..., John would have translated into English and perhaps added to his father’s short work” (Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 101 and Shakespeare? pg. 125).

It is worth noting that, in a passage of *First Fruits* (thirty-first dialogue, “Discourses upon Musicke, and Love”) we also find, as follows, the title of Shakespeare’s comedy “*Love’s Labour’s Lost*”(1589,1590)<sup>72</sup>:

*“We need not to speak so much of love, al books are ful[l] of love, with so many authors, that it were labour lost to speak of Love”.*

Also for J. Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 56, “That play’s title and subject matter, its merry demolition of stale courtly love-language, are strongly suggested by this passage in *First Fruits*”.

It is worth noting that Florio pointed out that the translations of the collected proverbs (published in two “synoptic” columns in Italian and English language) may not perfectly render the same “grace” expressed in the “natural” language. The readers have to be aware of this: “*But mark first, that an Italian proverbe, to say it in English, can not have that grace, a sit hath in Italian, and also an English proverbe, to say it in Italian, can not have that grace as it hath in their natural language*” (FF 18, 26v-27r).<sup>73</sup> By way of example, Florio (in *Second Fruits*,6,96) translated “ciance” into English as “lancie” (which is in rhyme, in the Italian language), maintaining, as follows, the rhyme structure: “words” like “swords”.

Furthermore, in the Preface of “*First Fruits*” John said: “*I know that somebody will say: ‘How can he write in good Italian when he was not born in Italy?’ to him I would reply to well consider the facts. Some others will say: ‘How can he give rules when he is not an erudite?’ to those I do not know how to reply, because they tell the truth.*”<sup>74</sup>

First of all, a comment of on the “form”, but also on the substance. The piece seems a typical Gospel passage, where the doctors of the law, the holders of religious knowledge, are trying to ask Jesus “insidious” questions, possibly to extort a statement out of him, which can then be used to his disadvantage. The difference is that it was John Florio who submitted himself “voluntarily” and “spontaneously” (because he himself asked the questions!) to a sort of “flagellation”. Such circumstance must be given due consideration!

I personally believe that this is the maximum token of his “pietas”, “love” “gratitude” and “recognition” that he can leave as sign of respect for his father, who had taught him everything he knew.

The first question (‘*How can he write in good Italian when he was not born in Italy?*’) was related to his existential dilemma: “I was born in London, but I aspire to become the “*Praelector Linguae Italicae*” (as he will then write in his portrait published with his dictionary of 1611). I am “an Englishman in Italiane” (as he will write in the “To the reader” of “*Second Fruits*” in 1591). A profound identity crisis!

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<sup>72</sup> See Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 124-125 and John Florio, pg. 100-101. Furthermore, Tassinari (in line with Yates) points out “not just ... the level of Michel Angelo’s theoretical reflections on language, but also that the point of view expressed is identical to by Shakespeare’s Holofernes in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (5.1, 15-25)”.

<sup>73</sup> See Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England*, 2005, pg.176 and 184.

<sup>74</sup> The passage is quoted by Santi Paladino, op. cit., pg. 109.

The answer is apparently “evasive” or “sybilline”. “*To him I would reply to well consider the facts*”. It means that John absolutely wanted to recognize the merits of his father, who had been essential in his education. For example, it is very likely that most of the library<sup>75</sup>, on which he based his works and dictionaries, had been lovingly put together by his father, as Monaldo Leopardi will later do for his son Giacomo (even if the relationship between the two Florios is not comparable to the relationship between Giacomo and Monaldo Leopardi, certainly not a sublime literato!). The answer is in my opinion a tangible token of gratitude to his father and basically has the following meaning: “I have nothing to say. You all know, because it is public knowledge, who my father is and you know his culture and you also know that he was my teacher! These are the facts and you will have to make do with, whether you like it or not! Everyone should freely conjecture as he likes”. It is like, I repeat, a passage from the Gospel, where the vicissitudes of Jesus resound. As it occurred when, speaking in the temple to the doctors, Jesus told Mary, who requested an explanation: “*Didn’t you know I had to be about my Father’s business?*” (Luke, 2,49). John (again I don’t mean the comparison to be blasphemous) must rework the materials lovingly prepared by Michelangelo to fulfill their “common superior mission”, so strongly planned by Michelangelo together with John.

As for the second answer (“*How can he give rules and he is not an erudite?’ to those I do not know how to reply, because they tell the truth.*”), John substantially repeats what he expressed in his first answer. Here, also, with accents and words typical of the Gospels (“*Verily, Verily, I say unto you...*”). My father is my teacher and with great pride I point out that this is the truth! He taught me the rules, since he is one of the greatest experts of the Italian language, he (and not me) “gave rules”; he (and not me) has compiled a manuscript entitled “*Regole et Institutioni della Lingua Thoscana*”<sup>76</sup>. He (and not me) is the “erudite in our family”, the “schoolmaster”, who supported me since my infancy! This is, in my humble opinion, the sense of the words of John, a clear recognition of his father’s merits rather than his own (although he himself had many!) merits. That is an admission that does not diminish the merits of John and the value of John himself, but aimed at his father’s “Redemption”, also in view of the Redemption of the whole “famigliuola” “small family”! At the moment, my father is still the “erudite” of the family, or more precisely, he is still the “most erudite” in the family!

We also agree with Santi Paladino that John’s expressions were also “masks” and “rhetorical devices”.

We repeat, the above mentioned sentences have been written by John himself, who never “blew his own trumpet” nor paraded his proficiency in any way. He avoided (in far as possible) his talent

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<sup>75</sup> Santi Paladino would like to read the manuscripts of the Florian library (op.cit. pg. 77). 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 seals this testimony of friendship and love” (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 85 and 94; John Florio, pg.81).

Pfister, *Inglese Italianato*, cit., pg. 43 pointed out that Florio’s “three hundred-and-forty Italian, French and Spanish books and manuscripts, which he bequeathed to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, as his literary executor, are lost”.

<sup>76</sup> Tassinari (Shakespeare? pg.41 and John Florio, pg. 35) points out that “Of the many manuscript accumulated by Michel Angelo during his peregrinations, only two have survived, both dedicated to high-ranking pupils. The first, from 1553, is addressed to “*Signore Arrigo Harbart*”, that is, to Henry Herbert, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Pembroke; the second, undated and bearing the title *Regole et Institutioni della Lingua Thoscana*, is dedicated to “*Signora Giovanna Graia*”.

becoming an obstacle to his own self-fulfillment, to his “being”. We have already pointed out some of Florio’s similar expressions in the “Dedication” of “Second Fruits” (1591), where he refers to “my slender endeavours”. Certainly the efforts of John were not at all “slender”, in the writing of a work as important as this collection of Italian proverbs, perfectly translated into English.

It was a way of “disguising” himself and hiding, not arousing envy and playing down his writing that was certainly the result of boundless efforts!

Shakespeare himself, in his “Dedication” to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, related to his work “Venus and Adonis” (1593) , will similarly apologise for his “unpolished lines” and, in the “Dedication”(to the same Earl) related to “The Rape of Lucrece” (1594), he will again apologise for his “untutored lines”(see. Tassinari, Shakespeare? pp. 134, 135; John Florio, pg. 119). Also in such cases, Shakespeare’s verses were anything but “unpolished” or “untutored” lines<sup>77</sup>.

It is worth noting that in 1578 John was 25 years old and this true act of “submission” and token of gratitude to his father will lead him, in the fulfilment of their “common cultural mission”, to deservedly bear the title of “Praelector Linguae Italicae”, 33 years later, in 1611, when he had already taken the metaphorical “baton” from his father, the “older generation”. John was well aware of Socrates’ thought, that the acknowledgment of his own “ignorance” is the first step towards the Knowledge. John clearly stated that he was not yet as erudite as his father was, or at least he did not want to disclose himself as such. Evidently, the rules set out by John were not fully “his own work”; however, John has learned them, even if, not yet as well as his father. This would finally be the true meaning of John’s words, stated by a person who has the sense of his great potentialities, but also of the transitory limits of his knowledge, which he would overcome with an immense amount of hard work. His words also reflect his profound commitment to himself and publically to his readers to improve his talent in the future!

Florio himself, in the “Epistle Dedicatorie” of the World of Wordes in 1598 confessed again and expressed his own “ignorance”. In particular, he pointed out his difficulties in rendering into English the words of the different Italian dialects. As he says, “I ... many years have made profession of this [English] tongue and in this search [related to the dictionary] or quest of inquiry have spent most of my studies; yet many times in many words have been stalled ..., as such sticking made me blushingly confess my ignorance, and such confession indeed made me studiously seek help, but such help was not readily to be had at hand”. It is the image of the boundless difficulties encountered by John in compiling his monumental dictionary, the unique vocabulary capable of translating into English the nuances of the various idioms and Italian dialects. A work that is beyond any comparison. A “superhuman effort”, which, as such, had necessarily involved two generations (and two superb scholars!) working “in unison”. “Also a forceful, intimate image of a difficult birth: John Florio studied the language destined to transform him, a language that was not his mother tongue, with passion and perseverance”<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> Bill Bryson, *Il mondo è un teatro. La vita e l'epoca di William Shakespeare*, Ugo Guanda publisher, Parma 2008, pg. 108 (translation into Italian of the original book entitled *Shakespeare*), considers such dedication “unctuous”.

<sup>78</sup> See Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 47, John Florio, pg. 38. Pfister (*Inglese Italianato*, pg. 53) points out that “Florio ... has internalised English to bilingual perfection”.

We were considering First Fruits. They are “the earliest work with his hand known to us and yields direct, unequivocal testimony to the continuity between the careers of the two Florios ... it was conceived for the teaching of Italian language and culture to the English ... and was the first stage of an enterprise destined to transport Italy to England by means of lessons, translations, and later poetry and theatre. Behind the book stands the great erudition and experience of Florio’s preacher father ... the final pages contain an extensive Italian grammar, followed by an appendix of *Regole necessarie per proferir l’Inglese* (rules needed for pronouncing English), with notes on English phonetics and pronunciation ... Michael Wyatt <sup>79</sup>... reminds readers that in Henry IV and Henry V by Shakespeare, language lessons that borrow directly from ‘theatrical’ booklets of John Florio are portrayed twice” (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 49, John Florio, pg.38-40). First Fruits was “conceived (as Florio clarified in the *Epistle Dedicatorie*) for the teaching of Italian language and culture to English, and conversely the English language to an audience of ‘tutti I gentili uomini e mercanti italiani’ ‘all the Italian gentlemen and merchants’ ... to learn the pronunciation of *our English* (note how Florio already identifies with the English language and culture)” (see Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 39 and 40).

Indeed, Florio’s answer in the preface of First Fruits, is a consequence, more than anything else, of a truth highlighted by the scholars (Michael Wyatt); “Florio’s relations with Citolini (or with his patrons) were such as to have afforded access to the manuscript of Citolini’s *Grammatica del la lingua italiana*, which Florio liberally drew on for the grammar appended to Firste Fruits<sup>80</sup>”. “The text that goes unmentioned anywhere in Florio’s grammar is [indeed] Citolini’s *Grammatica del la lingua italiana*, of which Maria Grazia Bellorini has demonstrated Florio’s work to be an unacknowledged translation. What might seem an inexcusable case of plagiarism should, however, be qualified in this case (and in general with regard to the issue in this period), for it is not clear to what extent Citolini might have been involved in Florio’s use of his work, and as Bellorini points out, Florio’s grammar is the adaptation of a work for the English context originally written in Italy for Italians<sup>81</sup>”. “Bellorini suggests that Citolini’s frequent recourse in his *Grammatica* to diverse Italian dialects would make little sense had it been intended for English public and that the text likely remained unpublished in Italy owing to its unusual orthographic proposals. And while not entirely letting Florio off the hook ... Bellorini also recognizes that he rendered the work functional for English readers, drawing on his experience as a language teacher and on his knowledge of English.”

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<sup>79</sup> See Michael Wyatt, *The Italian encounter with Tudor England. A cultural politics of translation*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pg.199, 200, 201 and 202. He points out (pg. 201, 202) “Florio’s instrumentality in the transmission to England of Italian Renaissance and early modern cultures”. “Shakespeare had written *Henry V* by the spring of 1599, not long after the publication of the first edition of Florio’s Italian-English dictionary, *A Worlde of Wordes*. Wyatt (pg. 202) claims the opportunity “to understand how Florio’s representation of the Italian language and the culture that it mediates assumed a character in England different from its native Italian identity, and in so doing established a paradigm against which later assessments of the Italian Renaissance might profitably be read”.

<sup>80</sup> See Michael Wyatt, op. cit. pg.205.

<sup>81</sup> See Michel Wyatt, op. cit., pg. 216 and 217, as well as footnote 72 at pg. 331. The work written in 1965 by Mariagrazia Bellorini (to which Wyatt makes reference) is entitled *La Grammatica de la lingua italiana di Alessandro Citolini*, in *English Miscellany* 16: 281-296. On the matter, see also Tassinari, who points out that “about four centuries before Julia Kristeva and Edward Said’s ‘intertextuality’, Florio, i.e. Shakespeare, is proclaiming here the ineluctable hybridity of text: books are born from books, and that which comes after bears, necessarily and biologically, the imprint of what came before (“*inherit their possession*”). There is nothing more natural and inevitable than borrowing” (Shakespeare? pg. 51 and 52, John Florio, pg. 40- 42).

Therefore, Florio, in the same way he hides behind a pseudonym (concealing the real name of the author), he conceals the sources he used and does not acknowledge (by applying, in his own way, a sort of “principle of reciprocity” in his anonymity).

Moreover, Florio expresses his conception of the universal form of acquisition and transfer of knowledge and art in the section “to the courteous reader” of the Essays of Montaigne; he points out that all, Latin and Greek authors translated thoughts of other writers and thinkers “borrowing their colors, inheriting their possession”<sup>82</sup>. He specifies that, if this is made “with acknowledgement, it is well; if by stealth, it is too bad: in this our conscience is our accuser; posterity our judge: in that our study is our advocate, *and you Readers our jury.*” Florio appears to hold many legal skills and interests, indeed!

### **7.9. From 1580 to 1582.**

In 1580, thanks to Burghley, he was able to enroll 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.

### **7.10. John’s friendship with Giordano Bruno in London (1583-1585). The importance of this friendship.**

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 but also from a philosophical point of view.

Future studies could better evaluate what Santi Paladino (op.cit. 1955, pg. 30) says: “John Florio, when he worked at the French Embassy [the French Ambassador was Michel de Castelnau, Sir of Mauvissière], heard that *Giordano Bruno had been a pupil of his father Michele Agnolo Florio*” (for a first approach to the issue, see the article by Panzieri in this website, “Parallelismi biografici tra Giordano Bruno e Michel Agnolo Florio”).

John Florio was “the schoolmaster of the French Ambassador’s daughter and his interpreter and factotum, so that he was called *Johannes Fac-Totum*” (Santi Paladino, op.cit. pg. 30). And here, on

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<sup>82</sup> See Andreas Hofele in *Renaissance Go-Betweens*, 2005, Introduction, pg. 4, who (while mentioning Edward Said) points out that “the history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowing”, of an “intercultural transmission and exchange”.

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: Yates (op.cit., pg.65) pointed out that Florio, at the French Embassy, worked as lawyer, upon request of the Ambassador Mauvissière. As a consequence, Florio's knowledge of law was very thorough.<sup>83</sup> Florio came into contact with important figures, such as Sir Walter Raleigh and attended the secret "School of the Night".

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" in London ("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; Florio, in turn, reached the "infinite in words" - see Samuel Daniel's "To my deere friend M. John Florio, concerning his translation of Montaigne", 1603). 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:

- Florio's "World of Wordes" of 1598 - apart from the "pun" – just like the name given to the "Globe Theatre" -1599- reminds us of universality as well as of Bruno's theories of "infinite worlds" and of "unitary": words, "letters, syllables, diction, power of speech, the parts related directly or indirectly to the whole"(see also J.Jones, pg.23, in this website).

J. Jones pointed out a passage from Hamlet (Act II, Scene ii, 191-192) which was drawn on from Bruno's *Il Candelaio* (another indisputable link between Bruno, Florio and Shakespeare)! In this passage, examined by Hilary Gatti herself (*Il teatro della coscienza. Giordano Bruno e Amleto*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1998), Hamlet is reading a book. "What is the book that he's reading? The answer? The book Hamlet is reading is Bruno's play, *Il Candelaio*! And how do we know this? In Bruno's play a Gentleman asks the pedant, Manfurio:

Gentleman: *What is the matter of your verses?* [and Manfurio: 'volete dire *de quo agitur? Materia de qua?*' 'do you mean the matter that I read?']

Manfurio: *Letterae, sillabae, diction et oratio, partes propinquae et remotae. ...*

... which translates, "*Letters, syllables, diction, power of speech*, the parts related directly or indirectly to the whole". Less formally "*Words, words, words*", such as Hamlet answers to Polonius' question "*What is the matter, My Lord? ... I mean the matter that you read, my Lord*" (see also Tassinari, Shakespeare?, pg.103, John Florio, pg. 271).

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<sup>83</sup> See Gerevini, pg. 85 and footnote 84, pg. 256-257, 397.

- The naming of Globe Theatre, which 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 plays.
- 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”.
- Florio himself freely rendered his Italian motto (“*Chi si contenta gode*”) into English in *Second Fruits* (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). It is probably a Neapolitan motto (as Giulia Harding points out, also on the basis of his father John Harding’s studies on Italian mottos). It is also worth noting that Florio’s “to live content” literally translates Horace’s “*vivere contentus*”.

All the above clearly echoes Bruno’s concepts concerning the new role of our world (a “speck of dust”) within the “infinite worlds”.

Also in the Sonnets Brunian expressions are present, such as “the prophetic *soul Of the wide world*” (Sonnet 107).

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<sup>84</sup>. 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; to such purpose he used some particular methods and techniques which we find utilised also by Hamlet<sup>85</sup>. Within the French Embassy he performed different roles, including those of lawyer and language teacher. We mustn’t forget that John Florio’s primary objective was to become the best language tutor in England (“the greatest”, in accordance with his father’s ambitions), which he actually achieved with great success. Giordano Bruno, following Mauvassiere, 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.

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<sup>84</sup> Julia Jones, “The Brave New World of Giordano Bruno”, in this website, pg. 2.

<sup>85</sup> According to Gerevini (op. cit. pg. 95-96), Francis Walsingham, the right hand-man of Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley (Secretary of State and counsellor of Queen Elisabeth I), was the organizer of an efficient secret service and in 1586 foiled a plot, which had been hatched by Sir Antony Babington in order to kill Queen Elisabeth I, to raise Mary Stuart to the throne and to reinstate the Catholic religion. John Florio took part in the espionage under Walsingham. Walsingham found out that Mary Stuart was sending secret letters to the French Catholics; this letters were hidden in barrels of beer, which were shipped. Walsingham’s spies removed the seals from the envelopes of the letters, read them and copied their content; then, they again affixed the seal of Mary Stuart (whose mould had been secretly taken) and reinserted the letters in the barrels of beer, so that the addressee had no chance of suspecting anything. When Walsingham had collected sufficient evidence, after several interceptions, he incriminated Mary Stuart, who was brought to trial in October 1586 and executed on February 8<sup>th</sup> 1587. John Florio received the approval of James I for this espionage, as William Vaughan’s *The Golden Fleece*, part I, D4-E3 bears witness (Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 95). Gerevini (op.cit. pg.96) pointed out that Hamlet himself used the very same technique in order to foil the plot which had been hatched by his stepfather and two courtiers (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) to kill Hamlet. Hamlet too removed the seal from the envelopes of the letters and then again affixed the Danish seal (in his possession) just like the spy vicissitudes concerning Mary Stuart. “Why, even in that was Heaven ordinate; I had my father’s signet in my purse, Which was the model of that Danish seal: folded the writ up in form of the other, Subscrib’d it, gave’t th’impression, plac’d it safely, The changeling never known” (Act V, Scene ii, 48-53).

Tassinari<sup>86</sup> 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*”. “The choice of the pseudonym *Soowthern* is a trial run of sorts, followed seven years later by the adoption of the appellation ‘Resolute’, and two years after that by the definitive nom de plume *Shake-Speare*”. Indeed, a collection of poetry known as *Pandora*, an ‘ode’ edited by John Soowthern, was dedicated to the Earl of Oxford. “The title poem *Pandora* marks the first time that either the word ‘ode’ or an example of this poetic genre had appeared in the English language and literature. *The next author to mention this genre a few years later and try his hand at it would be Shakespeare*”. “My name ... is Soowthern, and ... let thus suffice: *That Soowthern which will rayse the English language to the Skies*”. Florio’s “awareness of his role as diffuser of European culture, and how much he was contributing to the elevation of England’s language and culture, underlie the often arrogant and peremptory attitude found in his writings”. Tassinari (*Shakespeare?* pg. 218-220, John Florio, pg. 200-202), also pointed out Florio’s lines that appear twice, on the title page along with the author’s name, and at the end of the Ode *Pandora*: ““*Non careo patriam, me caret illa magis*’ ‘I do not miss my homeland, rather it misses me’”. These lines, which would seem a deliberate affront [addressed to Italy; indeed his father fled to England due to the persecution of Inquisition!] ... express feelings typical of the exile Florio, whose distant homeland, Italy, he depicts as missing him [a sort of ‘nemesis of history’] ... Such feelings and such presumptuousness inherent in the *Shakespearian* exile poetry. They are revealing about Florio’s status, tied as he was to the culture and memory of Italy, and critical of many aspects of English culture, yet at the same time strongly attached to his new country and profoundly involved in the English Renaissance, of which he felt himself, and of which he was, an active and essential part”.

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 encyclopedic 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.

### **7.11. “*Second Fruits*”.**

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.

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<sup>86</sup> *Shakespeare?* pg. 218 and John Florio, pg. 200.

“There is something of the Italian courtesy-book in the *Second Fruites*, and Florio probably hoped that an Italian finish would refine away some of the English barbarism of mind and manners which he and Bruno found so trying”<sup>87</sup>. Therefore, in Florio’s *Second Fruites*, we find a very important hint of Bruno’s influence, with whom John had a friendship which had been essential for John’s education, living through, as Yates observes, “one of the decisive experiences of his life, his encounter with the great Neapolitan Philosopher Giordano Bruno and their prolonged intercourse”<sup>88</sup>.

It is worth noting that “Between the end of the 1570s and virtually throughout the 1580s, Florio was among the main proponents of ‘Euphuism’, a literary and ‘political’ movement whose ultimate goal was to elevate the language and culture of the English”<sup>89</sup>.

Indeed, this “collections” of proverbs was also the clear result of a work already started by his father and successively reworked by John!<sup>90</sup>

According to Santi Paladino, John reworked the material and translated it into perfect English and improving it, in the light of (as Yates pointed out) his personal evolution due to Giordano Bruno’s ideas, with whom he had been linked by a fundamental cultural relationship<sup>91</sup>.

It is worth noting that the last two verses of the Sonnet *Phaeton*, which is prefixed to *Second Fruits*, are the following:

*“Sutch frutes, sutch flowrets of moralities, Were never before brought out of Italy”*.

Such verses testify and further confirm what Santi Paladino (“Un Italiano autore delle opere Shakespeariane”, 1955, pg. 8 and 9) claimed; indeed, according to Paladino, such *collection* of proverbs (even if not just the same published in 1591, which had been improved by John Florio and translated also in English, with the method of the two “synoptic” parallel columns) *already existed in the Italian language*, published in 1549, under the title of “*I secondi frutti*”, by Michele Agnolo

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<sup>87</sup> Yates, op. cit. pg. 138. Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 53, John Florio, pg.44.

<sup>88</sup> Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 53, John Florio pg. 44.

<sup>89</sup> Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 44, Shakespeare? pg. 53.

<sup>90</sup> In England, John Harding came up with the same findings on the works of John Florio, which in Italy Santi Paladino revealed regarding Michelangelo Florio (whose culture and “materials” were surely the basis and the “life blood” of John’s work). Indeed, also the English scholar John Harding “believed that Florio himself wrote the works of Shakespeare” (Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 65 and 363). Therefore, two scholars, an Italian and an English, who - on the basis of the fundamental paragraph of Baynes in the Ninth Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1890) “Shakespeare’s connection with Florio” and of the book of Yates in 1934 - since the early XX century, stood up as real “Founding Fathers” of the “Floriano theory”.

In particular, Santi Paladino, in an article published in ‘L’Impero’ on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1927 (available in the downloads of this website) informed the whole world that he found a volume written by Michelangelo Florio in Italian and entitled “*Secondi Frutti*”, published in Italy before the publication in England of John Florio’s “*Second Fruits*” in 1591 (a manual of conversation, in two columns, with the Italian and English corresponding version), whose many passages were reproduced in the works of Shakespeare! He then wrote a volume in 1929 and a later book *Un Italiano autore delle opere di Shakespeare*, Gastaldi publisher, Milan, 1955, where (pg. 8 onwards) he pointed out that he found the volume of Michelangelo (published in Italy in 1549) in his private aristocratic family library. This precious volume was requisitioned in 1930 by the Italian public authorities of the time; the ‘Accademia Shakespeariana’ founded in 1929 by Santi Paladino, was dissolved and the printing of his first book (“Shakespeare sarebbe il pseudonimo di un poeta italiano?”, Borgia publisher, 1929) was forbidden (see Paladino, op. cit., 1955, pg. 13). The entire matter is dealt with in the paragraphs 7.16 and 7.18 below.

<sup>91</sup> Santi Paladino, op.cit., 1955, pg. 109.

Florio. *Santi Paladino had been able to read such collection*, which had successively been “requisitioned” by the Italian public authorities as a consequence of the “compulsory” dissolution of the ‘Accademia Shakespeariana’ in 1930. This opinion is also shared by the Italian scholar Martino Iuvara (“Shakespeare era italiano”, Ragusa, 2002, pg.27); according to Iuvara, the last two verses of the Sonnet Phaeton contemplate a “self-evident statement, which, in my view, clearly means that the collection [I secondi frutti] had been already written [in Italy] by Michele Agnolo Florio”; on the other hand Iuvara claims the Sicilian origin of Michelangelo, whose life, as we again confirm, shall however be the specific object for future further studies. It is worth noting, in any case, that the “honey of Hybla” (a small Sicilian village near Ragusa) was cited by Shakespeare in his Henry IV, Part I, Act I, Scene ii (Iuvara, op.cit., pg.46).

### **7.12. The “turning point of his life”. John Florio became “Resolute”(1591), coinciding with his fruitful cooperation with William of Stratford.**

In the “To the Reader” epistle of “Second Fruits” (1591) reference is made for the very first time to Florio’s “appellation” “Resolute John Florio”.

It is again worth noting (repeating the issue “to death”!) that John was a true “funambulist” of the words and therefore such “appellation” was no coincidence (just like his name John). He literally “saw” the world through the glasses of one who was “madly in love” with “words”. And the world appeared to him just as a “World of Words”!<sup>92</sup>

John Florio himself introduced, in the “To the reader” of “World of Wordes” (1611), the comparison “wordes like swords”, a “play of words”, a “pun”, “which sounds as one of the infinite Shakespearian metaphors” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 127, John Florio, pg.103). Words are just like a sword. They both wound and cut! They metaphorically deeply engrave the concepts which they describe. “Often words do end with swords” is also similarly said in Second Fruits (1591) [SF 6, 96-97]<sup>93</sup>.

According to Yates (op.cit., pg. 118) “Florio knew that his *Second Fruits* was a provocative work, and it is here for the first time that he calls himself ‘Resolute John Florio’ the adjective would stick for life and even after death,”.

Moreover, his “appellation” “Resolute” is not just any word, since it identifies John Florio himself, as though a suffix to his own name!

There is no question that such word had a really well considered, well-thought-out, precise meaning!

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<sup>92</sup> This is one of Florio’s main messages and is a quotation from Giordano Bruno, in the preface of Florio’s translation of the Essays of Montaigne: “... *my olde fellow Nolano tolde me, and thought publikely, that from translation all Science had it’s of-spring*”. The objective reality is “rendered” by any science according to an *ad hoc* language. For a “mathematician”, the world is a world of “numbers”. For a “musician”, the world is a world of “notes”. For John, of course, the world was a “World of Words”, well ordered together with their own meaning. Such quotation is emblematically reported by Pfister just in his Introduction of his last edition of the Sonnets of Shakespeare.

<sup>93</sup> See also Wyatt, *The Italian encounter with Tudor English*, 2005, pg. 184.

Therefore, it is worth noting that “Resolute” originates from Latin “resolutus”, past participle of the verb “resolvere”, which means to “resolve”, or to “find a resolution” of, a dilemma, a problem, a critical situation.

The “antonyms” of such “appellation” are “irresolute”, “indecisive”, “wavering”.

Florio unexpectedly calls himself “Resolute” in 1591.

This brings us to question why someone, at a given moment of their life, feels the irrepressable need to disclose his new “status”. In my view, we are talking solely 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 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, as Santi Paladino widely reports, the Encyclopaedia Britannica’s (“Ninth Edition”, 1890), entry for “Shakespeare”, expressly refers to a “*literary association*” between William Stratford and John Florio, which coincides perfectly with all of Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding arguments<sup>94</sup>. We will examine the passage in the Encyclopedia Britannica in paragraph 7.17.

“The year 1591, as we know, saw the publication of *Second Frutes*, in which John Florio used the appellation of ‘Resolute’ for the first time, as a badge of his determination to accomplish an uncommon, imposing mission. The adjective ‘resolute’ is plucked from the same semantic patch as the combative nom de plume *Shake-speare*” [taking also into account that “wordes are like swordes” and therefore you shake spears or swords just like you shake also pens, necessary to write words!], “adopted shortly after. *For it is at the precise moment at which John publicly asserts his own ‘resolve’ that the name Shake-speare appears suddenly on the London stage*” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 57, John Florio, pg. 48-49).

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”). Michelangelo had precisely the same problem. They do not want to risk their own lives and their “cultural treasure”.

The fruitful cooperation with William of Stratford provided with them the proper resolution of their problem, since the works of the two Florios were shared with William of Stratford (a “born and

<sup>94</sup> Santi Paladino himself (op. cit. pg. 108-109) pointed out that John Florio and William of Stratford “met and began supporting each other”. This happened “in the year William started his dramatic player activity and John came back to London from Oxford (1590)”. Also Paladino clearly understood and explicitly claimed the importance of such collaboration between the two young men: he believed that nobody, better than William, could be able to perform the plays, which Paladino substantially attributed to Michelangelo, being, in his view, John’s role aimed at improving and translating them into perfect English. “The young player will be better treated by the producer and theatrical circles ...” (op.cit. pg. 108-109). In particular, Santi Paladino suggested that “As for the plays, poems and sonnets, John Florio and William Shakespeare entered into a secret agreement in order to establish the temporary or definitive ‘authorship’ in favour of William” (op.cit. pg. 110).

bred” Englishman) and registered under the pseudonym of Shake-speare; thus, the safety of the two Florios was well protected. In turn, William contributed to the success of such works by collaborating with the two Florios also in improving the texts, since he was able to “understand and anticipate” the tastes of the audience, and ensuring the superb staging of the plays.

### ***7.13. The reasons at the basis of John and Michelangelo’s decision to be “incognito” (“hidden”) poets and playwrights.***

In this paragraph we will briefly mention some reasons that led the two Florios to “conceal” themselves, in their poetic and theatrical works, behind the “shield” of an English pseudonym (Shake-speare).

Michelangelo, who had escaped death by a hairbreadth (which was utterly “imminent” in the Roman prisons), certainly had no intention of “reappear” on the brink of that “undiscovered country, from whose bourn /No travellers returns” (Hamlet, Act III, Scene I, 30, 31), nor of feeling again the “dread of something after death”, which “puzzles the will, And makes us rather bear those ills we have Than fly to others that we know not of” (as Hamlet says in his monologue).

On the other hand, his name had indelibly been “wounded” (Shakespeare defined it precisely as “wounded name”, Hamlet act V, scene ii), as a result of the scandal that had almost led him to be expelled from England and, despite Cecil’s forgiveness, his name still could not be used. “*Good name in man and woman, dear my lord, Is the immediate jewel of their souls ... But he that filches from me my good name Robs me of that which not enriches him And makes me poor indeed*” (Othello, Act III, Scene iii, 182-83 e 188-90). Actually, *Michelangelo and John’s mother’s good name had been wounded, and they had been deprived of the immediate jewel of their souls as well as such deprivation made them poor indeed!* Nor he (Cecil) who did away with their good name, by creating a scandal, had benefitted.

John, meanwhile, had received death threats from English poets who were envious of his skills.

The activities he could carry out “openly” were those related to his “being of Italian extraction”; such as, teaching Italian and preparing literary works (dictionaries and collections of Italian proverbs, translated into English) that were related to his role as Italian “schoolmaster”.

Indeed all his “official” “activities in England as a teacher, lexicographer and translator and his contacts with the English Court and with prominent literary figures of Elizabethan Oxford and London depended on his being Italian” (Pfister, *Inglese Italianato*, cit.,pg. 36).

These John’s activities were “tolerated” in the cultural context of London. If he had wanted to write poems or plays in English, he would have risked his life. John Florio had been threatened with death, as he recounts in “to the reader” of “Second Fruits” (1591): “I am an Englishman in italiane; I know they have a knife at command to cut my throate Un Inglese Italianato, è un Diavolo incarnato”. “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).

Therefore, Florios' philosophy was precisely that of the two scholars "who loved better to be a poet than to be counted so" (as John writes in "To the reader" of "Second Fruits" in 1591), as explored in the next paragraph.

Santi Paladino himself says that the Michelangelo's catechism was very similar to that expressed by Falstaff in the "King Henry IV" of Shakespeare. Michelangelo "does not want to expose himself to risk; nor especially to run the risk of dying, while he had devoted his life to his high culture ... Moreover, the honour that may arise from his works encourages him in its noble literary battle; but Michelangelo, for the fact that, exposing his real name in works that undoubtedly are intended to achieve a great popularity, can be found and killed, prefers to renounce the glory".

Santi Paladino (op.cit. pg. 21, 22 e 23) even quotes the passage of Shakespeare including "Falstaff's catechism" and climaxing to the following series of questions and answers: "Can honour set to a leg? No or an arm? no: or take away the grief of a wound? no. Honour hath no skill in surgery, then? no. What is honour? a word [editor's note: "word" is always in Shakespeare's mind!]. What is in that word honour? What is that honour? air. ... Who hath it? he that died ... But will it not live with the living? no. Why? detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it. Honour is a mere [e]scutcheon: and so ends my catechism" (Henry IV, First Part, Act V, Scene i). "Was it then better leaving for posterity the unpublished manuscript works to assure Michel Agnolo Florio of after death glory or surrendering them to his contemporaries, renouncing a priori to *mere question of honour to have the welfare in life?* Falstaff's Catechism had already given an answer to this question. And then the works of a poet, who loved better to be so and not to be counted so, should be better attributed to someone who is not a poet but is eager to be counted so. And so William Shakespeare became, in addition to his role of theatre actor, also a dramatist, and he himself benefitted and allowed also the real authors to benefit" (this is the opinion of Santi Paladino, op.cit. pg. 110-11).

The same could be said of John, whose motto was "Chi si contenta gode" "He who contents himself enjoys". Gerevini (op. cit. pg. 278) even suggests that John Florio so fully shared John Falstaff's "Catechism", so that he probably left his hint: "it is worth noting that the initials of John Falstaff's name, J.F., are the same of John Florio's name, just J.F." And we are well aware of the importance of his initials to Florio!

Moreover, both Florios were great admirers of the wisdom of Roman Supreme Poet Horace, who ironically called 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.

Horace claimed: "nec vixit male qui natus moriensque fefellit", "Horace's Epistles, I, XVII, 10: "nec vixit male qui natus moriensque fefellit", "nor has he lived badly, who from birth to death passed hidden, unknown and unobserved", according to the Epicurean aphorism "Lathe biosas", "live unobtrusively". And "anonymity" and silence are good protective measures (as John Florio pointed out in a proverb he published)<sup>95</sup>.

This Epicurean aphorism was cited in the "Essays" ('Of Glory') of Montaigne (great admirer of Horace!) and translated into English by John Florio himself, as "HIDE THY LIFE".

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<sup>95</sup> Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 216.

This aphorism fits the two Florios (the “clandestine poets”) like a glove!

**7.14. The cooperation of the two Florios with William of Stratford in the Sonnet “Phaeton” (1591). Who is the “friend of mine that loved better to be a poet than to be counted so”? All three “contributors”.**

Indeed, John and William of Stratford 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” (1591), where John refers to himself for the first time as “Resolute”.

The Sonnet was probably originally written and dedicated by Michelangelo to his son and finally reworded to be dedicated by William of Stratford (at the time, 27 years old), son/pupil to his father/master John (at the time, 38 years old); a son/father relationship (even if in reverse order with compared to the original father/son relationship) was however maintained.

According to Santi Paladino’s own opinion, John’s “Second Fruits” is an “improved and enlarged work and therefore, to some extent, different from the Italian book “Secondi Frutti” published by Michele Agnolo Florio in Italy nearly in 1549”<sup>96</sup>.

In the Sonnet “Phaeton”, which the scholar William Minto attributes to Shakespeare<sup>97</sup>, we find the following lines on collections of Italian proverbs: “Sutch frutes, sutch flowrets of moralities,/ Were never before brought out of Italy”. Such an assertion clearly belongs to Michelangelo!

The sardonic “mockery” of the poet Robert Greene, a “play on words” that is undisputedly directed at John; Greene is compared to the laurel “that is ever greene”.

Finally, the title of the Sonnet is “Phaeton to his friend Florio”. Only Will of Stratford (27 years old) could be Phaeton, the son/ pupil, while John (38 years old) was Helios, the Sun, Phaeton’s father/master; thus, taking into account that “Heliotropio” was John Florio’s pseudonym in Giordano Bruno’s “De la causa” dated 1583<sup>98</sup>.

<sup>96</sup> Santi Paladino, op.cit., pg. 31. The author deals with such issue several times, seldom with slightly different tones.

<sup>97</sup> Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 144, pg. 136 onwards, pg. 150 and his article “Phaeton” in this website, pointed out that also William Minto - Characteristics of English Poets from Chaucer to Shirley, London 1885, pg. 372-373 – attributed the Sonnet to Shakespeare. “Sweet friend whose name [Florid(o)] agrees with thy increase” (with a “euphuistic” “assonance” between “agrees” and “increase”). “Sweet friend” recur about sixty times in the Sonnets of Shakespeare. Minto pointed out that Phaeton and Shakespeare’s Sonnet No.1 (“From the fairest creatures we desire increase”) “were written by the same hand”. The second verse (“how fit a rivall art thou of the Spring?”) contemplates a comparison between persons and seasons, just like Shakespeare’s Sonnets (see Sonnets No. 1 and No. 2) *piace fare paralleli tra le persone e le stagioni*. Moreover, the third verse (“For when each branche hath left his flourishing”) is partially reproduced in Shakespeare’s Richard II, Act I, Sc. II, 18, “flourishing branch of his most royal roof”. Then, a season or a month “personified” in a compound word (verse fourth, “green-locked Summer”) is set forth in Sonnet No.98 (“proud-pied April”). As well as the singing of the little birds (“The little birds doo sing” – sventh verse of “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 ... [William’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). Also Tassinari (Shakespeare? pg. 126 and John Florio, pg. 102) attributes the Sonnet to Shakespeare and believes that it has was written solely by Michelangelo Florio.

<sup>98</sup> See J. Jones, The Brave New World of Giordano Bruno, pg. 21, in this website.

Indeed, let us be careful (John's works are always pervaded by double meanings!): the Sonnet is dedicated by its author, concealed under the pseudonym of "Phaeton", to his dear "friend" (John); while John is also a "father", since the Sun - i.e. the 'Heliotropio' John - is the father of Phaeton.

This is another of John's typical play on words and double meanings ("puns"), which was also part of his "experiences: his role as a spy at the French Embassy, the Rosicrucian mysteries of the School of Night and Giordano Bruno's often cryptic expressions.

This Sonnet has, then, a further feature, which makes it "unique".

It is a sonnet of Shakespeare, but only once, also Will of Stratford embraces the philosophy of the two Florios, hiding (for this poem) behind a "pseudonym".

In this case, also Will of Stratford hid himself, behind a pseudonym, Phaeton (nothing like his real surname)!

Moreover, John made an implicit reference to this sonnet in the "to the reader" epistle in the World of Words of 1598, saying that this sonnet is the work of a "gentlema[n]" (I declare clearly all my linguistic incompetence on ancient English and frankly I do not know if this is the original text!), but, as a good lawyer, I raise also this formal objection! It might even be considered that John himself intended to refer to "some gentlema[n]s": Michelangelo, Will and he himself!

But in any case (regardless of the "loophole" noted above), this piece may be read (as John has inured us with his typical "double/triple/multiple meaning encryptions") simultaneously at three different levels of interpretation, all three equally valid, correct, and coexisting, just like his three names (as we will explain below)<sup>99</sup>:

**1) *The first interpretation***, literal interpretation, indicates William of Stratford as "a friend of mine that loved better to be a poet than to be counted so".

Frankly, Will, who had already published several works in collaboration with Florio, is the most obvious reference as the author of the Sonnet, since the author of this Sonnet, was a "gentleman" and William of Stratford himself "in 1596 had borne the title of Gentleman"<sup>100</sup>. The author of the Sonnet had been "insulted" by a scholar, Hugh Sanford (indicated, in "To the reader" epistle, by the initials H.S.). Hugh Sanford, had disparagingly referred to the author of the Sonnet, as a "rymer", a "poetaster", a minor, low level poet (as John himself tells us in "To the reader" epistle of World of Wordes of 1598),

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<sup>99</sup> This love of John Florio for the "multiple meanings" expressions, for different possible coexisting interpretations, and "multiple senses" encryptions, is no surprise; suffice to say that this literato, as better we will further clarify, had just three different names (apart from his appellation "Resolute") and an equal number of "initials"!

<sup>100</sup> Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 150. Hugh Sanford superintended the second edition of *Arcadia* by Philip Sidney and was criticized by John Florio (also in his preface to book two of his translation of the *Essays* by Montaigne, 1603), "claiming that the modifications and the ending introduced by Sanford have ruined the work, bringing it down to a level far , the beneath Sidney's original text, the *Old Arcadia* , which Florio probably superintended, 'living his fingerprints on that work'. Without going into detail, what counts according to Yates is that Florio's arguments are rigorous and consonant with those of twentieth-century critics ... Yates maintains that this Florio's aggressive behaviour was not due solely to philological considerations; there was also personal Florio's animosity, for Sanford had indulged in heavy-handed irony regarding *Second Fruits* at the time of its publication in 1591"(see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 263 and John Florio, pg. 255; Yates, op. cit., pg. 203).

At the same time, the role of William as “hidden poet” would not have seemed meaningful, in John’s own view<sup>101</sup>.

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.

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 him.

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 the relationship he had with his beloved father with Will (we can obviously extend, *mutatis mutandis*, the same concept to John’s careful mission of schoolmaster, including to his daughter Aurelia - see Gerevini, *op.cit.* pg. 46).

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”.

This thesis of Gerevini (concerning the cooperation of Will and John in the Sonnet “Phaeton”) seems to be further reinforced by the fact that John clearly displays a “fundamental turning point”, while in 1591 declared to have become “Resolute”, thereby implicitly yet 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 on John, who appears, at long last, truly confident in his and Will’s abilities. 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, pg. 176 onwards) and whose abilities probably complemented each other; in a nutshell, what we call a “winning team”.

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<sup>101</sup> Santi Paladino feels a kind of John’s sadness for his father, whose works, just like those of John, were unknown (*op.cit.* pg. 108). However, it is worth noting that, according to Paladino himself, the catechism of Michelangelo was very similar to that expressed by Falstaff in the “King Henry IV” of Shakespeare. Michelangelo “does not want to expose himself to risk; nor especially to run the risk of dying, while he had devoted his life to his high culture. Similarly John told us: “I am an Englishman in Italiane; I know they have a knife at command to cut my throate Un Inglese Italianato, è un Diavolo incarnato”. Indeed, they were pursuing a “superior cultural mission of love” (they “better loved to be a poet than to be counted so”). Moreover, Santi Paladino considers the “triad” of the contributors in the works of Shakespeare: in his view, “John improved and translated into English the works of his father Michelangelo ... while the authorship was attributed to a young dramatic player” (*op. cit.*, pg. 92, 110-111). Please note that this is not our thesis, which is in line with the studies of Gerevini and Giulia Harding.

The roles of William and John are too limited, in our opinion. Indeed, Paladino did not know several important elements, such as the will of John. Indeed he states: “If we could know the will of John ... perhaps, we would have the key of the mystery and we could definitively prove that only Michele Agnolo Florio, with the technical support of his son John, wrote the immortal works attributed to William Shakespeare (*op. cit.* pg. 77).

Bate himself (as Gerevini underlines on 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 support 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 rather than the pseudonym of a single individual.

**2) *The second interpretation***, is passionately argued by Santi Paladino<sup>102</sup>: “It is clear that, in this case, John Florio has said “*friend*” [“a friend of mine”] but he wanted to say “*father*”...Only Michele Agnolo Florio, due to the fact that his literary activity was referred to in very few chronicles, could be the man ‘who loved better *to be* a poet than *to be counted so*’; while Shakespeare, though he might have been a wonderful actor, was never a poet, although he was passionately yearned to be one. And perhaps this aspiration could be satisfied by the fact that he was, Shakespeare, who would present the literary works to the Theatrical Company and he would play the lead of these plays whose from an author for inscrutable reasons, could not or did not want to be revealed” (op.cit. pg. 106).

We have pointed out that the dedication “to his friend Florio” was in the Sonnet directed by Phaeton to a “father” (Helios, i.e. John, the “*Hliotropio*”), who, was, at the same time, considered his friend (“his friend”): therefore, a father, who was, at the same time, a friend.

In this Sonnet, the scholars highlight the existence of a metaphor, which was drawn on from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and which Shakespeare introduced several times in his works, such as in “*Richard II*”: “Down, down I come like glistening Phaeton, wanting the manage of unruly jades” (Act III, Sc.iii)<sup>103</sup>. It is worth noting that metaphorically Phaeton/Will (the son) would have “fallen headlong” (just like Phaeton according to the legend) without John’s (the father) help<sup>104</sup>.

But this metaphor also applies to John; he too, in turn, would have “fallen headlong” without Michelangelo’s support.

If it is true, as we, along with Santi Paladino and Tassinari believe, that this “gentlemans”, “friend of mine” is also Michelangelo, this passage is to be regarded as a supreme display of love, which is expressed by John to his Father, to redeem him.

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 other men

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<sup>102</sup> Op.cit. pg. 106.

<sup>103</sup> See Gerevini’s very shrewd comment, op.cit. pg.144 and his article “Phaeton” in this website.

<sup>104</sup> Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 144.

(“monsters of men, if not beasts rather than men”), against whom John hurled his invective, for the pains they had given to his father.

This invective is comparable to the one hurled, in true rhetorical style (“in *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare will bring Cicero’s Roman world alive on stage” – Bate, “Soul of the Age”, pg. 87-88), by Antony at Brutus and Cassius in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, Act III, Scene 2: “So are they all, all honourable men”. The meaning is the exact 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 literally and figuratively).

John’s desire was to “disclose”, in “To the reader “of “World of Words” (1598), who his father really was and redeem him, despite the morally reprehensible situation he found himself in arising out of John’s conception <sup>105</sup>.

It is worth noting that Friendship, in John’s mind, is even more important than the mere “biological” relationship with his father. To this end, John’s best way of honouring his father consisted in considering Michelangelo as “a friend of mine”; since John was bound to his father not only by a mere “father-son” “biological” relationship, but, above all, by “Friendship”. And Friendship is the result of a “day-by-day mutual free choice”, which entails the sharing of a common view of life, common values and interests, the pain of exile, 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 considering Michelangelo “above all” as a “Friend”.

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 public (which was also John’s): 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”!

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<sup>105</sup> “John made any human efforts to redeem ... the figure of his father, ... restoring his father’s honour and dignity through his intense work” (Gerevini, op. cit.pg. 73).

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).<sup>106</sup>

**3) The third interpretation** of a "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 Shakespeare" (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? p.127, last sentence, pg.141, footnote 72; John Florio, pg. 103).

According to this interpretation, Florio is like 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 that 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 exile and the same life philosophy.

The "To the reader" epistle confirms that John felt profoundly akin to his father and indeed identified with his father.

John was his father's true spiritual heir, the executor of his father's will and, as a consequence, we can say, in very general terms, that almost everything that may be 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).

These lines are lovingly dedicated to his father Michelangelo, by John, who was largely in Michelangelo's debt. As mentioned above, John (who had a "unique", "special" and "symbiotic" relationship with his father), in the course of his life and through his works and activities, fully and constantly "embodied" his father's aspirations and role (even "identifying" with his father), since he

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<sup>106</sup> 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.

himself was an erudite man of letters and a schoolmaster just like his father and was his father's true spiritual heir and 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 extolling Michelangelo's merits and "philosophy" of life; in doing so, John (the "hidden poet") clearly demonstrates that he fully shares this "philosophy". Obviously, John could not (and did not at all want to) expressly declare that he himself wrote literary works incognito just like his father, but all the context leads to this 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 – in as far as is possible - something very important in his own life and his "view" of life. He unconditionally admired his father and his way of seeing life.

It is effectively a clear confession by John, in his own words, that he too "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).

### **7.15. John Florio and Friendship.**

Allow me a brief digression on the value of Friendship in Florio/Shakespeare.

John Florio greatly admired Horace, who, according to the Epicurean philosophy, highly considered Friendship; you can see, inter alia, the Ode to Dellio, a poet friend of his, and the Ode to Pompeo Varo, his fellow scholar in Athens.

Similarly for John, whose 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", i.e. study, reading, pleasant and stimulating conversations with trusted friends which allowed individuals to find true fulfillment, 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.

*Indeed, it was probably Michelangelo's well prepared material that actually sped up the rate of literary production!*

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, according to Gerevini.

The character of the "trusted" friend Horatio incarnates Horace's "wisdom" and is the "personification" of "friendship"<sup>107</sup>, as well as is a also a more specific reference to (apart from

<sup>107</sup> 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.

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, according to Julia Jones (cited article, pg.21, on this website), Hamlet, speaking to Horatio makes an undisputable reference to Bruno’s theory of “infinite worlds”. Jones refers to “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 also 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 other.

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).

Therefore, in Hamlet, Horatio 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.

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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 “Italianism” 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’en 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 “Romanity” 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.

It is worth noting again that John considered Friendship as the most important kind of relationship, even more so 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”; since Friendship is 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.

Also Jonathan Bate underlined the influence of Epicureanism on Shakespeare’s world (Soul of the Age 2009, pg. 413 onwards); indeed, Bate defined the Epicurean value of friendship as the “cardinal Epicurean virtue” (see pg. 415 and 423).

In fact, 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.

In this respect, 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 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”.

Antonio’s famous speech (Julius Caesar, Act III, Scene 2), starts with “Friends, Romans, Countrymen ....”. The audience to which Antonio speaks is first and foremost constituted by “Friends”!

In the same speech, Antonio, referring to Caesar and friendship claims: “He was my friend, faithful and just to me” (“Julius Caesar”, Act. III, Scene 2).

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 by the deceit of the Greeks, the famous “Trojan horse”), they shared the same nature, the same virtues and the same moral principles.

***7.16. The “common mission” of the two Florios. A “superior” mission, involving, for its “complexity”, two generations”. The enhancement of the English language and culture. Brief notes on the thesis of Santi Paladino (in his book of 1955) and on the thesis of Tassinari, shared here, about the relationship between the two Florios.***

The two Florios, similar to Aeneas and Anchises, are linked by a Friendship which is consolidated by their “common mission”, a “superior” mission, compared to which everything else takes second place (Aeneas’s love for Dido, for the two Florios, formal external recognition of their 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 was also destined to spread throughout the world.

In the Bible (a book that is well known to Michelangelo, a Protestant Pastor and to John), we find an example of an immense “common mission” in arriving at the Promised Land by Moses<sup>108</sup> and Joshua (though Joshua is not Moses’ son, but surely Mose’s trusted friend); Joshua saw the mission that Moses had commenced through to the very end.

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.

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. Similar concepts may be applied also to Monaldo and Giacomo Leopardi.

We fully agree with J. Bate (The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 158), who uses the adjective “*superhuman*”, with reference to the work of Shakespeare. In our humble opinion, this adjective is perfect, since such an “overwhelming” mission goes *beyond the forces of a single generation, of a single man*, but it needs a “preliminary” preparation during the previous generation, as well as the involvement of an “born and bred” Englishman, just like William of Stratford.

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 as such, and we can speak of a “common mission”; this is not the forum to decide on precisely what “influence” Michelangelo would have had. This merits further and separate research.

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<sup>108</sup> Moses has been deemed as a “Go-Between” by Jan Assmann, *Moses as Go-Between: John Spencer’s Theory of Religious Translation*, in Renaissance, Go-Between, 2005, pg. 163 onwards.

The aim of this essay is not to study the precise roles of the two Florios in achieving their “mission”. Nor are we interested in determining who was the “greater” of the two. Future studies should better investigate the extent of the contributions of each of the Florios.

Our sole purpose is to argue that the “official” works, published under the name of John Florio, were indisputably the result of Michelangelo’s influence and cooperation!

“The joint enterprise of father and son was a mission aimed at elevating the young and unrefined English culture to reach the levels of the other great European cultures”.

“Their contribution is in line with the vision of the Frenchman Joachim Du Bellay, however had already been envisaged by Dante, the first European writer who strategically considered *the language as an instrument of creativity and power at the same time*. Dante’s project concerning the Italian language was not supported by a proper, hoped-for political framework, due to the lack of a National Italian monarchy and State ... the work arrived to posterity under the name of *Shakespeare* seems to be, in Florios’ strategy, the magnificent literary promotion of the English culture and, at the same time, one of the higher humanistic contribution of the Renaissance”.<sup>109</sup>

Also Dante Alighieri had pursued the mission to elevate culture, in the area corresponding to present day Italy, as well as transforming the “vulgar tongue” into a literary modern language. “Shakespeare and Dante divide the modern world between them; there is no third” (T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 1950, to whom Tassinari makes reference in John Florio, pg. 250).

Just like Dante (in Italy), the two Florios pursued a similar mission of elevating the “rude” and “unpolished” English language (considered by John Florio as his “sweet mother tongue”; Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg.137; John Florio, pg.124,125), which nobody spoke in the European Continent and which “passe Dover, it is worth 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 the Florios.*

In France, in the period 1550-75 Pierre Ronsard and Joaquin Du Bellay were the leading lights of the “Pléiade”, a political, cultural and poetic initiative by 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).

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<sup>109</sup> Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 16-7, John Florio, pg.16, 178 onwards, pg. 210.

To this end, the Florios created many new words and inserted them in the dictionaries. We confirm again that for the Florios (just like for Dante and Du Bellay) language was “an instrument of creativity and power at the same time” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.16; John Florio, pg. 210).

In addition, it is worth noting that “banishment”, exile, was a common sense of the two Florios (even if Michelangelo was born in Italy and was an immigrant in England, while John was born in London but of Italian origin) and a central theme in the work of Shakespeare (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg.224 onwards; John Florio, pg. 205 onwards).

Therefore the Florios/Shakespeare too (just like Dante in Italy and Horace in the Roman world) 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, profoundly enhancing the global culture.

As for the works the two Florios wrote “incognito”, according to Santi Paladino’s thesis (op.cit., pg.92) “John’s contribution concerned the improvement and translation of his father’s works and John ... in turn attributed the authorship of such works to a young dramatic actor”. Furthermore, according to Santi Paladino himself, Michelangelo “wrote one literary work after another was very devoted to giving a good education to his only son”. “While his father, erudite, literato, writer and poet with vivid and an inexhaustible imagination, and was destined to remain unknown even after his death, John became a famous great translator and lexicographer, from a young age” (op.cit. pg. 27). “Michelangelo was not yet fifty years old when he returned to London and renounced all political-religious activities to devote himself exclusively to his manuscripts containing numerous dramatic works and many sonnets; these works had to be refined and polished in the foggy calm of London after his long and eventful life as a persecuted” (op.cit., pg. 21-22). “All the works created by the genius of Michael Agnolo Florio [and attributed to Shakespeare] were translated into good English by his son John”, and Michele Agnolo was endowed with a creativity, greater than his son (op.cit. pg.66).

“The plots of Michel Agnolo were such that they could be written exclusively by a man of his culture, experience, skill; no English literato of XVI century could create similar plots, without the direct, main and competent support of a person like Michel Agnolo. Only Michel Agnolo, professor of Greek-Roman history in Athens, could conceive historical dramas, such as ‘Julius Caesar’, ‘Anthony and Cleopatra’, ‘Coriolanus’, ‘Timon from Athens’, ‘Trolilus and Cressida’, ‘Titus Andronicus’ and ‘Pericles’; not to mention the works which are set in Italian locations (Verona, Venice, Mantua, Milan, Messina), where the persecuted ‘Florentine’ sojourned or passed through” (op. cit., pg. 122). Also the last work, the Pericles, not considered by Heminge and Condell in the ‘First folio’ of 1623, was “completed by his erudite son John Florio” (op. cit. p. 66). “Father and son worked in silence, practicing respectively the profession of poet-playwright and translator” (op.cit. p. 86). “Michele Agnolo Florio, ‘the Florentine’, died around 1605 and in this year William Shakespeare interrupted all his supposed activities of dramatic poet” (op. cit. p. 60). “All the tragedies, all the poems and all the Sonnets of Shakespeare were conceived and written by Michele Agnolo Florio and translated into perfect English by his son John.”(op.cit. p. 116). “All the works attributed to Shakespeare were written by the ‘unknown’ poet Michele Agnolo Florio, the ‘the Florentine’ with the collaboration of his erudite son, John” (op. cit., p. 6). “We consider the works

of Shakespeare as the intellectual fruit of a poet *deliberately ignored*, John's father, the old Protestant Michele Agnolo Florio, who, perhaps, would not have remained unknown if he had not had such an *erudite son*" (op. cit. pg.92). "John had free access to mountains of works written or drafted in the Italian language from his old father. John was a very erudite lexicographer and excellent translator and must provide for his two old parents, taking also into account the debts incurred during the clandestine prolonged pilgrimage of his family" (op.cit. pg. 108). The Sonnet Phaeton "is the result of a single brain, as of a single brain are all the creations attributed both to John Florio and William Shakespeare". All the work, namely comedies, tragedies, poems, sonnets, and "First Fruits" and "Seconds Fruits" are the results of the brain of a single true poet, considered by none as such: Michel Agnolo Florio. We can recognize only John Florio's authorship of the famous translations and vocabulary "World of Wordes". We can therefore only recognise William Shakespeare's excellent qualities of dramatic actor"(op.cit. p. 111).

A striking example is provided by Santi Paladino (op. cit. p. 59) of Michele Agnolo pilgrimage, persecuted by the Inquisitors. "During his clandestine travels throughout Italy and Europe, Michele Agnolo wrote, in Italian and in Italian dialects, many poems, dramas and sonnets" (op.cit., pg. 18). Santi Paladino reports that, "according to a chronicle of the time, a play in five acts of an unknown poet was very successfully performed in Messina, where Michele Agnolo sojourned almost a year" (op.cit. pg. 18). Santi Paladino declares that he did not know "the content of the such play in five acts, with scenes in Messina, "*Tantu trafficu pe' nenti*"; but the title, referred to in the chronicles of the time is perfectly equivalent to "*Much Ado About Nothing*", the famous work of Shakespeare (op. cit. pg. 59), published in the English language in 1600, about fifty years later.

"Indeed, Michelangelo Florio travelled almost over all Italy and before going to Greece (according to Paladino) he may well have been in Messina where he may have written a comedy with such a Shakespearean title" (Gerevini, op.cit. pg.336).

Moreover, Santi Paladino himself (op.cit. pag.124) pointed out that "Shakespearian comedies often contained expressions of Dante or dialectal words of the various Italian regions"(to mention just a few: Sicily- Messina -; Campania-Naples-; Tuscany; Veneto-Verona, Venice and Padua -;Lombardy-Milan and Mantua-).

It is worth noting that Santi Paladino (op.cit. pg.59-60 and 12-13) told us he had found and read, in his own family library, the very first Italian edition of "Second Fruits", written in the Italian language in 1549, "when his son John and Shakespeare himself had not be born yet" (see also §. 7.18 below concerning the article which Paladino wrote, in the matter, on "L'Impero" in 1927). But this volume was requisitioned in 1930, as the association set up by Santi Paladino in 1929 (the "Shakespearian Academy") was declared contrary to public order and, as a result, dissolved by the police; all the material was requisitioned, including the mentioned precious volume of 1549, and the reprinting of Santi Paladino's book published in 1929 ("Shakespeare sarebbe il pseudonimo di un poeta italiano?", published by Borgia) was prohibited.

Thus, I have tried to briefly describe Santi Paladino "Thesis" (further detailed in the following paragraphs); in the light of the above, I confirm that this essay is not aimed at studying the precise

roles of the two Florios and future studies should better investigate the extent of the contributions of John and his father.

Within these very general terms and *without taking away from the role played by William of Stratford as literary associate of the two Florios*, 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).

***7.17. The relationship between John Florio (to be considered a "unicum" along with his father) and William of Stratford. The theory of the 'Literary Association' between William and John, supported by the Encyclopaedia Britannica ('Ninth' Edition, 1890).***

The relationship between John Florio and William of Stratford was carefully researched in the "Shakespeare" entry of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, a British cultural institution, which first published the Encyclopaedia in 1768.

The precise title of the work is "*The Encyclopaedia Britannica a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*".

We are referring to the "*Ninth Edition – Complete Reprint*", Volume XXI, New York, The Henry G. Hallen Company, Publishers, 1890.

It is just "*The famous Ninth Edition (1875-89) of the Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which is widely known as the '*Scholar's Edition*' for its high intellectual standards, as clearly stated in the official website of the Encyclopaedia <http://www.1902encyclopedia.com/about.html> .

The text of the entry was written by one of the most revered English scholars of Shakespeare, Thomas Spencer Baynes, LL.D ("Doctor of Laws"), Professor of Logic, Rhetoric and Metaphysics, at University of St. Andrews, the third oldest in the English-speaking world, founded in 1413 (Cambridge and Oxford being the oldest ones)<sup>110</sup>.

In 1864 he had been appointed Professor of Logic and English Literature at St Andrews University, in which capacity his mind had been drawn to the study of Shakespeare, and he had contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* and *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, valuable papers which were later collected as *Shakespeare Studies*. In 1873 he was appointed to superintend the Ninth Edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica. The text of the Shakespeare entry was therefore directly written by the maximum authority of the "Ninth Edition", by the very person who had been appointed to superintend the Ninth Edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica. A wide bibliography, prepared by H.R.Tedder, follows this entry.

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<sup>110</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Spencer\\_Baynes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Spencer_Baynes)

We will examine some principle issues which are dealt with in this “passage” of this entry, where, on pages 756 and 757 of the volume XXI, the *connections of Shakespeare with John Florio, under the paragraph entitled [Shakespeare] “Continues his education”*, are described<sup>111</sup>.

This “passage” of the Ninth Edition (but printed in 1902) is also freely available in the official website of the Encyclopaedia <http://www.1902encyclopedia.com/S/SHA/william-shakespeare-31.html>, under the title “*Shakespeare goes to London (cont.). Shakespeare Continues his Education. His Connection with Florio*”.

Firstly, the Encyclopaedia points out that, during his first years in London, Shakespeare continued his education and acquired a *working knowledge* of French and Italian which can be observed in his writings.

“The most celebrated and accomplished teacher of French and Italian in Shakespeare’s days was the *resolute* John Florio”, who was engaged in tutorial and literary work and had relationship with eminent men of letters and their patrons.

To this end, J. Bate points out Shakespeare’s “*slight knowledge* of the Italian language”; therefore, the *working knowledge* [i.e. the necessary knowledge which allowed Shakespeare to use the Italian language for his work], mentioned in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, is defined by J. Bate as a *slight knowledge*. According to J. Bate, Shakespeare learnt Italian from Florio, in Southampton’s household (The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 55, The Soul of the Age, pg.12). Moreover, J. Bate (The Soul of the Age, pg. 151-152) makes reference to “an Italian tale in the *Hecatommithi* (‘hundred stories’) of Giovanni Baptista Giraldi, known as Cinthio. It was here that Shakespeare found the plot for another play ... around the year 1604: *Othello*”. He points out that: “Scholars debate whether Shakespeare knew the Italian original or a French translation that was available (or both!). I [Bate] lean towards the Italian: the verbal parallels are a little closer and the language [Italian] was easy to read if one knew Latin and *had Florio’s dictionary to hand*”.

The Encyclopaedia points out that, after 1603, during the reign of James I, Florio was appointed tutor to Prince Henry, received an court appointment, became the friend and personal favourite of Queen Anne (to whom he dedicated the second edition of his Italian dictionary, entitled the World of Words), and died with full honours in 1625, having survived Shakespeare by nine years.

The Encyclopaedia mentions Florio’s relationship with Ben Jonson, who presented a copy of ‘The Fox’ to Florio, with the inscription, ‘*To his loving father and worthy friend Master John Florio, Ben Jonson seals this testimony of his friendship and love.*’

Moreover, Florio was related to the poet Samuel Daniel (whose sister Rose, John had married); and Daniel wrote a poem of some length in praise of Florio’s translation of the Montaigne’s Essays.

Other contemporary poets dedicated commendatory verses to Florio, published in other works by Florio<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>111</sup> Santi Paladino, *Un Italiano autore delle opere shakespeariane*, Milano 1955, pagg.92-98, reported the translation into Italian of the main excerpts from this passage.

<sup>112</sup> See, by way of example, the dedications on the occasion of the publication of the “Queen Anna’s New World of Words” (see the last part of paragraph 10 below and Tassinari, Shakespeare? E’ il nome d’arte di John Florio, 2008,

In the light of all the above, the conclusion of the Encyclopaedia is that “*There are substantial reasons for believing that Shakespeare was also one of Florio’s friends*”.

Reference is also made to the Sonnet Phaeton, published in Florio’s *Second Fruits*, 1591; William Minto (1845-1893) attributed the poem to Shakespeare, who, this once, out of fondness for his friend Florio, he went with the times and the fashion of writing laudatory verses. “The internal evidence is in favour of this conclusion”. Furthermore, The Encyclopaedia points out that in the epistle “to the reader” of *World of Words* (1598) Florio claims the Sonnet as the work of “*a friend of mine, who loved better to be a poet than to be counted so*”, and vindicates it from the attack of a hostile critic (against the *Second Fruits*; see also footnote 99 above), Hugh Sanford (H.S.), a scholar who edited the second edition of *Arcadia* by Philip Sidney in 1593 and who was critical of the 1590 edition, edited by Florio.

He is, in our humble view, the pedant schoolmaster (“Master H.S.”), from whom Shakespeare will draw inspiration for his *Holofernes*. Indeed, Florio called him, in “to the reader”, as a “*much-like reading grammarian pedante*” (see also Yates, op.cit., pg. 197). Florio had made reference to a “master” described in “*Noctes Atticae*” by Aulo Cornelio Gellio (a Latin writer, who lived in the II century a.C.). He had quoted the following sentence (Vol. II, Liber XII, 31, 11): “*Recte sit oculis magister tuis*”, “*Master, I hope your eyes may improve*”. It is the story of a conceited man, who asserted to be the greatest interpreter and commentator of the classics. But he, when requested to read and interpret a passage by Aulo Gellio (while many present people were laughing), gave back the book to Aulo, claiming that his eyes were weak and almost ruined by constant night work. So that Aulo told him: “Master, I hope that your eyes may improve, but I put a question to you, for an answer, and you have no need of your eyes”. And the Master, as if alarmed by the difficulty of the question, said: “You ask no small matter; I do not give such instruction for nothing” (the Latin passage is freely available, with its translation into English, in the following website [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Gellius/13\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Gellius/13*.html)). A further connection of Shakespeare with John Florio!

Furthermore, the Encyclopaedia points out that “*There are other points of connexion between Florio and Shakespeare.*”

Scholars produced evidence to show that Shakespeare carefully read Florio’s translation of Montaigne’s *Essays*. Also J. Bate (*Soul of the Age* 2009, pg.149) points out that William used “to reread and meditate upon in his *otium* (‘retirement’) Florio’s Montaigne translation, which we know from Gonzalo’s borrowing was in his mind at the time of *The Tempest* and it shaped the philosophical vision of *King Lear*”.

Also the Encyclopaedia points out that “Gonzalo’s ideal republic in the *Tempest* ...is simply a passage from Florio’s version turned into blank verse”.

J. Bate (*The Soul of the Age*, pg. 415 and 425) claims that Shakespeare “would have been ... sympathetic when he discovered some of the following ideas of Epicurus in his reading of Montaigne

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pg.139 and John Florio, the man who was Shakespeare, 2009, pg. 126).

... that true wisdom involves being content to live in the moment ...[Horace's '*carpe diem*', Odes, I,11,8, "seize the day", in accordance with the Epicurean philosophy; and Horace ironically represented himself as "Epicuri de grege porcum" – "pig of Epicurus' swine herd" (Epistle to Albio Tibullo, I, 4), i.e. as a follower of Epicurean philosophy.]

"... And finally a resistance to pursuit of public glory and posthumous fame – summed up in the Epicurean precept ... 'HIDE THY LIFE' 'VIVI NASCOSTAMENTE'" [ "lathe biosas", according to the Epicureans, a motto drawn on in 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 motto fits the Florios like a glove (the "clandestin poets")!].

Moreover, according to the Encyclopaedia, Florio and Shakespeare were both close personal friends of the young 'Earl of Southampton', who was the patron of both. The Encyclopaedia points out that the dedications by Shakespeare to the Earl of Southampton, in *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, are very similar to the dedication by Florio to the Earl of Southampton, three years later, in his *World of Words* (1598). Shakespeare had said in his dedication of his *Lucrece*: "What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours, being part in all I have devoted yours." And Florio said, in his dedication of *World of Words*: "In truth I acknowledge an entire debt, not only of my best knowledge, but of all, yea of more than I know or can to your bounteous lordship, most noble, most virtuous, and most honourable earl of Southampton, in whose pay and patronage I have lived some years, to whom I owe and vow the years I have to live."

J.Bate points out that "Shakespeare's knowledge of matters Italian can be attributed to the presence of John Florio in the household of the Earl of Southampton" (The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 94).

According to the Encyclopaedia, "Shakespeare was also familiar with Florio's earlier works, his *First Fruits* and *Second Fruits*", manuals for the study of Italian, with parallel columns of Italian and English. To such purpose, a unique example is given, since *these examples "being numerous and minute cannot be given here"*.

Reference is made to the proverb which is uttered by Holofernes in praise of Venice in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Indeed, both in *First Fruits* and *Second Fruits* the following proverb is quoted, "Venetia, chi non ti vede non ti pretia ..." "Venice, who seeth thee not, praised thee not ...". Equally the same proverb is quoted by Shakespeare: "Venetia, Venetia, Chi non te vede non ti pretia" (*Love's Labour's Lost*, Act IV, Scene ii, 51-52).

Also J. Bate (The Soul of the Age, pg. 149-150) points out that "Shakespeare probably also owned a copy of one or both of Florio's Italian-language manuals, *First Fruits* and *Second Fruits*, and maybe his Italian-English dictionary, *A World of Words*".

The Encyclopaedia points out that *First Fruits* (1578) "was for some years the most popular manual for the study of Italian".

Reference is made to the fact that Shakespeare sought Florio's acquaintance and secured his help and Shakespeare "probably owed to Florio his knowledge of French and of Italian".

Furthermore, in the Sonnet “Phaeton” -1591- (probably to be attributed to Shakespeare), the dedication to Florio by Shakespeare (just this once, concealed under the pseudonym of Phaeton) is “to his friend Florio”. Thus, according to the Encyclopaedia, a friendship of William with John would be confirmed.

According to the Encyclopaedia “In any case Shakespeare would almost certainly have met Florio a few years later at the house of Lord Southampton”. To this end, J.Bate (*The Soul of the Age*, pg. 12) also points out that “The association of Shakespeare with Southampton ... introduced Shakespeare to the work of the Anglo-Italian man of letters John Florio, Southampton’s tutor, through whom he was exposed to Italianate culture and, later, the Essays of Michel de Montaigne, whose subtle, sympathetic mind was perfectly attuned to Shakespeare’s own mind”.

The Encyclopaedia also mentions Florio’s relations with the Earl of Bedford and Sir John Harington. It is worth noting that Lady Lucy Russell, countess of Bedford and a niece of John Harington, was John Florio’s pupil, one of the favorite ladies in waiting of Queen Elisabeth and then of Queen Anna, Florio’s patroness and dedicatee of Florio’s *World of Worlds*, 1598<sup>113</sup>.

According to the Encyclopaedia, “It seems also probable that Florio may have assisted Harington in his translation of Ariosto”. Also Yates (op.cit. pg.236) “suspects that Florio had a hand in the Harington translation of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* <sup>114</sup>. J. Bate (*The Soul of the Age*, pg. 150), moreover, believes that the translation of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* (by Harington) “was the main source for the Hero plot of Shakespeare’s *Much Ado*”.

Also Lord Derby was a common friend both of John Florio and Shakespeare and even more direct link connecting Shakespeare with Florio during his early years in London.

Indeed, according to the Encyclopaedia, Florio’s friendship with Lord Derby is revealed by the fact that Florio, in 1585, translated a letter from Rome, on the sudden death of Pope Gregory XIII and the election of his successor. Florio dedicated this translation: “To the Right Excellent and Honourable Lord, Henry Earl of Derby”, thus expressing his recognition and devotion to the Earl.

While, “in 1588, Lord Derby’s eldest son Ferdinando Lord Strange had become the patron of the company of players, which Shakespeare had recently joined”.

Therefore, according to the Encyclopaedia, “Shakespeare would thus have the opportunity of making Florio’s acquaintance at the outset of his London career”.

Finally William Warbourton, English critic and Bishop of Gloucester - 1698-1779, it is well-known, had coupled Florio’s name with Shakespeare in the XVIII century, asserting that Holofernes, the pedant literato in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* was Florio’s caricature.

According to the Encyclopaedia, “We may be sure that, if Shakespeare knew Florio before he produced *Love’s Labour’s Lost* [such as it seems], it was not as a sport-maker to be mocked at, but as a friend and *literary associate* to whom he felt personally indebted.”

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<sup>113</sup> See Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 102, footnote 113 and pg.115.

<sup>114</sup> See also Tassinari, John Florio, pg.141.

In any case, “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).

The paragraph from the Encyclopaedia Britannica expresses a very reasonable position, which is shared by J. Bate himself (see Gerevini, pg. 179), who points out a “turning point” also in William’s life in the period between 1592 and 1594. “The presence of Florio in Southampton’s household seems to have been of considerable importance for the development of Shakespeare’s career – it accounts for much of the dramatist’s broad, though very patchy, acquaintance with Italian literature and his *slight knowledge* of the Italian language [which he should have learnt from Florio]. It seems to have been immediately after the period of Southampton’s patronage during the closure of the theatres that Shakespeare began to make extensive and ambitious use of Italian settings and plots in his plays. Florio was the obvious person to introduce him to his sources [of Italian literature] for these. 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). As a consequence, an intense collaboration between John Florio and William of Stratford!

A “*Literary Association*” between William and John, as defined by the Encyclopaedia!

This is also the thesis of “the intense collaboration between John and William” (Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 14) supported by Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding. “Florio shared with Shakespeare the writing of their works” (op.cit. pg. 23), “a collaboration which produced, as gift for the whole world, the most magnificent theatrical plays in the worldwide history” (Gerevini, “Winny Florespeare”, in this website). Gerevini, in this very recent article, points out the “level of empathy William Shakespeare and John Florio’s minds reached, in producing the works “Shakespeare branded”. We refer wholeheartedly to this article, also for the analysis of William’s literary role, his cooperation with John and also regarding the Sonnets; in Sonnet No. 135, the name “Will” appears even thirteen times, in a framework of fourteen verses! (see Gerevini, *William Shakespeare ovvero John Florio*, cit., pg. 246 and 247).

It is worth noting that J. Bate also clearly emphasises Florio’s contribution to the works of Shakespeare. “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*”. “An 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).

“The ‘Tenth Edition’ of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1902-03) reprinted all the volumes of the ‘Ninth Edition’ and added further volumes to update the encyclopedia to the early 20th century”, as the official website of the Encyclopaedia clarifies <http://www.1902encyclopedia.com/about.html>

In the “Eleventh Edition” of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1911), the text of the Shakespeare entry, *omitted the paragraph* concerning “Shakespeare continues his education -His connection with Florio” (see [http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/William\\_Shakespeare](http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/William_Shakespeare)).

Also the entry on “Florio”, which, in the Ninth Edition of 1890 (volume IX, pg. 341-342), connected Florio to Shakespeare (through the mentioned character of Holofernes), in the Eleventh Edition did not make any reference whatsoever to Shakespeare.

*Therefore, in the 1890 Ninth Edition of, a mutual “cross reference” linked the two “Shakespeare” and “Florio” entries. From 1911 onwards, these “entries” appear completely “autonomous” without any cross references, as though John Florio and William Shakespeare had lived in completely separate worlds. Florio’s name is only incidentally reported in the entry “Shakespeare”, with regard to a “doubtful” autograph of Shakespeare on a copy of Florio’s translation of Montaigne’s Essays (1603), in the British Museum (see Yates, op.cit., pag. 245, denying the authenticity of the signature).*

*Of course, it is an editorial choice, which is perfectly respectable.*

Nevertheless, *in my very personal and humble opinion, the paragraph concerning “ Shakespeare continues his education - His connection with Florio” was fundamental to the entire text of the entry.*

The deletion of the said paragraph creates a consequent “*disconnection*” between the two figures of William and John, *which does not seem justifiable from an objective, historical standpoint.*

Indeed, *Professor Baynes* (he too a “lawyer”!) *had produced evidence*, to support his opinion, *or*, in any case, *circumstantial evidence*, which was, according to the legal jargon, “*important, detailed and coincident*”; *they gave a reliable and objective reconstruction of the facts!*

Not only that but *the entry, without the fundamental paragraph “His connection with Florio”, displays a biography of a man (William Shakespeare) with his birth, his marriage, his children, his will (without any reference to the literary works), his bust and tomb; which, in our very humble opinion, appears “incapable in themselves of justifying” the genesis of the works thereafter described. In short, the entry is focused on the works and it seems a catalogue of works disconnected from their author, who really appear to be merely “name”. Professor Mario Praz (1896-1982), one of the greatest of Shakespeare’s Italian scholars, pointed out that “It is impossible to find Shakespeare in the poor details of his life: out of the plays, the man Shakespeare is not more alive than his polychromatic bust of his tomb - polished manikin of a gentleman with pointed beard – or his portrait in the title page of the First Folio, with that astonished and tight rigidity of jack of hearts” (Mario Praz, Introduction to the Fox by Ben Jonson, Sansoni publisher, Firenze 1949, pg. I-II; see also Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 29).*

In my personal opinion and *in line with the thesis of Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding, we share the thesis of the ‘literary association’ between Florio (more precisely “the two Florios”) and Shakespeare, hoping that further studies will clarify the extent of such relationship, just like Santi Paladino hoped in the setting up of his ‘Accademia Shakespeariana’.*

We confirm what we wrote in our previous article (cited in the preface) and in particular that *for John, working in conjunction with William must have been a crucial moment since it meant the merging of two excellent minds*, that despite major differences, they 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.

It is at around this time coinciding with the publication of *Second Fruits* (1591) that Florio, must have made *his definitive decision, though painful, infinitely rewarding for him* (who had finally become “Resolute”, having “resolved” his existential drama): 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 as the most innovative, if really seemingly unrelated and distant 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 such a huge universal triumph*.

As for the relationship between John and William we make refer back to our previous article (cited in the preface) on pages 30-31 and 33-34, to Gerevini’s book and his recent article (available on this website) “Winny Florespeare”.

In conclusion, we believe it is fitting and proper to *give the utmost credit and public appreciation to the Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which, as mentioned, has rendered freely available on the Internet the paragraph of the entry “Shakespeare”, written by Professor Thomas Spencer Baynes in the “famous” Ninth Edition (“the Scholar’s Edition” “for its high intellectual standards”), entitled “*Shakespeare goes to London (cont.). Shakespeare Continues his Education. His Connection with Florio.*”; thus, in the following official website of the Encyclopaedia Britannica <http://www.1902encyclopedia.com/S/SHA/william-shakespeare-31.html> .

*Thanks to such a truly meritorious initiative, a very large audience is thus enabled to read this very important and authoritative passage concerning “Shakespeare’s Connection with Florio”!*

#### 7.17.1 The Role of the “Reader”, while reading the works of Shakespeare.

Brief notes will hereinafter follow on the role of the reader, while reading the works of Shakespeare.

It is worth noting that Florio wrote many epistles “to the reader”, prefixed to his works; therefore, in order to explain the purpose of his works and help the readers to understand the meaning of his work, the difficulties he had encountered and how he managed to overcome them.

The reader too has a mission, which is to possibly understand the message sent by another human being and be enriched by the human and spiritual experience described by the author of the works.

Briefly, the reader has to fully understand the meaning of “what he is reading”!

John Florio precisely clarifies the role of the reader in his epistle “to the courteous reader” in his translation of the Essays of Montaigne (1603), stating that the reader is the judge of an author: “*you Readers [are] our jury*”,

In the trials before the courts, the “judges” and the “jury” have to understand the actions of the accused and the reasons which were the basis for their actions. The personality of the accused (in our case of the “author”) is fundamental to appreciate the subjective reasons for his actions (the “works” in the case at hand).

If no negligence or willful misconduct is proven, the accused person will be acquitted.

Similarly, as for the author of a literary works, the “judge” and the opinion of the readers shall be fully informed only if the reader is able to understand the subjective reasons which are the basis of the passages of the author’s works.

In conclusion, we confirm that the understanding of a work (where feelings and emotions really experienced by the author are reflected) require knowledge of the author’s life, as asserted by Natalino Sapegno, the leading Italian scholar of Italian literature in the XX century.

We will try to practically apply such concepts in the following paragraph 7.23, where we will humbly propose a possible, well founded theory on the genesis of Hamlet’s famous soliloquy, which, indisputably, represents the climax of Shakespeare’s works, where the audience feels real, palpating, universal emotions of a man who was only flesh and blood!

7.17.2 Yates book on John Florio, published in 1934 confirms the “connection” between Florio and Shakespeare.

We briefly refer to the book on John Florio which the scholar Frances Amelia Yates (1899-1981) wrote; Yates was a fine English scholar who, for her merits, was appointed “*Officer of the Order of the British Empire*” (OBE) in 1972 and “*Dame commander*” (DBE) in 1977 ([www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frances\\_Yates](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frances_Yates)).

In our view, the book of Yates, *John Florio, The life of an Italian in Shakespeare’s England*, Cambridge University Press, 1934 (at the basis of the recent studies of Gerevini and Tassinari on John Florio) is, to say the least, a *fundamental volume*, for two reasons:

1) *It was written after the work of Santi Paladino in 1929 (“Shakespeare sarebbe il pseudonimo di un poeta italiano?”*, whose contents we will describe in the following paragraph 7.18), which was mainly focussed on the role of Michelangelo Florio, in addition to John Florio’s.

*Also Yates pointed out in her book the importance of Michelangelo* and her “Chapter I” (just 26 pages) is entitled “*John Florio’s Father*”.

She was the first English scholar who dealt with such an important figure!

The scholar pointed out that “In an astonishing work which claims that Michael Angelo Florio ... was the author of Shakespeare’s plays (Santi Paladino, *Shakespeare sarebbe il pseudonimo di un*

*poeta italiano?*, 1929) it is stated that Michael Angelo had been in Spain, Austria, Athens, at the French court, and in Denmark. No authority is given for these statements but *there may be some truth in some of them*" (op.cit., pg.17, footnote I).

2) As Yates told us in the Preface, her book was aimed at "*filling in blank spaces in our knowledge of Florio*".

In the Preface, Yates herself pointed out some "new aspects" emerging from her study, including *inter alia* the following:

(i) "His employment for two years at the French Embassy in London, which accounts for his familiarity with Giordano Bruno";

(ii) "His violent quarrel with Hugh Sanford, a member of the Pembroke circle, whose identity he masked under the initials 'H.S.'" (quarrel which was linked to Florio's squabble with Nashe; see, on such quarrel, involving Sanford, Greene and Nashe, our previous article, pg. 5-12, Gerevini, op. cit., pg. 156 onwards and "Winny Florespeare", on this website);

(iii) "His curious link with Thomas Thorpe";

(iv) "His vast circle of acquaintances amongst which are to be found most of the great names of the period".

All the above *fully confirms Shakespeare's "connection" with Florio*.

Yates pointed out (see op.cit.,Preface) that "*To contemporaries, amongst whom was William Shakespeare, he was one of the most conspicuous figures of the literary and social cliques of the time*"

Yates concluded her Preface saying: "*I hope that it may eventually be possible, in the light of this fuller knowledge, to reach a definite conclusion upon the vexed question of Florio's relations with Shakespeare*".

In conclusion, it is worth noting that *the recent First "paperback" edition 2010 of her book (First published 1934) and aimed at a broad readership (more than 75 years after the first publication!)* highlights a *renewed interest in the figure of John Florio!*

*Finally, our intention is to give broad international coverage to this key figure!*

*Credit and public appreciation are to be given to this valuable initiative of the "Cambridge University Press"!*

Finally, we pointed out, in §7.2 above, that Yates *had already solved in 1934 the question of Authorship of the works of Shakespeare*, "camouflaging" her definite "discovery", as described in §7.2.

**7.18. *The thesis of Santi Paladino, claimed in an article on the daily newspaper 'L'Impero' No. 30 on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1927 and then in the volume "Shakespeare sarebbe il pseudonimo di un poeta italiano?", Borgia publisher 1929. The dissolution of the 'Accademia Shakespeariana' in 1930.***

Santi Paladino tells us, in the Preface of his book *Un Italiano autore delle opere Shakespeariane*, Gastaldi, Milano, 1955, pg. 8 onwards, that he found in his family library an old volume of proverbs, entitled “I secondi frutti”, which was written in Italian by a Protestant of Valtellines origin, named Michele Agnolo Florio.

“Those proverbs had been published in 1549, about 50 years before the publication of the Shakespearian work [Hamlet]”.

Santi Paladino (op. cit. pg. 11) tells us that “*Such elements gave me the idea for writing and publishing in the daily ‘L’Impero’ No. 30 on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1927 a first article on the presumed Italianism of Shakespeare. This article ... aroused several comments of many national and international newspapers*”.

In this article, Santi Paladino informed the whole world that he found a volume written by Michelangelo Florio in Italian and entitled “Secondi Frutti”, published in Italy before the publication in England of John Florio’s “Second Fruits” in 1591 (a parallel Italian and English text), from which many passages were reproduced in the works of Shakespeare!

“I find that a volume of proverbs of a protestant of Valtellines origin, named Michele Agnolo Florio, entitled “I secondi frutti” contains entire lines of Hamlet. And I should certainly accuse this Italian poet of plagiarism, but *I have the evidence that “I secondi frutti” was actually published six years before the Shakespearian work. It should be simply ridiculous that I accuse Shakespeare of plagiarism ... Therefore, nothing could be easier than the protestant of Valtellines origin, Michele Agnolo Florio and the Dramatist Shakespeare were the same person*”.

The article, in all its details, is freely available in the “downloads” of this website (we invite you to read it in its entirety!), was entitled “*The famous Dramatist Shakespeare may have been an Italian!*”, “*Il famoso drammaturgo Shakespeare sarebbe un Italiano!*”.

Of course, Santi Paladino, in order to publish in a daily newspaper as important as “L’Impero” (a daily which was part of the Fascist press), such a lengthy article, must have shown Michelangelo Florio’s volume to the Editorial staff (and to the “Responsible Director”, a figure regulated by the Italian law December 31<sup>st</sup> 1925, No. 2307), “*the evidence*” explicitly referred to in his article; he had a copy of such a volume (as he tells us in his book “*Un italiano autore delle opere di Shakespeare*”, Gastaldi Editore, Milano, 1955, pg. 8), in his aristocratic family library! In that book he points out that “Those proverbs had been published and were widespread in 1549, about 50 years before the publication of the Shakespearian work” Hamlet. In his article published in 1927, Santi Paladino stated that the volume of proverbs had been published six years before *Hamlet*; indeed, in his later book published in 1955, Santi Paladino clarified his views. The figure of John/Giovanni, the son of Michelangelo, appeared and Santi Paladino pointed out the Tuscan (and not Valtellines) origin of Michele Agnolo (op. cit. 1955, pg. 17) and the fact that in 1549 he was pursued by the Inquisition precisely because of his collection of proverbs, which, in Paladino’s opinion, “offended the moral principles of the Church”.

Santi Paladino concluded his mentioned article on “L’Impero” in 1927, as follows: “*Critics of art and scholars of Italian literature, you have to work on this hypothesis [i.e. that Shakespeare was*

*Italian], which I should deem a certainty if I would not consider the probable oppositions of you, omniscient savants. As good Italians you have to take your high responsibility in the matter: you have to research more carefully and study the problem, more than I was able to do, in order to definitively establish the true nationality and the Homeric life of the greatest dramatist in the world.”*

Santi Paladino had aroused a real international “casus”, his article having sparked much reaction worldwide!

Moreover, the “casus” had not been placated by Paladino, who was writing a book on the matter, *Shakespeare sarebbe il pseudonimo di un poeta italiano?*, *Shakespeare should be the pseudonym of an Italian poet?* (Borgia publisher, 1929), some copies of which still circulate in Italy.

According to Paladino (op.cit. pg.12) “Some years later, my book *Shakespeare sarebbe il pseudonimo di un poeta italiano?* (Borgia publisher, 1929) gave rise to a heated debate and, due to both the protests and consensus of National and International newspapers and scholars, such pandemonium broke out that even the government authorities were concerned ... on the other hand, main figures in the literary field were in my favour ... including French, American and Russian ... These key figures, enthusiasts of the Shakespearian casus decided to set up, on the basis of my book and with my active participation, an ‘*Accademia Shakespeariana*’ ... to study the similarities between the works and the figure of Michele Agnolo Florio and William Shakespeare. But the *Accademia Shakespeariana*, set up in 1929, terminated all its activity in 1930 by order of the political authorities of that time. They considered the *Accademia* as a masonic organisation and issued an order to dissolve the *Accademia* and requisition of all the material and prohibit the reprinting of my book published in 1929, which had sold very successfully. Freemasonry had nothing to do with the *Accademia*; it was a mere pretext; but I prefer to just gloss over the real reasons which justified those unjust orders.” And this sequestration unfortunately also involved the precious volume which Paladino had found in his aristocratic family library: “*I secondi frutti*”, which had been written in Italian by Michelangelo Florio, published and distributed in Italy in 1549!

It is worth noting that the volume published by Santi Paladino in 1929, which created pandemonium in Italy and abroad, *had been based on the entry “Shakespeare” of the Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Ninth Edition (1890), where many connections between William of Stratford and John Florio (Shakespeare’s literary associate) were carefully pointed out. In that volume, still existing in Italy, Santi Paladino (just like in his later volume published in 1955) expressly quoted (accurately translated into Italian) the paragraph “Shakespeare continues his education -His connection with Florio”, from the entry “Shakespeare” of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* “Ninth Edition”, whose contents have been described in the paragraph above.

Santi Paladino created a personal interpretation related to the theory of the ‘Literary Association’ between William and John. Indeed, he only recognised William Shakespeare’s “excellent qualities as a dramatic actor”(op.cit., 1955, pg. 111); moreover he attributed particular value to the contribution of Michelangelo, John’s father. *To such purpose, we again confirm that, in our view, Michelangelo, as already said, was a “unicum” with John, and their precise roles are difficult to determine without further studies on the matter.*

In conclusion, we confirm that *the thesis supported by Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding, on the basis of objective evidence, and herein fully shared, is different from the opinion expressed by Santi Paladino*. Our opinion, as mentioned in the paragraph above, coincides considerably with the theory of the “Literary Association”, as described in the wonderful paragraph “ *Shakespeare continues his education - His connection with Florio*”, which was written by Professor Thomas Baynes in the entry “Shakespeare” of the “Ninth Edition” of the Encyclopaedia Britannica; it consists in the fruitful, fundamental collaboration of minds (of the two Florios’ and William’s) so different, but also so complementary to create an important, universal merger in writing the works of Shakespeare.

### **7.19. “World of Wordes” (1598). The dedication.**

In this very short paragraph, I do not intend to deal with the contents of the dictionary (as I will do in later paragraphs), but only to mention the three important figures to whom John dedicated his work.

1) Roger Manners, 5th Earl of Rutland (6 October 1576 - 26 June 1612) was the son of John Manners, 4th Earl of Rutland and was very influential and erudite. He married Elizabeth Sidney (daughter of Sir Philip Sidney and stepdaughter of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex), on 5 March 1599; John made also reference to the Earl’s ‘polyglot’ wife, in his dedication.

2) Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, in 1593, was “the main reference point for artists seeking success” (Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 53).

John Florio was the personal tutor to the Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley, when the young Earl was studying at St. John’s College, in Cambridge.

John Dedicated the following words to the Earl of Southampton as an expression of his sincere esteem and affection: “*In truth I acknowledge an entire debt, not onely of my best knowledge, but of all, yea of more then I know or can, to your bounteous Lordship most noble, most virtuous, and most Honorable Earle of Southampton, in whose paie and patronage I have lived some years; to whom I owe and vowe the yeeres I have to live*”.

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica’s, Ninth Edition, Shakespeare entry, cit. (whose passage was translated into Italian by Santi Paladino, op.cit., pg. 95), the same concepts of devotion, gratitude and debt, had been expressed, a few years before, in 1594, in a very similar dedication of Shakespeare to Southampton, related to his “Lucrece”: “*What I haue done is yours, what I haue to doe is yours, being part in all I have, devote yours*”<sup>115</sup>.

According to Wyatt, “The paean to Southampton in the dedication to A World of Wordes acknowledges Florio’s debt to his patron and likens it to Dante’s obligations to his two otherworldly

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<sup>115</sup> This dedication can be read in the following link

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dedication\\_page\\_of\\_The\\_Rape\\_of\\_Lucrece\\_by\\_William\\_Shakespeare\\_1594.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dedication_page_of_The_Rape_of_Lucrece_by_William_Shakespeare_1594.jpg)

guides”, Virgil in Hell and Purgatory, and Beatrix up to the Empyrean (where St. Bernard appears)

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According to the “*British Encyclopedia*” (Ninth Edition) entry on “*Shakespeare*” (cited and translated into Italian by Santi Paladino, op.cit., pg. 95) “*Florio and Shakespeare were both, moreover, intimate personal friends of the young Earl of Southampton, who, in harmony with his generous character and strong literary tastes, was the munificent patron of each. Shakespeare, it will be remembered, dedicated his ‘Venus and Adonis’ and his ‘Lucrece’ to this young nobleman; and three years later, in 1598, Florio dedicated the first edition of his Italian dictionary to the Earl in terms that almost recall Shakespeare’s words*”.

3) Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford, was a very influential woman, Florio’s close friend and patroness of famous figures (Gerevini, pg. 259). She was the patroness of Ben Jonson and Samuel Daniel.

She encouraged Florio to complete his translation of Montaigne’s *Essays*, after John (upon Edward Wotton’s request, brother of Sir Henry Wotton a famous scholar at that time) translated a chapter of *Essays* into English. The Countess of Bedford and Lady Rich (Penelope Devereaux, sister of the unlucky Earl of Essex) were the part of the “entourage” of the “intellectual court” of Queen Anna. Shakespeare himself, when describing the character of Portia in the “Merchant of Venice”, probably drew inspiration from those very cultured women (Gerevini, pg. 258).

The dedication to these three powerful nobles “testifies the extent of how well-connected Florio was in society” (Gerevini, op. cit. pg. 259).

Finally, Tassinari pointed out that, throughout their lives the protectors and friends of the Florios are those of *Shakespeare*. Many of John’s patrons had been Michel Angelo’s patrons: “Let us recapitulate: William and Robert Cecil, father and son, both bearers of the title Lord Burghley; .... the Herberts (Henry and William), Earls of Pembroke; Henry Wriothesley Earl of Southampton ... were among the protectors of Michel Angelo and above all of John Florio, and were all essential figures in the literary events linked to the name *Shake-speare* ... As well as the patrons, there were the friends, first among them Ben Jonson. The thread linking Shakespeare to Florios was not broken even after the death of the man of Stratford since the “*First folio*” of 1623 was dedicated to William Herbert and to his brother Philip” (Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pag. 57, John Florio, pag. 48).

### **7.20. Some brief comments on the Sonnets.**

Santi Paladino (op. cit. pg. 62-63) claimed that “Michel Agnolo Florio wrote the Sonnets of Shakespeare”. Tassinari (*Shakespeare?* pg. 39, footnote 21, John Florio, pg. 32, footnote 19) pointed out that “The hypothesis advanced by Paladino, which awaits verification, is that a portion of the *Sonnets* of *Shakespeare* were written half a century before their publication in 1609 by Michel Angelo Florio, and were addressed by him to Henry Herbert second Earl of Pembroke, first a pupil and later a protector of Michel Angelo in the 1550s (to the “Signore Arrigo Harbart”, Michel Angelo had also dedicated a manuscript in 1553, one of the two surviving manuscripts of Michel

<sup>116</sup> See also Michael Wyatt, *The Italian encounter with Tudor England, a cultural politics of translation*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2005, pg. 224: “*The paeon to Southampton in the dedication to A World of Wordes acknowledges Florio’s debt to his patron and likens it to Dante’s obligations to his two otherworldly guides*”.

Angelo<sup>117</sup>)! John is said to have added to them and published them with Thomas Thorpe, recycling the initials and dedicating them to Henry's son, William Herbert third Earl of Pembroke".

According to Gerevini (op.cit. pg. 394-95) "The Sonnets ... were just dedicated to that mysterious W. H. who corresponds to William Herbert, the same William Herbert who appears in the Will of John Florio and to whom John left all of his books, which were a true heritage." "Considering Michelangelo Florio's linguistic versatility, he also an erudite teacher of some languages, there may be a kernel of truth in the theory of Paladino; it may be true that Michelangelo wrote the Sonnets, addressing them to his pupil Henry Herbert. They, in turn, were reworded and readjusted by John" (op.cit. pg. 336).

"W.H. is William Herbert himself, to whom all of the works of Shakespeare were dedicated in 1623. Let us consider that in 1609 after the complete edition of the Sonnets of Shakespeare, John Florio himself hand delivered the Sonnets to Pembroke, on behalf of Thomas Thorpe, "pirate" publisher and Florio's close friend" (op.cit. pg. 395).

It is worth noting that in the First Folio in 1623 (containing the works of Shakespeare) Ben Jonson (Florio's devoted friend, as also testified by Ben's dedication, written on a copy of his "Volpone" and the fact that, in turn, John Florio was present with his own 8 lines and his name, "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). According to Gerevini (op.cit., pg. 397), Florio himself contributed to the compilation of "First Folio", published -along with Jaggard - by Edward Blount, who also happen to be publisher of the works of the Florios!".

Gerevini points out that "the Sonnets were dedicated to 'William Herbert'; but they were written (the portion that Michelangelo did not write!) and addressed by John to Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton (in the same line, also Bate, 'The Genius of Shakespeare', pg. 54) ... In 1609, Shakespeare, while dedicating the Sonnets to William Herbert, 'killed two birds with one stone': at that time William Herbert was the rising star among the artists seeking for protection. It is no coincidence that in 1623 'First Folio' (collecting the works of Shakespeare) was dedicated to William Herbert and his brother Philip Hebert [ the 'incomparable pair of brethren' ]. But, at the beginning of John' career, the Earl of Southampton was the main target, to whom the first of Shakespeare's works, such as 'Venus and Adonis', were dedicated. Therefore, while in 1594 the 'key-figure' was Henry Wriothesley (H.W.), in 1609, the 'key-figure' was William Herbert (W.H.). The 'initials' were, then, 'inverted'. This is a very Brunian hint; it coincides with Shakespearean magic mentality, where the opposites, in accordance with the Brunian theories, become reconciled. Therefore, the first initials 'H.W.' became 'W.H.'" (Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 329).

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<sup>117</sup> The other manuscript which has survived is that concerning Lady Jane Grey. Other manuscripts did not survive. "Could these not survived manuscripts have been some of the creative works, the sonnets, comedies and tragedies that John in collaboration with his father, translated and revised later, using the pseudonym *Shake-speare*?" (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 42 and John Florio, pg. 36; see also Yates, op.cit., pg. 7).

Moreover, “secret codes” and “encrypted initials” had been integral part of his fundamental experience of life, in his spying activities at the French Embassy in London (where Bruno had lived until 1585)!

The dedication of the Sonnets, by their publisher Thomas Thorpe, to Mr. W.H. is as follows: “*To the onlie begetter of these insuing sonnets, Mr. W.H. all happinesse and that eternitie promised by our ever-living poet* [in our view, Horace! The poet of immortality, through the poetry!] *wisheth the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth. T.T.*”

Thus, Mr. W.H. is considered a “begetter”, metaphorically a “father”; which entailed a quick “wedding” of Mr. W.H.!

Gerevini (op.cit. pg. 335) shares with J.Bate (The Genius of Shakespeare, pg.49) the opinion that in 1591 William from Stratford was not on such close terms with William Herbert (‘it is wholly implausible that Shakespeare would have begun his quest for patronage by urging his patron to do the very thing he didn’t want to do, namely get married quickly’); whereas John Florio was!

Indeed, we can consider that John’s father, Michelangelo, had been William Herbert’s father’s teacher and therefore John himself had long before been acquainted with the Pembroke family.

This is the reason why John Florio himself hand delivered the Sonnets to William Herbert, on behalf of Thorpe. (Yates, op.cit. pg. 291).

Bate (op.cit. pg. 49) “suspects that the first few sonnets were conceived ... as a joke at Burghley’s expense”, with a subtle irony towards him. Gerevini points out that a similar attitude was justifiable for John Florio, “since it was Burghley destroyed his father Michelangelo’s career in a devastating manner and for something directly related to the theme of the Sonnets: sex. Indeed Michelangelo Florio was excluded from the cream of English society by Burghley for having committed an act of fornication (i.e. for having pre-marital sex)” (Gerevini, pg. 335-36).

In 1610, Florio hand delivered to William Herbert, a work by John Healey (“Discovery of a new World”), on behalf of Thorpe, where John Haley’s signature appears as “Resolute John Healey”, “with Florio’s battle-cry of ‘Resolute’”!(Yates, pg. 285 and Gerevini, pg. 337; see also Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 232, John Florio, pg. 213).

In both cases, the supervision of Florio is quite clear and the recipient was well aware of this! And indeed Thorpe was very grateful to Florio, “without whom Thorpe would never have moved oin the circles of the Pembrokes’, also considering John’s preferential relations with the English Court and in particular with the Queen Anne” (Gerevini, pg. 338). Thorpe expressed as follows his “admiration and submission” to Florio, in the dedication of another work of Haley (“Epictetus His Manuall”): “*To a true favorer of forward spirits, Maister John Florio*”.

To complete this point, it is worth mentioning the interesting study of Giulia Harding “*Florio and the Sonnets - Part One*”, in this website, where the scholar gives substantial evidence about the publication, on June 19<sup>th</sup> 1609, of the Sonnets on the occasion of the 43rd birthday of King James I. According to Harding, the Sonnets also include a sonnet written by the Queen herself; she wanted to give her own gift to the King on the occasion of his birthday, thus, accelerating the publication of

the Sonnets. Florio should have been the person (*factotum*) as always, at the Queen request to rapidly publish the volume. Florio used his “decorative straps”, the same already used in his translation of Montaigne’s “Essays”. He used again his “*unique*” German-made engraved copper blocks (*an indelible and indisputable hint of Florio’s involvement!*); they (unlike English perishable wooden blocks) could be reused repeatedly. Finally, in his “Golden Fleece”, William Vaughen told us that, on June 19<sup>th</sup> 1609, *on the occasion of the King’s 43rd birthday, Florio recited some verses of the Sonnets before the King himself*, who was utterly satisfied.

**7.21. *The Gospel according to Shakespeare. The extraordinary knowledge of two Florios’ of Holy Scriptures’. The “dew” (the divine “Word”) which becomes flesh and flesh which, in turn, resolves into dew.***

The Bible was a book that John indisputably knew very well. He himself gives a written evidence of this, listing it (in the translation into English by Giovanni Diodati) in the bibliography of “Queen Anna’s New World of Words”, published in 1598 (see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 145 and John Florio, pg.133).

It is highly probable, almost certain, that King James I also involved John Florio in the King James Version of the Bible translation project. (Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 296).

King James Version of the Bible, published in 1611, was the popular English translation of the Bible from Greek and Hebrew, *two languages which very well known by the two Florios!*

*Moreover, his father Michelangelo was even a Christian pastor!*

“For Shaheen, Noble, and Carter, as for Marx, the author of the works of *Shakespeare* possesses an unusually highly developed Bible culture (in the sense of familiarity with the Bible) that pervades all his theatrical writing. This is a culture that goes beyond religiosity to become a *forma mentis*, a binding spell of sorts, of the kind that can only befall a ‘professional’ of Scripture, someone who has studied it for years, used it daily as part of his *métier*, and still does so in order to demonstrate, convince, educate. The preacher Michel Angelo Florio was certainly steeped in the Bible: he was in Switzerland, not far from Geneva, during the exact period when Protestant academics and literati in exile from Marian’s England were at work there on the most popular and successful translation of the Bible into English, ‘the most interesting of all versions’ (Carter), the one that *Shakespearian* criticism regards as the Bible of the Bard ... The hypothesis is not exorbitant that Michel Angelo have had some contact with the circle of Protestant translators” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 238, John Florio, pg. 221).

Without meaning to make somewhat sacrilegious comparisons, it cannot be denied that each and every one of Shakespeare’s works (including Hamlet) echoes 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 (Gospel of Matthew, 26,39) his Father (in the weakness of his humanity, in his “primordial anguish of the creature facing imminent death”, which, “according to

Luke - 22,44 - , makes him sweat blood”<sup>118</sup>): “*My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me*” (which was the “cross”, the culmination of his mission of Salvation). And then the Son “*totally abandoned himself to God the Father*” “*as obedience of Son*”<sup>119</sup> and accepted as a glorious part of his mission the extreme sacrifice: “*Fiat Voluntas Tua*”, “*Not my Will, but Thy Will Be Done*” (see Gospel of Luke 22.42) and Jesus metaphorically “*drank the bitter cup*”

To this end, it is worth mentioning *a recent book by Professor Piero Boitani*, a leading Italian scholar, who dedicated this essay to the memory of Professor Giorgio Melchiori, one of the leading scholars of Shakespeare in the world, who passed away in 2009.

This recent volume by Boitani, as already mentioned in the preface, *Il Vangelo secondo Shakespeare, The Gospel according to Shakespeare*, Mulino publisher, Bologna, 2009; is, in our very humble opinion, *absolutely one of the most original and interesting studies on Shakespeare that has ever been written*. The author himself, in the preface (pg.7) disclosed his awareness on his audacious initiative, pointing clearly out that “*Dealing with Shakespeare ... and combining him with the Gospels and the Scripture was perhaps as a crazy idea, yet an irresistible challenge.*”

Boitani pointed out (op.cit. pg. 11) that “The Christian Gospel constantly pervaded Shakespeare’s mind, and he compiled, as a supreme and free playwright, a *his own* testament: the New Testament according to William Shakespeare”. “I believe that Shakespeare’s dramas constitute *his* Gospel”.

Shakespeare’s “mind” was the mind of someone who dealt with the Gospels on a daily basis, and his mind was always, perhaps unconsciously, “steeped” in the Holy Scriptures.

As for Hamlet, Boitani (op.cit. pg. 36), pointed out that among Hamlet’s dying words there were the following: “*Let it be*”, i.e. *amen*, an expression typical of the Gospels and Holy Scriptures.

Thus, Shakespeare created an atmosphere that was deeply impregnated with religious symbolism, where, as we note, Hamlet also claims: “*Give me the cup*”, to drink also the last drops of the treacherously poisoned potion. This might metaphorically mean that Hamlet too, similarly to Jesus, trusted the “*Divine Will*”, which was precisely his death, in accordance with the Will of the Father in Heaven; and he too “*drank the bitter cup*”.

The “*communion*” between Father and Son is such that “*And all things that are mine are thine, and thine are mine: and I am glorified in them*”. “*That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee*” (see Gospel of John, 17.10 and 17. 21).

*I believe that something similar could be said of the two Florios.*

Michelangelo had called his son John, his only begotten son, who (paraphrasing the words of the Gospel of John) was the Glory of the Father.

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<sup>118</sup> See Joseph Ratzinger, Benedetto XVI, “Gesù di Nazareth - Second Part - Dall’ingresso in Gerusalemme fino alla risurrezione”, publisher Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011, pg.174 and 175 (my translation into English from the Italian Edition).

<sup>119</sup> See Joseph Ratzinger, Benedetto XVI, op.cit., pg. 182 (my translation into English from the Italian Edition). Splendid pages contemplate “Jesus’ Will and Father’s Will” (pg. 177-183).

Dante superbly expressed a similar concept in his Divine Comedy (Canto XV of Paradise). Dante's great-grandfather, Cacciaguida (a crusader who died in the second Crusade), addressed his important descendant (Dante), as follows:

“O fronda mia in che io compiacemmi pur aspettando, io fui la tua radice”.

“Oh, *I was your root*, and *you are my leaf*, whom I delighted in, while only anticipating you.”

It means that Cacciaguida told Dante: you (my descendant, of whom I am proud) are the foliage of the tree, its *leaves*, *which everyone can admire*; but remember that (*even if hidden*) *I was your root* (who came before you), and I am the root *of your tree!* It means that *we are an inseparable “unicum”*, since the foliage, the luxuriant “above ground” leaves imply the existence of the hidden root of the tree underground!

Similarly, in First Fruits, Florio too compared himself to a tree “*fram'd according to the fruite/ an English Stock, but an Italian Plant*”.<sup>120</sup> The Plant is Italian but there is an English graft.

In *Hamlet*, the entire plot that leads to Hamlet's death *seems to follow the same steps of Jesus' death, as described in the Gospels*.

Perhaps, a passage (“There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will” - Act V, scene, ii, 10-11; similarly, in “King Lear”, “It is the stars, the stars above us govern our conditions”. Act IV, scene iii, 34) might be also be further studied in connection with Ochino's predestination theory.

Moreover, Boitani (op.cit. pag. 35) pointed out the following very important passage that originates from the Gospel: “*There is a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow*” (Hamlet, Act V, Scene II, 213-214). “Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? *Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge*”. (Matthew, 10, 29). “Therefore I tell you, *do not worry about your life ... Look at the birds in the sky; ... your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? ... Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? But seek first the kingdom (of God) and his righteousness*” (Matthew 6.25-27; 6.33). “You judge by appearances, but I do not judge anyone. And even if I should judge, *my judgment is valid, because I am not alone, but it is I and the Father who sent me*” (Gospel of John, 8, 15-16). You may also find a concept similar to ‘Providence’, as mentioned above, in the following passage of Hamlet: “*even in that was Heaven ordinate*” (Act V, Scene ii, 48). For Hamlet is of fundamental help “my father's signet in my purse” (*his father appears “omnipresent”, especially in the crucial moments!*).

The meaning is that *you have to trust God*, who does not ever forget any one of you (“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, *I will not forget you!*”- Word of God – Isaiah, 49,15), you have not to worry about your life (as the birds do) and you have to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, since *only the divine judgment is valid*.

Moreover, Hamlet, having a clear premonition of his death, declared to “be ready”, declared his “*readiness*”; which is the invitation of Jesus to be “Ready” at any time of one's life, “for at an hour

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<sup>120</sup> See Pfister, Inglese Italianato, cit. pg. 36, footnote 20.

you do not expect, the Son of Man will come” (Luke 12, 35-40 and Matthew, 24, 44) and “there will be wailing and grinding of teeth” (Matthew, 24,51) for those servants whom the master does not find “vigilant” on his arrival.

Boitani (op.cit. pag. 38) keenly hypothesises Hamlet is “*the sparrow destined by the divine providence to fall*”.

Hamlet’s destiny is in accordance with the divine “providence”, and Hamlet is just like a sparrow, whose “fall” is (in the Gospels) under the divine knowledge, since “*Yet not one of any sparrow falls to the ground without your Father’s knowledge*”.

And, a few moments before, Hamlet had made reference to his agony, “*a so radical pain of life, that it could be inexpressible*” (Boitani, op.cit., pg.37). His words, addressed to Horatio, are the following: “*but thou wouldst not think how ill all’s here about my hearth: but it is no matter*”.

It seems almost to revive the passion of Jesus in Gethsemane (“*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*”- Matthew, 26,38); Hamlet has clear predictions that his destiny of death is nearing! “*It is such a kind of gain-giving*” (Act V, Scene II, 209-10).

In his famous “monologue”, Hamlet had already mentioned “*The heart-ache*”, (Act III, I, 62) and how such suffering would have finished with the “*consummation*” (III, I, 63), i.e. with the death. Boitani (op.cit. pag. 30) points out that Hamlet just repeats “the words of Christ on the Cross according to the Gospel of John (19,30): “*consummatum est*”. “*Jesus ... said, ‘It is finished’. And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit*”.

Therefore, in our opinion, the destiny of Hamlet may be reuniting *with his father, the king in the afterworld, just like Jesus who joined his heavenly Father*.<sup>121</sup>

Considering this “reuniting” with the Father, dare I propose the following *very personal theory*, which indisputably links Hamlet to John Florio.

1) According to Florio’s superb metaphor “A *good word* is a de[a]w from heaven to earth” (see the epistle to the reader of “Queen Anna’s New World of Words”-1611).

2) According to the Gospels, “The *Word became flesh*” (Gospel of John, 1,14): no doubt that the “*divine Word*” is a “*good word*”, and therefore “*a de[a]w from heaven to earth*”.

3) Therefore, we might hypothesise that Hamlet’s destiny is similar to that of Jesus. Then, we might imagine a “*backward route*” to “*complete the round*”, after the extraordinary event of the Word becoming flesh. Now *the flesh is “becoming again Word*”, “*a good Word*” (according to Florio’s expression), which is “*a dew*”. Hamlet says (Act I, Scene II; 129-130): “O, that *this too too solid flesh would melt/Thaw and resolve itself into a de[a]w!*” (*the dew of God’s grace!* “Dew” having also a second meaning, just like “solace”!).

Only a Christian pastor and his son, literally “steeped” in the Gospel, could (whether consciously or not) compose similar verses! “Et Verbum caro factum est” “*The Word became flesh*” (John, 1,14).

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<sup>121</sup> The Gospel also mentions another example of a son “*rejoining*” his father. We make reference to the Parable of the Lost Son, where, in a completely different context, the son says: “*I will ... go back to my father*” (Luke, 15, 18).

Now, “Et Caro Verbum facta est” “*The flesh became[again] Word*” “*and the Word was God*” (John, 1,1). This means that Father and Son were reunited. This might mean that similarly Michelangelo and John “symbiotically” lived, worked together in “unison” for a “common superior mission”, and they too were a kind of a “*unicum*” and the “*glory*” *pertained to both father and son!*

I do not want to add anything else, other than the the fact that in verse 130 the ubiquitous verb to “*resolve*” into appears once again, meaning “to be transformed into, to become”. But to “*resolve*”, without the preposition “into”, is also the verb of the “*resolution*” (*of the drama*) and of “*Resolute*” John Florio himself (*a further hint, left deliberately?*).

The book by Boitani contains many quotations from the Gospels and it is particularly worth mentioning his essay on “Pericles”. “Shakespeare rewrote the Greek work and especially the plots of Euripides, but reviewing them from a new point of view, *focused on John, the Evangelist*” (Boitani, op.cit., pg.75). Boitani, in his Preface, tells us that Melchiori, when reading the passage on “Pericles”, declared it a real “*shocker*”, just as the whole volume, recently published, appears to us.

While we could here only make reference to this excellent book, it is worth noting that Boitani (op.cit., pg.11) pointed out that *the whole work of Shakespeare ends with an extraordinary begging for mercy*, with the words of *Our Father*. The *Tempest* (Shakespeare’s last work) ends as follows: “And my ending is despair, Unless I be relieved by prayer, Which pierces so that it assaults Mercy itself and frees all faults. *As you from crimes would pardon’d be, Let your indulgence set me free*”(The *Tempest*, Act V, Scene I, the *Epilogue spoken by Prospero*).

In our view, it seems, that this is Michelangelo’s last and desperate cry, *begging for mercy* for the “*scandalous*” *sin* he had committed!

### ***7.22. The translation of Montaigne’s Essays. Shakespeare’s debt to John Florio. The Tempest, an indisputable finally disclosed autobiography of the two Florios.***

It should also be borne in mind that some key experiences belonged only to John Florio, including his relationship with Giordano Bruno, his participation in the School of the Night, and the translation of Montaigne’s *Essays*, which scholars unanimously acknowledged, had a major influence on Shakespeare’s work<sup>122</sup>.

Indeed, around 1597, Florio, “the hidden poet”, “the clandestine dramatist” (Tassinari), started working on the translation of the “*Essays*” into English.

“And in 1603, English men and women with small or no French had John Florio to thank, for in that year Montaigne spake English”, as pointed out by Bate (*Soul of the Age*, pg.110), emphasising the extraordinary translation done by John.

Thus, “pearls of wisdom” of the supreme Roman poet Horace were widely quoted in Montaigne’s “*Essays*”, including the motto “*Hyde your life*” (lathe biosas), the aphorism reminding us “to be content to live in the moment”, to “seize the day” (*carpe diem*) as well as “*aurea mediocritas*” “the golden mean” and the *value of friendship*.

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<sup>122</sup> See, among the latest work on the matter, Belsey, *Iago the Essayist: Florio between Montaigne and Shakespeare*, in *Renaissance Go-Betweens*, Berlin – New York 2005, pg. 267 (there you also find further bibliographical references).

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.*

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Ninth Edition, entry Shakespeare, "*The only known volume that certainly belonged to Shakespeare and contains his autograph* [Yates, op. cit., pg.245, pointed out that: "unfortunately its authenticity is disputed. Nevertheless, whether forged or genuine, it probably represents a truth"] *is Florio's version of Montaigne's Essays in the British Museum; and critics have from time to time produced evidence to show that Shakespeare must have read it carefully and was well acquainted with its contents. Victor Hugo in a powerful critical passage strongly supports this view. The most striking single proof of the point is Gonzalo's ideal republic in the Tempest, which is simply a passage from Florio's version turned into blank verse*" [underlining added by us]. The passage in reference is that related to the "cannibals", as Melchiori (*Shakespeare*, Bari, 2008, pg. 616) points out.

According to Gerevini (op.cit., pg. 295) "A Scholar that contributed a great deal to the analysis of the parallelisms between Florio's translation of Montaigne's Essays and Shakespeare's language is George Coffin Taylor (*Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne*, New York, 1925)".

"Mr Taylor has clarified the issue by limiting his parallels to those which occur in Shakespeare's plays written after 1603. He finds about a hundred close correspondences in thought and language between Shakespeare and Florio's *Montaigne* and about a hundred passages where the affinity is there, though less clearly defined ... Taylor also compiles a glossary of about seven hundred and fifty terms used by Florio in the translation of the Essays and 'used by Shakespeare during and after, but not before 1603'. ... Taylor does not claim that Shakespeare took all these seven hundred and fifty words from Florio, but he urges that the coincidence of this expansion in Shakespeare's vocabulary with the appearance of the vast word-treasury of the *Montaigne* is significant" (Yates, op.cit., pg. 245).

A recent study by Phillip Hendrick at the University of Ulster<sup>123</sup> has pointed out how in a number of passages of Florio's translation of Montaigne's Essay on Cannibalism, reappear in Shakespeare's *Tempest*.

The *Tempest* is indeed (as revealed by Gerevini and Tassinari) *a true autobiography where the island (metaphor for England) where the two Florios arrived and the language problem emerge prominently*. More precisely, The *Tempest* is "the cryptic tale of his own life, not in the form of a conventional autobiography, but rather the story of his innermost experiences whereby the writer insinuates time and again ... and how through *Prospero*, he says at the end of the play (Act V, Scene i) "*the story of my life/And the particular accidents gone by/Since I came to this isle*" (Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 303, John Florio, pg. 314). *This is the play where the author reveals his identity and where Miranda (like John) learns a second language in a foreign land.*

I cannot consider these questions in greater detail without referring to Gerevini and Tassinari's studies, which they have done admirably.

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<sup>123</sup> Philip Hedrick, "*Florio and Shakespeare: the mediation of colonial discourse*", available in the link <http://www.societefrancaiseshakespeare.org/document.php?id=164> .

In particular, Gerevini points out how, once again even *the very choice of the name "Prospero" leaves Florios' "indelible" hallmark!*

"'Florido' and 'Florio' can have the same meaning as 'Prospero' (*the adjectives "florid" and "prosperous" are synonyms!*). Prospero, in this instance is a "*florid" character at an intellectual level. His books are his most prized possessions. Indeed, Prospero himself stated the huge importance he placed on his books (Gerevini, op. cit.pg.349): "so, of his gentleness, knowing I loved my books, he [Gonzalo] furnish'd me from mine own library with volumes that I prize above my dukedom"*. (Act I, Scene ii).

We can clearly deduce from his work (see Santi Paladino, op.cit. pg. 83-84) that "*knowledge must have been a passion of Shakespeare's from a very young age. He frequently referred to knowledge as celestial, divine, of the very nature of light and to ignorance as diabolic, repugnant, dark.*"

Indeed, an "*angel [is] knowlledge*" ("Love's Labour's Lost, Act I, Scene i, 117); "*Knowledge [is] the wing wherewith we fly to heaven* (Second part of King Henry VI, Act IV, Scene vii, 69); "*Virtue and cunning [knowledge] were endowments greater Than nobleness and riches: careless heirs May the two latter darken and expend; But immortality attends the former. Making a man a god. 'Tis known, I ever Have studied*" (Pericles, Act III, Scene ii, 27-31).

On the contrary, "*Ignorance is the curse of God*" (Second part of King Henry VI, Act IV, Scene vii, 68); "*O thou monster Ignorance, how deformed dost thou look!*" (Love's Labour's Lost, Act IV, Scene 2, 22); "*I say, there is no darkness But ignorance*" (Twelfth Night, IV, 2, 46-47).

In John Florio's will "*there is a collection of almost four hundred books which was more or less equivalent to the number of books in the library of the University of Cambridge at the time. This collection of books was left to the Earl of Pembroke by Florio in his will*" (Gerevini, op. cit.pg.349). Part of this collection was *probably accumulated by Michelangelo* (as Santi Paladino also pointed out), in the same way as Count Monaldo Leopardi would later do for his son Giacomo. Santi Paladino (op. cit.pg. 122) also points to *all the volumes* that constituted the "*works that inspired the Shakespearian dramas...which could be found in the Earl of Pembroke's family library, left to them by the Florios*".

With regard to "The Tempest", Gerevini (op. op. cit.pg. 348-352 and pages 398-400)<sup>124</sup> sets out a number of points: (i) that the play should have been staged in 1611 and again in 1612-13 in honour of the marriage of Princess Elizabeth (who had been a pupil of John's!) and Federico del Palatinato (without any dedication being made by anyone other than the presence of John Florio "*Groom of the Royal Privy Chamber, personal secretary of the Queen and supervisor of cultural activities at court*", as pointed out by Tassinari, Shakespeare?,pg. 97, John Florio, pg. 227); (ii) that this play should have been regarded as a "celebratory" play of this marriage, neither was it a coincidence that in the play there is also an important marriage between Miranda and Ferdinand; (iii) that John Florio had been intimately involved in the King and Queen's plans regarding such an important wedding that was also intended to consolidate England; (iv) that John Florio should have received a

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<sup>124</sup> Gerevini too (cited book pg.355) believes that Florio made use of the description of a real shipwreck that occurred in 1609 in the Bermuda islands, about which he had read a secret report, through Sir Philip Sidney and a friend of his (Hakluyt, Board member of the Virgin Company)

very precious jewel as a reward for the interest he took in the secret (like everything that John did!) “negotiation” prior to the Royal wedding. We are talking about the “*Corvine stone* (a jewel fit for a Prince)”, which John Florio would leave to the Earl of Pembroke in his will, “which Ferdinando, the Great Duke of Tuscanie, sent as a most precious gift (among several others) unto Queen Anna of Blessed memory”.

*Here I am anxious to mention two aspects. Prospero and Miranda arrive at the island, like “exiles”.*

Prospero seems from certain angle to embody Michelangelo, since he was a *first generation immigrant*. He remembers his native land perfectly; he was the Earl of Milan and Powerful Prince (start Act V, Scene 2).

She, little Miranda, arrived at the island at the tender age of three; she remembered almost nothing about her native country, and like John was a *second generation immigrant* (to use Tassinari’s expression<sup>125</sup>), who could not have had any memories of Italy, her father’s native land.

“*We can say that between Prospero/Michelangelo and Miranda/John the ‘transfer’ is perfect!*”<sup>126</sup> According to Gerevini, the island may also represent (this metaphor does not rule out other alternative interpretations) the period Michelangelo and John spent in an isolated place such as the Swiss Alps, before returning to London (regarded as a return to “civilization”) and the regaining of one’s social position.

“Thus we may suppose that John began with the story of his father Michel Angelo, the man responsible for the uprooting. And Prospero himself, a widower in middle age, a political exile who has come to live on a desert isle not with a son but with a beautiful young daughter”.<sup>127</sup>

Michelangelo/Prospero reveals to Miranda/John that “*Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and She said thou wast my daughter*” (I, 2, 55-58). *Of this virtuous woman there is no other trace*; however it appears to be a sort of “Act of Faith” (by Michelangelo) on the word of the woman with whom he had been implicated in the mentioned “scandal”. In short, the ever doubtful Michelangelo shows

<sup>125</sup> Shakespeare?, pg. 313, John Florio, pg. 325.

<sup>126</sup> Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 392. In general the two Florios were real supporter of young women’s culture; “they promoted women’s learning in times when women’s education was neither deemed important nor generally recommended” (Gerevini, pg.258). Michelangelo was the teacher of Jane Grey, Queen from July 8<sup>th</sup> 1553 to July 18<sup>th</sup> 1553; he remained forever attached to her favourite pupil and he dedicated to her his heartsore laudatory work “*Historia de la vita e de la morte de l’Illustriss. Signora Giovanna Graia*”, which he wrote in 1561 after her death, and was published in Venice in 1607. John, in turn, was “schoolmaster” of his daughter Aurelia, teacher of Catherine Marie, daughter of Mauvissière (French ambassador in London, to whom Bruno dedicated in 1584, la *Cena delle ceneri*), teacher of the Princess Elisabeth, and of Queen Anna. His wife, married in 1583, Rose Daniel (sister of the poet Samuel Daniel) was a good and well-educated musician, the beautiful “Dark Lady” of the Sonnets, and according to a thesis which Bate (The Genius of Shakespeare, pg.58 and 363) drew from John Harding (Gerevini, pg. 83-4, pg. 226). Furthermore, Florio could involve in literary works women pertaining to the “Court entourage” (the Queen, such as on the occasion of the publication of the Sonnets, Lucy Russell, countess of Bedford, and Lady Rich, Earl of Essex’s sister), despite the habits of the time (Gerevini, pg. 258). Shakespeare drew his inspiration from these well-educated women, while creating the character of Portia in the “Merchant of Venice”. “Portia was disguised as a man of law and used a very precise legal jargon in the courtroom: asked for information, checked the validity of the contract ... was eloquent in her expositions, self-confident, sententious, clever, erudite, keen, resolute, shrewd and at the same time ruthless ... Shakespeare, in this courtroom, revealed his remarkable and indisputable legal knowledge” (Gerevini, pg. 256-7). In short, both the two Florios and Shakespeare loved the well-educated women!

<sup>127</sup> Tassinari, Shakespeare?, pg. 309, 320, John Florio, pg. 320, 332.

that even on this occasion (and even if the woman was a paragon of virtue!) probably, in the furthest recesses of his soul, he may have harboured this invisible “shred of doubt”, if only for a few moments. Shakespeare had expressed his love to his beloved with the words: “*Doubt Truth to be a liar/ But never doubt I love*”, which we read in Hamlet’s letter to Ophelia in Act II, Scene II.

It should be pointed out that this is probably the only reference to John’s mother in all of Shakespeare’s work and even if this were the case, the purpose is to “restore” the woman’s honour and the family name. We mustn’t forget that the “scandal” that Michelangelo was embroiled in was primarily due to his being a Christian pastor. *However the woman had also breached the laws of God with this “more uxorio” relationship that had not been blessed by the sacrament of marriage.*

It must also be stressed that it was *thanks to the sincere love of this woman that Michelangelo managed to “literally” be saved after the indelible experiences of his imprisonment in Rome, the tyranny he had been subjected to and the endless anguish of imminent death.*

Miranda “*had experienced...learning a new language...acquiring a second mother tongue*”, just like John (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 320, John Florio, pg. 331-332).

Michelangelo/Prospero had been her “schoolmaster” and he says to Miranda/John: “*We arrived at this island and here, as your master, I have got you to make more progress more than other princesses who have more time for vain pursuits and whose guides who are not quite so diligent*” (I,2, 171-174).

It appears that it is precisely the old Michelangelo who calls himself the especially diligent “careful” guide, and recalls the princesses (one of his pupils, Jane Grey, even became Queen for a brief period) who had been his pupils. In fact “Michelangelo Florio was a ‘schoolmaster’ of excellence!” (pointed out by Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 391, with regard to the passage in The Tempest; he claimed, pg.59-60, that “William was not the teacher of his two daughters, and they were really illiterate, differently from Aurelia, John’s daughter, who was John’s pupil”; also Bate, The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 72, pointed essentially out the “verbal facility” of Susanna, William’s eldest daughter, who would have inherited her father’s ‘wit’). In general the two Florios were real supporter of young women’s culture; “they promoted women’s learning in times when women’s education was neither deemed important nor generally recommended” (Gerevini, pg.258).<sup>128</sup>

Miranda/John shows her infinite gratitude to her father who had taught her everything she knew, even referring to Divine indulgence, so beseeched by Michelangelo: “Heavens thank you for’t!” (I, 2, 175).

Then it is Michelangelo/Prospero who warns Ferdinando, Miranda/John’s fiancée to respect the sacrament of marriage and to avoid most categorically, any “extra marital” relations before celebrating the holy marriage rites.

Michelangelo’s “cross” is a recurring theme and on this occasion we can get a measure of the extent of his “regrets”.

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<sup>128</sup> See also footnote 125 above.

*“If thou dost break her virgin-knot before/ All sanctimonious ceremonies may/ With full and holy rite be minister'd, / No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall/ To make this contract<sup>129</sup> grow: but barren hate, / Sour-eyed disdain and discord shall bestrew/ The union of your bed with weeds so loathly / That you shall hate it both: therefore take heed, / As Hymen's lamps shall light you.”* (IV, 1, 15-17) [Hymen or Imeneo was the God of Marriage and was represented as a blond young man holding a torch].

Without the sacrament, *God's necessary blessing will not come down from the sky!*

In short, Michelangelo had sinned through his “act of fornication” outside of a marriage blessed by God, this had caused a scandal; he even ran the risk of being expelled from England and was now trying, in every way possible, to prevent his offspring from committing the same “baleful” errors!

This is a real *bee in Michelangelo's bonnet*, an obsessive gnawing in Michelangelo's mind; his act of fornication would leave its mark for his whole life!

Gerevini too (op. cit.pg. 350) reveals how Prospero explicitly stated that the young couple should not “consume” their marriage before it is celebrated according to Canonical Rites. This was a reminder of what would happen otherwise, given Michelangelo Florio's experience.

Meanwhile, to get back to Phillip Hendrick's recent study, the author reveals how Florio inserted some ideas into the translation that had not been in Montaigne's original text, particularly regarding colonialism; he ended up imposing his own viewpoints, assumptions and values regarding the essay that was being translated.

Following an in-depth analysis, Hendrick comes to the conclusion that rather than Shakespeare's “debt” to Montaigne (referring to the well-known scholar George Coffin Taylor, “Shakespeare's debt to Montaigne”, New York, 1968/1925), *it may be more properly seen as Shakespeare's debt to John Florio*.

Finally, in *The Tempest*, there are numerous references to the Holy Scriptures; we saw above how the play ends with an entreaty for forgiveness, with the words of *Our Father*.

Boitani (op. cit.pg.135-136) emphasises a particularly interesting passage (IV, I, 146-163) for two reasons:

1) Michelangelo/Prospero, after the performance that was staged in honour of Miranda and Ferdinand's wedding, “declared to be vexed, weak, ill: his mind was beating and perhaps he firstly was aware of his frailness, of his age: of death” (Boitani, op. cit.pg. 134). *“I am vex'd; Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled: Be not disturb'd with my infirmity .... I'll walk, To still my beating mind”* (IV, I, 158-163). It actually seems it is the old Michelangelo Florio who is feeling the fragility of his age and the approach of death.

2) From another standpoint, the actors (which, according to Shakespeare includes everyone, men and women, mere actors on the stage of life -“As You Like It”, Act II, Scene vii, 147-8) *“Were all*

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<sup>129</sup> Matrimony is a religious sacrament, but also a contract which produces legal effects, as the two Florios clearly appeared to be aware, since they were at the same time expert of liturgies and of law.

*spirits, a and Are melted into air, into thin air ... The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, The solemn temples, the great globe<sup>130</sup> itself, Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve ... Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff As dreams are made on, and our little life Is rounded with a sleep."* (IV, I, 146-157). Everything "shall vanish like in a dream" (Job 20,6-8). Boitani points out (op. cit.pg.136-137) that men and women are actors, according to Shakespeare, who are acting out parts in the seven Acts that are the seven ages of Man". "Last scene of all, That ends this strange eventful history, Is second childishness and mere *oblivion*, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything"(“As You Like It”, Act II, Scene vii, 173-5).

In Boitani's view, this is *Shakespeare's Apocalypse*, the revelation of the final destiny of the world and of mankind: “the world shall fade away, the life of Man is a dream crowned with sleep and we all know that this sleep, as Hamlet said, is death” (op. cit.pg.135-7).

**7.23. *The two Florios and Hamlet. At long last, a well grounded theory on the genesis of the famous “soliloquy”: the anguish of a man sentenced to death, a person “doomed to die”, who was awaiting imminent execution.***

Reiterating once again the importance of considering the author's life so as to be able to understand his work, it cannot go unsaid that “Hamlet” is one of the most powerful, in terms of *the emotional impact it has on the audience and how the audience can actually palpably “feel” the events that are narrated*; it is obvious that *emotions can best be expressed when we experience them personally*.

We have already mentioned in the paragraph on the importance of the Gospel in Shakespeare's work, some themes that are an integral part of Hamlet.

So then, what are the other defining themes that most characterise the emotions in this masterpiece?

a) *A very special Father-Son bond* whereby the father asks that the truth about him be restored (the son will do everything, even sacrificing his own life to fulfil his father's wishes); and similarly in this regard, it can certainly not be denied that the bond between Michelangelo and John was very special indeed and that the son made his best efforts to redeem his father.

b) Hamlet's state of mind; he feels “*irresolute*” deep down, just like John did before he resolved his essential dilemma and proclaimed that he was “*Resolute*”.

One of the crucial moments in Hamlet is the very famous “soliloquy” centred on the “innate” resolution, “*native hue of resolution*” (an “indelible” hallmark of the “*Resolute*” John Florio!), “weakened” by an “inevitable” destiny, that of death, but especially by the “*dread*” of what comes after death.

Hamlet refers to the gnawing fear of death and especially to a “*dread of something after death/The undiscovered country, from whose bourn /No travellers returns*” (Hamlet, Act III, Scene I, 30, 31). “*It is precisely this ‘dread’, this fear and trepidation that numbs our minds and petrifies our very though process at the prospect of death*” (Boitani, op. cit.pg.32).

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<sup>130</sup> Obviously, according to Boitani (op.cit., pg.136, footnote 20), “the reference to the ‘great globe’ includes also the image of the ‘Globe’, the very important theatre of the Elizabethan Age”.

Precisely because of this “paralysing” dread, Hamlet says that: “And thus the native hue of *resolution*/Is sicklied o’er” (Act III, Scene I, 84-85). Gerevini also (op.cit.pg. 337), points out that “Resolute” [John Florio] reminds us of ‘the colour of resoluteness’ cited in Hamlet (Act III, Scene I 84)”.

John Florio really had received death threats, as he himself recounted in 1591 in the “To the Reader” section of “Second Fruits”: “I am an Englishman in italiane; I know they have a knife at command to cut my throate. Un Inglese Italianato, è un Diavolo incarnate” (“An Italianised Englishman is the devil incarnate”). It is through working with William of Stratford that he finally overcomes his “*irresoluteness*”, which is related to his well-founded fear that he, along with his immense knowledge and learning, could be, in a instant, “wiped off” the face of the earth and vanish into unknown lands following a violent and bloody death. Florios’ works would be published and put on the London Theatre Market under the pseudonym of Shake-speare and William of Stratford (a “born and bred” Englishman) was to work with them, making a significant contribution to the success of these works.

c) *The existential dilemma: “To be or not to be”*. The very same dilemma as John’s and his father’s: “To be a poet but not to be counted so”, where the only (loved) solution is “to be a poet” is paradoxically “not to be considered as a poet”<sup>131</sup>.

d) *The reference in Hamlet to his “wounded name, /Things standing thus unknown”* (Act V, Scene II) , that appears to refer to Michelangelo’s infinite “cross”, to the tainted family name and to the need to restore it by revealing the truth (“Doubt Truth to be a liar” , we read in Hamlet’s letter in Act II, Scene II). Horatio shall be assigned the task by Hamlet of “telling faithfully of me and of my cause to those who ask after me”.

e) *The reference in Hamlet to real events of Florio’s life*: (i) An attack by pirates (Act IV, Scene vi, 48-67). Florio retrieved the luggage of the French Ambassador Mauvessièrre, who had been robbed by pirates and thanked Florio in a letter dated 30th November 1585, which was conserved by the *Calendar State Papers Foreign 1585-6*, having assigned him this task in a previous letter (see Gerevini, op. cit.pg . 88 e Yates, cited book). (ii) Hamlet replaced a letter, since: “*Why, even in that was Heaven ordinate; I had my father’s signet in my purse, Which was the model of that Danish seal: folded the writ up in form of the other, Subsrib’d it, gave’t th’impression, plac’d it safely, The changeling never known*” (Act V, Scene ii, 48-53). Florio, in 1586 was a Secretary at the French in London, where Giordano Bruno had also lived until 1585, and was instrumental in getting hold of the contents of messages written by Mary, Queen of Scots, to the French Catholics, using the same

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<sup>131</sup> It is worth noting that a scholar (Montini, op.cit., pag.47) claims: “*Florio has one face, two names, a double identity which just seems proper of a theatrical fiction*”. Similarly Pfister (op. cit., pg. 36) points out that: “*Bilingual Florio went under two names – John or Giovanni. The two names suggest his divided self-definition and his in-between identity: he was both an Italian of sorts, and an Englishman of sorts*” Also Peter Burke (*The Renaissance Translator as Go-Between, in Renaissance Go-Between*, edited by Hofele, 2005, pg. 23 e 24) claims that “*John Florio’s hybrid name [Italian surname and English name] expresses a hybrid identity*” and “*his cultural hybridity*”. Thus reinforces a strong identity crisis, which is also at the basis of Hamlet’s “to be or not to be”. Such identity crisis adds to the fact that paradoxically for John “not to be” (counted as a poet) was the unique way “to be” (a poet). Then the intriguing dilemma acquires a new emotional impact; in addition, there is a kind of “pun” in such combination of verbs in the in definitive (John really was a ‘funambulist’ of the words!). Under such literary artifice, there is a real dramatic existential dilemma, a human being, “flesh and blood”, the author of these supreme and immortal verses. The climax of the dilemma “to be or not to be” is above all Michelangelo’s dilemma, who was a “doomed to die” person, sentenced to death.

techniques as Hamlet. John Florio received the approval of James I for this espionage, as William Vaughan's *The Golden Fleece*, part I, D4-E3 bears witness.

According to Gerevini (op. cit. pg. 95-96), Francis Walsingham, the right hand-man of Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley (Secretary of State and counsellor of Queen Elisabeth I), was the organizer of an efficient secret service and in 1586 foiled a plot, which had been hatched by Sir Antony Babington to kill Queen Elisabeth I, to raise Mary Stuard to the throne and to reinstate the Catholic religion. John Florio took part in the espionage under Walsingham. Walsingham found out that Mary Stuard was sending secret letters to the French Catholics; such letters were hidden in barrels of beer, which were shipped. Walsingham's spies removed the seal from the envelopes of the letters, read them and copied their content; then, they again affixed the seal of Mary Stuard (whose mould had been secretly taken) and reinserted the letters in the barrels of beer, so that the addressee had no reason to suspect anything. When Walsingham had collected sufficient evidence, after several interceptions, he incriminated Mary Stuard, who was brought to trial in October 1586 and executed on February 8th 1587. As above mentioned, John Florio received the approval of James I for this espionage, as William Vaughan's *The Golden Fleece*, part I, D4-E3 bears witness (Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 95). Gerevini (op.cit. pg.96) pointed out that Hamlet himself used the very same technique in order to foil the plot which had been hatched by his stepfather and two courtiers (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) to kill Hamlet. Hamlet too removed the seal from the envelopes of the letters and then again affixed the Danish seal (in his possession) just like the spying vicissitudes concerning Mary Stuard. "Why, even in that was Heaven ordinate; I had my father's signet in my purse, Which was the model of that Danish seal: folded the writ up in form of the other, Subscrib'd it, gave't th'impression, plac'd it safely, The changeling never known" (Act V, Scene ii, 48-53).

f) Above all, the fact that Hamlet (in Act V, Scene ii) described in such an "anguished" way the final hours of a person close to death, who knows that death may come very soon. Hamlet's soliloquy is in fact characterised by its extraordinary intensity, drama, emotional involvement, fundamental doubts and desperation<sup>132</sup>. The person "doomed to die" declares he is "ready" as a Christian to die, yet his suffering ("You cannot believe the ache I am feeling around my heart"), the real "dread" of something after death (as we can also deduce in the famous "soliloquy" –Act III, scene I, 56 onwards, 78), paralyses him especially the unknown of what comes after death, "The undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns" (79-80). The agony, the bitter cup, the real Gethsemane which we mentioned above. An unutterable physical and emotional suffering. It strikes and gnaws at the reader because it analyses the state of mind of a person "doomed to die", with astonishing lucidity and drama. I personally firmly believe that such a chilling and merciless description and analysis could only have been written by someone who had actually faced death, who could have died at any moment, in an of Tor di Nona (pontifical prison in Rome) ill-famed dungeon's terrible dark, cold and damp cells, experiencing tortures, physical and mental agony and truly facing all those doubts that emerge in the drama. Whoever wrote those pages really had "looked death in the face" and managed to escape death by sheer miracle and was able to give, with his innate sensitivity, an unequalled "account" of someone who had been on the verge of entering the "the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns".

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<sup>132</sup> Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 254.

The agonising wait for a trial that was constantly being put off, then for the verdict (an inauspicious one which Michelangelo must have augured for some time; “*The death sentence had already been decreed by the Inquisitors*”<sup>133</sup>), then finally, Capital punishment (which could have been carried out at any moment). All of this, in a dark, underground cold, damp cell, amid the physical oppression of his ruthless prison warders, devoid of all comforts. In addition, he daily heard the macabre preparation for the scaffold and the execution of other prisoners. All of this must have been unbearable and must have made him seriously consider suicide as a possible way out. In the famous soliloquy, he expressly says “*he himself could be at rest with a dagger*” “*...die, sleep, that’s all...*”.

In the soliloquy, he expressly refers to the “*slings and arrows*”, to “*heart-ache*”, and “*the law’s delay*” “*the contumely*”, “*the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes*”, to “*whips and scorns*”, to the “*oppressor’s wrong*”, to the “*scorns*” and even to physical “*insolence of office*”.

“*But the dread of something after death,/The undiscovered country, from whose bourn/No traveller returns, puzzles the will, /And makes us rather bear those ills we have /Than fly to others that we know not of*”. The temptation to commit suicide was only restrained by the Christian fear of performing an act for which Michelangelo could have merited, in the afterworld, suffering even more painfully than the worldly suffering: *the torments of Hell, the perpetual Hell-fire!* also taking into account his past “*scandalous sin*”, and the inscrutable and uncovenanted mercy of God.

The lawyer in me has always wondered about how, even Shakespeare should have been irked by the slowness of the legal system “*the law’s delay*” ... the explanation of this is that Shakespeare (in this case, Michelangelo) had been imprisoned in Rome, awaiting (*for two long years!*) trial for heresy which would have seen him sentenced to death!

*It all started and finds its origins in the dark Roman prison cells!*<sup>134</sup>

Shakespeare himself had even portrayed a Court of Justice in “*The Merchant of Venice*”; that of Venice (displaying his “*unquestioned knowledge of law*”, Gerevini, op. cit.pg.257), where Antonio had been subjected to a trial instigated by the Jewish moneylender Shylock whose loan had not been repaid was calling for a “*pound*” of Antonio’s flesh<sup>135</sup>.

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<sup>133</sup> Santi Paladino, op.cit., pg. 17.

<sup>134</sup> Lamberto Tassinari has recently given a very effective “*interview*” in the Vatican City (Saint Peter Square); he reminded us the torments which Michelangelo had borne in the Roman prisons due to the Inquisition. Such image remained well imprinted on my mind, as an implicit but clear “*warning*”: be careful, all may have started and found its origins here! The interview is available in the following link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bavxCfukTKo>.

<sup>135</sup> Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 255, pointed out that “*The character of Shylock in such passage seems to be merciless but it is pathetic and, at the end, you feel pity for him. The words he had previously pronounced may be read as a kind of justification for his un pitying behaviour: ‘If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrongs a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.’* Few lines before, Shylock had rhetorically claimed: “*I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions, fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled 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?*” (*Merchant of Venice*, Act III, scene i, 53–68). “*His outburst is as much intense as Hamlet’s soliloquy: same “dramatic force, same intensity of feeling, same fundamental doubts, and same despair. Hamlet’s own dilemma, “to be or not to be”, becomes Shylock’s and Jews’ own dilemma: “can (or not)”they have the right to a decent existence and to their dignity? ... In my opinion, Shylock is only trying to claim his right to a decorous life, since being a Jew does not imply at all maltreatments. The reasons of a similar position in favour of Shylock emerge from the two Florio’s lives. Michelangelo himself, in his Apologia (pg. 34) claimed:”and if you should say that my*

Portia states that: *“The quality of mercy is not strain’d, It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless’d; It blesseth him that gives and him that takes: ... But mercy is above this sceptred sway, ... It is an attribute to God himself, And earthly power doth then show likest God’s When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew, Though justice be thy plea, consider this, That in the course of justice none of us Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy, And that same prayer doth teach us all to render The deeds of mercy.”* (The Merchant of Venice, Act IV, i, 180 onwards). It is a clear echo of *Our Father* (“Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us”). Also St. Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians is echoed, which says: “all our competence comes from God. He has given us competence to be ministers of the new covenant, a covenant which is not of written letters; for the written letters [of the covenant] kill, but the Spirit gives life”.

*“Mercy” is “twice blessed”, and it implies “mutuality”.*

*“Mercy” is (according to Shakespeare) a “gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath”, just like a “merciful/good word” is (according to Florio) a “dew from heaven to earth”.*

*“Only our Michelangelo could have, with such searing words, condemn the obtuse and cruel enforcement of the law ‘to the letter’ and beseech clemency and the ‘mercy’ that are above the ‘sceptred sway’, which could have been, in the thoughts of the Poet, that of the Pope, in whose name a death sentence was hanging over his head”* (Santi Paladino, op. cit.pg. 115).

We can therefore better understand Michelangelo’s almost obsessive pleas for Divine mercy (until the last verse of Shakespeare’s play!), since he personally experienced the unspeakable anguish of *“flying towards other [ills] we do not know of”*; without a Divine pardon, the prospect of suffering in the afterlife may be even worse than the “worldly” suffering he had endured in the dark prisons of Rome, while he awaited death . And Michelangelo well knew the words of Jesus: *“my judgment is valid, because I am not alone, but it is I and the Father who sent me”* (Gospel of John, 8, 15-16).

This is what makes his masterpiece universal, because the anguish he expresses in such a profound and “merciless” way, as superbly set out by Boitani, regarding a problem that is common to all human beings. *“There is no answer to the problem of the end, other than either accepting its utterly inevitability or else within religious faith”* (op.cit. pg.32).

My personal view, if I may, is that it is absolutely clear that Michelangelo (who is, at least in this passage, the mind of Shakespeare) *sought an answer to this problem in religious faith*; this is perhaps a statement of the obvious, given that Michelangelo was a Christian pastor with deep faith, that he sought till the end of his days Divine mercy for having caused a public “scandal” and having breached the laws of God.

We must add that the situation of a person who has, for “months” and “years”, been reflecting on his destiny after death, after his sentence is actually carried out, this inevitably, puts the individual

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ancestors were Hebrews before baptism, this I will not deny”. Michelangelo was a Jew who had been Christianly baptized. And “ Michelangelo, just like the “wandering Jew” destined to wander in order to survive, had to wander through Europe also with his little John” (Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 251-52).

in question in a “borderline” situation between “being”, *earthly life*, and “not being” after death, or at least “no longer being” what one was before (in the *afterworld*).

That is why *what awaits us after death is compared to a “sleep” to a “dream”*. “*We are such stuff As dreams are made on: and our little life Is rounded with a sleep*” Shakespeare said also in *The Tempest* (Act IV, Scene i, 156-158).

The utter, all-consuming, paralysing anguish arises out of this crucial “hanging on” stage, with death so imminent, which at any rate, entails a “transformation” including “*resolving into*”, of the “*flesh that resolves itself into a dew*” perhaps as expressed in this vividly meaningful image used by Prince Hamlet himself (*Hamlet*, Act I, Scene,ii, 129-130).

John Florio himself, in “*Second Fruits*” had tackled a similar question with Giordano Bruno (called Nolano) in a dialogue between Nolano and Torquato<sup>136</sup>:

“T: *Quali sono le doglie da morire?*

What be those deadly griefes?

N:...*Stare in letto e non dormire ... Esser’ in prigione e non poter fuggire. Et ammalato e non poter guarire. ...Et haver un amico che ti vuol tradire: sono dieci doglie da morire...*

.... To lye a bed and sleepe not ... To lye in a iayle and hope not. To be sick and recover not. ... And to have a friend we trust not:are ten such spites as hell had not.

...T: *Queste son doglie ch’io ho patito & patisco sovvente volte.*

They be the spites as I have felt, and oftentimes doo feele.”

The “*person doomed to die*”, or whoever is awaiting death (we all are actually! And we must be ready at all times), and especially those who, owing to a death sentenced or to an incurable disease are fast approaching death and is “living” in a sort of “*journey of transition*” during which although one “is” still on *Earth*, one envisages, in a thousand different ways what the *afterlife* “will” be like, once the final destination of the journey has been reached.

I personally believe that the whole atmosphere of *Hamlet* reveals a strong sense of religion and faith, therein resolving the “*universal doubt*”, inherent in all living creatures regarding what comes after life on earth.<sup>137</sup>

Neither should it be underestimated that three close friends of the Florios’ had been sentenced to death and each time, both had relived Michelangelo’s “*ordeal*”: 1) Jane Grey, executed on February 12<sup>th</sup> 1554, just a few days before Michelangelo and his little family fled from England. To her (his

<sup>136</sup> Il The passage and some comments may be read in Wyatt, “*Giordano Bruno’s Infinite Worlds in John Florio’s Worlds of Words*”, in *Giordano Bruno, Philosopher of the Renaissance*, Edited by Hilary Gatti, 2002, pg. 191-92.

<sup>137</sup> Bruno’s ideas on the matter were different from the relevant Christian concepts; in his Latin philosophical works, Bruno dealt with the theme of the Fate of the Soul after Death and he claimed that “the elements remain constant, subjected to an eternal order and realizing themselves by fulfilling their own course, from which they can never deviate”, “Nature eternally creates, without augmenting or diminishing its capacity”. “The Nolan identifies Nature with God” and “after death the souls remain in this world”. “They are already essentially immortal as the endless metamorphoses of *Mater-materia*”. “Monism is the ultimate consequence of Bruno’s total rejection of every hierarchical order in the universe”. Further in-depth analyses may be read in Ramon G. Mendoza, “*Metempsychosis and Monism in Bruno’s nova filosofia*”, in “*Giordano Bruno. Philosopher of the Renaissance*”, edited by Hilary Gatti (University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’), 2002, pg. 284-97.

favourite pupil) Michelangelo dedicated in 1561 a manuscript about the life and death of the queen “for a week”, with hints of great emotion and pathos that take on a new meaning if read in relation to Hamlet (and further analyses of such work should be very useful) . 2) Giordano Bruno, was burnt at the stake in Rome on February 17<sup>th</sup> 1600 during the festivities to celebrate the new century. The figure of Bruno is portrayed in Hamlet (published the year after his death), by Horatio, Hamlet’s loyal friend to whom Hamlet turns to making an unmistakeable reference to the Bruneian theory of “infinite worlds”, in the following famous passage which has strong Bruneian undertones: ‘There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy’, (Hamlet, Act I, Scene 5, lines 166-167). 3) The Earl of Essex was executed on February 25<sup>th</sup> 1601. In Hamlet, Horatio says these words to the dying Hamlet similar to those uttered by the Earl of Essex when he was about to be executed: “Good night sweet Prince and flights of Angels sing thee to thy rest” (Act V, sc. 2). M.Praz specifies that the Earl had said these words: “When my life separates from my body, send your blessed angels and take it to the joys of Heaven”.

In brief, the Florios had time and again “*renewed*” their grief and anguish regarding the sentencing to death of their dear friends; those executions had really been carried out whereas Michelangelo must have felt he had been “saved by a miracle” having escaped execution by the skin of his teeth!

To conclude on this point, allow me one last reflection.

At the beginning of this essay we recalled how Shakespeare and Florio had coined and defined the word “go-between”. Manfred Pfister shrewdly revealed how we could consider the God Hermes who acted as the messenger between the gods and the world of mortals as the first ever “go-between”.

Regarding this, we could perhaps share Shakespeare’s view that the *all mortals live life as though they were “travelling”, from the moment we are born inevitably leads us to the afterworld, different (that each person’s imagines according to their own beliefs) from our worldly lives.*

*We are all “travellers”* (Hamlet says in his soliloquy) and from this point of view we are all in a metaphorical sense “*go-betweens*”, subjects destined to “transform ourselves” (“*resolving into*”) into something different from our worldly lives; and, in turn, the *image* we have of the *afterworld* may often also *influence our behaviour in our wordly lives*. This is also the case for *Hamlet* (and probably for Michelangelo), who “*fought back*” *the temptation to commit suicide*, considering the punishment such act would have caused him in the afterworld.

My own personal impression is that in the soliloquy, Hamlet describes the moment when as “go-betweens”, “travellers”, we reach the “climax”, *the moment when the journey into the unknown is (or appears to be) irreversible!*

The moment Man enters a “*dimension of transition*”, a “*contact zone*”, as Pfister defines it (for “go-betweens”), a “*third dimension*”, “*transiting...between two worlds*” (Montini), “*crossing the borders*”, in “liminal spaces of passages” in between the “being” in this life and “not being” or “being in a different way” in the afterlife (“the undiscovered country, from whose bourn/No travellers returns”). We are *at the frontier*, the customs house, the “*zona franca*” (“free zone”), *between two world, “between two ‘radically incongruous world images’”.*

Michelangelo had lived in this *dreadful “dimension”* and had *escaped death*, like *those who survive an air disaster* having seen their whole lives flash before them just moments earlier; it’s as though we want to take these key images of our lives with us to the afterworld.

Given all of this, we can understand why, *after such an “inhuman” event experienced personally* by Michelangelo, *both John and Michelangelo Florio had utterly abhorred the possibility of exposing themselves once again to the danger of death* (and to the “paralysing” anguish that goes with it which makes Man “irresolute”) they may have, just as Santi Paladino suggested (op. cit.pg.110) reached a *“secret agreement” with their cooperator William of Stratford*, “whereby he would take on ... the paternity of the works” (albeit under a slightly different surname), thereby acting as a hauberk to safeguard their lives and thus regain their full *“native resolution”!*

**7.24. The “triune” nature of “Shakespeare”. The written testimony of Ben Jonson in “First Folio” (1623), an “incontrovertible” evidence in favour of the “Florin” theory. The “mystery” of the portrait of Shakespeare by Martin Droeshut, in the front page of “First Folio”.**

The “triune” nature of “Shakespeare”- constituted by 1 pseudonym and 2 contributors - (this is the “essence” of Saul Gerevini’s<sup>138</sup> and Giulia Harding’s Florin theory.

In 1623, this theory is strongly testified in writing by Ben Jonson (a reliable and trustworthy witness), who launched the myth of Shakespeare with a poem and two introductory epistles, in the First Folio (the document that firstly lists and includes the works attributed to Shakespeare).

Ben Jonson clearly refers to the 2 “contributors” to the success of the works of Shakespeare:

1) *William of Stratford*, to whom Ben addresses the famous words: “*thou had small Latin and less Greek*”. Ben surely knew William very well. This is also the opinion of one of the main English scholars of Shakespeare, J. Bate, who points out that William, as an actor, “was in the cast of at least two of Jonson’s plays”<sup>139</sup>. Moreover, a written document testifies that William played in Ben Jonson’s comedy “Every Man in his Humour” premiered by the Chamberlain’s Men in 1598<sup>140</sup>. Furthermore, the relationship between Ben and William 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”<sup>141</sup> - and was called “Horace the Second” in “The Return from Parnassus Part 2”] and William are mentioned together<sup>142</sup>.

<sup>138</sup> See Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 180.

<sup>139</sup> The Genius of Shakespeare, pg. 69.

<sup>140</sup> See J. Bate, *Soul of the Age*, pg. 366-367.

<sup>141</sup> See J. Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* 2008, pg.26. Jonathan Bate himself, *Soul of the Age*, 2009, points out the importance of Horace in Shakespeare’s world (see, pg. 84, 89, 100, 145); at this age the poems of Horace 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”, and Horace’s *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!*).

<sup>142</sup> See J. Bate, *Soul of the Age*, pg. 377-379 onwards.

2) *His friend John Florio*, the great translator, man of letters, erudite and clandestine dramatist: “*a lance as brandished at the eyes of Ignorance*” “*a pen as brandished just like a speare against Ignorance*”<sup>143</sup>.

John Florio is obviously here to be considered, in the terms set out above, a “*unicum*” with *Michelangelo*.

It is worth noting that in “First Folio” (1623) Ben Jonson (John Florio’s devoted friend) “*made the decision not to reveal the true identity of Shakespeare (respecting the understanding between himself and Florio)*”<sup>144</sup>.

Moreover, a very obscure “mystery” emerges from the words of Ben Jonson in his preface “To the reader” in the First Folio.

Indeed, the front page of First Folio contains the famous portrait of Shakespeare, which is attributed to the young engraver Martin Droeshut (1601-1651) and the scholars have rightly pointed out that “*It is not an accident that in the preface, Jonson invites readers to look for Shakespeare in the writing rather than in the mentioned figure*”.

Jonson’s words are the following: “*Reader, Look not on his Picture, but his Booke*”.<sup>145</sup>

It seems a kind of further clear “*indication*” about the true identity of the author!<sup>146</sup>

The meaning seems to be the following: “the works contained in the book has no relationship with the Picture, the Portrait of the front page of First Folio and with the person therein portrayed! *Read the book, disregard the Portrait!*”

It is also worth noting that the profound friendship between Ben Jonson and John Florio is incontrovertible and, *inter alia*, also indisputably documented. Indeed, scholars have pointed out that all traces of John Florio’s 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 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*”.<sup>147</sup>

A real token of their strong Friendship and of Jonson’s profound admiration for John Florio (and his works), defined as Father, Friend, Master and Aid of his Muses!

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<sup>143</sup> Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 85; John Florio, pg. 82.

<sup>144</sup> See Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 84, John Florio, pg. 79 and 80.

<sup>145</sup> See Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 80.

<sup>146</sup> Professor Mario Praz (1896-1982), one of the greatest of Shakespeare’s Italian scholars, pointed out that “*It is impossible to find Shakespeare in the poor details of his life: out of the plays, the man Shakespeare is not more alive than his polychromatic bust of his tomb - polished manikin of a gentleman with pointed beard – or his portrait in the title page of the First Folio, with that astonished and tight rigidity of jack of hearts*” (Mario Praz, Introduction to the *Fox* by Ben Jonson, Sansoni publisher, Firenze 1949, pg. I-II; see also Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 29).

<sup>147</sup> Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 85 e 94; John Florio, pg. 81. We have mentioned in paragraph 4.2 above that Shakespearean zealots created new material, and more than that, destroyed documents compromising for the Stratfordian identity.

Furthermore, John Florio is present with his own eight lines and his name at the foot of them, “among the 10 authors of laudatory verse found in the first page of Ben Jonson’s *Volpone*”<sup>148</sup>.

In addition we remind you that John Florio (together with Michelanelo) was a great “admirer” of *Horace*, and shared with him, as already noted, *the concept of passing on of culture*, the motto “*vivere contentus parvo*” and the aphorism “*Hyde thy life*”, as well as (along with Shakespeare) the issue related to *immortality of Poetry*, considered as a “*monument*” *outlasting more than other monuments*.

We have already pointed out that *Jonson* too was a great admirer of *Horace* and Jonson’s admiration of *Horace* was such that he *set himself up as the English Horace*” - and was called “*Horace the Second*” in “*The Return from Parnassus Part 2*”.

“Jonson expressed in the First Folio [1623]: “*Shakespeare had held nature and art in Horatian balance*”<sup>149</sup>; 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*”<sup>150</sup>.

In the light of all the above, the scholars have pointed out the “*focal point*” which has to be very carefully considered in this First Folio.

Then, we have to investigate this point with careful attention!

Ben Jonson in the First Folio:

- *Firstly* referred to someone characterised by a very “poor knowledge” of the basic Classic languages of literature, Latin and Greek: “*Thou small Latin and less Greek*”;
- *Secondly* to someone who is compared to “*a lance as brandished at the eyes of Ignorance*”.

The second “expression” could not be objectively referred to someone, whose very “poor culture” had been pointed out a few lines earlier in the same text!

A different opinion would have the effect to rendering fully the whole content of the text utterly incomprehensible.

To clarify somewhat, the scholars express, as follows: “*When in 1623, launching the myth of Shakespeare with a poem and two epistles, Jonson wrote ‘to shake a lance /As brandish’d at the eyes of Ignorance’, Ben was referring not to the ill-educated man from Stratford of whom he had observed a few lines earlier ‘And though thou had small Latin, and less Greek’, but to the great translator, literato, erudite and clandestine dramatist John Florio, who really had brandished his lance against ignorance*”<sup>151</sup>.

<sup>148</sup> Tassinari, Shakespeare?, pg. 85, John Florio pg. 82.

<sup>149</sup> J. Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg. 30.

<sup>150</sup> J. Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, pg.26.

<sup>151</sup> Tassinari, Shakespeare?, pg. 85, John Florio pg. 82.

Scholars pointed out that “another odd thing about the collection published in the Folio of 1623, which orthodox scholarship prefers to overlook, is that the Sonnets are not included. George Greenwood and Diana Price<sup>152</sup> both maintain that the ambiguity of the panegyric and the two introductory epistles written by Jonson but signed by two actor colleagues of Shakspere, Heminges and Condell, proves that Jonson knew that the author was not the man from Stratford. Beset by moral scruples, perhaps, Ben is sending messages to his contemporaries and posterity in these texts, signalling that behind this great oeuvre stand two different figures, one of whom he respects, John Florio the foreigner, and another whom he disdains, the broker William Shakspere”<sup>153</sup>.

Regardless of these appreciations of William of Stratford (that we by no means share!), it is clear that Ben Jonson clearly pointed out to the readers an “absolute incongruity”, namely that, in despite of “William’s very rudimentary knowledge of Latin and Greek (‘And though thou had small Latin, and less Greek’), the works of Shakespeare display a very thorough knowledge of these fundamental literary languages!” (Santi Paladino, op.cit. pag. 124).

Ben Jonson was clearly refering to John Florio, when speaking of an author brandishing his lance at the eyes of Ignorance!

We firmly believe that Jonson’s is refering, in the same text, to both William of Stratford and, indisputably, to John Florio (to be considered a “unicum” with his father), which constitutes an “incontrovertible” written evidence given by Ben Jonson, a reliable and trustworthy witness, who was contemporary with John and William and knew both of them very well.

This is further very strong evidence in favour of the “Florian” theory, as pointed out by Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding regarding a fruitful literary cooperation between John Florio (supported by his father) and William.

To conclude the point, it is worth noting that Jonson himself gives a kind of explanation of the “meaning” of the pseudonym “Shakespeare” (which largely coincided with William’s surname) just claiming: “A lance brandish’d at the eyes of Ignorance”.

In our view, such explanation could also be correlated with John Florio’s comparison, involving “words” and “swords”. It might emerge that the pseudonym “Shakespeare” might mean a “lance (or a pen) or metaphorically a “word” like a sword, brandished against Ignorance”. Against, the focus should finish to converge on Florios’ typical noun, the “word”.

And Ben Jonson knew very well that his loving “Father”, “Friend”, “Master” and “Aid of his Muses”, John Florio fully devoted his life to elevating and enhancing English language and culture, depriving them from any uncouthness and lack of refinery, in a real day-by-day “fight” against the worst evil in the world, ignorance.

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<sup>152</sup> See Greenwood, *Is there a Shakespeare problem? With a reply to Mr. J.M. Robertson and Mr. Andrew Lang*, London, New York, 1916; Price, *Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography*, Greenwood Press, 2001.

<sup>153</sup> Tassinari, *Shakespeare?*, pg. 87, John Florio pg. 83-84.

And Ben knew very well John's famous passage in "the Epistle Dedicatorie" of the "Worlde of Wordes" (1598), where John expressed his aversion to "ignorance".

John himself had experienced the frustrating sensation of not being sufficiently prepared to overcome the "superhuman" difficulties in translating Italian dialect words into English. Sometime, it had taken a long time to render into English such "lively" "dialect words" and he was literally exasperated by this situation. John, as already noted, tells us that such difficulties: "made me 'blushingly' confess my *ignorance*, and such confession indeed made me studiously seek help, but such help was not readily to be had at hand". And John's sense of hopelessness was so evident (he "*blushingly*" confessed his *ignorance*) that you feel for him. Jonson was very well aware that for John ignorance was his worst "spectre"!

Moreover, Jonson was also very aware, *inter alia*, that the Florios' immense cultural background was based both on their very important personal life experiences, travels and cultural exchange, and also on their "incommensurable library", "a collection of almost four hundred books, more or less a number equal to the books that the library of the University of Cambridge had at that time." (Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 349); this library included multilingual volumes on ancient and "modern" literature, theology, sciences, arts, etc., well selected (during their travels!), read as well as carefully and diligently studied!

Finally, it is worth confirming that we can clearly deduce from his work (see Santi Paladino, op.cit. pg. 83-84) that "knowledge must have been a passion for Shakespeare from a very young age. He frequently referred to knowledge as celestial, divine, of the very nature of light and to ignorance as diabolic, repugnant, dark."

Indeed, an "angel [is] knowledge" ("Love's Labour's Lost, Act I, Scene i, 117); "Knowledge [is] the wing wherewith we fly to heaven" (Second part of King Henry VI, Act IV, Scene vii, 69); "Virtue and cunning [knowledge] were endowments greater Than nobleness and riches: careless heirs May the two latter darken and expend; But immortality attends the former. Making a man a god. 'Tis known, I ever Have studied" (Pericles, Act III, Scene ii, 27-31).

On the contrary, "Ignorance is the curse of God" (Second part of King Henry VI, Act IV, Scene vii, 68); "O thou monster Ignorance, how deformed dost thou look!" (Love's Labour's Lost, Act IV, Scene 2, 22); "I say, there is no darkness But ignorance" (Twelfth Night, IV, 2, 46-47).

## **8. Giordano Bruno coined the expression "In questo teatro del mondo, in questa scena" "In this theatre of the world, in this stage". Bruno's influence on John's dictionaries.**

A recent study by Michale Wyatt<sup>154</sup> examines the influence of Giordano Bruno and his theory of "Infinite worlds" on the dictionary "World of Words" by John Florio.

Before giving some information about the content of this interesting article, it is worth noting that it refers to a famous passage of Bruno's<sup>155</sup> "*De gli Heroici Furori*" , "On the Heroic Frenzies"

<sup>154</sup> Wyatt, *Giordano Bruno's Infinite Worlds in John Florio's Worlds of Words*, in "*Giordano Bruno. Philosopher of the Renaissance*", Edited by Hilary Gatti (University of Rome 'La Sapienza'), 2002, pg. 187-199.

<sup>155</sup> A selection of this passage is translated into English by Wyatt, op. cit. pg. 197 and can be read in Italian in its entirety in the link <http://www.filosofico.net/furori.htm> .

(published in London in 1585), where, for the first time Bruno introduced the expression “*in questo teatro del mondo, in questa scena*” “*in this theatre of the world, in this stage*”, as follows:

“Che *tragicomedia*? Che *atto*, dico, degno di più compassione o riso *può essere ripresentato in questo teatro del mondo, in questa scena delle nostre conscienze*, che di tali e tanto numerosi suppositi fatti penserosi, contemplativi, constanti, fermi, fideli, amanti, coltori, adoratori e servi di cosa senza fede ...? ... sospiri da far compatir gli dei ... con una superficie, un’ombra, un fantasma, un sogno ....”.

“What *drama*? What *play*, I say, worthy of more compassion or laugh, *may be performed in this theatre of the world, in this stage* of our consciences, full of thoughts, contemplations, constancies, lovers, believers, adorers and creedless servants ...? ... sighs which the gods feel on ... with a surface, a shade, a ghost, a dream ...”. The *world* is metaphorically considered as *a theatre, a stage, where all the different kinds of human beings* (thinkers, lovers, believers, adorers, servants etc.) *play-act*.

It is indisputable that “The theatre of consciousness activated by *Shakespeare* is an idea of Bruno in *The Heroic Frenzies*: “*this theatre of the world, this scene of our consciences*” (Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 101-105, John Florio, pg. 269-274). The issue had been dealt with by *Hilary Gatti* (*Il teatro della coscienza. Giordano Bruno e “Amleto”*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1998, pg. 46), who “attempted to pinpoint *a relation between the dramatic works of Shakespeare and those of [Bruno] a philosopher closely linked to persons of his own culture who were certainly known to him*”.

It is worth noting that the naming of *Globe Theatre* (which was built fourteen years after, in 1599<sup>156</sup>) 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 (registered in 1600) “As You Like It<sup>157</sup>”, Act II, Scene 7, as follows: “*All the world’s a stage, And all the men and women merely players*”.

In the Prologue of *Henry V* (1600) the wooden “O” of the “Globe Theatre”, representing the world, was expressly mentioned as follows:

“Pardon, gentles all, the flat unraised spirits that hath dared  
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth so great an object.  
Can this cockpit hold the vasty fields of France?  
Or may we cram Within *this wooden O* the very casques that did affright the air at Agincourt?”

Indeed, if you think about it, you will inevitably wonder who, but Giordano Bruno, could have coined such immortal expression “in questo teatro del mondo, in questa scena” “in this theatre of the world, in this stage”? It was, after all Bruno who wrote the revolutionary theory of the “*Infinite Worlds*”!

<sup>156</sup> Melchiori, op.cit., pg.8.

<sup>157</sup> Melchiori, op. cit., pg.353 and 354. The work was registered in the “Stationers’ Register” on 4 August 1600 and was completed and performed in the second half of 1599 or in the first half of 1600.

*“God is glorified not in one, but in countless ‘suns’; not in a single earth, a single world, but in a thousand of thousands, I say in an infinity of worlds” - Bruno, “De l’infinito” 1584.*

And Hamlet was *“a King of infinite space”*- Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2.

Florio, in turn, reached the *“infinite in words”*, as Samuel Daniel claimed in his dedication *“To my deere friend M. John Florio, concerning his translation of Montaigne”*, 1603.

Florio named his dictionaries *“World of Wordes”*, and freely rendered into English his Italian motto *“Chi si contenta gode”* as *“Who lives content has all the world at his will”*.

Giordano Bruno, not only embraced the *“heliocentric”* theory of Copernicus (on the basis of which the *“Earth”* lost its *“centricity”* in the Universe), but also claimed that as many solar systems exist as the infinite number of stars. It is a theory that fully *“devastated”* the *“stability”* of minds and still today is utterly disconcerting”, since *the “Earth” becomes no more than a mere “speck of dust” in the infinite Universe.*

*It appears very clear that, within this “new” framework, our “World” is only a very small part of the whole, a small stage, a theatre, where women and men are as daily mere players, who play-act in a “tragicommedia”, a “drama”, with their joys and sorrows!*

On a similar issue, Shakespeare himself asked, with vibrant tone: *“What is my nation?”* (Henry V, Act III, Scene 2). This is a typical question for an expatriot, of someone who is living in a place other than where they were born.

Bruno had previously asked the same question and, according to the same concept of the expression “questo teatro del mondo” “this theatre of world”, had coined also another new expression *“cittadino ... del mondo” “citizen of the world”*, since *“al vero filosofo ogni terreno è patria” “every country is home for a true philosopher”*<sup>158</sup>.

*Again, Giordano Bruno, John Florio, Shakespeare!*

Again, the study of Florio and even of Florio’s dear friends always ends up leading to the works of Shakespeare!

Let us proceed, since the findings are many and interesting! And here it is time we dealt with Bruno’s influence on the works of John Florio and particularly on John’s dictionaries.

*“Bruno and Florio unquestionably shared a passion for words and the cultural-political space of London in the 1580s was a context particularly amenable to the linguistic experimentation that resulted in Bruno’s vernacular philosophical dialogues and Florio’s early work on his dictionary.”*<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Dialoghi Italiani. See also Werner von Koppenfels *“Ash Wednesday in Westminster: Giordano Bruno Meets Elizabethan England”*, in *Renaissance Go-Betweens* Edited by Andreas Høfele, Berlin- New York 2005, pg 58.

<sup>159</sup> Wyatt, Giordano Bruno, cit. pg. 188. Wyatt points also out *“their differences in background, formation and professional orientation”*: 1) *“during his formative years in Naples, Bruno had developed such a decided antipathy towards the reformed thinking of Juan de Valdès,”* which, on the contrary, had an influence on Michelangelo, John’s father; 2) he never learnt English; 3) Bruno’s work was characterized by its anti-humanist rhetoric.

The Accademia della Crusca (founded in Florence in 1583) had “issued its *Vocabolario*, in 1612 (the year following *Queen Anna’s New World of Words*). This dictionary tries its best to limit the range of the Italian language to a catalogue of words [essentially] found in the “*tre corone*” (Boccaccio, Petrarca e Dante), “with the aim of ‘unifying’ Italy linguistically”<sup>160</sup>; the *Cruscati*, “in claimed in the preface, that writers who express themselves in anything other than ... ‘the loveliest flowers’, referring to ‘classical’ Italian usage .... ‘seem to be foreigners rather than home-grown’” *forestieri più tosto sembrano che nostran[li]*’.

Such position of the *Cruscati* is completely different from the criteria used by Florio in writing his dictionary.

“In the dedicatory epistle to a *World of Words* (1598), Florio signals an axiomatic principle of the philological imagination that sets his approach to Italian lexicography apart from that of his Italian contemporaries: the capacity of language to metamorphose through adapting to changes in time and place, noting in his ‘Address to the reader’ that ‘daily both new words are invented and books still found that make a new supply of old’”. Florio drew his words from works, dictionaries (in Italian, Latin, Spanish, French and English) and many “mono-, bi- and multi-lingual word-books”; “Italian literature and historiography, including but by no means limited to the *tre corone*, are represented by all the significant figures of the XV and XVI centuries and in all genres; and there are treatises on philosophy, theology, fencing and other arms, gardening, falconing, medicine, cooking, horsemanship, spectacle and the natural sciences”.<sup>161</sup>

“Florio’s aim was to provide as extensive a survey of both past and contemporary Italian usage as his reading and experience could afford him”.

According to Wyatt, “An experience which, as Yates argues and I have found no reason to challenge, John Florio probably did not extend to the Italian peninsula”!<sup>162</sup>

“This was a method that in spite of its limitations – notably its almost exclusive reliance on printed books – provided Florio’s readers with a close approximation of the heterogeneity of several centuries of Italian linguistic practice; and, importantly for the focus of this chapter, he recognized the necessity of supplementing Florentine usage through the incorporation of Venetian, Roman, Lombard and Neapolitan voices”.

As for the Neapolitanisms in Florio’s dictionaries, the scholars<sup>163</sup> pointed out that “many of them undoubtedly were culled from the Neapolitan writers whose books Florio consulted: Sannazzaro, Tasso, Mannarino, Franco, Rao and di Costanzo”.

“But Florio’s *personal encounter with Bruno in London added a dimension to his appropriation of a linguistic tradition diverse from his own* that seems to have been entirely unique in the process of compiling his dictionaries, for of the other living Italian writers present in London during those

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<sup>160</sup> Wyatt, op.cit., pg. 193-194.

<sup>161</sup> Wyatt, op.cit., pg. 194.

<sup>162</sup> Wyatt, op.cit., pg. 194.

<sup>163</sup> Vincenzo Spanpanato (1924), ‘*Giovanni Florio, un amico del Bruno in Inghilterra*’, *La critica*, XI, pg. 118, cited by Wyatt, op. cit., pg. 195.

years he notes only Alessandro Citolini, citing the title of his *Tipocosmia* in the list of books in the preface of both a *World of Words* and *Queen Anna's New World of Words*.”

Above all, Wyatt points out “The strong sense of place that links Bruno’s thinking and his character ... provided Florio with one” of important issue, since Florio was “a ‘virtual’ Italian born in London but raised in a remote corner of the Swiss Alps”; “there was for Florio himself no linguistic or cultural center of gravity equivalent to Bruno’s Nola”.<sup>164</sup>

“Indeed, Bruno identified the particular language of his childhood with his capacity, to describe things and persons ‘as they are’; a sentiment that, in Hilary Gatti’s formulation, echoes Dante’s distinction in *De Vulgari eloquentia* between: (i) *the language that infants acquire* from those around them when they first begin to distinguish sounds, ... without any formal instructions, by imitating our nurses; and (ii) *those other languages acquired through grammar*”.<sup>165</sup>

Florio used the wisdom of the proverbs and “followed Bruno’s lead in employing proverbs throughout his career to establish one of the most distinctive aspects of his advocacy of the Italian language, the significance of its local, demotic registers for a wider appreciation of the varieties of linguistic usage and the ways in which language serves to delineate place”.<sup>166</sup>

Florio’s “relationship with Bruno was especially significant, for besides finding in Bruno a tangible link to one of contemporary Italy’s liveliest dialects, Nolano provided his Italo-Anglo friend with a theoretical framework for the Italian cultural arbitration he would practice in early modern England”.

It is worth noting that, “In the ‘Epistola explicatoria’ of the *Spaccio della bestia trionfante*, Bruno explains that he choose the medium of Italian to communicate many of his most important ideas: ‘Giordano speaks in the vernacular, names things freely, gives its proper name to that which nature gives its proper being’”.<sup>167</sup>

Therefore, *he better expressed himself in his native language*, a language which “flows” as his “blood”, linked to his native village, to his childhood and its sounds, and which had not been only learnt from grammar books.

It is also worth confirming that in “World of Words” (in the epistle to the “reader” - 1598) John explicitly “*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).

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<sup>164</sup> Wyatt, op. cit., pg. 195.

<sup>165</sup> Wyatt, op. cit., pg. 195 and further bibliography therein cited.

<sup>166</sup> Wyatt, op. cit., pg. 192. As for the concept of “copia”, see also Pfister, *Inglese Italianato*, cit, pg. 49-50 and Montini, op.cit., pg. 56.

<sup>167</sup> Wyatt, op. cit., pg. 196.

In addition to the Bruno's indisputable influence on John's dictionaries, we have to confirm that the "roots" of Michelangelo are surely present in the work and the son clearly gave explicit evidence of this, in sign of sincere *recognition and gratitude*.

Michelangelo, unlike John, had had a direct and prolonged knowledge of the different Italian dialects, having every corner of Italy, sojourning in almost all the Italian Regions. Michelangelo's material, drafts and support were fundamental for the work of John, who, as noted by Yates and Wyatt, had no direct and prolonged knowledge of Italy.

"The most obvious characteristic of Florio's lexical practice is *copia*, a layering on of definitions that function to provide as full a sense of a particular word's meanings as possible" (e.g. the verb "sapere" has two different meanings : "sapere il greco", "to know Greek"; "sapere di birra" has another meaning linked to the taste).

"On clear consequence of such a linguistic perspective is an opening up of the potential of language to represent a multitude, perhaps we could say an infinity, of possible significations, a further indication of Florio's relationship to the decentrated parameters of *la filosofia nolana*".<sup>168</sup>

In *Dialoghi Italiani*, Bruno (who did not want to learn English), sings the praises of Queen Elizabeth , for her ability to learn different languages and to converse almost anywhere in the world known to Europeans of the time; his *paean to the polyglot queen was characterized by a "global" note* (by Bruno, who fiercely opposed the English colonialism).

Wyatt concludes that "*the worlds of Florio's linguistic universe, so importantly signed by Bruno's presence, ... encompass the copious range of words contained in both A World of Words and Queen Anna's New World of Words, which in turn entail the political and cultural spaces of Italy and England, the demotic specificity of Bruno's Nola and the unbounded parameters of the cosmos he sought to delineate*".<sup>169</sup>

## **9. Shakespeare (i.e. the Absolute Ioannes Factotum) and Florio's three names: John, Giovanni, Ioannes.**

### **9.1. The names John and Giovanni.**

The name Giovanni first appears in the Garden of Recreation (1591), in the To the Reader section of First Fruits and in The Necessary Rules for Spoken English (initials G.V.), in addition to the translation into Italian of James I's "Basilikon Doron"; in which he calls himself the most humble and faithful servant Giovanni Florio, in the dedication in 1603 to 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 Giovanni<sup>170</sup>. Probably, in the case of "Basilikon Doron" (Florio's unique translation into Italian), the choice of his Italian name Giovanni was also due to the Italian "audience", for whom the translation was intended.

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<sup>168</sup> Wyatt, op.cit. pg. 198.

<sup>169</sup> Wyatt, op. cit., pg. 199.

<sup>170</sup> See also Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 229.

We will never know (I'm just slightly curious!), what he was called by his family (there are no witnesses!); however we could speculate that it was his father and Giordano Bruno who called him Giovanni. In any case, some scholars point out Florio's "Italianate inflection"<sup>171</sup> and this could mean that Florio learned the Italian language as his mother tongue in Soglio and this could have entailed, as a consequence, his "foreign accent" when speaking English.

Elsewhere John signs using the name John or Iohn Florio with the initials J.F. or I.F.

## **9.2. The "Epistle Dedicatorie" of "Queen Anna's New Worlde of Wordes". A passage of unbelievable creativity. The "travels of Florio's mind" and the "travellers" of Hamlet's soliloquy.**

The "Epistle Dedicatorie" of "Queen Anna's New Worlde of Wordes" of 1611 merits special mention; there is an initial dedication to Queen Anne in Italian by the humble and obedient "servant" Giovanni Florio (this document can be read at the following link <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio/005small.html>)<sup>172</sup>.

Later on, there is a more substantial dedication in English (see the document at <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio/006small.html>), in which Florio starts by comparing the coming into being of his dictionary as a "birth from his brain", jokingly apologising to Minerva, who had leapt forth from the brain of Jupiter! Therefore, a kind of "Divine" birth. Thus also substantially confirming what Florio himself had already claimed as for his first dictionary in 1598: that he, as the creator of dictionaries, was similar to, or to an extent comparable to (according to Florio's own words in the "Epistle Dedicatorie" of the World of Wordes of 1598!), the Creator of the Universe, since Florio's dictionary contains words "as the Universe contains all things, digested in best equipaged order, embellisht with innumerable ornaments by the universal creator".

Florio reminds us that the new dictionary appears thirteen years after the publication of World of Wordes in 1598<sup>173</sup> and the new edition bears the prestigious name of Queen Anna's New Worlde of Wordes<sup>174</sup>.

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<sup>171</sup> Michael Wyatt, *Giordano Bruno's Infinite Worlds in John Florio's Worlds of Words*, in *Giordano Bruno, Philosopher of the Renaissance*, Edited by Hilary Gatty, 2002, pg. 188. See also Pfister, op.cit., pg. 36.

<sup>172</sup> It is worth noting that, according to J. Bate's last book, *Shakespeare (to understand Italian matter) "had Florio's dictionary to hand"*, as well as "Another book he would almost certainly have taken home to Stratford to reread and meditate upon in his *otium* ('retirement') was Florio's Montaigne translation" ("*Soul of the Age*", 2009, pg. 152 and 149). Bate himself pointed out (indeed, *in an extremely dubitative way*) that, as for Shakespeare's *small library* "*He might have owned a Latin text of Horace's Odes*, but nearly all his Horatian allusions, like his Virgilian ones, can be traced back to *extracts studied in the grammar schools*" ("*Soul of the Age*", pg. 145).

<sup>173</sup> Florio had dedicated the dictionary to the Earl of Southampton, and in the dedicatory epistle, and he acknowledged his debt to his patron and likened it to Dante's obligations to his two otherworldly guides (Virgil, in the Hell and Purgatory, and Beatrice, from the summit of Purgatory to Empyrean, where, finally, S. Bernard replaced her). See also Michael Wyatt, *The Italian encounter with Tudor England, a cultural politics of translation*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2005, pg. 224 ("*The paeon to Southampton in the dedication to A World of Wordes acknowledges Florio's debt to his patron and likens it to Dante's obligations to his two otherworldly guides*").

<sup>174</sup> Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter*, cit., pg. 212 and footnote 46 at pg. 329, pointed out that "John Florio freely adapted his father's work [*Regole de la lingua thoscana*, written in England no later than 1553, never printed by Michelangelo] when he came to append an Italian grammar to *Queen Anna's New World of Words* ". "Michelangelo's text was intended not for beginners but as a reference work for those who already had a good grasp of the language; this might explain why John waited to utilize his father's work until the second edition of his dictionary, where it could serve just such purpose".

It is here that John's (*more precisely*, Iohn's) flair and creativity reach their peak, with Florio saying he had followed in the footsteps of the Italian "fathers" (Christopher Columbus) and had been at the respectable service of Queen Anne, just like Columbus had been at the orders of the glorious Queen Isabella I of Castile; and furthermore he had compiled the dictionary with the very same mentality of a voyager on the oceans ("with a travellers minde"), and had also discovered (though he had stayed "at home") "neere Halfe of a New World", obviously a world composed of new words, and not new geographical territories. Indeed, in his dictionary of 1611, Florio added a huge number of words (to the original 46.000 Italian words of the dictionary of 1598), reaching around 74.000 Italian words translated into 150.000 English words! Therefore, John proudly claimed to have discovered "neere Halfe of a New World" of words!

Finally (and this is the best part!), just like the territory of Virginia, in the newly discovered continent of the New World, was named after Queen Elizabeth I, the "virgin" Queen, this dictionary, which is "neere Halfe a New World" (discovered by Florio), is now with daring entitled by Florio "Queen Anna's New World of Wordes", "as under the protection and patronage" of Queen Anne.

The "parallelism" between Florio's "New World" of words and the "New World" as a new continent is highly creative, as is the "travellers mind" that Florio declared he had used to compose his dictionary.

Moreover, Florio had already translated some books related to ocean crossing, such as, in 1580, Jacques Cartier's volume of "Navigations to New France", pointing out to the Crown on this occasion, the opportunities that colonising the Americas would bring.

The dedication, in English to Queen Anne is signed by Iohn Florio, who once again calls himself her "*Devoted subject and most obliged servant*" (just like a real "factotum").

To conclude the point, one final comment may be useful.

As mentioned, in Hamlet's soliloquy, the "human beings" were regarded as "travellers", traveling from the wordly earth towards the afterworld; also in that passage the "traveller" was someone who "did not move one's body". Travelling in the soliloquy is of "souls", "spirits" and "minds" from the wordly earth to the afterworld. It is a "spiritual" experience.

John Florio clearly reworked the same theme here, having special regard for the creation of his dictionary; such experience is described as a kind of "cultural" travelling aimed at "discovering" new words and therefore a new "Half" of the fanciful "World of Words". This dictionary, as Bruno would have said, is the "translation" of the variegated, infinite reality of our world, by a supreme 'scientist' of lexicography.

Also in this "cultural" "travelling", no "movement of the body" is contemplated, since it is a "travel of mind" and – as Florio expressly clarifies – the body stays "at home"!

Yet another indisputable 'point of contact' between the Florios and the works of Shakespeare!

### ***9.3. John Florio, the “Resolute Ioannes Factotum” and the passage of Greene concerning the “Absolute Ioannes Factotum”; a fundamental passage in the studies on Authorship of the works of Shakespeare. The role of the two Florios.***

It is obvious, in my mind, that John was indeed (not just for the Queen but for the other aristocrats that he served as tutor, schoolmaster and personal assistant) the “Ioannes Factotum”, as Hugh Sanford (a scholar who edited the second edition of *Arcadia* by Philip Sidney in 1593 and who was critical of the 1590 edition, edited by Florio) teasingly nicknamed him, the faithful and obedient servant willing to “bend over backwards” to assist his students<sup>175</sup>.

Gerevini (op. cit. pg. 137 and pg. 153 onwards, especially pg.156-8,163-4, 169, 183) deservedly takes the credit for having “discovered” the passage of the “To the reader” section of “World of Words”, 1598, where Florio’s “nickname” “Johannes Factotum” is clearly attributed to John Florio by Hugh Sanford.

It is also clear, again in my view (and also in line with the theses put forward by Saul Gerevini, Giulia Harding and Santi Paladino), that Florio was also the “Absolute Ioannes Factotum” (as Robert Greene<sup>176</sup>, ironically, called him, considering Florio as a “conceited” person, who “supposes” “in his own conceit”, to be the “greatest”, the “only Shake-scene in a country”), i.e. the discoverer, or better again, the “universal” creator (capable of “facere totum” as the “Absolute Maker”) by “giving birth” to a “World of Words” and later to a “New World of Words” “from his brain” and in this work, Florio, as the creator of his dictionaries, was similar to, or to an extent comparable to (according to Florio’s own words in the “Epistle Dedicatorie” of the *World of Wordes* of 1598!), the Creator of the Universe, since Florio’s dictionary contains words “as the Universe contains all things, digested in best equipaged order, embellisht with innumerable ornaments by the universal creator”.

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<sup>175</sup> See the ‘to the reader’ section of *World of Words*, 1598, available among the “downloads” of this website in the link [http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=11&Itemid=27&limitstart=20](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=11&Itemid=27&limitstart=20)

According to Santi Paladino (op.cit. pg. 30 and 60) “In 1583, John Florio was an employee of the French Ambassador Michel de Castelnau, Master of Mauvissière, in his capacity as Mauvissière’s daughter’s schoolmaster, as interpret and factotum, so that he was since then called *Johannes Factotum*”. See also Tassinari, who pointed out that Florio was the “factotum” of the French Ambassador in London (Shakespeare? pg. 55; John Florio, pg. 46). See also Gerevini, op.cit. pg. 91, who claimed that John Florio was “firstly tutor of the Earl of Southampton, then Queen Anna’s Italian language lector and personal secretary, tutor to Prince Henry and Princess Elizabeth ... Florio continued his relations with the French Embassy from 1585 to 1606 (as a letter dated 1606 and contained in Calendar State Paper Foreign evidences). There’s no denying it, our John Florio just was a ‘Johannes Factotum’. He continued his translations, at different levels of importance, concerning also dispatches from abroad, which he promptly translated and sold to the newspapers – *the trade noverint*.”

Also Pfister (Inglese Italianato, cit. pg.42- 43), pointed out that Florio’s “*career culminated in 1604, when he became reader in Italian and one of the Grooms of the Privy Chamber to Queen Anne at the court of James I and later perhaps also tutor in Italian and French to Prince Henry and Princess Elizabeth. Again he did not merely serve as a linguistic go-between, but extended his services beyond that acting as an intermediary between the Queen and Italian artists seeking employment with her, lending himself as informer of the secret plans of a double French wedding, or literally playing go-between in the – abortive – project of Ottavio Lotti, the Minster of the Grand Duke of Tuscany in London, to arrange a marriage between the Prince of Wales and a Tuscan princess (Yates, Florio, pg. 249-251). And again this demonstrates how seamless the web is between the various activities of John and Giovanni, how subtly graded the transition from teaching and translating to cultural and economic transactions, to matchmaking and on to informing and spying.*”

<sup>176</sup> See Greene’s “Groatsworth” (and in particular, pg.1) among the “downloads” of the following link [http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=11&Itemid=27&limitstart=25](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=11&Itemid=27&limitstart=25)

The issue of the “Absolute Ioannes Factotum”, fundamental in the discussions on Authorship, is explained in detail at pages 5-13 of my previous article which is cited in the preface and was studied by Gerevini in particular.

Also in this case, the keen and fundamental “discovery” (regarding Authorship) is to be attributed to Gerevini, who “connected” such nickname (“Absolute Ioannes Factotum”) to Florio’s name (Resolute Ioannes Florius) and to Florio’s own nickname “Resolute Ioannes Factotum”, which was further “modified” (by the envious Greene), since the adjective “Resolute” was transformed into “Absolute” (Gerevini., op. cit. pg. 157 onwards especially pg. 156-158, 163-164, 169, 183, “Winny Florespeare” in this website; see also Giulia Harding, “Humphrey King and absolute Johannes Factotum”, in this website).

The following “invective”, dated 1592, is included in ‘Greene’s Groatworth of Wit’ (whose contents are attributable to Greene) and plays a very important “key” role in all Shakespeare’s “Authorship” debates: “Yes, trust them not [John and Will, in Gerevini’s - herein fully shared - interpretation]: for there is an upstart Crow [John], beautified with our feathers [John did not have the feathers of a ‘University Wit’ and was accused to be a plagiarist], 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...”

According to Gerevini’s thesis (which we wholeheartedly share), such invective is Greene’s retort (also based on several other reasons, not least Greene’s envy of Florio’s success) to Florio’s criticism; indeed, in *Second Fruits* (in the first lines of its epistle “To the Reader”) Florio had severely criticized Robert Greene’s *Mourning Garment* as follows: [this literary work – *Second Fruits* - occurs] “when everie bramble is fruitful, when everie mol[e]-hill hath cast off[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].”

Santi Paladino (op.cit. pg.61) upheld, the same thesis, but he did not connect the expression “Absolute Ioannes Factotum” with Florio’s own nickname “Resolute John Florio”: Paladino made reference to the cited passage of Greene’s *Groatworth* (in particular to some preceding lines) and wondered as follows: “Who the Puppets that spake from our mouths, the Antic[k]s garnisht in our colours are? The allusion seems to be addressed to some foreign actors or poets, who want to pass themselves off as Englishmen. The *Crow* was the *absolute Joannes Factotum*, to whom Greene very probably attributed the so called Shakespearian works. The poet Greene evidently intended to make reference to John Florio, the famous writer (and not to his father Michelangelo), while affirming that *an upstart Crow beautified with our feathers ... is in his own conceit the only SHAKE-SCENE (Shake Speare) in a country*.” “And the jealousy clearly was not for the actor Shakespeare, but for the author of the works which, under the name of Shakespeare, were profitably more successful than the admirable works by Marlow and the other English literatos”.

In my mind, the “foreigners” “that spake from our mouths [i.e., who used our English language] and were garnished in our colours” [i.e., who wanted to pass themselves off as Englishmen] indisputably were precisely the two Florios!

#### **9.4. The third name: “Ioannes Florius”.**

Scholars of Florio (Manfred Pfister and Donatella Montini) speak only of the two names; John and Giovanni, but perhaps, in our humble opinion, they overlooked something quite important and rather obvious<sup>177</sup>.

The uncertainty between the two names, the Italian and the English, reflects the very real confusion that existed regarding the identity of “our” author, who defined himself (in the To the Reader Section of Second Fruits in 1591) as an “Englishman in Italiane”, an expression, in my view that is nearly impossible to translate into Italian. “An Englishman who reasons in Italian”.

Florio 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 “Italianism” 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).

The expression “I am an Englishman in Italiane” cannot be properly translated in my view by Roger Asham’s expression “inglese italianato”, “an Italianised Englishman”, who said in the 1550s “un inglese italianato è un diavolo incarnato”, “an Italianised Englishman was the devil incarnate”.<sup>178</sup>

Florio, under English Common Law was an English citizen through his birth in London; however, as has amply been pointed out by scholars, his Englishness was his second nature, which took root in his Italian cultural and linguistic background. In the To the Reader section of World of Wordes in 1598, Florio confesses however that he had devoted many years to studying the English language with the utmost dedication.

In 1578, in First Fruits, he says of the Italian language: “I am sure that no language can better expresse or shewe forth the lively and true meaning of a thing, then the Italian (“Induction”, First Fruits, 114).

As scholars (Montini) have revealed, the English language, desolate and sterile land, was thus to be revitalised by the Italian gems introduced by Florio<sup>179</sup>.

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<sup>177</sup> See Pfister, *Inglese Italianato* ..., cit. pg. 36. “ ‘Bilingual FLORIO’ went under two names – John or Giovanni, depending on whether he wrote in English or in Italian. The two names suggest his divided self-definition and his in-between identity: he was both an Italian of sorts, and an Englishman of sorts. He was the son of a Tuscan of partly Jewish descent and thus Italian; and he was born in England and thus, according to Common Law rule that dates back to the thirteenth century, English. In all likelihood he had never set foot in Italy itself and had learnt and perfected his Italian with his father in London, in the Swiss Grisons canton and with Bishop Pietro Paolo Vergerio in Tübingen of all places. On the other hand, all his activities in England as teacher, lexicographer and translator and his contacts with the English court and with prominent literary figures of Elizabethan Oxford and London depended on his being Italian ... Florio *fashions himself as a naturalised Englishman*, for whom *Englishness has become his second nature, and insists at the same time upon his Italian linguistic and cultural background*. ‘As for me’, he explains to the readers of his Second Fruits, ‘*I am an Englishman in Italiane*’”.

<sup>178</sup> This was “the xenophobic expression of a new English nationalism that reacted to a wide-spread passion for Italian culture and all things Italian amongst courtiers and humanists” (Pfister, *Inglese Italianato*, cit., pg. 39).

<sup>179</sup> Op.cit. in the bibliography reported at the end of this document, pg. 51.

All the texts of John Florio “are *bilingual* and Florio focused his attention on the linguistic and cultural transition, between two worlds, two tastes, two tongues. He devoted himself to three kinds of works”, translations, dictionaries and manuals of conversation” (First Fruits and Second Fruits).

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His relationship with the English language was a loving one, tinged with criticism. As in First Fruits, the weak point of the English Language is the fact it is “bepeesed [pieced] with many tongues ... so that if euery language had his owne words againe, there would but a few remaine for English men”, as Florio pointed out: “It is a language that wyl do you good in England, but passe Douer, it is worth noting ... Certis if you wyl beleue me, it doth not like me at all, because it is a language confused, bepeesed [pieced] with many tongues; it taketh many words of the Latine, & mo from the French, & mo from the Italian, and mo from the Duithe, some also from the Greek, & from the Britaine, so that if euery language had his owne words againe, there would but a few remaine for English men, and yet every day they adde”.

Meanwhile, in 1598, he delighted in (in the To the Reader section of “World of Wordes”), the fact that English had a significantly larger number and variety of words compared to Italian (there were twice as many English terms as their Italian equivalent), expressly referring to English (and not Italian) as his “sweet mother tongue” (“If in the rankes the English outnumber the Italia, congratulate the copie and varietie of our sweet mother toong”). Indeed John was truly a good lawyer (who actually practiced law, as the scholar Frances Amelia Yates points out in her *John Florio. The Life of an Italian in Shakespeare’s England*, Cambridge University press, 1934, pg.65) , capable of both upholding a thesis and soon afterwards justifying the opposite. The number and variety of English words, which John previously considered a “weak point” of this “confused, bepeesed” language, they become a real “worth” of his “sweet mother tongue”, in the epistle dedicatory of his dictionary.

Finally, in 1611, in the Latin “epitaph” under his portrait published in the 1611 edition of his dictionary, he referred to himself definitively as “*Italus ore, Anglus pectore*” (Italian by language and English at heart).

Going back to his names, I personally believe that (in addition to his English and Italian name) the third Latin name Ioannes should also be considered; this appears alongside his portrait published in Queen Anna’s New Worlde of Wordes in 1611 (the complete portrait of the heraldic symbols and Latin writings can be admired in the link <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio/015small.html>), considering Florio was especially fond of this name and enrolled at the University of Tubingen using the name Johannes Florentinus, insofar as he was the son of “Florentine” Michelangelo Florio (see Saul Gerevini, *William Shakespeare, ovvero John Florio: un fiorentino alla conquista del mondo*, Pilgrim edizioni, 2008, pg. 20).

This bears witness to the fact that, although he was open to a new language and the dispute with Bembo (which was already true of Michelangelo), John also continued to hold Latin close to his heart, which, in spite of everything, was the language of the Classics; although it was deemed as a “dead” language, which was buried in books (as pointed out for the first time by Alessandro

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<sup>180</sup> Op.cit. in the bibliography reported at the end of this document, pg. 51-52.

Citolini, another fine scholar of Venetian origin, in the Elizabethan Court whose *Tipocosmia* was cited by John, among the works he had read while preparing his dictionaries).

Perhaps regarding his name and the uncertainty of “being or not” (English or Italian), in the end “our” author (maybe so as not to do injustice to either of the two “living” languages, his adopted and his native language) he opted for a third “solution” resolving in 1611 to consign his own image to “eternity” in the famous portrait in which (casting away John and Giovanni) he finally preferred to call himself by his third, Latin name, Ioannes.

Though strictly my personal view, perhaps compared to the two “living” languages (Italian and English) which had recently risen to prominence as literary languages, Latin must have seemed to be the Universal literary language<sup>181</sup> par excellence, the language which immortalised the “caput mundi”, Rome’s greatest poets, in Capitoline Hill, among whom he wished to be counted and be remembered, and also as a mark of his eternal admiration for the Roman world.

Santi Paladino pointed out (op.cit. pg.120) that “In all the works of Shakespeare we find his admiration and respect for Italianism and over all for the Roman world. All the plays that were written by Shakespeare on ancient Rome show his thorough knowledge of Latin, Greek and ancient History, which Michel Angel Florio, teacher of Greek-Roman History, surely had, such as John himself had, thanks to his father’s teaching.

We cannot undervalue that in this “triad” of names we might find some allusions to the “Trinity”: Giovanni is his name in the language of his “father’s” native country; John in the language of the “son’s” native country; Ioannes the “universal” name, understandable by everyone, such as in the miracle of descending Holy Spirit, who rendered the apostles capable of speaking and understanding every language.

Indeed, not only in his names, but also in his passages, three contextual different levels of interpretation are recurrent in the works of Florio!

The same concept could also be extended (see, similarly, Gerevini, op.cit. pg.180) to the pseudonym of Shakespeare: the two Florios, to be deemed as a “unicum”, and are essentially the “fathers” of the works; William, is the “son” who “appears” and “enters” the arena; Shakespeare is the pseudonym which ensured “universality” and “immortality” of the relevant works.

### **9.5. The portrait of John in 1611. The writings: “Praelector Linguae Italicae”, “Chi si contenta gode”, “Italus ore, Anglus pectore”.**

In his portrait, there is a dedication to the August Queen Anne (“Augustae Reginae Annae”), who is regarded as being on a par with a Roman Emperor.

Florio’s age (“aetas”) 58 years old in 1611 A.D. also appears in Latin.

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<sup>181</sup> Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter*, cit., pg. 208 (and footnotes 23-26) makes reference to some evaluations by Citolini on the universality of the Latin language; according to Citolini, the Italian vernacular advanced in the same way, passing beyond the Alps and was known, loved and cherished there.

The Latin expression that Florio kept for himself, which encapsulated the meaning of his life: “*Praelector Linguae Italicae*”<sup>182</sup>, i.e. “Master and interpreter of the Italian language”, and therefore promoter and teacher of the Italian language. He influenced with his own works and Italian culture the English Renaissance culture.

In this portrait, as mentioned, there appears a sort of early epitaph written only in Latin (no English words), including the expression “*Italus ore, Anglus pectore*” (Italian by language, English at heart) cited above.

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). Indeed, his “career culminated in 1604, when he became reader in Italian and one of the Grooms of the Privy Chamber to Queen Anne at the Court of James I and later perhaps also tutor of Italian and French to Prince Henry and Princess Elizabeth”<sup>183</sup>.

Finally his motto “*Chi si contenta gode*” (the only words not written in Latin) appears, in eternal memory of the greatest genius that Florio had ever met in his life, Giordano Bruno. It was Bruno who had taught him this Italian proverb and we know how passionate Florio was about Italian proverbs (“Fiori di moralità, che non furono mai portati fuori dall’Italia prima di adesso”, as spoken in the *Phaeton of Second Fruits*) and for proverbs in general (“Proverbs are the pith, the proprieties, the proofes, the purities, th elegancies as the commonest so the commendablest phrases of a language. To use them is a grace, to understand them a good”, in the *To the Reader* section of *Second Fruits*). We have already pointed out that this motto substantially translates one of Horace’s mottos, “*vivere contentus parvo*”<sup>184</sup>.

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<sup>182</sup> The Latin word “*Praelector*” (used by Aulo Gellio, Latin writer in the II century a.C.) is literally translated into Italian as “*Maestro di lettura*”, “Master of reading” (dictionary Castiglione-Mariotti, Turin 1970). This word derives from the Latin verb “*praelegere*” (used by Marco Fabio Quintiliano, a Latin writer, of Spanish origin, who lived in the I century a. C. and by Gaio Tranquillo Svetonio, who lived in the I/II century a. C.), which means “to preliminarily read a text and then explaining, interpret and commenting it”. Finally, the “*praelectio*” (word used by Marco Fabio Quintiliano) was the preliminary explicative and interpretative reading of the Master, the explanation of the Master.

<sup>183</sup> Pfister, *Inglese Italianato*, cit. pg. 42 and 43.

<sup>184</sup> Florio himself freely rendered his Italian motto (“*Chi si contenta gode*”, “He who contents himself enjoys”) 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”. It is worth noting that Florio’s “to live content” just translates Horace’s concept of “*vivere contentus*”! Indeed, Horace Flaccus similarly invited to “*vivere contentus*” (“to live content”, contenting oneself), accepting one’s lot (*Satires*, I, 1, verse 3), which is linked to Horace’s aphorism “*carpe diem*”, “seize the day”, *Odes*, I, 11;8; the true wisdom involves being content to live in the moment, according to the Epicurean philosophy (such

The heraldic symbol of a flower (a word which brings us back to, by assonance to his surname, Florio), *a sunflower with a sun in the centre of the petals*; this figure is a reference to the pseudonym (“Heliotrope”) that Bruno, his old friend from Nola, the “old fellow Nolanus”, gave to John Florio in his work “De la causa”. “Heliotropism” (the movement of flowers or leaves in the direction of the sun), the main characteristic of the sunflower, symbolises the Copernican Heliocentric theory that Bruno strenuously defended along with his original theory of infinite worlds.

It also appears the name of Gul[ielmus] Hole Sculp[tor], he who engraved the portrait (William Hole was a very famous English engraver, who died in 1624 and also engraved the portrait of

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aphorism was shared by Shakespeare, who (according to Bate, “Soul of the Age”, pg. 149 and 425) “discovered” the ideas of Epicurus in his reading of Montaigne, since he read and meditated upon Florio’s Montaigne translation in his “otium”(retirement). 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 and he claimed to “vivere contentus parvo” (“to live content with little”-Satires, II, 2, verses 1 and 110; see also Odes, II, 16, verse 13, concerning the “vivere parvo bene”, “to live well with little”). Horace suggests a wise life (“aurea mediocritas” “the golden mean”, Odes, II, 10, 5), and advocates a life of restraint whereby it is preferable not to “stand out”, just like a huge pine, in order to elude the “destructive force of the wind”, which in practice can take the form of other people’s envy; this 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. This concept was linked to another Epicurean aphorism, “Lathē biosas”, “live unobtrusively”; this aphorism was also mentioned by Montaigne (great admirer of Horace!) in his Essays (‘Of Glory’) and was translated just by Florio into English as “HIDE THY LIFE” (see also 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 motto fits the Florios (the clandestine, the hidden dramatists) like a glove! Bate takes the credit for having written (in his book “Soul of the Age”) an entire chapter (chapter 24) which is entitled “Shakespeare the Epicurean”; but in this a chapter no reference whatsoever all is made to Horace (whose immortal verses Montaigne had included among the works which encouraged him to write the Essays)! However it is Bate’s merit to have pointed out the importance of Florio’s masterful translation of the Essays by Montaigne, so that “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.

It is worth pointing out the importance of involving also the Classical scholars in the reading of Shakespeare. By way of example, Bate’s comment on the cited passage of Shakespeare’s “Cymbeline” is peculiar. This passage is drawn on by Horace’s Ode II, 10, 5 (the Ode where the concept of “aurea mediocritas”, the “golden mean”, is explained). There, *the image of the huge pine is very evocative; it towers over the other trees and however it is more exposed to the devastating fury of the wind that could uproot it* . (“Saepius ventis agitur ingens pinus”, “Most often it is the huge pine that is shaken by the wind” and uprooted). It is one of the fundamental passages of the universal Latin literature! Bate makes no reference at all to this passage from Horace’s, which inspired Shakespeare’s passage! Bate’s mere comment (“Soul of the Age”, 2009, pg.54) is that “Shakespeare likes that paradox”. Regarding this, it is worth noting that Diana Price, “Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography”, Westport, Greenwood Press, 2001, pg. 239, made reference to a book written by a Latinist, Christina Smith Montgomery (“Shakespearean Afterglow”, 1942, pg. 13, 40), who pointed 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 also Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 260 and John Florio, pg. 245.

Prince Henry – son of Queen Anne; Hole also designed<sup>185</sup> the title page for the folio edition of Ben Jonson's works<sup>186</sup>(published in 1616)<sup>187</sup>.

In his will (on July, 20th 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!

#### **10. "Now mark Florio, he begins ... to speak" from his portrait.**

At this point, I report an imaginary and burlesque "soliloquy" addressed by our Florio to his "fans".

I apologise in advance to the "orthodox" readers, who might not used to such a "piece".

Thus, also to "alleviate" the tone of this overly serious document. Too boring! No, Florio would not at all have liked it, since he was a witty, lively, creative and sardonic person!

And we, even if softly, intend to dedicate these notes to him, on the occasion of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of his "The Queen Anna's New Worlde of Wordes"!

We hope our readers will be engrossed ... or at the very least, will not fall asleep.

I can assure you that the following is the faithful transcription of his words and of what happened....

This distinguished gentleman, with his confident, sardonic and challenging stare, typical of a man at the top of his game, he seems to appoint to his Latin name.

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<sup>185</sup> See Michael Wyatt, *The Italian encounter with Tudor England, a cultural politics of translation*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2005, pg. 340, footnote 188.

<sup>186</sup> Ben Jonson had "set himself up as the English Horace" - J. Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* 2008, pg.26 - and was called "Horace the Second" in Jonson's "Poetaster", in "Satiromastix" by Thomas Dekker and in "The Return from Parnassus Part 2", produced at St John's College during the Christmas vacation of 1601-02 (see. J. Bate, "Soul of the Age", 2009, pg. 377 onwards). Jonson expressed in the First Folio [1623] his opinion on Shakespeare and Horace: "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. 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).

<sup>187</sup> During the last years of his life, Florio revised his dictionary in view of a third edition (Gerevini, op.cit., pg. 392), translated into English Boccaccio's Decameron – such translation was anonymously published in 1620 (Tassinari, *Shakespeare?* pg. 65, John Florio, pg.56) – and contributed to the First Folio (1623), where all the works of Shakespeare are collected (Gerevini, pg. 397 and 398). After Florio's death, his pupil Giovanni Torriano, in 1659, further increased and revised Florio's dictionary and a second edition of this new dictionary was published in 1688, *Dictionary Italian and English, First compiled by John Florio*, London, Holt and Horton, 1688, one copy of which is also kept in the library of Accademia della Crusca in Florence; see also Gerevini, pg. 392; see also John Florio's Contribution to Italian-English Lexicography, by D. J. O'Connor © 1972; see also the following website <http://213.225.214.179/fabitaliano2/dizionari/corpus/schede/0029383.htm> .

He wants to briefly tell us (“*intelligenti pauca*”, “*few words for a clever person*”!) that his Latin name, so publicly exhibited, is the clue to solve the puzzle.

“*Let us hear him*”!

“Oh my darling fan, how is it that you don’t know I am crazy about “encryptions”, double meanings, secret codes, multi-meaning initials, mysteries, enigmas? They are the essential part of espionage!

How is it that you don’t know I really lived among spies (such as John Dee, who signed his secret memos to Elisabeth I with two Ohs, a pair of eyes, followed by a 7, “007”<sup>188</sup>), among secrets of School of Night’s affiliates, Rosicrucian mysteries, my old fellow Nolanus’ double meanings?

Can’t you see that I.F. are my true English initials (John Florio), and, at the same time, my Latin initials (Ioannes Florius)? ... So that you can’t ever know whether I.F. means either John Florio or Ioannes Florius ! Each time you deal with I.F., you may also read it as John Florio or Ioannes Florius, “*as you like it*” (just like Shakespeare would have said)! This is the reason why I was awaking you to my Latin name in this portrait, from which I am speaking! It is such so obvious that it may go unnoticed! It is a very subtle ploy to “hide a secret”! Indeed, much to my satisfaction, since it is the obvious that hides the secret! Let’s go on, time is limited and I would like to give you some more helpful information!

In “To the reader” section of World of Words, 1598, I made reference to that man, Hugh Sanford<sup>189</sup>, and, on that occasion, I properly “branded” him as a “*much reading grammarian pedante*”, just comparing him to that “ridiculous” “pedante” whom Aulo Gellio, Latin writer, had inimitably immortalized in his works! Furthermore, I wrote that “my quarrel is to a tooth-lesse dog” and that “I would you should knowe he is a reader and a writer too”!

Indeed, he was able to read, in my last epistle to the reader, my initials, which are I.F. and they stand for my Latin name *Ioannes Florius*.

Therefore, in a work he wrote, he “made as *familiar* a word of F. as if I had been his brother”! Namely, he considered me as a “*familiar*”, a “*servant factotum*” and transformed my F. (of Florius)

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<sup>188</sup> Different hypotheses has been formulated on the meaning of such “code” of the famous English figure, John Dee (1527- 1608/1609), a well known mathematician, astronomer, astrologer, alchemist, occultist, hermetic philosopher, navigator and counsellor of Queen Elizabeth I (probably he was also a participant of the “School of night”). I like to make reference to the thesis of a student of University of Houston’s College of Engineering: “Dee signed his memos to Elizabeth with an odd symbol: two Ohs (a pair of eyes) followed by a 7 with its top drawn back across the Ohs. The symbol looked like a Victorian lady’s lorgnette. But it was simply a double-oh-seven. -- 400 years before James Bond. And why the 7? Historian Richard Deacon thinks it told Elizabeth that Dee put not only his two eyes and the other four senses at her disposal; he offered her his occult sense as well.”; see <http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi896.htm> .

<sup>189</sup> As above mentioned, Hugh Sanford superintended the second edition of Arcadia by Philip Sidney and was criticized by John Florio (also in his preface to book two of his translation of the Essays by Montaigne, 1603), “claiming that the modifications and the ending introduced by Sanford have ruined the work, bringing it down to a level far , the beneath Sidney’s original text, the Old Arcadia, which Florio probably superintended, ‘leaving his fingerprints on that work’. Without going into detail, what counts according to Yates is that Florio’s arguments are rigorous and consonant with those of twentieth-century critics ... Yates maintains that this Florio’s aggressive behaviour was not due solely to philological considerations; there was also Florio’s personal animosity, for Sanford who had indulged in heavy-handed irony regarding Second Fruits at the time of its publication in 1591”(see Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 263 and John Florio, pg. 255; Yates, op. cit., pg. 203).

into an F. of a Factotum (familiar); so that my Latin name *Ioannes Florius* became “*Ioannes Factotum*”! Ioannes Factotum addressed to me, “a mia” [typical Sicilian expression, which stands for “to me”]?! ... to me, whose surname is so common in Sicily! ...

So that, in turn, considering that the initials of this Hugh Sanford are H.S., I “*gave him a piece of my mind*”, and I addressed him as Mr. *Haeres Stultitiae* (Heir of Stupidity), Mr. *Homo Simplex* (Homo Simpleton), Mr. *Hostis Studiosorum* (Hostile to the Scholars) ...

At this point, from the portrait ... “*silence*”... what luck! ..., only if considering the recorded “torrent of abuse”, an endless list of disparaging Latin nicknames beginning with Hugh Sanford’s initials H.S., which Florio addressed to this person in the “to the reader” section !

Perhaps Florio intended to somehow make us understand that Latin language is not completely “dead and buried” (just like Citolini claimed), considering that it is still capable of expressing and creating lively and real emotions, such as the ones connected to the “avalanche” of insults addressed to the person identified by the initials H.S. And, in such a Latinizing context, the obvious option is to read the initials I.F. as referring to Ioannes Florius!

Therefore, we are now aware that Florio’s English initials I.F. (which stood for John - an, at that time, common deviation from John - Florio) coincided with his Latin (so beloved!) initials I.F. (which stood for Ioannes Florius).

To conclude the point, it is worth noting that a further “name” was given to Florio by James Mabbe, a literato, poet and translator of the works of Cervantes as well as Professor at the Magdalen College (Oxford), where John Florio himself lectured and had been awarded an M.A. (Master of Arts). Indeed, James Mabbe addressed to Florio, in the preliminary section (which includes four full pages of encomiastic poems) of Florio’s dictionary of 1611, the following Latin couplet.

*“Ioannes Florio.  
Ori fons alieno”*

“Ioannes Florio, fountain to a foreign tongue”; which stands for the author who, in England, spread the Italian culture and language, and also translated, from French into English, the Essays of Montaigne. This expression is partially similar to Florio’s appellation “Praelector Linguae Italicae”.

“Mabbe is almost certainly the author of a piece of dedicatory verse appearing in the “First Folio” of 1623 and signed ‘I.M.’ (James Mabbe). This is yet one more “curious” *Shakespearian* presence to add to what is already a tight network of interwoven names”.<sup>190</sup>

In the abovementioned preliminary section, other dedications were made: (i) in Italian, a sonnet dedicated to Queen Anne by Florio’s friend, the lawyer Alberto Gentili.(ii) again in Italian, by another of Florio’s friends, the doctor Matthew Gwinne (an Italian sonnet). (iii) by his friend and brother-in-law, Samuel Daniel (an English sonnet in honour of his ‘deare friend and brother’).

**11. The dictionary of 1611. The hope for the study of Florio’s dictionaries and “Fruits” in the Italian schools. Florio’s dictionaries and “Fruits” are to be regarded as some abroad works of**

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<sup>190</sup> Tassinari, John Florio, pg. 126, Shakespeare? pg.139.

**the Italian literature? Or as English literature, deeply influenced by Italian literature? Or are they a “third” genre?**

In the light of the above, it is worth confirming that the two Florios wrote some works which were “officially” published by John, while for other works (plays, poems, sonnets) they cooperated with William of Stratford, under the pseudonym of Shakespeare.

We already pointed out that the two Florios could “openly” publish their works relrole as Italian schoolmasters: 1) the two dictionaries; 2) “First Fruits” and “Second Fruits”, manuals of conversation for the Italian language learning. Of course, translations (such as Essays by Montaigne and Decamerone by Boccaccio) may be included.

In this paragraph, we will completely disregard Florios’ “hidden” works and we will only deal with the dictionaries and “Fruits” published by John.

The occasion of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of John Florio’s dictionary ‘The Queen Anna’s New World of Wordes’(1611) should be a ideal opportunity (to be embraced!) to introduce in the schoolbooks related to the school year starting in September 2011, a paragraph aimed at keeping John and Michelangelo Florio’s memory alive.

In particular, the dictionary (as well as the “Fruits”) is, in my opinion, *also* Italian National cultural heritage. Indeed, John Florio, “Praelector Linguae Italicae” (even if formally an English citizen), along with his father Michelangelo, had also considerably contributed (as “go-between”) to the history of the Italian literature, even abroad, in England.

These literary works (created with the unfailing support of his father Michelangelo) have *also* to be considered as Italian literature.

His activity as “go-between”, intermediary, intercessor, propagator of the Italian language and culture in the Court of Elisabeth I Tudor and James I Stuart, renders him a scholar and an “innovator” *also* of the Italian language and culture; since, as already mentioned, his activity as “Praelector Linguae Italicae” (a kind of anticipated “epitaph”, coined by John himself) not only entailed spreading the Italian language and culture, but necessarily also a work of “creation” or at least of “systematization” of the Italian words.

Florio himself tells us that he was a natural-born Englishman, and that his official social role (apart from his activity, along with his father, of “clandestine poet”, which is not considered in this paragraph) was related to his activity as scholar, primarily based on the Italian language and culture.

Florio tells us that he was a “Praelector Linguae Italicae”, i.e. “Master and interpreter of the Italian language”, and therefore promoter and teacher of the Italian language, even if he was born in England!

In my opinion, this is the meaning of his famous expression: “*I am an English in Italiane*”.

The precise meaning of this expression of Florio's is not easily and fully understandable, since it involved "destabilizing" concepts, which, in turn, are influenced by the "relativity" of their possible interpretations.

However, we will try to make our best efforts to come as close as possible to the meaning of this expression; we are fully aware that should Florio, "a funambulist of the language", have not found a better alternative to such expression, this would have really been impossible!

The starting point is that this expression is directly related to the complex notion of "go-between", i.e. a subject who "metaphorically" is a kind of "ferryman" between the two shores of two Countries: his Country of origin (or of his family's origin) and his Country of adoption (or of birth).

And, in this "ferrying across" of culture and language ("*the intertraffique of mind*", as Samuel Daniel said), something new, different and creative was inevitably produced. Something new and different from both the original language and culture and from the language and culture of adoption.

In turn this "something different, new, creative" influenced, either directly or indirectly, both the original languages and cultures.

For these reasons the "official" works of Florio are not easy to "classify":

- 1) Are they Italian literature, simply produced abroad (in England)?
- 2) Are they English literature, profoundly influenced by the culture, language and literature coming from Italy?

In my humble opinion (but the issue is open to discussions, herein merely envisaged!), as for Florio's works, both the "cases in point", mentioned in points 1) and 2) above, are simultaneously applicable! ...I apologise for this kind of "field invasion", by using such legal jargon ("case in point").

As for Florio's official works, they belong, in my opinion (still using a juridical terminology!), to a unique and indivisible "complex case of point", simultaneously constituted by the 2 "simple cases of point" described in points 1) and 2) above.

As for the case of point 1), the American scholar Michael Wyatt (The Italian encounter ..., cit. pg. 231) pointed out "*the wide-reaching significance of Florio's lexicography for the history of the Italian language and for the dissemination of Italy's early modern print culture*".

All the above was rendered by Florio in his repeatedly mentioned expression (necessarily anchored to the "relativity" of the 2 "shores" interconnected and therefore "sibylline" just like the "complex case of point" described by the expression): "*I am an English in Italiane*".

We have made use of "hermeneutics" (to interpret the expression of Florio); and the etymology of "hermeneutics", according to Manfred Pfister, is, in turn, linked to Hermes, the winged messenger of the gods, who was the intercessor between the gods and the mortals and revealed to the latter the real intentions of the deities, the very first "go-between" of the history! And "hermeneutics", science or art of interpretation of the meaning of a text, is fundamental for anyone, just like me (and

Florio too! See Yates, op.cit. pg.65), who, as a practicing lawyer, works in the legal profession, based on the proper interpretation of the legal and contractual texts!

It is worth noting that, as lawyers very well know, it may even happen that, in case of uncertain “jurisdictions” related to “borderline” matters, all the judges involved (by the claimants) might declare themselves “not competent” ... but finally the Supreme Court takes a final and binding decision to identify the competent judge!

In brief ... it would be desirable (in the lack of a similar mechanism to that of a Supreme Court) that all the potentially interested scholars not avoid dealing with such a “borderline” matter.

On the contrary, we hope for an enthusiastic and full involvement of all the potential interested scholars and researchers, including, without limitation, Latinists, Greek scholars, Anglists, Italianists, experts of French literature (for the translation of the Essays of Montaigne), experts of Holy Scriptures, experts in psychology and experts in law.

Florio’s dictionary ‘Queen Anna’s New World of Words (1611) included about 74.000 Italian words, translated into 150.000 English words<sup>191</sup>, on the basis of the reading of 252 books, which Florio precisely listed in the preliminary section of such dictionary (the complete list of such books is freely available in the link <http://www.johnflorio-is-shakespeare.com/florio15.html#8>); the dictionary contemplated a far wider number of Italian words than the coeval dictionary of “Crusca” (1612), which contained about 28.000 words. The dictionary of “Crusca”, in accordance with Bembo’s vision, mainly took into account the words which Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch had used in XIV century.

It is worth noting that, according to Frances Yates (op.cit., pg.190),“The collection of so many English equivalents for each word must have involved at least as wide a reading in English as in Italian”; “Florio in effect read ‘everything’ ...from the primordial stage down to his time: not just poetry and history, religious literature and theatre, but texts on science, on technology and pastimes” (Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 139, John Florio, pg. 126).

*This dictionary (from Italian to English) is a very important document for the Italian language itself, since it contains a collection of Italian words (74.000) and relevant meanings, in 1611, far vaster (about three times as many) than the contemporary “Crusca” dictionary. Indeed, “Unlike the Florentine dictionary, grounded as it was in Bembo’s belief that literary Italian should draw its vocabulary almost exclusively from the works of the tre corone (Dante, and above all Petrarch and Boccaccio), that of the expatriate Florio covers three centuries of Italian culture and opens its portals to dozen and dozen of literary, scientific and technical source texts from Dante to Bruno”* (Tassinari Shakespeare? pg. 138, John Florio, pg. 125, who, in turn, makes reference to Wyatt)

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<sup>191</sup> Michael Wyatt, The Italian encounter ... cit., pg. 230-231 pointed out that Florio (on the basis of John Willinsky’s calculation) is responsible for the earliest appearances of 1,149 new English words in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED); Chaucer heads this league table with 2012 earliest appearances, Shakespeare comes second with 1969, and Florio comes third with 1149 words. Willinsky concludes (pg. 231) [Florio/Shakespeare, if considered a ‘unique’, would head this table]: “The statistics provide a striking picture of the manner in which Florio’s work both registered and contributed to the development of English, a further indication of the multi-directional consequences of his philological stewardship” (see also Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 138 and John Florio, pg. 125).

Florio's dictionary not only covers several centuries of Italian linguistic practice, but includes many dialects and dialectal words, since Florio "*recognized the necessity of supplementing Florentine usage through the incorporation of Venetian, Roman, Lombard and Neapolitan voices*"! (Wyatt, Giordano Bruno, cit., pg. 194). Thus in accordance with his linguistic vision, already well described in the epistle dedicatorie of "World of Wordes" (1598), concerning the other different Dialects and Idioms (beside the Florentine), which were spoken in Italy.

Florio's "Italian-English dictionary was the first to fully take into account not only Dante Petrarca and Boccaccio but also contemporary Italian literature, the first to record a wealth of dialectal words and forms, and had preserved both in Italian and in English, a 'colloquial stratum of discourse which so frequently never reaches the printed page'"<sup>192</sup>.

To conclude the point, Florio's dictionaries and "Fruits" are fundamental documents of both Italian and English literature!

Moreover, it is worth noting that John's dictionary of 1611 was surely the result of the cultural contribution and cooperation of his father Michelangelo (as already clearly expressed by John in the epistle 'to the reader' in his dictionary of 1598), schoolmaster of the Italian language and literato, who prepared the first material, which his son reworked, improved, expanded and finally published, thanks to the encouragement of Queen Anna, his pupil and Italian language enthusiast; a literary work Florio could be very proud of!

Moreover, Florio expressed his judgment on the difficulties encountered when reading the works of the considered authors.

Boccaccio was considered "*prettie hard, yet understood*", in the epistle dedicatorie of the dictionary of 1598". Among the books listed by Florio (since they had been read by Florio to prepare the dictionary), it appears *Decameron* (which Florio translated and the translation was anonymously published in 1620 -Tassinari, Shakespeare? pg. 65, John Florio, pg.56) and other works such as *La Genealogia degli dei*, *La Fiammetta* and *Philocopo*.

Petrarch was considered "*Harder, but explained*". Among Florio's cited list we find the Works of Petrarch and Petrarch's biography (two books) by Gesualdo, as well as *Le Osservazioni sopra il Petrarca* by Francesco Alunno.

Finally, Dante was considered "*Hardest but commented*". And Florio listed four "commentaries" of the works of Dante, including the commentary by Boccaccio. The "Divine Comedy" (which largely influenced the works of Shakespeare and was entirely translated into English in 1802) was considered "hardest" by Florio, a "schoolmaster of the Italian language". Let alone the "others"!

In the epistle dedicatorie of the dictionary of 1611 Florio taught a lesson of Italian literature (in English, but it makes no matter!). In conflict with the Accademia della Crusca, Florio claimed that in Italy, beside the Florentine, others dialects and idioms were spoken (with their respective words), such as the Venetian, Roman, Lombard and Neapolitan dialects. The Florios had carefully studied

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<sup>192</sup> Pfister, Inglese Italiano cit., pg.44, where further references.

those idioms and collected many proverbs coming from the different parties of Italy, just like First Fruits (1578) and Second Fruits (1592) testified.

Michelangelo, in turn, had pointed out that *the Italian language had notably changed* after Boccaccio, Dante and Petrarch!

*In the dictionary of 1611, Florio demonstrates his thorough knowledge of the Italian works: translations of Latin and Greek works, books concerning every discipline, including those which were written after the “tre corone”.*

Some examples include, Le Vite by Plutarco, the translations of Ovid’s Metamorphoses (cured by Anguillara), Titus Livio, translated by Narni, the Epistles of Cicero in vernacular.

The Holy Bible, translated by Giovanni Diodati.

Moreover, La Civile Conversatione and I Dialoghi piacevoli by Stefano Guazzo (which deeply influenced the plays of Shakespeare), the Epitia and Ecatommiti by Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio (which were the ground for Hotello), Il Pecorone by Ser Giovanni Fiorentino (source for the Merchant of Venice); *it is worth noting that such works had not yet been translated into English and are universally regarded as the sources of some of Shakespeare’s plays.* Yates (op.cit. pg.268) pointed out: “*It is very probable that Shakespeare had sometimes occasion to study this dictionary*”.

Furthermore, according to a random exemplification, L’Aminta and Torrismondo by Torquato Tasso, L’Orlando Furioso by Ludovico Ariosto, L’Orlando Innamorato by Matteo Boiardo, the works of Giordano Bruno (of course! La cena delle ceneri, Della causa principio e uno, Heroici furori, Spatio della bestia triumphante), Il Galateo by Monsignore della Casa, L’Arcadia by Sannazzaro, the works of Pietro Bembo, the Canzon di ballo by Lorenzo de’ Medici, Hecatompila by Leon Battista Alberti, the works of Aretino (among which four comedies and the lives of Vergin Mary, S. Thomas and S. Catherine), Tipocosmia by Alessandro Cittolini, works of Guicciardini, Morgante Maggiore by Luigi Pulci, Novelle by Bondello, Retrattione by Vergerio, works by Alessandro Gatti, Marsilio Ficino, Thomaso Garzoni, Annibal Caro, Leonardo Fioravanti (Specchio di Scienza Universale), Jacopo Passavanti, works by Botero, Piovano Arlotto, Luigi Grotto, Somma della dottrina christiana, the works of Niccolò Machiavelli, Ugoni Bresciano degli stati dell’humana vita: dell’impositione dei nomi: della vigilia&sonno; et dell’eccellenza di Venetia.

*In brief, the dictionary of 1611 is also a cultural heritage of the Italian language and culture and as such, it should be taught in the Italian schools.*

The same goes for First Fruits (1578) and Second Fruits (1592) and relevant Giardino di Ricreazione (including 6.000 proverbs), which collect many mottos and proverbs coming from Italy; they were written in Italian and translated into English as well as published in two parallel “synoptic” columns.

The Fruits (which were the results of the collaboration between father and son) are real “pearls of wisdom”, “*Flowrets of moralities [that] Were never before brought out of Italy*” (see “Phaeton” in Second Fruits; in Italy, as Paladino tells us, “I secondi frutti” had been already collected and published in 1549) “*For Proverbs are the pith, the proprieties, the proofes, the purities, the*

*elegancies as the commonest so the commendablest phrases of a language. To use them is a grace, to understand them a good”* (see the epistle to the reader of Second Fruits).

It is paradoxical that such “flowers” are better known abroad, due to their translation into English, than in Italy, from where they had come!<sup>193</sup>

Speaking with some Italian secondary-school students, none of them knew who the two Florios were!

Some students, who were very fond of speedy cars, knew the Sicilian “Targa Florio” (now “Rally Targa Florio”), one of the most ancient Italian car races, worldwide known, famous for mythical drivers such as Tazio Nuvolari.

Other students are well aware of “Marsala Florio” a wine worldwide famous<sup>194</sup>.

Nevertheless, the surname Florio seems destined to play an important role in the world!

## **12. Brief conclusions**

By way of conclusion to this essay, an observation that emerges from the study of Florio’s 1611 portrait which along with the elements it is composed of, serves as a type of epitaph to the author, left for posterity and for all eternity.

At the dawning of the British Empire’s Imperial colonisation worldwide (through which the literary works which bear the name of William Shakespeare spread throughout the world), John Florio on.

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<sup>193</sup> It is worth mentioning a recent study on the Italian language by Prof. Franco Pierno of the University of Toronto (Canada), entitled “Tra universalità e compromessi locali. Il Vaticano e la lingua italiana”, published in the volume “L’italiano nella Chiesa fra passato e presente”, Allemandi publisher. The author claims that the Italian language is *de facto* the official language of the Vatican State. The fundamental law of this State (issued on 26 November 2000) is written in Italian and the Italian language is used by the pontifical universities, which are attended by students coming from anywhere (Italian linguistic tests for admission are often contemplated). The importance of the Italian language emerges also in the Vatican media, such as newspapers (the *Osservatore Romano* published since 1861 in Italian), radio-television media (Radio Vaticana and Centro Televisivo Vaticano) as well as the official website. The Italian version of the Bible has been revised by CEI (Conferenza Episcopale Italiana) in 2008 and the Italian language is used by the Popes in different occasions (e.g. on the occasion of the pastoral visit of the concentration camp of Auschwitz in 2006), including – as we add – the weekly meeting of the Pope with the believers in St. Peter Square, in order to say the *Angelus prayer* and to give the Papal benediction “*urbi et orbi*”. See the following website concerning an article, on the matter, published on the newspaper “*Corriere della Sera*” on 13 December 2010 [http://archivistorico.corriere.it/2010/dicembre/13/italiano\\_non\\_latino\\_lingua\\_universale\\_co\\_9\\_101213037.shtml](http://archivistorico.corriere.it/2010/dicembre/13/italiano_non_latino_lingua_universale_co_9_101213037.shtml)

<sup>194</sup> In 1773, an English trader John Woodhouse landed at the port of Marsala and discovered the local wine produced in the region, which was aged in wooden casks. Fortified Marsala wine was, and is, made using a process called *in perpetuum*. Woodhouse recognized that the *in perpetuum* process raised the alcohol level and alcoholic taste of this wine while also preserving these characteristics during long distance sea travel. Marsala wine proved so successful in England that Woodhouse returned to Sicily and, in 1796, began the mass production and commercialization of Marsala wine. In 1800 Admiral Horatio Nelson, (1758-1805) commissioned 500 barrels of Marsala wine to be delivered to England’s Mediterranean fleet on an annual basis. In 1805, after the victorious Battle of Trafalgar, Marsala came to be known as “*Marsala Victory Wine*.” [http://www.reluctantgourmet.com/veal\\_marsala.htm](http://www.reluctantgourmet.com/veal_marsala.htm) In 1833, the entrepreneur Vincenzo Florio, a Calabrese by birth and Palermitano by adoption (he himself also set up the Targa Florio!), purchased Woodhouse’s firm, among others, in the late 19th century and consolidated the Marsala wine industry. Florio is one of the leading producers of Marsala wine today. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marsala\\_DOC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marsala_DOC) Giuseppe Garibaldi (who landed at the port of Marsala on 11 May 1860) liked very much Marsala wine and also the wine cellar of Buckingham Palace has many quantities of this wine.

the whole, appears to be a figure suspended between the “past and future”, between the universality of Latin and the universality of the infinite worlds of Giordano Bruno.

As for the contents of this document, as you can see, the “peculiarity” of this article is that we have substantially “discovered” nothing!

You could say we have “discovered” that the main English scholars had already “discovered” everything!

- Indeed, the article “discovers” that the “literary association” between Shakespeare and Florio was a theory which one of the main English scholars, Thomas Spencer Baynes (a Doctor in Law who became one of the main scholars of the works of Shakespeare!) claimed in the entry for “Shakespeare” of the Ninth Edition of the “Encyclopaedia Britannica” (the so called “Scholar’s Edition” for its intellectual high standards); as already said, such entry is currently freely available in the official link of the Encyclopaedia <http://www.1902encyclopedia.com/S/SHA/william-shakespeare-31.html>, under the title “Shakespeare goes to London (cont.). Shakespeare Continues his Education. His Connection with Florio”. Thanks to this meritorious initiative of the Encyclopaedia, the passage is therefore publicly available to a very large audience!

- The same article “discovers” that another eminent English scholar, Frances Amelia Yates (who received many important honors including Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1972 and Dame Commander (DBE) in 1977) had already fully “discovered” the truth on the genesis of Hamlet’s soliloquy and on the “Authorship”, camouflaging her discovery in an “overlooked” footnote (in Italian) of her book on John Florio published in 1934 (being clearly not in the position to better display her discovery!). The book has recently (in 2010, 76 years after the first edition!) been reprinted in its first paperback edition by the Cambridge University Press and once again thanks to this meritorious initiative, the book is available to a very large audience!

All the merit then is for the English scholars, editors and publishers!

To conclude this essay, we could confirm that further studies will be necessary to add integrations and clarifications on the matter (an in-depth analysis of the works of Michelangelo and John Florio could be very useful!); however, we humbly but strongly believe to have contributed to “build” a reliable “skeleton” for such further studies.

A sincere “fan” of John and Michelangelo Florio  
Massimo Oro Nobili

## Bibliography

The bibliography has been from also been indicated in the text or in the footnotes.

Here below you find three studies (one on Shakespeare and two on John Florio) that I have been reading recently (they inspired me to start writing this essay) and to whose authors I again wish to extend my heartfelt thanks:

- Boitani Piero, *Il Vangelo secondo Shakespeare*, Mulino publisher, Bologna 2009.
- Montini Donatella, *John/Giovanni: Florio “mezzano e intercessore” della lingua italiana*, in *Memoria di Shakespeare*, VI, Roma, Bulzoni, 2008, pp.47-59.
- Pfister Manfred: *Inglese Italianato-Italiano Anglizzato: John Florio*, in *Renaissance Go-Betweens. Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, edito da Andreas Hofele, Berlin, New York, 2005, pp.32-54.

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