

Michelangelo Florio's *incarceration* and Hamlet's Danish "*prison*": ideas for a study¹.

Abstract: Ideas for a research, which *correlates* the situation of Michelangelo to that of Hamlet:

- 1) Michelangelo Florio's *incarceration* in Tor di Nona, in Rome (*with the torments and anguishes of a person accused of heresy, also due to the length of the Inquisition trial, to the delay of justice, which Hamlet also complains about, in his monologue, when he complains about "law's delay"*);
- 2) and Hamlet's Danish "*prison*" (*the Dramatist defines Denmark, where the action of drama takes place, not as an abstract entity, but as a real "prison", architecturally structured in "many confines, wards, and dungeons"*);
- 3) The meditation of Hamlet (who feels near death) on the afterlife; similarly Michelangelo Florio, fleeing from Rome, escaped death, upon which he also had to meditate for a long time during his imprisonment.
- 3) *inquisitors and troublesome mice* characterize both prisons.
- 4) the figure of speech of "*copia*", which recurs, vehement, in Michelangelo Florio and in the Dramatist (Laura Orsi): i) *il ritardo della giustizia, i "flagelli", gli "scorni", gli "oltraggi", i "bargelli"* (police officers, with *the authority of their office*) by Michelangelo Florio; ii) *the "law's delay", the "whips", the "scorns", the "outrageous fortune", the "insolence of office"* by Hamlet.

Summary: Introduction.

I. The place where the action of *Hamlet* takes place, Denmark, a real "*prison*", *not an abstract entity*, really described, in the drama, *in its corporeity* and its *articulated architectural structure*, also endowed with *underground prisons* ("*dungeons*"), just like those "*secrete*" (*underground cells*) where Michelangelo Florio had been imprisoned (letter from Friar Paolo Antonio, alias Michelangelo Florio, to Cosimo of 9 April 1548).

II. The place of the action, Denmark, a "*prison*", a "*prison*" with characters who play the "*role of an inquisitor*" (Prof. Giorgio Melchiori): does, *in reality*, Denmark represent a *prison of the Inquisition*, as the one where Michelangelo Florio was imprisoned, in Rome?

III. Why Hamlet calls the play acted at Court "*The Mousetrap*", *immediately feeling obliged (although he was not required) to justify such strange title (even towards the audience)*, as it follows: "*marry, how tropically!*" (i.e., such title is to be intended *in a metaphorical sense!* - Act III, Scene ii, 231-233). *Who are the mice in the Hamlet? Are they just a metaphor or a reality?*

¹ A special dedication goes to Stefano Reali, who, *for the first time* (with an *unprecedented event in the history of the world theater!*), has "*revived*" on the scenes, "*in flesh and bone*" (in his theatrical piece "*La Volpe e il Leone*") *two great Italian writers, a father and a son (almost completely unknown to the vast audience of spectators!)*: Michelangelo and John Florio.

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III.1 *Are we really sure that the “mice” have nothing to do with the entire drama of Hamlet (and not only with the recital at Court)?*

III.2 *Are we sure that these “mice”, “rats” are not at all “a metaphor”, “a trope” (or not only a “metaphor”), but (also) are precisely the rodents that infest the underground and wet places of the fortresses? The dungeons of Tor di Nona - often flooded by the Tiber - were infested by these harassing rodents!*

III.3 *Does the Dramatist speak of “mice”, “rats” as mere literary metaphors or did he experienced, in his life, the dungeons of a prison, experiencing (even indirectly, through the behavior of other prisoners), the well - known pathological impact that these rodents have on the psychological health of men? Gertrude’s words seems to be possibly referred to a pathological feral raptus (hypothetically referable to the significant psychological impact on human mind, caused by the presence of such harassing rodents), when she tells the King that: Hamlet “In his lawless fit, Behind the arras hearing something stir, Whips out his rapier, cries, ‘A rat, a rat!’, And in this brainish apprehension kills The unseen good old man”. In the Hamlet, it seems to be also described the problem, of a ‘practical’ nature, in the prisons, that is where to place the ‘remains’ of a killed rat, to avoid the smell of its putrefaction.*

IV. *The contents of the famous Hamlet’s soliloquy: there appear to be the suffering of a prisoner in a prison of the Inquisition, just like Michelangelo Florio’s suffering in Torre di Nona.*

IV.1 *The existential doubts that arise in Hamlet (who feels near death): the mystery of afterlife, “the undiscover’d country from whose bourn no traveller returns”. They are the same proper Michelangelo’s doubts, the doubts of a man anxiously waiting for knowing his fate, the verdict of the judges of the Inquisition, which seems never to arrive. Michelangelo Florio openly tells us that he felt close to the breath of death (“If I had not escaped from Rome, I would have left my life in Rome, like many others, because of the word of God”- Michelangelo’s Regole de la lingua Thoscana). Due to the many torments, the temptation of suicide, which is firmly rejected, because Hamlet, like Michelangelo Florio, is fully respectful of the divine laws of a Christian.*

IV.2 *Michelangelo was a person accused of heresy awaiting the judgment of the Inquisition, who suffered the length of the incarceration (desperately calling for help from Cosimo I de’Medici!), the slowness of the trial, the sentence that did not arrive (after five months from his incarceration, he had not yet been judged!), the delay of justice; Hamlet speaks, in his monologue, with suffering, of the “law’s delay”, of the delays of justice (“ritardi della giustizia”, as exactly rendered into Italian by Prof. Agostino Lombardo, in life, Academician of the Lincei).*

IV.3 *In addition to the delay of justice (Hamlet’s “law’s delay”), Michelangelo Florio (in his Apologia, pp. 18 v e 19 r) complained about i “flagelli”, gli “scorni”, gli “oltraggi”, i “bargelli” (police officers, with the authority of their office); Hamlet, in his monologue, equally complains about the “law’s delay”, the “whips”, the “scorns”, the “outrageous fortune”, the “insolence of office”. Furthermore, Michelangelo (Apologia, p. 18 v) speaks of “ignominie, ... uituperij, biasimi, parole ingiuriose, tormenti”, “ignominy, ... vituperations, blame, offensive words, torments”, which are other concepts that you can substantially find in Hamlet’s soliloquy. Finally, as it is evident, both Michelangelo and the Dramatist loved the figure of*

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speech of “*copia*”, abundance of words (Laura Orsi), however, *vehement in both the aforementioned writers!*

Conclusions.

THE ENTIRE TEXT IS AVAILABLE IN ITALIAN

“La carcerazione di Michelangelo Florio e Amleto, nella sua “*prigione*” danese: spunti per una ricerca”

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