

Emmerich's "ten reasons" (related to his "Anonymous") fit John and Michelangelo Florio like a glove

1. Emmerich's "ten reasons"

Emmerich explains, in a short worldwide famous seven minute movie, his ten reasons aimed at demolishing the current thesis (by him defined as a "fraud") according which Will of Stratford was the author of the works of Shakespeare.

It is not really easy to contradict such ten reasons and they coincide with what we have already affirmed, in line with Saul Gerevini, in precedent studies (see the last one "The genesis of Hamlet's soliloquy – The two Florios" in this web site).

In his movie "Anonymous", Emmerich supports the candidacy of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford; but such candidacy has been recently demolished by James Shapiro in his in-depth study "Contested Will" (2010), whose conclusions we fully share.

2. The gist of the Florian thesis

In line with the studies of Saul Gerevini and Giulia Harding, our candidate is John Florio, supported by the fundamental works of his father Michelangelo, in the framework of an intense and fruitful cooperation with Will of Stratford.

The works of John Florio indisputably played an essential role in Shakespeare's works, as it is clearly pointed out in the Ninth Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, entry "Shakespeare", including an ad hoc paragraph (freely available in the official website of the Encyclopaedia Britannica <http://www.1902encyclopedia.com/S/SHA/william-shakespeare-31.html>), which is entitled "Shakespeare goes to London (cont.). Shakespeare Continues his Education. His Connection with Florio."

Incidentally, we can wonder why, in 1911, the editorial staff of the Encyclopaedia opted for the deletion of such paragraph (a surely respectable decision).

At the end of 1800, English scholars were strongly convinced about the "literary association" between William Shakespeare and Jhon Florio, as the mentioned entry by Thomas Spencer Baynes shows. Such opinion was well supported and justified by Baynes and was also functional to explain the (differently inexplicable) really numerous "connections" between the works of Shakespeare and the ones of Florio, as per the following mere exemplification: many excerpts of Florio's "First Fruits" and "Second Fruits" may be found in the works of Shakespeare; the ideal republic of Gonzalo in the Tempest is simply a passage from Florio's version (of the Essays by Montaigne) turned into blank verse; Florio's dictionaries, whose new words can be found in the works of Shakespeare; the knowledge of Italy, of its towns, of its dialects, of its literature etc., which are main part of the works of Shakespeare.

My personal opinion is that, after the first print of the Ninth Edition of the Encyclopaedia (in 1890), the English scholars in depth studied the life and the works of John Florio (English citizen just like Will) and they discovered that, in turn, his works had been deeply influenced by the ones of his father Michelangelo. Michelangelo had previously written the "Secondi Frutti" in the Italian language (as indisputably testified by the Italian journalist Santi Paladino, who wrote and published in the daily 'L'Impero' No. 30 on February 4th 1927 an ad hoc article to disclose the discovery of such old volume in an Italian library). Michelangelo, evidently, had previously written in the Italian language also the "Primi Frutti" and had worked on the first draft of the Dictionary published by John Florio (including many Italian dialect words, which Michelangelo had collected during its traveling around Italy).

In my opinion, between 1890 and the early 1900, the English scholars most likely become aware of an unexpected truth, which only Yates (in her book on John Florio published in 1934) picked up the courage to publicly and clearly disclose in writing.

Indeed, Yates, “disconcerted and practically sorry”¹ (in the first chapter of her mentioned book, dedicated to Michelangelo, “John’s father”), pointed out that English scholars “had supposed” “that Shakespeare learnt much of what he knew about Italy and Italian towns” from John Florio; but “It begins to look as though John Florio may never have set foot in Italy itself at all” (Yates, *op.cit.*, pg. 21).

Yates’s courageous public clarification may explain the new option of the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 1911, which “disconnected” Shakespeare from Florio.

The works of John Florio (his “First Fruits” and “Second Fruits” as well as his dictionaries) were strictly linked to the ones of his father Michelangelo, who knew very well the Italian towns, the Italian dialects and proverbs and was the author of the materials that John reworked and published.

Probably, while a “literary association” between William Shakespeare (an English born and bred) and John Florio (an English citizen, of Italian origin) was acceptable, the Encyclopaedia was likely no longer in the position to further promote such association, since it clearly appeared that the association would have also and deeply involved Michelangelo, John’s Italian father. We thank however the Encyclopaedia for currently rendering available on line the mentioned paragraph of the IX Edition to a large audience!

3. Emmerich’s “ten reasons” fit John and Michelangelo Florio like a glove

Emmerich’s “ten reasons” may be regarded according to the two following different kinds of approach:

(i) according to a negative approach, they demolish the Stratfordian identity of Shakespeare; Will of Stratford could not be (without the strong support of other people) the author of the works of Shakespeare (which we fully share!);

(ii) according to a positive approach, they foreshadow the features Emmerich expects to be proper of the author of the works of Shakespeare.

According to the second approach, it emerges a portrait of Shakespeare that fit John and Michelangelo Florio as a glove!

Let us consider one by one Emmerich’s ten reasons with respect to the two Florios.

1. Not a single manuscript has been found in William Shakespeare's handwriting. Not even notes or correspondence.

Suffice it to mention: the letter of Michelangelo in February 1552 to Lord Cecil (concerning Michelangelo’s act of fornication- mentioned by Yates, pag. 6); the translation, in 1585, of a letter from Rome, on the sudden death of Pope Gregory XIII, which Florio dedicated “To the Right Excellent and Honourable Lord, Henry Earl of Derby”(see in the mentioned link of the Encyclopaedia Britannica).

¹See Montini Donatella, John/Giovanni: Florio “mezzano e intercessore” della lingua italiana, in Memoria di Shakespeare, VI, Roma, Bulzoni, 2008, p.49.

2. Shakespeare was born of illiterate parents, but he went on to possess the largest English vocabulary of any writer in history. Yet his two children, Susanna and Judith, couldn't read or write.

Michelangelo was the schoolmaster of John and John was, in turn, the schoolmaster of his daughter Aurelia. As for the vocabulary used by Shakespeare, suffice it to say that in his works you find many new words introduced by Florio's dictionaries!

3. Shakespeare was not a member of the upper class, but wrote extensively about them with great insight.

Michelangelo was the Italian schoolmaster of Lady Jane Grey (Queen of England for eight days) and probably of princess Elisabeth (future Queen of England). John Florio was Groom of the Royal Privy Chamber, personal secretary of the Queen Ann and supervisor of cultural activities at the court of James I.

4. The only examples of Shakespeare's handwriting are six very shaky signatures.

John Florio handwrote and signed his will.

5. None of Shakespeare's poems or plays reflects an actual event in his life, including the death of his son.

Hamlet's famous soliloquy, 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; it is obvious that emotions can be expressed at our best when we experienced them personally. In such work, the author described, in an "anguished" way, the final hours of a person (just like Michelangelo Florio directly experienced) close to death, who knows that death may come very soon.

It is 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), then finally, Capital punishment (which could have been carried out at any moment), which he managed to escape by a hairbreadth, through a daring break from jail. All of this, in a dark, underground cold, damp cell, amid the physical oppression of his ruthless prison warders, devoid of all comforts. Michelangelo Florio had lived such extreme experience. He had actually "come face to face with death" and had spent 27 months in solitude, without any comfort, analysing the true emotions of a "person doomed to die". He (who was considered heretic) had been imprisoned in Rome by the Inquisition and managed to escape from jail thanks to a powerful help (probably, Renée de France, Duchess of Ferrara). He lived the situation of a person who has, for "months" and "years", been reflecting on his destiny after death. Michelangelo recounted, in his manuscript of 1561, dedicated to his pupil Lady Jane Grey, "The outrages, the scorns and the torments" which he had endured for the space of twenty-seven months in Rome; thus anticipating, in the Italian language, the contents and words of Hamlet's soliloquy!

The same could be said for the Tempest, which is a mere metaphoric biography of Michelangelo and John (their arrival in an island, the Great Britain; the issue of a new language, the English; the relationship schoolmaster-pupil).

6. There is no record of Shakespeare receiving any schooling, yet his level of knowledge of science and humanities is extensive.

John Florio was the pupil of his father Michelangelo, attended the University of Tubingen (in his matriculation document, John appears as as "Johannes Florentinus", due to the fact that he was the son of

Michelangelo the “Florentine”) 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. 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). He was also awarded a M.A. (Master of Arts) by Magdalen College (Oxford). Florio’s dictionary ‘Queen Anna’s New World of Words’ (1611) included about 74.000 Italian words, translated into 150.000 English words, on the basis of the reading of 252 books, which Florio precisely listed in the preliminary section of such dictionary.

7. Once he retired to Stratford-upon-Avon in his late forties, Shakespeare never wrote a single poem or sonnet again.

Michelangelo, according to recent studies of Corrado Panzieri (see “Biografia di uno sconosciuto” in this website), died (as proven by documentary evidence) in 1605, when the main part of the works of Shakespeare had been composed. John, in turn, during the last years of his life translated into English the “Decamerone” by Boccaccio (the translation was anonymously published in 1620) and prepared the third edition of his dictionary, published by his pupil Giovanni Torriano in 1659.

8. Despite no indication that Shakespeare left England, his work exhibits an intimate knowledge of Italy. Shakespeare makes grandiloquent references to Italian cities, French court life, and the manners and etiquette of foreign lands -- a third of his plays are set in Italy -- but no documented record exists of him having traveled outside of England.

As above mentioned, Michelangelo Florio gave evidence, in his *Apologia*, to have visited all the Italian towns which are described in the works of Shakespeare. He collected, in his *Primi Frutti* and *Secondi Frutti* published in Italy, the Italian proverbs which John reproduced in his *First Fruits* and *Second Fruits* (manuals for the study of Italian, with parallel columns of Italian and English) and was reported in the works of Shakespeare. The same is true of John’s dictionaries, including many dialect words, and they were drafted by Michelangelo, such as John revealed in his epistle to the reader (1598).

9. An ancient drawing shows the Stratford monument of Shakespeare with a sack of grain rather than a quill.

Suffice it to admire the famous portrait of John Florio, herein attached, with its Latin inscriptions, which was particularly described by Yates (pag. 276)!

10. 10. Will's will makes no mention of his literary works, of any books or manuscripts, leaving the impression that he did not care about what happened to his life's work after death, but does leave his second best bed to his wife as a legacy.

In John Florio’s will, you do not find legacies concerning his second best bed, but you find a collection of almost three hundred and forty books (including his new dictionary and other works) 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. The main part of this collection was probably accumulated by Michelangelo. All the volumes that inspired the Shakespearian dramas could be found in the Earl of Pembroke’s library, left to them by John Florio!

In conclusion, we can confirm that Emmerich's ten reasons, according a positive approach, adumbrate features Emmerich expects to be proper of the author of the works of Shakespeare, which fit John and Michelangelo Florio like a glove!

Un Fan di John e Michelangelo Florio

Massimo Oro Nobili



