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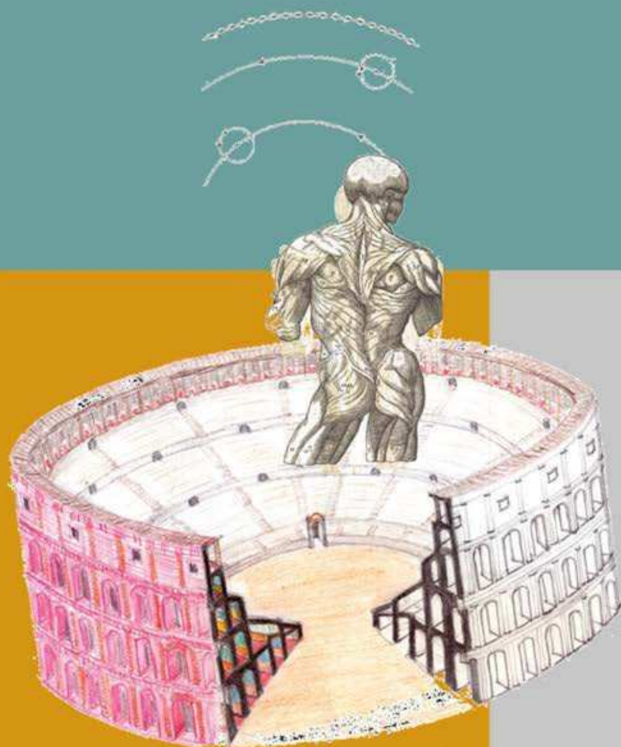
Maria Del Sapio Garbero / Nancy Isenberg / Maddalena Pennacchia (eds.)

Questioning Bodies in Shakespeare's Rome



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Interfacing Science, Literature, and the Humanities / ACUME 2

Volume 4

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With 19 figures

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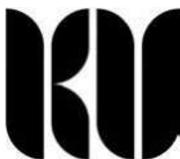

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Cover image: Anatomical torso from Helkiah Crooke's *Microcosmographia*, 1615 (courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London), rearranged by Maria Del Sapio with the graphic design assistance of Giorgio Garbero and Claudio Mosticone.

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Maria Del Sapio Garbero

Introduction: Shakespeare's Rome and Renaissance 'Anthropographie'

In the Renaissance analogical exchange between the order of the microcosm and that of the macrocosm, the trope of the human body plays a pivotal role. For the Elizabethans, it is indeed a world unto itself. Conceived as a hierarchized and interdependent whole of organs and functions, the human body mirrors the system that orders all other bodies in the universe. As a body condensing in itself the real and the ideal, it validates the process of metaphorical shifting from the abstract to the concrete and vice versa.

The Renaissance analogical way of connecting man and world, world and universe, is what urged John Dee in his famous *Mathematicall Praeface to Euclid* (1570) to catalogue all ancient and contemporary knowledge about man – "The Lesse World" – under the category of an inclusive science which he called "Anthropographie", "the Arte of Artes", or what nowadays we might call a transdiscipline:

> This do I call Anthropographie. […] Although it be, but now, first Cõfirmed, with this new name: yet the matter, hath from the beginning, ben in consideration of all perfect Philosophers. Anthropographie, is the description of the Number, Measure, Waight, figure, Situation, and colour of euery diuerse thing, conteyned in the perfect body of MAN: with certain knowledge of the Symmetrie, figure, waight, Characterization, and due locall motion, of any parcel of the sayd body, assigned: and of Nũbers, to the sayd parcel appertainying. This, is the one part of the Definition, mete for this place: sufficient to notifie, the particularitie, and excellency of the Arte: and why it is, here ascribed to the Mathematicals.[1]

In advocating the necessity of finding a proper new name for his "Arte of Artes", John Dee grounded his project on the widely held conception of the human body

1 John Dee, *Mathematicall Praeface to Elements of Geometrie of Euclid of Megara* [1570], The Project Gutenberg Ebooks, Etext-No: 22062, Release date: July 13, 2007, p. 41. URL: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22062/22062-h/22062-h.htm.

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as "an abstract or model of the world" (in the concise terms of Bacon),[2] and hence on its centrality in articulating the relation among earthly and heavenly elements:

Yf the description of the heauenly part of the world, had a peculier Art, called *Astronomie:* If the description of the earthly Globe, hath his peculier Arte, called *Geographie.* If the Matching of both, hath his peculier Arte, called *Cosmographie:* Which is the Descriptiõ of the whole, and vniuersall frame of the world: Why should not the description of him, who is the Lesse world: and, frõ the beginning called *Microcosmus* (that is, *The Lesse World.*) [...] haue his peculier Art? And be called the *Arte of Artes* [or Anthropographie].[3]

As a consequence he concluded his proposal optimistically, envisaging an integrated approach, based on the cooperation of the different branches of knowledge, as well as of knowledge both ancient and new, to the understanding of the human being:

The Anatomistes will restore to you, some part: the Physiognomistes, some: The Chyromantistes some. The Metaposcopistes, some: The excellent, *Albert Durer*, a good part: the Arte of perspectiue, will somewhat, for the Eye, helpe forward: *Pythagoras*, *Hypocrates, Plato, Galenus, Meletius*, & many other (in certaine thinges) will be Contributaries. And farder, the Heauen, the Earth, and all other Creatures, will eche shew, and offer their Harmonius seruice [...]. The outward Image, and vew hereof: to the Art of *Zographie* and Painting, to Sculpture, and Architecture [...]. Looke in *Vitruvius* [...] Look in *Albertus Durerus*, *De Symmetria humani Corporis.* Looke in [...] *De Occulta Philosophia.* Consider the *Arke of Noe.* And by that, wade farther. Remember the *Delphicall Oracle NOSCE TEIPSVM* (Knowe thy selfe) so long agoe pronounced [...] New Artes, dayly rise vp: and there was no such order taken, that, All Artes, should in one age, or in one land, or of one man, be made Knowen to the world. Let vs embrace the giftes of God, and wayes to wisedome, in this time of grace, from aboue, continually bestowed on them, who thankefully will receiue them: *Et bonis Omnia Cooperabuntur in bonum.*[4]

"Anthropographie", or the "description" of man, as it was prompted by John Dee, was both a transdiscipline and a field of enquiry imagined on the model of the new cartography, an 'Art' he had studied on the continent with such outstanding cosmographers as Ortelius and Mercator. In an age of swift advancement of knowledge ("New Artes, dayly rise up"), this field needed to be conceptualized anew. The aim of 'Anthropographie' was to provide – in analogy with

2 Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* [1605], in *The Advancement of Learning* and *New Atlantis*, ed. by Arthur Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 105.

3 Dee, pp. 41–2.

4 Dee, p. 42.

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more precise and experimental branches of knowledge – an 'Art' (or science) which might properly map or re-map the human being/body in an age in which the understanding of man and woman was becoming increasingly complex due to the so-called 'scientific revolution' and hence, to new ways of knowing.[5]

The ever expanding territories, or writings, of the human were being annexed, antonomastically, in Dee's monumental library at Mortlake, a library unique in its size. According to the 1583 catalogue, it housed between three and four thousand printed books and manuscripts, in twenty-one different languages, universally encompassing every aspect of classical, medieval, and Renaissance culture. In addition the scientist could boast a number of mathematical and astronomical instruments, maps, globes, optical glasses, rare plants and a collection of fossils. As William Sherman has written, "The Bibliotheca Mortlacensis must be seen as much more than a collection of books. Like many of the period's larger libraries it must be considered part of a more general place of knowledge, in which the books coexisted with laboratories, gardens, and cabinets of curiosities".[6] The site was made accessible to a wide range of scientists, humanists, and statesmen, who often visited Dee's library on a scholarly residential basis: Robert Recorde, the founder of the English school of mathematics, Thomas Digge, promoter of the Copernican theory, and then Bacon, Ralegh, Hakluyt, Drake, Thomas Digges, William Camden, Sir Philip Sidney and the Earl of Leicester among others – Shakespeare, perhaps?

In the universalizing context of this ideal Renaissance library (whose best prototype on the continent was Ficino's Platonic Academy in Florence, followed, in 1571, by Cosimo's Biblioteca Medicea in the architectonical setting planned by Michelangelo; all magnificently phantasized in Greenaway's *Prospero's Books*), Dee's proposal of an 'Anthropographie' appears as a compound of libraries and of shifting or overlapping paradigms. Like the new European Renaissance cartography, it seems to be conceived as "a palimpsest to be endlessly elaborated and scribbled over".[7]

It is not my concern here to assess the degree of success Dee's term gained in his age. Dee's influence at court and among contemporary scientists was enormous, although constantly undermined by an enduring suspicion that he was a

---

5 Surprisingly, no attention is paid to John Dee in the two insightful recent studies on these topics. See Elizabeth Spiller, *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and *Science, Literature and Rhetoric in Early Modern England*, ed. by Juliet Cummins and David Burchell (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007).

6 William H. Sherman, *John Dee. The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), p. 36.

7 John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 157.

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sorcerer. At the time he wrote his *Praeface to Euclid* he had already suffered this allegation, and he was so enraged that he took the opportunity to intersperse it with one of his self-vindicative outbursts. But certainly, his passion for hermetism and occultism in no way diminished his contribution to scientific learning at an age in which – as in the case of Shakespeare's Prospero, probably modeled on the famous scholar – the magician could exchange roles with the Baconian scientist, the providentialist Neoplatonist, and the playwright, astronomers could still double as astrologers, and chemists as alchemists.

However, what is important for the purposes of my introduction to this volume is the fact that Dee's transdiscipline offers a vivid instance of Renaissance cooperation among 'Artes' (what we now distinguish into science and humanities), as well as an indication of the effort being made towards a reshaping of knowledge in an age of changing epistemological paradigms. Indeed, Dee's *Praeface* seems to dictate a useful transnational and interdisciplinary agenda (numbers, anatomy, physiognomy, magic, perspective, sculpture, architecture, Agrippa, Dürer, Vitruvius, Leon Battista Alberti, etcetera) for any culturalist, or new-historicist (or whichever other critical) study of the interfacing of science, literature and humanities in Renaissance culture.

The "defence of Learning" against the "errors of learned men which hinder the progress and credit of learning", and hence against Divines, magic, the authority of verbal assumptions and the vices of rhetoric, was one of the principal themes of the scientific thought of Francis Bacon. Nonetheless his critique did not affect his theory of knowledge, and particularly "the knowledge of ourselves", which in his *Advancement of Learning* (1605), he likewise conceived organically in the terms of a communicating and interconnected venous system:

> And generally let this be a rule, that all partitions of knowledges be accepted rather for lines and veins than for sections and separations; and that the continuance and entireness of knowledge be preserved. For the contrary hereof hath made particular sciences to become barren, shallow, and erroneous, while they have not been nourished and maintained from the common fountain. [...] So we see also that the science of medicine if it be destitute and forsaken by natural philosophy, it is not much better than an empirical practice.[8]

Both John Dee and Francis Bacon, from their respective angles, help us define the regime of cooperation, or permeability (to borrow a highly connoted Greenblattian term),[9] among the different domains of knowledge that characterized

8 Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning,* p. 102.

9 See especially Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

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the Renaissance episteme.[10] Their organic model of knowledge also invites and supports the interfacing approach between literature and science variously adopted by the authors of this volume in addressing Shakespeare's own 'anthropographie'.

But why the Roman Shakespeare?

Ancient Rome has always been considered a compendium of City and World, the summary of different forms of government, different cultures and races, contaminations and hybridisms. In the Renaissance, an era of epistemic fractures, when the clash between the new science (Copernicus, Galileo, Vesalius, Bacon, etcetera) and the authority of classical and religious texts produced the very notion of modernity, the extended and expanding geography of Ancient Rome becomes, for Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, a privileged arena for questioning the nature of bodies and the place they hold in a changing order of the world and universe.

Francis Bacon – the herald of a new knowledge – lavishly acknowledged the exemplarity of Rome when in *The Advancement of Learning* he compared the progress of learning at the time of the two first 'Caesars' to that of his own age under the patronage of Elizabeth and James I:

[…] the Romans never ascended to that height of empire, till the time they had ascended to the height of other arts. For in the time of the two first Caesars, which had the art of government in great perfection, there lived the best poet, Virgilius Maro; the best historiographer, Titus Livius; the best antiquary, Marcus Varro; and the best orator, Marcus Cicero, that to the memory of man are known. […] Let this therefore serve for answer to politiques, which in their humorous severity, or in their feigned gravity, have presumed to throe imputations upon learning; which redargution nevertheless (save that we know not whether our labours may extend to other ages) were not needful for the present, in regard of the love and reverence towards learning, which the example and countenance of two so learned princes, Queen Elizabeth and your Majesty, being as Castor and Pollux, *lucida sidera*, stars of excellent light and most benign influence, hath wrought in all men of place and authority in our nation.[11]

Rome, as we see, whether it be Bacon's or Shakespeare's, could serve to mediate a manifold range of issues. It could be used as a reservoir of *exempla exsecranda*,

10 On this range of issues see also Manfred Pfister's 'Introduction', in *The Renaissance and the Dialogue Between Science, Art, and Literature*, ed. by Klaus Bergdolt and Manfred Pfister, Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissance-forschung, xxvii (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, forthcoming).

11 Bacon, p.16. See also chapter VII.1 (First Book) devoted to 'Human Proofs of the Dignity of Learning – Heathen Apotheosis of Inventors, Civilizing Quality of Learning, the Learned Ruler in Peace and War', pp. 43 – 54.

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but also as a model of cultural authority, or better as an argument useful to negotiate new space for new forms of knowledge, especially if wrought, as Bacon profusely does, page after page (especially in the First Book, VII.1), in the spirit of *translatio imperii*.

As the work of the authors of this volume stands to prove, Rome for the Roman Shakespeare is both world and cosmos, a privileged globalized arena in which to deal with the Renaissance expanding territories of the human; an authoritative world map against which Shakespeare is able to define or redefine the perimeter of his 'globe' and of his own 'anthropographie'. It is not purely coincidental that the first play to be performed at the Globe when it opened in 1599 was *Julius Caesar*.

This volume is not concerned solely with the re-interrogated human body of men and women. Drawing on the rich geography of the Roman Shakespeare, the essays of this volume variously address the way the different bodies of the earthly and heavenly spheres are conceptualized in the economy of the Aristotelian *scala naturae*, or chain of being, that is, the authoritative way of interpreting the natural world in its relation with the universe in Shakespeare's time and in early modern European culture. More precisely, the authors investigate the way bodies are fashioned to suit or deconstruct a culturally articulated providential ladder, and hence the system of analogies which connect earth and heaven. Taken together, the essays show, overtly or covertly, how the *scala naturae*, ideologically appropriated and reinforced in Elizabethan times for the purposes of an affirmative nascent notion of nation/empire, was at the same time becoming increasingly shaky and unstable, precisely because of the epistemic breaches brought about by the new science and the enlarged confines of world and cosmos.

However, what characterizes this volume is the grounding assumption that in the Renaissance episteme, science was still one order among many; and the premise that the enduring analogical way of connecting the microcosm to the macrocosm provided scientists, humanists, sovereigns, and playwrights alike with a shared theory of knowledge and a shared set of tropes. As Elizabeth Spiller has highlighted, "science maintains strong affiliations with poetic fictions because, in ways that are rarely acknowledged, its practice emerges out of a central understanding of art as a basis for producing knowledge. A belief in the made rather than the found character of early modern knowledge unites poets and natural scientists".[12]

As in Dee's 'anthropographie', the early modern re-conceptualization of bodies intersects with a compound of libraries (divine, scientific, humane, poetical), often resulting in the coexistence of competing paradigms and shifting

12 Elizabeth Spiller, *Science, Reading and Renaissance Literature*, p. 2.

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metaphors; a complexity that bears on the methodology (or methodologies) worked out by the single authors of this volume. As a whole, what this book brings to the fore is the underlying issue of porosity, in an age in which learning was verging on a future of disciplines with a distinct status. Such an interconnection is a specific feature of Renaissance culture and is once again emerging as an issue in our present time, when the traditional separation between science and humanities no longer seems to hold up to the demands and complexities of our age.

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Maddalena Pennacchia

A Map of the Essays

Taking my cue from Maria Del Sapio Garbero's introductory essay[1] – in which the early modern activity of mapping the fluctuating confines between traditional humanistic knowledge and the new sciences has just been emphasized – I will try to chart here a route around the multifarious 'bodies' that have been questioned in Shakespeare's Rome by the contributors to this volume. Shakespeare's Roman works – almost a mini-canon within the Canon – consist of four tragedies (*Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus*), a romance (*Cymbeline*), and a poem (*The Rape of Lucrece*) that have all been dealt with in this book.[2]

'Human Bodies' and 'Earthly and Heavenly Bodies' are the two sections into which the editors have divided the essays of this volume, almost reproducing in structure the well-known early modern partition of all matter into micro and macrocosm, two orderly systems which according to analogical thinking not only mirrored each other but were also connected through another conceptual figure, the Aristotelian *scala naturae*, or chain of being, "the authoritative way of interpreting the natural world in its relation with the universe" (Del Sapio Garbero, p. 18).

In the essays included in the first part of this volume, we find a pervasive awareness of the controversial role of the human body as *the* 'measure' of all things known and yet to be known, at a time when that body was being painstakingly questioned and dissected, by the emerging science of medicine in particular. Indeed, the human body was being reconfigured by Renaissance literary men, visual artists and scientists both with an objective eye and an imaginative mind,[3] thus becoming a 'flexible paradigm' capable of casting the

1 See Maria Del Sapio Garbero, 'Introduction. Shakespeare's Rome and Renaissance "Anthropographie"' in this volume.

2 On 'Roman' Shakespeare, see also *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome*, ed. by Maria Del Sapio Garbero (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009).

3 For the ambivalent attitude in Shakespeare's late plays towards sight as both an objective and illusory sense within the context of anatomy and optics, see Maria Del Sapio Garbero,

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shadow of its "self-fashioning"[4] onto the orderly systems of the Earth and Heavens. The trope of the human body is, therefore, pivotal in Shakespeare's Rome, a city that is never represented as a mere historical setting, but as both the place of 'origin' of an inherited humanistic vision of man (and of the world) – a powerful signifying system in itself – and the space of a rationalist 'anatomy' of man (and of the world).

The second part of the volume enlarges the scope to the relationships between the human body and earthly and heavenly spaces. In this perspective, "the historical geography of Rome, a condensation of *urbs* and *orbis*, city and world, might well […] serve as a world-scale stage, a *Theatrum Mundi*, a 'Globe'"[5] within which to reconsider the order of *all* natural bodies. Indeed, the new Geography – which was greatly expanding through the many discovery voyages – together with the new Cosmography – which was shattering the crystal envelope of the heavenly spheres, thus opening the skies to virtual infinity – ,[6] supplied an elastic framework wherein the manifold nascent scientific disciplines could try to fit the bodies they were questioning – stones (proto-geology), plants (botany), animals (zoology), and stars (astronomy) – eventually connecting them to the "paragon"[7] of nature, the human body.

References to the widespread early modern curiosity towards new scientific discoveries and the display of this curiosity on stage characterize all the essays included in the first part of this book which deal with the human body. Many of them specifically discuss the complicity between the anatomy theatre and the playhouse, already brought to the fore by books such as, for instance, Jonathan Sawday's,[8] and they all underscore the European quality of early modern scientific research. In this respect, the role of Italy in European culture acquires new relevance for its being not only, as is well known, the cradle of modern Humanism – with its crucial recovery of classical texts – but also an important site

'Troubled Metaphors: Shakespeare and the Renaissance Anatomy of the Eye', in *The Renaissance and the Dialogue Between Science, Art, and Literature*, ed. by Klaus Bergdolt and Manfred Pfister, Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissance-forschung, xxvii (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, forthcoming).

4 For the concept of self-fashioning see, of course, Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

5 See Del Sapio Garbero, 'Introduction: Performing 'Rome' from the Periphery', in *Identity, Otherness and Empire*, ed. by Maria Del Sapio Garbero, pp. 1 – 15 (pp. 7 – 8).

6 See in particular John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and Gilberto Sacerdoti, *Nuovo cielo. Nuova terra. La rivelazione copernicana di* Antonio e Cleopatra *di Shakespeare* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990).

7 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Harold Jenkins, Arden edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 2.2.307.

8 See Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned. Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

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of the new scientific learning. Padua, the place "of a ground-breaking resurgence of anatomical studies", is a case in point. As Del Sapio Garbero emphasizes (p. 34 f), the University of Padua was the centre of an international community of celebrated physicians and scientists like the Italian Alessandro Benedetti, the Spanish anatomist Juan de Valverde, the Belgian Vesalius, the Englishman William Harvey, who gathered there to practice their art and discuss their ideas, in a stimulating intellectual environment; an environment influenced by the new cosmological perspectives opened up by Copernicus, who studied medicine in Padua in 1501, and Galileo, who held there the chair of mathematics between 1592 and 1610.

Anatomy can indeed be taken as an exemplary case of interfacing between science and the humanities, as Maria Del Sapio Garbero points out in the essay which opens the first part of the volume, 'Anatomy, Knowledge, and Conspiracy: in Shakespeare's Arena with the Words of Cassius'. For Benedetti at the opening of the sixteenth century as well as for Bacon a century later, "the anatomist", she argues, "is both a physician and a philosopher". And it is to a philosopher/ anatomist that Del Sapio Garbero compares the character of Cassius, in *Julius Caesar*, giving him supreme relevance in the dismembering outlook of the play. She, in fact, sees him engaged in "removing the mythological layer of skin from Caesar's body", in the attempt to separate Caesar from Caesarism and transform the conspiracy into a rational act of justice. This kind of philosphical activity is, for Del Sapio, a form of "secular anatomy" as opposed to Antony's "sacred anatomy", which she interprets, instead, as a ritual transformation of Caesar's dead body into a hallowed relic.

The centrality of the human body in the sixteenth century episteme is extensively discussed also in Claudia Corti's 'The Iconic Body: *Coriolanus* and Renaissance Corporeality', in which the author maintains that the reflection on corporeality affects the whole realm of Renaissance culture, from politics (with the question of "the King's two bodies"), to religion (with disputes on the Eucharist), to science (with the creation, in anatomy, of "two complementing paradigms […] the exterior form of the body […] and the interior one"). This "obsession over corporeality" meant, in a theatrical perspective, also an enhancement of the iconic value of bodies on stage, and influenced the writing of such plays as *Coriolanus* where the hero's "materially, carnally overpowering form" speaks for itself, giving corporeal expression to what cannot be said, such as, for instance, a "more or less latent component of *homoeroticism*".

Maurizio Calbi's 'States of Exception: Auto-immunity and the Body-Politic in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*' is dedicated to this same most political play. The author builds his essay on Derrida's metaphor of 'auto-immunity', a metaphor that is both physiological and political ('immunity' was an institution of Roman law). With the aid of Agamben's philosophical concepts of 'state of exception'

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and '*homo sacer*', Calbi sets out to explore the motive of 'ejection' or banishment (and self-banishment) of the hero from the 'body politic' of Rome. In his analysis of the play, Calbi relates Coriolanus's acknowledged function as a "war machine" – a part of Rome's 'immunity system' – with his being "in Volumnia's censuring words, 'too absolute' (3.2.49)", in the sense of "*ab-solutus*, 'un-bound', sovereignly not bound to any specific community and outside the circle of exchanges which is called Rome".

The anatomists' dispute on the correct way of performing their art is the focus of Ute Berns's 'Performing Anatomy in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*'. The author analyses Brutus's and Antony's speeches over Caesar's dead body as if they were "exercises in anatomy". Berns argues that the two performances recall a "specific historical development in the practice of anatomy", when the two separate figures of "surgeon lecturer" and "ostensor" (who were the protagonists of the anatomy lessons in Mundinus's times) were united in the "Professor of Anatomy", a new academic title that was 'conquered' by Vesalius. It was he who inaugurated a new anatomical method that shifted the attention of the audience "from the text read *ex cathedra* to the evidence of the body". The shift can be, therefore, detected in the move from the pulpit, where Brutus delivers his oration "*ex cathedra*", to the market-place, where Antony, at the level of the onstage audience shows Caesar's wounds and directly comments on them.

Bodies were not only anatomized as 'corpses' in the sixteenth century, but also subjected to gruesome, public mutilations that were also spectacular moralizing shows, as Mariangela Tempera reminds us in her '*Titus Andronicus:* Staging the Mutilated Roman Body'. The essay begins with the acknowledgment of the extreme difficulty faced by today's directors in staging the two bloodiest moments of the play, namely scene 3 of Act 2, where the tongueless, handless Lavinia stands bleeding while her uncle comments at length on her wounds, and scene 1 of Act 3 where Titus has his own hand cut off on stage. While examining some of the solutions devised by Deborah Warner, Peter Brook, Silviu Purcarete, Peter Stein, Yukio Ninagawa, Julie Taymor and others, Tempera relates the two scenes to actual public mutilations and to theories of blood circulation current in the sixteenth century.

A sequence of five essays adopting a privileged gender perspective on the 'human' body is ushered in by Antonella Piazza who in her 'Volumnia, the Roman Patroness' states that the absence of fathers in *Coriolanus*, i. e. a generation of old but authoritative men, is a threatening cause of disorientation for the citizens of Rome and for the isolation of the hero. In the play, written under Stuart rule – at a time when James I was implementing a cultural politics intended to strengthen the ideological link between the concepts of 'Father' and 'King' – enormous relevance, power and meaning are given to the presence of the old mother, Volumnia, as *parens patriae* and the only true 'states-man'. When this woman

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literally saves Rome by persuading her son not to destroy the City, she is hailed by both patricians and plebeians of the old and new generations with the ambivalent term of 'Roman Patroness', a patriarchal qualification allowed by her postmenopausal identity.

If Volumnia seems to gain power through her post-menopausal, androgynous condition, mothers in their fertile years must be drastically erased from the hero's story when the purity of Roman 'virtus' is at stake. In her essay, '"From me was Posthumus ript": *Cymbeline* and the Extraordinary Birth', Iolanda Plescia focuses on the strange vision dreamt by Posthumous in prison, a dream through which the 'miraculousness' of his birth is revealed to him, as a delivery obtained through the medical incision of his mother's womb. Plescia starts from this textual fact to enlarge her reflection to changing early modern perceptions of child-birth and midwifery in an age in which a new figure was violently penetrating the "'protective circle'" of "women surrounding a mother", i. e. "the male doctor". It was he who could rip/rape the female womb with his knife to extract a (male) child "not born of woman", thus 'civilizing', or de-feminizing, the act of birth.

And a knife is precisely the instrument chosen by brave Lucretia to cut her skin open and cleanse her body of the pollution of rape. In Barbara Antonucci's 'Blood in Language: the Galenic Paradigm of Humours in *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Titus Andronicus*', the author points out how in both works "the female body becomes the site of a process of purification that ultimately deletes both the stain and the woman's body". Blood as a 'humour' actually running in the veins seems to be the real protagonist of the poem, in which Shakespeare apparently adopts the "Galenic paradigm of blood and bloodletting as curative remedy". In *Titus Andronicus*, on the other hand, when Lavinia is raped and mutilated, the abundant letting of her blood does not cause her death nor, speaking the truth, does it cause the public purification of her body, which will be celebrated instead by her father in a rite aimed at "disinfect[ing] Rome's (political) body and […] defend[ing] the Roman bloodline".

Death and a beautiful female body are once again paired in Paola Faini's 'Cleopatra's Corporeal Language', where the author compares visual representations of Cleopatra's death in sixteenth century German and Italian paintings to Shakespeare's lines for his heroine, in particular the last ones, uttered when she is preparing herself for the kiss of the asp. The most recurrent body-parts in Cleopatra's speech, referring to her own body, are *eyes*, *hands*, but above all *lips*. For Faini, the shift in *Antony and Cleopatra* from image to word, from eyes that look to lips that speak – i. e. Cleopatra's "corporeal language" – can be traced back to Plutarch's narrative, which Shakespeare 'translated' into dramatic language; it is there that a change of focus can already be detected "from the

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queen's physical beauty to the attraction of her charming voice and witty discourse".

Simona Corso's essay, 'What Calphurnia knew. *Julius Caesar* and the Language of Dreams' closes the sequence on gendered bodies. Here the author speculates about Shakespeare's knowledge of the rich canon of dream theories and dream narratives circulating in sixteenth century Europe. While at first Calphurnia's might seem only a variation on the traditional theme of the prophetic dream, upon closer reading it reveals its crucial dramaturgic function. The dream, in fact, prompts a series of conflicting hermeneutical acts that bring to the fore Shakespeare's concern for "the difficulty of deciphering reality; the exasperating coexistence of different interpretations and points of view; the frailty of human knowledge". That all this should spring from a woman's word is all the more meaningful.

But where does reality end and where do dreams begin? This is the question addressed by Viola Papetti to human and fairy bodies in her essay, 'Under the sign of Ovid. Motion and Instance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'. As Papetti reminds us, Ovid tied his name to the glory of imperial Rome, but "while the geopolitical body of the Roman Empire has been destroyed by time, the poetic body of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is fully alive". In the most Ovidian of Shakespeare's comedies, the moments of metamorphosis – including Bottom's, inspired by Apuleio's *Golden Ass* – as well as all other frantic actions, take place in a symbolic space iconically connoted by the number four, a symbol of stability that may lead the audience to foresee a conciliatory conclusion.

The world of seeming and the world of being compete for the bodies on stage in *Coriolanus* and *Cymbeline*, directing their *actio*, i. e. their corporeal rhetoric, as Michele Marrapodi explains in his essay, '*Mens sana in corpore sano:* the Rhetoric of the Body in Shakespeare's Roman and Late Plays'. The author shows how in the Roman plays and in the later works associated with Latinity and Italian humanistic culture, such as the romances, corporeality acquires a specific moral usage, either embracing *tout court* the virtues of *romanitas*, as in the figure of the inflexible Roman hero, Coriolanus, or making them emerge from a dialectic between opposing values, namely English virtues vs. Italian vices. This is seen enacted by the contrast between Imogen's truthfulness and Iachimo's falsness.

The first section of the volume closes with Alessandro Serpieri's essay, 'Body and History in the Political Rhetoric of *Julius Caesar*'. Pointing out that from the very first Shakespearean Roman play, *Titus Andronicus*, the body is "conspicuously on stage, in the most various and truculent ways", the author selects two foundational 'dead bodies' in the Roman canon, Lucrece's and Caesar's, which mark, respectively, the beginning and the end of the Republic. Over these two iconically powerful 'corpses', other characters fight the battle for political

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control. The dead bodies of Lucrece and Caesar are, in fact, given voice on the historical scene by those who are most skilled in the art of rhetoric and who are capable of reversing the fate of dramatic action as well as that of political systems. In the Roman plays, therefore, even more than in the plays inspired by the English *Chronicles*, Serpieri states, "Shakespeare seems to be fascinated with the catastrophic functions of the body in the unfolding of great epoch-making events".

The second part of the volume gathers together essays devoted to earthly and heavenly bodies in the context of changing geographies and cosmographies. In an age of adventurous travels on untrodden routes, Nature could no longer be confined to the steady knowledge of it that was transmitted by such classical texts as Pliny's celebrated encyclopedic *Naturalis Historia*, in which natural bodies were all included and ordered according to the principle of the Aristotelian *scala naturae*. Even though these books retained their authoritative status, and were, generally speaking, vital for the development of early sciences, their approach and order was gradually being revised. One reason was the strong need to take into account the infinite variety of new plant and animal species previously unknown in Europe that were being discovered in the New World and all over the globe. Nature was revealing itself to be more complex than ever, and boundaries between the different levels of the *scala naturae* were shifting. Therefore, a comparative analysis of 'new and old' natural bodies belonging to the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, as well as the heavenly bodies – whose aspect apparently changed when observed from the other side of the world – had to be built through a combination of direct observation and classical knowledge.

This general framework is illustrated by Manfred Pfister's '"Rome and Her Rats". *Coriolanus* and the Early Modern Crisis of Distinction between Man, Beast and Monster'. Here the author highlights how "the crucial issue of differences and distinctions between man and beast" was explored by "both the travellers to new worlds beyond the seas, encountering what seemed to them borderline cases between the human and the bestial, and early comparative students of human and animal anatomy and ethology". In this perspective, *Coriolanus* appears as a work in line with early anthropo-zoological observations, since it is a play obsessed with investigating the special status and the limits of man in his relationship with his bestial other. Coriolanus's Rome, the paradigm and model of an advanced civilization, becomes in Pfister's view, a privileged theatrical site for acting out the unresolved separation between the human and the bestial, a paradox adding a deeper tragic quality to the protagonist's fate.

The passage of boundaries in a perspective that is both geographically and morally meaningful is crucial also to John Gillies's '"Mighty Space": the Ordinate

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and the Exorbitant in Two Shakespeare Plays'. In this essay the author explores the "Roman figure of 'exorbitance'" which literally meant passing the borders of the ordained world or going beyond the Pillars of Hercules. Since Hercules is also the hero who chose between the paths of virtue and vice, his very name conferred an (ambiguous) moral meaning to voyages beyond the limits of the Mediterranean sea. In Gillies's view, the topos of 'exorbitance' is questioned not only in *Julius Caesar*, but also in *The Merchant of Venice*, as it is witnessed, among other things, by the presence of a virtuous character named Portia in both plays. The Roman Empire and the Venetian mercantile world are therefore compared in order to bring to the fore "the *normative* side of the exorbitance idea, that is to say, how exorbitance is imagined from the standpoint of that which it violates".

The relationship linking travel and the subversion of hierarchies between white and black bodies, male and female gender, civilized and savage societies, is at the core of Gilberta Golinelli's 'Floating Boarders: (Dis)-locating Otherness in the Female Body and the Question of Miscegenation in *Titus Andronicus*'. Golinelli argues that the sixteenth century travelogues dealing with exotic female warriors and "amazons" in the New World betray ancestral anxieties about "a female dominion that could both subvert political and sexual hierarchy, and give the female the power to control birth". These fears surface in *Titus Andronicus*, where the savage white Queen of Goths, Tamora, after marrying the Emperor of Rome, gives birth to her black lover's son, threatening the value of patrilinearity and spreading the 'infection' of otherness within the very body of the Roman civilization.

Infection and geographical location is, from another perspective, also the topic of Andrea Bellelli's 'Where do diseases come from? Reflections on Shakespeare's "contagion of the south"'. Starting from Coriolanus's curse on his coward compatriots during the siege of Corioles, where he invokes the "contagion of the south" on them, the author conducts a minute survey of medical knowledge about epidemic diseases in Shakespeare's time. He points out that such knowledge was based on the alternative theories of 'miasms' and 'contagion', which lasted well into the eighteenth century. Considering the symptoms described in Shakespeare's lines, Bellelli ventures the hypothesis that the contagion mentioned by Coriolanus could be 'syphilis', while querying if there could be any medical or 'theatrical' reason "for assigning a specific geographical origin" to this sexually transmitted disease.

Proceeding further down the chain of being, lower than man and animals, there are plants. Botany was the most developed and practiced of the natural sciences due to its association with medicine and pharmacopoeias. It is to a psychoactive plant, which grows in the Roman countryside and in many Mediterranean areas, that Giovanni Antonini and Gloria Grazia Rosa devote their essay, 'Shakespeare and the Mandragora'. As the authors point out, "because of

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its curious bifurcations which give it a resemblance to the human figure (male and female, corresponding to *mandragora vernalis* and *mandragora autumnalis*, respectively), and its identity as a psychoactive drug, mandragora has long been recognized as a 'magic plant'". However, in the sixteenth century, thanks both to new translations of classical authors like Dioscorides and the publication of herbals, mandragora came to be gradually recognized for its anaesthetic and sleep-inducing pharmacological properties. The cultural passage from a magical to a scientific perception of mandragora is detected by the authors in Shakespeare's way of referring to the plant's characteristics, which becomes more precise, compared to the earlier plays, in *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, namely at the turn of the sixteenth century.

At an even lower level than plants in the *scala naturae*, we find the mineral kingdom with its inanimate stones. In my own essay, 'The Stones of Rome: Early Earth Sciences in *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*', I make a survey of the 'scientific' knowledge about earthquakes and mineral formation current in Shakespeare's time mainly built upon the translations of Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* and Seneca's *Naturales Questiones.* These earth phenomena, I argue, are used in two Roman plays, namely *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, as objective correlatives of the political life of ancient Rome, thanks to an interfacing process between the scientific observation and an imaginative response to it.

But is the matter at the base of the *scala naturae* really inanimate? According to the theory of 'abiogenesis', dating back to presocratic thought and embraced in Shakespeare's time by Giordano Bruno, this is *not* the case, since matter is 'animated' by a 'fire' which is "the source of universal life and the source of universal motion", as Gilberto Sacerdoti points out in his essay, 'Spontaneous Generation and New Astronomy in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*'. In this respect, particularly meaningful, for the author, is scene 7 of Act 2 in which not only are crocodiles said to be bred out of the Egyptian mud by the action of the Egyptian sun, but the world is also said to "go round" in the 'energetic dance' of the "Egyptian Bacchanal", as if celebrating the silenced truth of the Copernican revolution. In this scene Sacerdoti sees strong traces of Bruno's thought, since "the mobility of the earth was due, for [Bruno], to an energy of life, an intrinsic principle, a soul, which is the immanent cause of both its movement and its generative powers".

There is an explicit link between Sacerdoti's interpretation of the above mentioned scene and Nancy Isenberg's closing essay 'Dancing with the Stars in *Antony and Cleopatra*' that takes us from the bottom of the *scala naturae* directly to its uppermost rung. For Isenberg discusses the same Bacchanal dance, taking as her starting point Sacerdoti's interpretation, but examining it in relation to Renaissance views on the Cosmic Dance. "Thanks to a Pythagorean kinship of

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numbers and proportions, the harmony of the celestial spheres", Isenberg explains, "was reproduced in the human microcosm" in elite social dancing, thus authorizing it as a powerful political practice in the Renaissance. The staging of the Egyptian Bacchanal in Shakespeare's play, however, for all its potential cosmological significance and the elitist identity of its dancers is, for Isenberg, utterly at odds with the highly influential political discourse of dancing bodies at that time. The 'dizzy' circle choreography of the Bacchanal is, in Isenberg's view, a sort of antimasque which, with no masque of harmony restored following it, reflects the deepening crisis in the authority of aristocratic political entitlement in an expanding world and universe.

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Part I Human Bodies

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Maria Del Sapio Garbero

Anatomy, Knowledge, and Conspiracy: in Shakespeare's Arena with the Words of Cassius

Coliseus sive Theatrum

'Coliseus sive Theatrum' is the inscription of an engraving representing a classical theatrical structure that circulated in a 1511 edition of Plautus's *Comedies* and in a few other Venetian Renaissance editions of Latin plays. If, as some critics suggest, the illustrator of Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543) used that engraving as an inspiration for the amphitheatre of the title page, he implicitly brought under the same heading the new surgical display of the body interior. The amphitheatre stood for the form of the world and the set of Vitruvian geometric relations along which the human *fabrica*, architecturally conceived, was newly investigated from an anatomical point of view in humanist Europe. As such it was appropriated as a cognitive space.[1] A similar caption, with the same equation underscored by antonomasia, also appeared on the upper left side of a large etching of the Roman Colosseum itself, dated 1590 ca. and published by the Flemish engraver Nicolas Van Aelst: 'Theatrum sive Coliseum Romanum'. Was Shakespeare aware that his characters were moving in this same highly paradigmatic circle when he produced his Roman plays?[2]

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre has been considered by John Gillies as a sort of analogue for the "cosmographic imagination which produced the world maps of Ortelius and Mercator". He has also shown how nowhere more than in the Roman plays, and particularly in *Antony and Cleopatra*, is Shakespeare's play-

1 See Giovanna Ferrari, 'Public Anatomy Lessons and the Carnival: The Anatomy Theatre of Bologna', *Past and Present*, 117 (1987), 50 – 106 (p. 84 f); Franco Ruffini, *Teatri prima del Teatro. Visioni dell'edifico e della scena tra Umanesimo e Rinascimento* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1983), pp. 47 – 53; Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned. Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 69 f. Differently from others, Sawday has indicated Bramante's Tempietto as an alternative source of inspiration for Vesalius's title page.

2 Interestingly, a Colosseum featured also, majestically, as a theatrical place *par excellence*, at the top of the title page of Ben Jonson's 1616 in folio edition of his *Workes*.

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house, the 'Globe', made to coincide with "a world map in its own right".[3] Nowhere more than in the Roman plays, I would like to add, is the universalizing claim entailed in the very name of Shakespeare's playhouse made to coincide with a globalized anatomizing arena, in a period when anatomy had championed and gained its space and dignity by presenting itself as a science combining empirical observation and philosophical speculation, *evidentia* and spectacularized oratorical production of its bodies, thus affirming itself as a sort of keyword, a pervading heuristic model for both science and humanities in early modern Europe.

It is no coincidence that the first play to be performed at the Globe in 1599 was *Julius Caesar*; the play in which a most powerful anatomical "process of dismemberment and reinscription"[4] takes place. It is my suggestion in this essay that the dissecting method of anatomy belongs to Cassius, more than to those with whom he later executes Caesar's body, and in a manner quite different from that of Antony who eventually takes control of Caesar's bleeding body to transform it, through the "rhetoric of martyrdom",[5] from "a savage spectacle" (3.1.223) into a "piteous spectacle" (3.2.195).[6]

But before entering Shakespeare's Roman dissecting arena with the anatomizing words of Cassius, I would like to give physical visibility to the heuristic space made available by the anatomists, with the guidance of Alessandro Benedetti, the author of *Historia corporis humani sive Anatomice,* first printed in Venice in 1502. Benedetti was a physician and anatomist at the University of Padua, "fair Padua, nursery of arts", where Shakespeare's Lucentio, in *The Taming of the Shrew,* purports to "institute / a course of learning and ingenious studies" (1.1.8 – 9). Padua is also renowned in this play for "the mathematics and the metaphysics" (1.1.37).[7] However, Padua in Renaissance Europe was mainly the site of a ground-breaking resurgence of anatomical studies, the place where quite a few acclaimed European physicians and anatomists studied and taught: the Englishman William Harvey (the discoverer of blood circulation), and before him the Spanish anatomist Juan de Valverde, and the Belgian Vesalius, the author of the most famous *De humani corporis fabrica* published in 1543, the same year when, as a parallel to this growing early modern cartographical conscience of the

3 John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 70, p. 90 and pp. 99 – 122.

4 Richard Wilson, 'Introduction', in *Julius Caesar,* ed. by Richard Wilson, New Casebooks (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 1 – 27 (p. 17).

5 Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History. The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 222.

6 Quotations from *Julius Caesar* in this essay refer to the Arden edition, ed. by David Daniell (London: Thomson Learning, 2003).

7 Quotations from *The Taming of the Shrew* refer to the Oxford edition of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare,* ed. by W. J. Craig (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 243 – 69.

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body, Copernicus (he himself linked to the intellectual ambience of Padua) announced the good news of a new map of the universe.

I do not know whether Shakespeare ever heard of the less famous Italian Alessandro Benedetti and of his pioneering *Historia corporis humani sive Anatomice* (which circulated fairly widely in Europe in a Paris edition and four others in German speaking countries), but here, in Benedetti's work, we find the first envisaging of a movable anatomy theatre and the proposal of dissection as an instructive (or 'moral') theatrical performance worthy of attracting not simply physicians, but humanists, and governors like Maximilian I of Hapsburg (soon to be elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1508) and his Venetian imperial ambassador Christoph von Schrovenstein, the dedicatees of Benedetti's highly esteemed book of anatomy. Benedetti's anatomy theatre, which he imagined, in a Roman gladiatorial style, as an amphitheatre, like those of Rome or Verona – which he mentions – to be installed for the occasion in a well-aired room, will be transformed at the turn of the sixteenth century, in Shakespeare's times, into a permanent indoor structure by Fabrizio d'Acquapendente, the explorer of the venous system, and he himself a surgeon and anatomist at the University of Padua where his anatomy theatre is still visible.

Fig. 1: Fabrizio d'Acquapendente, Anatomy Theatre (1594), Padua

But let us follow Benedetti's instructions for the arrangement and use of his removable anatomy theatre, a sort of pre-Shakesperean "wooden O" (apparently designed with the Roman arena of Verona, his city of birth, in mind):

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[...] the only corpses which may be legitimately claimed for dissection are those belonging to people of humble origins, or unknown persons, from faraway lands, in order to avoid offending neighbours and bringing shame on family members. The best bodies are those that have been hanged, preferably middle-aged, neither too lean nor too fat. [...] The best period to proceed is the coldest time of winter, so that the cadavers do not start to putrefy immediately. The best location for a dissection is a large, well-aired room, in which a temporary theatre will be set up, with seats placed round it in a circle (such as the ones which may be seen in Rome and Verona), big enough to contain the number of spectators and prevent the crowd from disturbing the wound surgeons, who are in charge of the dissections. They must be skilled, and they must have already performed frequent dissections. The seats will be assigned according to rank; to this purpose, only one warden will be present, who shall check and arrange everything. A number of custodians will be necessary, so that they may keep away the meddlers who will try to get in, and two trustworthy treasurers, who shall procure all that is necessary using the money collected. The dissection procedure will require razors, knives, hooks, drills and gimlets (the Greeks call them 'chenicia'), as well as sponges to promptly remove blood during the dissection, scissors, and basins; torches must be on hand in case it should get dark.[8]

And then finally in his opening one-page description of his theatre, and with the timing we would appreciate in a director and playwright, Benedetti turns his attention to the corpse, which he makes appear as a focal point in the middle of a series of concentric rings of benches, displayed and offered to the inspective gaze of the onlookers for a prescriptive theatrical time; the time established by the unappealable natural law of putrefaction – or else, the natural time elapsing from life in death and putrefaction –, which alone decides, as in a sort of new Aristotelian unity, the type of conjunction between action and place.

The cadaver shall be placed in the middle of the theatre, on a rather high table, in a well-lit and comfortable place for the dissectors. It will be necessary to establish a time for the beginning and the end of appointments, so that the work may be completed before the body's putrefaction.[9]

For all its brevity, all is arranged as if with the care of a theatrical impresario, and with the awareness of a playwright: the architecture of the anatomy class, the disposition of spectators, the preoccupation with details such as the funding public, box office, personnel, time of production. Benedetti's refoundation of anatomical studies is tantamount to the construction of his theatre and to its

8 Alessandro Benedetti, *Historia corporis humani sive Anatomice*, Latin/Italian bilingual edition, ed. by Giovanna Ferrari (Firenze: Giunti, 1998), pp. 84 – 5 (the English translation of this and subsequent quotations is mine).

9 Benedetti, p. 85.

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Roman circular shape; a shape which implies publicity, the widening (although strictly regulated) audience of an amphitheatre; an amphitheatre which while offering an arena-like view of the uncanny gladiatorial dissecting spectacle, orchestrates with its very circular form a forensic speculation on the human body, a moral philosophical dispute: that is, a comparison among different ancient sources, and between the authority of classical or divine texts and direct observation.

In fact the anatomist, as he is presented by Benedetti, at the opening of the sixteenth century, and as it will be in Renaissance Europe for a good part of the seventeenth century, is both a physician *and* a philosopher. For him, as it will still be for Francis Bacon[10] a century later, anatomy is a useful branch of natural philosophy, whether it be to confirm or gradually dismantle the epochal, highly textualized order of the human body in its codified correspondences with the world and the universe. Anatomy "is grounded in philosophy", Benedetti writes, "if it wants to be of any use to medicine; in it we perceive the admirable, divine work of God our Creator". And "You", he says addressing his dedicatee, the emperor Maximilian of Austria, "will thus more readily turn your gaze towards the forms of the universe, of which man is but a smaller replica".[11]

Differently from later books of anatomy, Benedetti's work was not supported by illustrations. But Benedetti was an accomplished classicist and a physician highly renowned for his oratorical skills. He knew how to make space for his discipline, by exploiting the ennobling equivalence between the body-interior and the God-like architecture of the universe:

> You should not find it objectionable [...] that I have invited you to observe a heap of entrails, since, as they say, there is nothing in nature that is not worthy of admiration and wonder. Indeed, Heraclitus himself, while sitting next to a stove to keep warm, urged those who were hesitating and standing back to draw nearer: 'Do you not know – he said – that the immortal gods are here?' For it is certain that the divinity of nature is hidden in all places, and the soul pervades everything.[12]

Let us remember in passing that dissection, as Benedetti takes pains to point out, started from the belly with a first cross-like incision; and that the vision of entrails constituted the onlookers' first encounter with the body-interior. Yet every body part was to be considered part of a hierarchical order replicating the

10 See Francis Bacon's IX chapter of *The Advancement of Learning* [1605] ('Human Philosophy, or the Knowledge of Ourselves'), *The Advancement of Learning* and *New Atlantis*, edited by Arthur Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 102, and my Introduction in this volume.

11 Benedetti, pp. 76–7.

12 Benedetti, pp. 120–21.

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providential design of nature and universe. Future illustrators of anatomy books, such as those who worked for Vesalius or Estienne, will try their best to emphasize from a secular perspective the commonplace God-like structure of the human frame, "the beauty of / the world, the paragon of animals", in Hamlet's derisive words (2.2.307 – 308), by resorting to the ennobling wrapping, or posture, of classic statuary.

98 *Of the Parts belonging to* 3. BOOKE.

TABVLA II.

The lower belly, with the vpper Membrane of the Kall torn vp, and turned about the outside of the Chest and the stomacke; the stomack also remoued out of his seat to the Chest, that the lower Membrane of the kall might the better bee perceiued; as also the guts remayning in their naturall position, and a part of the spleen, are herein deciphered.

aaaa. The inside of the vpper membrane of the kal, which some call *alam superiorem* the vpper wing.

bb. The stomack bursting out couered with the vpper membrane of the kall.

cc. The lower membrane of the kall, or his nether wing gathered vpward.

d Vessels passing to the spleen which appeareth bunching vnder the *Omentum* at b.

e The trunke of the gate vein.

f The spleenick branch of the port veine.

g The bladder of vrine.

h The seate of the spleen.

i The vessels called *Vrachus*, by which the Infant is nourished in the wombe.

kk The 2. vmbilicall arteries.

Fig. 2: A. Vesalius, *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543), anatomy table
Fig. 3: H. Crooke, *Microcosmographia* (1615), 2nd ed. 1618, anatomy table

In fact, if not the object of a religious/ideological contemplation, the still pulsating early modern human entrails were wrapped in their Renaissance Greek-Roman allure, as if in a common endeavour of artists and anatomists alike to maintain the difficult analogy, while probing into the body-interior to be increasingly bemused by its complexity, and by the skeleton within.

However, as late as 1615 Helkiah Crooke still celebrated in the very title of his late Renaissance compendium of European anatomy, *Microcosmographia. A Description of the Body of Man*, the ancient long-standing assumption that the human body was a *microcosmus*, "an abstract or model of the world […]", in the (obliquely) critical synthesis offered by Francis Bacon in 1605, "as if there were to be found in man's body certain correspondences and parallels, which should have respect to all varieties of things, as stars, planets, minerals, which are extant in the great world".[13]

As in Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (where the traditional *exemplar* position of human beings in the *scala naturae* is redefined in alimentary/

13 Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, p. 105.

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nutritional terms), the highly textualized order of the early modern human body turns into a territory of increasingly conflicting paradigms and shifting metaphors, as an effect of the inquisitive eye of the anatomist. The body thus turns into a battleground, as has been shown by a fast growing scholarship on early modern bodies.[14]

Indeed, as may be seen in the painting "Skeletons" by Agostino Veneziano, made after Rosso Fiorentino's "Skeletons", painters and anatomists alike explored the undiscovered lands of the human body with a book in their hands, whether sacred or secular or both, while trying nonetheless to invert the hierarchy between ancient sources and direct observation, between the authority of ancient natural philosophy and dissection as the ultimate source of knowledge, and as the path towards the discovery of the "true cause": Cassius's claim in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar.* This inversion is brashly highlighted in Vesalius's frontispiece to his *Humani corporis fabrica* (see in this volume p. 103), in the isolation of the onlooker concentrated on his book, while all the others are intent on looking directly at the real 'fabric' of the human body as it is being deployed by the anatomist.[15]

All this meant finding a way in territories which needed to be cartographized anew, or remapped and renamed, as Benedetti, a contemporary of Columbian geographical discoveries, states, with an incisive navigational analogue in the very last paragraph of his treatise. This also meant discovering in the dissecting and unmasking function of the theatre the potentiality of a new alliance with the demonstrative, ostensive space being invoked and devised by the new science, not only medicine with its fast spreading European anatomy theatres, but also the new Renaissance cartography with its theatrical titles and frontispieces. But let us hear Benedetti's interesting last paragraph to understand the methodological challenge entailed in his conclusive navigational metaphor.

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14 See especially the already quoted Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*; David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (eds), *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997); Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) and *Humouring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004); Maurizio Calbi, *Approximate Bodies: Gender and power in early modern drama and anatomy* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2005); see also Maria Del Sapio Garbero, 'Troubled Metaphors: Shakespeare and the Renaissance Anatomy of the Eye', in *The Renaissance and the Dialogue Between Science, Art, and Literature*, ed. by Klaus Bergdolt and Manfred Pfister, Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissance-forschung, xxvii (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, forthcoming) and 'A Spider in the Eye/I: The Hallucinatory Staging of the Self in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*', in *Solo Performances: Staging the Early Modern Self*, ed. by Ute Berns (Amsterdam: Rodopi, forthcoming).

15 On these topics see Sawday, p. 71 f and Ute Berns in this volume.

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I would encourage everyone, both students and expert doctors and surgeons, to go as often as possible to see these spectacles, which should be repeated at least once a year; for in the theatre we see things as they are, we expose them to observe them closely, so that the book of nature may be opened before our eyes, and its work be observed as though it were alive.
After all, writing is most similar to painting, an art which often awakens memory from indifference and clears away darkness from the soul. But, as Plato says, he who trusts in written testimonies without observing things well, and does not think over, within himself, what was described, will often convey more opinion than truth to the minds he wishes to address. The same thing happens to those learning about navigation when they read nautical maps, in which islands, gulfs, bays and promontories do not exactly match the real ones that are before their eyes. […] the discourse of a person who knows things is lively and animated, and we rightly call his writing a "figure".[16]

The comparison between written and empirical knowledge, the testing of classical texts against the experience of the body itself, a comparison which Benedetti advocates by evoking Plato and his distinction between live knowledge and written simulacra, is posed as a never-ending task. What is also worth noticing is that he cunningly downsizes Platonism with Plato, or to put it differently, the authority of the ancients with arguments drawn from the ancients.

"Brutus will looke for this skinne": or, Julius Caesar's *écorché*

In this second part of my essay I intend to look at how in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* the arena, the part and the method of the Renaissance anatomist belong to Cassius, although the arena will later be seized from Cassius by Antony, the astute politician. It is no coincidence that Cassius is first mentioned in connection with the mirror, a recurring symbolic object, together with the flaying knife, in late Renaissance personifications of 'Anatomia'.[17] Implicitly or explicitly, they were both alluded to in Michelangelo's self-portrait in his *Last Judgement* fresco for the Cappella Sistina, where the flayed skin of an entire body dangling from the left hand of Saint Bartholomew – his other hand brandishing a

16 Benedetti, pp. 350 – 51.

17 See Roberto Paolo Ciardi, 'Il corpo, progetto e rappresentazione', in *Immagini anatomiche e naturalistiche nei disegni degli Uffizi,* ed. by Roberto Paolo Ciardi and Lucia Tongiorgi Tomasi (Firenze: Olschki, 1984), pp. 9 – 30 (pp. 26 – 9) and Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, p.183 f. As recalled by Sawday (p. 3), "Those attributes were derived from the story of Perseus, the mythical hunter of the Medusa. […] The Medusa stands for interiority. […] The attempt at conquering the Medusa's realm with the devices of *Anatomia* involved a confrontation between an abstract idea of knowledge, and the material reality of a corpse".

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knife – stands as a forceful, if somewhat disquieting, instance of self-knowledge achieved through the speculative and denuding practice of anatomy.

Fig. 4: Michelangelo, *The Last Judgement* (1541), detail

In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* a mirror takes on this Delphic "Nosce te Ipsum" ("Know Thyself") function – the proclaimed philosophical imperative of anatomy destined to become a familiar inscription in the anatomy theatres throughout Europe –, when Cassius offers himself as the mirror of Brutus's hidden and troubling 'passions':

> Therefore, good Brutus, be prepared to hear.
> And since you know you cannot see yourself
> So well as by reflection, I your glass
> Will modestly discover to yourself
> That of yourself which you yet know not of. (1.2.66 – 70)

Cassius's deconstructive inspection of Caesar's body thus develops as part of a

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larger role of unmasking that he seems to enact from the very outset of the play. Indeed, it is Cassius's task to perform with both the gaze and language of anatomy the preceding intellectual meditation that will make Caesar reveal his inner mortal frame, transforming him into a sort of Renaissance *écorché*, such as those made famous by artists and anatomists alike (Leonardo, Michelangelo, Rosso Fiorentino, Berengario da Carpi, Vesalius, Valverde), and which, I would like to suggest, are visually close to the Caesar flayed by Cassius's words. For, all over Europe, anatomy, as Helkiah Crooke will summarize to his English readers in his *Microcosmographia. A Description of the Body of Man*, had "a double acceptation":

> There is among Physitians, a double acceptation of Anatomy; either it signifieth the action which is done with the Hand, or the habite of the Mind, that is the most perfect action of the Intellect. The first is called Practicall Anatomie, the latter Theoricall or Contemplatiue: The first is gained by experience, the second by reason and discourse: The first we attaine only by Section and Inspection, the second by the living voice of a Teacher [...] The first is altogether necessarie for the practice of Anatomy, the second is only profitable; but yet the profite is oftentimes more beneficiall than the use itself of Anatomy.[18]

In this sense Cassius's "contemplative" brand of anatomy may be considered as a sort of "profitable" first incision; an incision aimed at removing the mythologized layer of skin from Ceasar's body, thus transforming the body of a king into the body of a convict. Such a task was likely to appear all the more necessary to the conspirators ("some certain of the noblest-minded Romans", 1.3.123), and to Shakespeare's audience alike, for being located in the austere republican places of the Senate, Pompey's Porch, Pompey's Theatre (1.3.125, 153), and against the festive offstage scenario of the city of which Caesar is master. Indeed, it is from the bustling background of the Lupercalia that an echo of the approving shouts of the Roman plebs arrives, when a crown is "thrice" offered to Caesar by Antony to be "thrice" refused (1.2.220 – 30),[19] clearly demonstrating Caesar's skill in fuelling his own legend in front of the rabble as much as the necessity of Cassius's deconstructive pursuit.

In addition to being a popular anatomical illustration in Shakespeare's times, I feel that the suggestiveness of Valverde's *ecorché,* dated 1556, provides, more than other images, the right visual analogue for the Caesar being flayed by

18 Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia. A Description of the Body of Man* [1615], 3rd edn (London: Thomas and Richard Cotes, 1631), p. 26.

19 On the play's two public spaces see Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History. The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 212 f.

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Fig. 5: J. de Valverde, *Historia de la composición del cuerpo humano* (1556), anatomy plate

Cassius's words. In England, the catalysing force of that image, whose rich symbolism could be traced back to both its influential Michelangiolesque antecedent of the Cappella Sistina, and to the mythical story of Marsyas flayed by Apollo, was confirmed by Helkiah Crooke when he reproduced it in the internal title page of his *Microcosmographia* in 1615.

As in the story of Marsyas narrated by Ovid, often subsumed in Renaissance anatomical *écorchés*,[20] we would not be surprised if we heard a still alive Caesar screaming: "Why flayest thou me so?" while he is stripped of his skin and,

> Nought else he was than one whole wound. The grisly blood did spin
> From every part; the sinews lay discovered to the eye;
> The quivering veins without a skin lay beating nakedly.
> The panting bowels in his bulk ye might have numbered well,
> And in his breast the sheer small strings a man might easily tell.[21]

20 See Frederika Jacobs, '(Dis)assembling: Marsyas, Michelangelo, and the Accademia del Disegno', *The Art Bulletin*, 3 (2002), 426–48 (p. 429) and Sawday, pp. 185–87.

21 Ovid, *Metamorphoses. Translated by Arthur Golding* [1567], ed. by Madeleine Forey (London: Penguin, 2002), Book vi, 490–98, pp. 188–89.

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Cassius's words, in fact, seem to flay Caesar alive up to the point of showing his "quivering veins" and "panting bowels", before turning into a knife and piercing his body with a last final stab. It may perhaps be of some import here to remember that "flayed", a highly charged anatomical term, is also expressly used by Shakespeare to give us a portentous martial image of Coriolanus. "Who's yonder / That does appear as he were flay'd?" Cominius observes, after one of his battles against the Volscians: "O Gods / He has the stamp of Martius, and I have / Beforetime seen him thus" (1.6.22 – 4).[22] "Mantled" only in blood (1.6.29), he does seem to be represented as a sort of frightful *écorché*.

Plutarch could hardly have provided a more suggestive image for the purpose of my argument when, in his 'Life of Julius Caesar' he tells the story of the dictator referring to himself, metonymically, as "this skinne". He quotes Caesar as saying "Brutus will looke for this skinne", when report had it that Brutus was conspiring against him, "meaning thereby, that Brutus for his vertue, deserved to rule after him, but yet, that for ambitions sake, he woulde not shewe him selfe unthankefull nor dishonourable".[23] As if complying with Caesar's belief, Shakespeare strengthens the role Cassius plays in the conspiracy by assigning to him – more than to Brutus – the conscience of the tyrannicide and hence the ideological questioning of Caesar's 'skin'. Thus Cassius takes centre stage as the person who triggers the fierce contentious process of inspecting Caesar's body that is at the core of Shakespeare's play. Appropriately, Cassius is soon targeted as "a great observer" in Caesar's distrustful judgment (1.1.201).

Arguably, Cassius's proclivity to examine, far from simply being the outcome of an 'envious' project – as it might appear if we take note of Brutus's anxiety of succession (2.1.177), or Caesar's dislike of him ("Such men as he be never at heart's ease / Whiles they behold a greater than themselves" [1.2.207 – 208]) – alerted Shakespeare's audience to a larger context of drives and intentions. Those who were familiar with Stubbes's successful *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583) and his puritanical fustigation of the multifarious forms of public and private 'vices', in which he also included festivities, idleness, and theatre, knew only too well where to find the word that would categorize Cassius's eagerness to pry and unmask. Indeed 'anatomy' had become a fashionable word by the time the play was produced.[24] If this is the case, however, there was much more to be seen in his anatomy.

I would argue that under Cassius's gaze the body of Caesar appears as an early

22 Quotations from *Coriolanus* are taken from the Arden edition, ed. by Philip Brockbank (London: Methuen, 1985).

23 Plutarch, 'Life of Julius Caesar', trans. by Thomas North [1579], in *Julius Caesar*, ed. by David Daniell, Appendix, p. 325.

24 Stubbes's book saw four editions before Nashe's counter *Anatomie of Absurditie* was issued in 1589.

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modern "penetrable" or "transparent" body,[25] whose volume, organs, and meaning lay open to the new evaluating regime of science. Coldly dismantled of his troubled god-like skin, Caesar's body is shown as if it were that of a "sick girl", a physiology of feeble frame, thus explaining images such as Caesar swooning in front of the Roman multitude, Caesar unable to swim his way across the troubled Tiber to the opposite bank, Caesar crying "Help me, Cassius, or I sink", Caesar helped by Cassius like Anchises on Aeneas's shoulders, and Caesar trembling with fever and crying for water during his campaign in Spain (1.2.90 – 130). By contrast, Caesar's mythologized body, increasingly swollen by the acclaiming shouts of the plebs of which Shakespeare makes us constantly aware, albeit offstage, is figured as that of a Colossus, a disproportionate figure whose anatomy invokes the supportiveness of perspective:

CASSIUS Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.
Men at some time are masters of their fates.
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.
'Brutus' and 'Caesar': what should be in that 'Caesar'?
Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
Write them together: yours is as fair a name:
Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well.
Weigh them, it is as heavy;
[…]
When could they say, till now, that talked of Rome,
That her wide walks encompassed but one man?
Now is it Rome indeed, and room enough,
When there is in it but only one man. (1.2.134 – 56)

The anatomy of Caesarism, which parallels the representation of the dictator's private persona as a diseased body, and precedes Caesar's final 'shrinking' into the "little measure" of a corpse, to be mourned later by Antony (3. 1. 150), is first of all a lesson on perspective; an art, or science, which in Renaissance times, as has been incisively stressed by Jonathan Sawday,[26] developed as part of a culture of dissection, a branch of anatomy. Caesar's body politic seems to be first and foremost anatomized pictorially by Cassius as a body marring and offending the law of perspective, and the science of perspective, as it developed in Renaissance

25 I am borrowing these terms from Sawday's *The Body Emblazoned* (p. 87) and Ciardi, 'Il corpo, progetto e rappresentazione' (p. 29).
26 Sawday, p. 85 f.

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culture, and as we see in this passage, pertained to the representation of bodies in space. It involved volume and proportion, the understanding of the interior body space, the position of organs and limbs, and the measurement of bodies in relation to other bodies within space; which is what made the work of the anatomists coincide with the contemporary research of the artists. As Sawday has remarked with Serlio's treatise on architecture to hand, "Any attempt at rendering surface convincing without an understanding of volume was to be content with the 'bare shew of superficiencies' rather than the full complexity of the body functioning within space. Space, the positioning of the body within a three-dimensional matrix, was the key to anatomical understanding".[27]

As was also explained in Giovanni Lomazzo's *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scultura ed architettura* (1584), and as was beautifully rendered in one of Richard Haydocke's illustrations for his abridged English translation published in 1598 – only one year ahead of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* –, bodies had to be geometrically measured and located in order to achieve volume and proportion (Fig. 6).[28]

They had to undergo the trial of scientific measurement, one might say, in order to acquire the measure urged by the Renaissance perspectival regime.

In Shakespeare's play, perspective seems to be turned into a heretical and dangerous knowledge. Indeed, it is one with Cassius's conspiratorial project. Caesar is figured as a giant straddling the Roman worldwide geography with his "huge legs"; a man who with his colossus-like stature, visually dwarfs everything around him: space as well as the volume and height of all men surrounding him. Cassius's reference to the Colossus is not traceable to Shakespeare's Plutarchan sources. In depicting Caesar disproportionately, Shakespeare may have had in mind the *colossi* of the Roman imperial statuary, or even more specifically the legendary colossal bronze statue of Caesar mounted upon a globe which according to ancient historians was erected on the Capitol. As the historian Dio Cassius writes, the Senate "decreed that a chariot of [Caesar] should be placed on the Capitol facing the statue of Jupiter, that his statue in bronze should be mounted upon a likeness of the inhabited world, with an inscription to the effect that he was a demigod".[29]Also shown by the image of Octavian Augustus on some of his coins, this posture was increasingly adopted in the discourse of imperialism as symbolic of a Roman worldwide hegemony; a symbolism which,

27 Sawday, p. 86.

28 See Giovanni Lomazzo, *A Tracte containing the Artes of curious Paintinge, Carvinge, and Buildinge* [1584], trans. by Richard Haydocke [1598], Facsimile reprint (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum; New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), p. 36. See especially chapters on 'proportion', 'perspective', and 'distance'.

29 Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, trans. by Earnest Cary, The Loeb Classical Library, 9 vols (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1961), iv, p. 235.

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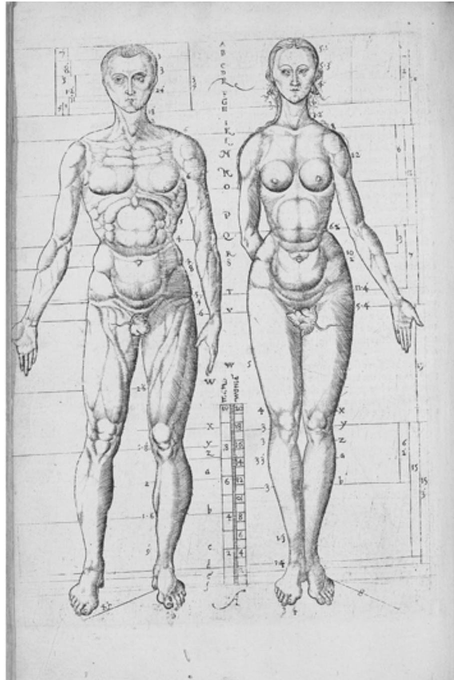

Fig. 6: G. Lomazzo/R. Haydocke, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scultura, et architettura.* English version (1598)

interestingly, as with all things Augustan, would prove very attractive to the future King James I and the Stuart dynasty.

David Daniell's footnote to the Arden edition of Shakespeare's play refers us at this point to the legendary bronze statue of Apollo, famous in ancient times – no matter how incorrectly – for straddling the harbour of Rhodes with its outspread legs. What is worth saying in this context, though, is that the Colossus of Rhodes often featured in Renaissance perspectival design of disproportion, and especially in the field of the nascent science of photometry. Indeed, in one of Rubens's studies prepared for the illustrations of François d'Aguillon's treatise *Optics* dated 1613, we see a bearded philosopher portrayed in the act of visualizing – with the aid of a surveyor's staff – the optical lines departing from different points of the mythical statue, while a number of *putti* are fumbling about with cosmological and measuring instruments – an armillary sphere, a rule or level, a quadrant.[30]

Cassius's famous linguistic testing of Caesar's name is encased within the

30 See Michael Jaffé, 'Rubens and Optics: Some Fresh Evidence', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* 34 (1971), 362–66.

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comparative logic of measurement and proportion ("write them", "sound them", "weigh them") dictated by perspective, to which in fact the inspective eye of Cassius returns to conclude his preliminary experiment with bodies, volume and space: "When could they say, till now, that talked of Rome, that her wide walks encompassed but one man? / Now is it Rome indeed, and room enough, / When there is but one only man" (1.2.153 – 56). What should also be noted here, is that Cassius's wordplay with 'Rome' and 'room', took advantage of the fact that 'Rome', as Voltaire significantly points out, was pronounced 'roum', and as such the name of the city was all the more capable of being invested with connotations related to space *tout court*,[31] whether that be a constraining or expanding geography, as it is, for instance alternately in *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra.*

Caesar's disproportionate figure, as viewed by Cassius, disfigures a proper perspectival background. In Cassius's diagnosis Caesar has grown into a *monstrum.* In fact, as Cassius later states, he has achieved the quality of a fearful, portent-like figure. Therefore, if Cassius wants to reduce Caesar to his contingent human measure and into a corpse, he first needs to give his conspirators a convincing lesson on proportion and perspective. He needs to enforce a new perspectival regime, or a new "ordering code" if we prefer the supportiveness of a Foucaldian category.[32] He has to divest Caesar of his Caesarean mythological skin, and lay bare his body-space beneath, thus unmasking and revealing his frail human interior, as in a Renaissance *écorché*, or as in the ripped classical statuary, with protruding organs and entrails, which one could see in Vesalius's, Estienne's or Valverde's famous tables of anatomy, and of which the English public would find a generous sampling in Crooke's 1615 *Microcosmographia.* Indeed, as I have already mentioned, Crooke's popular textbook exhibited in its very title page a reproduction of Valverde's *écorché*, thus providing a hint of how this early modern wide spreading interest in the anatomized human figure may have pervaded the mode and imagery of the conspirators' inspecting endeavour in Shakespeare's play. In this light the disrobing of Caesar's statues prompted by Flavius, the tribune of the people, at the outset of the play, appears metaphorically isomorphic with Cassius's anatomizing stance or procedures.

31 As Voltaire explained: "Il y a ici une plaisante pointe; Rome en anglais se pronounce *roum*, et *roum* signifie aussi *place*". Interestingly in translating Cassius's verses (1.2.155 – 56), he transliterated 'Rome'-'room' as 'Roume'-'roum': "Ah, c'est aujourd'hui que Roume existe en effet; car il n'y a de roum (de place) que pour César". Quoted and commented upon in Philip E. Cranston, '"Rome en Anglais se prononce *roum…*". Shakespeare Versions by Voltaire', *Modern Language Notes*, 6 (1975), 809 – 37 (p. 826).

32 See Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* [1966]; *Le parole e le cose* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1978), pp. 10 – 11.

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"But if you would consider the true cause": secular anatomy versus sacred anatomy

In commenting on the circular form of the Leiden anatomy theatre and the Vitruvian-like position of the cadaver at its centre, Sawday has written:

> Disposed on the anatomy table in a sacrificial pose, the cadaver suggests the Vitruvian figure once more. The right hand of the corpse is thrown out so that it nearly touches the innermost ring of the concentric circles. This somewhat inelegant suggestion of a Vitruvian figure reminds the onlooker of the old tradition of understanding the human image as a principle of proportional design.[33]

Disposed on Cassius's philosophical dissecting table, Caesar's figure with its splayed legs appears as a sort of Vitruvian man exceeding the proportions successfully illustrated by Leonardo as an instance of a symmetry coincident with the geometrical laws of nature. Caesar's colossal figure is no longer "a principle of proportional design" and controlled correspondences with the universe. He seems to have obscured the traditional concentric rings of corporeal and cosmological correspondences with the elements, stars, and heavens, devised in contemporary English iconography to both exalt and hierarchically circumscribe the human frame, as we can see typically in the title page of Robert Fludd's *Utriusque Cosmi Majoris et Minoris* (1617).

I would argue that this is where Shakespeare's play turns into the most extraordinary anatomy of the king's 'two bodies'; that is, in the way in which Cassius takes advantage of this underlying traditional way of conceptualizing the exemplary role played by the body politic in articulating the hierarchical relation with the universe,[34] in order to inject a new heretical, or secular understanding of heavens, kingship and human beings. Accordingly, as in Renaissance anatomy lessons, Cassius cannot avoid being a philosopher. As in Italian public dissections, or as in Crooke's distinction between the two forms of anatomy, Cassius seems to be primarily the 'lector' "whose task was to perform the lesson", that is "to teach the public anatomy", both before and during the demonstrations – not an easy task to perform. In fact, as Giovanna Ferrari has remarked, "This was a very special kind of course, shorter than the normal but much more demanding, and above all, very risky for the anatomy professor's reputation. For during the dispute the professor had to answer, in public,

33 Sawday, p. 73.

34 See on this Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

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questions put to him without prior warning by lectors from various different disciplines",[35] but mostly medicine, philosophy, theology, arts.

In one of his insightful essays on *Julius Caesar*, Alessandro Serpieri has argued that the hermeneutical paradigm pervades the structure of the play.[36] I would like to put forward in this essay that the heuristic mode of anatomy has a great bearing in determining the hermeneutical register of the play, with Cassius being the character that predominantly employs it. Significantly, he is the one who champions his cause against a god-like Caesar by advocating at the same time, a rational non-mythological interpretation of natural phenomena and of the universe at large. Indeed, Cassius cannot question and dissect the highly textualized body of Caesar without engaging with ways of knowing and interpreting the world all around him.

Let us consider the way in which Cassius addresses a fearful Casca on the night of conspiracy when a myriad of wonders seem to shake the order of the universe to its roots. Meaningfully, these portents narrated by Plutarch, as they are handled by Shakespeare, are turned into the amplified object of a dispute between Casca, represented as the womanish dupe of superstition, and Cassius, depicted as the champion of a masculine rational investigation of natural phenomena. What is more, this contention over truth and opinion is authoritatively, albeit briefly, anticipated by Cicero, a highly influential intellectual presence in Shakespeare's times, thus assuming significance as an epistemic fracture at a crucial historical juncture. "But men may construe things after their fashion, / Clean from the purpose of the things themselves" (1.3.34 – 5).

When Cassius enters the stage soon after, he seems to be endowed with the task of developing Cicero's elliptic and undisclosed argument. Standing before him is Casca who, here as elsewhere in the play, is derogatorily depicted as if embodying "a Roman", a representative of the impressionable commoner, despite the fact that he is a patrician.

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35 Ferrari, 'Public Anatomy Lessons and the Carnival', p. 88 f. It is useful to remember in this context that the doctor's syllabus in university courses was still similar in some aspects to that of literary scholars. In fact it included logic and philosophy. It was precisely the dispute (or 'contraddittorio') that made the public anatomy lessons of Padua and Bologna so popular all over Europe, attracting flocks of foreign scholars and students each year at Carnival, the period during which the "useful shows" (*utilia spectacula*), as they were called, or "gran fontione", were allowed. Significantly, when the university of Bologna decided to build a new anatomy theatre in a more spacious chamber of the Archiginnasio in 1637, the double focus of dispute and dissection was architectonically reinforced. "Instead of revolving around its original central point, the dissecting table, the new theatre clearly had two focuses. The dissecting table was, as it were, counterbalanced by the cathedra from which the anatomy professor propounded and defended his theses". For all this see Ferrari, p. 76, p. 86.

36 Alessandro Serpieri, 'Prefazione', in *Giulio Cesare*, trans. by A. Serpieri (Milano: Garzanti, 1994), pp. xxxii-xlvii.

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CASSIUS Who's there?

CASKA A Roman.

CASSIUS Caska, by your voice.

CASSIUS Your ear is good. Cassius, what night is this?

CASSIUS A very pleasing night to honest men.

CASSIUS Whoever knew the heavens menace so?

CASSIUS Those that have known the earth so full of faults.
For my part, I have walked the streets,
Submitting me unto the perilous night,
And thus unbraced, Caska, as you see,
Have bared my bosom to the thunder-stone. (1.3.40 – 9)

With a crucial rhetorical move, Cassius first turns Casca's subjugated eyes from the heavens' ill disposition to the reality of the earth he inhabits. He then addresses the 'Roman' as he used to be and as he should be:

You are dull, Caska, and those sparks of life
That should be in a Roman you do want
Or else you use not. You look pale, and gaze,
And put on fear, and cast yourself in wonder
To see the strange impatience of the heavens.
But if you would consider the true cause
Why all these fires, *why* all these gliding ghosts,
Why birds and beasts, from quality and kind,
Why old men, fools, and children calculate,
Why all these things change from their ordinance
Their natures and preformed faculties
To monstrous quality… (1.3.57 – 61, emphasis mine)

The undertaking to look for "the true cause" is the point that I would like to underline in Cassius's argument: the appeal to interrogate the "why" of natural phenomena, the "why" we hear resonate anaphorically, and five times in a row in Cassius's argument, while he continues to conflate knowledge, power and visual proportion in his reasoning. For, received knowledge, not differently from undisputed power, and not differently from the unquestioned body of Caesar grown into the exceeding measure of a "colossus" – "prodigious grown", he says, "And fearful, as these strange eruptions are" (1.3.77 – 8) – can transform men into tremulous female bodies and natural phenomena into nightmarish monstrosities, "instruments of fear and warning", as happens during that night of conspiracy; a night teeming with inexplicable disruptive events and fantastic apparitions, as if in a painting by Bosch.

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It would be interesting to comment on the gender-coded dimension of Cassius's 'scientific' claim. My priority in this essay, however, is to underline the fact that Cassius considers as urgent the necessity of distinguishing between truth and opinion, wonders and reality, a topical issue in the nascent Renaissance science, and in the new philosophy of Francis Bacon. Contrary to those within the play, and contrary to the critics who are content to see those prodigies simply as presages, a premonitory corollary of an incipient kingly assassination (and of course they theatrically function as such), Cassius invites us to look at them as phenomena demanding investigation and a reordering according to a rational regime.

What is then useful to stress for the purposes of this essay is that Cassius cannot divest Caesar's body of his mythology without conjuring up the heavens. He also cannot question Caesar's body as both a man and a body politic without engaging on a larger scale with questions of volume, place and proportion. In brief, Cassius cannot downsize Caesar as a body politic without shaking the highly codified relation between bodies, geography, and cosmology; and Rome offered the proper global or expanding space to make his endeavour resonate as purposeful to Shakespeare's early modern times. In this sense, Cassius's anatomical role is tantamount to that of the new rational philosopher, looking for the "true cause"; even more so because it is connected with a nocturnal undertaking, a conjure, a secret.

Accordingly, he is portrayed as a dangerous scholar. Cassius is not just "pale" and "leane", as recounted in Plutarch,[37] in Shakespeare's play "[Cassius] reads much, / He is a great observer, and he looks / Quite through the deeds of men". Also "He loves no plays / As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music". And "Seldom he smiles", as he is described in Caesar's distrustful words (1.2.200–204). I would suggest here that we are also offered a dazzling synthesis of the two newly combined ways of reading sequentially *along* the flat surface of textbooks (e.g. old sources knowledge on human beings) and in depth, *into* the volume and secret of bodies. This is precisely what anatomists did, and what new scientists (for example, Bacon) were increasingly advocating. Cassius indeed reads, observes, flays, probes into bodies.

I do not think, then, that it is too daring to say that it is this underlying broader questioning of a universe grounded on opinion (or mythology) – more than the overt cause for freedom – that in Shakespeare's play prepares the diminution of Caesar into a frail body and into the measure of a corpse literally fitting the measure of the anatomical table. Indeed, the cause of liberty and the enquiry into the "true cause" of natural phenomena, republican radicalism and

37 Plutarch, 'Life of Caesar', trans. by Thomas North [1579], in *Julius Caesar*, ed. by David Daniell, Appendix, p. 326.

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the inquisitive eye of science are gradually made to conflate in Cassius's stance. And this is a choice surprisingly different from the cautionary position suggested by Francis Bacon, who while advocating "the advancement of learning", "was at pains to distinguish between innovations in politics and in science".[38]

But as is evident, the time is not ripe for Cassius and for his select group of conjurers. Philosophy (or science) – Shakespeare makes us understand –, then as now, is bound to come to terms with culture, if not with politics, forms of dictatorship and mass conditioning. As we know only too well from Foucault's cultural theory, the entry of knowledge into discourse is always regulated by the institutions and the rules or limits posed by the order of representation.[39] But Cassius, the anatomist/philosopher who has been so good at seducing Brutus and the select group of patricians into taking up the knife, will not be able to control the dispute over Caesar's body that he has so cunningly triggered to the end. We now understand that it has not been by chance that Shakespeare has made us aware that, "he [Cassius] doesn't like theatre", in contrast to Mark Antony, who does.[40]

Cassius and his conspirators will prove incapable of administering politically, in front of the people, the knowledge they have of Caesar's body. For all their ability to figure a re-proportioned idea of bodies and space, their thoughts and words remain located in the aristocratic places of excellence and conspiracy. And once they have theatrically pursued their 'noble' deed, they are not able to move the 'anatomy lesson' out of the place where Caesar has been murdered – in Pompey's theatre at the Senate, at the basis of his statue –, to the larger theatre of the Forum where the populace, used to Caesar's spectacular display of his politics, is ready to make the pendulum sway in favour of the best orator or actor.

As Timothy Hampton has remarked, "Caesar is the public man par excellence. His manipulation of the crowd and those around him shows a mastery of public action". Hampton has also underlined "Caesar's reliance on spectacle as a way of manipulating the crowd".[41] This assumes even more relevance if we consider that in Shakespeare's play the temporal setting of the conspiracy against Caesar and his assassination spans the two seasonal festivities of the Lupercalia (15

38 On this see the introduction by Arthur Johnston in Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, p. viii.

39 See Michel Foucault, 'The order of discourse,' in *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader*, ed. by Robert Young (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 51–76, and the entire 'Preface' in *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

40 As Jonathan Goldberg has written: "Antony's role is to be the echo of Caesar, the fulfilment of his word, embodied in performance. Antony takes upon himself to extend himself to represent Caesar. Antony's performance becomes history, as firmly as Cassius's lack of love for plays marks out his destiny". Jonathan Goldberg, '"The Roman Actor": *Julius Caesar*', in *Julius Caesar*, ed. by Richard Wilson, pp. 92–107 (p. 97).

41 Hampton, *Writing from History*, p. 207, p. 216.

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February) and the Ides of March (15 March). Critics have incisively commented on the festive scenario of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and the way in which an atmosphere of celebration and carousal bears on the behaviour of the masses and their manipulation at the hands of opposite factions, but mostly at the hands of Antony's final histrionic and winning performance in the Forum, an art in handling the emotions of the mob which he seems to have inherited from Caesar.

Furthermore, critics have noted the quasi-temporal coincidence of this festive scenario with the Carnival, the period in which public anatomy lessons were allowed to be held in Renaissance Europe.[42] What is also important to mention, though, is that as in public executions, from which came most of the bodies for dissections, this fostered a ritualized perception of the inspected body. "The execution itself was a 'function', an event that was ritualized in such a way as to reorder its profound violence"; an event during which the criminal body passing through the redemptive retribution of execution could be transformed into a relic. "What was sought for above all was fat, but also blood, teeth, hair, burnt skull, the umbilicus, and other parts and substances of the body that possessed specific healing properties. Human fat […] was generally extracted from the bodies of convicts by the executioner – sometimes as the last act of execution – purified, and then sold as a pain-killer. In England the mere contact with the cadaver of someone who had been hanged was considered to be therapeutic".[43]

The imagery used by Decius in interpreting Calphurnia's dream seems to be strongly indebted to these popular ritualized practices which accompanied public executions or anatomy lessons all over Europe:

> Your statue spouting blood in many pipes
> In which so many smiling Romans bathed
> Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck
> Reviving blood, and that great men shall press
> For tinctures, stains, relics and cognizance.
> This by Calphurnia's dream is signified. (2.2.85 – 90)

Only Mark Antony, "a masquer and a reveller" in Cassius's words (5.1.62), the astutely demagogical politician trained, according to Plutarch's story of his life, in "asiatik" eloquence,[44] will be able to capitalize on Caesar's body by moving the

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42 See Hampton, pp. 205 – 36; Naomi C. Liebler, *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy. The ritual foundations of genre* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 85 – 111. Richard Wilson, '"Is this a holiday?": Shakespeare's Roman Carnival', in *Julius Caesar*, ed. by Richard Wilson, pp. 55 – 76.

43 Ferrari, 'The anatomy theatre of Bologna', p. 100, p. 102. See also Piero Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh: Bodily Mutation and Mortification in Religion and Folklore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) and Katherine Park, 'The Criminal and the Saintly Body', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 1 (1994), 1 – 33 (pp. 22 – 9).

44 Plutarch, 'The Life of Antony', trans. by Thomas North [1579], in Geoffrey Bullough, *Nar-*

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corpse, this "bleeding piece of earth" (3. 1. 254), to the market-place and by turning Cassius's secular anatomy into martyrdom and hence into what might be seen as a form of "sacred anatomy",[45] a ritualized and almost Christological understanding of his mangled body, although within a context of perverted and commodified rituals.[46]

The final rhetorical contest between Brutus and Antony is finely discussed in this volume by Alessandro Serpieri. Also in this volume, Ute Berns provides an insightful reading of Antony's use of the ostensive language of anatomy. I would suggest that what also happens during this contest is a reversal of the 'scientific' knowledge of Ceasar's body that Cassius has been communicating so far to the conspirators and to Shakespeare's audience with his secular anatomy, even though Cassius is not directly participating in this last contest played in the Forum. In fact he has declined Decius's invitation "to go to the pulpit" with Brutus and speak to the people (3.1.84). Antony, on the other hand, has asked permission to go to the pulpit, and as "a masquer and a reveler" he succeeds in reversing Caesar's "little measure" (3. 1. 150), "That now on Pompey's basis lies along / No worthier than the dust" (3.1.115 – 16), into a "piteous spectacle" (3. 2. 195) and a marketable relic.

> I found [this parchment] in his closet. 'Tis his will.
> Let but the commons hear this testament –
> Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read –
> And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds,
> And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,
> Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,
> And, dying, mention it within their wills,
> Bequeathing it as a rich legacy
> Unto their issue. (3. 2. 130-38)

rative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1957), v, p. 255 ("He used a manner of phrase in his speech, called asiatick, which carried the best grace and estimation at that time, and was much like to his manners and life: for it was full of ostentation, foolish braverie, and vaine ambition").

45 Here I am using this definition in a sense that can be loosely referred to the "sacred anatomy" discussed by Sawday, p. 98 f.

46 On the perverted ritual context of the play see Naomi C. Liebler who convincingly relates it to "an emergent market economy". We should not forget here that it is also Brutus's wish to envelop Caesar's assassination in the language of religious ritual. But, as Liebler has rightly remarked, "[w]hereas Brutus invites the conspirators to bathe their arms in Caesar's blood, in a private in-gathering gesture of solidarity, Antony parcels out the body, along with seventy-five drachmas [...] like a feudal lord distributing largesse to the general populace. Moreover, [Brutus's] desire to make Caesar's murder seem ritualistic is not the same thing as an attempt to make it an *actual* ritual, nor does he say anywhere outside the confidential circle of conspirators that it is one. His orations to the people do not refer to ritual (although [...] Antony's do); they only appeal to the commons' sense of republicanism" (*Shakespeare's festive tragedy,* p. 102, p. 105).

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Caesar's body parts – a drop of his blood, a hair – are given a currency which lies still undisclosed in his will. The delayed reading of the will, with Caesar's charitable donations, is Antony's last *coup de theatre:* "he gives, / To every several man, seventy-five drachmas. […] Moreover, he has left you all his walks, / His private arbours and new-planted orchards" (3.2.238 – 39). But first he invites the people to gather round Caesar's body in a circle[47] and look with tearful eyes at his wounded body which, in this way, undergoes a reordering according to the symbolism of the martyred body, a reordering which is appropriate to and favoured by the emotionally-charged festive scenario of the play.[48]

In this way, Antony reconciles the king's two bodies, that is, Caesar with Caesarism. I would thus argue that Antony re-mythologizes Caesar's body, or better the skin which Cassius has, in Ovidian style, flayed from his body: his name, aura, apparel, in a word Caesarism and its paraphernalia. Antony has won the "course" (1.2.4) he had started running at the Lupercals, but only to hand Caesar's skin over to Octavius Caesar Augustus, and to all of Caesar's posthumous emulators, be they good or bad. Elizabeth and James I included, of course.

And yet, he has only "come to bury Caesar, not to praise him" (3.2.76). Antony has just finished his funeral oration in Shakespeare's play when a servant appears on stage to announce that Octavius, hitherto hardly mentioned, has arrived in Rome.

47 On the strategic relevance of the human circle Antony creates around Caesar's body see Maddalena Pennacchia, 'Antony's Ring: Remediating Ancient Rhetoric on the Elizabethan Stage', in *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome*, ed. by Maria Del Sapio Garbero (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 49 – 59.

48 Such a symbolism is later underscored by Octavius when he records the number of Ceasar's wounds: "three and thirty" (5.1.52), like Christ's age, and not twenty three as in Plutarch's 'Life of Caesar'.

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Claudia Corti

The Iconic Body: *Coriolanus* and Renaissance Corporeality

What has always struck me in *Coriolanus* is the extraordinary process of 'physicalization' of the playtext that Shakespeare, carefully exploiting the implicit dramatic structure of his source text (notoriously Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus* as translated by Thomas North in the middle of the sixteenth century) sets out. It is precisely this peculiar dimension of physical reality that becomes especially crucial in a complex drama like *Coriolanus*, in which the major transitions are played out in silence, and where emotions and passions reach such a degree of intensity that the play refuses to be contained within the boundaries of spoken language, transmitting its 'moments' instead through an iconic theatrical discourse made up of gestures, facial expressions, and body movements. It is the body, in this play, that bears a continuous meaning *onstage*, sometimes even exceeding the borders of the playtext it occupies, as well as identifying its evocative, descriptive, and prescriptive force in the variegated materials of the characters' physicality. The stage on which Coriolanus and his co-agonists move is an intensely body-conscious theatre increasingly supplementing dialogue with physical and iconic messages: from Menenius's fable of the belly, to Coriolanus's terrified refusal to disclose his wounded limbs, to Aufidius's trampling on the hero's corpse. The human body is the material this drama works on and works through, thus reminding us of Hamlet's famous theatrical lecture: the purpose of playing, in holding the mirror up to nature, consists in showing "the very age and *body* of the time his form and pressure".[1]

In order to understand the body-consciousness and body-language of *Coriolanus*, it will be helpful to reconstruct the body-culture of the period in which this drama was conceived, as well as performed.

1 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Harold Jenkins, Arden edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 3.2.23 – 4. All references to this edition are included in the text after quotation.

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The Renaissance Culture of the Human Body

The paradigm of the human body lies at the core of the Renaissance *episteme*, as demonstrated by much contemporary work in cultural and literary studies, partially stimulated by such seminal books as Michel Foucault's and Mikhail Bakhtin's,[2] and by a sequence of important social historians, anthropologists, materialist critics and new historicists,[3] for whom the body has become a privileged field of enquiry into the culture and literature of Europe.

The widely shared view of the human body during the Renaissance entails – as has been noticed – a "refashioning of the means by which people made sense of the world around them in terms of their philosophy of understanding, their theology, their poetry, their plays, their rituals of justice, their art, and their buildings".[4] In fact, the human body is omnipresent in Renaissance speculation, crossing all the fields of intellectual and social interest. Promulgated by natural sciences, it invades the political sphere, fostering the theory of 'the King's two bodies' – the one questionable as a physical subject, the other unquestionable as an intellectual (divine) object – a theory which dates back to the crown lawyers of Edward VI:

> The King has in him two Bodies, *viz.* a Body natural, and a body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a

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2 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), and *Discipline and Punish*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Allan Lane, 1977). Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), and *Art and Answerability*, ed. by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, trans. by Vadim Liapunov and Kenneth Brostrom (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990). Note that while Foucault reads the body through the category of power, Bakhtin reads it through that of carnival.

3 See in particular: *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. by Susan Amussen and Mark Kishlansky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); *The First Modern Society*, ed. by A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and James M. Rosenheim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), and *Marriage and Love in England 1300–1840* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), *Learning to Curse* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), and *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001); Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (London: Methuen, 1984); Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Discipline of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

4 Sawday, p. ix.

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Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body.[5]

The problem of corporeality also invests religion, specifically the debate around the actual presence of Jesus's body and blood in the sacramental wafer, in the Eucharist. As Stephen Greenblatt has brilliantly highlighted,[6] people's anxiety focused on what Christ meant, when he instituted that sacrament, by saying "Hoc est corpus meum". Catholic doctrine interpreted the statement literally, insisting that the body and blood of Jesus were really present in the bread and wine of the Mass, while Protestants denied this, proposing instead various symbolic interpretations or representational readings. Literal or metaphorical explanations inevitably led to a questioning of the material progress of the wafer's content in the body of the communicant. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer tried to solve this problem stating that "we do not eat Christ with our teeth grossly and carnally", for Jesus is only in Heaven, and what we swallow are just "tokens, significations, and representations". The reason why Jesus established the Eucharist in a material way was that human beings are fundamentally carnal creatures who cannot acquire intellectual and spiritual understanding unless their senses are energetically activated; so, "the eating and drinking of this sacramental bread and wine is, as it were, a showing of Christ before our eyes, a smelling of him with our noses, a feeling and groping of him with our hands, and an eating, chewing, digesting, and feeding upon Him to our spiritual strength and perfection".[7]

The obsession over corporeality endemically increased during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with reference to the dynamic process that took place from a static view of the body to one of the body as *mechanism*, which was about to influence the literary and artistic domain, and especially that of dramatic art.

5 *The Commentaries and Reports of Edmund Plowden, containing divers cases upon matters of law […] In the several reigns of King Edward VI, Queen Mary, King and Queen Philip and Mary, and Queen Elizabeth, etc.* (London: The Savoy, 1761), n. 212a. It goes without saying that the major authority on this subject is still the classical study by Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

6 Stephen Greenblatt, 'Remnants of the Sacred in Early Modern England', in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass, pp. 338–49.

7 Thomas Cranmer, *A Defence of the True and Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Our Saviour Christ* (Lewes: Focus Christian Ministeries Trust, 1987), p. 12, p. 16.

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The new science of anatomy – i.e. the methodical observation of the body – structured various modes of enquiry which tended to dispose themselves around two complementing paradigms: the one is the exterior form of the body, as in the famous figure of the Vitruvian man, and the other is the interior one, as in Leonardo's designs of the dissections executed by him in the Florentine *Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova*. Provisionally I wish to anticipate that *Coriolanus* bears the double imprint of this dual phenomenon, in the manipulation of both the exterior and the interior body, respectively through Coriolanus's and Menenius's theatrical enunciations. For the moment, in order to remain in the strict field of an historical reconstruction, let it suffice to say that the central figures of the Renaissance body argument are, notoriously, Andreas Vesalius and William Harvey (not accidentally coupled in many Renaissance treatises): the former, in his *De humani corporis fabrica*, practically founded modern anatomy; the latter, with his pioneer studies on the circulation of the blood, which he defended and fostered at the risk of reprimands on the part of the *Santo Uffizio* (Michael Servetus had been burnt at the stake with his books, in 1551, for challenging Galen's view of the circulation of the blood through the lungs) simply established the modern, scientific conception of human physiology.

It is now indispensable – for my present aims – to mention the rebound effect that these new physiological and anatomical disciplines had on the practice of theatre. Theatricality was explicit in Vesalius's anatomic theatre, which enhanced so many threads of speculation. The *Fabrica* opens with two engravings: the frontispiece and Vesalius's own portrait. In the first (see Fig. 2 in Bern's essay, p. 103), the master is not figured *as cathedra* as he used to be in many contemporary treatises, but has been put at the centre of an imaginary stage-place, with pit, circles and galleries around him, and watched by a crowd/audience of students/observers/spectators. The other image (see Fig. 1 in the present essay) pictures the physician himself, engaged as he is in anatomizing a human arm, but who looks, characteristically, not at the limb he is working on, but rather toward the reader/spectator, as witness of his anatomical analysis, as well as addressee of his both 'dramatic' (in psychological terms) and 'theatrical' (in stage terms) performance. The moment of the appearance of the 'Vesalian theatre' marks not only the status of the modern sciences of the body, but the whole dimension of figurative and literary arts.

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The Body Politic and Menenius's Fable of the Belly

> There was a time, when all the body's members
> Rebell'd against the belly; thus accuse'd it:
> That only like a gulf it did remain
> I'th'midst o'th'body, idle and unactive,
> Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
> Like labour with the rest, where th'other instruments
> Did see, and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,
> And, mutually participate, did minister
> Unto the appetite and affection common
> Of the whole body. The belly answer'd […]
> 'True is it, my incorporate friends', quoth he,
> 'That I receive the general food at first
> Which you do live upon; and fit it is,
> Because I am the store-house and the shop
> Of the whole body. But, if you do remember,
> I send it through the rivers of your blood
> Even to the court, the heart, to th'seat o'th'brain;
> And through the cranks and offices of man,
> The strongest nerves and small inferior veins
> From me receive that natural competency
> Whereby they live. […] Though all at once cannot
> See what I do deliver to each,
> Yet I can make my audit up, that all
> From me do back receive the flour of all,
> And leave me but the bran'. […]
> The senators of Rome are this good belly,
> And you the mutinous members. (1.1.95 – 148)[8]

It is well known that the source of this famous passage of *Coriolanus* is Aesop's fable of the Belly and the Members, in which the belly was denounced for its parasitical idleness, and finally ostracized by the hands, mouth and teeth, with the result that they weakened and deteriorated. It is not certain whether Aesop was the source of the story later told by Livy, who recounts how, when the common people defected from Rome in the early period of the Republic, Menenius Agrippa was sent to persuade them to come back. He won their resistance narrating how:

> in the days when all parts of man were not as now in agreement, but each member had it own ideas and speech, the other parts felt it improper that by their care and hard work and service the stomach acquired everything, while lying passively in

8 William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. by Philip Brockbank, Arden edition (London: Methuen, 1976). All references to this edition are included after quotation in the text.

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their midst enjoying itself; so they agreed that the hands would not carry food to the mouth, nor the mouth take in anything offered, nor the teeth chew.[9]

The same story was also told by Plutarch, and from there it was taken over by Shakespeare. Another version of the simile state/body is to be found in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (mid-twelfth century), where the prince is the head, the senate is the heart (giving deeds their impulse), the judges are the eyes, ears and tongue, the soldiers are the hands, the tax collectors are the belly (which if overfull causes illnesses), and the peasants are the feet. Also Christine de Pizan, in *Le Livre de corps de policie* (1406) has the prince as head, nobles as arms, knights as hands, and labourers as legs and feet. The association of commons with *feet*, active both in *Policraticus* and *Le Livre de corps de policie*, is particularly significant for the comparison Menenius makes between the first citizen (who has been listening to the fable) and a *great toe*, when he urges a reaction to his tale:

MEN [...] What do you think,
You, the great toe of this assembly?

FIRST CIT. I the great toe? Why the great toe?

MEN For that being one o'th'lowest, basest, poorest
Of this most wise rebellion, thou goest foremost. (1.1.153–57)

By the sixteenth century both John of Salisbury and Christine de Pizan were probably almost forgotten, while Aesop, Livy and Plutarch were becoming popular classics. The belly and members fable was taken up by Philip Sidney in the *Apologie for Poetrie* (3, 21) and is referred to in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (IV.2.2.7). Barnabe Barnes, in his *Foure Bookes of Offices* (1606), calls the king "head", and compares riches to blood and laws to lungs. Francis Bacon, in his essay "Of Empire", sees merchants as "vena porta", and explains that "if they flourish not, a kingdom may have good limbs, but will have empty veins, and nourish little".[10] In 1598, King James I (when he was still James VI of Scotland) used the body/state analogy to argue for the primacy of the 'head' or 'Prince':

As the discourse and direction flowes from the head, and the execution according thereunto belongs to the rest of the members, every one according to their office: so it is betwixt a wise Prince, and his people. As the judgement coming from the head may not onely imploy the members, every one in their owne office, as long as they are able for it; but likewise in case any of them be affected with any infirmitie

9 *Ab Urbe Condita*, Book XXXII, in John Briscoe, *A Commentary on Livy, Books XXXI-XXXIII* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 182.

10 *The Essays of Francis Bacon*, ed. by William Smeaton (London: Dent, Everyman's Library, 1966), p. 173.

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must care and provide for their remedy, in-case it be curable, and if otherwise, gar cut them off for feare of infecting of the rest: even so is it betwixt the Prince, and his people. And as there is ever hope of curing any diseased member by the direction of the head, as long as it is whole; but by the contrary, if it be troubled, all the members are partakers of that paine, so is it betwixt the Prince and his people.[11]

The only political possibility offered by King James is rule by the 'Belly', that is *aristocracy*, of which the regal equivalent, Coriolanus's consulship, is obviously a part. The idea of *flowing* (from head to limbs) employed by James must immediately remind one that it was exactly in this period that William Harvey promulgated his revolutionary theory of the circulation of the blood, which Shakespeare totally assimilates in Menenius's speech.

Harvey believed the blood to flow not like the tides of the sea, constantly to and fro, essentially moving in one place, as the ancients – from Aristotle to Galen to Vesalius – had said, but in one direction only, from the heart to the aorta, from there through the arteries to every part of the body, then finally through the veins back to the heart, always in a circle. Although *De motu cordis* was published in Holland in 1628,[12] it is amply demonstrated that Harvey had been working on his theory of the perpetual motion of the blood in a circle since his days of scholarly apprenticeship in Padua dating back to 1597.[13] There is one page of his manuscript notes – later published by his friend Dr. Ent – that appears particularly revealing:

WH [this monogram is commonly prefixed by the author to signal crucial passages] constant per fabricam cordis sanguinem/ per pulmones in Aortam perpetuo/ transferring, as by two clacks of a/ water bellows to rayse water/ constat per ligaturam transitum sanguinis/ ab arteries ad venas/ unde Δ [delta signifies 'it is demonstrated'] perpetuum sanguinis motum/ in circula fieri pulsu cordis/ An hoc gratia Nutritionis/ an magis Conservationis sanguinis/ et Membrorum per Infusionem calidam/ vicissimque sanguis Calefaciens/ membra frigifactum a Corde/ Calefit.[14]

11 *The Basilicon Doron of King James VI*, ed. by James Craige, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society Publications ser. 3, 1944–50), i, pp. 89–90.

12 *The Anatomical Exercises of Dr William Harvey, De motu cordis 1628 (printed in Holland): De circulatione Sanguinis 1649: The first English text of 1653*, ed. by Geoffrey Keynes (London: Nonesuch Press, n.d. [1928]).

13 See Walter Pagel, *New Light on William Harvey* (Basel and New York: Karger, 1976), p. 6. In the Epistle dedicatory to Argent, President of the College of Physicians in London, Harvey gives a few indications concerning the time of progress of his research, stating that: he had laid open his "new opinion repeatedly before"; that for many years it had been confirmed "by ocular demonstrations"; and that his "little book" was completed for a long time "otherwise", that is before publication.

14 Quoted in Charles Singer, *The Discovery of the Circulation of the Blood* (London: Dawson, 1956), p. 45.

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The approximate translation could be as follows:

On account of the structure of the heart, W.H. is of the opinion that the blood is constantly passed through the lungs into the aorta, as by two clacks of a water bellows to raise water. Moreover, on account of the action of a bondage on the vessels of the arm he is of the opinion that there is a transit of blood from the arteries to the veins. It is thus demonstrated that a perpetual motion of the blood in a circle is brought about by the beat of the heart. What shall we say? Is this for the purpose of nutrition? Or is it for the better preservation of the blood and of the members by imparting heat to them, the blood by turns losing heat as it warms the members, and gaining heat from the heart?

It did not take much time for him to make sure that the fundamental target of the circulation of the blood was in fact the *nutrition* of the body (as Shakespeare's Menenius apparently thought): "In this way it is that all parts of the body are nourished, cherished, and quickened by the warm, spirituous, more perfect, and truly alimentative blood".[15]

Starting from 1607 (and one should not forget that *Coriolanus* is traceable to 1606–1610) William Harvey became a member of the College of Physicians, giving lectures on anatomy and surgery, and making statements such as this: "See how the heart contracts like a closing fist to squeeze the blood into the arteries, and then relaxes to fill again from the veins".[16]

The metaphorical relationship between the blood circulation theory and the vital 'circulation' in the body politic – on the usual Renaissance basis of cosmic correspondences – is stated by Harvey himself in the dedicatory letter of *De motu cordis* to "The Most Illustrious and Invincible Monarch CHARLS King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith", in these terms:

The Heart of creatures is the foundation of life, the Prince of all, the Sun of their Microcosm, on which all vegetation does depend, from hence all vigor and strength does flow. Likewise the King is the foundation of his Kingdoms, and the Sun of the Microcosm, the *Heart* of his Commonwealth, from whence all power and mercy proceeds. I was so bold to offer to your Majesty those things which are written concerning the *Heart*, so much the rather, because (according to the custom of this age) all things human are according to the pattern of man, and most things in a King according to that of the *Heart*; Therefore the knowledge of his own *Heart* cannot be unprofitable to a King, as being a divine resemblance of his actions (so us'd they small things with great compare). You may at least, best of

15 Quoted in Robert Willis, *William Harvey: A History of the Discovery of the Circulation of the Blood* (London: Kegan Paul, 1878), p. 192.
16 Quoted in William C. Harrison, *Dr. William Harvey and the Discovery of Circulation* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 16.

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Kings, being plac'd in the top of human things, at the same time contemplate the Principle of Man's Body, and the Image of your Kingly power.[17]

Although Harvey's lecture notes are full of commonplace references, he never mentions the works of Shakespeare, his contemporary (nor, for truth's sake, any of the literature of his time). So Shakespeare's appropriation of Harvey's views, which at their best were regarded as idle dreams, and at their worst appeared liable to the Holy Office, sounds like an act of homage to *his own* Stuart monarch. Few people, Shakespeare excluded, in those days, claimed so extravagant a notion as Harvey had been reckless enough to enunciate. Shakespeare's provocative choice was in keeping with James's politically strategic rebuff of Catholicism, for reasons that we shall soon see.

The Two Bodies of the Consul

Where Menenius, in his espousing of Harvey's circulation theory, adopts the epochal paradigm of the interior man, Coriolanus modulates its complementary paradigm, that of the exterior man, under various facets which I – for analytical convenience – intend roughly to summarize in three formal components, borrowing their terminology from the aesthetic speculation of the period: body as icon, body as token, body as simulacrum. In this way I shall attempt to answer an elementary question: does Coriolanus love or hate his own (and others'), body(ies)?

The Body as Icon

That Caius Martius, later surnamed Coriolanus, is extremely body-conscious, emerges at the very beginning of the play, during the Corioles war, and especially in the duel that, significantly ignoring the theatrical conventions of his time, Shakespeare situates within the action of Act 1. It is in fact during the war against the Antiates that the Shakespearean Roman hero demonstrates a highly dramatic awareness – in more than a technical sense – of his own physicality. This is apparently shared by his military partners, as one of Lartius's comments clearly shows, "Thou wast a soldier/ Even to Cato's wish, not fierce and terrible/ Only in strokes, but with thy grim looks and/ Thunder-like percussion of thy sounds/ Thou mad'st thine enemies shake" (1.4.56 – 60). And Cominius reinforces the strength of Martius's appearance on the warlike – and dramatic – scenery:

17 *The Anatomical Exercises of Dr. William Harvey*, ed. by Geoffrey Keynes, pp. vii-viii.

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"Who's yonder,/ That does appear as he were flay'd? O Gods,/ he has the stamp of Martius, and I have/ Beforetime seen him thus" (1.6.22 – 5). Precisely *thus*, altogether signifying *now, here*, and *in my present, actual, physical body*, is the same term that Coriolanus employs when he is going to struggle with his direct, personal enemy – Tullus Aufidius – to properly indicate through both words and gesture – but also directing the audience's looks to it – his more than winning, overwhelming, extremely virile supremacy: "To Aufidius *thus*/ I will appear and fight" (1.5.19 – 20). The idea of *appearing*, implied in both Martius's and Cominius's enunciations, involves the corporeal, and hence inevitably *theatrical*, summoning up of Coriolanus's body *onstage*, with its hylic outlines and added metaphorical connotations. However, it is in Act 1, scene 8, i. e. during the duel with Aufidius, that Coriolanus enhances the sensation of his body as the sign of *his own* self-perception – and consequently self-evaluation – which draws significance from the physical presence – *onstage* again – of his psychological *other*, or *double.* "I'll fight with none but thee" (1.8.1), and "Alone I fought in your Corioles walls,/ And made what work I pleas'd: 'tis not my blood/ Wherein thou seest me mask'd" (1.8.8 – 10), says Martius, to which Aufidius replies, "We hate alike:/ Not Afric owns a serpent I abhor/ More than thy fame and envy. Fix thy foot" (1.8.2 – 5).

The priority of Coriolanus's prevailing body over any other occasional component of the Corioles victory is highlighted by a number of passages which insist on the fact that such a victory was *only* due to the captain's *unique* physical capacities. *All alone* is the expression that recurs to signal this; for example in the soldier's report of Martius's entering the enemy city while his coward companions are flying back, "He is himself alone,/ To answer all the city" (1.4.51 – 2); or in the herald's eulogy in Rome, "Know, Rome, that all alone Martius did fight/ Within Corioles gates" (2.1.161 – 62). And it is precisely his materially, carnally overpowering form, that causes the sort of delirium which spreads among the Roman populace on welcoming the hero's return (2.1.202 – 16), and which is textually insisted upon as a tripudium of bodies reacting to bodies: a composite bulk of human frames – people "with variable complexions" – climbing walls and roofs, occupying windows, howling and gesturing, pushing one another. The context of intense corporeality energized by this efficaciously reported scene neatly underlines the visual and theatrical overtone of Coriolanus's figure simultaneously perceived like either a performing actor, or the sitter for a painting; that is to say, in a *posture*, "As if" – tribune Brutus comments – "that whatsoever god who leads him/ Were slily crept into his human powers,/ And gave him graceful posture" (2.1.218 – 20).

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The Body as Token

After exposing his triumphant body to the exultant crowd, Coriolanus has to pass through a much less gratifying experience: following a traditional ritual, if he wants to be consul he is compelled, in order to gain the people's votes, to show them his war wounds in a public place (2.3). As everyone knows, he partially satisfies this rite, presenting himself in the market place wearing the gown of humility, but refusing to uncover his scars – which will provoke the plebeians' rebuttal of his former election. Coriolanus intellectually knows that he *must* show his body, but he is emotionally repulsed from this act. The importance given by Shakespeare to this dramatic 'point' can be inferred by his clamorous deviation from Plutarch/ North, according to whom instead, "Martius following this custome, shewed many woundes and cuts upon his bodie, which he had received in seventeene yeares service at the warres".[18] This crucial change marks a semantic elaboration of the source story on the part of the playwright, who intends – I believe – to condescend to ideologically relevant manoeuvres of his monarch and patron James I, as far as politically invested religious ceremonies were concerned. In order to signal his exponential approaching of the Protestant faith at the expense of his native Catholicism, James had given new emphasis to the ancient British rite of 'the King's touch', or the healing/ sanctifying imposition of the royal hands on the subjects' bodies, as a token of the sovereign's sacredness. This happened in purposeful concomitance with the contention about such fundamental sacraments, also involving corporeality, as the Eucharist (on which we have previously commented). I think that in the case of Coriolanus's behaviour, during the incomplete display of his wounded limbs, Shakespeare adumbrates a critique, *via* parody, of the Catholic Confirmation, which, while implying the bishop's light slap of the cheek as the equivalent of the king's touch, also entails a very significant dialectic between the showing and the hiding of a symbolic 'wound'. In England, Confirmation is also called Chrismation (similar to the Italian 'Cresima') because of the *chrism*, or holy oil with which the recipient of the sacrament is anointed: a sign, or seal, that prompts a conspicuous system of 'soldier of Christ' imagery, which appears easily transferable to the idea of a true soldier who is seeking his community's consent by offering them the view of the corporeal signs or seals of his God-blessed fortune in war (the "whatsoever god crept into his human powers", 2.1.217 – 18, evoked by the tribune's words). However, in the traditional Chrismation rite, this precious seal left on the Christian soldier's forehead by the officiant's oiled finger,

18 *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes, Compared together by the Grave and Learned Philosopher and Historiographer, Plutarke of Cheronea, translated etc. by Thomas North* (London: Thomas Wight, 1595), p. 242.

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was characteristically felt like a metaphorical incision cut by God in the human flesh, as a reminder of the adept's new partaking in the general Christian army. As such, that is in being a physical token of divine grace, this symbolic *wound* had to be carefully covered (for a certain period), hidden from vulgar sight by a white band arranged around the young soldier's head. In this sense, Coriolanus's ambiguous behaviour in the showing/unshowing of his scarred body – "I have here the customary gown" (2.3.85), vs. "I will not seal your knowledge with showing them [his wounds]" (2. 3. 106) – looks like the parodic performance of a ceremony of Catholic Confirmation: an element which King James, in pursuing the Elizabethan 'rule by consent' instance would have implicitly appreciated, if not explicitly required.

The Body as Simulacrum

In the process of symbolization that progressively (i.e. dramatically) arrays Coriolanus's figure, a large space is dedicated to the treatment of the physical body as a *form* which obliquely alludes to hidden sensations and censured passions, making what cannot be said much more relevant than what is being spoken about. This process by which the iconic body, continuously perceived by both co-agonists and audience in all its overwhelming physical strength, is overturned into the *mere semblance*, or *simulacrum,* of recondite, inexpressible ideas, simultaneously involves the agonist, Coriolanus, and his direct antagonist, Aufidius. Reciprocally, what the rival's body *stands for* is, for both Coriolanus and Aufidius, concealed, repressed *love*, that is to say a more or less latent component of *homoeroticism.* Precisely this component – which I shall textually analyse later – is being heavily exploited in contemporary productions of this play (Fig. 2-5), starting from the memorably transgressive 1984–85 performance of a notorious gay actor like Ian McKellen (frequently appearing shirtless as well as wearing only briefs in the most crucial moments) directed by Peter Hall at the National Theatre in London. Shakespeare's play – as we shall see – has a great potential to explore the implicitly homosexual relationship between the two warriors, and many directors are making their mutual attraction thoroughly explicit. For example, the *Coriolanus* performed by the Royal Shakespeare Theatre during the 2007–08 season, was directed so that, as the two agonists came together for their single combat and dealt each other crushing blows, a loud backing track of heavy breathing started playing, growing louder as the characters' fighting noises blended into it. Eventually Coriolanus and Aufidius, panting loudly, stood opposite each other almost naked, threw down their weapons and ran together to start grappling hand to hand, as the breathing track reached its climax. Finally, Coriolanus and Aufidius passionately kissed by

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torchlight; the kiss making sense of the killing and leaving Aufidius, when everyone had walked off, cradling Coriolanus's body.

Of course, this sort of productions attributes to Coriolanus a considerable Oedipus complex towards his mother Volumnia, as the principal booster of his homosexuality. Perhaps excessively insisted on in recent productions, nonetheless Coriolanus's and Aufidius's mutual homoerotic attraction is amply justified by the Shakespearean text, which again summons up the typical Renaissance concern with corporeality. Indeed, Martius's Oedipal obsession with his mother – a subdued passion that leads him to hidden/overt homosexuality – is everywhere present, from the text's insistence on the fact that any of the captain's more-than-human achievements in the wars was due *only* to his will to please his mother (Act 1), to the hero's double fear both of deluding her, and (chiefly) of being punished by her, that he experiences during the long action of Act 3. What finally emerges is that he appears transparently as a man subjugated by his mother's overpowering *body power.* Yes, because it is her overwhelming physical presence which orientates any of his existential as well as political choices. Whenever Coriolanus succeeds in overcoming his own undefeated nature by agreeing to bow to anybody – either the people's tribunes or his family's patrician friends – it is because he has been commited to it by Volumnia's instructions of bodily behaviour. See, for example, the grandiosely metatheatrical scene 2 of Act 3. She appears on stage dominantly interrupting her son's discussion about his own indomitable nature. Her slow and stately entrance opposes her son's impetuous force, when Coriolanus catches a glimpse of her implacable figure, "I talk of you,/ Why did you wish me milder? Would you have me/ False to my nature?" (3.2.13 – 15). Here the actor must mingle petulance and defiance, as if moved by an uneasy sense of guilt, which makes him regress from the proud warrior into a spoiled teenager in a potent image of domestic tyranny.[19] The exponential accumulation of theatrical images – from "It is a part/ That I shall blush in acting" (2.2.144 – 45), to "You have put me now to such a part which never/ I shall discharge to th'life" (3.2.105 – 106), to "Like a dull actor now/ I have forgot my part and I am out,/ Even to a full disgrace" (5.3.40 – 2) – expresses the warrior's inability to perform a role alien to his spirit, continuously repressed by Volumnia's maternal suasion. Everyone in the scene realizes that he/she is present at an elaborate nursery lesson, in which the greatest warrior of the age is being scolded into submission by his mother. In his first acceptance speech, Coriolanus metatheatrically plays with a series of false exits before returning to corporeally confront his mother, to impress upon her the gravity of her request:

19 See my article 'L'eros in *Coriolanus*', in *Tragiche risonanze shakespeariane*, ed. by Laura Di Michele (Napoli: Liguori, 2001), pp. 172 – 89.

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> Must I go show them my unbarb'd sconce? Must I
> With my base tongue give to my noble heart
> A lie that it must bear? Well, I will do't: [here, a false exit]
> Yet were there but this single plot to lose,
> This mould of Martius, they to dust should grind it
> And throw't against the wind. To th'market-place! [false exit]
> You have put me now to such a part which never
> I shall discharge to th'life. (3.2.99 – 106)

As soon as Volumnia perceives her loosening hold of her son, she immediately tightens the maternal reins by calling him "sweet son" and bidding him perform "to have my praise" (3.2.107 – 109). At this point Coriolanus decides that his only option is to do what she wants, and resignedly concedes, "Well, I must do't" (3.2. 110); but immediately finds in himself a significantly degrading "harlot's spirit" (3.2.112), feeling that his autonomous will has receded, dragging back with it his sexual independence from his mother, as is superbly signified by his pathetically childish fear of his mother's punishment: "Pray be content./Mother, I am going to the market-place:/ *Chide me no more*" (3.2.130 – 32, my emphasis).

The homoerotic component of Coriolanus's nature – apparently stimulated by his Oedipal complex – can be perceived from the very beginning of the play, where Aufidius is immediately figured as Coriolanus's 'other', the mirror of his own physical potency and military valour: "were I anything but what I am, I would wish me only he", the hero says (1.1.230 – 31). What is significant is that this external projection soon becomes intimately perceived within a very peculiar sense of guilt, "I sin in envying his nobility" (1.1.229). The slip of the tongue implied in the utterance of the term 'sin' is contextually destined to become the symptom of a recondite desire, whose object can be obtained only through *physical fight:* "To Aufidius thus I will appear and fight" (1.5.19 – 20), where "thus" alludes to the glory and power implicit in his body soaked with the blood of his enemies, both physically strong and sexually victorious.

The paradigm of physical combat as a hidden search for erotic contact is easy to find in Shakespeare's dramatic discourse (see for example the use of *to wrestle* in *As You Like It*;[20] *to sport* in *Othello*;[21] *to rebel* in *Hamlet*, 1.3.43 – 4); but in *Coriolanus* the paradigm does not function at a merely linguistic level, because it tends to actualize itself in concrete, corporeal action. A violent duel between Coriolanus and Aufidius takes place at the end of Act 1, after a mutual chase (in itself suggestive of a mutual attraction) and with an extraordinary exchange of insults, whose excessive vehemence seems to be the outlet for a flock of repressed

20 William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. by Agnes Latham, Arden edition (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 1.3.20 – 1.

21 William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by E. A. J. Honigmann, Arden edition (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 2.1.225.

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feelings and suppressed passions. That is why this duel is felt by many contemporary directors to demand performance as a passionate collision of sweaty limbs, damp hair, and dribbling mouths, rather than the illusionary impact of fake swords and cardboard shields.

An actual chase after the hero's erotic object occurs in Act 4, when Coriolanus goes to Aufidius's house to put his military competence at the Volscians' service. The homoerotic implication of Coriolanus's search for Aufidius comes to the fore in a cue by the hero, within the frame of a verbal skirmish with Aufidius's servants. Coriolanus, disguised as a beggar, is teased by a servant in these terms: "How, sir! Do you meddle with my master?" (4.5.47); to which the hero replies with a linguistic pun that displaces the ordinary meaning of the verb 'to meddle' as 'to mix oneself up with someone' onto its obscene Elizabethan connotation – 'to have sexual intercourse with someone' – contextually expressing an implicit homosexual preference, "Ay; 'tis an honester service than to meddle with thy mistress" (4.5.48). Aufidius also is erotically attracted by his enemy/friend. The effusive energy of his response to Coriolanus's visit expresses his joy in hyperbolic images and an obsessive repetition of Coriolanus's name:

> O Martius, Martius!
> Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart
> A root of ancient envy. If Jupiter
> Should from yond cloud speak divine things
> And say 'Tis true', I' d not believe them more
> Than thee, all-noble Martius. (4.5.102 – 107)

What seems to me particularly relevant to my argument, is Aufidius's *theatrical/ bodily* attitude. He gazes in exultation at Coriolanus's body, while he pronounces the famous – and erotically charged – cue "Let me twine/ Mine arms about that body" (4.5.107 – 108), allowing both the image to impress the audience, and the scene's dynamics to build up, before his advancing with open arms, fostering an actual embrace (4.5.110 – 11). In many contemporary productions, Aufidius delivers a large portion of his speech while still in Coriolanus's arms, suiting – as Hamlet would have it – "the action to the word" (*Hamlet*, 3.2.17 – 18), as they now contend as hotly for love as ever they did in mutual hate. Aufidius steps back to gaze on Coriolanus's body once more in the cue "But that I see thee here" (4. 5. 116), expressing his happiness with monosyllabic emphasis, while Coriolanus's "You bless me, gods" (4. 5. 136) sounds like an enthusiastic 'climax'. At the end of the play, the erotic stance of the two generals' relationship is made explicit by Aufidius himself, when he recalls their encounter as the moment "when first I did *embrace* him" (4.7.10), in all the secondary sexual meaning – also active in seventeenth century English – of the verb 'to embrace'. After all, the homoerotic tonality of Aufidius's behaviour towards Coriolanus is noted even by the com-

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mon Volscians, "Our general himself *makes a mistress of him*, sanctifies himself with's/ hand, and turns up the white o'th'eye to his/ discourse" (4.5.199–202, my emphasis).

The completion of homoeroticism is actuated by Aufidius when he reports a dream he has frequently experienced, the dream of a physical and erotic *bodily fight* with Coriolanus:

> I have nightly since
> Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me -
> We have been down together in my sleep,
> Unbuckling helms, fisting each other throat -
> And wak'd half dead with nothing. (4.5.123–27)

The motive of the erotic dream highlights the sexual component of the bodily fight, which is an emerging unconscious will for mutual corporeal possession. Unbuckling helms alludes to undressing, and undressing means delivering the bodies from any social or political constraints; fisting each other's throats means neutralizing any interpersonal social and political distance; finally, awaking half dead entails the idea of homosexual orgasm, thanks to the linguistic pun, no less active in seventeenth century England than nowadays, based on the recondite sense of *die* as *ejaculate.*

Both the peak and the *dénouement* of the personal tragedy of Coriolanus hinge upon an energetic body language alimented by strong passions. Soon after capitulating to Volumnia's entreat, he moves upstage to physically position himself once more besides Aufidius, and obsessively repeats his name – exactly as Aufidius had done with his own before – in what sounds like a desperate cry of confirmation of love, "Now, good Aufidius,/ Were you in my stead, would you have heard/ A mother less? Or granted less, Aufidius?" (5.3.191–93). He does not catch the ironic tone of the reply – "I was mov'd withal" (5.3.194) – but blindly seeks to summon up his shattered control with the self-deprecating humour of "And sir, it is no little thing to make/Mine eyes to sweat compassion" (5.3.195–96), followed by the resolute revelation of his political as well as sexual choice between family and partner, "For my part,/ I'll not to Rome, *I'll be back with you*" (5.3.197–98, my emphasis). The fatal consummation of the tragedy resolves itself into discursive combat between the two agonists, both lacerated between love and hatred. It is Aufidius who starts it, unexpectedly insulting Coriolanus as "the traitor in the highest degree" (5.6.85). Unprepared for this attack from his partner, Coriolanus at first responds in a tone of bewildered incomprehension, which grows in intensity to an explosion of angry violence when he is addressed as "Martius". This betrayal of his only remaining connection in the world proves too much for the hero's physical and psychic strength. That is why Peter Hall wanted McKellen to accord the lines, "Measureless liar, thou hast made my heart/

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Too great for what contains it" (5.6.103–104) a literal interpretation, as he clutched his hand to his breast staggering on the stage: the violence of his grief and anger causes his heart literally to break. Thus the actor pronounced his last cues in extenuating speed, miming the physical symptoms of the heart attack which became the key image of the play's conclusion. Coriolanus fights back the pain and the emotion welling up inside him to bid the senate "thrust the lie unto him" (5.6.110), but Aufidius's brutal gibe "thou boy of tears" (5.6.100) is more than his feelings can bear. He is emotionally involved with the treaty of Rome and has, in fact, performed precisely what Aufidius accuses him of. He perfectly knows that his partner's taunt is a direct reference to the tears of compassion shed at his mother's supplication; it is thus the very truth of Aufidius's accusation that prompts Coriolanus to fall down in the enemy/friend's trap. He delivers a vigorous boast of his former invasion and conquest of the Volscian nation, once again insisting on the solitariness of his bodily action, "Boy! False hound!/ If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,/ That like an eagle in a dovecote, I/ Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioles./ *Alone I did it.* Boy!" (5.6.112–16, my emphasis). Sorrow and disillusion impede any possibility of rational defence. He picks up the last remains of his physical power to draw his sword and utter the final words which provoke Aufidius to give the signal for his assassination.

After Coriolanus's body falls to the ground, Aufidius rushes to stand in triumph upon the corpse, and tries to articulate his self-justification, while the whole stage is a bustle of chaotic movements on the part of lords, citizens, soldiers. The lords refuse to allow Aufidius the opportunity to acquit himself: first it is time to honour the dead, and the injunction, "Bear from hence his body,/ And mourn you for him" (5.6.141–42) is significantly addressed directly to Aufidius, rather than uttered as a command to the general multitude. At this point Aufidius loses control of his social mask, and his love is authentic. A profound sense of emptiness and desolation is conveyed by his admission, "I am struck with sorrow. Take him up" (5.6.147). The removal of Coriolanus's body means that the most important part of Aufidius's life is gone too: there will be no more fighting, no more chasing. As Aufidius and his officers ceremoniously lift the corpse and carry it in state, the tragic cycle of Coriolanus's body is completed.

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Fig. 1: A. Vesalius's Portrait from the *Fabrica* (1543)

Fig. 2: Coriolanus (Ian McKellen) preparing to fight with Aufidius (Greg Hicks), 1.8.1. Peter Hall production at the National Theatre, London (1984 – 85)

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Fig. 3: Coriolanus (Ian McKellen) engages Aufidius (Greg Hicks), 1.8.1. Peter Hall production at the National Theatre, London (1984 – 85)

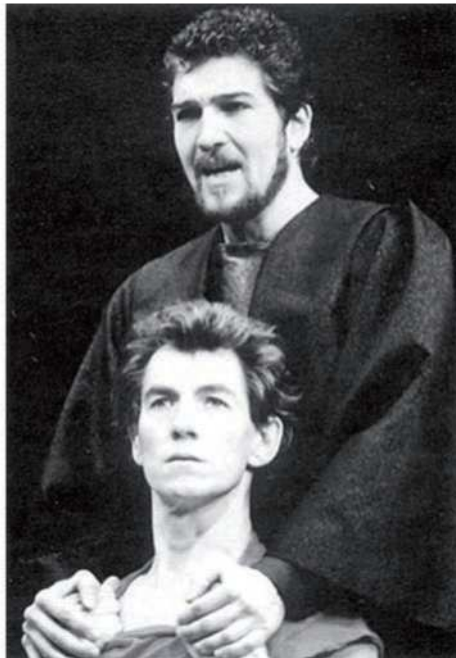

Fig. 4: "Let me twine mine arms around that body" (4.5.108). Peter Hall production at the National Theatre, London (1984 – 85)

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Fig. 5: Aufidius (Trevor White) cradling Coriolanus's (William Houston) body (5.6). Royal Shakespeare Company (2007 – 08)

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Maurizio Calbi

States of Exception: Auto-immunity and the Body Politic in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*

A few more hours… . And years, not years. Surely. Things in flight on first waking… . Flying blind. Blind flying. No pilot beside. Just as well… Decision impossible. But forced ones. Elephants of decisions. Overweighted. Jostled… . Crowds… . Hold back… . But how?

(John Osborne, *A Place Calling Itself Rome*)

I want to start by referring to a central moment in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, when the Roman hero reacts to his banishment by banishing: "I banish you! / And here remain with your uncertainty!" (3.3.123–24).[1] These lines may be, as John Plotz half-jokingly observes, "vintage Coriolanus";[2] or, as Janet Adelman argues in her influential interpretation of the play, an expression of the hero's "infantile fantasy of omnipotent control", itself typical of his obsessive, if precarious, strategy of turning vulnerability into masculine aggression.[3] But I want to suggest that one should not underestimate their shocking dramatic effectiveness.[4] They provide in a condensed form a radical shift of perspective on the question of the boundaries of 'Rome': how far does 'Rome' extend? Can 'Rome' banish herself? Does 'Rome' move with Coriolanus as he moves "elsewhere" (3.3.135)? They also force the audience as well as the reader to reconsider the 'nature' of the political decision that leads to the ban.

Taking its cue from these lines, this essay wants to show that the question of boundaries in *Coriolanus* is intimately connected with the uncanny logic of 'auto-immunity' that seems to affect Rome's body politic. According to Jacques Derrida, "auto-immunity" names the:

1 All references to *Coriolanus* are from the Arden edition, ed. by Philip Brockbank (London: Methuen, 1976), and are included parenthetically in the text.

2 John Plotz, 'Coriolanus and the Failure of Performatives', *English Literary History*, 63 (1996), 809–32 (p. 820).

3 Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays,* Hamlet *to* The Tempest (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 137.

4 On these lines, see also Francis Barker, 'Nationalism, Nomadism and Belonging in Europe: *Coriolanus*', in *Shakespeare and National Culture*, ed. by John J. Joughin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 233–65.

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strange illogical logic by which a living being can spontaneously destroy, in an autonomous fashion, the very thing within it that is supposed to protect it against the other, to immunize it against the aggressive intrusion of the other.[5]

This "strange illogical logic", I want to suggest, structures from within the act of banishing Coriolanus *and* the latter's decision to banish.[6] The essay will also argue that auto-immunity prevails insofar as political life in Rome repeatedly presents itself as life under a state of exception. As Giorgio Agamben points out, the state of exception is equivalent to the suspension of the law, and is a condition in which life can ultimately be produced as the bare life of the *homo sacer* (significantly for my purposes here, a Roman juridical figure), a life "that may be killed but not sacrificed".[7] Bare life is a life which can always be potentially "ejected" – to use a verb which appears only once in the Shakespearean corpus, to wit in *Coriolanus* (3. 1. 284) – from the *polis* and yet it is an 'outside' that keeps on maintaining a complex topological relation to the 'inside'. In this sense the people and its tribunes do "remain" with "uncertainty", with the fear of a terrifying future ("Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts! / Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes, / Fan you into despair!" 3.3.125 – 27), a fear which, from Coriolanus's partial point of view, already informs the present and is but a remarking of the cowardice they have previously shown: "Being press'd to the war, / Even when the navel of the state was touch'd, / They would not thread the gates" (3.1.121 – 23). But "uncertainty" is also, more generally, the term which aptly describes the state of exception that rules in Rome.

Coriolanus's banishment – the banishment of a Roman hero – shows the extent to which there is no safety under a state of exception, as everyone becomes potentially bare life and *homo sacer* for everyone else.[8] In the scenes that lead to

5 Jacques Derrida frequently uses this term in his latest work, especially in relation to questions of politics and religion. See Jacques Derrida, *Rogues. Two Essays on Reason* [2003], trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 123.

6 Therefore I am not just referring to the fact that Rome gives her "shield" to the Volscian "enemy", which is perhaps the most obvious instance of this logic: "You have pushed out your gates the very defender of them, and […] given your enemy your shield" (5.2.38 – 40). This logic is also at work in Coriolanus's banishing of 'Rome', which makes his position simultaneously stronger and more insecure, as well as in his multiple enraged submissions to banishment, for instance when he lashes out as follows: "Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death, / Vagabond exile, flaying, pent to linger / But with a grain a day" (3.3.88 – 90).

7 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life* [1995], trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 83.

8 According to Agamben, "the state of nature and the state of exception are nothing but two sides of a single topological process in which what was presupposed as external (the state of nature) now reappears […] in the inside (as state of exception)" (*Homo Sacer*, p. 37). The "state of nature" permanently and structurally dwells inside the *polis* (p. 106).

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Coriolanus's banishment, the tribunes appeal to Roman law to advocate its suspension. In Sicinius's words, Coriolanus

> hath resisted law,
> And therefore law shall scorn him further trial
> Than the severity of the public power,
> Which he so sets at nought. (3.1.265 – 68)

This is what Giorgio Agamben refers to as the *iustitium*, which literally means standstill or suspension of the law, a Roman legal institution which is paradoxical insofar as it consists of "the production of a juridical void", where "every citizen seems to be invested with a floating and anomalous *imperium* that resists definition within the term of the normal order".[9] At first the tribunes of the people seem to accept Menenius's advice that they should "proceed by process" (3.1.311), as well as his offer "to bring [Coriolanus] / Where he shall answer by a lawful form – / In peace – to his utmost peril" (3.1.321 – 23). But in the end it is precisely the *iustitium* – what the play calls "the other course", a "course" which is "bloody" (3.1.324 – 25) – which prevails over the more "humane way" (3.1.324) and allows them to act as 'sovereigns'.

It is worth underlining that in the scenes leading to the hero's banishment, the suspension of the 'normal' legal procedure crucially overlaps with the disruption of the rhetoric of the wounded body, a rhetoric which often contributes to the normative construction of the Roman male (homosocial) body as a body which is 'married' to his country and therefore transcends, and sets itself over against, bonds of a reproductive kind.[10] In one instance, this takes the form of a *literal* interruption of Cominius's speech. He attempts to mediate one more time by portraying himself as an emblem of masculine valour, as a former consul who "can show for Rome / Her enemies' mark upon [him]". He continues as follows:

> I do love
> My country's good with a respect more tender,
> More holy and profound, than mine own life,
> My dear wife's estimate, her womb's increase
> And treasure of my loins: then if I would
> Speak that – (3.3.110 – 16)

But one of the tribunes abruptly replies, "We know your drift. Speak what?". The other categorically asserts, "There's no more to be said but he is banish'd" (3.3.116 – 17). In another instance, the people's tribunes describe Menenius's

9 Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* [2003], trans. by Kevin Attell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 41, p. 43.

10 The rhetoric of male homosociality in Shakespeare's Roman plays has often been noted. See especially Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), especially pp. 144 – 59.

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rhetoric of the bleeding wounded body of the warrior as "clean kam" and "merely awry" (3.1.301–302), and re-define this body as a "tyrannical" (3.3.65) and "gangren'd" (3.1.304) body, an "infection" (3.1.307), a "disease that must be cut away" (3. 1. 292).

The patricians are thus unable to "salve" this – patrician – body (3.2.70). But one must bear in mind that if, as critics such as Annabelle Patterson have argued, "Shakespeare's audience is invited to contemplate an alternative political system" (i. e., republicanism);[11] if, that is, the play prefigures the proto-liberal autonomous body of the citizen whose boundaries need to be safeguarded against Coriolanus's absolutist and 'sovereign' claims, this emergence takes place *in* and *as* a state of exception / state of emergency in which one actively and violently excludes that which cannot be kept at a safe distance from oneself. In other words, the "infection" Coriolanus embodies is indeed "of catching nature" (3.1.307), in a sense the tribunes probably do not intend, as the bounded body of the citizen infects itself (i. e., auto-immunises itself) with the violence it supposedly protects itself against, a violence, of course, which will eventually come back to haunt. As James Kuzner points out, "if the play dramatizes the transfer of sovereignty from a tyrant [i.e., Tarquin] to the people as the tribunes represent them, it depicts this moment as one which preserves the exception – the placement of life outside the law – as a legitimate, lawful political act". He also stresses that, "in their production of bare life, Brutus and Sicinius endanger the very borders – of Rome and its residents – that they claim to safeguard".[12] Even seemingly neutral assessments of life in Rome after the banishment of Coriolanus are analeptically and proleptically marked by the violence of the exception. For instance, Sicinius's idyllic picture of "tradesmen singing in their shops and going / About their functions friendly" (4.6.8–9), which comes as close as the play historically can to the representation of the proto-liberal functioning of a community of citizens, is founded on the production and expulsion of a bare life which is kept at bay only momentarily. Indeed, Brutus's assertion that "Rome sits safe and still without [Coriolanus]" (4.6.37) turns out to be highly ironic, as it immediately precedes the news that, "Martius, / Join'd with Aufidius, leads a power 'gainst Rome, / And vows revenge as spacious as between / The young'st and the oldest thing" (4.6.66–9).

This is not to take sides with Coriolanus against the people and its tribunes. Coriolanus is indeed, in Volumnia's censuring words, "too absolute" (3.2.49). He continuously strives to approximate the hyperbole of himself, and this seems to

11 Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 127.
12 James Kuzner, 'Unbuilding the City: *Coriolanus* and the Birth of Republican Rome', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 58, 2 (2007), 174–99 (p. 184; p. 185).

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be the case whether one considers his role as a political and military leader, the way he construes his body, or the way he speaks, as well as the way he fights – with words – against the dissembling nature of *all* language, "When blows have made me stay, I fled from words" (2.2.72). His haughty refusal to show his wounds to the people in the marketplace is perhaps the paradigmatic example of his being "too absolute". To "seal [the people's] knowledge with showing them" (2. 3. 106) would be tantamount to the creation of some kind of bond with them. But, as Stanley Cavell persuasively argues, this refusal cannot simply be explained in terms of his *patrician* unwillingness to have anything in common with the plebeians, his reluctance to be "common" in what he loves (2.3.94). Rather, it has to do with his more general rejection of community *tout court*, of the "circle of mutual partaking" fundamentally involving eating and speaking, a circle which defines, in Cavell's somewhat idealising view to which I shall return, any community. Cavell clarifies his argument by referring to the fable Menenius enunciates at the beginning of the play:

> It is maddeningly irrelevant to Coriolanus which party the belly represents. What matters to him is that, whoever rules, all are members, that all participate in the same circulation, the same system of exchange, call it Rome.[13]

Coriolanus is therefore "absolute" also in the sense of *ab-solutus*, "un-bound", sovereignly not bound to any specific community and outside the circle of exchanges which is called Rome. In addition to Volumnia's reproach, we have, for instance, Sicinius's remarks on his "singularity" (1. 1. 277), his proud denial of mortal "infirmity" (3.1.81), as well as on the fact that he "endures not article / Tying him to aught" (2.3.194 – 95). In short, he cannot be "singly counter-pois'd" (2.2.87). To adapt Agamben's terminology, Coriolanus inhabits the empty space of the exception and, as such, he can maintain a relation to the (Roman) rule / community *only in the form of a non-relation*, which is of course different from arguing that he bears no relation to the rule / community whatsoever.

This may seem a strange definition for a Roman hero, but the text repeatedly draws attention to the ways in which Coriolanus exceeds the boundaries of the *polis* in the name of which he ostensibly acts. For instance, one may want to compare the words Coriolanus uses to incite his fellow soldiers before Corioles, in which belonging to the *polis* is subordinated to martial valour – "Come on my fellows: / *He that retires, I'll take him for a Volsce*, / And he shall feel mine edge" (1.4.27 – 9)[14]– to Cominius's more sedate lines, delivered "as it were in retire", as

13 Stanley Cavell, '"Who Does the Wolf Love?": *Coriolanus* and the Interpretations of Politics', in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. by Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 245 – 72 (p. 262).

14 My emphasis. Moreover, as the Roman soldiers are beaten back to the trenches, Coriolanus

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the stage directions have it, in which fighting like a Roman coincides with a carefully planned *collective* strategic enterprise which avoids taking unnecessary risks:

> Breathe you, my friends; well fought; we are come off
> *Like Romans*, neither foolish in our stands
> Nor cowardly in retire. Believe me, sirs,
> We shall be charg'd again. Whiles we have struck,
> By interims and conveying gusts we have heard
> The charges of our friends. (1.6.1 – 6)[15]

Coriolanus's entrance soon after this speech re-emphasises the difference. He comes on stage "mantled" in blood (1.6.29) "as he were flayed" (1.6.22), scarcely recognisable except for the sound of his voice, a voice which does not articulate any concern for the safety of his bleeding body but repeats, almost mechanically, his willingness to fight on, "Come I too late?" (1.6.24); "Come I too late?" (1.6.27).[16] The two men finally embrace, "Oh! Let me clip ye / In arms as sound as when I woo'd" (1.6.30 – 1). But how much *like a Roman* is Coriolanus?

As an exception, Coriolanus also interrupts the circle of mutual recognition, as shown when Cominius attempts to acknowledge his martial efforts by offering him a greater share of the spoils of war, "to be tak'n forth, / Before the common distribution, at / [his] only choice" (1.9.34 – 6). This offer only results in Coriolanus's further withdrawing from any dialectic of recognition. Persuaded that the reward for the deed is nothing but the doing of the deed, as Cominius himself will put it later ("He covets less / Than misery itself would give, rewards / His deeds with doing them") (2.2.126 – 28), he reacts as if the Roman general's offer was an injurious insult, "I thank you, general; / But cannot make my heart consent to take / A bribe to pay my sword: I do refuse it" (1.9.36 – 8).[17] Cominius

curses them and eggs them on again, "Mend and charge home, / Or, by the fire of heaven, *I'll leave the foe / And make my wars on you*" (1.4.38 – 40) (my emphasis). After this, he enters the gates of Corioles alone.

15 My emphasis. The two tribunes' 'interruption' of Cominius's rhetoric of the wounded body later on in the play (see above) is, from a structural and political point of view, uncannily symmetrical to the implicit contrast between Cominius and Coriolanus here. They both point to a 'Rome' which is being exceeded.

16 Coriolanus will immediately request that "[Cominius] directly / Set [him] against Aufidius and his Antiates" (1.6.58 – 9).

17 Instead, Coriolanus desires to "stand upon [his] common part with those / That have beheld the doing" (1.9.39 – 40). He is therefore willing to partake of the spoils of war as an equal among others. This only apparently contradicts my argument about his relation of non-relation to the social bond that cements a community. The (alternative) community we have a glimpse of here is an ephemeral one which is constituted in / as the exception which is called war, and is fundamentally made of those "who love this painting [i.e. blood] / Wherein [they] see him smear'd" (1.6.68 – 9). This is a 'community' whose *raison d'être* is its latent undoing, in that it is willing to take the risk of a shedding of blood which makes friends and enemies

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replies to Coriolanus's discourtesy and breach of *decorum* with words which are simultaneously bitter, humorous and affectionate:

> Too modest are you;
> More cruel to your good report than grateful
> To us that give you truly: by your patience,
> If 'gainst yourself you be incensed, we'll put you,
> (Like one that means his proper harm), in manacles,
> Then reason safely with you. (1.9.52 – 7)[18]

One can thus "reason safely" with Coriolanus, and "report" him "truly", only by restraining his unboundedness; by turning him, that is, into a captive, "in manacles", and this, of course, in order to protect and save him from himself. This speech may be seen as part of an innocuous and marginal exchange between two characters, and may even be read as articulating some kind of release from the tension of war. But I want to argue that it points to some crucial features of the play, and even captures some of its darkest aspects. First of all, the image of a captive Coriolanus somehow uncannily adumbrates his fate. Second, it aptly describes the position Coriolanus finds himself occupying, in spite of himself, at regular intervals in the scenes that follow. Indeed, as the play moves from war to (precarious) peace, one can often see a Coriolanus who is metaphorically "in manacles". For instance, Coriolanus cannot entirely avoid hearing himself being praised and having his "nothings monster'd" (2.2.77). He cannot "o'erleap" the "custom" (2. 3. 136) of showing his wounds to the people, and is constrained to wear "the gown of humility" (2.3.41). He is also forced to listen to his mother's extolling of the "virtue" of *realpolitik* and dissimulation in a state of peace as well as in a state of war (3.2.46 – 51) – *realpolitik* which this and other early modern plays consistently call "policy"(3.2.48) – before being sent back to the market-place ("Go, and be rul'd", 3.2.90) to "perform a part" (3. 2. 109) against his will, which includes the use, "such words that are but roted in / [his] tongue [...] but

indistinguishable, and thus potentially extends beyond the boundaries of 'Rome'. See Kuzner on the crucial question of whether the blood that "mantles" Coriolanus has flowed out of him or onto him. He concludes his discussion by arguing that Coriolanus "loves war not because it permits him to prove his loyalty to Romans in risking himself against Volscians, but because taking that risk makes Romans and Volscians indistinguishable and, to that extent, alike" (p. 188). In any case, this is a community which cannot be spoken of, some kind of secret that threatens 'Rome' with the spectre of its dissolution, and which will arguably be reconstituted, at least from Coriolanus's point of view, in all its fragility, when he strikes an alliance with the Volscian Aufidius. For the moment, Coriolanus bluntly replies to the soldiers' loud acclamation with words that intimate silence: "May these same instruments, which you profane, / Never sound more!" (1.9.41 – 2).

18 For instance, "by your patience" is subtly ironic. By asking him permission, Cominius reminds him of hierarchy, of being his general. See the Arden edition of the play, p. 146 n.

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bastards and syllables / Of no allowance to [his] bosom's truth" (3.2.55–7).[19] Yet Cominius's speech is also significant in that it implicitly associates the possibility of Coriolanus's release from his "manacles" with the unleashing of a threatening self-destructive drive ("Like one that means his proper harm"). It implicitly acknowledges, that is, in a furtive but nonetheless incisive way, that Coriolanus is not only Rome's shield but also the name for a potential threat, some kind of "disease" or "infection", to use the tribunes' words (3.1.292; 307), which could extend beyond "his proper harm" so as to "mean[…] harm" to the boundaries of the *polis.* As a shield, Coriolanus makes Rome's body politic equivalent to a self-enclosed hyper-protected organism with a perfectly functioning immunitary system. But the shield-Coriolanus, as the battle against the Volscians shows, is also attracted, in a quasi-mechanical fashion, to the hyperbolic possibilities of his own immunity ("The blood I drop is rather physical / Than dangerous to me", 1.5.18–19)[20] as well as of the immunity he provides, and so much so that, as the scenes that follow fully illustrate, immunity shifts its connotation. In short, to use Derridean terminology, he also embodies the risk of auto-immunity, of the immunity system turning on itself and beginning to destroy what it is supposed to safeguard. One must stress again, however, that auto-immunity in the play does not simply consist of the self-destructive act of endowing the Volscian "enemy" with a Roman "shield" (5.2.40). It does not merely coincide with Coriolanus's banishment. The shield continuously performs, as it were, from beginning to end, its own self-dividedness.

It is worth citing at length Derrida's formalisation of the logic of auto-immunity I have been adopting, a logic which, for Derrida, affects every community and forces him to coin a new expression, "auto-co-immunity". His argument reads very much like an interpretation of the vicissitudes of the body politic in the play, as well as the complex positioning of the title character in relation to it:

> [T]he auto-immunitary haunts the community and its system of immunitary survival like the hyperbole of its own possibility. Nothing in *common*, nothing immune, safe and sound […], nothing unscathed in the most autonomous living

19 For insightful remarks on Volumnia's speech, see John Plotz, p. 815–16. According to Plotz, Volumnia's speech is paradigmatic of a "public realm of tacitly accepted opportunistic mendacity" (p. 809) which is itself based on a model of language in which future effects and rewards are paramount. Coriolanus's model of language provides a critique of this self-interested public realm, but it is "nothing but the flip side of a delusionary split between an inherently false public sphere and a true inner self" (p. 821). Plotz criticises Cavell's approach to the play (see note 13) since it idealises the political and linguistic norms of a community the play clearly shows as mendacious.

20 Just before leaving Rome, Coriolanus refers to himself as "one / That's yet unbruis'd" (4.1.48).

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present without a risk of auto-immunity [...]. This excess above and beyond the living, whose life only has absolute value by being worth more than life, more than itself – this, in short, is what opens the space of death that is linked to the automaton (exemplarily 'phallic'), to technics, the machine, the prosthesis: in a word, to the dimensions of the auto-immune [....], to this death drive that is silently at work in every community, every *auto-co-immunity*, constituting it as such in its iterability, its heritage, its spectral tradition. Community as *com-mon auto-immunity:* no community [...] that would not cultivate its own auto-immunity, a principle of sacrificial self-destruction ruining the principle of self-protection (that of maintaining its self-integrity intact), and this in view of some sort of invisible and spectral sur-vival.[21]

To provide a further gloss on this passage, I want to argue that one can hardly read Derrida's words on the "excess above and beyond the living" without thinking of Coriolanus's life within the play as life in excess of itself, a life that is worth living only insofar as it is more (or less) than itself and thus, for this very reason, "opens the space of death" and repetition, which the play radically imagines as the paradigmatically phallic automatic behaviour of a war machine that brings life to an end, a mortal threat to Rome's enemies as well as Rome itself.[22]

References to Coriolanus as a war machine abound. Thinking him dead, Titus Lartius remarks on his "grim looks and / The thunder-like percussion of [his] sounds" (1.4.58 – 9). Cominius's *laudatio* before the senators and the people's tribunes contains references to the quasi-automatic functioning of Coriolanus's lethal weapon,"[H]is sword, death's stamp, / Where it did mark, it took" (2.2.107 – 108). He also mentions the deadly rhythmical movement of the hero: his "every motion / Was tim'd with dying cries" (2.2.109 – 10). After his banishment, with only his name left (4.5.74), having the people and the "dastard nobles […] devour'd the rest" (4.5.76 – 7), Coriolanus *qua* war machine approaches more and more the status of a "thing" that is other than natural, "a

21 Jacques Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of "Religion" at the Limits of Reason Alone' [1996], in *Religion*, ed. by Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 1 – 78 (p. 47; p. 51). For excellent readings of the logic of auto-immunity, see W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Picturing Terror: Derrida's Autoimmunity', *Critical Inquiry*, 33 (2007), 277 – 90, and Geoff Bennington, 'Foundations', *Textual Practice*, 21 (2007), 231 – 49.

22 Interestingly, one of the questions raised in the Volscian camp is whether Coriolanus will "carry Rome" (4.7.27); whether he will deflect or not from his purpose of conquering Rome. But to "carry Rome" is fascinatingly ambiguous: does Coriolanus "carry" Rome, in the sense of taking "Rome" upon himself and embodying it, as he plans to "carry" (i.e. conquer) Rome, which would make the act of "carrying" equivalent to some kind of suicide mission? This ambiguity belongs to the self-destructive auto-immunitary logic of the play, and even more so if one thinks of the meaning of "carrier" in immunitary discourse. On the 'portability' of the signifier of the nation in the play, see Barker, especially p. 253 – 54.

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thing / Made by some other deity than nature" (4.6.91 – 2), "a kind of nothing, titleless" (5.1.13), a "thing" haunted by the memory of his (former) self, and thus aggressively seeking to "forg[e] himself" a new name (5.1.14 – 15) which could guarantee a spectral survival for himself. But it is Menenius's description towards the end of the play that undoubtedly insists more clearly on the machine-like qualities of Coriolanus, and in a way that uncannily recalls future figurations of this titleless thing:

> When he walks, he
> moves like an engine, and the ground shrinks before
> his treading: he is able to pierce a corslet with his
> eye, talks like a knell, and his hum is a battery. (5.4.18 – 21)

It is almost as if the play, that is, through Menenius's speech, inscribed within itself the memory of the future of the automaton: the warrior as proto-fascistic body, or a cyborg or indeed a simulacrum in a virtual reality environment.[23]

The war machine does not stop functioning in the scenes that are situated between the battle of Corioles and Coriolanus's turning against Rome. Aufidius's lucid dissection of Coriolanus's "nature" (4.7.41) provides some clues as to why this is the case. To Aufidius, Coriolanus is unable to "mov[e] from th'casque to th'cushion" (4.7.43). He suspects that Coriolanus's attitude in a state of peace is that of "commanding peace / Even with the same austerity and garb / As he controll'd the war" (4.7.43 – 5). Coriolanus's appeal to the senators before his banishment confirms the accuracy of the Volscian general's hypothesis:

> Therefore, beseech you, –
> You that will be less fearful than discreet,
> That love the fundamental part of state
> More than you doubt the change on't, that prefer
> A noble life before a long, and wish
> To jump a body with a dangerous physic
> That's sure of death without it – at once pluck out
> The multitudinous tongue: let them not lick
> The sweet which is their poison. (3.1.148 – 56)

Coriolanus also advises the senators to "throw [the tribunes'] power i' the dust", on the grounds that they were chosen in a time of "rebellion", when necessity created its own law, "when what's not meet, but what must be, was law" (3.1.165 – 66). In its initial phases, therefore, the play moves from the people's *tumultus*[24] – the exceptional circumstances leading to the election of the tribunes – to a war against an external enemy which ends with a state of peace in which there

23 On the diacritical mark of history in relation to these figurations, see Barker, p. 252.
24 See Agamben on the state of disorder and unrest called *tumultus*, and its etymological relation to the swelling of a tumour (Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 42).

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prevails a war of all against all.[25] In short, states of exceptions superimpose upon each other in a spiral-like movement, not least because each state of exception proliferates the disease it is designed to cure. For instance, the "musty superfluity" which war as a state of exception is meant to "vent" (1.1.224 – 25) represents itself here as the "multitudinous tongue" to be "pluck[ed] out" for its own sake, a "tongue" which will eventually succeed in plucking out the "disease" called Coriolanus (3. 1. 292). This is a "disease", in turn, which will threaten "to unbuild the city and lay all flat" (3. 1. 196) and "sack great Rome with Romans" (3.1.313), a pillage from which not even Coriolanus as a "carrier" of Rome would be able to escape.[26]

In Coriolanus's speech, which is a declaration of war against the people and is also far removed from the hierarchical inclusive corporatism of characters such as Menenius and Cominius,[27] the "fundamental part of state" coincides with the violence of the state of exception – the "dangerous physic" without which the body politic is destined to die. It amounts to a re-foundation of the *polis*, "the creation and definition of the very space in which the juridico-political order can have validity".[28] This does not exclude the war of all against all but, rather, incorporates it and transforms it into the violence of the 'absolute' act of the sovereign, a sovereign "with respect to whom all men are potentially *homines*

25 The 'war of all against all' is often referred to, even if only in passing, in criticism of the play as a short-hand formula to photograph conflicts that undoubtedly run much deeper than the simple opposition between patricians and plebeians. Cavell, for instance, mentions it in relation to his reading of cannibalism: the war of all against all means that man is wolf to man, which means, in turn, devouring – and being devoured by – the other (Cavell, p. 253). This is clear from the very beginning of the play, "If the war eat us not up", as the first citizen puts it, "[the patricians] will" (1.1.84). For Coriolanus, without authority to "keep [the plebeians] in awe", they "would feed on one another" (1.1.186 – 87). John Plotz speaks of "a continual war of each against each" which affects the public space (and its language) as a whole (Plotz, p. 813). Plotz identifies at least seven sides in the "battles" the play articulates, which include: Aufidius vs. Coriolanus; Patricians vs. Plebeians; Tribunes vs. Patricians; Plebeians vs. Plebeians; Rome vs. Coriolanus; Coriolanus vs. himself; Volumnia vs. Coriolanus. To these one might add: Coriolanus vs. the patricians and the people's tribunes vs. the people. Barker speaks of a "profound, even catastrophic, disorganisation […] in the body politic" (Barker, p. 251).

26 See note 22. Rome will eventually be safe but it will also traumatically bear the memory of the 'victim' Coriolanus. In managing to dismantle the machine-Coriolanus, Volumnia becomes "the life of Rome" (5.5.1). But she also comes to coincide with the "unnatural dam" who has "eat[en] up her own" (3. 1. 290). The "life of Rome" is, once again, predicated upon the production of a bare life that can be killed without recourse to more orthodox legal channels.

27 Barker argues that "at odds with the received patrician corporatism, [Coriolanus's] impersonation of the state takes the form of treasonous partition from it, by identifying its interests against itself" (Barker, p. 251). Trying to justify Coriolanus's uncouthness, Menenius points out that "meal and bran together / He throws without distinction" (3.1.319 – 20). He would not be able to function as an organ in the body politic of Menenius's initial fable.

28 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 19.

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sacri".[29] The tribunes are thus not wrong in interpreting this and other speeches by Coriolanus as symptoms of 'absolutist' claims, even if they themselves produce, as argued earlier, life as bare life in a way which is structurally similar to what remains, as far as Coriolanus is concerned, only an appeal that falls on deaf ears.[30] To them, Coriolanus has endeavoured to "wind [himself] into a power tyrannical" (3.3.64 – 5). Moreover, as they clarify after Coriolanus's banishment, he has "unknit himself the noble knot he made" (4.2.31 – 2).

Yet the dialectic between the "knot" and its "unknit[ting]" is more complicated that these lines suggest, and the oversimplified way in which the tribunes articulate it may be an attempt on their part to cover up the "unknit[ting]" through which Coriolanus has just been exposed to bare life – an "unknit[ting]" to which they crucially contribute – and bring to the foreground, instead, what retrospectively becomes the only (noble) "knot" that counts: the "knot" made of bounded citizens "going about their functions friendly" (4.6.8 – 9) from which Coriolanus willingly excludes himself. Indeed, what transpires from a reading of Coriolanus's positioning of himself as well as from the various articulations of the body politic in the play is that there is no pre-existing "knot", in the form of sharing, pact or contract, which can subsequently be "unknit". One cannot but agree with Agamben's thesis that the 'truth' of the sovereign tie is an untying. At least as far as *Coriolanus*'s Rome is concerned, "the tie itself originarily has the form of an untying or exception in which what is captured is at the same time excluded". Agamben adds that "what this untying implies and produces [is] bare life".[31] It is this "untying or exception" that lies at the basis of Coriolanus's 'absolute' invoking of "the fundamental part of the state", of an arcane and more profound law which is nothing but the suspension of the law – the suspension of what he calls in another circumstance mere "custom".[32] This suspension goes hand in hand with his construction of the life of the people as bare life, as merely tongue to be plucked out, an act to be performed, paradoxically, in the name of keeping life immune from "poison."

This is not to argue that in the play as a whole the logic of untying is entirely unambiguous, and I want to show this complexity by referring to yet another of the charges the tribunes level at Coriolanus, when they call him a "viper / That

29 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 84.

30 Agamben also argues that "*homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 84). This can be applied to the tribunes' successful implementation of the state of exception which construes Coriolanus as *homo sacer:* Coriolanus's objections to Sicinius's "*absolute* 'shall'" (3.1.89, my emphasis) is yet another sign of the uncanny proximity of strategies.

31 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 90.

32 Being required to show his wounds, Coriolanus ironically asserts, "What custom wills, in all things should we do't, / The dust on antique time would lie unswept, / And mountainous error be too highly heap'd / For truth to o'erpeer" (2.3.117 – 20).

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would depopulate the city and / Be every man himself" (3.1.261 – 63). What emerges from these lines is, first of all, the animalisation of the human, with Coriolanus being figured as a "viper", an image which connects with, and further explores, the previous definition of the hero as "wind[ing] [himself]", like a snake, "into a power tyrannical" (3.3.64 – 5). This animalisation should not come as a surprise in a play which is replete with images of Rome *tanquam dissoluta* (i. e., as if it were dissolved),[33] a (scarcely human) city under a permanent state of exception in which animalisation is at every moment possible. The state of exception in which the city is caught, as Agamben reminds us, operates through the creation of multiple "threshold[s] of indistinction and passage between animal and man, *physis* and *nomos*, exclusion and inclusion".[34] But more significantly for my purposes here is the specific articulation of the vanishing city as a depopulated city. On the one hand, the depopulated city fits in with the logic of the exception which is a structure of de-localisation and dis-location creating an "empty space", a temporal and spatial vacuum for the sovereign decision to be effectively exercised. After all, bare life as the target and substratum of the sovereign decision, included solely through an exclusion, is not, strictly speaking, 'proper' life. In this sense, bare life has already evacuated the city. To Coriolanus, who is imagined as acting as *absolutus* in this "empty space", which is also the locus of the emptiness of time,[35] the people are not properly Romans:

33 This is of course Agamben's borrowing from Hobbes. See Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, esp. pp. 35 – 7.

34 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 105. Images of Rome *tanquam dissoluta* abound: the "unroof'd" city (1. 1. 217), the city "in heaps and piles of ruins" (3. 1. 204); the city cleft "in the midst" (3.2.28), and so on. They often combine, and are indistinguishable from, images of a city animalised, whose culmination is perhaps that of "renowned Rome" which, "like an unnatural dam", threatens to "eat up her own" (3.1.288 – 91). These are often images which are meant to function apotropaically but they are in fact the mark of an event which has already occurred. The more general proliferation of figures of animals also has to do with the blurring of the threshold of distinction between opposing terms which is typical of the state of exception. In Agamben's recent work, the state of exception as defined in *Homo Sacer* is arguably rearticulated as an anthropological machine which similarly works "by means of an exclusion [of the animal] (which is also always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is also always already an exclusion)". See Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* [2002], trans. by Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 37.

35 Leonard Tennenhouse observes that Coriolanus becomes "in his perversely moral world an autonomous body politic", and associates this with his embodiment of "the impractical and impolitic ideal of the old state". The temporal (and spatial) suspension of the state of exception suggests otherwise. As the dialectic of time comes to a standstill in the sovereign decision, one witnesses a certain indeterminacy as regards the past, present and future as temporal marks of time. This is the reason why, I would suggest, Coriolanus appears as the return from the past of the "dictator" Tarquin, whom he "struck […] on his knee" (2.2.94 – 5) *and* a virtual machine coming from the future. See Leonard Tennenhouse, '*Coriolanus:* History and Crisis of the Semantic Order', in *Drama in the Renaissance*, ed. by Clifford Davidson (New York: AMS, 1985), pp. 217 – 31 (p. 227; p. 223).

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they do not inhabit the city but are merely "in Rome litter'd", bare life "calv'd i'th'porch o'th'Capitol" (3.1.237–38). But, on the other hand, if one wants further to explore the image of the depopulated city, one cannot but ask oneself questions such as: what kind of city is this uncannily (de)populated city in which Coriolanus is "every man himself" and thus not just *absolutus* but also *homo sacer* in relation to himself? What kind of tyrant is this sovereign whose decision is necessarily an act of auto-affection, an act that – sovereignly – affects and cruelly infects the self as well as itself?[36] Does the logic of exception exceed itself when what is included only through an exclusion is none other than one's self as bare life?

From a perspective such as Cavell's, the city in which Coriolanus is "every man himself" is the city of unrestrained cannibalism (and narcissism), which is set against a community of those who symbolically "partake of the same body, of a common victim" and mildly incorporate one another. Coriolanus, an inverted image of Christ, disdainfully keeps himself at a distance from this kind of sharing.[37] As Cavell argues, he "cannot imagine, or cannot accept, that there is a way to partake of one another, incorporate one another, that is necessary to the formation rather than to the extinction of a community". He cannot envisage a sharing that is "beneficial, creative, not annihilating".[38] It should be clear from what I have been arguing so far that while agreeing with Cavell's hypothesis that the play is political mainly in the sense of being about "the formation of the political, the founding of the city", I fundamentally disagree with his idealisation of community (and of community *as* idealisation).[39] Following Derrida, I have been arguing that the – uncertain – foundation of the political is auto-immunitarian, that community is "auto-co-immunity", immune life turning on itself and undermining the principles of integrity and self-protection which simultaneously govern the boundaries of the (sovereign) self and the boundaries of *its* community. But it would be wrong to assume that Derrida's view of community is more pessimistic than Cavell's. Auto-immunity introduces "death" in the "life" of a community in the form of a (mechanical) trace. But what would the absolute immunity of a body (politic) mean if not its devotion to death? As Derrida points out in *Rogues. Two Essays on Reason*, "auto-immunity

36 On auto-immunitarian sovereignty as auto-affection and infection, see Derrida's scattered remarks in *Rogues. Two Essays on Reason,* especially p. 109. The final part of Aufidius's speech in act four, scene seven reads like a textbook on (sovereign) power as the auto-immune, "One fire drives out one fire; one nail one nail; / Rights by rights falter, strengths by strengths do fail" (4.7.54–5).

37 See Cavell, p. 262. This is an *unsafe* distance since Coriolanus is killed "in a place irrelevant to his sacrifice" (p. 259).

38 Cavell, p. 263; p. 267.

39 Cavell, p. 262.

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is not absolute evil. It allows for exposure to the other, to *what* is coming and to *who* is coming […]. Without auto-immunity, with absolute immunity, nothing would ever happen".[40] In *Faith and Knowledge* he underlines that it is because of auto-immunity that a community presents openness to "something other and more than itself: the other, the future, death, freedom, the coming or the love of the other".[41] It is not, therefore, a matter of life *or* death but, rather, of death-in-life (and life-in-death), of the (risky) undecidability between life and death, an undecidability which is at one and the same time threat *and* chance and without which there would not be any event.

As shown earlier, auto-immunity means, to Coriolanus, being fascinated with the hyperbolic possibilities of his own immunity, and to such an extent that he begins to resemble "one that means his proper harm" (1.9.56), obsessively driven by a drive which is nothing but the undoing of the "proper". This drive corresponds to a self-consuming act, an act which is absolute and thus an end in itself. As Cominius points out, Coriolanus "rewards / His deeds with doing them, and is content / To spend the time to end it" (2.2.127 – 29). That this drive is appropriated by Rome – and Cominius's eulogy is itself a form of appropriation – and subsequently by Antium does not mean that it is driven, or at least driven primarily, *in the name of* either polis. Using Agamben to read *Coriolanus*, James Kuzner argues that the title hero is a "figure who represents practices of self-undoing that could clear a path out of the state of exception, however tortuous that path might prove. He gestures towards life after and outside its production in Rome as bare life".[42] As this citation shows, Kuzner is not unaware of how "tortuous" this "path" may be. However, he provides convincing examples of how Coriolanus actively seeks, and indeed accelerates, his self-undoing and unravelling,[43] and in ways that do not necessarily re-inscribe what Agamben

40 Derrida, *Rogues*, p. 152.
41 Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge', p. 51.
42 Kuzner, p. 174.
43 Kuzner's examples range from Coriolanus's attitude to fighting – "he wants to keep to the battlefields, for there he can exist beyond protective imperatives" (p. 187) – to the "sodomitical order" he instigates, which is an undermining of 'Rome' as the play dominantly knows it (p. 189). For instance, the effect of his victorious return from Corioles is that women escape from the 'proper' social and reproductive roles to which they are confined: "All tongues speak of him, and the bleared sights / Are spectacled to see him: your prattling nurse / Into a rapture lets her baby cry / While she chats him: the kitchen malkin pins / Her richest lockram'bout her reechy neck, / Clambering the walls to eye him" (2.1.203 – 208). Kuzner also mentions Coriolanus's meeting with Aufidius and the scene in act five with his wife, mother and son in which Coriolanus's "kiss" (5.3.44 – 8) seals his betrayal of both Rome and Antium. Kuzner usefully summarises Coriolanus's practices of undoing: "When Corioles is empty of Romans, he enters, when the time comes to show himself worthy of the consulship, he speaks in terms that seem absolutist […]; and later, when he is supposed to solidify his alliance to Antium, he instead sides with his Roman mother" (p. 187). For the concept of "sodometry"

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calls the lethal "central fiction" of a state (in this case, Rome) as a state of exception.[44]

Indeed, Coriolanus is mostly unconcerned with the effects the drive he embodies may have on the – immune – life of a self, including his own self, or a community. This drive is thus a poisonous gift in the terms of any community qua community. Because it escapes the logic of reward, memorialisation and exchange,[45] it may be seen, in Agamben's language, as a "force" that "deactivates and deposes", a force that runs counter to a force that "institutes and makes", even if in the state of exception that rules in Rome these two forces often seem to coincide.[46] This force intermittently loosens what from the point of view of the state of exception is the "substantial articulation […] between law and violence, between life and norm".[47] This is not only the case when Coriolanus fights, at the moment, that is, of his utmost strength, when "violence" shows itself most clearly as not necessarily being a function of the "law": Coriolanus's "violence", as argued earlier, when seen from within Cominius or Menenius's dominant construction of the body of 'Rome', does not make him wholly like a Roman (1.6.2). This is also the case when Coriolanus, just after being banished from Rome, not quite a Roman but not yet Rome's enemy, espouses with conviction, and in an auto-immune fashion, the weakness of his status as bare life, and turns up at Aufidius's "goodly house" at the time of a "feast [that] smells well" (4.5.5). As bare life, he is, in the words of a servingman, "a strange [fellow]" (4.5.21), a "strange guest" (4.5.36). He dwells "under the canopy" (4.5.39), in the city "of kites and crows" (4.5.43), in a liminal state which is in fact an untying of the untying of the exception, and does not bring "life" back – or at least not yet – under the domain of the "norm". Like any auto-immunitarian exposure worthy

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as the undermining of the *dispositif* of alliance which is based upon the exchange of women and thus confines them to their 'proper' domestic roles, see Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

44 For Agamben, it would be wrong to assume that one can "halt the machine" of the state of exception by reaffirming "the primacy of norm and of rights", since they are themselves "ultimately grounded in it" (Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 94). *Coriolanus* shows, as we have seen earlier, that the "rights" of proto-liberal citizens are protected through the production and expulsion of bare life.

45 Coriolanus's refusal to enter any circuit of exchange can also be said implicitly to extend to the fact of being a character or actor in a play called *Coriolanus.*

46 Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 94. This is no less than through the figure of Coriolanus himself. For instance, Coriolanus's invoking of "the fundamental part of the state" (3.1.50) deactivates as much as institutes. But not only is this exceptional state of exception not implemented, it ensues in the image of the depopulated city I have referred to, which can be read as the articulation of the fact that sovereignty, including sovereignty over one's self, auto-immunises itself, and makes itself vulnerable, at the very moment in which it is supposed fully and absolutely to exercise itself.

47 Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 94.

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of this name, Coriolanus's exposure to the other entails the risk of instant death and destruction. It is chance *and* threat. He talks to Aufidius as follows: "Now this extremity / Hath brought me to thy hearth, not out of hope / (Mistake me not) to save my life; for if / I had fear'd death, of all the men i'th'world / I would have 'voided thee" (4.5.79 – 83). This is an exposure to the other that proliferates exposure. For instance, it affects Aufidius, "O Martius, Martius! / Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart / A root of ancient envy" (4.5.102 – 104). It is this "ancient envy" that had made Aufidius speak of Coriolanus at the end of act one in the following terms, "Where I find him, were it / At home, upon my brother's guard, even there, / Against the *hospitable canon*, would I / Wash my fierce hand in's heart" (1.10.24 – 8, my emphasis). But now in Antium, the guest who does not even "appear […] like a guest" (4.5.6) turns the host Aufidius into his hostage, and this at the very moment in which he gives himself over to him:

> But if so be
> Thou dar'st not this and that to prove more fortunes
> Th'art tir'd, then, in a word, I also am
> Longer to live most weary, and present
> My throat to thee and to thy ancient malice;
> Which not to cut would show thee but a fool. (4.5.93 – 8)[48]

Aufidius, of course, does not cut Coriolanus's throat. He 'cuts', instead, the 'double bind' in which Coriolanus's argument is articulated by showing openness to the *event* this "strange guest" (4.5.36) seems to be, an event which can only take place, to refer to Derrida once again, "where it is not yet or already no longer possible to face up, to put up a front, to the unpredictability of the other".[49] The servingmen marvel at what they call "a strange *alteration*" (4.5. 149, my emphasis) on Aufidius's part, which includes his repeated gestures of welcoming ("A thousand welcomes!"; "Your hand: most welcome!", 4.5.146 – 48) toward a "noble thing" (4.5.117) who "hath done / To [Aufidius] particularly, and to all the Volsces, / Great hurt and mischief" (4.5.66 – 8); his making "a mistress of him"; the way he "turns up the white o'th'eye to [Coriolanus's]

48 Later on in the play, Coriolanus will become a "strange guest" again, when he utters the words "let it come", which seal the fact that his mother has "with him prevail'd", and "most dangerously" for him (5.3.188 – 89). But this time the guest will only encounter utter hostility. As Kuzner comments, "he becomes traitor to Rome and Antium alike; in relenting to his wife and family he has embraced and betrayed both places and so cannot be identified with, or tolerated by, either" (p. 195). In other words, he becomes *homo sacer* again, exposed to the unlimited capacity of being killed. As *homo sacer* he cannot but incite the Volscian conspirators with these words: "Cut me to pieces, Volsces; men and lads, / Stain all your edges on me" (5.6.111 – 12).

49 Derrida, *Rogues*, p. 152.

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discourse" (4.5.200 – 202) in rapture, and so on. Moreover, this auto-immune hospitality that exposes Aufidius's radical vulnerability seems to have been there all along, in his dreams:

> Thou hast beat me out
> Twelve several times, and I have nightly since
> Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me –
> We have been down together in my sleep,
> Unbuckling helms, fisting each other's throat,
> And wak'd half dead with nothing. (4.5.122 – 27)

Outside the dream, the "noble thing" Coriolanus will soon be engaged in a lethal war: they will soon be "pouring war / Into the bowels of ungrateful Rome" (4.5.130 – 31). He will soon become a killing machine again, turning "terror into sport" (2.2.105), this time for Antium. Moreover, the whole scene of infinite hospitality in Antium could retrospectively be read as part of Aufidius's cynical manipulation of Coriolanus. But I want to argue that this does not erase, the auto-immunitarian inoperativeness Aufidius's "nothing" enacts there and then; the way it points to the halting of the war machine, if only for an instant. It is with the "nothing" one awakens with after this most martial and *un*martial of encounters that I want to end. It is a "nothing" that inevitably carries within itself the future threat of annihilation. But this "nothing" is also – literally – "disarming" in its alterity. It neutralises the circuit of war and makes sovereignty over one's self "half dead", temporarily but nonetheless crucially annihilating the annihilation, and on the side of life, of vulnerable but liveable life.[50]

50 Whether this (erotic) inoperativeness is itself entirely included in the "virile homosexuality" of the dominant schema of friendship is a question too complicated to be dealt with here. On this question, see Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* [1994], trans. by George Collins (London: Verso, 1997), especially pp. 271 – 307.

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Ute Berns

Performing Anatomy in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

Julius Caesar treats historical events in ancient Rome that have become founding myths of European political history. The highly dramatic events presented in the play – the conspiracy that leads to Caesar's assassination, the civil war following his death, and the emergence of Octavius, the future emperor Augustus – reflect the particularly theatrical flavour of Roman political life as transmitted through the historical writings of Plutarch and Suetonius. Moreover, *Julius Caesar* is the first of Shakespeare's plays assumed to have been acted at the newly built Globe theatre in 1599 where it may indeed have served as the opening production.[1] In what follows, I will discuss the way in which *Julius Caesar* engages with a contemporary practice that was no less theatrical than the events the play depicts, namely the performance of anatomy. Anatomical dissections, shaped by developments across Europe, were a regular feature of early modern English culture. And with the visibility of dissections apparently increasing towards the end of the century, we may assume that some of the contemporary theatre-goers would have had first-hand experience of this kind of spectacle.[2]

The representation of anatomy in *Julius Caesar* touches upon a number of issues that have occupied recent critics, and I will briefly summarize them. To begin with, studies of the play have frequently commented on the way in which it foregrounds the process of signification itself. They refer to the dramatic preoccupation with letters and portents, to soothsayers, augurs or foreboding dreams, or to the symbolic and ritualistic meaning of the blood spilt in the play.[3] Furthermore, the critics' attention has been drawn to the way in which *Julius*

1 Richard Wilson, 'Introduction', in *Julius Caesar*, ed. by Richard Wilson, New Casebooks (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 1 – 28 (p. 8).

2 See Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 41 – 3, pp. 54 – 7.

3 See Stephen M. Buhler, 'No Spectre, no Sceptre: the Agon of Materialist Thought in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 26 (1996), 313 – 32; or Naomi Conn Liebler, '"Thou bleeding piece of earth": The Ritual Ground of *Julius Caesar*', in *Julius Caesar*, ed. by Richard Wilson, pp. 128 – 38.

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Caesar highlights the theatricality of the events it presents. They have pointed out that the play's meta-theatricality draws attention both to the fundamental theatricality of public political agency and to the performative political force of theatricality itself.[4] And finally, this challenge has been taken up by sophisticated new historicist readings of *Julius Caesar* which have linked postmodern theories of representation with historico-political agendas. They trace the way in which Shakespeare appropriates Roman history to represent the conflicts of his own culture.[5]

The discourse of anatomy in *Julius Caesar*, I argue, cuts right across the representational and political issues just outlined (I here use the word 'discourse' in the widest Foucauldian sense of a discursive formation, encompassing texts, images, material practices and performances).[6] When Cassius dissects Brutus's inner thoughts and feelings (1.2.92 – 162), we are made aware that his discursive use of the practice of anatomy produces meaning, more specifically, that it discloses hidden truths.[7] When Brutus urges the conspirators to "carve [Caesar] as a dish fit for the gods" (2.1.173), the discursive anatomies of Caesar's character are linked to the artful practice of a knife working on a body. And when Antony keeps pointing at Caesar's corpse as he addresses the citizens (3.2.158 – 248) he evokes an anatomical performance before an audience and thus, with a meta-theatrical gesture, the notion of the anatomy theatre itself. Several critics have demonstrated the architectural, discursive and performative exchanges between early modern anatomy theatres and playhouses,[8] and Richard Wilson

4 Discussing the position of the contemporary theatre between subversion and containment, John Drakakis actually argues: "*Julius Caesar* is […] an unmasking of the politics of representation *per se*"; see '"Fashion it thus": *Julius Caesar* and theatrical representation', in *Shakespeare and Politics*, ed. by Catherine M. S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 206 – 18 (p. 215). Jonathan Goldberg suggests that "the Roman plays that came to claim the stage in the Jacobean period reflect the style of the monarch and James's sense of himself as a royal actor"; see 'The Roman Actor: *Julius Caesar*', in *Julius Caesar*, ed. by Richard Wilson, pp. 92 – 107 (p. 94). And Ian Munro situates the play's theatrical self-consciousness "in the context of the urban multitude and the position of the theatre as an institution"; see *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London: The City and its Double* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), esp. pp. 143-73, here p. 145.

5 See Robert S. Miola, 'Julius Caesar and the Tyrannicide Debate', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 38 (1985), 271 – 89, and Wayne Rebhorn, 'The Crisis of the Aristocracy in *Julius Caesar*', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43 (1990), 78 – 109; or more recently and from a materialist perspective Richard Wilson, '"Is this a holiday?": Shakespeare's Roman Carnival', in *Julius Caesar*, ed. by Richard Wilson, pp. 55 – 76.

6 Michel Foucault develops this concept of 'discourse' in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991).

7 This and all subsequent references are based on *Julius Caesar,* in *The Norton Shakespeare Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and others (New York: Norton, 1997), pp. 1533 – 89.

8 See for example Devon L. Hodges, *Renaissance Fictions of Anatomy* (Amherst: University of

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actually makes the discussion of anatomy part of his interpretation of *Julius Caesar*. At the very point when the modern state is beginning to emerge, Shakespeare's text – Wilson argues – demonstrates how various modes of authority insert themselves on all social levels. He points out that the exertion of control focuses especially on the dead body and its exegesis, and refers to Antony speaking over Caesar's corpse in a role resembling that of a professor of anatomy. In Wilson's account, the corpse here embodies the materiality in which bourgeois ideology inscribes a punitive discourse of morality and reason.[9]

Wilson's powerful reading focuses on anatomy as a disciplinary device in the service of an emerging regime of bourgeois power and subject formation. My own approach to the anatomical discourse in *Julius Caesar* intends to shift the investigation to a different arena. In what follows, I will be interested in Shakespeare's representation of anatomy as an epistemological project or mode of knowing. First, we need to stress, however, that in Elizabethan English the word 'anatomy' had a very wide range of meaning, indeed. Not limited to the mere opening of cadavers, the term was used to describe other bodies of knowledge as well, and it could refer to a mode of discursive analysis.[10] In 1540 a pupil of the famous Renaissance anatomist Andreas Vesalius pointed out that dissection may be performed "in one way really or actually, in another way through description, e. g. in writing or lecturing".[11] According to William Harvey, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, anatomy is "philosophical, medical, mechanical", and Stephen Pender concludes that "[b]y the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the conception of dissection as both

Massachusetts Press, 1985), pp. 68 – 89, Michael Neill, *Issues of Death* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), and Maria Del Sapio Garbero, 'Anatomy, Knowledge, and Conspiracy: in Shakespeare's Arena with the Words of Cassius', in this volume.

9 "The division of labour between those who knife Caesar's body and the orator who explicates their inscription installs Antony, indeed, in a professorial role. […] this is a scene that suggests that the Elizabethan stage shared with its rival [the anatomy theatre] a fascination with cutting up bodies to observe the hearts or 'spirits of men' within"; see Richard Wilson, '"Is this a holiday?": Shakespeare's Roman Carnival', pp. 70 – 1.

10 Andrea Carlino stresses the significance of anatomy in the context of natural philosophy; *Books of the Body: Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning*, trans. by John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 4 – 7 and 125 – 27. Andrew Cunningham emphasizes this significance throughout his study *The Anatomical Renaissance: The Resurrection of the Anatomical Projects of the Ancients* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997). And Hodges points out that written "anatomies were a fad in sixteenth century England". Encompassing "literary anatomies, theological anatomies, scientific anatomies", they formed a genre that was open to "men of every persuasion"; Hodges, p. 1.

11 The student Matthias Curtius is quoted in Stephen Pender, 'Signs of Interiority, or Epistemology in the Bodyshop', *The Dalhousie Review*, 85, 2 (2005), 221 – 37 (p. 225). The quotation is taken from Baldasar Heseler, *Andreas Vesalius' First Public Anatomy at Bologna, 1540, an Eyewitness Report*, ed. and trans. by Ruben Eriksson (Uppsala: Almquist and Wiksells, 1995), p. 47.

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medical and discursive activities was conventional".[12] Keeping in mind this broad terminological range, I will show how Shakespeare's play registers momentous changes in the discourse of anatomy that have helped to propel anatomy on its way towards a 'modern science'. And I will investigate how the play alerts its audience to the larger implications of the novel epistemological procedure it represents.

It is the Forum scene in act three that will be at the core of this discussion. Following shortly after Caesar's assassination, this scene famously presents first Brutus's speech and then Mark Antony's. I am interested in both speeches and their specific relation to each other. First of all, it is crucial to establish what they do in fact have in common: both, I argue, are exercises in anatomy – the anatomy of Caesar. They anatomize their object, Caesar, in the more general early modern sense denoting a variety of forms of discursive analysis and categorization. But they are also, and more specifically, anatomies in the commonplace sense that denotes a revelation of concealed knowledge. And finally, the speeches discursively anatomize the moral character of Caesar, the dead man, and thus perform an activity that formed an important part of the dissection of the criminal in the anatomy theatre. In both speeches the ultimate aim of swaying the audience depends on the success of the same project – that of dissecting and producing a hidden truth about Caesar – a truth the citizens are as yet unaware of.

The difference between the two orations is usually seen as a difference in style and rhetorical technique, yet it seems to me that this view misses an important point. The point is this: the two speeches actually invoke different epistemological models. Brutus speaks from a rostrum. And during his speech the body of Caesar is not present. It is only brought in at the end, when Brutus announces "Here comes his body" (3.2.38). To a large extent, the impact of Brutus's speech depends on the fact that it is Brutus who speaks. The conspirators have chosen him for his standing and reputation as a Roman patrician, and it is precisely this standing that lends authority to his words. His *reputation* backs the contents of his speech that describes Caesar as loving, fortunate and valiant but ambitious. Brutus himself explicitly underlines that source of truth at the opening, when he says: "Believe me for mine honour and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe" (3.2.14–16).[13] His linking the truth of his speech to his ethos and

12 William Harvey, *Lectures on the Whole of Anatomy: An Annotated Translation of Prelectiones Anatomiae Universalis*, ed. and trans. by C. D. O'Malley, F. N. L. Poynter and K. F. Russell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), p. 27, and Pender, 'Signs of Interiority', p. 225.

13 Both the Arden and the Oxford edition gloss "have respect to mine honour" as "bear in mind that I am a man of honour"; *Julius Caesar*, ed. by David Daniell, Arden edition (London:

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authority as a speaker is more than a rhetorical ornament. The success or failure of his speech indeed depends on this link between authority and truth. For when we look at the content of Brutus's speech we realize that he makes no effort to back the central claim of his moral dissection – that Caesar was "ambitious" – either by argument or illustration. By contrast, his assertion that ambition leads to tyranny – which marks Caesar as a 'political criminal' – can draw on Renaissance textual authority from Elyot to Montaigne.[14]

Antony's procedure is very different. Initially, he mounts the rostrum, but soon comes down again and stands close to Caesar's corpse where he delivers the greater part of his speech. Antony does not refer to his honour as a source of truth when he offers his own anatomical presentation of Caesar. Recalling the worth of Caesar in a language rich with memory and emotion, Antony legitimises his praise of Caesar by drawing attention to the murdered statesman's will. He promises to read it out to the citizens, then he steps down from the rostrum and bids the citizens:

> Then make a ring around the corpse of Caesar
> And let me *show* you him that made the will. (3.2.155; my emphasis)

For a moment the truth of his anatomy appears to depend entirely on the words of the will as ultimate proof.

As soon as Antony enters the ring, however, the will and the discourse it alludes to are forgotten, or rather displaced by Caesar's body which becomes the object of Antony's attention. Antony's speech now parallels his deictic gestures towards the body in front of him. Having mentioned the "bones" of the deceased at the beginning of the speech (3.2.73), he then concentrates on Caesar's "heart" (3.2.180). Having pointed to the holes in Caesar's mantle, Antony eventually uncovers Caesar's body with a gesture of revelation: "*Look* you here. Here is himself, marred, *as you see*, with traitors" (3.2.190 – 91, my emphasis). Referring to real objects or persons for purposes of demonstration or illustration is a tried and tested device of classical rhetoric. Antony's showing Caesar's body to the citizens might hence be seen to merely lend emphasis to his speech. Yet what actually happens is a much more complex affair. Though the citizens are *shown* "Caesar's body marred", what they – purportedly – *see* is "Caesar's-body-marred-with-traitors". This is obvious from their cry: "Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Let not a traitor live!" (3.2.196). Thus Antony has suc-

Thomson Learning, 2005), p. 253 and *Julius Caesar*, ed. by Arthur Humphreys, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 175.

14 Wolfgang Müller, *Die politische Rede bei Shakespeare* (Tübingen: Narr, 1979), pp. 113 – 14.

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ceeded in locating the truth of his speech in Caesar's body and in what appears as the citizens' capacity to 'see'.[15]

The effect of Antony's locating the truth of his speech in the citizens' capacity 'to see' what the body signifies is augmented by yet another, structural feature of his speech. Antony's continuous references to Brutus as "an honourable man" are of critical importance, both with respect to Brutus's own truth claim and with respect to Antony's framing of Brutus. Antony's famous use of this epithet is often called 'ironic', but the nature of this irony is complex. After all, for much of Antony's speech his references to Brutus as "an honourable man" are not understood as ironic by an audience who have been cheering Brutus merely a few moments earlier. Then, as his speech progresses, Antony incites his listeners gradually to question the epithet so that eventually they themselves hit on the possibility that, actually, Brutus may not be honourable but treacherous. Only after about 120 lines does one citizen's response prove unmistakably that he takes the words as ironic ("They were traitors. Honourable men!" 3.2.150).

Antony's strategy serves at least two purposes. The first is self-protection. After all, Brutus has granted Antony the right to speak about Caesar as long as he does not attack the conspirators. Moreover, the audience *has* just hailed Brutus and right before Antony ascends the rostrum, one of the citizens exclaims "it were best he speak no harm of Brutus here". The second reason could be described as a specific form of efficacy. After all, the listener who may have difficulties in believing something he is told may be more easily inclined to believe that which he has found out for himself. In the Shakespearean context this observation helps to explain how the citizens are brought to believe the very opposite of what they had believed only a moment before. More significantly, though, the rhetorical process that leads the citizens to think that they themselves have discovered that Brutus is a traitor perfectly complements and supports the ultimate rhetorical emphasis on their own eyes, on their seeing for themselves that which is the case, i.e. Caesar's-body-marred-with-traitors.

Let me briefly recapitulate. The Forum scene as a whole offers us two anatomical projects, one following the other. These two performances both involve speakers, rostra, speeches, gestures of pointing and of revelation, a corpse and an audience – but they do so in markedly different constellations. In the first performance, Brutus mounts the rostrum, delivers his speech at a distance from the audience while the corpse remains absent. In the second performance, we witness Antony briefly ascending the rostrum, coming down again and delivering the main part of his speech standing over the corpse. He refers to the corpse

15 See for example Maddalena Pennacchia, 'Antony's Ring: Remediating Ancient Rhetoric on the Elizabethan Stage', in *Identity, Otherness, and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome*, ed. by Maria Del Sapio Garbero (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 49–59.

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through deictic markers in his speech and keeps pointing at it, with the audience standing in a close ring around him and the body. Furthermore, the truth of the first performance is located in the honour of the speaker and his text, whereas the truth of the second is located in the dead body and the audience's capacity to see for themselves. Both of these anatomical performances – and this needs to be emphasized – are successful. It is the authority and success of Brutus's oration to which Mark Antony's speech initially defers and only gradually does his audience realize and 'see' that a very different Caesar emerges from Antony's arguments.[16]

I argue that in the particular way that they succeed each other these two performances evoke a specific historical development in the practice of anatomy that took place in the second half of sixteenth century Europe. However, I am not, here, interested in tracing the different premises and axioms of various early modern anatomical practices as such. Instead, I would like to draw attention to a shift in practice and performance – a shift with epistemological implications.

The first influential figure in the story of this development is Mundinus (Mondino de' Liuzzi), professor of medicine at Bologna and author of *Anathomia* which appeared in the fourteenth century. "Mundinus' [form of anatomizing]", Andrew Cunningham writes, "was to be the model for all anatomizing […] well into the 1500s; it was this which was eventually to be challenged and replaced by alternative approaches in the Renaissance".[17] Mundinus based his work on Galen, but considered the discipline of medicine as intimately linked to Natural Philosophy. Hence, when he introduced the *demonstration* of anatomy which involved putting on display and opening up the human body, he did so not merely for the medical but also for the philosophical benefit of the students and in celebration of God's power of creation. What actually happened during these anatomies must be imagined as follows.

A professor (Mundinus himself or one of his successors) in his high professorial chair, or cathedra, slowly read out the Latin text of Mundinus, commenting on it if he wished. At a remove from him, a surgeon performed the dissection, and someone else acted as the 'ostensor' pointing out the parts as they came to view. The surgeon knew little or no Latin, and Andrea Carlino points out that the students or instructors in the illustration take little interest in what takes place before their eyes. Probably anticipating the last phase of the anatomy, the *disputatio*, they are in deep conversation. Cunningham notes,

16 It is important to emphasize the initial success of Brutus's speech, no matter whether it is seen to illustrate "his plain honesty" and commitment to the ideals of stoicism or whether it is interpreted as exposing – as Andrew Hadfield argues – the "absence of republican sophistication"; see *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 181.

17 Cunningham, p. 42.

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Fig. 1: Johan of Ketham, *Fasciculo de Medicina* (1493)

moreover, that "although the pictures which represent this event show the lecture and the demonstration taking place in the same visual space it is quite possible that the two events were separated in time".[18] In these cases you would have the lecture first, and then, possibly even in another building, the demonstration.

In the course of the sixteenth century Mundinus's demonstrations were replaced by a number of competing practices. One of these proved revolutionary, because it reconceived the practice and performance of anatomy. The innovator in question is, of course, Andreas Vesalius (Andreas Van Wesele), author of *De humani corporis fabrica* with its masterly drawings of skeletons, organs and vessels printed at Basle in 1543. Like Mundinus, Vesalius based his project on Galen. Yet Vesalius tried to emulate Galen not primarily through deferring to his texts, but, as Andrew Cunningham points out, through modelling himself on Galen as a practising anatomist – on Galen as someone who had actually dissected and looked at bodies.[19] The change this brought to the anatomical per-

18 Carlino, p. 11; Cunningham, pp. 43 – 4.
19 Cunningham, p. 116.

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formance is perhaps best illustrated by the changing status of the positions and objects involved in it.

As we have seen, for Mundinus the crucial position was that of the elevated lecturer, the professor in possession of the knowledge and the text. The presence of the corpse, during his performance, was not of crucial importance; the lecture could just as well proceed without the accompanying demonstration, and the surgeons and ostensors, cutting and pointing, were largely ignorant and mute. When Vesalius came to Padua, a young but excellent dissector, he was appointed to the position of ostensor and lecturer on surgery right after he obtained his medical doctorate. Up to then, the position of ostensor had been a lowly one. Yet when Vesalius occupied this position he amalgamated it with that of the surgeon lecturer.

Fig. 2: Title Page of A. Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543)

As Vesalius was personally engaged in dissecting, drawing, talking and pointing, the post rapidly gained in significance and was soon transformed into that of the 'Professor of Anatomy'. The elevation of this post was not limited to Padua; in the years to come, every ambitious medical faculty followed suit. Thus, what occurred at Padua describes, *in nuce*, the historical transformation of the performance of anatomy in sixteenth century Europe as a whole. In the course of

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this transformation, the authority and limelight moved from the professor of medicine reading or speaking *ex cathedra*, to the one who actually performed the dissection of the body. The physical body, moreover, became the indispensable centre of this performer's touch, voice and gesture.[20]

It is this historical transformation, I argue, that the third act of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* condenses and presents in a single scene. The two different anatomical performances of Brutus and Antony are clearly distinguished by their specific constellations of protagonists, stage objects and audience that show parallels with the historical shift in anatomical performance. The first decisive feature here is Antony's move from the cathedra down to the body, that has become indispensable. The second visually conspicuous change is the regrouping of the audience in the 'ring around the body' demanded by Antony, who then complains, "Nay, press not so upon me." (3.2.158 – 63). The third feature is gestural and consists in the deictic references to Caesar's body that accompany Antony's oration. And by thus performing his speech as an anatomical spectacle as it would have been witnessed in contemporary anatomy theatres, Mark Antony *retroactively* transforms his predecessor's oration. Simply by assuming the role of the advanced anatomist, he turns Brutus into the old-fashioned performer of the medieval academic kind. As the Forum scene thus enacts competing anatomical performances, it presents them in their 'historical' order.

However, the transformation of the anatomical performance in Padua and elsewhere also signalled an epistemological shift. The authority with which the performance was invested was transferred from the text read *ex cathedra* to the evidence of the body at the dissection table. Especially in cases of dispute, the sheer authority of the text appeared no longer to be sufficient. Having achieved perfection in the art of dissection, Vesalius discovered the body as evidence appealing to the senses, evidence to be looked at and felt. And in weighing this evidence, he could appeal not only to his own senses, but also to those of his witnesses, his audience. Moreover, Vesalius's introduction of this new epistemological procedure implied a significant shift in power. Or, as Cunningham puts it, "if he could get everyone else to concede that the physical evidence was the arbiter of the dispute, this meant that he had won the argument over all the eminent professors and practitioners".[21]

How did this new epistemological approach insert itself into the existing practice of anatomy? Let me give an example. In 1540 Vesalius, then 25 years old, was invited to Bologna to act as demonstrator in an anatomy there. His reputation was not yet that of a reformer of anatomy, but merely that of an excellent

20 Cunningham, pp. 124 – 31; Carlino, pp. 39 – 53.
21 Cunningham, p. 102.

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dissector. We are extremely fortunate that a German student by the name of Baldasar Heseler documented this event with verbatim notes (i. e. sentences in quotation marks) and descriptions of audience reactions.[22] The event consisted of a series of lectures based on Mundinus given by the old and venerable Professor of Theoretical Medicine, Matthaeus Curtius. During the course of these lectures, a criminal was executed, and the students all rushed to the church of San Francesco, where the body was laid out. Standing in front of the body, Vesalius began to give a lecture but was immediately interrupted by Curtius and told to demonstrate what he, Curtius, had been lecturing on. Vesalius complied and proceeded according to Mundinus. Yet soon after this he disobeyed Curtius's order and began to show parts of the body that Curtius had not been lecturing on at all, offering his own opinions on them. Shouting students encouraged him to go on. When challenged as to whether he considered his opinions superior to those of Galen, Vesalius answered, "I am not saying that, but I am showing you here in these two subjects the 'vein without a pair' [...]". And shortly later he is reported to have said, "I do not want to give my opinion, you yourselves should feel with your own hands, and trust them".[23] Ultimately, however, placing sight and touch above authority, Vesalius did explicitly challenge Galen.

Turning again to Shakespeare, we can see that the Forum scene not only evokes two different modes of anatomical performance, it also shapes the two distinct epistemological procedures bound up with each mode of performance – Brutus's insistence on the decisive importance of the authority of the speaker and his text, evoking Mundinus or Curtius, and Antony's appeal to the citizens to trust their senses and to see the body with their own eyes, evoking Vesalius. I do not wish to argue that Shakespeare directly refers to the events that took place at Bologna in the first half of the century. Yet the Forum scene could be seen to enact the rhetorical strategies with which the emerging epistemological approach inserted itself into the authoritative performance of the previously dominant one by devising similar speaking positions in an analogous context of power. Vesalius was invited to Bologna as a demonstrator i. e. to demonstrate the professor's words and not to contradict them. Antony is granted permission by Brutus to speak about Caesar, but not to "to blame us" (3. 1. 247). Both Vesalius and Antony initially appear to be submitting to their roles. Yet as they change the official agenda in the course of the performance and introduce new criteria of

22 Ruben Eriksson edited Heseler's Latin text with an English translation under the title, *Andreas Vesalius' First Public Anatomy at Bologna 1540, An Eyewitness Report by Baldasar Heseler Medicinae Scholaris, Together with his notes on Matthaeus Curtius' Lectures on Antomia Mundini* (Uppsala: Almquist and Wiksells, 1959).

23 Cunningham, p. 111, quoting from Eriksson, pp. 272 – 73; and p. 115, quoting from Eriksson, pp. 292 – 93.

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truth, they lead their audiences to totally different conclusions and thus incite them to turn against the previously accepted authority.

If we regard the Forum scene, on a metaphorical plane, as replaying a historical shift in the performance and epistemological grounding of contemporary anatomy, then what does this signify? After all, the shift that is at issue here is not a minor one. Jonathan Sawday speaks of a "new image of the human interior, together with a new means of studying that interior that left its mark on all forms of cultural endeavour of the period" – a new *episteme* bound up with specific modes of seeing and of representation.[24] This new *episteme* has been lauded, by historians of science, as introducing 'modern' anatomy, or as introducing the 'scientific principle' into anatomy. For these reasons the changes in the practice and performance of anatomy in the sixteenth century have been regarded as anticipating the momentous cultural developments later summarized under the label of the 'Scientific Revolution'.

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* obviously presents Antony's performance as the more powerful of the two. It supersedes that of Brutus and wins the day. Yet for all his performance's bravura, the play does not fully endorse the 'modern' epistemological claims of the performance. The emotional pathos of the speech is explicitly cast into doubt by Antony's calculating remarks in a later scene (4.1.9). And, more importantly, the figure of Brutus and the depiction of his motives for slaying Caesar remain fundamentally ambivalent in the play. In fact, many spectators and critics have found them impeccable, irrespective of the treachery Antony makes his audience 'see'. The play, though performing the efficacy of the 'new principle', does not fully submit to it. On the contrary, by presenting the two performances and their effect side by side, it invites the audience to compare and judge both of them. If the audience takes the fundamental ambivalence of the political constellation seriously, then Brutus's suggestion that the truth of his speech should be linked to his personal ethos shows this truth to be conditional. By contrast, Antony's proposition that the truth is located in the body, for everyone to see, becomes decipherable as a trick.

To be sure, some people may simply wish to argue that Shakespeare's play does not question the worth of visual evidence at all. The play merely shows – so the argument might run – that a skilful orator can deploy the 'scientific principle' in a political context for the sake of manipulation. This objection begs the question, however, precisely because this distinction between scientific and

24 Sawday, p. viii; as to the new orders of representation emerging from this shift, Sawday (pp. 135–36) draws on arguments put forward by Walter J. Ong in *Ramus, Method, and The Decay of Dialogue* [1958] (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

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other arguments was not yet established. Arguably, it is the very possibility of this distinction with which the play can be seen to grapple.[25]

As I read or rather see it, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* skilfully exploits the capacity of drama to adopt a meta-position towards the dramatic performances it represents. This means, first, that the audience watches these performances at a remove and is better informed than the audience onstage. They are put in a position to critically scrutinize both the anatomical performances and their effect on the onstage audience. Second, the play can show us the two epistemological models side by side. And while it may be *expected* that personal ethos and authority can be misused in a political context, the play demonstrates to its audience that, in fact, *the same* is true of visual evidence. And third, the play emphasizes the strong interdependence between the meaning of visual evidence and the context in which it is deployed. In this manner, it could be said to broach a more fundamental issue. It could be said to raise the question of whether it is possible to fully decontextualize visual evidence, i. e. to imagine a piece of meaningful visual evidence that is not part of a larger conceptual project. These larger questions transcend specific contexts and refer back to the truth claims at the centre of the new anatomical practice itself.

Thus perceived, Shakespeare's appreciation of contemporary changes in anatomy appears amazingly complex – more complex, in fact, than some of today's simplistic accounts of it. These accounts of scientific progress in anatomy seem to assume "[…] that anatomical advance and discovery is simply a matter of being willing to use your eyes and gain personal experience of dissection" – as did Vesalius. By contrast, Cunningham has outlined the extent to which "it is […] your project of inquiry which provides you with the intellectual spectacles through which you look, and the mental categories which enable you to make sense of what you see through them. It is impossible for us to look at Nature without intellectual spectacles of one kind or another. Different projects of inquiry – different spectacles – make *different bodies* visible in anatomy [my emphasis]".[26]

Shakespeare's play casts doubt on the newly introduced procedure of 'seeing' not only because the 'truth' construed through seeing in the play is at odds with the ambivalent nature of the object of the gaze. The play also acquaints the audience closely with the different projects within which Caesar is framed, *before* we hear the speeches. The spectators learn of Brutus's radical republicanism

25 Of course, the use of the word 'science' is an anachronism in this context, especially when considering the extent to which Renaissance anatomy was practiced within the framework of Natural Philosophy.

26 Cunningham, p. 8.

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through his soliloquy in act two (2.1).[27] And they witness Antony's grief over Caesar's death and his subsequent curse of Rome in a soliloquy right before the Forum scene (3.1). In this manner, the two different epistemological procedures are shown to be deeply embedded in opposite projects that make "different bodies visible" in the two anatomical performances. As the play thus contrasts two different anatomical projects and suggests that the meaning of visual bodily evidence also remains 'project-dependent', it seems to anticipate later critical positions respecting the brute facticity of 'bodily evidence'. In their *Anatomie* of 1668, Thomas Sydenham and John Locke complain that anatomists exploring the interior reveal only "more superficies […] to stare at".[28]

27 'Radical' is here meant to qualify the spirit of republicanism Brutus idealizes. This qualification does not contradict Liebler's interpretation that considering the dynamic political forces in the play, Brutus actually occupies a conservative position; Liebler, p. 131, p. 141.

28 Thomas Sydenham and John Locke, 'Anatomie' (1668), in Kenneth Dewhurst, *Dr. Thomas Sydenham (1624–1689) His Life and Original Writings* (London: Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1966), p. 88.

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Mariangela Tempera

Titus Andronicus: Staging the Mutilated Roman Body

For proof that Shakespeare is not always our contemporary, we need look no further than *Titus Andronicus.* Hugely successful when it was first performed in the early 1590s, this tragedy has been a source of embarrassment for Shakespeareans in the following centuries. Even when Shakespeare's authorship was not denied outright, *Titus Andronicus* was quietly ignored both by scholars and directors. Peter Brook's landmark production in 1955 did not instantly reverse the trend. Only the success of Deborah Warner's 1987 staging encouraged other major directors to explore the dramatic potential of a tragedy whose time had finally come with the turbulent end of the twentieth century.

Confronted with *Titus Andronicus*, directors have pursued different options which, according to Alan Dessen, are:

> (1) to stylise or formalise the action […]; (2) to seek 'realism', often with an emphasis upon blood, severed heads, maiming, and brutality; (3) to focus upon the bizarre features of the play […].[1]

The directors' task is especially difficult in two key scenes where the cultural gap between the Elizabethans and the moderns becomes almost unbridgeable: the aftermath of Lavinia's mutilation and rape in scene 3 of Act 2 and the cutting off of Titus's hand in scene 1 of Act 3. The bloody banquet at the end of the play is so over the top that it seldom engages today's audiences at an emotional level, but rape and on-stage mutilation trigger responses that may be completely at odds with what Shakespeare expected when he wrote the two scenes.

The last twenty years have seen several productions of *Titus Andronicus.* On stage, modern audiences worldwide have had the opportunity to respond to the bloodiest of Shakespeare's plays thanks to Peter Stein (1989), Silviu Purcarete (1992), Gregory Doran (1995), and Yukio Ninagawa (2004), among others. On

1 Alan C. Dessen, *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare in Performance (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 24.

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television, Jane Howell directed *Titus Andronicus* in 1985 as part of the BBC Complete Works. On screen, two low budget B-movies directed by Lorn Richey (1997) and Christopher Dunne (1999) preceded Julie Taymor's 1999 Hollywood film. All these directors employed radically or partially different strategies to adapt the two scenes to the taste of their target audience. Even when the results are far from satisfactory, they contribute to illuminate modern responses to the Elizabethan spectacle of the body in pain.

On-stage suffering and the Elizabethans

"*Enter the* Empress' Sons *with* LAVINIA*, her hands cut off and her tongue cut out, and ravished*".[2] We must depend on Chiron and Demetrius, unsympathetic interpreters of Lavinia's "martyred signs", to get a glimpse of how Shakespeare expects the boy actor to stage the harrowing progress of their traumatized victim. Demetrius's words, "See how with signs and tokens she can scrawl" (2.3.5), offer an implicit stage direction for the jerking, uncoordinated movements of Lavinia that could be misconstrued as an attempt at writing. In the next line, Chiron's suggestion that she should go wash her hands is both a sick joke and a reminder that stage blood must have been pouring out of Lavinia's stumps and mouth. When the brothers rush off and their victim is left alone on stage, the Elizabethan spectators would have expected her to collapse and die, not only because they obviously knew that, in real life, death would be the inevitable consequence of leaving such severe wounds untreated, but because she appears to have fulfilled both her symbolic and practical function in the play. On one level, her mutilated body is a living metaphor of the ruin of the Roman body politic, damaged beyond repair by Titus's unwise choice of Saturninus as the new Emperor, by several acts of savagery, and by the integration of the Goths into the ruling class. On another, Lavinia has become a pawn in the revenge plots of Titus and Tamora. By targeting their enemy's daughter, the Goths have avenged Alarbus's sacrificial death; thoroughly familiar with the conventions of the *revenge play*, the spectators are now encouraged to let go of Lavinia and wonder what form the Andronici's response will take. The young Shakespeare, however, does not hesitate to flaunt convention: not only does Lavinia not die, but her mutilated body remains the focus of attention for a very long time.

When Chiron and Demetrius exit, Marcus enters, slowly realizes the extent of

2 William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate, Arden edition (London: Routledge, 1995), 2.3.s.d. (all references are from this edition and they are given after quotations in the text).

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his niece's mutilations and launches into a 47-line-long monologue that eulogizes her wounds and laments her lost beauty.

> MARCUS Alas, a crimson river of warm blood,
> Like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind,
> Doth rise and fall between thy rosed lips,
> Coming and going with thy honey breath.
> […]
> Ah, now thou turn'st away thy face for shame,
> And notwithstanding all this loss of blood,
> As from a conduit with three issuing spouts,
> Yet do thy cheeks look red as Titan's face,
> Blushing to be encountered with a cloud. (2.3.22 – 32)

An Elizabethan audience would have found a lot to admire in this speech. In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare wants to prove himself equal to the University educated playwrights that dominated the Elizabethan theatrical scene by coating his horrific plot in a language shot through with cultural references. The literary precedent for Marcus's speech, for example, is to be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the Latin poet eroticizes the mutilated female body. But Shakespeare is also showing off his scientific knowledge. He pays homage to current beliefs about the one directional flow of blood through veins and arteries by referring to the "river" and the "conduit" of Lavinia's blood. The scientific framework for this speech is still strictly Galenic. By the end of the sixteenth-century, England was lagging behind Italy, France, and Germany in medical knowledge. Although other theories of blood circulation were already familiar on the continent, Shakespeare's audience would have considered Marcus's observation of Lavinia's body perfectly accurate and would have appreciated the playwright's ability to combine scientific and literary culture. After all, as late as 1615, Helkiah Crooke could still write:

> Vnder the name of vessels we vnderstand three kinds, Veines, Arteries and Sinewes, because out of these as out of riuers, doe flow into all the parts of the body Blood, Heate, Spirits, Life, Motion and Sense.[3]

The blood issuing from her mouth "bubbles" because it comes from the *Arterea venalis* which "carrieth blood from the Hart to the Lunges […] and there he receyueth of the Lunges ayre, and bringeth it to the hart to refreshe him with".[4]

3 Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia. A Description of the Body of Man* (London: William Jaggard, 1615), p. 825. On theories of blood circulation, see Gail Kern Paster, 'Nervous Tension', in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 107 – 25.

4 Thomas Vicary, *The Anatomie of the Bodie of Man* [1548], ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall and

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Clearly, the convoluted monologue is introduced as an intellectual treat for discerning Elizabethans.

Black humour travels better than intellectual debate down the centuries, but it too is best appreciated by those who are fully familiar with its context. In scene 1 of Act 3, Aaron informs the disgraced Andronici that the Emperor is willing to return Quintus and Martius in exchange for the hand of one of their relatives. Both Marcus and Lucius are eager to comply, but Titus tricks them into leaving the stage:

TITUS Come hither, Aaron. I'll deceive them both:
Lend me thy hand and I will give thee mine.

AARON [*aside*] If that be called deceit, I will be honest
And never whilst I live deceive men so.
But I'll deceive you in another sort,
And that you'll say ere half an hour pass.

He cuts off Titus' hand.
Enter LUCIUS *and* MARCUS *again.*

TITUS Now stay your strife; what shall be is dispatched.
Good Aaron, give his majesty my hand.
Tell him it was a hand that warded him
From thousand dangers, bid him bury it: […]
(3.1.187 – 96)

The scene would not have been totally bewildering for spectators who knew only too well that the loss of a hand was a common form of punishment for treason. In 1579, John Stubbs published a pamphlet condemning Queen Elizabeth's plan of a "French marriage". Along with the publisher, he was arrested and condemned to have his hand cut off. According to E. Lloyd Berry:

[The Sheriff of Middlesex] was also ordered to see that competent surgeons were present to prevent the prisoners from bleeding to death. […]
The hand ready on the block to be stricken off, he [John Stubbs] said often to the people, "Pray for me, now my calamity is at hand." And so, with three blows, it was smitten off, whereat he swooned.
Camden notes that "Stubbs, having his right hand cut off, put off his hat with his left and said with a loud voice, 'God save the Queen,'" which is confirmed by Stubbs in his letter to Hutton […].[5]

Percy Furnivall, The Early English Text Society, Extra Series No. LIII (London: Oxford University Press, 1888), p. 58.

5 Lloyd E. Berry, 'The Life of John Stubbs', in *John Stubbs's Gaping Gulf with Letters and Other Relevant Documents*, ed. by Lloyd E. Berry (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1968), pp. xx-xlv (pp. xxxiv-xxxvi).

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If the condemned was expected to survive his ordeal, "competent surgeons" needed to get to work very quickly and staunch the blood flow. In the circumstances, this would have been done with no regard to the pain inflicted. The ability of the victim to indulge in verbal wordplay would have been severely curtailed and swooning was likely to occur sooner rather than later.

It is against the background of such real life episodes as Stubbs's ordeal that the Elizabethans would have evaluated the staging of scene 1 of Act 3. Titus's wordplay on "hand" may in fact be a direct allusion to the unfortunate pamphleteer's scaffold speech. The slapstick comedy of the squabble over who should lose a hand was not considered out of place in Elizabethan tragedy. As a Roman warrior, Titus would have been expected to show a level of Stoicism consistent with carrying off a conversation after receiving a major wound (rather than fainting like the only too human Stubbs did). Shakespeare set out to give his audience the kind of popular entertainment they enjoyed and succeeded.

Act 2 scene 3: gazing at the mutilated female body

The taunting of the mutilated Lavinia is made more disturbing for the modern spectator by the presence of an actress in place of the Elizabethan boy actor and by an increased abhorrence of rape as a crime against women. The wounds acquire new meanings for the audience: as Pascale Aebischer notes, "[b]y intertextually and metonymically pointing to the victim's invisible rape, the mutilations put into visual signs what is unutterable […] within the playtext […]".[6] As documented by the BBC production, a recitation of Marcus's 47 lines (with all the dramatic pauses requested by modern acting practices) takes about five minutes. Even on screen, with the variety of angles made possible by the camera, it is a very long time for the spectators to be staring at a human wreck while listening to rather unimpressive verse. On stage, most directors have come to the conclusion that the presentation of the uncut monologue is, quite simply, unfeasible.

Peter Brook reduces the entire scene to the achingly beautiful image of Lavinia (Vivien Leigh) standing aloft with red streamers trailing from her mouth and arms. The rapists retreat softly, as if frightened by their own evil deed and Marcus's notorious monologue is completely eliminated. At the other end of the spectrum, Deborah Warner does not cut a single line from the text while at the same time offering a brutally realistic representation of Lavinia as rape victim. Sonia Ritter crawls on stage, her mouth smeared with blood, her stumps and

6 Pascale Aebischer, *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 27.

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clothes caked in mud. Her torturers' gibes and her uncle's poetic images do not penetrate her traumatized psyche. Throughout the lengthy scene, the spectators are encouraged to focus their attention on the jerking movements of Lavinia's maimed body, rather than on Marcus's words, which are conspicuously at odd with what they see. The absence of bleeding from the "three issuing spouts" lessens the sense that Marcus's imitation of Ovidian poetry is delaying urgently needed medical attention. It also helps viewers to interpret the external wounds as a way of making visible the invisible outrage of rape. Much of the publicity surrounding this production was centered on this scene. The spectators knew that they were witnessing the first ever staging of Marcus's entire monologue and that they were supposed to like it. And they did, though some may have felt that watching an uncut version of scene 3 of Act 2 is something one has to do once in a lifetime of theatre going, but preferably not more than once.

When tackling this harrowing scene, most directors position their own interpretations between the two extremes of Brook's and Warner's approaches. In his Johannesburg production, Gregory Doran introduces a dumb show of Chiron and Demetrius performing rape and dismemberment on a dummy seized from a shop window, while the mutilated Lavinia (Jennifer Woodburne) dances to a haunting waltz tune. Her stumps are already bandaged and smeared lipstick is the only visual trace of her mouth wound. The actress, however, strongly resisted this approach, did a lot of research on wound management, and brought her findings to bear upon her interpretation of the role. From a man who had had his hand chopped off with a machete, she learnt that the shock obliterates the pain and allows the victim to focus on the all important task of staunching the flow of blood. Above all, from observing a patient who had lost his tongue, she noticed that saliva kept pouring out of his mouth because he had so much difficulty swallowing: "'I thought, what would it be like for Lavinia, who had been this, like, *princess* in Rome … what would it be like for her to have saliva running out of her mouth all the time, and no hands to wipe it away?'".[7] Eventually, the director saw the potential of her clinically accurate approach to the character and had Titus fondly wipe her mouth or negotiate the difficulties of spoon feeding her. Unfortunately, he did not abandon his stylized vision of scene 3 of Act 2, which is completely at odds with Woodburne's interpretation. The drooling, moaning Lavinia that the actress offers to Marcus's contemplation resists any attempt at a symbolic reading.

Silviu Purcarete's *Titus Andronicus* premièred in Craiova in 1992 and then toured Europe for years, at a time when images of ravaged war victims in the Balkans were vivid in everybody's mind. His portrayal of the atrocities in the

7 Antony Sher and Gregory Doran, *Woza Shakespeare!* Titus Andronicus *in South Africa* (London: Methuen, 1996), p. 144.

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play is firmly rooted in the brutal reality of end-of-millennium civil war, but realism interplays with the bizarre to produce a wealth of striking visual images. Chiron and Demetrius are two grotesque middle aged twins who dress and behave like naughty children. Having been briefly teased by them behind a gauze screen that turns the whole scene into a shadow play, Ozana Oancea's Lavinia is captured for a moment upright in a blinding white light which unmercifully reveals her very realistic wounds. She then collapses to the floor and is followed by a spotlight in her painstakingly slow crawl towards the wings. Standing over her in semidarkness, an authoritative, unemotional Marcus delivers the gist of his monologue without ever attempting to touch her. The ravished female body and the male gaze that turns it into an object of aesthetic contemplation have no emotional common ground. The emphasis is even more firmly on Marcus in Peter Stein's production which resulted from a theatre workshop in Rome in 1989. In a company that included both professional and trainee actors, Raf Vallone was the one star with box office appeal. In scene 2 of Act 3, he makes the most of a version of the monologue that is only slightly shortened. Ravished in the darkness of the woods, Lavinia (Almerica Schiavo) re-enters in the stark light of the two tiered geometrical space that represents Rome. In Stein's political reading of the tragedy, she is very much the symbol of the city's moral collapse. Her long skirt is hitched at the waist, thus foregrounding the invisible wound of rape. Her sleeves are soaked in blood and her face is hidden by a curtain of long, matted hair. On chancing upon her, Vallone launches into his *romanza.* Like a tenor, he monopolizes the attention of the spectators and reduces Lavinia to little more than a prop.

The very atrocities that discourage directors from staging *Titus Andronicus* attracted two makers of trash films, whose target audience would have welcomed close-ups of realistic dismemberments. Lorn Richey (*Titus Andronicus: The Movie*, 1997) is surprisingly quaint in his version of scene 2 of Act 3. Raped and mutilated off frame, Lavinia (Maureen Moran) shows the consequences of her ordeal in her blood soaked sleeves. A close-up of her blood-filled mouth is the only concession to sensationalism. As she runs from him, Marcus calls her back and drops his spear in horror (a gesture that sums up the 47 lines of the original). Two years later, Christopher Dunne's *Titus Andronicus* would be far more explicit, as promised by the producers' website: "Wandering in the forest, Titus's beloved daughter Lavinia loses her hands, her tongue … and something more".[8] Dunne's Lavinia (Amanda Geezik), a scantily dressed bimbo, is seized on frame by one of the brothers who mimes anal sex on her before pursuing her into the wood. She is mutilated on camera during the taunting scene (2.3.1 – 10). Her tongue is severed with a sword thrust into her throat, and then extracted and

8 URL: http://home1.gte.net/titus98/.

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shown in close up. Her hands are effortlessly chopped off with a dagger. The camera lingers on the torrent of blood gushing from her wounds (which are left untreated) before zooming in on the discarded hands. Marcus's scene being entirely cut, Lavinia is left alone in the woods. These two low budget films were completely (and deservedly) unsuccessful and must rank among the worst adaptations ever made of a Shakespearean play.

A much more ambitious Hollywood film, Julie Taymor's *Titus*, was also released in 1999. It attracted a lot of attention from professional Shakespeareans but was undeservedly ignored by the general public. In keeping with the nightmarish quality of much of the film, Taymor avoids realism and positions the defiled Lavinia (Laura Fraser) on top of a tree stump. Like a statue on its pillar, she becomes an object of aesthetic appraisal for both the audience and Marcus. Bare twigs are attached to her stumps to signify the withering of the verdant branches evoked by her uncle. Having lulled the spectators into believing that the mutilated body has been turned into a work of art, Taymor assaults their senses by having Lavinia vomit a jet of blood in response to Marcus's questioning. It is a moment that would not be out of place in Dunne's film. In the context of Taymor's interpretation of scene 1 of Act 3, it forces the spectators to confront their earlier readiness to accept a ravished mutilated female body as a thing of beauty.

A few years later, Yukio Ninagawa would tour Europe with a Japanese production that became part of the RSC "Complete Works" season in 2006. His Lavinia (Hitomi Manaka) causes both wonder and compassion. All in white, with bundles of red wool streamers flowing from her arms and mouth, she is at first as beautiful as Vivien Leigh (Ninagawa repeatedly pays homage to Peter Brook in this production), but she is allowed to play the entire scene that Shakespeare had scripted for her, and her suffering soon becomes unbearably real. The red streamers covering the genitals of Chiron and Demetrius tell the story of her rape. Her uncle is shocked by her and utters a short version of his monologue in an emotional voice that is totally at odds with the cool intellectualism of the original. When he gathers Lavinia under his mantle and leads her away, he makes the spectators feel that they are intruding on a very private grief.

Act 3 scene 1: witnessing mutilation

Because of Peter Brook's stylized treatment of scene 3 of Act 2, the cutting of Olivier's hand is remembered as the most horrifying moment in his production: "The hand-cutting action was concealed. Titus put his wrist on a block; he cried out, Aaron grunted and stamped, and from off-stage came 'a nice scrunch of

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bone. That's when most people faint', explained a theatre official".[9] And yet, the mutilation scene may trigger laughter more readily than revulsion. The ludicrous exchange among the three Andronici as to who will have the privilege of sacrificing a hand undercuts the pathos, the use of the prop can be very distracting, Titus's speedy recovery beggars belief. Tales of fainting and vomiting among the spectators are good publicity, tales of helpless giggles are to be avoided at all cost. In this light, making a plausible switch between the hand of the actor and the prop is essential. For his Johannesburg production, for example, Gregory Doran experimented with several possibilities and finally chose to do it under cover:

> Aaron grabs a piece of black plastic from the rubbish heap around the stage and lays it out to perform the amputation. After three terrible chops of the panga, Titus pulls his mutilated arm away from a pre-wrapped hand, which Aaron has already palmed (excuse the pun), and wraps his stump in the plastic.[10]

Another challenge for the directors is to get the audience to accept the cartoon-like resilience of a character who carries on with his lines after receiving such a devastating wound. In Jane Howell's TV version, Titus (Trevor Peacock) faces his ordeal like a true Roman warrior. He prevents massive blood loss by tying a tourniquet around his arm before offering it to Aaron's sword. To avoid screaming in pain, he bites into a towel which Aaron will thoughtfully reuse to bandage the gaping wound. The gore is carefully kept off camera. We only get the briefest glimpse of the blood soaked prop that Aaron stuffs in a small bucket. It is a tense, highly dramatic scene that can be appreciated without suspension of disbelief. It does not, however, do justice to the black humour that has such an important role in the text. Silviu Purcarete foregrounds the black humour while addressing the surgical aspects of the scene. His Titus (Stefan Iordache) is strapped to a hospital gurney while Aaron bestrides him in order to perform his amputation. High on anesthetics, Titus heartily slaps his tormentor's thigh and cooperates with him by holding within his lips the flame on which Aaron sterilizes his knife. After the amputation, he is given ample recovery time on his gurney before the action resumes.

Richey and Dunne are not concerned with dramatic tension or black humour. Richey's Titus (Ross Dippel) is so wooden and inexpressive that he is easily upstaged by the severed hand, covered in blood and shown in close up. Having wiped his knife with a napkin, Aaron silently offers it to Lucius who is reluctantly forced to take it to dress his father's wound. Dunne opens and closes the se-

9 Alan Hughes, 'Introduction', in *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Alan Hughes, The New Cambridge Shakespeare Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1–60 (p. 43).

10 Sher and Doran, p. 149.

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quence with lingering shots of the severed hand, a prop so crudely crafted that not even the most naif spectator could mistake it for the real thing. His Titus (Robert Reece) sweats and groans a lot while clutching a stump that sprouts blood until Marcus bandages it. After minimal ministration, the maimed protagonist is ready to resume the show.

Julie Taymor goes for humour and speed to carry off this notorious scene. Titus (Anthony Hopkins) storms into the kitchen, frightens away a bewildered cook, and places his arm on a butcher block. Aaron quickly tests a few cleavers, finds the perfect one, exchanges one look with his victim, and strikes. We do not see any blood and only catch a glimpse of the hand when the Moor seals it in a Ziploc bag. After a couple of agonized grunts, Titus makes an impressive recovery. Caught in a whirlwind of funny, perfectly timed images, the spectators are not given any time to reflect on the sheer barbarity of what they have just witnessed. Deborah Warner too plays the first part of the scene for laughs up to Aaron's choice of instrument (a cheese-wire). But after the amputation her towering Titus (Brian Cox) succeeds in regaining the audience's full empathy as he bewails his fate.

Peter Stein downplays the scene as much as possible. Titus (Eros Pagni) leads Aaron to a dark corner of the stage, where the actual mutilation takes place while the attention of the spectators is distracted by the tableau of the other Andronici huddling in full light. As the Moor wraps the hand in a large white towel, Titus speaks his lines with only a modicum of distress. Yukio Ninagawa too forgoes the comic effects, but, unlike Stein, he foregrounds the brutality of the mutilation scene, which is played within the blinding white set that represents Imperial Rome and is dominated by a huge white statue of the She-wolf. Against this background and over the white costumes of the Romans, the bright red streamers that signify blood monopolize the attention of the audience. Having had his hand cut off with one elegant stroke of Aaron's sword, Titus (Kotaro Yoshida) writhes and screams in pain clutching the thick bunch of wool streamers issuing from his stump. When an equally distressed Lucius lifts the severed hand in the air, more streamers trail from the soft prop wrapped in translucent plastic. We are encouraged to forget that the mutilation is the result of a clean cut and to visualize it as a wrenching of the hand from the wrist which puts slow, unbearable strain on veins and sinews. The body of its most valiant defender becomes a visual metaphor for the brutal, primitive process of dismemberment of the Roman Empire at the hands of the Goths.

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Coda: Titus Andronicus and The Simpsons

There seems to be widespread consensus among directors that salvaging the complete version of Marcus's monologue is counterproductive. Both the Ovidian and the Galenic allusions would be missed by most spectators. The emotion of chancing upon a raped and mutilated woman can no longer be conveyed through a hyperbolic description of her past beauty. Like the comic exchanges in scene 1 of Act 3, the monologue needs a lot of fine tuning before it is presented to a modern audience whose attention is totally engaged by the mutilated characters that are at the centre of the two scenes. Stylized or realistic, the presentation of their bodies in pain is essential in determining the response of the spectators to the play. It can encourage them to become emotionally involved or to remain critically aloof. Or both.

In an episode of *The Simpsons*,[11] the family attends a performance of *Stab-A-Lot*, a spoof of *The Lion King*, a famous musical directed by Julie Taymor (who is featured in the episode as Juliana Krellner). In a parody of Taymor's mutilated Lavinia on a tree stump, the Cat King climbs on a pillar and starts singing. A mischievous mouse assaults him with a knife, cutting off first both his arms and then his legs. Red streamers float out of the wounds and reach the young Simpsons in the audience. Cool and knowledgeable as usual, Lisa comments: "I love the use of streamers as blood. It robs the violence of its power". Bart too is true to character: "Woo ho! I am drenched in blood!" he gasps in terrified delight. Eliciting both reactions with the same staging of *Titus Andronicus* would make most directors very happy indeed.

11 *The Simpsons* 17 ep. 19: 'Girls Just Want to Have Sums', dir. Nancy Kruse, 2006.

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Antonella Piazza

Volumnia, the Roman Patroness

Taking Volumnia's side

Coriolanus's probably legendary life (527?-490? BC) opens the new course of Roman history when, after the Tarquins' expulsion (509 BC), the Republic was instituted. At the time, the young Rome was afflicted by internal and external threats: the class struggle between patricians and plebeians, on the one hand, and the Volsces' belligerent army, on the other. The young Caius Martius bravely conquers the Volscian city of Corioles (493 BC) – in celebration of which victory he adds 'Coriolanus' to his name – and heroically saves Rome from the external enemy. But, when he is not elected Consul for proudly refusing to submit to the plebeians' and tribunes' conventions, he almost provokes a civil war. After he is exiled, Coriolanus himself shamefully becomes Rome's most dangerous and obstinate enemy. When, after joining the Volscians, he is about to lay waste on this town, only his mother Volumnia is able to dissuade him and by so doing save Rome.

That is the story as Shakespeare adapts it from Plutarch's *Lives* and Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*.

Since the eighteenth century, in literary criticism as well as in theatrical performance, the play has been the animated arena either of sociological or psychoanalytical debates. From the sociological point of view, rightwing and leftwing approaches followed one another and overlapped. The anti-populist reading started after the French Revolution with John Kemble (1789 – 1817) who emphasized the aristocracy of Coriolanus's proud militarism (the Roman virtue being the hero's 'ruling passion') and continued up to reactionary interpretations during Fascism in Europe; on the opposite side, leftwing interpretations began to appear in the thirties in the communist countries of Eastern Europe. Twenty years later, Bertolt Brecht would work on an adaptation of *Coriolanus* – left incomplete by the playwright's death – which stressed Shakespeare's *ante litteram* focus on the value of class struggle: to the point that in the end Brecht has the plebeians, rather than Volumnia, save Rome.

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From the psychological perspective, Lawrence Olivier's is an exemplary Freudian interpretation (1959) of Coriolanus's interiority. That is an interpretative line which stretches up to the authoritative and influential reading of Janet Adelman who considers Coriolanus as a case of psychopathology interpreted as the effect of a starving and devouring mother.[1]

Thus, Volumnia is demonized by and left out both from the psychoanalytical and the sociological perspectives, although she is the only one who is able to keep things together and in the end to save Rome. The articulation and the meaning of Volumnia's role has not, in my opinion, been investigated enough yet.

In *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare is not interested in taking sides in the conflict between patricians and plebeians. His preoccupation does not seem to be the social question which will haunt European political thought only after the French Revolution as the history of criticism and of theatrical interpretation of *Coriolanus*, split after the eighteenth century into rightwing and leftwing camps, proves.[2] On the contrary, Shakespeare's preoccupation has to do with the institutions and the forms of political power in the crucial emergence of the modern nation state: he questions what political ruler, either in a Republican or monarchical regime, would be able to keep the state together, save it from internal and external threats and guarantee its stable institution and continuity.

The unexpected power of an old woman, Volumnia, as we shall see, seems the answer to Shakespeare's preoccupations under James I whose Stuart rule shared the same predicaments of the young Republican Rome. Volumnia's presence

1 In the pre-symbolic structuring of the child's psyche, Donald Winnicott makes a distinction between the pure feminine element and the pure masculine element. He connects the first to the primary relation with the maternal feminine element – which is an asymmetrical relation where the baby and the object are one on the basis of a primary identification: the experience of being the object which warrants and founds the discovery of the self and of the feeling of being. The consequences of a deprivation of such primary identification are fatal for the psyche of the child (this is not the case for Volumnia who recognizes the pleasure of watching and nursing a baby) who lives an experience of mutilation of being. From Winnicott's perspective, Coriolanus's failures might be the effect of a distorted relation with the pure masculine element – the dimension of doing – rather than with the pre-symbolic pure feminine element – the dimension of being. In Shakespeare's play the masculine weakness of identification is expressed by the lack of authority of the classical *wise senex,* as we shall see. See Donald Winnicott, *The Child, the Family and the Outside World* (London: Penguin, 1964).

2 While the idea of government always keeps a privileged position in America, in the Europe which followed the French Revolution it almost disappeared, being replaced by the social question. Hannah Arendt argues: "Conspicuous by its absence in the mind of those who made the revolutions as well as of those who watched and tried to come to terms with them, was the deep concern with forms of government so characteristic of the American Revolution, but also very important in the initial stages of the French Revolution. It was the men of the French Revolution who, overawed by the spectacle of the multitude, exclaimed with Robespierre: 'La Republique? La Monarchie? Je ne connais que la question sociale'; and they lost, together with the institutions and constitutions which are 'the soul of the Republic' (Saint-Just), the revolution itself". Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), p. 56.

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makes *Coriolanus,* which features the most impolitic hero, one of Shakespeare's most political plays.

Apparently the organic Republican form of government of Coriolanus's Rome, which is hypocritically described in Menenius Agrippa's famous fable as an acephalous belly supportive of and supported by the body's other arts and parts, seems to have very little to share with the vertical body dominated by the kingly head of James's monarchy ("And lastly, Kings are compared to the head of this Microcosm of the body of man", James I had stated).[3] However, the patriarchal bond (I should immediately add matriarchal, but of that more later) runs through and actually haunts the whole text of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* (published in the socially tormented year 1607) and is put under severe scrutiny. Four old men – the two senators Menenius Agrippa and Cominius and the two tribunes of the people, Brutus and Sicinius – apparently father figures because of their old age, hold the stage and the state. But in the end, all of them either lack authority or prove crucially unfit for any kind of rule and government of the younger generation: Coriolanus, on the one hand, and the citizens, on the other. The irresponsible incapacity of mediation of both Republican institutions – the Senate and the Tribunate – will precipitate the fatal contrast between the young hero and the young generations of Romans. The political crisis of Republican Rome may be considered as questioning the authority of the fathers over the sons, of the older over the younger generation, as questioning, that is, the basis of the Stuart patriarchal bond, supported and reinforced by the spreading authority of the IV commandment of the Mosaic law: "Honour thy Father" (the following "and Mother" was pronounced not as loudly). Unexpectedly the text has Volumnia as the only *old* character who – though a woman and an old woman – in some ways, will prove and confirm the patriarchal bond both in the public and the private realms. She will re-direct vertically the horizontal body of the state, giving back a head to the acephalous, flabby body of old Menenius's worn metaphor.

A Fatherless Country or the Old Body of Patriarchal Power

The repositioning of Volumnia's power is amazing from the point of view of her gender as well as of her age:

3 See King James I, 'A Speech to the Lords and Commons of the Parliament (March 21, 1610)' in *The Political Works of James I*, ed. by Charles Howard McIlwain (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918), p. 307.

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[…] by installing an older woman at the centre of both public and domestic politics in his play, Shakespeare reworks his sources by displacing unto a woman past the menopause, the attributes so greatly prized in old men by the ancients.[4]

Nina Taunton, to whom my essay is largely indebted, concludes in this way her brilliant analysis of the implications of *Coriolanus* with the cultural representations of old age in the early modern period. They contradictorily depended on humanistic classical sources – mainly, Cicero and Plutarch – and on the more recent approaches of the Baconian science to the human body. The body in *Coriolanus* does not feature just imaginatively in the belly metaphor, but also as the flesh of patriarchal power which is, in this way, put under severe scrutiny.

The authority of the fathers, quite obviously, is at the basis of patriarchalism in political thought, an ideological stance which crosses Western history, but which is acknowledged and supported as a full fledged theory of political power only under James I ("Kings are also compared to Fathers of families", James I famously stated).[5] The old generation of fathers was to have, so to speak, the natural right and the natural duty to lead and govern the younger generations on the basis of a wisdom reached through experience and the exercise of virtue during the course of the years. Cicero's *wise senex* (in his *De Senectute,* translated by Thomas Newton in 1569 as *The Worthye Book of Old Age*) was the classical paradigm for such a representation of old age. Ageing, for Cicero as well as for Plutarch, was not, as it was for Aristotle, a linear process marked by the decay of physical and mental strength leading to the decrepitude of the body and the marasmus of the brain; it marked, on the contrary, a victory of a stoically educated mind over the passionate overindulgences of the young body, which 'remodelled'[6] the old man as the fittest subject to govern the young generations and public affairs.

4 Nina Taunton, 'Time's Whirlgig: Images of Old Age in *Coriolanus*, Francis Bacon, and Thomas Newton', in *Growing Old in Early Modern Europe, Cultural Representations,* ed. by Erin J. Campbell (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 21 – 38 (p. 38).

5 Gordon Schochet argues that: "The family was never consciously recognized as a standard category in political argument and did not acquire an overtly important status in the centuries before the Stuart period. It is nevertheless true that the patriarchal-familial conception had become the chief view of political origins by this time. What is more, this doctrine at least implied […] an understanding of the movement from family to state that determined political attitudes in ways that were initially unappreciated". Gordon Schochet, *The Authoritarian Family and Political Attitudes in 17th Century England. Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1988), p. 54.

6 See Vita Fortunati's five groundbreaking essays on old age as a cultural and medical discourse: 'La vecchiaia in Shakespeare fra mito e scienza', in *Il testo letterario e il sapere scientifico*, ed. by Carmelina Imbroscio (Bologna: Clueb, 2003), pp. 177 – 91; 'Vecchiaia', in *Dizionario dei Temi Letterari*, ed. by Remo Ceserani, Mario Domenichelli and Pino Fasano, iii (Torino: Utet, 2007), pp. 2565 – 71; 'Il corpo anziano: un immaginario controverso', in *Letteratura e Arti*

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With the exception of some citizens and the two warriors, Coriolanus and Aufidius, Rome seems a country overflowing with fatherly old people, but they all prove to be impotent, unreliable old people. It seems that the contradictions between mind and body provoked by the contradictory observations and prescriptions of Baconian empiricism and the impossibility of finding a valuable scientific method to prevent or delay the decay of the body involves, as we shall see, only the old male characters of *Coriolanus.* Let us turn to the text.

> MENENIUS [...] and you slander
> The helms of the State, who care for you like *fathers*
> When you curse them as enemies (1.1.74 – 7, emphasis added)[7]

The old Menenius is haranguing the citizens presenting himself and the Senate – which he will later call "most reverend and grave elders" (2.2.40) – as the generation in charge, almost by natural right, of the government of the state (the "helms of the state"). In *De Senectute* Cicero confers upon the old the role of pilots of the ship of the state. Both Plutarch and Cicero maintained the superiority of the older over the younger generations on the basis of the parallel superiority of the mind over the body. "In Cicero's universe" – Taunton explains – "the pinnacle of old age is reached when the libidinous clamour of the body is stilled and the maturity of years confers the highest powers of authority".[8] On the topic of the different ages of man, ethics and medicine were, at the time, strictly interwoven. Plutarch too, in his treatise *Whether an old man should engage in public affairs,* declares that there is no limit of age for the statesman since wisdom is achieved through maturity.[9] So within the classical perspective, only the old man was to be the proper Statesman entitled to govern both his and the social body through moderation and a temperate diet. Moral moderation was a way of fashioning and controlling biology.

But in Shakespeare's uncharitable Roman world, the problem is that the old Menenius, who pretends to care and control, cares neither for his nor the social body. He is a parody of the old statesman, a comic inversion of the wise, mod-

visive nel XX secolo, ed. by Daniela Carpi (Bologna: Re Enzo Editrice, 2001), pp. 51 – 64; 'Memory and Aging: A Revaluation of the Crone in Women's Literature', in *The Controversial Women's Body: Images and Representations in Literature and Art*, ed. by Vita Fortunati, Anna Maria Lamarra and Eleonora Federici (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2003), pp. 157 – 60; 'The Aging Body: a Controversial Imaginary', in *The Controversial Female Body: New Feminist Perspectives on Aging*, ed. by Maria de Fátima Outerinho and Rosa Maria Martelo, Cadernos de Literatura Comparada 2. Identitades no feminino (Porto: Granito, 2001), pp. 85 – 102.

7 William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. by Jonathan Crewe (London: Penguin, 1999). All quotations are from this edition.

8 Taunton, p. 24.

9 Plutarch, *Moralia*, trans. by Harolf North Fowler, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), x, pp. 75 – 153. Quoted in Nina Taunton, p. 26.

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erate unselfish model of classical senescence. He who pretends to care for the hungry people is also the one accused of withholding the corn from them and, by his imprudent and superficial behaviour, encourages the institution of the tribunate. The tribunes in Plutarch are not old people and Menenius is so honest that he dies in poverty. So it was on purpose that Shakespeare chose to make both senators and tribunes old, and present their old age as a clear sign of their physical, moral and political inability. In the second scene of the second act Shakespeare devotes a great number of lines to a confrontation between Menenius and the tribunes precisely on the merits and demerits of their reciprocal old ages. "You two are old men; tell me one thing that I shall ask you" (2.2.13), Menenius addresses the tribunes. The 'infant-like' selfishness, ambition, hypocrisy of the tribunes are revolting in men whose beards have lost all signs of gravity or nobility: "When you speak best unto the purpose, it is not worth the wagging of your beards; and your beards deserve not so honourable a grave as to stuff a botcher's cushion or to be entombed in an ass's pack-saddle" (2.1.81–4). And yet, Menenius cannot hide, in this confrontation, his own uncontrollable passions, his confusing impulses which offer an image of debility rather than nobility of old age as was often the case in Bacon's representations:

> I am known to be a humorous patrician, and one that loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying Tiber in't; said to be something imperfect in favouring the first complaint, hasty and tinder-like upon too trivial a motion; one that converses more with the buttock of the night than with the forehead of the morning. What I think I utter, and spend my malice in my breath. (2.1.44–52).

Menenius especially likes to eat and drink, which is in striking contrast with the play's leading images of hunger and starvation (on which authoritative psychoanalytic interpretations of the mother-son bond have long kept the critical attention). In the medicine of the early modern age, nourishment becomes a central, but contradictory issue in the practices for keeping the body healthy and for prolonging life. The body becomes more the object of external medical theories than the sign of the individual's moral balance.

Galen's materialistic theory of the bodily humours, which explained ageing as a drying process of moisture (youth as hot and moist versus old age as cold and dry) offered solutions to old age (dry air, as an example) quite different from Paracelsus's spiritual outlook (external air proved in his opinion damaging for the internal spirit of matter) and offered quite different diets. If one theory favoured abundance of food and the other scarcity, the solution was no longer on Aristotle's ennobling right medium. In Bacon's *The History of Life and Death. With observations naturall and experimentall for the prolonging of life* (1638) the matter of diet is not as simple as in Cicero who stressed the importance of eating

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and drinking just enough to recover the body's strength. For Bacon, strict "Pythagoricall Dyet" (one that is balanced and frugal) is "good to make Schollers and Fryers live long." So a moderate, low-fat diet is good. But 'free' eating and drinking are also good, and a plentiful diet makes common people live longest. Though recommended, a healthy moderate, temperate diet is not a means of prolonging life, "for the strict Dyet – Bacon argues – doth breed few spirits, consuming less moisture, and full dyet yeelds more repairing nourishment; but the moderate Dyet affords neither fewer spirits, nor more nourishment, the mean of good extreames being not so good as of bad extreames".[10]

If the tribunes are denounced as manipulative, more masters than servants of the people, Menenius is a father-figure though inadequate for the orphan hero of the play: "He called me father; But what o' that?" (5.1.3). Menenius proves quite superficial, blind, ineffective towards Coriolanus all through the play. When Coriolanus is banished from Rome or rather he banishes Rome, at the moment of their separation, the hero pities him rather than the other way around: "Thou old and true Menenius, / Thy tears are salter than a young man's / And venomous to thine eyes" (4.1.21–3), echoing Galen's representation of ageing as a drying process of all the parts of the body.

One final example of old Menenius's stark materialism and comic blindness is his last attempt to calm down the self-burning fury of Coriolanus's revenge against Rome simply with a good dinner:

> He was not taken well; he had not dined.
> The veins unfilled, our blood is cold, and then
> We pout upon the morning, are unapt
> To give or to forgive, but when we have stuffed
> These pipes and these conveyances of our blood
> With wine and feeding, we have suppler souls
> Than in our priest-like fasts. Therefore I'll watch him
> Till he be dieted to my request,
> And then I'll set upon him. (5.1.51–9)

The debilitated body and the unreliable mind of old men in the play underlines the absence of fathers as the threatening cause of the disorientation of the citizens and the isolation of the hero. Coriolanus's pride in defending his country 'alone' is not without cause, after all: Cominius, the leader of the war against the Volsces is a very old man and the old Lartius goes to battle courageously, but on his crutches:

10 Quoted in Taunton, p. 25.

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MARTIUS What, art thou stiff? Stand'st out?

LARTIUS I'll lean upon one crutch and fight with t'other
Ere stay behind this business (1.1.238–42)

When Coriolanus would have liked to behave charitably toward an old Volscian prisoner, worth being released for having offered him shelter during the battle, he discloses his desire of a father, but then he forgets the man's name:"By Jupiter, forgot! / I am weary; yea, my memory is tired. Have we no wine here?" (1.9.89–91). But the absence of fathers and the contempt of old age is, as it were, a Freudian negation. The physical and moral debasement and the political failure of the old father-figures of both patrician and plebeian institutions seems devised by Shakespeare to emphasize, later on, the enormous relevance and power of the presence of the old mother Volumnia. English monarchy was "a sovereign trinity, a 'mixed estate' composed of a divinely anointed monarch, a hereditary House of Lords, and a popularly elected House of Commons".[11] The House of Lords and the Parliament were often associated with the Senate and the Tribunate of the Roman republic. The power of old age and of fathers (Roman Senators / British Lords and Roman Tribunes / British Parliamentarians) is downrated if and when they are left without the leadership of one: the absolute monarch. In the oldest versions of Coriolanus's story, like Livy's, Volumnia's name is Veturia from the ancient Roman aristocratic name Veturius, from the Latin root 'vetus', old. Which sets the positive representation of old age in a woman in even more striking and meaningful opposition to the negative picture of the father figures of senators and tribunes.

If the cultural representations of old age polarize the wise *senex*, on the one hand, and the decrepit fool, on the other, the ageing of the woman is invariably presented in monstrous, paradigmatically misogynous terms so that the ugliness of old age is identified with the old woman. Tim G. Parkin, in his article 'Ageing in antiquity. Status and Participation',[12] maintains that in antiquity the post menopausal woman suffered a double marginalization. Being beyond the prescriptions which regulated the sexuality of fertile women, the old woman, in fact, was totally devoid of interest for rule makers; she became an invisible object. But it is also true that post menopausal old women, especially widows, both in Roman and early modernity, could enjoy more economic autonomy than their younger selves.

Moreover, according to Galenic medical theories, the body of post-menopausal women became more similar to a man's body.

11 Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen. Shakespeare's Theater and the Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 2.

12 Tim G. Parkin, 'Ageing in Antiquity. Status and Participation', in *Old Age from Antiquity to Post-Modernity*, ed. by Paul Johnson and Pat Thane (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 19–42.

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> [...] You should be women,
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
> That you are so.[13]

The drying, asexual body and the growth of hair make women more similar to men. Macbeth's three weird sisters are 'bearded' creatures which are instruments of mischief whose sex is uncertain, old women whose femininity is denied, demonized, ridiculed. The witch, especially if poor, is always a post-menopausal old woman.[14] But in *Coriolanus,* Volumnia, a Roman widow is not a witch. She has, rather, all the patriarchal power of a mother as well as of a father. All the virtues of classical old age – expediency, experience, flexibility – are projected onto Volumnia making her the only Roman states*man*,[15] a Jacobean Machiavellian governor.

Mother and Son. Volumnia's Ubiquitous Presence on Stage: Her Private and Public Roles

While Roman senators and Tribunes, as fathers, move only in a public dimension, Volumnia, as a mother, rules both the private and public realms.

In his life of Coriolanus, Plutarch immediately presents Coriolanus as an orphan and latently expresses his concern that a mother's education might not equal the *paideia* of a father, involved, more than a woman, in the public political dimension.[16] But Plutarch is here expressing an Athenian, rather than a Roman point of view on the mother's identity. While in Athens the woman's role – as a mother – was merely biological, in Rome it was political because the mother was

13 William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Kenneth Muir, Arden edition (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), 1.3.45–7.

14 See Fortunati, 'The Aging Body'.

15 In this context of gender fluidity, it may be worth recalling Thomas Laqueur's contention that "There was still in the sixteenth century, as there had been in classical antiquity, only one canonical body and that body was male". Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex. Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 63. Everything – despite objective observation – depends on cultural assumptions and representations. Volumnia, the old woman, in this respect, might have supported such a mythical model of just one sex, invariably (and) patriarchally male.

16 In the last two decades the mother-son relationship has been demonized as the paradigm of a suffocating fusion: in Adelman's and Kahn's ground-breaking analyses, Volumnia – the not good enough mother, the starving mother – is responsible for malevolently configuring her son's psychic (or psychopathic) structure, prisoner of a self-sufficient model of masculinity (Freudian negation of his neediness and dependence), a model which would amount to the perfect model of military Roman virtue. Coriolanus is Rome's sword, its hardware, but the fusional drive is Coriolanus's, not his mother's.

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dignified with the task of educating and governing her children, the new generations. The text seems aware of the difference between the two cultures:

> You would be another Penelope. Yet they say
> all the yarn she spun in Ulysses' absence did but fill
> Ithaca full of moths (1.2.82–4)

Thus Valeria scolds Virgilia, Coriolanus's wife for being too domestic. In Roman history Volumnia, on the contrary (together with Cornelia, the Gracchi's mother, and the Sabine women) is recorded as the paradigm of the authority Roman mothers enjoyed in the public arena. Granting them a permanent educational role, Roman culture acknowledged mothers, when working together with fathers, as capable of and responsible for forming Roman citizens and the ruling class and for establishing a continuity between the past and the future. Women worked together with men:

> Roman women – deeply aware, as they were, of its relevance – accepted the male construction of their images and their roles and, as *permanent* (my emphasis) educators of their sons, conveyed them their fathers' values and also the deeply felt belief that the division of sexual roles could not be questioned, as if it was inscribed in the laws of nature […] Roman women did not have public power […] Nonetheless women's relationship with men – perhaps for the first time in Western history – was not founded on oppression. Women held with men an exchange relationship […] That was such an effective model of relationship that has crossed centuries and has reached us at the threshold of the 3rd millennium.[17]

The new configuration of the Roman mother's role strongly recalls the contradictory power of mothers in the new Stuart patriarchal nuclear family. Also in Shakespeare's England mothers, as educators of the younger generations, shared part of the patriarchal power and its reinforcement:

> Women had to shift roles deftly from playing the master to playing the servant. Linda Polock has made the important point that a woman (at least an upper class woman) had to learn in effect two roles – to be 'the weaker vessel' in her husband's presence and yet 'the best steward' in his absence. She must negotiate between submission and competence, be properly female and yet also have a masculine part.[18]

17 Eva Cantarella, *Passato prossimo. Donne romane da Tacita a Sulpicia* [1998] (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2008), pp. 136–38 (my translation).

18 Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture. Witch-hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 69.

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Volumnia's role as a mother is so *permanent* that her presence on the stage is ubiquitous and moves from closed to open spaces. She occupies the stage pervasively, there is no act of the play where she is not present. Volumnia's first scene (1.3), which is wholly Shakespeare's invention, is purely domestic while her last one – when she is acclaimed by the Roman people – is thoroughly public. While the male characters always move in external spaces from the battlefield to the forum, the female characters move from the inside to the outside, from home to the streets of Rome. Volumnia's space, in particular, seems a growing course from the domestic to the political realm. All along, her role keeps being steadily pedagogical, educational. And although she coherently sticks to her task, she adapts her teachings and her lessons to the changing of times.

From the very first scene she tries to persuade Virgilia, her daughter-in-law, to rejoice rather than cry at the idea of Coriolanus's receiving and giving wounds on the battlefield. Volumnia is strongly contrasted with the Penelope-like domestic wife's role. She has taught valiantness as the supreme Roman virtue to her son almost in the cradle and he is now performing his duty towards his mother and his country.

Volumnia did create a military leader, manly sacrificing, her / Hecuba's milking breasts (1.3.41 – 4) to Hector (her son's) bleeding forehead. As the old general, Cominius recognizes: " It is held / That valour is the chief virtue and most dignifies the haver" (2.2.81 – 2), but, later, facing the threat of Coriolanus's pride, he, together with Volumnia, will recognize that military heroism cannot be defended in any circumstance as the supreme Roman *virtus:*

> COMINIUS But now 'tis odds beyond arithmetic,
> And manhood is called foolery when it stands
> Against a falling fabric (3.1.244 – 46)

Once Coriolanus has won Rome safety against external attacks, he should be ready – his mother tries to persuade him – to win also his country's internal peace. Volumnia – according to Machiavelli's lesson – changes with the times and tries, in a process of continuing education, to teach Coriolanus her Machiavellian lesson, the lesson of expediency and dissimulation, relativity and flexibility. "You are too absolute, / Though therein you can never be too noble" (3.2.39 – 40), the undaunted mother warns her son almost at the geometrical centre of the play:

> But when extremities speak, I have heard you say,
> Honour and policy, like unsevered friends
> I'th'war grow together. Grant that, and tell me
> In peace what each of them by th'other lose
> That they combine not there (3.2.41 – 5)

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The 'policy' you need in war to gain your victory is as honourable as that which you need in times of peace, the Machiavellian mentor advises her son. But when Coriolanus stubbornly keeps to his position, refusing to submit to the plebs, with their 'voices' and their 'stinking breaths' in order to win the consulship, Volumnia marks their difference and so scolds her son: "Thy valiantness was mine, thou suckest it from me / But owe thy pride thyself" (3.2.129 – 30). She, unlike her son, in fact, knows how to turn her anger to her advantage ("a brain that leads my use of anger / to better vantage", 3.2.23 – 4). Volumnia scolds her son when she, frightened, recognizes that his son's pride will destroy him and her lifelong educational efforts. Coriolanus does not understand that a time of peace requires the playing of a different role, that times are ripe for the radical change of the institution of the state. Swords are to be substituted with words, the battlefield with court, war with politics.[19] Coriolanus is the most 'impolitic' Shakespearean character. Coriolanus's failure is Volumnia's failure. In the middle of the play Volumnia's anger is devoted to the tribunes, but her rage is especially cased by the frustrating personal defeat of her lifelong enterprise:

> Anger's my meat. I sup upon myself,
> And so shall starve with feeding. (4.2.50 – 1)

After her son's exile she seems to recoil in isolation, she refuses her old friends' support and witnessing the easy life and comfort Roman people enjoy in times of peace makes her angry. But when times change again, she leaves her isolation and changes her role.

When in the last act Volumnia mediates between her son and Rome and pleads with her son for Rome's salvation, she enacts the lesson she had tried unsuccessfully to teach him. She kneels and performs a visual rhetoric she knows works better than words for the illiterate mob ("Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th'ignorant / More learned than the ears", 3.2.76 – 7). In this way she recognizes and emphasizes Coriolanus's weakness, inability and failure rather than his heroic military successes. For Rome's welfare she will prove stronger than his son, but she has not been a lucky, successful, happy mother, as Cornelia had been.

19 It is obviously a crucial step in the process of civilization described by Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* [1939], trans. by Edmund Jephcott, rev. edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

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Parens patriae. Volumnia and Absolutism

Volumnia does not sacrifice her son: she is Machiavellian, not a Machiavel; she is not an ambitious malevolent witch, on the contrary, she deeply feels the call of the intimately private relation with her son together with her public responsibility as a mentor of a potential political leader. When, in the end, she makes her last desperate attempt to save Rome from the ravenous revenge of her son, she will be tragically divided between her private and her public realms:

> […]. And to poor we
> Thine enmity's most capital. Thou barr'st us
> Our prayers to the gods, which is a comfort
> They all but we enjoy. For how can we,
> Alas, how can we for our own country pray.
> *Whereto we are bound,* together with thy victory,
> *Whereto we are bound?* Alack, or we must lose
> The country, our dear nurse, or else thy person,
> Our comfort in the country. (5.3.103, emphasis added)

Coriolanus capitulates and Rome is safe. In the end Rome – rather than her son – gives Volumnia all possible gratifications, and she becomes a thoroughly public figure, actually Rome's only political defence and safety:

> FIRST SENATOR Behold our *patroness*, the life of Rome
> (5.5.1, emphasis added)

In her town, the Roman Matron (to use the epithet adopted by Sheridan when he renamed Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*) is hailed as Roman *patroness*, an ambivalent title from the gender point of view. *Patroness* is neither a male nor a female qualification as the postmenopausal identity of the old woman allows. It invests the old woman with patriarchal power. This sounds even more paradoxical when we consider that patriarchal power in Coriolanus's Rome, as we have seen, is blatantly absent.

In the exchange mechanism which characterizes Roman culture (as well as Stuart England), Volumnia wins a totally public role in the political arena though a woman. "Kings are also compared to Fathers of families: for a King is trewly *Parens patriæ*, the politique father of his people", is James's well known justification of his monarchical absolutism in A *speach to the lords and commons of the parliament at White-hall, on wednesday the xxi. of march. anno 1609.* The metaphor which in patriarchal thought (Filmer's *Patriarcha* being its recognized theorization) tied monarchy and the nuclear family works, in this case, the other way around and changes a private mother into an absolute Patroness, which amounts to a kingly father, and gives back, with renewed force and conviction, a legitimation to patriarchal absolutism. Against the ideological conflict between

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the plebeians and the patricians, a father figure, the kingly figure of a patroness, warrants the only possibility of governing and accelerating the process of formation of the new Rome, the metaphor of the new English nation state.

> MENENIUS I'll go meet the ladies. This Volumnia
> Is worth of consuls, senators, patricians,
> A city full; of tribunes such as you,
> A sea and land full. You have prayed well today
> (5.4.51 – 4)

James is the first to give a theoretical basis to absolutism which is acknowledged as the form the early modern nation state devised to subordinate the Church to the State, to found a lay state and start an irreversible process of secularization. "The first stage of this secularization", Hannah Arendt argues, "was the rise of absolutism, and not the Reformation; for 'the revolution' which, according to Luther, shakes the world when the word of God is liberated from the traditional authority of the Church […] does not establish a new secular order but constantly and permanently shakes the foundations of all worldly establishment".[20]

During her political triumph two women are at Volumnia's sides: Virgilia and Valeria. Valeria is a vestal defender of the sacredness of religious rites, while Virgilia is young Caius Martius's mother:

> CORIOLANUS […] Ladies, you deserve
> To have a temple built you. All the swords
> In Italy, and her confederate arms
> Could not have made this peace. (5.3.208 – 10)
>
> VIRGILIA Ay, and mine,
> That brought you forth this boy to keep your name
> Living to time. (5.3.120)

Volumnia, the political *parens patriae*, leads and supervises the sacredness of Roman rites through Valeria and the continuity between the old and the new generations through Virgilia.

In the process of secularization, in Jacobean Stuart England as well as in Republican Rome, *Coriolanus,* through the presence of a postmenopausal mother, has, rather than a psychological or social relevance, a historical and political meaning which sounds like Shakespeare's suggestion to the contemporary James to look back to 'prudent' Elizabeth I for advice.

20 Arendt, p. 26.

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Iolanda Plescia

"From me was Posthumus ript": *Cymbeline* and the Extraordinary Birth

In Act 5, scene 4 of *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare's "last Roman play", Posthumus Leonatus is reunited in a vision with his dead mother and father, as well as his long lost brothers, who have died valiantly in battle.[1] While he lies sleeping in his prison, the Leonati draw round him in a circle, as the Folio suggestively indicates, a ring which serves to define the sacred space needed for a family secret to be revealed.[2] The elaborate Folio stage direction also takes care to note that his father is an old man, "attired like a warrior", while his mother wears the garb of an "ancient matron". As in the best of Graeco-Roman family traditions, it is the duty of a father to go to war, the duty of a mother to give birth: her personal battle-field is the lying-in room.[3]

1 The title of this essay takes its cue from a book published in Italy and entirely devoted to the subject of the history of Caesarean childbirth: Nadia Maria Filippini, *La nascita straordinaria. Tra madre e figlio la rivoluzione del taglio cesareo* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1995). On *Cymbeline* as Shakespeare's "last Roman play", see David M. Bergeron, '*Cymbeline:* Shakespeare's Last Roman Play', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 31, 1 (1980), 31 – 41, and Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare's Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 206 – 35. Many other commentators have more recently emphasized the Roman aspects of *Cymbeline.* See, among others, Jodi Mikalachki, 'The Masculine Romance of Roman Britain: *Cymbeline* and Early Modern English Nationalism', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 46, 3 (1995), 301 – 22; Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 160 – 70; Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 151 – 88; Lisa Hopkins, *The Cultural Uses of the Caesars on the English Renaissance Stage* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 111 – 26.

2 On the much debated issue of the authenticity of the vision scene, see J. M. Nosworthy's 'Introduction', in *Cymbeline*, ed. by J. M. Nosworthy, Arden edition (London: Thomson Learning, 2004), pp. xxxiii-xxxvii. All the quotations from the play in the present study refer to this edition. Nosworthy convincingly argues in favour of the scene's authenticity: it is indeed a key moment in the play, from both a thematic and structural point of view, and it cannot be easily dismissed as non-Shakespearean for mere stylistic reasons (see p. xxxvii).

3 See François Lissarrague's discussion of such a family scene in examples of classical iconography, in 'Figures of Women', in *A History of Women in the West: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. by Georges Duby, Pauline Schmitt Pantel, Michelle Perrot, Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 180 – 81: "Man's pro-

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The secret that is about to be revealed to Posthumus is the narrative of his own birth. Like any orphan, he longs to be told of his origins, and his dream materializes the explanation he has never had from his own parents: while his father died "whilst in the womb he stay'd, attending Nature's law" (5.4.37–8) – his mother's womb a prison then, he a prisoner as he is now, awaiting his legal sentence to come to term – his mother survived her husband only to die in childbirth, deprived of the aid of Lucina, Juno's emissary and the helper of women in labour:

> Lucina lent me not her aid,
> but took me in my throes,
> That from me was Posthumus ript,
> Came crying 'mongst his foes,
> A thing of pity! (5.4.43–7)

Posthumus is extracted from his dead mother's womb, in a scene reminiscent of another Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*, in which Macduff, the hero who will deliver Scotland from tyranny and free its people, reveals that he too was "from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd" (5.8.15–16).[4] The similarity has often been noted and is especially evident in the word chosen, in both instances, to define that excision – a 'rip', a violent act that may be construed as a sort of inverted 'rape', one that allows birth regardless of the "woman's part" (*Cymbeline*, 2.4.172) in it, and one that allows the hero to call himself "of no woman born" (*Macbeth*, 5.8.31).[5]

While the word 'rip' is probably of Flemish or Scandinavian origin, and may be an onomatopoeic rendition of the sound of cloth being torn, the affinity of its sound to the Latin verb 'eripio', to snatch, or tear, would not be lost on an Elizabethan ear with some training in the classics ('rape', on the other hand,

vince is war, woman's is child-rearing. […] On a funerary vase such an image would evoke the ever-present possibility of simultaneous death: the man in combat and the woman in childbirth" (p. 181).

4 William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Kenneth Muir, Arden edition (London: Thomson Learning, 2006).

5 In particular, see Janet Adelman's discussion of the male "fantasy of exemption from the woman's part" in birth in *Suffocating Mothers. Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays*, Hamlet *to* The Tempest (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), especially chapter six, 'Escaping the Matrix: The Construction of Masculinity in *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*', pp. 130–64, and chapter eight, 'Masculine Authority and the Maternal Body: The Return to Origins in the Romances', pp. 193–238. Maria Del Sapio Garbero has recently elaborated on the parthenogenetic theme in her *Il bene ritrovato. Le figlie di Shakespeare dal* King Lear *ai* Romances (Roma: Bulzoni, 2005): see pp. 148–52, as well as her discussion of *Cymbeline*, in particular pp. 204–10. Nosworthy also calls attention to the parallel passage in *Macbeth*, citing Wilson Knight in his note (Nosworthy, p. 157, n. to ll. 43–7). I am grateful to Maria Del Sapio Garbero for bringing this passage to my attention and encouraging me to work in this direction.

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comes from the Latin 'rapere', through the Anglo-French word 'raper', to seize with force).[6] It is therefore interesting to note that 'eripio' is also the verb that recurs in mythological accounts of what may be considered the first, legendary instances of Caesarean sections.

Two such births are narrated in Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*[7] The first is the story of Coronis, a nymph pregnant with Phoebus's child: an envious raven spies upon her and, finding her unchaste, hastens to bring the matter to the god's attention (significantly, Iachimo's enigmatic evocation of the raven in the scene in which he introduces himself into Imogen's room to gather evidence to use against her, 2.2.48 – 9, has been interpreted as a reference to himself). Enraged, Phoebus pierces Coronis's heart with an arrow: the nymph extracts the arrow from her bosom, and blood stains her body, as she reproaches the god for killing his own son as well as herself. Phoebus is filled with remorse, and though it is too late to save Coronis, he opens up her womb and saves his child from the flames of the funeral pyre: "non tulit in cineres labi sua Phoebus eosdem / semina, sed natum flammis uteroque parentis / *eripuit* geminique tulit Chironis in antrum" (Book II, 628 – 30, emphasis added).[8] The boy will be named Aesculapius, and he will become the god of medicine, having learnt the trade from the centaur Chiron.[9]

The second 'Caesarean section' is performed on Semele, who is expecting a child from none other than Jove himself. The jealous Juno, disguised as Semele's own nurse, persuades her to ask the god to show himself to her in all his might. Jove, who has promised to grant Semele any wish she might ask, cannot go back on his word: the girl's mortal body is instantly incinerated at the sight of the tremendous celestial apparition. The unformed foetus is extracted from her womb and inserted into a cut in Jove's thigh, which is then sewn up, allowing the baby to reach full term in what is effectively a second pregnancy ("Imperfectus adhuc infans genetricis ab alvo / *eripitur* patrioque tener, si credere dignum est, /

6 Rip: see *OED*, v2 (in part. v2.1). Rape: see *OED*, v2 (in part. v 2.1, 2, 3).

7 A third is only hinted at in Book X. With Lucina's help, Myrrha gives birth to Adonis after being turned into a tree: the bark rips open, probably spontaneously, and the child is extracted.

8 "But that his own son should perish in the same funeral fires he cannot brook. He snatched the unborn child from his mother's womb and from the devouring flames, and bore him for safekeeping to the cave of the two-formed Chiron". Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966) i, p. 105.

9 Interestingly, Chiron is also the name of one of Tamora's sons in *Titus Andronicus*, who, together with his brother Demetrius, rapes and mutilates Lavinia (2.2). The skill of Chiron the centaur as a teacher of the art of surgery would seem to be here indirectly evoked in the rapist's name and the brothers' 'surgical' decision to cut off Lavinia's hands and tongue for their own protection. This is particularly significant, for, as we shall see, the power to cut into women's bodies to facilitate birth will be considered in Renaissance medical discourse as either a lifesaving technique or a form of rape or mutilation.

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insuitur femori maternaque tempora complet", Book III, 310 – 12)[10] – Bacchus, the fruit of this labour of love, is born twice, and his second emergence from a male body is particularly relevant when the resonance of this extraordinary birth is considered in the context of Posthumus's own delivery.

Posthumus, the fearless knight, the immaculate hero of no woman born, represents "what is best in British manhood":[11] but recent criticism has shown that he also embodies all that is noble – and male – in the Roman world, effectively representing the link that sutures the British and Roman alliance at the end of the play in a "masculine embrace of the civility of empire".[12] Throughout the play, Posthumus is repeatedly described as worthy, virtuous, loyal – so much so, that upon hearing his praises sung by a gentleman at court, the second gentleman in 1.1 concludes simply: "I honour him, / Even out of your report" (1.1.54 – 5). Imogen compares him to an eagle (1.2.70), a clear reference to Rome which prefigures the imperial eagle that is to return at the end of play. These, and other allusions to Rome, depicted in an extremely problematic way as the site of true valour and of a legitimizing, all-male genealogy, but also as a Machiavellian land of corruption,[13] serve to bring the *translatio imperii* issue to the foreground in all its complexity. For while Elizabethan culture is eager to represent itself as the legitimate heir of the greatness of Rome through the genealogical link provided by Brutus, the values of an inviolate, independent Britain must also be upheld. Thus Posthumus – the hero who leaves Britain for Rome, where he is convinced of Imogen's unfaithfulness, returns to Britain with the Roman army, changes sides to fight incognito with his people *against* the Romans, then pretends to be a Roman once more so that he may be arrested and brought to Cymbeline's court – becomes the mediator through which an allegiance with Rome may be recovered.[14] And all this is achieved without the inevitable loss of the manly attributes the British warriors need to hold on to: so that, as has often been noted, the British can win the war *and* pay tribute to Rome. As Coppélia

10 "The babe still not wholly fashioned is snatched from the mother's womb and (if report may be believed), sewed up in his father's thigh, there to await its full time of birth" (Ovid, p. 147).

11 Nosworthy, p. xliv.

12 Mikalachki, p. 303. See also Adelman on Cymbeline's "alliance with an all-male Rome", and her reading of the two plots ("the Cymbeline plot and the marriage plot") as requiring "different valutations of Rome" (p. 201), as well as Kahn, pp. 160 – 61. For a broad discussion of national identity and empire in Shakespeare's works, see also *Identity, Otherness, and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome*, ed. by Maria Del Sapio Garbero (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009).

13 See Adelman, p. 201.

14 It is interesting to note that the *Historia Brittonum* links the Britons to the Romans through a figure with a very similar name to that of our hero: "[the] inhabitants [of Britain] were the descendants of the Romans, from *Silvius Posthumus*, thus named because born after the death of his father Eneas". Nennius, *Historia Brittonum*, ed. by William Gunn (London: John and Arthur Arch, Cornhill, 1819), p. 5.

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Kahn reminds us, the play "is as much Roman as romance", and in it, "independence from Rome is always already compromised by a kind of co-dependence on Rome for the validation of manly virtue".[15]

It is fitting, then, that this paragon of Roman and British virtues should be brought to the world by means of a *post mortem* Caesarean section, which both preserves him from the "woman's part" in labour – perhaps this "part" may also be read as the birth canal itself? – and indirectly alludes to the greatness of Julius Caesar. Interestingly, Caesar's own alleged extraordinary birth is a myth, often evoked in medieval times to emphasize his divine qualities: a baby who had been pulled straight out from his mother's womb and managed to survive could only be a god, like other gods born in the same way before him – Adonis, Bacchus, Aesculapius. A false, but appealing, etymological hypothesis based on an obscure passage in Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* connected Caesar's very name to a portentous birth "ab utero caeso" (Fig. 1).[16]

There are no historical certainties as to whether Caesarean sections were actually practised in Roman times, and the procedure seems to have been very rare up until the eighteenth century. It was performed only on deceased women, and was recommended by the Church as a way to save the newborn's soul by administering the sacrament of baptism, especially after the eleventh century. The Church's endorsement of the procedure in extreme cases contributed to its

15 Kahn, pp. 160 – 61.

16 For thorough accounts of the history of Caesarean birth, see Filippini, *La nascita stroardinaria* (note 1 in the present essay), and Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Not of Woman Born: Representations of Caesarean Birth* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990). While the first study details the history of the Caesarean operation up until the nineteenth century, concentrating on the symbolical, socio-historical, and ethical dimensions of the procedure, the second is particularly concerned with iconographic representations of Caesarean births, and with the "marginalization of women in obstetrics" that Blumenfeld-Kosinski traces in her readings of the pictures. As well as providing a useful historical overview, the book contains an interesting appendix that deals with what Blumenfeld-Kosinski refers to as "creative etymology", that is, the complex web of "etymology and genealogy" (p. 144) that medieval scholars used to decipher the relationship between the word and the world. An exhaustive account is here given of all the possible derivations of the expression "Caesarean section" (pp. 145 – 53): the *lex caesarea*, which "stated that it was unlawful to bury a pregnant woman without attempting to cut out the child in order to save its life" (p. 145), but whose link to Julius Caesar's family is doubtful; Pliny's "ambiguous passage", which "caused many misunderstandings that had a direct influence on the development of the legend concerning Caesar's birth" (p. 145); Aelius Spartanus's suppositions about the origin of the word 'Caesar'; Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*, a text through which "the idea of Caesar's birth by Caesarean section was perpetuated and entered vernacular literature" (p. 146); and the anonymous *Faits des Romains* (early thirteenth century), which conflated Isidore's work with Suetonius's *The Twelve Caesars*, since the first sections of the latter text had been lost: "There is no doubt that the *Faits* constituted the authoritative version of Caesar's life (and consequently of his birth) and that the responsibility of making abdominal delivery a truly "Caesarean" birth […] lies with this text" (p. 150).

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Fig. 1: Julius Caesar's purported birth by Caesarean section. Reproduction (1933) of a 1506 woodcut

configuration as an extraordinary, miraculous event: on a symbolic level, it was assimilated to the birth of Eve, extracted by God from Adam's side; but a negative version of the supernatural occurrence also existed in medieval culture, and the birth of the Antichrist was sometimes imagined as a Caesarean section, in so far as it was an unnatural, inverted kind of birth. Whether a god or an evil being, the issue of the supernatural event is in effect "of no woman born", in that the birth itself is actually a non-birth, an unnatural inversion of the normal course of things.[17]

Posthumus's survival at birth, then, is in itself a miracle, and the praise he is commended with throughout the play, whether sincere or ironical, takes on new meaning when placed in the context of his god-like nativity. He is referred to at 1.2.77 as "a man worth any woman", and while Imogen is clearly speaking of herself in this instance, one cannot help but think that Posthumus is also worth the *sacrifice* of any woman's life: his mother has died before his birth, like the mothers of the mythological gods evoked above, and she has played no active part in giving birth to this miraculous child. When Iachimo ironically describes Posthumus as one who "sits among men like a descended god […], more than a mortal seeming" (1.7.169 – 71), he is effectively depicting him as a Roman god. What Gail Kern Paster, drawing on Janet Adelman's seminal work, summarizes in an analysis of *Macbeth* as the embodiment of a "male fantasy of escape from being born of woman",[18] may well be attributed to Posthumus, who escapes his mother's womb and is nurtured by the king Cymbeline – thus materializing the fantasy of a parthenogenetic, all-male family that Adelman defines as the result

17 See Filippini, pp. 34 – 6, and Blumenfeld-Kosinski, pp. 120 – 42.

18 Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 220.

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of a "ruthless excision of all female presence" (again with reference to *Macbeth*).[19]

When Posthumus, who believes he has been made a cuckold, condemns this "female presence" in the biological make-up of his own body – the "woman's part" – in his famous tirade against all womankind in 2.4.153 – 86, he is referring to the 'genetic' (so to speak) and gestational contribution of woman to the making of sons, but also to a more general idea, which has to do with the tainted nature of a fallen and corrupted female body. As a hero embodying the Roman values that Britain is paradoxically struggling to appropriate while affirming its independence, he feels the need to preserve himself by discovering the woman's part in him and wishing he could isolate it: "Could I find out / The woman's part in me – for there's no motion / That tends to vice in man, but I affirm / It is the woman's part" (2.4.171 – 73). He cannot bring himself to finish the hypothetical sentence and declare what he would do if he could identify one part, a single site in himself containing all the faults he sees as female – and which are typically summed up in that mother of all purportedly female faults, "mutability" (2.4.178). While Posthumus's broken syntax leaves the thought unfinished, the audience is still under the shock of the threat he has just uttered at line 146, "O, that I had her here, to tear her limb-meal!" – and this lingering image of a dismembered body suggests that when he wishes he could find the "woman's part" in him he would gladly cut it away, rip it out of his own body.[20] As Nosworthy notes,[21] Posthumus asks a question at this point which was "fairly often asked in medieval literature, and raised later by Sir Thomas Browne in *Religio Medici* and by Milton in *Paradise Lost*":

> Is there no way for men to be, but women
> Must be half-workers? We are all bastards,
> And that most venerable man, which I
> Did call my father, was I know not where
> When I was stamp'd. (2.4.153 – 57)

The question being, of course, whether it might ever be possible for a man to generate a child without a woman's aid, thereby eliminating all potential doubt as to its lineage and origins. This genealogical anxiety is precisely what leads to Posthumus's fantasy of excision of the female part in himself: thus the parthenogenetic dream serves to establish a pure, unadulterated family tree[22] in a play

19 Adelman, p. 131.

20 Nosworthy notes, agreeing with Schmidt, that "what he doubtless intends to say […] is: If I could find the woman's part in me, I would tear it out", Nosworthy, p. 72.

21 Nosworthy, p. 71.

22 On the issue of female bodies and legitimacy, see Maurizio Calbi, *Approximate Bodies: Gender and Power in Early Modern Drama and Anatomy* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 56 – 7 in particular.

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that is very much concerned with the British nation's process of self-fashioning as the rightful inheritor of Roman values. These lines, however, acquire new meaning when re-read in the light of the narrative of Posthumus's birth by means of a Caesarean section: for though Posthumus is yet unaware of the details of his birth, it is interesting to speculate upon the possibility that to the early modern audience the woman in his tirade – the "half-worker" in question – may also be the midwife, seen as a sort of 'half-doctor', and a 'doctor-in-between', who positions herself between the legs of the woman in labour and between her womb and the world in order to conduct the child safely into it. Caroline Bicks has argued that the elusive figures of midwives that haunt the early modern stage sometimes served to undermine the category (the midwife could be cast as a gossiping and/or incompetent old shrew in comedy) but also often emphasized the power of a woman who "was usually the first person to touch newborns and declare their sex".[23] Midwives not only delivered babies in a space where men had no right to enter, but they bore witness to the children's status as legitimate offspring. They were also skilled in manoeuvres which helped 'shape' babies' bodies in the event of birth defects or deformities: "[the] early modern midwife […] was recognized as a sanctioned shaper of men's, women's and children's bodies".[24] The absence of the father from the marriage bed, an absence Posthumus imagines when postulating that all men are conceived as bastards, also reminds us of the absence of the father from the birthroom: a woman's work – and word – would have to suffice as a guarantee that the child would be delivered safely and, more importantly, would bear, and deserve, the right name. While Posthumus's own birth, we learn later on in the play, makes him an orphan, the extraordinary conditions of his delivery preserve him, in a sense, not only from his mother's 'part' but also from the midwife's 'part' in his coming to the world. The "excision of all female presence" is complete.

For this excision in *Cymbeline* is also a surgical operation, an *in*cision, configured as a C-section performed on the female body, which effectively brings a new actor on the early modern scene of birth: the male doctor. While Posthumus's mother is evasive as to *how* her child was extracted from her body, leaving us to imagine one of the mythological births found in Ovid, Caesarean

23 Caroline Bicks, *Midwiving Subjects in Shakespeare's England* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), p. 2.

24 Bicks, p. 12. "Early modern texts indeed circulated beliefs that connected the actions of the midwife to the shape of newborn physiognomies. These marked heads and bodies then went on to be read and categorized according to prevailing values and beliefs. When the midwife cut the umbilical cord, for instance, she allegedly controlled the size of the tongue and genitals, anatomical sites whose proportions determined the performative success of masculine and feminine roles; and when she swaddled the malleable newborn body or pressed its head, she molded it into either a deformed or perfect figure that then supposedly shaped the infant's fortunes and character", Bicks, p. 4.

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sections were described in great detail in early modern medical texts, and of course there were also the beautiful images in medieval and renaissance manuscripts.[25] The all-female world of the confinement, or 'lying-in' room, is disrupted when a surgeon claims his right to position himself in front of the woman in labour, replacing the midwife: the Caesarean section, being a surgical procedure, could only be performed by a man. "Since women in early modern Europe ordinarily gave birth under conditions monitored only by other women, childbirth in the period has been interpreted as an inversion of customary gender hierarchies", notes Paster.[26] This temporary moment of "female empowerment" is brought to an end when a man takes it upon himself to rip – to rape, in a sense – the womb open. If it is true that only women could touch a woman in childbirth,[27] the Caesarean section becomes the space within which a man can operate, and if the actions of a midwife – a *sage-femme* in the French tradition – belonged to a centuries-old tradition of wisdom and practical common sense, the hands of an early modern surgeon, newly practised in the art of dissecting bodies, could impose the civilizing force of medicine on the pregnant body, thus 'ruling' the uterus, conceptualized since Plato's time as a kind of autonomous animal, an organ capable of independent movement.[28]

The practicability of Caesarean sections, and the possibility of performing the procedure on living women, had in fact become the centre of a heated debate in early modern Europe after the publication, in 1581, of François Rousset's *Traitté nouveau de l'hystérotomotokie ou enfantement caesarien*. While *post mortem* Caesareans had been practised, though not often successfully, on women since medieval times, this is the first instance in which the hypothesis of performing one on a living woman became real, as Rousset provided technical advice and

25 Filippini mentions a number of early modern manuals for midwives, p. 44: in particular, Roesslin's *Rosengarten* (1513), which was translated into Latin and then into English under the title *The Byrth of Mankynd*; Ambroise Paré's *De hominis generatione* (1573); Jacques Guillemeau's *De l'hereux accouchement des femmes* (1609). For a thorough account of manuscript illustrations, see Blumenfeld-Kosinski's chapter 'Caesarean birth in the artistic imagination', pp. 48–90.

26 Paster, p. 165.

27 On midwives and their position with respect to male surgeons in the lying-in room, see Bicks's 'Introduction: Midwiving Subjects', pp. 1–21; Paster, pp. 165–66 and 185–90; Blumenfeld-Kosinski, pp. 26–47. While concerned with broader issues, *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, edited by Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), also deals with the lying-in chamber as a space "regulated by the midwife" (p. 89). See in particular ch. 1, 3, 7, 14.

28 "On the whole, early modern physiology accepted Galen's denial of Plato's assertion that the womb was an independent, animate entity capable of smell and violent movement. Treatment, however, continued to assume the womb's attraction to sweet smells, its antipathy to foul smells. […] the womb seems to function as a quasi-independent force in the female body", Paster, pp. 174–75.

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argued in favour of the safety of the procedure. The book was translated into Latin for the benefit of the wider scientific community in 1582, and it is here that the term 'Caesarean' is to be found for the first time. Significantly, Rousset combines two etymologies, one derived from the Latin 'caedere', meaning 'to cut', and the other from the ambiguous passage in Pliny, who mentions the birth of one of the Caesars – thus reaffirming the connection with what popular imagination had already long recognized as Julius Caesar's divine birth. The definition caught on immediately, and was translated into several European languages. As Filippini notes,[29] what is particularly interesting is that the name originated within the scientific community, and was produced by a member of a corporation that was seeking autonomous status as a discipline, that of modern surgery. Suggesting that a Caesarean section might be practised on a living woman to save both mother and child put the surgeon himself in a god-like position: the label chosen by Rousset to describe the procedure served both as a reminder and a project. The early modern doctor thus uses the legendary name to found the credibility of his knowledge, characteristically interfacing two apparently conflicting epistemological paradigms, that is, myth and scientific culture.

In so doing, he asserts his right both as a skilled practitioner and a divine thaumaturge to enter the confinement room, and lay his hands on a woman in the name of science: for the womb is "a world of yt selfe" in the words of Simon Forman, the author of an Elizabethan treatise on "Matrix and the Pain Thereof",[30] it represents a new land to be conquered and colonized. The expression strangely echoes Cloten's famous assertion, in 3.1.12 – 14 of *Cymbeline*, that Britain will no longer put up with Roman colonization: "There be many Caesars ere such another Julius: *Britain's a world by itself*, and we will nothing pay for wearing our own noses" (emphasis added). Thus Britain, the inviolate island, is a world unto itself like the womb, and will not admit Roman penetration. What Paster calls the "medical colonization" of the womb[31] may be submitted to in life and death cases, so that lives may be saved, but such a penetration also indirectly recalls the issue of rape: for another womb that will not be penetrated, much to Cloten's chagrin, is Imogen's – so that it is particularly interesting that she should identify herself with Britain when she fears Posthumus has forgotten her. When Iachimo tells the princess of the good times Posthumus is having in Rome, she exclaims: "My lord, I fear, has forgotten Britain" (1.7.112 – 13), effectively positioning herself as the personification of her own nation, as has often been noticed. It is the very strategy that had enabled another virgin – this time a real-

29 Filippini, pp. 28 – 30.
30 Quoted in Paster, p. 178.
31 Paster, p. 178.

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life Queen – to hold on to her power and provide the mythical and rhetorical foundations for her country to start thinking of itself as a nation.

Jodi Mikalachki is one of many critics who have argued that in *Cymbeline* "Imogen alone remains as a possible icon of pure Britishness". Mikalachki locates the savage, pure essence of a pre-Roman community in the role of powerful, originary females, since "Britons made no distinction of sex in government".[32] Feminine savagery must thus be tamed by the masculine culture of the *civitas*, so that Rome is at the same time perceived as a colonizing and civilizing force, which explains the ambivalence of Posthumus and his people, who wish to remain independent (and defend Imogen-Britain's honour), but also to pay the requested tribute. Thus the presence of the chaste Imogen, silently defending her land through her body's resistance to penetration, complicates the process that will enable Cymbeline to win the war but also submit to Rome. While Imogen's chastity is the symbol of all that is pure in Britain, she also must submit to some form of 'colonization' if the future of her country is to be secured through a cultural allegiance with Rome. Significantly, she will have to travel on her own quest towards her union with Posthumus, and just as he constantly wavers between a British and Roman identity, she will also experience a form of hybridization through her male disguise and her role as attendant to a Roman officer.

In the same way, I would add, the woman in labour must submit to the civilizing force of medicine, which seeks to rule the primal act of giving birth, but at the same time provides salvation and life (for the child, if not for the mother). When the doctor penetrates the sacred circle of women surrounding a mother in labour, a "protective circle"[33] is broken, just as the circle of the womb is surgically broken. The ring Posthumus receives from Imogen, the bracelet – a symbol of chastity – which Iachimo deceivingly obtains, and the circle formed by the members of the Leonati family, are as concentrical as the layers of tissue and placenta in the womb protecting a foetus. As science offers new ways to save lives and give life, something of the sacredness of the woman's pregnant body is irrevocably lost; when Britain willingly accepts the masculine embrace of Rome, agreeing to be 'civilized' and pay tribute, it becomes less of a "world by itself".

Similarly, while the act of a man's hands cutting a woman's womb open could be perceived as a breakthrough for medical science, not all members of the scientific community readily welcomed the procedure: Jacques Marchant, a surgeon in Paris, immediately reacted against the notion that living women should be subjected to Caesarean sections, both on scientific and moral grounds. He argued in favour of letting midwives – whose skill he fully recognized – deal

32 Mikalachki, p. 316, p. 302.
33 Del Sapio, p. 188.

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with difficult labours, seeing no need for surgeons to intervene; and he supported the belief that men should not meddle with the holiness of natural childbirth, especially with life expectancy for the baby and mother so low after such an invasive operation. A number of influential surgeons upheld the same opinion, including William Harvey in England, and Marchant eloquently renamed the procedure "Tarquinian section" – thereby stressing that it was to be considered more of a rape, a violation, than a legitimate surgical treatment.[34]

Sextus Tarquinius, another figure at the cusp between history and legend, is the model Iachimo explicitly indicates as he emerges from the trunk he has used as a pretext to be conveyed into Imogen's room: "Our Tarquin thus / Did softly press the rushes ere he waken'd / The chastity he wounded" (2.2.12 – 14).[35] This violent image of penetration is, in a sense, the other side of the coin: here the womb is attacked not to save a life but to perpetrate a crime which will lead to the death of the victim, and this is precisely the point Marchant wishes to make in choosing his own appellation for the Caesarean section. Significantly, the story is echoed in the mythological tale of yet another rape, which Imogen "hath been reading late" (2.2.44): "The tale of Tereus, here the leaf's turn'd down / Where Philomel gave up" (2.2.45 – 6), as Iachimo notices (and Shakespeare here may wish us to think that the book Imogen is reading is precisely Ovid's *Metamorphoses*).[36] The brutality of this kind of contact between man and woman is reverberated in the following scene, in which Cloten coarsely remarks on the 'penetrating' power of music during his wooing serenade (2.3.11 – 26). It is only thanks to Imogen's final union with the demi-god Posthumus that Britain will be able to appropriate the best of Roman values, passed on by Caesar through the purity of a miraculous birth, free from the "woman's part", while rejecting at the same time the Tarquinian violence of colonization, resisted precisely through Imogen's inviolate body.

As we have seen, the early modern debate on the advisability of cutting pregnant women open is thus rhetorically organized around the same ripping vs. raping dichotomy that recurs in Shakespeare's play. Here, though, the whole issue remains in the background, and is only very hesitantly hinted at in the narrative of Posthumus's birth. The male doctor is never mentioned by his mother, but it is very clear from her story that Lucina, the midwife, has fled the scene, and we are left to imagine the symbolic impact of a birthroom in which "giving birth is no longer the sole prerogative of a woman, but of a man who uses

34 See Filippini, p. 30.

35 Nadia Fusini reads the scene as an actual instance of 'visual' rape committed by Iachimo's penetrating gaze. See Nadia Fusini, *La passione dell'origine: studi sul tragico shakespeariano e il romanzesco moderno* (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 1981), pp. 108 – 10.

36 See Nosworthy, p. 51.

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his hands and his art".[37] This art is the product of a culture, of a new kind of scientific knowledge that seeks to civilize medicine, rejecting the wise women's good old common sense in favour of experimentation and technical advancement. Similarly, the isolated world identified with Imogen's chaste womb, Britain, must come to terms with the civilization it nevertheless wishes to emulate, and its feminine energy must be tamed in favour of masculine *virtus*. As is often the case with Shakespeare, the hazy, semi-legendary past in which the play is set serves as a mirror of Elizabethan anxieties and of a fundamental quest for knowledge. In *Cymbeline*, this quest is pursued not by means of the serene, maternal, maieutical art of the midwife, but through the violent rip of a new science – one sixteenth century figurative meaning of the verb 'to rip' was "to open up, lay bare, disclose, make known; to search into, to examine"[38] – and the inevitable rape of an old Empire.

37 Filippini, p. 298 (my translation).
38 *OED*, v2.4a.

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Barbara Antonucci

Blood in Language: the Galenic Paradigm of Humours in *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Titus Andronicus*

In both *Titus Andronicus* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, Shakespeare seems to be haunted – or rather haunts the spectators – with sanguine imagery. Blood plays a crucial role in *Lucrece* and it constitutes a topic around which Lucrece speculates and deliberates and in whose name she eventually commits suicide. The stanzas are stained with blood and reflect a sound scientific knowledge (for its time) while in *Titus Andronicus* blood seems to 'tinge' the scenes, giving emphasis to the violence contained in the plotline: the word 'blood' is used predominantly as an adjective to foment bloody actions and no evidence is given of a blood that actually circulates and pours: limbs are chopped off and tongues are cut out but the victim does not die as a result of a haemorrhage, whilst in *Lucrece*, we actually *see* blood in its physical essence, mostly used as a substantive and associated with dynamic verbs: it runs, it bubbles, it pours and it shows different colours and nuances.

Supposedly written in the same year, the blood-stained poem *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) and the blood-curdling tragedy *Titus Andronicus* (1594) will be read, within this paper, from a 'medical' point of view in order to shed light on the functional role of blood and, more specifically, the way the image of blood as a physiological substance and as a trope is utilized by Shakespeare in the two works. Referring also to some crucial texts in Renaissance medical literature, we shall see the way in which the work of Shakespeare is influenced by the Galenic paradigms of blood and bloodletting as a curative remedy.

In *The Rape of Lucrece,* Shakespeare actually provides a Galenic medical justification of Tarquin's angry lust and Lucrece's subsequent suicide, interpretable as a 'remedy' to free her blood from Tarquin's infectious stain, a cure which was familiar to Renaissance readers, aware of Galen's theory of humours and of bloodletting as a device to 'heal' the body.

Shakespeare had had more than one opportunity to become acquainted with surgery and medical practices. Among the many books he had at his disposal in Elizabethan London were Galen's *De usu partium*, Celsus's *De Medicina*, Vesa-

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lius's *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, and Bright's *A Treatise of Melancholie.*[1] As Fu notes in his article on Shakespeare's medical knowledge, Shakespeare used to stroll around St. Paul's churchyard, where he could find "many bookstalls that displayed the latest publications from local and foreign publishers" and he also lodged in a house near Mugwelle Street and Silver Street at Cripplegate, very close to the Barber-Surgeons' Hall where "three annual public demonstrations in anatomy had taken place since 1540".[2] Even if in Shakespeare's time Galenic paradigms were being questioned and undercut, eventually replaced by more modern medical approaches originating from Vesalian anatomy, *The Rape of Lucrece* is clearly influenced by humoral theories.[3]

An imbalance among the four elements (blood, choler, melancholy and phlegm) was thought to cause an excess of 'matter', a *plethora*, often cured through the common practice of bloodletting: the opening of a vein and draining of the blood. This 'home-made' remedy was employed by Lucrece in order to cleanse her body of Tarquin's infectious blood, but mistakenly, as we shall see, since bloodletting was not recommended as a therapy for *cacochymia.*

Tarquin: a pathogenic body

Whereas bleeding, in patients affected by *plethora*, helped to free the body from the excess of blood and to re-establish a balance among the humours, phlebotomy in patients affected by *cacochymia* was often believed to compromise the quality of blood as an excessive amount of healthy substance was often lost. In *The English Phlebotomy* (London, 1592), Nicholas Gyer defines *cocochymia* as:

> A corrupted quality of the humors, by reason whereof the humor departeth from his just mediocritie. Under which *cacochymia* is contained all corruption of humors in quality; whereby the powers of the bodie are hindered from their proper functions, whereby also the whole bodie waxeth filthie and daily decayeth.[4]

1 See Ktl Fu, 'The healing hand in literature: Shakespeare and Surgery', *Hong Kong Medical Journal*, 4, 1 (1998), 77 – 88.

2 Fu, p. 79.

3 For a study on procedures aimed at producing good humoral blood, see Alan Smith, 'Of Lively Grapes and Windy Hops: Blood and Drink in Renaissance English Literature', in *Shakespeare's Theories of Blood, Character, and Class: A Festschrift in Honor of David Shelley Berkeley*, ed. by Peter C. Rollins and Alan Smith (New York and Washington DC: Peter Lang, 2001), pp. 19 – 42.

4 In Catherine Belling, 'Infectious Rape, Therapeutic Revenge: Bloodletting and the Health of Rome's Body', in *Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*, ed. by Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 113 – 32 (p. 117 – 18).

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If we look at the whole poem from a physiological perspective, Tarquin shows symptoms both of *plethora* and *cacochymia:* the repletion of 'matter' makes him overheated and the pollution in his blood makes him literally poisonous. The stanzas are interspersed with medical references and Tarquin emerges as a pathogenic body: an ill governed man in whose body a 'battle of humours' is fought, a war between sexual desire and reason that covers 270 lines. Indeed, from line 169, when he steps out of his bed, right through to line 439, when he first touches Lucrece's breasts, it seems as if each humour is fighting its own battle to gain control over his reason. As Catherine Belling aptly puts it, "Shakespeare presents Tarquin's sexual desire for Lucrece as an uprising of excessive and overheated blood against the restraints of reason and morality".[5]

According to humoral physiology, the liver was the blood-forming organ, the seat of life and emotion, source of anger and sexual desire which made the body swell and overheat. It is, in fact, "with swift intent" that Tarquin goes "[t]o quench the coal which in his liver glows".[6]

As the lines unroll, Tarquin grows physically excited, moved by a "brainsick rude desire" (175) produced by the excess of hot humours, since it was thought that when the presence of choleric and sanguine humours increased excessively in the blood, this would result in a 'fever' of lust or anger. A *plethora* of choler, for example, was believed to cause an overexcitement of the body, an arousal of humours that could hinder mental faculties temporarily and make the will inoperative:

> [I]f the quantitie of temperament of their substance, be [...] inverted the rule of all the bodies is disordered.[7]

Tarquin's "hot-burning will" (247) thus quashes "respect and reason" (275). Moved by "servile powers" (295) and by his "hot heart" (314), he literally marches towards his war booty. 'Matter' seems to swing back and forth in Tarquin's body, which becomes tantamount to a receptacle. As Belling has argued:

> [...] the humoral model of health fed into the trope of a struggle between the individual's moral and rational will and the passionate and unruly blood. 'Blood' was synonymous with the passions, which were understood as powerful urges of

5 Belling, p. 115.

6 William Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*, in *Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. by Colin Burrow, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 47. All subsequent references are to this edition.

7 Nicholas Gyer, quoted in Belling, p. 115.

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the soul as it responded to internal or external sensory *stimuli*, and which became manifest as effects of the body, especially where spirit met blood, in the heart.[8]

As if trying to self-regulate the balance of humours in his body, and tame his "inward will" (91), in the passageway from his room to Lucrece's bedchamber Tarquin initially manages to gain control over his passion, "That nothing in him seemed inordinate" (94), but eventually he collapses "madly tossed between desire and dread" (171).

When he finally resolves to act out his "outward harm" (91), his reasoning 'compresses' in short sentences, absolute constructions, as if he had not enough blood in his brain to utter proper sentences:

> Hateful it is. There is no hate in loving.
> I'll beg her love; but she is not her own.
> The worst is but denial and reproving. (240 – 42)

Entering Lucrece's bedchamber, Tarquin is overwhelmed by the impulse to spoil that "virtuous monument" (391) and stain the "unstainèd bed" (366). Interestingly, there is 'something' in his perception of Lucrece that foments "his rage of lust" (424) and the "uproar" (427) that tempts his veins. I suggest that it is exactly the blood that runs in *her* veins which overheats his own, a 'something' which is concealed in that fair complexion broken by sensuous blushing cheeks.

It is on the "silent war of lilies and roses" (71) fought in the "hieraldry" (64) of Lucrece's face that Tarquin lays the blame.[9] In fact, when he touches her breasts and feels her heart palpitations, he gets more and more excited: "This moves in him more rage and lesser pity / To make the breach and enter this sweet city" (468 – 69).

Noticeably, her white skin interspersed with "azure veins" (419) and her "coral lips" (420) against her "snow-white dimpled chin" (420) turn Tarquin into a sort of *corrida* bull, a vampire yearning for blood. Again, it is the vividness of Lucrece's blood that inflames him and the more she resists the more voracious he becomes: "the fault is thyne" (482) he utters while approaching her body.

Yet, before Lucrece's naked breasts, he suddenly grows reticent, "His rage of lust by gazing qualified. / Slaked, not suppressed" (424 – 25). We could interpret such a transitory 'sag' as a further, brief disequilibrium among humours which permits will to prevail upon elation or, more commonly, as performance anxiety. Notwithstanding this incapacity of containing the *plethora* of blood in his body any longer, he moves to action. The passage is extremely interesting at sentence

8 Belling, p. 116.

9 When Tarquin recalls their second encounter, it is her blushing that strikes his attention: "O how her fear did make her colour rise! / First red as roses that on lawn we lay, / Then white as lawn, the roses took away" (257 – 59).

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level because the agent of the action shifts from Tarquin to his veins, a sign that he has completely lost control over his humours:

> […] *they*, like straggling slaves for pillage fighting,
> […]
> Swell in *their* pride, the onset still expecting.
> Anon his beating heart, alarum striking,
> Gives the hot charge, and bids *them* do *their* liking.
> (428 – 34, emphasis mine)

In response, Lucrece's *veins*, assaulted by Tarquin's hand, abandon her breasts, "their round turrets" (441), to warn their governess of the imminent danger:

> They, must'ring to the quiet cabinet
> Where their dear governess and lady lies,
> Do tell her she is dreadfully beset,
> And fright her with confusion of their cries. (442 – 45)

It seems a battle of bloods fought through veins, a 'conflict' that might have been quite plausible for Elizabethan people, accustomed to the paradigm of imbalance of the humours. Lucrece tries to persuade him in the name of his royal blood – "By knighthood, gentry" (569) – in a scene that resembles Lavinia's attempt to persuade her rapists not to use violence against her. Both heroines display an outstanding rhetorical force which, unfortunately however, does not prevent the rape. Immediately after the violation, Tarquin faces a physiological reaction: he cools down and is immediately overwhelmed by regret – "Drunken desire must vomit his receipt" (703) – what we would call today the last phase of sexual intercourse, the refractory phase, wherein the 'object' of sexual desire must be somehow distanced and "all organs return to original color, position and size, sex flush disappears, heart rate, blood pressure & breathing return to normal".[10] Indeed, Tarquin's "hot desire converts to cold disdain" (691), and repentantly – "a heavy convertite" (743) – remissive, he leaves the scene.

Lucrece: "For me, I am the mistress of my fate"

After the rape, Lucrece instantly feels infected and poisoned: in the vain attempt to delete Tarquin's stain upon her body, "She, desperate, with her nails her flesh doth tear" (739), but she is desolately aware of the irreversibility of that 'stain.'

10 If we lay the stanzas under the microscope of modernity – admittedly risking having Shakespeare turn over in his grave – we can easily spot the four phases of sexual intercourse: excitement, *plateau*, orgasm and ultimately, the refractory phase. See URL: http://www.studystack.com/studytable- 40904.

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According to Galenic medicine, ejaculation was considered an act of release of blood pressure and semen was thought to contain concocted blood which rapidly spread through the woman's uterus, thus causing contamination of her blood.

'Receptacle' of Tarquin's blood, infected by his plethoric imbalance, Lucrece's tempered blood had been polluted with "a material and medically pathologized moral stain".[11] In compliance with Galenic physiology, though, phlebotomy[12] was rarely recommended in patients affected by *cacochymia*, since the operation could reduce the presence of healthy blood in the veins: "the most thinne bloud alone floweth out, the grosse thick bloud remaining still behind".[13]

Nevertheless, Lucrece decides that her blood must be disinfected, even at her own life's risk: "The remedy indeed to do me good / Is to let forth my foul defilèd blood" (1028–29). As Maus has argued: "The outrage seems real to her only insofar as it may be *seen* – thus she arranges to advertise it, assuming that the display of her bleeding body will constitute an immediately convincing proof of her violated innocence".[14] Lucrece intends to cure her humoral dyscrasia and not even her family's 'absolution' can make her change her mind:

> My stainèd blood to Tarquin I'll bequeath,
> Which by him tainted shall for him be spent,
> And as his due writ in my testament. (1181–83)

When her father and husband aver she has no sin to expiate, with a "joyless smile" (1711) she declares: "For me, I am the mistress of my fate" (1069), ultimately contradicting the fact that she is Collatine's property. Looking at the poem from a strictly physiological perspective, rather than consecrated to sacrifice (interestingly the word 'sacrifice' never occurs in the poem) she seems resolved on disinfecting her body, freeing her soul and satiating her vengeful desire.

The rationale behind this three-fold project is strongly defended and Lucrece's clinical assumption that her blood has become "gross" is soon demonstrated when she stabs herself and her blood,

> […] bubbling from her breast, it doth divide
> In two slow rivers, that the crimson blood
> Circles her body in on every side,

11 Belling, p. 118.

12 See also Peter Brain, *Galen on Bloodletting: a Study of the Origins, Development and Validity of his Opinions, with a Translation of the Three Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

13 Gyer in Belling, p. 120.

14 Katharine Eisaman Maus, 'Taking Tropes Seriously: Language and Violence in Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37 (1986), 66–82 (p. 80).

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> […]
> Some of her blood still pure and red remained,
> And some looked black, and that false Tarquin stained.
> About the mourning and congealèd face
> Of that black blood a wat'ry rigol goes,
> Which seems to weep upon the tainted place,
> And ever since, as pitying Lucrece's woes,
> Corrupted blood some watery token shows,
> And blood untainted still doth red abide,
> Blushing at that which is so putrefied. (1737 – 50)

Healthy red blood and black infected blood (today's venous and arterial blood) naturally separate and the corrupted blood displays clear signs of *cacochymia*, the "watery token" which we nowadays recognize as the *serum* that follows blood coagulation.

If we look at the knife as a surgical instrument, making an incision to purify her blood, Lucrece proves she is right and also succeeds in staining Tarquin's blood in return: the stain of guilt and his forthcoming banishment from Rome.[15]

Randy Phillis corroborates the hypothesis that Elizabethan readers could have read Lucrece's stain literally as "[…] something which would explain – physiologically – the necessity of Lucrece's death".[16] Certainly, in comparison to the way in which blood is 'treated' in *Titus Andronicus*, in *Lucrece* Shakespeare accords more importance to the physical processes that accompany Tarquin's rush of lust and Lucrece's suicide.

What happens in *Lucrece* – bleeding and bloodletting as a remedy to cleanse the body – clearly responds to the widespread scientific paradigms of early modern scientific thought and was unmistakably recognized as plausible by the Elizabethans, familiar with the issue of imbalance of humours related to physical and mental diseases.

15 For accounts of the Christian response to Lucrece's suicide and a sustained discussion on the issue of sacrifice, see Maus; D. C. Allen, 'Some Observations on *The Rape of Lucrece*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 15 (1962), 89 – 91; Roy W. Battenhouse, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Art and Christian Premises* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), and Arthur L. Little Jr., *Shakespeare Jungle Fever. National-Imperial Re-Visions of Race, Rape, and Sacrifice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

16 Randy Phillis, 'The Stained Blood of Rape: Elizabethan Medical Thought and Shakespeare's *Lucrece*', in *Shakespeare's Theories of Blood, Character, and Class*, ed. by Peter C. Rollins and Alan Smith, pp. 123 – 30 (p. 125).

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Titus Andronicus: a bloodless bloody tragedy?

Leaving Lucrece's "chaste blood so unjustly stainèd" (1836) behind and following the 'red line' that takes us to *Titus Andronicus*, the impression is that of blood that does not circulate, in a tragedy where the word 'vein' is never mentioned. If in *Lucrece*, as Belling notes, "Shakespeare's observation is clinically sound, suggesting some familiarity with the practice of haematoscopy",[17] in *Titus Andronicus*, on the contrary, blood constitutes a trope rather than a physiological image. The Bard seems to tinge the stage with red, like fake blood, using the word as an adjective rather than as a material substantive: Titus returns "Bleeding to Rome";[18] Tamora warns Titus not to stain his tomb with blood ("Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood" [1.1.119]); Aaron gives strength to his bellicose thought uttering the sentence: "Blood and revenge are hammering in my head" (2.2.39), and "drops of new-shed blood" (2.2.200) are seen in the "blood-drinking pit" (2.2.225) where Bassianus lays dead. We have a "bloody battleaxe" (3.1.169), "bloody wrongs" (1.1.144), "fell curs of bloody kind" (2.2.281), "Performers of […] heinous bloody deed" (4.1.80), "bloody villains" (4.2.18), a "bloody mind" (5.1.100), a "bloody murder" (5.2.37), and a "bloodstained face" (5.3.153). Yet, images are not drawn from Shakespeare's medical repertoire as in *The Rape of Lucrece* and no 'physiological justification' is given for the rape of Lavinia despite a reference by Tamora to her "spleenful sons" (2.2.191), the spleen being considered the hub of strong passions.

The arrival of the Barbarians in Rome certainly enhances a *subtle* process of contamination – Aaron's mistress Tamora being married to Bassianus and Lavinia being raped by the two Goths – that threatens the pure hereditary Roman bloodline, but this contamination is assumed rather than described.

Aaron's blood might be identified as the very source of contamination within the tragedy and some hints are given in this sense. His "cloudy melancholy" (2.2.33) might be interpreted as a physiological response to his cruelty and ferocious mind. As Hur suggests, according to the Galenic paradigms looming large in Renaissance England, melancholy was "linked to the planet Saturn, and phlegm was related to Venus".[19] This is confirmed to a certain extent by Aaron's utterance:

17 Belling, p. 22.

18 William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate, Arden edition (London: Thomson Learning, 2004), 1.1.34. All subsequent references are to this edition.

19 Myung-soo Hur, '"Vengeance Rot You All!" Blood-Oriented Revengers in *Titus Andronicus*', in *Shakespeare's Theories of Blood, Character, and Class*, ed. by Peter C. Rollins and Alan Smith, pp. 131–62 (p. 141).

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> Madam, though Venus govern your desires,
> Saturn is dominator over mine. (2.2.30 – 1)

Aaron's blood is doomed to infect the Roman bloodline through his sexual intercourse with Tamora, an infection made visible by the ruse of the black child onstage. As we have previously seen, semen was considered concocted blood. As Phillis argues, Aristotle describes semen as blood and in *Generation of Animals* the philosopher illustrates how the contaminated blood rested in the body of further generations recalling the episode of a woman at Elis "who had intercourse with a blackamoor; her daughter was not black, but her daughter's son was".[20]

Interestingly, a similar occurrence takes place in Shakespeare's tragedy when Aaron, in order to save his son's life and, presumably, to 'stain' the Roman hereditary bloodline with his own seal, intends to replace his black son, his "flesh and blood" (4.2.86) with a white infant born to a "countryman" of his (4. 2. 154):

> His wife but yesternight was brought to bed;
> His child is like to her, fair as you are. (4.2.154 – 55)

But Aaron also believes the reverse process to be true and calls his son 'royal', since generated by the *liaison* with the new-made Roman Empress Tamora. He warns the two Goths not to kill their own brother, since the infant, with his "seal stamped in his face" (4. 2. 129) was made "Of that self blood" (4. 2. 125) that gave life to them, and when threatened by Lucius, he utters the sentence: "Touch not the boy, he is of royal blood" (5.1.49).

A further and more 'visible' reference to blood is given in the scene in which Marcus finds Lavinia ravished and mutilated. Although no evidence is given of the corruption of her blood and the passage is overwhelmed by the lyricism of Marcus, light is indirectly shed on the purity and healthiness of Lavinia's blood:

> Alas, a crimson river of warm blood,
> Like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind,
> Doth rise and fall between thy rosed lips,
> Coming and going with thy honey breath.
> […]
> And notwithstanding all this loss of blood,
> As from a conduit with three issuing spouts,
> Yet do thy cheeks look red as Titan's face,
> Blushing to be encountered with a cloud. (2.3.22 – 32)

Lavinia's venous blood is crimson and warm, and bubbles powerfully from "three issuing spouts". Its consistency, colour and ampleness reveal features of

20 Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, quoted in Phillis, p. 128.

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what was considered healthy blood. In *A Treatise of Melancholie*, Timothy Bright describes pure and good blood as follows:

> The purest part which we call in comparison and in respect of the rest bloud, is temperate in qualitie, and moderate in substance, exceeding all the other parts in quantitie, if the bodie be of equal temper, made for nourishment of the most temperate parts, and ingendering of spirits.[21]

As Jonathan Bate notes, Shakespeare uses the verb "issuing" to refer to blood, employing a medical term for the "discharge of blood".[22] Lavinia's blood pressure surprises Marcus as a sign of health and robustness, and interestingly, we are not given further hints to detect a sign of 'decay' due to the sexual intercourse.

The risk of haemorrhage does not fall within the scope of this scene[23] and, as the plot unfolds, we are provided other images of blood and bleeding. Swearing revenge upon Tamora and her sons for the sake of his niece Lavinia, Marcus utters one of the many metaphors that in the tragedy turn into reality[24] and swears: "Mortal revenge upon these traitorous Goths, / And see their blood, or die with this reproach" (4.1.93 – 4). The Andronici's revenge is literally written in "bloody lines" (5.2.14) as apparently maddened by grief Titus had cut his arm to write letters with his own blood, a scene rarely shown onstage but outstandingly performed in Julie Taymor's 1999 gory film where he lies in a bathtub filled with his own blood.

When he acts out a suitable torture for the two Goths, hanging them and cutting their throats in order to make a *pastiche* to feed their mother, Titus asks Lavinia to hold their "guilty blood" (5. 2. 183) in a reverse process compared to *The Rape of Lucrece* where it is the blood of Lucrece that is to be seen. In *Titus*, we actually see the blood of the contaminators but no visual description accompanies the scene which seems to be overwhelmed by a religious ritualistic flavour rather than by a scientific need to show their blood's pollution. Titus asks Lavinia to hold the basin that contains the villains' blood: "Lavinia, come, / Receive the blood" (5.2.196 – 97) and Lavinia, as Belling suggests, becomes at once "the recipient of a stain and the site of its purification",[25] although her destiny is that of being killed by her father's hand in the final blood-curdling

21 Timothy Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie*, quoted in Smith, p. 20.
22 Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate, p. 188, n. 30.
23 There is an indirect reference to the dangers of blood loss in the scene in which Aaron asks for Titus's hand in order to rescue his sons and Lucius offers to sacrifice his own: "[…] My hand will serve the turn. / My youth can better spare my blood than you" (3.1.165 – 66).
24 For a detailed analysis of the way metaphors are used in *Titus Andronicus*, see Maus.
25 Belling, p. 26.

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banquet which perhaps can be read as a sort of 'therapeutic' bloodletting, that metaphorically – "as a means to an end in the Bard's mastery hands"[26] – cleanses Rome's contaminated body and erases Lavinia's "shame" (5.3.45), making Rome's "broken limbs again into one body" (5.3.71).

Finally, as in *The Rape of Lucrece*, a disrupted Rome is brought together again through the sacrifice of a woman and Shakespeare consents to the diseased body of Rome being purified and granted a new life. As Arthur Little has argued, "Rome finally kills Lucrece not because her body is polluted but because her mind is pure" and "Lavinia dies not as the (raped) body stolen by the Goths and the Moor but as Rome's sacrificial property".[27]

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, however, the process of piercing the body in order to purge it is portrayed as a real operation carried out by a valiant and fearless Lucrece, whilst in *Titus Andronicus* it maintains a more abstract/symbolical form despite the many dead bodies on stage. Indeed, the death of the two women is necessary to disinfect Rome's (political) body and to defend the Roman bloodline.

> To maintain the purity of Roman blood and the integrity of Roman *virtus*, the female body, when identified as a point of pathological vulnerability, must be excised.[28]

The female body becomes the site of a process of purification that ultimately deletes both the stain and the woman's body. Whereas in *Lucrece* the narrative is interspersed with physiological details about the deletion of both Tarquin's and Lucrece's polluted bodies, in *Titus* the physiological processes are eventually overlooked and major emphasis is given to the metaphorical implication envisaged in the deletion of impurity from Rome through – among others – Lavinia's execution.

In order to cool down the 'shameless' body of the rapist and the 'shameful' body of the raped, a therapeutic haemorrhage is necessary. The body is partitioned in the name of Roman *virtus* in *Titus Andronicus* and in the name of modesty in *The Rape of Lucrece*. In both cases, Shakespeare uses the image of the two classical heroines to serve his narrative and draws on the fall of the Roman ladies to shed light on Rome's endangered 'pathogenic conditions.' Women become once again the texts, the white, virgin canvas – their skin being made of alabaster – on which to inscribe the rape, on which to carve the contaminators' names.

26 Fu, p. 77.
27 Little, p. 57.
28 Belling, p. 127.

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Paola Faini

Cleopatra's Corporeal Language

How did visual elements help facilitate Shakespeare's subjective desire to enrich the rhetorical potential of his language? And how did the interweaving of lexis and vision contribute to the drawing up of a new cultural pattern during the Renaissance? Though the rapid increase in new words in the sixteenth century was mainly caused by the need to express new ideas eloquently in English (and no longer in Latin), far from being circumscribed to the field of science, this need was the result of a great expansion in knowledge in general. Within this perspective, the innovative force of the vernacular in *Antony and Cleopatra* clearly illustrates how the Renaissance tradition in visual arts participated in creating a consciously expressive lexis. In addition to establishing its metaphorical and symbolic significance, this lexis enhanced a new vision of man and, specifically in Cleopatra's speeches, it contributed to the effectiveness of what may be defined her 'corporeal' or 'organic' language.

The Icon, from Classical Antiquity to the Renaissance

Based on a limited number of references in classical documents – Appian, Cassius Dio, Caesar's *Civil War* and *Alexandrine War* – the historical figure of Cleopatra finds in Plutarch's *Life of Antony* the most well-known and extensive description. In depicting the Egyptian queen, Plutarch chose to emphasize Cleopatra's attraction rather than sing the praises of her beauty by entering into an accurate description of her physical features. Nonetheless, it was inevitably on these latter details that the visual arts concentrated throughout the following centuries. Indeed, in classical antiquity, statues, busts, and images on coins all embodied Plutarch's description and gave evidence of how historical figures, such as Alexander the Great, and Egyptian iconography were the basic outline for Cleopatra and her self-presentation,[1] be it realistic or idealistic. Later in time,

1 An interesting historical documentation is to be found in *Kleopatra und die Caesaren. Katalog*

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from the Middle Ages onward, Cleopatra's *Nachleben* was perpetuated in paintings as well as in literary texts.

In Plutarch's *Life of Antony* the Roman messenger (well trained in 'decrypting' human nature) who had been "sent unto Cleopatra", "throughly considered her beawtie, the excellent grace and sweetnesse of her tongue".[2] A grace of which Cleopatra was fully conscious, so that she "trusted […] in her selfe, and in the charmes and inchauntment of her passing beawtie and grace" (p. 274). Plutarch realistically reports it as follows:

> Now her beawtie […] was not so passing, as unmatchable of other women, nor yet suche, as upon present viewe did enamor men with her: but so sweete was her companie and conversacion, that a man could not possiblie but be taken. And besides her beawtie, the good grace she had to talke and discourse, her curteous nature that tempered her words and dedes was a spurre that pricked to the quick. Furthermore, besides all these, her voyce and words were marvelous pleasant: for her tongue was an instrument of musicke […]. (p. 275)

By shifting the focus from the queen's physical beauty to the attraction of her charming voice and witty discourse, Plutarch set a link between vision and words, foreshadowing Shakespeare's dramatic 'translation' of Cleopatra's iconic physical presence into a language that employed, either directly or metaphorically, the words of the body.

Beauty visualized

During the sixteenth century, the new appreciation of physicality was reflected in the arts by a generous yield of works dealing with feminine (but not only feminine) bodies: countless drawings, engravings and paintings demonstrated how the response to modern science had become manifest in the Renaissance depiction of the human body, no longer seen as the receptacle of sin, and no longer concealed under rich and heavy garments. Cleopatra's body also offered itself to vision. Indeed, her direct gaze, at once impudent and innocent, stared at the onlooker, catching the attention.

In reconstructing her likeness and re-enacting her final moments, artists

einer Ausstellung des Bucerius Kunst Forums, Hamburg, ed. by Bernard Andreae and Karin Rhein (München: Hirmer Verlag, 2006).

2 *Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes translated by Sir Thomas North* (1579): *The Life of Marcus Antonius*, in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. by Geoffrey Bullough, 8 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957–75), v: *The Roman Plays. Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus* (1964), p. 273. All references are to this edition and are given in the text after quotations.

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relied more on the myth and on the medieval iconography than on the evocative accounts found in classical texts. Plutarch's terse style made no concession to an imaginative tale: "Some report that this Aspicke was brought unto her in the basket with figs [...] And so, her arme being naked, she put it to the Aspicke to be bitten" (p. 316). But this was not the only version of her death, in fact, "Other say againe, she kept it in a boxe, and that she did pricke and thrust it with a spindell of golde, so that the Aspicke being angerd withall, lept out with great furie, and bitte her in the arme" (p. 316).

What painters and sculptors handed down is quite a different account. Omitting the historian's realistic tale, they refashioned Cleopatra's final moments to offer the inviting vision of her naked body. The traditional tale of her death (but a rather uncertain tradition it was if Plutarch advised, "Howbeit fewe can tell the troth", p. 316) was overshadowed by the more vivid, though fictional, scene of an asp ready to bite not Cleopatra's arm but her nipple.[3] And ready the asp was for Shakespeare's Cleopatra: "Dost thou not see my baby at my breast, / That sucks the nurse asleep?".[4] Though the stage direction recovers Plutarch's tale and informs that Cleopatra "applies another asp to her arm", the symbolic aspect prevails: the asp is at once taking the milk of life, mortal life, and giving eternal life in exchange.

It is the same symbolic allusion that one finds in the work of an anonymous French miniaturist, dating back to the first half of the fifteenth century:[5] fully dressed but for the upper part of the body, Cleopatra is still a flat figure, the whole picture conforming to the traditional aesthetic taste in the precise delineation of features and in the elaborate treatment of accessories. Nonetheless, the partial nudity of her body indicates the visual transition to the Renaissance. Here, as well as in other coeval paintings, each of Cleopatra's strong and almost coarse hands holds a serpent which is dangerously ready to nip her breasts. In this stylized death scene the painter does not focus on Cleopatra alone, she does not dominate the painting, but rather has to share its space with a dying Antony, whose blood is spurting from his heart and staining his sword. The scene is

3 This detail does not comply with the tradition, according to which Caesar "in his triumphe [...] caried Cleopatraes image, with an Aspick byting of her arme" (p. 316). Quite soon, in fact, iconography appropriated her body and chose to focus the onlooker's attention on a more symbolic (and also more tempting) part of the anatomy.

4 William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. by M. R. Ridley, Arden edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 5.2.308–309. All references are to this edition.

5 Unfortunately, it has not been possible to obtain permission to reproduce all the images discussed in this paper. I have therefore indicated, whenever possible, a webpage where the image can be viewed. See, here, *The Death of Cleopatra*, Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlungen, URL :http:// thebrain.blogli.co.il/archives/111. The same miniature is found in a French translation of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* (British Library, MS Royal 14 E.V).

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unquestionably a picturesque refashioning of what Plutarch wrote, that is: "Therewithall he [Antonius] tooke his sword, and thrust it into his bellie, and so felle down upon a litle bed, the wounde he had killed him not presently, for the blood stinted a litle when he was layed […]" (p. 309).

Around 1520, the German engraver Augustin Hirschvogel sketched a body whose anatomy is rudimentary:[6] Cleopatra lies naked, and her barely harmonious forms evoke both the attitude of the coeval *Naiad at the Fountain* by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1518, Museum of Fine Arts, Leipzig),[7] and the allegory *Woman with Mirror and Snake (Prudence)* by Hans Baldung (1529, Alte Pinakothek, Munich). In Hirschvogel's engraving Cleopatra's attitude would suggest the sensuality of Titian's reclining Venuses, but unlike them she stares sidelong at the onlooker, and her strong hand does not hold flowers, but clenches the serpent's head whilst bringing it to her breast. What characterizes these and other 'primitive' portrayals[8] is a dark line that isolates the body, and makes it stand out from its background, so that it acquires a somewhat codified stance.

As the Renaissance triumphant body imposed its presence and became the crucial place of a new dynamic tension, the elementariness of the early paintings and line drawings gave way to a more mature iconicity. Around 1550, an anonymous Flemish artist portrayed Cleopatra as a second Eve in the garden,[9] with an asp instead of an apple in her hand. A grace hitherto unknown softens her standing, but not still, body; the asp's tail curls bracelet-like around her wrist and its head sticks out of her clenched hand. Her lips are parted in a faint smile, or as if they were ready to utter some words. Her eyes gaze at the snake as if contemplating the imminent immortality it was believed to give. Despite her open eyes and parted lips, Cleopatra's stance suggests the mystical aspiration to a deeper perception that Walter Pater saw in exactly the opposite attitude: "shut one's lips, brooding on what cannot be uttered, […] shutting the eyes, that one may see the more, inwardly".[10] The woman in the portrait faces open-eyed the mystic moment of transition from mortal life to eternity.

In a drawing by Francesco Raibolini, known as 'Il Francia' (early sixteenth century), Cleopatra's right hand is stretched out in a gesture of power and majesty, partly shading the slight touch of fear that dims her expressive face, her

6 URL: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hirschvogel_Cleopatra.jpg.

7 The painting is considered to be the 'translation' of a well-known Renaissance model, Giorgione's *Venus*.

8 Hans Baldung's *The Original Sin* (woodcut, 1519) and Albrecht Durer's *Adam and Eve* (drawing, 1504) offer the same visual effect.

9 The presence of the snake, despite its different position, determines the overlapping of Eve's and Cleopatra's figures. Its iconic meaning is also different: as a Christian symbol it represents 'venom' and 'evil'; as an Egyptian, it embodies 'royalty', 'dominion' and 'power' (URL: http://www.isidore-of-seville.com).

10 Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 24.

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eyes and lips. Her left hand is holding the aggressive asp tight, as if a trace, a remnant of vital force were restraining its forward spring. Far from being unusual, this posture is found, among other examples, in Cristoforo Stati's *Cleopatra* (second half of the sixteenth century), where the stretched out movement is made by the left hand.[11]

The artistry of Giampietrino lent Cleopatra's beauty the charm of relaxed abandon. In one of his paintings, dating back to the first half of the sixteenth century,[12] a woman – Cleopatra – is preparing for death as if she were preparing to meet her lover: languid eyes and a mysterious smile on her lips, and soft hands that suggest loving caresses whilst opening the basket of figs or holding the asp as if it were a flower. The serpent's bite is going to assure her royal body eternal life, and her looks, her gaze and her smile reveal that her imminent death is acknowledged and accepted as a rite of passage from the sublunary mortal life to a life where nothing can menace her perfect charms and her deepest feelings.

These few examples undoubtedly support the suggestion that it is precisely in Cleopatra's hands, on her lips, in her eyes that physicality finds its full expression.[13] Who could not perceive such charming corporeity? Who could ever forget such attracting features? Whichever painting one looks at, Cleopatra's eyes, lips and hands catch the attention, stimulate the interest in the body, and work like a charm.[14]

It is not by chance, then, that a significant proportion of this physical materialism was transferred into Shakespeare's language, so much so that Cleopatra's speech is comprised of lexical choices which not only provide an idea or an image but at the same time give a sense of actual material corporeity, of something tangible, almost sculptural in form and effect.

Visual Corporeity and Corporeal Language

The convincing impact of Cleopatra's specific lexical choices which make up her corporeal language relies on quality rather than on quantity. If we compile a list of these words, we find that their occurrence is fit for the purpose but never excessive: there are seven occurrences for *lips*, six for *hand* or *hands,* and five for *eyes.* More words referring to parts of the body can be included in the list: *heart*

11 Born near Rome in 1556, Cristoforo Stati was a sculptor and restorer imbued with classical culture.

12 URL: http://www.flickr.com/photos/27259819@N05/2802737312/.

13 The relevance of these details is indisputable, despite the different perception of bodily harmony that characterizes Northern and Italian art.

14 Cleopatra's posture became an icon, as Piero di Cosimo's *Portrait of Simonetta Vespucci* (*c.* 1480, Musée Condé, Chantilly) shows.

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and *head*, for instance, with four occurrences, or *blood* and *tongue*, with three. What grants these items their prominence is their collocation, not their frequency.

In this self-contained catalogue of words, the parsimonious use Cleopatra makes of the word *heart* is almost surprising, in particular if compared to the nineteen occurrences of the same word in Antony's speeches. Since the organs were considered to be the seat of all emotional reactions, and since Cleopatra's organic language is the medium to voice her sensibility, does this imply that she is less emotionally involved than Antony, whose language in this case is significantly more organic than hers? If her bouts of passionate fury are the assertion of her royal state, her more intimate emotional life needs to find a different form of expression: relying on terms indicating parts of the body, she bestows on words an almost physical relevance, so that her inner feelings can take material shape.[15]

Lips, eyes and hands

The conspicuous details (*lips*, *eyes* and *hands*) characterizing Renaissance portrayals of Cleopatra reverberate in the words of the body that significantly, though sparingly, make up her lines. For, regardless of the vision one perceives, a correspondence can be found in Cleopatra's lexical choices, the use she makes of them echoing the peculiar idea of harmony that characterized Northern art. German painting,[16] in particular, exemplified how the sense of order and the idealistic perfection of the Italian Renaissance had given way to a less perfect but more realistic approach: the clearly defined details which submitted to the imposed order in Italian art were substituted by the casualness of nature that refused any static ideal in drawing a body whose apparent lack of harmony suggested an aggregation of various parts. There ensued a different concept of harmony, where details found their relevance in themselves: they could be observed and become the focal point, giving an effect of extraordinary and realistic force to the portrayal of the body as a whole.[17] This same principle seems to characterize Cleopatra's speeches, where the symbolic or metaphorical im-

15 This sort of self-restraint may partly derive from the fact that Cleopatra had to be acted by a boy.

16 The link between German painting and English culture, and hence the influence of German sensibility, may be said to date back to the arrival in England of Hans Holbein the Younger during the reign of Henry VIII.

17 Heinrich Wölfflin's *Die Kunst der Renaissance: Italien und das Deutsche Formgefühl* (Munich: F. Bruckman, 1931) illustrates the contrasting nature of the Italian and the German viewpoint.

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plication of the words of the body is intensified by their collocation, thus strengthening the whole sentence. In the dramatic perspective, the act is expressed by the limb performing it, its gestural character is emphasized by vision and meaning at once. Some examples will illustrate the use of these meaningful tropes.

"Eternity was in our lips, and eyes, / Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor / But was a race of heaven" (1.3.35 – 7). The emphatic position of the word *eternity* casts a new light on the words *lips* and *eyes*, and sets their value. What Cleopatra sees – and what she suggests – is their implicit and innermost meaning, the spiritual and life-giving power of the sun gods, whose symbol was the eye, and the devouring aspect of the Great Mother. Thus they become explicit: eyes and lips express the indissoluble union of body and soul, they are both the organ and what the organ means, the spiritual life that gives sense to the material aspect. This perfect moment throws light on other details: their brows' bent, and all other parts of their body become single limbs and at once elements of a naturally harmonious whole.

The force of Cleopatra's visual language increases in scene 5 of Act 1, where a rather long speech, seemingly focusing on Antony, quickly shifts attention onto the speaker, i. e. Cleopatra herself:

> […] Now I feed myself
> With most delicious poison. Think on me,
> That I am with Phoebus' amorous pinches black,
> And wrinkled deep in time. […]
> […] I was
> A morsel for a monarch: and great Pompey
> Would stand and make his eyes grow in my brow,
> There would he anchor his aspect, and die
> With looking on his life. (1.5.26 – 34)

The language of the body is now at work, every single expression is infused with carnal sensuality: the gentle image conveyed by the word *lip* acquires a much more dramatic force when reference to the *mouth* starts to dominate her speech, though indirectly (*I feed myself / I was a morsel*), and *hunger* is the only suitable term with which to define Pompey's attitude. Words are brushstrokes of meaning, and flashes of Cleopatra's mouth, of her face, of Pompey's greedy eyes staring at her are their vivid outcome.[18]

In 2.5.29 – 30, "A hand that kings have lipp'd, and trembled kissing", the verb *lip* is used significantly. Besides its semantic value (*to touch with the lips*; *to utter in a murmur*; and of course its poetic meaning *to kiss*), *to lip* implies more than

18 Also the reference to *food* in 2.5.1 – 2, "Give me some music – music, moody food / Of us that trade in love" inevitably brings to mind the vivid image of the *mouth*.

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an abstract action, that which in the following sentence is conveyed by the verb *kiss*. Now it is the organ that carries out the function,[19] and it is thus placed in a sort of historical perspective: the sense of eternity that openly characterizes the word *lip* in Act 1, scene 3, is now conveyed by the repetition of the action, hinted at by the plural subject *kings*, as well as by the iterative quality of the present perfect. In the same line, the historical perspective also characterizes the word *hand:* isolated from the rest of the body, Cleopatra's hand becomes an object of worship, recalling the western tradition of the healing touch that was the unquestionable prerogative and gift of kings. And yet, it also suggests the instinctive reference to the hand of the Egyptians that depicted the union of fire and water, of male and female.

A similar image is conveyed twice in scene 13 of Act 3, but from two different points of view. At first Cleopatra addresses the messenger, announcing her homage (and a cold, indifferent homage at that) to Octavius Caesar: "Say to great Caesar this: in deputation: / I kiss his conquering hand" (3.13.74 – 5). But that coldness changes into passionate submission when she is the one who is paid the homage: "Your Caesar's father oft, […] / Bestow'd his lips on that unworthy place, / As it rain'd kisses" (3.13.82 – 5). The word *lips* – a direct object – is connected both to the image of power and to the force of a natural phenomenon (*it rained kisses*): Caesar himself – the power and the glory personified – is said to have repeatedly paid homage to Cleopatra's hand. Despite, or on account of, her seeming self-depreciation, the warm touch of Caesar's lips heats and enlivens "that unworthy place" so that the organ – Cleopatra's hand – acquires a life of its own, and at once it exalts the body and the being it belongs to.

In scene 15 of Act 4, welcoming in her arms a dying Antony, Cleopatra has to acknowledge the limited power of her lips: "Die when thou hast liv'd, / Quicken with kissing: had my lips that power, / Thus would I wear them out" (4.15.38 – 40). Nonetheless, what sounds like an understatement acts by contrast, so that the final effect is once more the exaltation of the power of this organ, through which death and life are bestowed, almost reflecting the well-known symbolism of the mouth as the door to heaven and to hell.

The word *lip*, which is discreetly used only once in each of the first four acts, is used three times in Act 5, scene 2, in slightly more than ten lines:

> […] Now no more
> The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip. (5.2.280 – 81)
>
> Come then, and take the last warmth of my lips. (5.2.290)
>
> Have I the aspic in my lips? (5.2.292)

19 In 1.3.96 – 7, the use of the verb *to eye* has a similar value: "[…] my becomings kill me when they do not / Eye well to you".

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No more and *last* fix a temporal limit in the first and second quotation, announcing death through actions that involve the word *lip(s)*. Creating a striking contrast with what she said in Act 1, scene 3 ("Eternity was in our lips, and eyes"), this temporal limit takes on the ghastly appearance of death in the final metaphor, where the connection of *aspic* and *lips* suggests a metamorphosis that returns to the ideal "eternity" that had impressed its seal on Cleopatra's lips. A syntactic link is established among three elements: the subject (*I*, Cleopatra), the direct object (the *aspic*) and the adverbial (*in my lips*). The juxtaposition of two images, *aspic* and *lips*, recollects *Ouroboros,* the serpent with its tail in its mouth, the symbol of the beginning and the end, that closes the circle and substantiates the material dialectics of life and death, with its perpetual and mysterious transmutation from life to death and from death to life, from the material body to its symbolic metamorphosis, as if to say that nothing perishes, it just transmutes.

The visual icon has found its language and has given the myth a new tool to perpetuate its existence. But, moreover, and regardless of whether or to what extent consciously, the force of this corporeal language contributed a new perspective to the newly discovered object of scientific research and human curiosity in the Renaissance period, the body.

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Simona Corso

What Calphurnia knew. *Julius Caesar* and the Language of Dreams

I

When Joseph L. Mankiewicz, the director of *Julius Caesar* (1953), set out to adapt Calphurnia's notorious dream for the big screen, he could rely not only on Shakespeare's play, but also on three and a half centuries of stage adaptations, on the more recent tradition of cinematic nightmares and, last but not least, on a new, post-Freudian concern with dreams, nightmares and the interpretation of dreams.

In Mankiewicz's film we see Calphurnia, on the fatal morning before Caesar's death, tossing in her sleep and suddenly shouting, "They murdered Caesar, they murdered Caesar!". The next scene shows us husband and wife in animated conversation on a terrace overlooking Rome. Calphurnia implores Caesar not to go to the Capitol and, in order to dissuade him, she lists the previous night's ominous portents. "Caesar shall forth" – her husband replies – "The things that threatened me never looked but on my back; when they shall see the face of Caesar, they are vanished". And he quickly adds, "Cowards die many times before their deaths. The valiant never taste of death but once. Of all the wonders that I yet have heard, it seems to me most strange that men should fear, seeing that death, a necessary end, will come when it will come". To which Calpurnia responds, "Your wisdom is consumed in confidence. Do not go forth today: call it my fear that keeps you in the house, and not your own".

Mankiewicz – like Shakespeare – does not show us the moment in which Calphurnia describes the dream to her husband. As in Shakespeare's play, the audience finds out from Caesar himself, when he repeats Calphurnia's words to Decius, whose famous response ("This dream is all amiss interpreted. It was a vision fair and fortunate") puts an end to the quarrel between husband and wife. During the rest of the scene, Calphurnia does not speak, but remains in silence, slightly apart from the other actors.

Mankiewicz's Calphurnia is given more space than Shakespeare's, just as Shakespeare's Calphurnia is more prominent than Plutarch's. The camera takes

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us to her bedroom, where we are present at the secret moment of nocturnal terror, and it stays with her during much of the following scene – the arrival of Decius, followed by other conspirators and finally by Antony – hypnotically drawn to her face, capturing the anxiety of her expressions and the loneliness of the neglected dreamer. While Caesar is surrounded by 'friends' whose flattery all too quickly dispels the fears raised by his wife, Calphurnia withdraws from the scene, both literally and metaphorically. We see her walk away from her husband and turn her back to the bedroom, while Caesar and his acolytes gather on the terrace above Rome – the public space from which Calphurnia has been banned. After a subjective shot of the group of men in conversation, framed by the view of Rome's cityscape, Calphurnia reappears, her face now transformed by anguish. With a single, majestic gesture she closes the two large wings of the bedroom door behind her.

The director's blatant use of space emphasizes the abyss between Calphurnia's nocturnal world – the realm of portentous dreams, symbols, fears, and traces of the divine – and the sunlit domain of men: a world of ambition (Caesar) and deceit (Decius) disguised as rationality.

Mankiewicz's dialogues faithfully reproduce Shakespeare's text, but the screen highlights the importance of Calphurnia's dream. The sequence opens and closes in her bedroom – a room which, incidentally, frames Calphurnia's figure throughout the entire episode. Cinematic framing also privileges the woman's point of view. Caesar's encounter with the conspirators is seen through her eyes – eyes that also see while dreaming. The final part of the episode (Calphurnia shuts the doors and locks herself into the bedroom) is a scene of great impact, much repeated throughout the history of cinema: the wings of the closing door split the screen in half, violently separating Calphurnia's psychic realm from the outside world that she failed to change, but also, more trivially, preparing the spectator for the imminent catastrophe.

Mankiewicz shows us Calphurnia in a modern guise, according to cinematographic iconography: a woman haunted by nightmares and confined as much to her bedroom as to her mental universe. The other dreamer (the soothsayer), by contrast, is represented in a classical manner as blind. Neither Plutarch nor Shakespeare mention the seer's blindness, but for Mankiewicz he is a blind old man. Instead of 'simplifying' the story by bringing it up to date – as in the case of the classical heroine represented, by typically cinematographic means, as a modern, troubled dreamer – the director here opts for complication: the tradition he is alluding to is that of classical iconography, according to which the soothsayer must be blind.

Mankiewicz's decision in these two instances exemplifies the endless possibilities available to the director (or playwright) who decides to represent, rewrite or adapt for the big screen a text written in another epoch: he or she can

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move freely between readings of the original text, memories of other works, the audience's expectations, filmic conventions, shared modes of perception. Mankiewicz's Calphurnia thus combines very different features: she is the classical heroine haunted by prophetic dreams (a recurrent figure from Penelope onwards), the enigmatic and intense woman of Shakespeare's imagination, the docile housewife of 1950's American cinema, but also the modern, neurotic, post-Freudian female, whose dreams are being ignored.

II

Mankiewicz's representation of the famous dream-scene reminds us of the historical and cultural specificity of every representation, especially when the represented object is a dream, a fragment of psychic life.

Is it possible then, in 1953, to narrate dreams like they were narrated in 1599 or during the second century AD? In her essay 'The "Candy-Colored Clown": Reading Early Modern Dreams', Kathleen McLuskie considers a closely related question. Her comparison between the representation of dreams in a 1986 film (David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*) and that in several early modern texts (two Shakespearean comedies, *The Duchess of Malfi*, Archbishop Laud's diary) leads her to the conclusion that while the categories of dream interpretation have changed since the seventeenth century, the cultural references associated with dream narrative – and the specific knowledge expected from the reader – have remained of equal complexity:

> In its complex intertextuality and its play with vulgar Freudianism, *Blue Velvet* seems very much of its time. Yet the range of cultural reference which every spectator must bring to this film offers a model of the complexities required to provide an adequate account of dreams in earlier cultures. Lynch is able to play with images of dreaming since he is making films in a long tradition which associates films with dreaming, and which uses dreams and dream sequences as a part of the language of the cinematic 'dream factory'. Reading dreams in early modern culture requires a similar attention to the connections between dreams and theatre, to the available models for the interpretation of dreams, and to the ways in which this cultural raw material contributes to the development of a dramatic and theatrical language of representation.[1]

1 Kathleen McLuskie, 'The "Candy-Colored Clown": Reading Early Modern Dreams', in *Reading Dreams. The Interpretation of Dreams from Chaucer to Shakespeare* [1999], ed. by Peter Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 147 – 67 (p. 149).

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According to Artemidorus of Daldis (second century AD) – whose authority on dreams was uncontested in seventeenth century England – dreams reflect both the dreamer's unique character traits and the culture to which she or he belongs. As a result, the interpretation of dreams must always pay attention to both factors.[2] In Shakespeare's theatre, we find a similar, twofold awareness. Whenever he represents a dream, Shakespeare shows great consideration for the dreamer's personal experience, but also a profound awareness of the time-honoured tradition of theoretical writings on dream, which he reads through Chaucer, contemporary scientific treatises, collections of popular tales and humorous pamphlets like Thomas Nashe's, and which links him to Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Artemidorus.

At the end of the sixteenth century, English reflections on dream were largely indebted to classical tradition. Artemidorus's influential treatise – arguably the most systematic work of dream analysis to have survived from the classical period – was widely available in Latin, Italian, French and German. The first English translation (from a French translation of the original Latin), edited by Robert Wood, appeared in 1606 with the title *The Judgement or Exposition of Dreams*. According to S. R. F. Price, it was re-printed twenty-four times before 1740.[3]

During the Middle Ages, Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (from the sixth book of *De re publica*) had provided an equally important source of inspiration and knowledge for dream enthusiasts. Its popularity was at least partly due to Macrobius's detailed commentary (around 400 AD), which also introduced medieval thinkers to Artemidorus's extremely influential classification of dreams – a system of categorization which soon became the basis for most medieval and Renaissance theories of dreaming.[4] From 1577, Cicero's *Somnium*

2 Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica. The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. by R. J. White (Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1975), book I, § 8, p. 21. Further references to Artemidorus's text are to this edition. For a discussion of the relation between subjectivity and cultural codes in dream analysis see Katharine Hodgkin, 'Dreaming Meanings. Some Early Modern Dream Thoughts', in *Reading the Early Modern Dream. The Terrors of the Night,* ed. by Katharine Hodgkin, Michelle O'Callaghan and S. J. Wiseman (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 109–24 (pp. 109–11).

3 S. R. F. Price, 'The Future of Dreams: From Freud to Artemidorus', *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), 3–37 (p. 32).

4 According to Artemidorus (book I, § 1, p. 14) there are two types of dreams: *oneiros* or prophetic dream, and *enhupnion* or the dream that is generated by the day's cares and preoccupations – a complex set of stimuli which Freud will subsequently call 'day-residue'. In Artemidorus's system only dreams of the former type are noteworthy. Drawing on Artemidorus's classification, Macrobius classifies dreams under five categories: *somnium* (enigmatic), *visio* (prophetic), *oraculum* (oracular), *insomnium* (nightmare), and *visum* (apparition). See Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. by William H. Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), pp. 87–8.

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Scipionis could also be read in Thomas Newton's English translation, in *Fowre Severall Treatises of M. Tullius Cicero.*

Alongside these classical models, there were many popular collections of dream-narratives, which Peter Holland divides into four categories: "chance-books often used with psalters, physiological dreambooks defining dreams as indications of physiological ailments, dream-lunars which […] interpreted dreams differently according to the day of the lunar month and hence the phase of the moon, and alphabetical dreambooks".[5] This fourth category also included *Somnia Danielis*, a collection of dream-topics in alphabetical order, arguably the most renowned medieval guide to dream interpretation, in use until the sixteenth century.

Models such as these were of great interest to Thomas Hill, the author of a celebrated booklet – *The Most Pleasaunte Arte of The Interpretacion of Dreames* (1576) – which in the late sixteenth century became a cornerstone of the science of dreams.[6] Combining received ideas, but lacking in originality, Hill's study was fiercely attacked by Reginald Scot in his *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), "[…] it is time vainelie emploied, to studie about the interpretation of dreames. He that list to see the follie and the vanitie thereof, maie read a vaine treatise, set out by Thomas Hill, Londoner".[7] Scot's criticism reminds us of the importance of the Renaissance re-discovery of Aristotle's secular and physiological theory of dreaming,[8] but it also suggests that in 1584 Hill's booklet was still considered the last word on oneiromancy.

Alongside this rich canon of dream theories, there existed an equally abundant tradition of dream narratives (from the Bible to Homer, from Sophocles to Virgil, from Dante to Chaucer), which often used dreams as a narrative frame for the presentation of new and complex ideas. In his plays, Shakespeare engages freely with this eminent tradition of religious, philosophical, literary and scientific enquiry on dreams, which is explored and transformed by his creative imagination. *Julius Caesar* – the great tragedy of dreams, which looks back on Roman history through the works of a Greek historian translated by an English

5 Peter Holland, 'Introduction' [1994], in William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Peter Holland, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1–117 (p. 8).

6 The date of Hill's treatise is problematic. See Peter Holland, '"The Interpretation of Dreams" in the Renaissance', in *Reading Dreams*, ed. by Peter Brown, pp. 125–46 (p. 129, note 10).

7 Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: W. Brome, 1584), book X, chapter IV, p. 180.

8 Aristotle's three essays on dreams ('On Sleep and Waking', 'On Dreams', and 'On Prophecy in Sleep', included in *Parva Naturalia*) represent, according to Freud, "the first work to treat the dream as an object of psychology". Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* [1899], trans. by Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 7.

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humanist – offers us an interesting illustration of this process of creative transformation.

III

In her influential study of dreams in Shakespeare, Marjorie Garber notes that "much of the plot of *Julius Caesar* […] is shaped by the device of the predictive dream or sign".[9] Throughout the play, prophecies, dreams and omens abound, motivating the characters' actions and defining their thoughts, revealing their states of mind and their views of the world. Much of the tragedy stems from the fact that these signs are systematically ignored. Already in the first act, we encounter one such instance of fatal disregard:

CAESAR Who is it in the press that calls on me?
I hear a tongue shriller than all the music
Cry 'Caesar!' Speak. Caesar is turned to hear.

SOOTHSAYER Beware the ides of March.

CAESAR What man is that?

BRUTUS A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.

CAESAR Set him before me; let me see his face.

CASSIUS Fellow, come from the throng; look upon Caesar.

CAESAR What say'st thou to me now? Speak once again.

SOOTHSAYER Beware the ides of March.

CAESAR He is a dreamer. Let us leave him. Pass.
(1.2.15 – 24)[10]

Caesar's first encounter with the soothsayer – an episode which can also be found in Thomas North's translation of Plutarch[11] – reveals a crucial assumption of Shakespeare's plot: human intellect is too feeble to make sense of reality. Despite his efforts to listen ("Caesar is turned to hear"), observe ("let me see his

9 Marjorie Garber, *Dream in Shakespeare. From Metaphor to Metamorphosis* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 48.

10 Quotations from the plays are from *The Arden Shakespeare, Complete Works*, ed. by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1998).

11 Plutarch, 'The Life of Julius Caesar', in *Shakespeare's Plutarch. The Lives of Julius Caesar, Brutus, Marcus Antonius and Coriolanus in the translation of Sir Thomas North*, ed. by T. J. B. Spencer (London: Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 87 – 8. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

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face"), and hear again ("speak once again"), Caesar fails to understand. By dismissing the soothsayer with impatience ("He is a dreamer. Let him pass"), Caesar draws attention to one of the demarcation lines that characterize this drama of oppositions: superstitious dreamers on one side, rationalists and enemies of superstition on the other. Cicero figures as a champion of the latter group. When he encounters the terrified Casca during a storm, he comments on the menacing spectacle of the night as follows:

> CASCA [...] When these prodigies
> Do so conjointly meet, let not men say,
> 'These are their reasons, they are natural';
> For I believe, they are portentous things
> Unto the climate that they point upon.
>
> CICERO Indeed, it is a strange-disposed time:
> But men may construe things after their fashion,
> Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.
> (1.3.28–35)

Casca's "portentous things" are not a Shakespearean invention. We already find them in Plutarch's 'Life of Julius Caesar', where they are listed by the historian with sobering succinctness:

> Certainly destiny may be easier foreseen than avoided, considering the strange and wonderful signs that were said to be seen before Caesar's death. For, touching the fires in the element and spirits running up and down in the night, and also the solitary birds to be seen at noondays sitting in the great market-place – are not all these signs perhaps worth the noting, in such a wonderful chance as happened? But Strabo the Philosopher writeth that divers men were seen going up and down in fire; and, furthermore, that there was a slave of soldiers that did cast a marvelous burning flame out of his hand, insomuch as they that saw it thought he had been burnt, but, when the fire was out, it was found he had no hurt. Caesar self also, doing sacrifice unto the gods, found that one of the beasts which was sacrificed had no heart; and that was a strange thing in nature – how a beast could live without a heart. (pp. 86–7)

Plutarch's slightly ironic opening ("Certainly destiny may be easier foreseen than avoided"), suggests a critical detachment from the "strange and wonderful things", which are further distanced by the historian's use of the impersonal form, "that were said to be seen". In *Julius Caesar*, by contrast, the tale of omens and portents acquires particular importance, since it is told by Casca, "the blunt fellow" of "tardy form", who is about to kill the most powerful man on earth. The full extent of the conspiracy has not yet been revealed, and Casca is not completely aware of his role in it, but his fear of the portents appears symptomatic of

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a general state of mind: Casca is aware of being drawn towards an action that violates the laws of human nature, just as the events of the previous night seem to violate the natural order. Cicero's philosophical reply – "Men may construe things after their fashion, / Clean from the purpose of the things themselves" – reflects Shakespeare's characteristic assumption that human existence is undecipherable, or at least difficult to decipher. Like many Shakespearean sentences, Cicero's claim is deliberately ambivalent. What is the true meaning of the portentous events of the previous hours? Who disturbs the established order of society? Is it Caesar, who by accepting the crown threatens to subvert the 'natural' history of Rome, transforming the *res publica* into a dictatorship? Or is it the conspirators, who intend to kill the man who has made Rome great, and whose death will lead to a civil war?

Cicero has barely left the stage, when Cassius enters to tell Casca about the hidden meaning of his earlier claims:

> CASSIUS [...]You look pale, and gaze,
> And put on fear, and cast yourself in wonder,
> To see the strange impatience of the heavens;
> But if you would consider the true cause
> Why all these fires, why all these gliding ghosts,
> Why birds and beasts from quality and kind,
> Why old men, fools, and children calculate,
> Why all these things change from their ordinance,
> Their natures, and pre-formed faculties,
> To monstrous quality, why, you shall find
> That heaven hath infused them with these spirits
> To make them instruments of fear and warning
> Unto some monstrous state.
> Now could I, Casca, name thee a man
> Most like this dreadful night,
> That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars
> As doth the lion in the Capitol;
> A man no mightier than thyself, or me,
> In personal action, yet prodigious grown,
> And fearful, as these strange eruptions are.
> (1.3. 59–78)

Cassius speaks with an augur's confidence when he provides Casca with his interpretation of the portents, which are defined as "instruments of fear and warning", sent by the heavens to warn mankind against the man who roars and thunders like a nocturnal storm, exposing tombs and forcing the republic "unto some monstrous state". Cassius's explanation exemplifies the possibilities of reading – other instances of reading abound in the play – and like all interpretations it relies on several different heuristic skills: logic, reasoning by

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analogy, the free association of ideas. References to natural causes ("the true cause", "why" repeated four times, "quality", "kind", "natures", "pre-formed faculties") exist alongside allusions to the supernatural ("the heaven", "these gliding ghosts", "these spirits") both when Cassius establishes analogies between different levels of existence (Caesar *is* the portentous night; tyranny *is* a violation of the laws of nature), when he infuses the divine with human emotions ("the impatience of the heavens"), and when human beings are seen as gods or beasts ("a man […] that thunders, lightens … roars").

As spectators, we do not know if Cassius's speech exemplifies the kind of malice against which Casca has just been warned by Cicero, that is whether it "construe[s] things after [his] fashion / Clean from the purpose of the things themselves". Undoubtedly, Cassius does what humans have always done: in his search for direction, he appeals to a domain *outside* his own actions. The interpretation of portents is as uncertain as the interpretation of dreams, and like the latter it reflects a fundamental human need: the urge to inhabit a world full of meaning and the desire for this meaning ("the purpose of the things themselves") to be open to the human mind.

And yet Cassius knows that the portents of the night – like all signs – are open to different, even contradictory interpretations, and that they may just as easily be read as a warning against a different 'unnatural' event: regicide, which here coincides with the murder of a friend. After giving his word to the conspirators, Cassius admits his preoccupation that Caesar, terrified by the events of the previous night, may not make his way to the Capitol:

> CASSIUS But it is doubtful yet
> Whether Caesar will come forth today or no;
> For he is superstitious grown of late,
> Quite from the main opinion he held once
> Of fantasy, of dreams, and ceremonies.
> It may be these apparent prodigies,
> The unaccustomed terror of this night,
> And the persuasion of his augurers
> May hold him from the Capitol today. (2.1.193 – 201)

Decius, however, is more optimistic and reassures the conspirators that his flattery will suffice to win Caesar's superstitious fears. In fact, Decius achieves more than this: he convinces Caesar to ignore not only the portents of the previous night, but also his wife's dream. From this moment on, Caesar's life depends on his inclination to pay attention to dreams, omens and prophecies.

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IV

Plutarch's list of "strange and wonderful signs" prefiguring Caesar's death also includes a dream by his wife during the night before the assassination. In North's version, the episode reads as follows:

Then going to bed the same night as his manner was and lying with his wife Calpurnia, all the windows and doors of his chamber flying open, the noise awoke him and made him afraid when he saw such light; but more, when he heard his wife Calpurnia, being fast asleep, weep and sigh and put forth many fumbling lamentable speeches. For she dreamed that Caesar was slain, and that she had him in her arms. Others also do deny that she had any such dream; as, amongst others, Titus Livius writeth that it was in this sort: the Senate having set upon the top of Caesar's house, for an ornament and setting forth of the same, a certain pinnacle, Calpurnia dreamed that she saw it broken down and that she thought she lamented and wept for it. (pp. 88–9)

Shakespeare adopts Calphurnia's dream, but – as we will see – he changes its content. In Plutarch's version, Calphurnia's dream is a typical prophetic dream: literal in his first account, allegorical in the second. It is a dream that reveals the future, and that is sent by the gods to guide men in their decisions, to prompt them into action or to discourage them from acting. Artemidorus calls this kind of dream *oneiros* ("a dream that operates after sleep and that comes true either for good or bad") and he distinguishes it from *enhupnion* ("a dream that has no meaning and predicts nothing, one that is active only while one sleeps and that has arisen from an irrational desire, an extraordinary fear, or from a surfeit or lack of food").[12] This influential distinction survives in many classical writings on dreams, often paired with the assumption that only *oneiroi* deserve critical attention. As late as 1899, Freud still affirms that "the divinatory, future-predicting power of dreams remains under discussion because the attempts at a psychological explanation are not adequate to cope with all the material gathered, however firmly the feelings of anyone devoted to the scientific mode of thought might be inclined to reject such a notion".[13]

At the end of the sixteenth century, Thomas Hill also endorses the distinction between *oneiros* and *enhupnion*, which he uses to defend his achievements against critical interlocutors:

[true dreams happen] to suche, whose spirites are occupyed with no irrationall imaginations, nor overcharged with the burthē of meate or drinckes, or super-

12 Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica*, book IV, p. 184.
13 Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 8.

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fluous humours, nor geuē to any other bodelie pleasures. For those which are cōtrary to this order, are not properly dreames, but be named vain dreams, no true signifiers of matters to come but rather shewers of the present affections and desires of the body. And yet dreames seene by graue & sober persons, do signifie matters to come.[14]

For Hill's contemporaries, it has become impossible to ignore the physiological theories of dreams, dating at least from Aristotle, but this does not mean that they no longer believe in the prophetic meaning of certain dreams. In the mysterious field of dream interpretation, medicine coexists with astrology, and physiology develops alongside the belief in ghosts. Hill mentions Hippocrates and Galen, when he remarks that dreams may serve to diagnose certain forms of illness, but he also points out that "men have truer dreames in the Sommer and Wynter then in the Springe, and Harveste".[15] Thomas Browne's essay 'On Dreams', probably written during the middle of the seventeenth century, divides all dreams into four categories: 'divine', 'demonicall', 'angelicall', and 'naturall' or 'animal':

That there should bee divine dreames seemes unreasonably doubted by Aristotle. That there are demonicall dreames wee have little reason to doubt. Why may there not bee Angelicall? If there bee Guardian spirits, they may not bee unactively about us in sleepe, butt may sometimes order our dreames; and many strange hints, instigations, or discoveries which are so amazing unto us, may arise from such foundations. Butt the phantasmes of sleepe do commonly walk in the great roade of naturall and animal dreames; wherin the thoughts or actions of the day are acted over and ecchoed in the night.[16]

The co-existence of different discursive practices (medicine, religion, astrology) characterizes the study of dreams throughout the seventeenth century. More than a century after the publication of Hill's booklet, Thomas Tryon's *Treatise of Dreams and Visions* (1691) still attributes the origins of dreams to seven distinct sources: constitution, profession or course of life, the influx of the planets, diet

14 Thomas Hill, *The Most Pleasaunte Arte of The Interpretacion of Dreames* (London: T. Marsh, 1576), *The Epistle Dedicatorye.* The edition I have consulted does not have page numbers. Where possible, I will indicate section titles.

15 Hill, 'Of the deuision of Dreames and order of interpreting of thē', in *The Most Pleasaunte Arte […]*.

16 Thomas Browne, 'Essays and Observations from Notebooks' [On Dreams], in *The Prose of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. by Norman J. Endicott (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1967) pp. 455–56. The essay was published posthumously.

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or medicine, evil spirits, good spirits and angels, extraordinary visions from God.[17]

At the end of the sixteenth century this combination of religious belief, popular superstition, scientific enquiry and neo-classicist nostalgia culminates in a particularly lively debate about the prophetic quality of dreams.[18] Skeptics like Reginald Scot do not hesitate to affirm that dreams are utterly meaningless "inward actions of the mind in the spirits of the braine, whilest the bodie is occupied with sleepe",[19] but most commentators are inclined to believe that dreams can be a form of divination. Even the author of a mocking and scornful pamphlet on oneiromancy is forced to admit that not all terrors of the night are equally deceptive: "Some will object unto me for the certainty of dreams the dreams of Cyrus, Cambyses, Pompey, Caesar, Darius and Alexander. For those, I answer that they were rather visions than dreams, extraordinarily sent from Heaven to foreshow the translation of monarchies".[20]

For the spectators gathered in "the house with the thatched roof" in September 1599,[21] ready to attend the performance of *Julius Caesar*, prophetic dreams are therefore more than just a residue of the past or a homage to classical models. Shakespeare's subtle attention to dreamers presupposes an audience that is familiar with the multifaceted language of dreams – a language whose complexity is further increased in Shakespeare's work.

Shakespeare, as we have seen, takes Calphurnia's dream from earlier sources, but re-invents its content, which Caesar summarizes as follows:

> CAESAR She dreamt tonight she saw my statue,
> Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,
> Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans
> Came smiling, and did bathe their hands in it.
> And these does she apply for warnings and portents
> And evils imminent; and on her knee
> Hath begged that I will stay at home today. (2.2.76 – 82)

17 Quoted in S. J. Wiseman, 'Introduction', in *Reading the Early Modern Dream,* ed. by Katharine Hodgkin, Michelle O'Callaghan, and S. J. Wiseman, pp. 1 – 13 (p. 3).

18 See Holland, '"The Interpretation of Dreams" in the Renaissance', in *Reading Dreams*, ed. by Peter Brown, p. 140.

19 Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, book X, chapter II, p. 178.

20 Thomas Nashe, 'The Terrors of the Night', in Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Devil. Summer's Last Will and Testament. The Terrors of the Night. The Unfortunate Traveller and Selected Writings*, ed. by Stanley Wells (London: Edward Arnold, 1964), pp. 141 – 75 (p. 158).

21 The expression, which has become famous, comes from a report by Thomas Platter, a Swiss tourist who on 21 September 1599 saw *Julius Caesar* performed at the Globe and who left an interesting account of it. Platter's report is quoted in T. S. Dorsch, 'Introduction', in William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. by T. S. Dorsch, Arden edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1951), p. vii.

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In its passage from the Greek source to Shakespeare's play, Calphurnia's dream has become more complex and poetic. Like all dreams in Shakespeare, it can be read on more than one level.

First, there is Shakespeare's creative re-invention of the source text: the two different versions mentioned by Plutarch (Caesar dead in the arms of his wife; the pinnacle falling from the roof of Caesar's palace and shattering into pieces) blend into a single, highly suggestive image. The corpse transforms itself into a symbol of political power (the pinnacle) and becomes a statue. To dream of a statue (instead of the person who is represented by it) is considered a typical example of replacement, characteristic of allegorical dreams (according to Artemidorus) or perhaps of all dreams (according to Freud). In traditional oneiromancy, the statue naturally represents and replaces the politician. In Robert Wood's translation of Artemidorus's text we read: "[…] statues also represent magistrates and governours of the town; and in this case, whatsoever they shall do or say, shall befall the said personages".[22]

So far, Calphurnia's dream may seem little more than a variation on traditional themes. At a closer reading, however, the dream sequence reveals a profound affinity with some key moments and motives of Shakespeare's tragedy, which are here taken up with a great sense for iconography and dramaturgy. The statue is not only an obvious substitute for a person, it is also one of the most fundamental motifs of Shakespeare's play.[23] In its opening scene, Marullus and Flavius scold the plebeians, who have decorated Caesar's statues with crowns ("Disrobe the images, / if you do find them decked with ceremonies", Flavius says to Marullus, 1.1.65 – 6). In his first dramatic dialogue with Brutus, Cassius calls Caesar a "colossus": "he doth bestride the narrow world / Like a Colossus, and we petty men / walk under his huge legs" (1.2.133 – 35). Later Caesar himself dies at the feet of Pompey's statue, beneath the stone image of his defeated enemy, in comparison to whom he is now "no worthier than the dust" (3. 1. 116). In the concentrated and concise language of dreams, the statue appears to

22 Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams Rendred into English* [by Robert Wood] *the fourth edition* (London: William Iones, 1656), p. 132. The first edition of Wood's translation appeared in 1606 under the title of *The Judgment or Exposition of Dreams*.

23 In her interesting reading of *Julius Caesar* informed by feminist and psychoanalytic theory, Cynthia Marshall sees "two opposite conceptions of Caesar, monumental and vulnerable" condensed in the statue dreamt by Calphurnia: the public man who is hard to kill and the private man who, being endowed with a body, is prone to suffering. According to Marshall, through Calphurnia "*Julius Caesar* questions the notion of stable historical identity, and emblematizes its doubts in the image of the bleeding statue. […] Statues provide a 'metaphor for identity', and the bleeding statue precisely figures constructed, contingent and vulnerable identity. Within the play, Shakespeare gives this awareness to Calphurnia alone". Cynthia Marshall, 'Portia's Wound, Calphurnia's Dream: Reading Character in *Julius Caesar*', in *Julius Caesar, New Casebooks*, ed. by Richard Wilson (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 170 – 87 (p. 183).

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Calphurnia spitting blood from its one hundred mouths. This image, too, recurs as a leitmotiv throughout Shakespeare's play. The statue's one hundred mouths anticipate the thirty-three stabs inflicted on Caesar's body, which become as many wounds, spilling blood just like Antony's eyes spill their tears ("Had I as many eyes as thou hast wounds, / Weeping as fast as they stream forth thy blood […]", 3.1.200 – 201). In an extraordinary metaphorical and emotional *crescendo*, the wounds are then transformed into open but silent mouths with ruby lips, which command Antony to speak on their behalf: "Over thy wounds now do I prophesy – / (Which like dumb mouths do ope their ruby lips, / To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue) […]" (3.1.259 – 61). Finally, after the funerary speech, the silent mouths spill blood – with visionary circularity, like in Calphurnia's dream – but this time it is the blood of the civil war: "[I] Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths, / And bid them speak for me. […] and put a tongue in every wound Caesar that should move / the stones of Rome to rise and mutiny" (3.2.226 – 31).

In her dream, Calphurnia sees Romans who smile and wash their hands in the rivers of blood that flow from the fountain. Once again, it is possible to read this image as a variation on a theme that has already been anticipated and that will be taken up again later in the play. Calphurnia's vision evokes the rituals of war, but also the sacred rites of religion. This ambiguity, which Decius exploits to turn Calphurnia's interpretation on its head, is deeply rooted in Shakespeare's text, which never tells us whether the assassination of Caesar was sacrilegious or legitimate. Brutus is the first to capture this ambiguity in lucid words: "Between the acting of a dreadful thing / And the first motion, all the interim is / Like a phantasma or a hideous dream: / The genius and the mortal instruments / Are then in council; and the state of man, / Like to a little kingdom, suffers then / The nature of an insurrection" (2.1.63 – 9). Throughout the play, Brutus remains obsessed by this tragic awareness of the subtle line between *fas* and *nefas.* His famous response to Cassius – when the latter suggests that Antony ought to be killed as well – contains *in nuce* all the images of Calphurnia's dream:

BRUTUS Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar,
And in the spirit of men there is no blood.
O, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit,
And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,
Caesar must bleed for it. And, gentle friends,
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;
Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds
[…]
We shall be called purgers, not murderers. (2.1.166 – 80)

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As René Girard has shown, we are in the presence of a sacrificial rite, in which Caesar acts as the scapegoat, brought to the altar of the common good.[24] The scapegoat, however, partakes in the divine order: his body is a "dish fit for the gods" and his blood can give new life. Despite Decius's malice, his interpretation of Calphurnia's dream is as legitimate as the opposite reading, according to which the dream predicts suffering and anguish:

> DECIUS This dream is all amiss interpreted;
> It was a vision fair and fortunate:
> Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,
> In which so many smiling Romans bathed,
> Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck
> Reviving blood, and the great men shall press
> For tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance. (2.2.83 – 9)

The image of Romans washing their hands in Caesar's blood is obsessively repeated throughout the play, where it can acquire opposite meanings: "[…] Stoop, Romans, stoop" – Brutus proclaims after inflicting the final stab – "And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood / Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords; / Then walk we forth, even to the market-place, / And waving our red weapons o'er our heads, / Let's cry, 'Peace, freedom, and liberty!'" (3.1.105 – 10). "Stoop then, and wash" repeats Cassius (3. 1. 111). When he discovers Caesar's body, Antony challenges the conspirators to stab him, too, with their "swords, made rich / with the most noble blood of all this world" (3.1.155 – 56). And when he is left alone with the mutilated body, Antony addresses him as "bleeding piece of earth" thus reiterating (unknowingly) the famous words of Brutus, who has called the conspirators "butchers" because they had to "shed this costly blood". Antony's funerary speech also uses images of bloodshed and cleansing, which are now associated with religious ceremony: if only they listened to Caesar's will, the Romans "would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds, / And dip their napkins in his sacred blood, / Yea, beg a hair of him for memory, / And, dying, mention it within their wills, / Bequeathing it as a rich legacy / Unto their issue" (3.2.133 – 38). Like in Decius's interpretation of Calphurnia's dream, Antony's funerary speech shows the Romans clean themselves in Caesar's blood "for tincture, stains, relics, and cognizance".

Calphurnia's dream hence contains, in a nutshell, Shakespeare's entire play. It anticipates the main action (the assassination of Caesar) and its modality (the thirty-three stabs), but it also concentrates the basic themes of the play in a few powerful and compelling images: the sacrificial meaning of murder; the contrasting emotions of the conspirators, who smile while bathing in blood; Cae-

24 René Girard, *A Theater of Envy* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 200 – 26.

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sar's posthumous triumph, after the horrors of the civil war; his ultimate transformation into glorious relic, holy blood, sacrificial object.

V

Like other famous prophetic dreams in Shakespeare's theatre,[25] Calphurnia's dream has an important dramaturgic function: it anticipates events, spreads hints and creates suspense. But it also allows the author to delineate psychologies and to articulate ideas. Calphurnia's dream prompts a conflict of interpretations, which ultimately highlights a very Shakespearean concern that has already emerged at the beginning of the play: the difficulty of deciphering reality; the exasperating coexistence of different interpretations and points of view; the frailty of human knowledge. *Julius Caesar* is ultimately a maddening exercise in reading and misreading, as is confirmed by its misunderstood, ignored or over-interpreted portents, by its contradictory but ultimately corresponding interpretations of dreams, by its many letters, which, if genuine, are undelivered, but which will be read when they are forged. As in many of Shakespeare's plays, dreams – or rather, the entire realm of visions, dreams, portents, ghosts – reveal the limits of man's desire to understand and to give a more stable meaning to his existence.

In *Julius Caesar*, many characters are shown in the process of reading or when they are about to read. Brutus reads the fake messages that have been thrown into his window and convinces himself that they are real. Caesar does not read the letter from Artemidorus, which could save his life, but he reads the one that is given to him by Decius, and which has been written on purpose to distract his attention from the other letter. Casca reads the portents of the night as announcing the end of the world; for Cassius they signify the end of dictatorship, for Cicero nothing. Calphurnia is convinced that her dream means death, but for Decius it speaks of glory. For the conspirators Caesar's testament is the work of an ambitious demagogue, but for the people of Rome it shows patriotism and generosity. Portia takes her life because she believes – erroneously – that her husband has been defeated. Cassius kills himself with his own sword because a sentry tells him that Titinius has been surrounded by a group of horsemen (but the horsemen are friends and Titinius returns to the camp victorious, with a garland donated by Brutus). When he finds Cassius dead, Titinius sighs: "Alas, thou hast misconstrued everything!" (5.3.84). "That one cry, 'thou hast mis-

25 See for instance Romeo's dream in *Romeo and Juliet*, 5.1.1 – 9 ("If I may trust the flattering truth of sleep […]"), or Clarence's dream in *Richard III*, 1.4.9 – 63 ("Methoughts that I had broken from the Tower […]").

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construed everything!'– writes Garber – might well serve as an epigraph for the whole of *Julius Caesar*".[26] Throughout the play, there are only incorrect – or rather, incomplete – interpretations.

The conflict of interpretations triggered by Calphurnia's dream is only one instance of a much greater war of interpretations in Shakespeare's play: the violent struggle for truth and the 'correct' interpretation of facts. This may also explain Shakespeare's reasons for re-writing Plutarch's version of the dream. What the playwright needs is a dream that is not only prophetic, but also symbolic and ambiguous, and therefore capable of generating different, but equally plausible interpretations: a dream that combines the multiple meanings of poetry with the succinctness of the oracle. As a consequence, Shakespeare's Calphurnia appears more intensely poetic than Plutarch's. She even adds her own portents to Casca's, Cicero's and Cassius' lists; portents that do not appear in any of Shakespeare's classical sources:

> CALPHURNIA A lioness hath whelped in the streets,
> And graves have yawned and yielded up their dead;
> Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds
> In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
> Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol;
> The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
> Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,
> And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.
> (2.2.17 – 24)

Although "[she] never stood on ceremonies", Calphurnia is frightened. During her brief appearance on stage, fear is her one defining emotion, "They fright me" (2.2.14); "I do fear them" (2.2.26); "call it my fear / That keeps you in the house" (2.2.50); "for thy humour I will stay at home" (2.2.56). In her visionary fear, Calphurnia foresees the civil war: fierce warriors fighting in the clouds, whose blood drizzles onto the Capitol.

In a famous passage of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Theseus compares the dreamer's imagination to that of the poet and of the lover:

> THESEUS The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact:
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
> That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.
> And as imagination bodies forth

26 Garber, *Dream in Shakespeare*, p. 48.

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> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name. (5.1.7 – 17)

Lunatics, lovers and poets are all dreamers, and Calphurnia seems to belong to all three categories. She is driven by love and fear; her imagination "bodies forth the forms of things unknown" and creates an aerial battleground above the clouds, where blood is spilt and swords are drawn. Like poetry, dreams evoke an "airy nothing", and, like in poetry, they are based on condensation: a few powerful, semantically over-determined images (the statue as a fountain with one hundred mouths, spilling blood in which the smiling citizens of Rome bathe and wash themselves) are sufficient to inspire many stories.

It is perhaps more than a coincidence that the only other character who foresees Caesar's death in his dream is a poet: Cinna, who in his dream is invited to dine with Ceasar on the night before his assassination, who refuses the invitation, but who is forced to attend. The episode already features in Plutarch (p. 98), but it is hardly surprising that Shakespeare should choose to highlight its importance:

> CINNA I dreamt tonight that I did feast with Caesar,
> And things unluckily charge my fantasy;
> I have no will to wander forth of doors,
> Yet something leads me forth. (3.3.1 – 4)

The meaning of Cinna's dream is allegorical, and some of its motives are closely related to Calphurnia's dream. Cinna's vision of a feast recalls the idea of Caesar as a "dish fit for the gods". In his dream, Cinna dines with Caesar, but outside the dream he dies with him. The superior knowledge brought to him in his sleep does not save the poet, who is mistaken for "Cinna the conspirator", and massacred by the plebeians, who wish to avenge Caesar's death. "I am Cinna the poet, I am Cinna the poet!" he cries, but the wrath of the people cannot be contained, and the poet dies as a victim of his fantasy, which has lead him out into the streets of Rome, despite all warnings.

VI

Like many of Shakespeare's dreamers – Romeo, Bottom, the four lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – Calphurnia is not taken seriously. In fact, *Julius Caesar* endorses one of the basic assumptions of classical and Renaissance oneiromancy: what counts is the opinion of experts, not – as in Freud – the dreamer's association of ideas. Decius has the last word and Calphurnia, deprived of her dream and of her vision, disappears from the stage. Her dream,

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however, remains as a powerful presence, which prompts new images, motives and scenes.

Calphurnia's story adds a further layer of meaning to Shakespeare's life-long concern with dreams and to his extraordinary re-interpretation of classical sources, scientific models and popular beliefs, which marks a crucial point in the development of Western dream theory.

After having listed the "strange and wonderful signs" that anticipated Caesar's death, Plutarch writes: "For these things, they may seem to come by chance" (p. 92). *Julius Caesar* does not settle Plutarch's doubts (do dreams and prodigies come by chance?), but broadens their scope and their significance. Shakespeare's play investigates the realm of dreams: its language, its modes, its advocates and detractors, its relation to daily life and rationality. But it also illustrates what a dream can *do* within a play, how a dream-narrative of barely four verses can become a sophisticated textual device.

Julius Caesar does not tell us of the origin of our dreams – a fundamental concern for Renaissance oneiromancy: do our dreams have a supernatural cause, or are they simply the product of a particular mental and physical state? – but it teaches us that it is wise not to ignore them. Whether our dreams are ultimately divine – as Calphurnia affirms – or whether their origin is human – as is claimed by Theseus and Mercutio[27] –, in Shakespeare's theatre there can be no doubt that our wakeful, rational view of the world is extremely limited.

As has been shown, Shakespeare is aware of contemporary physiological theories of dreams, in which dreams are defined as "shewers of the present affections and desiers of the body",[28] strictly "naturall" phenomena "wherin the thoughts or actions of the day are acted over and ecchoed in the night",[29] or "nothing else but a bubbling scum or froth of the fancy, which the day has left undigested, [...] an after-feast made of the fragments of idle imaginations".[30] Yet he also reminds us that there is more to our dreams than what such theories suggest. Mercutio mocks the ominous nature of our dreams, when he tells Romeo that lovers dream of love, lawyers of fees and parsons of benefices, and his definition of dreams as "the children of an idle brain, / Begot of nothing but vain fantasy" (*Romeo and Juliet*, 1.4.97 – 8) recalls Thomas Nashe. But as the play unfolds, the events on stage prove Romeo's point that "[dreamers] do dream things true" (1.4.52).

In Shakespeare's theatre, the meaning of dreams is never uncontested. For every character who believes in dreams, there is another who doubts their

27 Mercutio famously expounds his doctrine of dreams in *Romeo and Juliet* (1.4.53 – 103).
28 See note 14 above.
29 See note 16 above.
30 Nashe, 'The Terrors of the Night', p. 153.

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significance: Romeo is opposed by Mercutio, Hippolyta by Theseus, Casca by Cicero, Calphurnia by Caesar, Stanley by Hastings,[31] and so on. Sooner or later, however, even the most hardened skeptic is forced to acknowledge the power of dreams. Like Hippolyta, he or she must admit that "But all the story of the night told over […] more witnesseth than fancy's images, / And grows to something of great constancy" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.23 – 6). Even the rationalist Brutus, who has been capable of sacrificing close friendship to an abstract ideal, must ultimately yield to the powers of the night: "Art thou any thing?" he calls out to a "monstrous apparition" that makes the candle in his tent flicker. And finally, when it is too late to pay tribute to Caesar, he bows to his ghosts: "O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet! / Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords / In our proper entrails" (5.3.94 – 6). When the ghost returns to haunt him, Brutus has no doubts, "I know my hour is come" (5.5.20).

"The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was" proclaims Bottom at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (4.1.209 – 12), when he tries to explain his "inexplicable" dream. Bottom's misquote from Saint Paul[32] highlights the synesthetic nature of dreams: their capacity to engage, simultaneously if confusedly, all our senses and our ways of understanding the world. This characteristic is perhaps the most important common feature of dreams, poetry and theatre: they can all reveal what is hidden from us in our normal, wakeful state. The playwright, who has often described theatre as a dream, teaches us with *Julius Caesar* an important lesson on the nature of dreams and on the price we pay if we choose to ignore them.

31 I am referring to Stanley's prophetic dream, reported to Hastings by a messenger in *Richard III*, 3.2.10 – 17 ("He dreamt the boar had razed off his helm […]"). Hastings reacts with disbelief and declares that he will not "trust the mockery of unquiet slumbers". The dream, however, will prove true and Hastings will be forced to admit, "For I, too fond, might have prevented this. / Stanley did dream […]" (3.4.81 – 3).

32 "The eye hath not seen, and the ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I *Corinthians* 2:9).

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Viola Papetti

Under the sign of Ovid. Motion and Instance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Ovid knew, by the gift of prophesy given to all poets, that his poetry would be more enduring than the empire of Augustus. In 1567, Shakespeare could read his *Metamorphoses* translated into English by Arthur Golding, "Of shapes transformd to bodies straunge, I purpose to entreate / Ye gods vouchsafe (for you are they wrought this wondrous feate) / To further this mine enterprise".[1] Today, such a request to the gods sounds like a clever and subtle challenge to Augustus's political enterprise, which, although magnificent, is nonetheless undermined by his personal caducity and that of any political achievement. On the contrary, change is perennial in the physical world, as hermetic philosophers thought, and modern scientists, though from a different point of view, agreed.

Time for poets is paradoxically limited and unlimited. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* concludes: "For looke how farre so ever / The Romane Empyre by the right of conquest shall extend, / (If Poets as by prophesie about the truth may ame) / My lyfe shall everlastingly bee lengthened still by fame" (XV, 992 – 95). The fame and glory of Rome and Ovid are now co-essential, but while the geopolitical body of the Roman Empire has been destroyed by time, the poetic body of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is fully alive. Transmuted over the centuries into many different languages, some unknown in Ovid's time, it did not pass away – only its Latin garb. "Things eb and flow: and every shape is made to passe away. / The tyme itself continually is fleeting like a brooke" (XV, 198 – 99). Such is the closure by Pythagoras, who resumes the whole process of change, a sort of *theodicaea* expressed in the slow quatrains of the English translation. On the contrary, the Latin hexameters possess a sort of quick and powerful energy, in their clean cut images – and Ovid's translators know well the difficulty of achieving the same speed and immediacy.

Ovid simply cannot take his eyes off the human body in the process of be-

1 Ovid, *Metamorphoses. Translated by Arthur Golding* [1567], ed. by Madeleine Forey (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 31 (I, 1 – 3). All references are taken from this edition and given after quotations in the text.

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coming a thing of monstrosity. There is no voice or movement for the subject assaulted by another self, be it a beast or a plant or a rock. It shoots out from his/her body; it is a surprise, and a paralysis. The Italian translation of the *Metamorphoses* by Ludovica Koch for the Valla Edition is plastic, alert to capturing time and movement, the last gesture of the body in transformation. Here is a little known and most horrifying example: "Prendeva appena Licabante a chiedergli: 'In che razza di mostro / stai trasformandoti? E mentre parlava gli si slarga la bocca, / il naso s'incurva, la pelle indurita gli si copre di scaglie. Ma Libi, che provava a dar volta ai remi incagliati / si vide contrarre le mani e rattrappirglisi in cose / che più non erano mani, ma le diresti pinne" (III, 673 – 78).[2] Ovid is not our contemporary. He does not assail us, as Shakespeare does, with recognisable *dramatis personae* as projections of ourselves, albeit glorified by his imagination. Ovid digs beneath our skin and finds our metamorphic deaths. And he brings to a standstill, for the benefit of readers, the frightful instant of transformation and describes its aching, because the tree, the serpent, and the brook all preserve the memory of the passion which lived in their (forever lost) human bodies. The brevity, along with the inevitability, of the process begets horror.

The metamorphosed body has a different destiny for Apuleius, who celebrates its playful adventure, and invents the retro-metamorphoses as a final consolation, a fortunate occasion for both Lucius and Bottom, in which they are transformed from men into jackasses and back again into men with the naturalness typical of a nocturnal dream, as Lucius himself describes it. A year before Golding's translation of Ovid's work, in 1566, William Adlington published his translation of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses.* The many adventures of the esoteric jackass narrated in a brisk and restless prose were an immediate success. Reprints followed in 1571, 1582 and 1596.[3] Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* observes that in Apuleius metamorphosis acquires an even more particular and directly magical character:

> Almost nothing remains of its former breath and force. Metamorphosis has become a vehicle for conceptualizing and portraying personal and individual fate, a fate cut from both the cosmic and the historical whole. Nevertheless, the idea of metamorphosis retains enough energy (thanks to the influence of an immediate

2 Ovidio (Publio Ovidio Nasone), *Metamorfosi,* ed. by Alessandro Barchiesi, trans. by Ludovica Koch, vol. I, Libri I e II (Milano: Mondadori, 2007), p. 57.

3 See William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* ed. by Reginald A. Foakes, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 10.

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folklore tradition) to comprehend the *entire life-long destiny of man,* and all its critical *turning points.* Here lies its significance for the genre of the novel.[4]

Though the times were mournful for Hamlet-like souls, they were euphoric for adventurous pragmatics, impassioned readers or listeners of tales of dangerous navigations and discoveries of other worlds, and – seduced at their writing desks – for translators, cosmographers, and writers of memorials who were in truth the ferrymen of knowledge, visions, and desires from one shore to another of the Mediterranean and even across Oceans. And a Copernican wind swelled their sails. A real world of metamorphosis was out there, within reach of dreams. And the theatre took advantage of it. That Indian boy, the possession of whom incites a war between Oberon and the Fairy Queen, would nearly three hundred years later intrigue G. M. Hopkins, who in a letter to his friend Dixon, dated 15 August 1883, wrote:

the scene or episode of the Indian boy in the *Dream* is, I think, an allegory of which writing once of that drama I believed to have discovered the sense. If I had guessed correctly or not, the significance would have been present, in any case, and Shakespeare had to know it, obscure or invisible to the greater part of spectators or readers. Nevertheless, it remained, I suppose, because it is interesting as an historic incident and not because it casts some illumination upon the main plot or aids the unity of action, which it superficially impedes frequently.[5]

I quote this excerpt in another essay of mine on the *Dream*, where I hypothesise the sense of that allegory: that it might be read as an event of founding like that of a birth or an important enterprise.[6] The year 1600 is the year *Dream* was entered into the Stationers' Register, but it is also the year that signalled the destiny of India for approximately four centuries: for the powerful Company of the Indies received that very year from Elizabeth the official patent for the engagement of its commerce and the expansion of the first possessions on that continent. In contrast with Titania, Elizabeth (to whom the *Dream* frequently alludes) does not surrender to any Oberon, nor does she ever renounce any property. Besides, Puck-Robin was in her service, for Robin was her nickname for the two Roberts of her life.

In Europe, during the Renaissance, both 'metamorphoses' were read as esoteric texts, as Yates unequivocally illustrated by drawing the paths of philo-

4 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination, Four Essays* [1975], ed. by Michael Holquist and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 114.

5 *The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon*, ed. by Claude Colleer Abbott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 115.

6 Viola Papetti, 'Shakespeare. Il sogno e la prova', in Viola Papetti, *La commedia. Da Shakespeare a Sheridan* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007), pp. 17–24.

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sophic-magical thought from Trismegistus to Dee, Fludd and in particular Bruno.[7] These esoteric threads are seen also in the fantastic fabric of the *Dream*. There was a strong interest on the part of Shakespeare for the dramatic use of those two texts. Not only did they provide him with suggestions, names, and brief citations, but they were insinuated as parodic inter-texts in the story of Pyramus and Thisbe and in Bottom's metamorphosis and retro-metamorphosis. The two stories were stripped of their melodramatic and creatural original tone. They belong to the symbolism of anti-order, to the carnival-like world where 'chance' or 'magic' govern, so the *Dream* could be read unquestioningly as a spring-like or nuptial 'festive comedy' by Barber[8] and Frye.[9]

The metamorphoses, improvised by desire, are magical and as they are brought about by Puck's error, the error becomes an agent that participates in the magic which is unexpected, and by its very nature unstoppable. The eye is the door of desire. Both Shakespeare and Lyly, who preceded him in the use of metamorphic myths in drama, refuse to offer even the slightest hint of a psychological explanation for the improvised and brutal mutation. The metamorphosis from desire is mysterious, both at the moment of its improvisation and when it is beheld by nauseated eyes averting their gaze from the loved thing. Puck, a creature of magic and of error, acts upon the eye and the metamorphosis of passion happens in the instant of the first glance, in the bat of an eyelid.

The error of the roving Puck is necessary in order to cancel even the shadow of a psychological reason or moral. Lysander and Demetrius pursue the unloved Helena, and Titania shall be caught by Bottom with his jackass's head. The two intertexts are played out by the company of amateurs, and Bottom is the principal artificer of the parodic dismemberment and overturning of the pitiful story of the two Babylonian lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe, and their star-crossed deaths in the manner of Romeo and Juliet, decided by the blind fairy of love. Regarding those pathetic deaths, a 'troupe' of ignoble actors construct an incoherent yet irresistible text. The nuptial play amuses at the expense of passion. Gail Kern Paster in her notable essay, *The Body Embarrassed*, strips every connotation of prestige from the simple phallic simulacrum and esoteric ass.[10] Bottom, a descendant of the medieval *proktos lalon*,[11] undergoes the humiliating 'maternage'

7 Frances A. Yates, *Theatre of the World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

8 Cesar Lombardi Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: a Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

9 Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: the Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1965).

10 Gail Kern Paster, 'Covering his Ass', in Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed. Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 113 – 62.

11 Ernst R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages,* trans. by Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 435.

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of Titania to an enema, and becomes the bearer of an eschatological theme common to the European stage. No longer the bestial lover of the refined Fairy Queen, but an old comical expedient of crude mime to cheer the groundlings.

The many crucial instances and their centrifugal energy are contained in the number four that leaps out in the opening four verses of *Dream* as the time-space that structures the dramatic action. To the motions of desire it prescribes a waiting period, four days and four nights in acceleration so that the nuptial circle of Theseus and Hippolyta is closed. There are four Athenian lovers: Lysander, Demetrius, Helena and Hermia. There are four exceptional princely lovers: Theseus and Hippolyta, who are considered the double of the translunary couple Oberon and Titania. Even though the number four has always stood for symmetry, equilibrium, staticity, here it is disjointed internally by brief motions which are synonymous with disintegration from escapes, fights, and errors. Thus the division into quarters provides an instable equilibrium, both for the couples of simple young human lovers, and for the mythical ones. The couple with classic origins, Theseus and Hippolyta, have just finished warring, and the Celtic couple of Oberon and Titania, with their fighting disarrange the fundamental order of the four seasons. If, as it seems, at the beginning of the seventeenth century the era of the simile was about to close in on itself, as Foucalt writes,[12] the *Dream* constitutes the most fantastic and coherent proof of it. The scheme and the result unite in the nuptial event of all. The invocation to the virginal moon at the beginning, at the end results in a luminous blessing upon the chaste married lovers.

And what about the bodies in the *Dream*? Some are plausible as terrestrial, others are fairy-tale like. We know from the scene of jealousy between Oberon and Titania that she was the lover of Theseus and he of Hippolyta. A spontaneous interrogative is natural. How was sex possible between the bodies of air and the human ones? Certainly "at night", as an Italian Anglicist, Masolino D'Amico, suggests.[13] That is correct, but surely their erotic epiphany happened only in a dream. Dreamed bodies. Wet dreams.

12 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* [1966] (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 38 f.

13 Telephone conversation.

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Michele Marrapodi

Mens sana in corpore sano: the Rhetoric of the Body in Shakespeare's Roman and Late Plays

In many of his stage settings Shakespeare appears to be obsessed by the idea, image, or concept of the body in its multiple literal and figurative aspects and by the dramaturgical potentiality of the language of corporeality. The rhetoric of the body does in fact lend itself to an impressive series of striking theatrical forms since it is innate to the physicality of performance and to the natural 'spectacle' of the dramatic *actio*.[1] What indubitably makes the corporeal semantics of Shakespeare's language even more fertile is the social, political, and ideological value acquired by this kind of rhetoric in the culture of the early Renaissance. In the history plays in particular the political exploitation of the language of the body becomes identified with the very idea of the state and linked to concepts of continuity and social order, as also to values of ethnicity and national identity.

For although a macrotextual reading of the two tetralogies confirms the epic nature of Shakespeare's approach to English history, the blood of the nation shed in the Wars of the Roses is in many cases considered in the sense of a rightful curse, the origin of which was the sacrilegious dethronement of Richard II.[2] But if, for Bolingbroke, "The body of our kingdom" (3.1.37) is infected by rebellion, young Hal can predict to the Lord Chief Justice that "the great body of our state may go / In equal rank with the best-governed nation (*2 Henry IV,* 5.2.135 – 36) and ultimately a kingdom purified by pardon will be restored: "I Richard's body

1 On the semiotics of the body in Shakespearean drama, see Keir Elam, '"In what chapter of his bosom?": Reading Shakespeare's Bodies', in *Alternative Shakespeares 2*, ed. by Terence Hawkes (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 140 – 63.

2 See Peter Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 14: "The deposition of Richard II is seen as a sacrilegious act interrupting the succession of God's anointed kings, a kind of original sin for which England and her rulers must suffer. The Lancastrians are then punished for their usurpation by the Yorkists, and the Yorkists by their own last king, until, England having atoned in blood, redemption may come in the form of Henry Tudor and his union of the rival houses".

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have interred new / And on it have bestowed more contrite tears / Than from it issued forcèd drops of blood" (*Henry V*, 4.1.292–94).[3]

It is however in the Roman plays (as in the satire by Juvenal selected as the eponymous compendium of this essay)[4] and in the later works associated with Latinity and Italian humanistic culture, such as the romances, that the idea of corporeality additionally acquires a specific moral usage, realistically embracing the virtues of *romanitas* or making them emerge from a dialectic between opposing values. Performing a kind of *translatio imperii* between principles of civilization and dynastic continuity from ancient Rome to Renaissance London, the playwright exorcizes domestic anxieties of political disgregation and presents a patriotic ideal of national sovereignty. The aim of this essay is to exemplify this theme by examining in detail some passages in *Coriolanus* and *Cymbeline*.

1. *Coriolanus*

In the opening scene of Act 2, Volumnia pre-announces to the elderly Menenius Agrippa the triumphant return of her son Caius Martius, who has vanquished the Volscians. Menenius exults and asks whether Martius has returned wounded, as on other occasions: his scars well befit his cause. Thus commences an amazing dialogue that goes on for some sixty lines – despite the presence of a frightened Virgilia, anxious about her husband's fate – revolving around the political expediency of the blood shed by the hero in battle.

MENENIUS Is he not wounded? He was wont to come home wounded.

VIRGILIA O, no, no, no!

VOLUMNIA O, he is wounded, I thank the gods for't!

[…]

MENENIUS Where is he wounded? […]

VOLUMNIA I'th' shoulder, and i'th' left arm. There will be large cicatrices to show the people when he shall stand for his place.

The sequence stops only with the arrival of the triumphant soldiers, after a detailed reckoning of the total number of blows Martius has received:

3 All quotations from Shakespeare are taken from *The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (London: Clarendon Press, 1988).

4 Juvenal, *Satire* X, 356. See Juvenal, *The Satires*, trans. by Niall Rudd (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). On the influence of Juvenal and other Latin poets on the Elizabethans' view of the city, see Gail Kern Paster, *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), pp. 33–57.

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MENENIUS One i'th' neck, and two i'th' thigh–there's nine that I know.

VOLUMNIA He had before this last expedition twenty-five wounds upon him.

MENENIUS Now it's twenty-seven. Every gash was an enemy's grave. (2.1.116–53)

The body of the wounded soldier, even more than his personal safety, is in this scene the true centre of attention and interest. It is raised on high as a symbol of authority and military virtue and offered to the public gaze for political reasons. The man and his most sacred values are reduced to mere scars to be shown to the people. In the consular Rome of *Coriolanus*, where the rebelling citizens have brought the patrician government to a state of crisis, only bleeding wounds have the power to affect the masses, becoming transformed into eloquent organs of communication and persuasion. The heroism recalled by Volumnia thus becomes the only ideal that all can look upon as one of true *auctoritas*, of loyalty to the mother country, of leadership, and therefore one that can be exchanged for the votes necessary for election to the consulship.

The *virtus* inspiring Volumnia's military ideology contrasts significantly, as in this sequence, with the more fragile *humanitas* embodied in the figure of Virgilia. The different characterization of the two women is clearly marked in their dialogue in the domestic scene set in Caius Martius's house (1.3). Whereas Virgilia worries over her husband's life and shuns all distractions, Volumnia rejoices at her son's military expedition, declaring that she ranks fame and glory even above life itself:

had I a dozen sons, each in my love alike,
and none less dear than thine and my good Marcius',
I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country
Than one voluptuously surfeit out of action. (1.3.22–5)

This perverse conception of the idea of honour, of 'nobility' towards which – as Adelman has it – "the construction of heroic masculinity" strives, explains her intention to display her son's wounded body in order to curry the people's favour, since blood shed for one's country is noble and sacred.[5] Adelman maintains that Coriolanus himself is also drawn towards this construction of heroic virility that has been inculcated in him by his mother, inasmuch as he devotes his soldierly life to the achievement of this ideal – utterly devoid of all weakness or human frailty – on which he has fed since his adolescence. Volumnia confirms this principle when she uses a potently virile image that has attracted

5 Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers. Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays,* Hamlet *to* The Tempest (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 147.

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the attention of feminist-oriented psychoanalytic criticism and explains the dialogue with Menenius regarding the importance of blood shed by a soldier:[6]

> The breasts of Hecuba,
> When she did suckle Hector looked not lovelier
> Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood
> At Grecian sword, contemning. (1.3.42–5)

Rather than suggesting, as is often claimed, a profound affinity of intent, the play's axiology leads instead to a sort of dialectic opposition between mother and son inasmuch as the man, the hero, whom Volumnia herself exalts is ultimately mortified by the pre-announced anatomical display, which increases the level of visual spectacle and gestural expressiveness at the expense of thought and action. The different reaction of the two characters to the practice of this custom conveys the difference between their characterizations and Shakespeare's conception of *romanitas.*[7] While Volumnia's martial *virtus* places the achievement of fame above all other considerations, even above her own children's life, that of Coriolanus conjugates *virtus* with *dignitas*, which cannot exist without *pietas*, to which it is indeed indissolubly linked, thus marking an ever clearer divarication from the cynical reality being represented.[8] As in the temptation scene dominated by Lady Macbeth where she tries to construct a perverse sense of manliness to lead her husband to murder, Macbeth's "I dare do all that may become a man; / who dares do more is none" (1.7.46–7) displays that "milk of human kindness" that initially opposes him to *scelus.* Linking *Macbeth* to *Coriolanus*, R. A. Foakes has rightly observed that "Volumnia projects her fantasies of manliness onto her son, and so can sustain them with a terrifying complacency".[9] Clearly Shakespeare's sympathies are for this lofty expression of *romanitas*, although if this ethical and moral rectitude appears to be a conquest in the monolithic characterization of the hero, it reveals itself to be – in the

6 See in this regard, Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 150 f.

7 See Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare's Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 171–72.

8 Jonathan Dollimore, in *Radical Tragedy. Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), sees in the contrast between *Virtus* and *Realpolitik* the different ideological positions held by the two characters: "For Coriolanus the world is seen in terms of the absolute and the determining essence; for Volumnia the absolute is displaced by a social network of relative interactions, one in which intervention not essence is determining" (p. 219).

9 R. A. Foakes, *Shakespeare and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 156. See also Marilyn L. Williamson, 'Violence and Gender Ideology in *Coriolanus* and *Macbeth*', in *Shakespeare Left and Right*, ed. by Ivo Kamps (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 147–66; Bruce R. Smith, *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 113.

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impact with the public-spectacle type of society the play evokes – a mere utopia, the rigid application of absolute ideals that can be neither understood nor valued. Hence Coriolanus's body acquires an extraordinary metaphorical connotation that is identified with the very organism of the state, reflecting itself in its political body. This symbolism dominates the allegorical construction of the entire play: in the opening scene Menenius holds the attention of the angry citizens and placates their rebellious intentions with his moralizing fable of the members that rebelled against the belly which instead provides them with their life support, establishing an implied principle of collaborative, if subordinate, political unity in the state (1.1.94 – 161). The strong contrast between the mob and Caius Martius, which we see next, makes a clear antithesis between the figure of the protagonist and the fickle, rebellious crowd, creating a manifest dialectic relationship between the two ideologies. It is significant that the 'political' quality of Coriolanus's body should be exploited by all the contenders and parties involved. The term 'body', together with the rich corporeal imagery, recurs with unusual frequency and nearly every occurrence is directly or indirectly related to the protagonist's actions. In this way an extraordinary process is begun of the 'appropriation' of his body for ideological reasons, a process centred on the bloody wounds that totally ignores the individual's subjectivity, i. e., a process of dismemberment, of depersonalization, which all the factions strive for but which is thwarted by Coriolanus's refusal to lay his wounds bare. This refusal, discounting any suggestive psychoanalytical motivations, indicates his desire to maintain his self-mastery and keep his identity intact.[10] The body of the hero is thus, as it were, coveted and claimed by all: the senators and the patricians, Cominius and Menenius, his mother Volumnia, and the tribunes and the populace, in the Roman camp; Aufidius and the Volscians in the enemy camp.

The senators and the patricians, threatened by the class war, see in Caius Martius the military *auctoritas* able to breathe new life into an aristocracy in a state of crisis, the unitary symbol of the *body politic*, which has been shattered by the division of powers: proof and advance notice of this are to be seen in the apologue of the belly recounted by the astute Menenius.[11] The tribunes want the

10 See in this regard, Cynthia Marshall, 'Wound-man: Coriolanus, Gender, and the Theatrical Construction of Interiority', in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects,* ed. by Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan and Dympna Callaghan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 93 – 118 (p. 103).

11 On the medieval doctrine of the "King's two bodies", from which the concept of *corpus mysticum* derives, i. e. a *body natural*, subjected to physical consumption and death, and a *body politic*, which never dies, see the classical study by Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* [1957] (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). See also Anne Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977).

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wounded hero's body to be displayed to the people and Martius to recognize the authority of the populace, the true expression of the city and the idea of the state, as the Machiavellian Sicinius Velutus grandiloquently declares (*Sic.* "What is the city but the people? *Citizens.* True, / The people are the city", 3.1.198 – 99). Only in this way will it be possible to assert the principle of the people's control of the government and only in this way will Coriolanus's scars speak for the cause of the masses, for their amelioration and political emancipation, inverting the aristocratic and oligarchic view of the *body politic.* His mother Volumnia, who has brought Martius up with an eye on her own rise to power, sees in the heroic deeds of her war-torn son an eloquent viaticum that will enable him to obtain the consulship. In the opposite camp Aufidius repeats over and again his hatred of Caius Martius, together with his desire to seize and destroy the body of his enemy, who has brought him dishonour and defeat. In Act 3, scene 2, it is clearly highly ironic that Coriolanus – contradicting his avowed resolutions and his unbending *virtus*, which is contrary to the policy of falsehood and external appearance, should yield to his mother's desire that he go to the "market-place" to ask the people to elect him to the consulship and answer the tribunes' charges:

> I will not do't,
> Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth,
> And by my body's action teach my mind
> A most inherent baseness. (3.2.120 – 23)

His words, like those that conclude the sequence – "Mother, I am going to the market-place. / Chide me no more" (3.2.131 – 32) – are doubly ironic in view of his sudden acquiescence (which however fails to achieve the desired effect) and of the subsequent events. Equally loaded with dramatic irony is Volumnia's remark to the Gentlewoman in Act 1, scene 3, which proves to be a bitter premonition: "He'll beat Aufidius' head below his knee / And tread upon his neck" (1.3.48 – 9). Both of these passages will be re-echoed in the play's closing lines, tinged with satirical overtones, when the Herculean hero of countless battles is accused of being a cowardly "boy of tears" (5.6.103) and his *body natural* is literally torn to pieces in the vindictive incitement of the Volscian crowd (which thus nullifies its all-dominating symbolic power) and butchered by the conspirators, while Aufidius marks his final victory by standing on the lacerated corpse.

The tragedy of Coriolanus acquires satirical traits owing to the presence of a perfectly symmetric structure that mirrorwise marks the shifting of the action from the hero's apotheosis to his infamy, from military triumph to a grotesque and unseemly death surrounded by an incensed crowd. The progress of action features a series of parallel situations that are repeated with significant and one might even say didactic regularity. The siege of Corioles, which leads to Caius

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Martius's triumph, is inverted in its axiological significance in the siege of Rome, which leads instead to the hero's downfall. We thus witness a dual process of triumph and fall – of apotheosis and bathos – that befalls him both in Rome and among the Volscians, marking his vicissitudes with an unmistakable sense of bitter and ironic involution.

This satirical construction is strengthened by the presence of two ironic commentators (Menenius and Aufidius), who present the title hero critically in both the Roman and the Volscian camp. The gradual passage from tragedy to satire is especially clear in Act 4.[12] At the end of Act 3, Coriolanus upsets the tribunes' sentence to exile by his refusal to live in the community, emphasizing his moral integrity in the face of an ungrateful, hypocritical world that is devoid of all values:

> I banish you.
> And here remain with your uncertainty.
> Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts;
> Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,
> Fan you into despair! Have the power still
> To banish your defenders, till at length
> Your ignorance – which finds not till it feels –
> Making but reservation of yourselves –
> Still your own foes, deliver you
> As most abated captives to some nation
> That won you without blows! Despising
> For you the city, thus I turn my back.
> There is a world elsewhere. (3.3.121 – 33)

Also thanks to this supreme affirmation of self-centredness, the figure of Coriolanus is in a state of continuous expansion until the opening scene of Act 4, when he parts from his family and friends, ironically pre-announcing his intention to remain true to his ideals ("While I remain above the ground you shall / Hear from me still, and never of me aught / But what is like me formerly" 4.1.52 – 4). But in the fourth scene he betakes himself to Antium to offer Aufidius his revenge. This switch is presented suddenly, with no inner conflict: in a single stroke he destroys the mythical moral integrity that he had always refused to dent. He thinks he has found another fatherland and mistakes the opportunism of Aufidius and the Volscian senators for the testimony of a people that, unlike his own fellow countrymen, has preserved the values in which he believes (4.5. et sqq.). When he is moved by the "unnatural scene" of his mother, his wife, and the little Martius, who on their knees beseech him to save Rome, berating him for

12 See Oscar J. Campbell, *Shakespeare's Satire* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. 198 – 217.

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bartering his honour for the sake of vengeance, he shows that he is yielding to the heroic image of a soldier towards which his mother has always guided him and – faithful to his principles of *dignitas* and moral integrity – he calls upon his former enemy to stand witness to the peace agreement.[13] As Aufidius remarks, the conflict Coriolanus provokes within himself is between *pietas* and *honor* (5.3.201 – 203).

In Act 4 Cominius described him as a vengeful god, a scourge of nature, that leads the Volscians sowing death and destruction without mercy:

> He is their god. He leads them like a thing
> Made by some other deity than nature,
> That shapes man better, and they follow him
> Against us brats with no less confidence
> Than boys pursuing summer butterflies,
> Or butchers killing flies. (4.6.94 – 99)

Now, for the first time, his iron temper is shaken; and he who shortly before had been exalted as "the rock, the oak, not to be wind-shaken" (5. 2. 110) bends to his mother's will:

> O, mother, mother!
> What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,
> The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
> They laugh at. O my mother, mother, O!
> You have won a happy victory to Rome;
> But for your son, believe it, O believe it,
> Most dangerously you have with him prevailed,
> If not most mortal to him. (5.3.183 – 90)

But while this humanization of the character is apparently a conquest, it also ironically comes to mean the failure of his life, both public and private, since Coriolanus has not succeeded in establishing himself either as consul or as the purifying destroyer of a "cankered country" (4.5.92). For this reason he later realizes that there is no space in society for him either in Rome or with the Volscians, because the two worlds are in fact two sides of the same coin, governed as they are by the same laws and the same Machiavellian forces. For Coriolanus there is *not* "a world elsewhere", and his yielding is cleverly exploited by Aufidius:

> I am glad thou hast set thy mercy and thy honour
> At difference in thee. Out of that I'll work
> Myself a former fortune. (5.3.201 – 203)

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13 See Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama. The History Plays and The Roman Plays* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 208 – 10.

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The mirror image of the dramatic situations thus returns, with all its meaningful, anticlimactic quality. In a scene paralleling that of his departure from Rome, he is goaded into rage by the accusation that he is a "traitor", stripped even of his glorious soubriquet, mocked as a pavid "boy of tears" (5.6.103), and ignominiously killed among a crowd that despises him, giving him no chance of catharsis. He consequently appears totally isolated in his convictions, unable to affirm his role in society outside the martial arts, and ends up a victim of the selfsame virtues he exalted, unwittingly exposing himself to Aufidius's provocation and to the consequent derision of an ironic epitaph pronounced by his own assassin.[14]

2. *Cymbeline*

As the heart of *romanitas* and the classical world, Italy was also regarded as the ancient site of the Roman empire and, as such, the relevant emblematic expression of imperialism and colonization was immediately absorbed and exploited by the Elizabethans, becoming a metaphor for the English nation and an extraordinary vehicle for celebrating issues of nationalism and patriotic identity set against the threat of the foreign Other denounced as a source of corruption.[15] This sort of anglicized political adoption of the idea of a *translatio studii et imperii* from ancient Rome and *cinquecento* culture to early modern England is visible throughout the canon in a series of dramas, from the histories and Roman plays to the tragedies and late romances, portraying a self-representation of idealized British unity.

In Shakespeare's tragicomedies, governed by an ethical dimension projected onto forgiveness and reconciliation, the representation of Italy becomes an ideological appropriation of the country's history, mythology, and literary tradition in which 'Italian vices' are opposed to 'English virtues' and replaced by values of post-Tridentine humanism such as patience, constancy, and endurance. In *Pericles*, the eponymous hero's encounter with evil, when he deciphers the ambiguity of the riddle, takes the shape of "foul incest", for which Pericles's reign

14 See Jacqueline Pearson, 'Romans and Barbarians: The Structure of Irony in Shakespeare's Roman Tragedies', in *Shakespearian Tragedy*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 20 (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), pp. 180–81.

15 See Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Italian and Others: *The White Devil*', in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. by David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 251–62. But see also Margo Hendricks, 'The Moor of Venice: or the Italian on the Renaissance English Stage', in *Shakespearean Tragedy and Gender*, ed. by Shirley Nelson Garner and Madelon Sprengnether (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 193–209.

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must suffer and be in peril at the tyrant's will, making, says he, "my body pine and soul to languish, / And punish that before that he would punish" (1.2.32 – 3). The lewd menace of sexual abuse within the parental household is set against the incorruptible purity of Pericles's daughter and imbued with the Christian virtue of patience, characterizing the ongoing actions of both Pericles and his wife. Marina stands out not only as the symbol of regeneration for her father's family loss; she becomes the most natural reward for the prince's proven capacity of endurance prompted by both Marina and Thaisa as spiritual agents, just as Perdita's and Hermione's characterizations stand for Leontes in *The Winter's Tale.* The abrupt eruption of jealousy and Senecan *furor* in both Leontes and Posthumus Leonato arises from a kind of Italian vice that is similar to Othello's, against which feminine redemptive powers, embodied both in wife and daughter, are contrasted.[16] This important shift in the play's symbolic construction, as Robert Miola has noted, "occurs in a Christianized context of sin and repentance" akin in spirit to Giraldi Cinthio's theorization of *tragedia mista* or *tragedia di fin lieto* and Guarini's pastoral tragicomedy.[17] The female regenerative role is also drawn from the theatregrams of the wondrous woman and the faked death and burial experimented with in Italian *commedia grave*, a comedic sub-genre replacing the classical *topos* of fate and whorish fortune with the Counter-Reformation belief in the rewarding outcomes of Providence. Marina, Innogen, Perdita, and Miranda – each in her single role or alongside that of her mother – are endowed with the assertive linguistic capacity of the heroine on trial as well as the saint-like quality of Desdemona's and Cordelia's innate life-giving gifts of innocence and grace. In their similar character construction, they are indeed all derivative of the trope of the woman as wonder, grafting the post-Tridentine principles of Guarinian tragicomedy onto Anglo-Italian humanistic culture.[18]

In *Cymbeline*, perhaps more clearly than in the other romances, the moral content depicting the conflict between mind (*mens*) and body (*corpus*) is linked to the threat of the foreign Other conjoint to issues of sovereignty and national

16 For the symbolic role of Desdemona as a dispenser of faith and forgiveness, see Michele Marrapodi, '"Let her witness it": the Rhetoric of Desdemona', in *Italian Studies in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, ed. by Michele Marrapodi and Giorgio Melchiori (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), pp. 220 – 44.

17 Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 188. On the influence of Guarini's tragicomedy on Elizabethan drama, see George K. Hunter, 'Italian Tragicomedy on the English Stage', in George K. Hunter, *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Traditions: Studies in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978), pp. 133 – 56.

18 See, in this regard, the seminal work by Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) and Robert Henke, *Pastoral Transformation. Italian Tragicomedy and Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997).

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identity. This political theme provides also a common thread connecting *Cymbeline* to *Coriolanus*. The male fortitude of Posthumus in battle recalls the kind of heroism of Caius Martius; Belarius's banishment for his alleged treason as well as that of Posthumus rehearses the case of Coriolanus; the danger of the foreign siege by the Volscian army is duplicated in the Roman invasion of Britain, although the war concludes with the peaceful unification of the two countries' military ensigns in the later play. By contrast, Iachimo, more explicitly than Aufidius, acts as a stage machiavel, embodying in himself those scheming and dissimulating powers portrayed in current stereotypes of moral duplicity associated with his Italian origin, as he is indirectly referred to in the play ("false Italian", "Slight thing of Italy", "Italian brain", "Italian fiend"). Apart from the obvious derivation from Iago, it is noteworthy that, although most of the love affair between the slandered Innogen and the deceived Posthumus recasts the tragedy of *Othello* via the influence of Italian drama and novelistic literature, it is the ethical and political component related to the rhetoric of the body that provides instructive elements connecting the stage world of *Cymbeline* to that of *Othello* and the Roman plays. In spite of *Othello*'s domestic world, the Venetian state has to face military aggression by the Ottoman empire, the Moor is depicted as the foreign Other by a wave of racial hatred and patriarchal authority propagated by Iago, and Othello identifies himself as the "turbaned Turk" who "traduced the state" before taking his own life (5.2.362 – 63). The semantic of the body with its moral and political connotations is also part of the rhetorical structure of *King Lear*, a tragedy offering striking similarities to *Cymbeline* and one in which the division of the kingdom and the disruption of the social and political order, obeying domestic anxieties of national unity, are finally restored through both the impeded invasion of a defeated French army and the death of the English evildoers.

In the Italian background of *Cymbeline*, on the other hand, in the wager plot taken from Boccaccio, Iachimo's faked conquest of Innogen intertextually restages Lucrece's violated body and echoes Othello's corporeal language, while the latter is addressing the sleeping Desdemona in the bedchamber:

> Our Tarquin thus
> Did softly press the rushes ere he wakened
> The chastity he wounded. Cytherea,
> How bravely thou becom'st thy bed! Fresh lily,
> And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch,
> But kiss, one kiss! Rubies unparagoned,
> How dearly they do't! 'Tis her breathing that
> Perfumes the chamber thus. The flame o'th' taper
> Bows toward her, and would underpeep her lids,
> To see th' enclosèd lights, now canopied

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> Under these windows, white and azure-laced
> With blue of heaven's own tinct. (2.2.12–23)

The sensuality of the scene is also evoked by the intertextual allusion to Innogen reading, like Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (2.2.44–6), suggesting an explicit reference to a classical work associated with rape.[19]

The moral overtones in the language of corporeality reverberate with striking accents in Innogen's response to Iachimo's obscene courtship, when the lady compares Posthumus's humble lineage to Iachimo's boasted ancestry:

> His meanest garment
> That ever hath but clipped his body is dearer
> In my respect than all the hairs above thee,
> Were they all made such men. (2.3.130–33)

Significantly, the metaphor of garment joined together with bodily imagery recurs throughout the play with this acquired moral content from this time onwards. Despite Innogen's faith in her husband, Iachimo's deception makes Posthumus believe in the false report of Innogen's adultery and he disowns their love, disrupting the moral values which their union has represented for him:

> Let there be no honour
> Where there is beauty, truth where semblance, love
> Where there's another man. The vows of women
> Of no more bondage be to where they are made
> Than they are to their virtues, which is nothing! (2.4.108–12)

For although he asks for "some corporal sign about her", he is totally duped by Iachimo's deceiving language and bursts into savage *furor* like Othello. Thus Iachimo's description of her star-like stain on her naked body becomes that kind of ocular proof which disrupts Othello's mind, condemning his wife to death. In the case of Posthumus, this conviction makes him proclaim a tremendous curse against women and a fierce outburst of misogynist rage which will lead to the letter to Pisanio, commissioning Innogen's murder:

> for there's no motion
> That tends to vice in man but I affirm
> It is the woman's part; be it lying, note it,
> The woman's; flattering, hers; deceiving, hers;
> Lust and rank thoughts, hers, hers; revenges, hers;
> Ambitions, covetings, change of prides, disdain,
> Nice longing, slanders, mutability,

19 On Shakespeare's use of the classical world, see *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. by Charles Martindale and Albert Booth Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), particularly the essays in Part III and IV, p. 173 f.

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> All faults that man can name, nay, that hell knows,
> Why, hers in part or all, but rather all–
> For even to vice
> They are not constant, but are changing still
> One vice but of a minute old for one
> Not half so old as that. I'll write against them,
> Detest them, curse them… (2.5.20–33)

Reacting as Camillo does in *The Winter's Tale*, Pisanio realizes that his master is betrayed by "a strange infection" transmitted by some "false Italian" and shows the letter to the slandered Innogen. Believing her husband abused by "some Roman courtezan", Innogen agrees to leave the British court and follow the Roman ambassador, Lucius, in the guise of a page. From this scene onwards the play overtly juxtaposes Italian vices with English virtues, denouncing the poisonous influence stemming from "That drug-damn'd Italy" as a source of corruption of British values.[20] Innogen's assumed name of Fidele underlines the sentiments of love, constancy, and faith towards her supposed dead husband; this untouched behaviour places her in the foreground of *commedia grave*, endorsing its providential design capable of redressing Iachimo's calumny and restoring the marriage's union. Ironically, though, it is the corrupted English queen and her son Cloten who subvert the idea of *romanitas* portrayed in the ideal of humanistic virtues embodied in Posthumus, Belarius, and his adopted sons. For although the queen's and Cloten's insolent response to the Roman ambassador, obeying Jacobean exigencies of national sovereignty, leads to the war against Rome, their political plotting against Cymbeline and Innogen manifest them as the real enemy of the state.

The moral level of the metaphor of garment comes again to the fore when the villain Cloten plans to kill Posthumus at Milford-Haven and to rape Innogen on his dead body:

> she held the very garment of Posthumus in more respect
> than my noble and natural person, together with the
> adornment of my qualities. With that suit upon my
> back will I ravish her– first kill him, and in her eyes;
> there shall she see my valour, which will then be a
> torment to her contempt. (3.5.134–40)

Thinking of acquiring Posthumus's valour by putting on his clothes, Cloten plans to commit a double knavery by killing his rival and usurping his rights as husband, thus making with the stolen dress fantasies about Posthumus's sexual

20 See Thomas G. Olsen, 'Iachimo's '"Drug-Damn'd Italy" and the Problem of British National Character in *Cymbeline*', *Shakespeare Yearbook*, ed. by Holger Klein and Michele Marrapodi, x (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), pp. 269–96.

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and military strength. As Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass have pointed out, "It is as if the clothes will keep Posthumus, imagined as dead, alive so that, in the remaining form of his suit, he can witness Innogen's rape, while, simultaneously, the suit, and thus Posthumus, will be both defiled and appropriated by Cloten".[21] Ironically, Cloten's boasted manliness will be the cause of his decapitation in duelling with Guiderius and his headless trunk will be mistaken for Posthumus by the disguised Innogen:

> A headless man? The garments of Posthumus?
> I know the shape of 's leg; this is his hand,
> His foot Mercurial, his Martial thigh,
> The brawns of Hercules; but his Jovial face –
> Murder in heaven! How? 'Tis gone. (4.2.310 – 14)

In Act 5, scene 1, the penitent Posthumus, believing he has caused the death of Innogen with his letter to Pisanio, reverses the rationale of Cloten's apparel, directing his plans towards a sense of learning and expiation:

> I'll disrobe me
> Of these Italian weeds, and suit myself
> As does a Briton peasant. So I'll fight
> Against the part I came with; so I'll die
> For thee, O Innogen…
> […]
> Let me make men know
> More valour in me than my habits show.
> Gods, put the strength o'th' Leonati in me.
> To shame the guise o'th' world, I will begin
> The fashion – less without and more within.
> (5.1.22 – 33)

The dichotomy between mind and body reflects that between appearance and reality, seeming and being, within and without, that is nakedness and clothing, rehearsing Lear's *anagnorisis* of the "thing itself. Unaccommodated man" (3.4.101 – 102), and it is confronted with moral corruption coming from Italy. Iachimo's guilty conscience recognizes in his seeming honour and apparel the loss of Roman virtues as distinct from British values:

> Knighthoods and honours borne
> As I wear mine are titles but of scorn.
> If that thy gentry, Britain, go before
> This lout as he exceeds our lords, the odds

21 Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 200.

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> Is that we scarce are men and you are gods.
> (5.2.6 – 10)

By contrast, Posthumus's decision to don a poor Briton's clothes and die in battle, fighting for the British side, embodies the very idea of *romanitas*, refashioning Roman ideals nurtured by heroism, civility, and honour. Significantly, these same principles prove to be innate in Belarius's adopted sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, that the banished lord has abducted from the court:

> 'Tis wonder
> That an invisible instinct should frame them
> To royalty unlearned, honour untaught,
> Civility not seen from other, valour
> That wildly grows in them, but yields a crop
> As if it had been sowed! (4.2.177 – 82)

When, during the battle with the Romans, Cymbeline's life is saved by the heroism of Posthumus, who, like Coriolanus, rescues him from his enemies, sharing the military valour with Belarius, Guiderius, and Arviragus, the king pays tribute to them, dispensing part of the nation's *body politic* as a symbolic recompense:

> the poor soldier that so richly fought,
> Whose rags shamed gilded arms, whose naked breast
> Stepped before targs of proof, cannot be found…
> […]
> To my grief I am
> The heir of his reward, which I will add
> To you, the liver, heart, and brain of Britain,
> By whom I grant she lives. (5.6.3 – 15)

The final recognition of the long-lost sons and of Innogen, whose innocence is confirmed by Iachimo's confession, leads to the self-revelation of Posthumus, who asks forgiveness for the intended murder of his wife. Thanks to the divine intervention of Posthumus's dead parents as household gods, appearing in Posthumus's dream, the action moves on towards forgiveness and reconciliation. The theatricality of Jupiter's theophany when he descends as *deus ex machina* in thunder and lightning sitting upon an eagle, operates a kind of religious syncretism consonant with Guarinian theories of pastoral tragicomedy and the meta-theatrical perspectives of the last plays. The tablet Jupiter leaves on Posthumus's breast provides the necessary explanations for the final recognition scene and the celebrated peace with the Romans, establishing a new political union between imperial Rome and the British kingdom. The play's final peace and the united flags may thus express James's political project to unite the two kingdoms of England and Scotland, anticipating the modern symbolism of the

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Union Jack. By rejecting from the British court the kind of Italian vices juxtaposed in the play by the anachronism of contemporary Italy, the dramatist can appropriate the myth of imperial Rome distancing it from the villainies of Renaissance Italy, powerfully expressing, as Peter Parolin has put it, "the British desire to ground its national identity in an identification with Rome but not with the Italy that Rome became".[22]

3. Conclusion

Renaissance culture identified 'action' with the concept of *actio*, i. e., the rhetorical capacity to report an action, charging it with suprasegmental meanings of a gestural and non-verbal nature. Francis Bacon explained what it was in the following terms, in his essay *Of Boldnesse:*

> It is a triuiall Grammar Schoole Texte, but yet worthy a wise *Mans* Consideration. Question was asked of *Demosthenes; What was the Chiefe Part of an Oratour?* He answered, *Action*; what next? *Action*; What next again? *Action.*[23]

Shakespeare shows he was aware of the word's meaning when he makes Hamlet say "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action" (*Hamlet*, 3.2.17 – 18), inviting the players to show moderation and take the mirror up to nature as their model. In *Coriolanus*, written between 1607 and 1609, this healthy balance between word and gesture breaks down, with the term *actio* taking on a negative connotation in the atmosphere of general affectation surrounding consular and republican Rome that is evoked by the tragedy. Here gesture becomes rite, it espouses falsehood and external appearance, and – charging itself with social motivations and political demands – it acquires the communicative power of language and itself becomes a form of eloquence.

David Bevington cites a passage by Thomas Wright in *The Passions of the Mind in General* (1630) in which gesture and eloquence are placed on the same plane:

22 Peter A. Parolin, 'Anachronistic Italy: Cultural Alliances and National Identity in *Cymbeline*', *Shakespeare Studies*, ed. by Leeds Barroll, xxx (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2002), pp. 188 – 215 (p. 207).

23 *Essays by Francis Bacon*, ed. by Geoffrey Grigson (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 47 (italics in the text).

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Action is either a certaine visible eloquence, or an eloquence of the bodei, or a comely grace in deliuering conceits, or an external image of an internal minde.[24]

In the behavioural codes of the day, as Bevington points out, "a person plays a set part in the social organism, and that role prescribes certain outward forms. Gesture is something put on, like a garment, to enable one to fulfil a social role".[25] It may perhaps be said that Caius Martius shows himself to be unable to put this rhetorical capacity into practice, to don the garment of hypocrisy and ceremonial falsity that is instead the natural sociolinguistic statute of the stage-world represented and, in particular, of Volumnia's conception of politics. This factor also adds to the growing split between the two characters, for not only does Volumnia wholly belong to the world of ambiguity and external appearance that characterizes the play's political dimension and affects its ideological construction but she also makes use of it to suit her own purposes, to support the demands of her political adversaries, and to favour her son's rise to power. Coriolanus, on the contrary, categorically shuns any form of compromise as he is by nature totally averse to the affectation and hypocrisy of politics, to rhetorical invention for its own sake. His linguistic universe, like Hamlet's, is anchored in the world of truth and being. His fatal error is that he lacks Hamlet's speculative ability, the powers of logic and deduction that enable the Danish prince to understand his opponents' devious manoeuvres in advance and act accordingly. If it is indeed true that in the end it is the "political" avenger Fortinbras who rules over the state of Denmark, having judiciously waited for the right moment to claim his rights, it is equally true that Hamlet succeeds in the arduous task of healing the 'sickness' of the *body politic*, straightening out the times that are "out of joint", poisoned as they are by the corruption of speech and the mystification of power. Coriolanus, by contrast, does not have an incisive effect on the new reality that is represented; the evils, hypocrisies, and contradictions of that society remain and indeed flourish with the hero's fall, ironically triumphing over his inflexibility, over his inability to adapt to the new social and political processes that are now inexorably moving towards a radical transformation of the world, towards the creation of a new rhetorical language, code, and register that these processes themselves develop and impose.

In the Jacobeans' middle-class, capitalist society, in which an ever-growing social awareness was to clear the way for the Puritan revolution and the consequent crisis of the aristocracy, Coriolanus belongs to the heroes of the past, and his stubborn attachment to absolute values and the philosophy of truth and

24 David Bevington, *Action is Eloquence: Shakespeare's Language of Gesture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 67.

25 Bevington, p. 67.

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being, to which he insists on referring in his debate with his mother – "Let deeds express / What's like to be their words" (3.1.135 – 36) – eventually leads to his succumbing to the rhetoric of politics, to the new eloquence, which clouds the confine between reality and external appearance, with the result that he falls victim to the provocation and opportunism of his detractors, as he himself offers his flank to the fatal blows of his political opponents. If, for Coriolanus, "deeds" speak by their very nature and express – as express they must – that which they themselves perform, for the more worldly-wise Volumnia, one who is accustomed to the hypocrisy and Machiavellianism of politics, external appearance and the spectacular gesture are sufficient unto themselves and themselves become, if need be, political action; seeing is corroborated by hearing, and *actio* obtains what reason is unable to communicate:

> I prithee now, my son,
> Go to them, with this bonnet in thy hand,
> And thus far having stretched it – here be with them –
> Thy knee bussing the stones – for in such business
> Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th'ignorant
> More learnèd than the ears… (3.2.72 – 7)

Coriolanus never succeeds in putting his mother's indoctrination into practice. Ironically, his inability to bend his knee before the people to ask for their votes is matched in the third scene of Act 5 by the "unnatural scene" of his mother and his young son kneeling before him to beg him to spare Rome. If in the first case he refuses to yield to his mother's will and has to go into exile, in the second case his acquiescence – consistently with his nature and honesty – leads him to death. The tragedy of Coriolanus may perhaps be read in this incapacity of the protagonist to adapt to a society governed by the external appearance and cynicism of the *new men* of the late tragedies – the sundry Octavius Caesar, Alcibiades, and Aufidius – who know how to exploit his weaknesses and triumph at his fall. The two antagonists confirm their antithetic positions in the final scene. Aufidius is the new man, the rational and astute politician who looks upon the times with a sense of realism and moderation ("So our virtues / Lie in th'interpretation of the time", 4.7.49 – 50); Coriolanus is the hero of the past who remains anchored to an inflexible world of absolute values, a man whose ultimate fate seems to fulfil Vindice's paradoxical maxim, "'Tis time to die, when we are ourselves our foe".[26]

With *Coriolanus*, the doctrine of the "King's two bodies" is smashed in the

26 Cyril Tourneur, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, in *The Plays of Cyril Tourneur*, ed. by George Parfitt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5.3.109.

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impact with the satirical tragedy of state.[27] The immortality of king and empire clashes with the advent of a multiform, opportunistic, changing society, one that prompts new types of 'characters' – who are at one and the same time ironical, cynical, Machiavellian – as in the plays of Marston, Jonson, Tourneur, Middleton, and Webster. Shakespeare's sympathies are for Coriolanus, but it is the politic Aufidius that triumphs over the world, because with *Coriolanus* the 'King dies' and with him the construction of the 'heroic tragedy' also vanishes.

In *Cymbeline*, on the other hand, the moral content of the rhetoric of the body sets up a dialectic between outer and inner forces, Italian duplicity and Christianized English integrity, originating in the representation of a double-sided Other seen both as a corrupter of national virtuosity and as an English projection, a repulsive font of vices where domestic anxieties could be easily stored and exorcised. The idea of *romanitas* is linked to a humanistic perspective, influenced by Italian *cinquecento* culture, which leads to conjugate manly *virtus* with feminine *caritas*, providing a unitary frame to erstwhile separated and opposing values. The *topos* of the woman on trial, with its variations of the slandered and assertive heroine, covers fundamental issues of Shakespeare's dramaturgy, providing intriguing dramatic situations from the early comedies and mature tragedies to the last plays, from the role of the defamed Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing* to the patriarchal inquisition of Desdemona and Cordelia until Hermione's indictment in *The Winter's Tale*. As I mentioned earlier, the related commonplace of the supposed death and burial links this theatregram to that of the *donna mirabile* and the rise of *commedia grave* experiments, performing the Counter-Reformation belief in a providential design capable of rewarding Christian virtues and creating a happy ending.[28] As in the other romances, *Cymbeline* grafts this *topos* onto the new tragicomedic structure of Giraldi's third, mixed genre, later theorized by Guarini in his *Compendio della poesia tragicomica*.[29] Whereas the *gravitas* in the enactment of *commedia* solutions

27 See James W. Lever, *The Tragedy of State. A Study of Jacobean Drama* (London: Methuen, 1971).

28 See, for instance, such plays as Alessandro Piccolomini's *L'amor costante* (1536), Girolamo Bargagli's *La Pellegrina* (1564), and Raffaello Borghini's *La Donna costante* (1589). See Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, particularly chapters II and III.

29 See Giovan Battista Giraldi Cinzio, *Discorso intorno al comporre delle commedie e delle tragedie*, in *Scritti critici*, ed. by Camillo Guerrieri Crocetti (Milan: Marzorati, 1973), pp. 169–224; Giovan Battista Guarini, *Il Pastor Fido e il Compendio della poesia tragicomica*, ed. by Gioachino Brognoligo (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1914), p. 246: "se sarà domandato che fine è quello della poesia tragicomica, dirò ch'egli sia d'imitare con apparato scenico un'azione finta e mista di tutte quelle parti tragiche e comiche, che verisimilmente e con decoro possono stare insieme, corrette sotto una sola forma drammatica, per fine di purgar con diletto la mestizia degli ascoltanti". On Cinthio's and Guarini's contribution to the origin of tragicomedy in England, see Marvin T. Herrick, *Tragicomedy: Its Origin and Development in Italy, France, and England* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955), pp. 63–92; Robert

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sustains the woman's regenerative powers, tragicomedy holds the generic necessity of unpredictable transformations of tragic outcomes into a happy conclusion, marking Shakespeare's late romances with an interest in mixing genres and Italian mannerism demonstrating, in Louise Clubb's words, "each in its unique way continuing Shakespeare's exploration and testing of frontiers".[30] Thus wives and daughters in the last plays become spiritual agents of reunion for an often dispersed family, generating a newborn artistic reform, creatively mixing structural variations and theatregrams based on self-conscious theatricality, theophanic syncretism, and bucolic and mythological settings.

In this context, Innogen's own body, exposed by Posthumus as an object of untouchable desire for the male gaze in the wager scene and violated by Iachimo's visual rape, becomes the metaphor of Britain under threat by Roman invasion. Despite his nationalistic hatred towards the Romans, Cloten's planned rape of Innogen sounds as a transgressive act which is not only sexual but also and above all politically subversive. He aims to vindicate Innogen's refusal to surrender by killing her husband and raping her while he wears Posthumus's garments:

> Posthumus, thy head, which now is
> growing upon thy shoulders shall within this hour be
> off, thy mistress enforced, thy garments cut to pieces
> before thy face. (4.1.15 – 18)

Ironically, his intended crime is repaid with a just reward by Guiderius who beheads him, while he receives from Innogen only a loving obituary, mistaking his trunk for Posthumus's body:

> The garments of Posthumus?
> I know the shape of's leg; this is his hand,
> His foot Mercurial, his Martial thigh,
> The brawns of Hercules; but his Jovial face –
> Murder in heaven! How? 'Tis gone. (4.2.310 – 14)

In *Cymbeline* the semantic of corporeality acquires a new ethical dimension through the symbolic representation of the feminine reclaimed, conquered, and violated, mirroring the country's *body politic.* It was indeed an established early modern commonplace to associate the female body to England's political ge-

S. Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy*, p. 188 f; George K. Hunter, 'Italian Tragicomedy on the English Stage', pp. 133 – 56; Peggy Munoz Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare's* Cymbeline. *An Iconographic Reconstruction* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), pp. 29 – 65; Robert Henke, *Pastoral Transformation*, particularly chapters III and IV; *Transnational Exchange In Early Modern Theater,* ed. by Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. 19 – 34).

30 Clubb, *Italian Drama*, p. 181.

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ography as well as the idea of ravishment as a violation of national sovereignty.[31] In the guise of a boy, Innogen meditates at her expenses the moral of borrowed robes and the danger of her disguise in a male-dominated society governed by the falsity of appearance ("To lapse in fullness / Is sorer than to lie for need, and falsehood / Is worse in kings than beggars", 3.6.12–14). Thus the Christian virtues of faith, constancy, and grace exalted by Innogen are opposed to the manly *virtutes* which are at stake in the wager scene, where Posthumus embraces the world of seeming and falsehood embedded in Iachimo's tale, mistaking as truth his ostentation of deceitful love-tokens as evidence of Innogen's wantonness. Inevitably, this moral dichotomy parallels continuously the political scene, placing Iachimo's dissimulation alongside the destabilizing attempts at political subversion in the plotting of the wicked queen and her son. The king's sententious reaction at the reported death of the queen conveys a sense of expiation for his misgivings, since he has been deceived by the world of seeming:

> Mine eyes
> Were not in fault, for she was beautiful;
> Mine ears that heard her flattery, nor my heart
> That thought her like her seeming. It had been vicious
> To have mistrusted her. Yet, O my daughter,
> That it was folly in me, thou mayst say,
> And prove it in thy feeling. Heaven mend all!
> (5.6.62–8)

By contrast, the king's spiritual blindness and the falsity of his corrupted court are juxtaposed with the natural simplicity of Belarius's country-life, where he has brought up the king's sons, teaching them the king's becoming graces with the aid of great creating nature:

> O thou goddess,
> Thou divine Nature, how thyself thou blazon'st
> In these two princely boys! They are as gentle
> As zephyrs blowing below the violet,
> Not wagging his sweet head; and yet as rough,
> Their royal blood enchafed, as the rud'st wind
> That by the top doth take the mountain pine
> And make him stoop to th' vale. (4.2.170–77)

31 See, for instance, Leonard Tennenhouse, 'Playing and Power', in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacoben Drama*, ed. by David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 27–39, especially pp. 31–7; Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (New York: Methuen, 1986); Maria Del Sapio Garbero, *Il bene ritrovato. Le figlie di Shakespeare dal* King Lear *ai* Romances (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 2005), p. 220 f.

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As Innogen's name indicates, her triumphant innocence as well as the heroic performance of true *romanitas* delivered in battle by her long-lost brothers and the penitent Posthumus contribute to the final recognitions, leading the corporeal theme to achieve both a family reunion and a political reconciliation.

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Alessandro Serpieri

Body and History in the Political Rhetoric of *Julius Caesar*

Even more than in the plays dealing with the history of England, it is in those inspired by Roman history that Shakespeare seems to be fascinated with the catastrophic functions of the body in the unfolding of great epoch-making events. These are plays in which the body is subjected to mutilation, rape, and murder. Shakespeare draws ideas, suggestions and information from the *Chronicles* of England and the narrations of Livy and Plutarch, as well as Ovid's myths (in particular, the myth of Philomela). And as his art concentrates on political plotting and the clash of conflicting institutional organisations, he builds up around the body a tremendous argumentative rhetoric with a strong scenic impact, through which history is shown at decisive turning points.

The body is already conspicuously on stage, in the most various and truculent ways, in one of Shakespeare's very first theatrical works, *Titus Andronicus*, a tragedy set in a remote past, at the time of the late Roman Empire, when political cohesion, and above all, the values of honour and *pietas*, already weakened by the internal crisis afflicting the institutions on the brink of an irreversible decline, were disintegrating under the external pressure of the Barbarians (in this case, the Goths). In spite of the many specific references to Roman places and customs, the tragedy's historical setting remains in the background, as the action takes the form of a revenge tragedy centred on a feud between the family of the Andronici and that of Tamora, Queen of the Goths. Although the conquest of power is at stake, this does not occur through a popular consensus which must be won by the opposing factions through the art of persuasion. Rather, the struggle involves death sentences (imposed on the sons of both families); the rape and multiple mutilation (of Lavinia, a new Philomela); the severing of Titus's hand – the hand which he is tricked into believing he is giving in exchange for his sons' lives – and, finally, the macabre pie concocted from the minced bodies of Tamora's sons, which Titus serves her at table (in a scene reminiscent of Seneca's *Thyestes*). The tribal conflict progresses by means of slashes to the body or ferocious killings through which the rival families are torn to pieces and decimated. From beginning to end, one has the impression of

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witnessing a relentless severing of limbs from bodies representing organic, individual, or family trees. Thus, the rhetoric of this form of theatre of cruelty is articulated through invectives and lamentations from both sides, rather than persuasive arguments employed to obtain power.

However, when Shakespeare turns to Roman history, not for a vague historical register but for reliable sources dealing with the greatness of Rome, such as those of Livy and Plutarch, his treatment of the function of the body takes quite a different dramatic, rhetorical and scenic turn. Granted, the struggle for power is made up of events, but even more so it is a political war of words, where the body of a victim is fought over for partisan reasons. And that body changes the course of history, in accordance with what *really* happened to Rome as reported by the sources Shakespeare follows more or less closely. I am referring here to the long narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) and the first great Roman play, *Julius Caesar* (1599). They are based upon two pivotal events, separated by five centuries of history but essentially symmetrical with respect to the fate of ancient Rome: the rape of Lucretia, perpetrated by Sextus Tarquinius, and her consequent suicide, an event which Lucius Iunius Brutus used as a vital weapon of persuasion to stir up the people to rebellion against Tarquin the Proud, the last of the seven kings, and thus establish the republic; and Caesar's assassination in a conspiracy led by another Brutus, Marcus Iunius Brutus, an event intended to save the republic but which, in fact, led to its end, principally at the hands of Mark Antony who, standing before Caesar's mangled body, stirred up the people against the conspirators. This eventually led to the absolute Empire that Octavian Augustus would later take from that same Antony, proclaiming himself the first of a succession of Caesars which was to span many centuries.

The two events mirror each other and encompass a great part of Roman history. Lucretia's dead body serves Lucius Iunius Brutus's purpose of destroying the monarchic regime. Caesar's dead body serves Antony's purpose of destroying the republican regime that Marcus Brutus had wanted to preserve. Nevertheless, in spite of their temporal proximity in Shakespeare's career, the poem and the play he dedicated to these events are separated by the material difference in genre, and therefore in artistic treatment.

The narrative – and often lyrical – form of the poem favours descriptions as well as interlocution among the main characters, in which Lucretia's voice predominates, and never broadens its scope to the public scene, not even in relation to the historical catastrophe. Lucretia's body, covered with blood, cries out for vengeance, and it is Lucius Iunius Brutus who responds to that call, having extracted the knife from her wound, thus becoming the recipient of this silent message:

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> And from the purple fountain Brutus drew
> The murd'rous knife; and, as it left the place,
> Her blood in poor revenge held it in chase. (1734–36)[1]

The great historical consequence of that suicide, prompted by the blind fury of a tyrant's brother, is condensed in a brief closing:

> They did conclude to bear dead Lucrece thence,
> *To show her bleeding body* thorough Rome,
> And so to publish Tarquin's foul offence;
> Which being done with speedy diligence,
> The Romans plausibly did give consent
> To Tarquin's everlasting banishment. (1850–55)[2]

Here, Shakespeare takes the dramatic effect of that body for granted, choosing not to dramatise Livy's text. Livy, on the other hand, insists on the spectacular persuasive rhetoric with which Lucius Brutus rouses the crowd against the Tarquinians, precisely by concentrating on that body:

> They carried out Lucretia's corpse from the house and bore it to the market-place, where men crowded about them, attracted, as they were bound to be, by the amazing character of the strange event and its heinousness [...] *it was Brutus* who chid their tears and idle lamentations and *urged* them to take up the sword, as befitted men and Romans, against those who had dared to treat them as enemies. There [in the Forum] [Brutus] made a speech by no means like what might have been expected of the mind and the spirit which he had feigned up to that day. He spoke of the violence and lust of Sextus Tarquinius, of the shameful defilement of Lucretia and her deplorable death [...].[3]

But in *Julius Caesar*, a few years later, scenic space and persuasive rhetoric are the very elements on which Shakespeare bases his most political and public play. The ancient, victorious Brutus is succeeded here by the Brutus who is doomed to lose, and an entire historic cycle draws to a close, on a single name. We are now at the theatre where we find scenes involving the masses alternating with individual tragedy. Significantly, the curtain rises to show the people about to rejoice in Caesar's triumph upon his return to Rome from Munda, where he had defeated the sons of the great Pompey, his sole rival and final obstacle in the conquest of absolute power. Statues, icons of his body decorated with royal symbols, appear in the streets. The plebeian tribunes, defenders of the repub-

1 William Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*, in William Shakespeare, *The Narrative Poems*, ed. by Maurice Evans (London: Penguin, 1989).
2 My italics, here and in the following quotations.
3 Livy, *History of Rome*, trans. by B. O. Forster, 14 vols (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), i, pp. 205–06 (Book I, LIX, 3–9).

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lican regime, step in to chastise the crowds, even taking care to strip the statues of their adornments ("Disrobe the images, / If you find them decked with ceremonies", Flavius admonishes the other tribune, Marullus, in 1.1.64 – 5).[4] Immediately afterwards, Cassius tries to tempt the reluctant Brutus to join the conspiracy against the tyrant, or rather, to become its leader, precisely in the name of the first Brutus, who had founded the republic. He uses a number of arguments to diminish the greatness of Caesar, who is simply a man, no greater than other men; not a giant, not a Colossus to whom all must bow in submission:

> Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
> Like a Colossus, and we petty men
> Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
> To find ourselves dishonourable graves. (1.2.133 – 36)

Meanwhile, off stage, the feast of Lupercalia is taking place, in which Antony offers Caesar a symbolic laurel crown, while on stage the people's applause is heard. This noise is interpreted as an indication of Ceasar's impending coronation (whereas he has actually refused Antony's offer three times, reluctantly, according to Casca's testimony). Nevertheless, Brutus is finally persuaded of his own crucial historical duty, but he would prefer not to be forced to *play* the part that a conspiracy necessarily requires. During the sleepless night he spends meditating on what he has already resolved to do, he also, or primarily, reflects on this point:

> O conspiracy,
> Sham'st thou to show thy dang'rous brow by night,
> When evils are most free? O then, by day
> Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough
> *To mask* thy monstrous visage? Seek none, conspiracy;
> Hide it in smiles and affability;
> For if thou path, thy native semblance on,
> Not Erebus itself were dim enough
> To hide thee from prevention. (2.1.77 – 85)

He would like to be able to kill Caesar's spirit and not his body. When the conspirators join him and Cassius suggests that the dangerous Antony should be killed along with Caesar, he responds:

> Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,
> To cut the *head* off and then *hack the limbs*,
> Like wrath in death and envy afterwards,
> For Antony is but *a limb* of Caesar.
> Let us be *sacrificers*, but not *butchers*, Caius.

4 The edition used is *Julius Caesar*, ed. by T. S. Dorsch, Arden edition (London: Methuen, 1973).

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> We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar,
> And in the *spirit* of men there is no blood.
> O that we then could come by *Caesar's spirit*
> And *not dismember* Caesar! But, alas,
> Caesar must bleed for it. And, gentle friends,
> Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;
> Let's *carve* him as a *dish* fit for the gods,
> Not *hew* him as a *carcass* fit for hounds.(2.1.162–74)

Brutus's discourse is rich in metaphors that stem from the intersection between the physical and symbolic meaning of *head*, both of the human body and of the 'body politic', the political body represented by those who are in power. Antony is a mere *limb* of this body, a member with no power, who therefore poses no threat. More significantly, the deed must be a sacrifice, not a butchery. If the sacrifice of Caesar's spirit will regrettably have to take place through the sacrifice of his body, let the deed then become a ritual, sublimating the corporeal on the level of a propitiatory offering, following a symbolic code derived from long-standing anthropological practice. The opposition between sacrificial offering and beastly violence is condensed in the verbal and nominal parallelisms of the last two lines. Nevertheless, there will in fact be violence. Calphurnia's ominous dream promptly announces this in the next scene: Caesar's statue is bleeding and Roman youths gather round it to soak their hands in the blood. Caesar himself is frightened by the dream, although he will not admit this when revealing it to Decius, one of the conspirators who has come to escort him to the Capitol, where he will be slaughtered. Decius, however, interprets the dream in the opposite, triumphant sense: the icon of his blood-drenched body is by no means a sign of impending doom; rather, it signifies that Rome will draw new life from him. Flattered, Caesar goes to the Capitol.

The conspirators have prepared the scene in which he will have to play his part with the utmost care. It seems that no political event may take place without this awareness of one's role, as even the virtuous Brutus had bitterly acknowledged when dismissing the conspirators:

> Good gentlemen, look fresh and merrily.
> Let not our looks put on our purposes,
> But bear it as our Roman actors do,
> With untired spirits and formal constancy. (2.1.224–27)

All the characters are, inevitably, *actors of history.* The conspirators play their part, assembled in the Capitol, so that Caesar must necessarily play the part of the tyrant – this is the only way in which the 'scene' representing the event can possibly justify his murder. Following a preordained stage direction, they encircle Caesar's seat (as Plutarch notes in his *Life of Caesar*), and Metellus Cimber

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begs him to revoke his brother Publio's banishment. When the Head rejects this plea, the Head who cannot go back on his word, who is both the centre of the world and the 'polar star' of this historical conjuncture, Brutus, Cassius, Cinna, and Decius join in to entreat him. At the end of this crescendo, Casca deals the first blow, as planned. The next is dealt by Brutus, before whom Caesar surrenders, covering his face with his robe. It is the symbolic killing circle, which bears a relation – as we will see – to the circle organised by Antony for the symbolical 'resurrection' of the same Head's royal spirit.

However, even though the 'theatrical' planning of the event has been necessary, the scene has not worked out well! It turns out badly both in the play and in the story as told by Plutarch, who, in his *Life of Caesar*, specifies that everyone stabbed Caesar simply because it had been decided that everyone should take part. Thus Caesar falls beneath the blows of a frenzied slaughter, which is exactly what Brutus did *not* wish to happen. As Plutarch – once again – notes, both in the *Life* of Caesar and in that of Brutus, the assailants injure one another in striking a single body so many times, producing as many as twenty-three wounds, and Caesar collapses at the feet of Pompey's statue, now drenched in blood. This is not a merely fortuitous detail, but a symbolic coincidence which Brutus perceives as important. Aware as he is of the historical catastrophe at hand, he almost immediately turns to sublimate the butchery into a sacrifice (as he had wished in the lines cited above), and invites his comrades to perform what seems to be a purification rite. Surprisingly, the cynical, sceptical Cassius joins in, demonstrating that the actual history of men cannot do without symbolic markers:

> BRUTUS [...] Stoop, Romans, stoop,
> And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
> Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords.
> Then walk we forth, even to the market-place,
> And waving our red weapons o'er our heads,
> Let's all cry "Peace, freedom, and liberty!"
>
> CASSIUS Stoop, then, and wash. How many ages hence
> Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
> In states unborn and accents yet unknown!
>
> BRUTUS How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport,
> That now on Pompey's basis lies along,
> No worthier than the dust! (3.1.105–16)

The invitation addressed to the conspirators to bathe in Caesar's blood, to mark themselves with it, brings to fulfilment Calphurnia's dream, as well as Decius's deceptive interpretation of it, with the addition of a funereal implication: it is *not* in Caesar's symbolical, live blood that the Roman youths will bathe, *but* in the

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blood of a dead body – a body, however, that will be able to live once more, and die once more, in a fiction! For here is Cassius passing the event on to the future, to the possible representations of an event whose significance transcends the age it belongs to, so that *this* tragedy *represents itself* while representing the historical tragedy, in a secret analogy to the Christian celebration of Mass, where divine sacrifice is indefinitely re-actualised. The 'theatre' of history is steeped in blood, and a secret sin is hidden in the 'necessary' act performed for the democratic life of Rome.

But Antony soon appears to radically alter the scene. As close as he is to Caesar, and certainly deeply affected by his death, he is nevertheless first and foremost a leader called upon to fill his political role. Not only will he do that, but he will also direct the ensuing events, which will lead not to a revitalisation of the republican institution, but to the birth of the Empire. At this point, Shakespeare cannot dwell on all of his subsequent moves as recounted by Plutarch.[5] Antony enters the Capitol and immediately begins his great political work. Brutus greets him. Antony gives no answer, he does not even see him, he sees only Ceasar's body ("O mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low", 3. 1. 148). He then turns to the conspirators, to ask whether there are other men whose blood must be drawn; the same blood which they believe to be corrupt, but which is, to him, the noblest in the world, the blood that has stained their hands red. He decides to risk it all, but cleverly manages to prove his earnestness in remaining loyal to his leader while simultaneously praising those who have killed him: he is ready to die *at Caesar's side*, a death that would be glorified by precisely this affiliation, and he is ready to die *at the hands* of Caesar's murderers, a death that would be glorified by their greatness.[6] An extraordinary ironic simulation! Antony's tactic is developed through the grammar and rhetoric of his linguistic, and gestural, figures – for he is constantly moving, dominating the scenic space by turning first towards Caesar, then towards one or another of the conspirators. Brutus explains that they take pity on the dead man, but that they were forced to take action because of the greater piety they felt for Rome. Antony appears to be persuaded, shakes each of the conspirators' hands, one by one, as they are all "gentlemen", and then plays the card of utter sincerity: what credibility could he ever have in their eyes? He is "either a coward, or a flatterer" (3. 1. 193). As a man of high moral stature, he cannot accept either definition. Only his own sincerity, his

5 In an alliance with Plancus and Cicero, Antony solicits the Senate's pardon on the conspirators' behalf, sending them his own son to be held hostage in the Capitol; he then concludes an agreement with them, so as to avoid a civil war for the time being.

6 "Live a thousand years, / I shall not find myself so apt to die. / No place will please me so, no mean of death, / As here *by Caesar*, and *by you* cut off, / The choice and master spirits of this age". Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, 3.1.159 – 63.

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loyalty to Caesar can represent him. Accordingly, he turns again towards Caesar's body and speaks to him. He sees him as a hart butchered by cruel hunters:

> Pardon me, Julius! Here wast thou bayed, brave *hart*;
> Here didst thou fall; and here thy hunters stand,
> Signed in thy spoil, and crimsoned in thy lethe.
> O world, thou wast the forest to this *hart*,
> And this indeed, O world, the *heart* of thee!
> How like a deer, strucken by many princes,
> Dost thou here lie! (3.1.204 – 10)

Caesar has fallen like a hart, the symbol of meekness, not like a lion, which symbolises power and regality.[7] Antony plays on the homophony of *hart* with *heart:* Caesar was a generous heart, *not* an imperious *head*.[8] The world, whose heart he was, has not understood this, and has turned into a forest surrounding its prey. In order to secure credibility, Antony has pushed the limits, risking it all, but he once again mitigates his accusation with the final, flattering epithet of *princes* – an outrageously hyperbolic appellative – addressed to the bloodstained conspirators. Cassius interrupts him with an unmistakable threat, and Antony apologises: he has been carried away by his love for Caesar. His bold strategy is successful. He professes to be everyone's friend. He asks only that the reasons for the deed be explained more fully. Brutus gives his consent. And at this point, neither a coward nor a flatterer, Antony is free to make the move that will determine the course of history: he asks only, "moreover" (3. 1. 227), for permission to show Caesar's body in the forum and deliver a public oration. Brutus naively agrees. Cassius, a man with a much keener political nose, tries to dissuade him, to no avail. Brutus has decided, placing his trust in the terms he forces Antony to accept: Brutus himself will deliver the first oration, and Antony will be able to deliver his only afterwards, and only after specifying that he has had their permission; finally, Antony is not to blame them in his speech, but will be free to express his good opinion of Caesar as much as he wishes. These limits are precisely what will help Antony create his masterpiece of persuasive simu-

7 And here Shakespeare revives Plutarch's image in the *Life of Caesar*, in which we read that "he was mangled and hacked among them, as a wilde beast taken of hunters" (p. 789), but he substitutes the wild beast with the gentle hart. All quotations from Plutarch throughout this essay are taken directly from the 1595 edition of the *Parallel Lives* translated by Thomas North, in Friedrich Leo's photolithographic edition (Friedrich August Leo, *Plutarchus. Four Chapters of North's Plutarch* [Berlin and London: 1878]). For a thorough study of the *Parallel Lives* as a source of the play, see Alessandro Serpieri, 'Julius Caesar', in *Nel laboratorio di Shakespeare* (4 vols), iv, *I drammi romani*, ed. by Alessandro Serpieri, Keir Elam and Claudia Corti (Parma: Pratiche Editrice, 1988), pp. 15 – 129.

8 As Brutus had perceived him in 2. 1. 164 and 184. And the world has not understood this – the world whose heart Caesar was has become a forest which surrounds him (*heart-hart*).

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lation! As soon as the conspirators have left, Antony throws himself on Caesar's body and promises his great revenge:

> O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
> That I am meek and gentle with these *butchers!*
> Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
> That ever livèd in the tide of times.
> Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!
> Over thy wounds now do I prophesy –
> Which like dumb mouths do ope their ruby lips
> To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue –
> A curse shall light upon the *limbs of men.* (3.1.254 – 62)

He will be the one to lend a voice to the many wounds inflicted by the butchers Brutus had not wanted them to be. Those wounds, like poor dumb mouths, will inspire his oration, initiating a civil war that is already evoked here as a butchery of human limbs. Caesar's body will be revenged by the bodies of many, and ultimately by the bodies of Brutus and Cassius, in the decisive battle at Philippi, with which the play draws to an end.

And we now come to the great second scene of the third act. Brutus's oration is brief (24 lines) and in prose, despite the 'lofty' character, since prose is the vehicle of logical argumentation. His speech takes the form of a theorem. It is logical but also tautological: he believes what he is saying, therefore his medium of expression is *perspicuitas*, that is, the intellectual comprehensibility of words.[9] Brutus is right: he therefore simply needs to explain this to the people in the clearest manner. His rhetoric is interwoven with premises, hypotheses, rhetorical questions, parallelisms associated with antitheses: Brutus loved Caesar, but he loved Rome more; Caesar was valiant, and Brutus cannot but honour him; but Caesar was ambitious, therefore Brutus killed him: "[…] but, as he was ambitious, I slew him" (3.2.27). This is the core of his speech. Who, amongst the people, would have wanted to be his slave? Brutus challenges the people to answer ("I pause for a reply"), but no-one is willing to ("None, Brutus, none", they answer, 3.2.36), for he has essentially rendered them speechless. Yet the people are on his side: at 50 – 53, they proclaim his triumph ("Bring him with triumph home unto his house"), they request that he be iconically celebrated ("Give him a statue with his ancestors"), symbolically named ("Let him be Caesar"), and even crowned ("Caesar's better parts / Shall be crown'd in Bru-

9 Shakespeare probably took his inspiration from the Spartan style which Plutarch attributes to Brutus: "But for the Greeke tongue, they do note in some of his Epistles, that he counterfeited that briefe compendious manner of speach of the Lacedaemonians". Plutarch, *Life of Brutus*, p. 1054.

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tus"). When presented with this republican speech, the people reveal their profoundly symbolic – and therefore essentially monarchic! – orientation.

While the people are still cheering, Antony takes the stage, followed by others bearing Ceasar's body. He must now invalidate Brutus's demonstration, according to which Caesar's ambition forced the conspirators to perform the honourable act of killing him for Rome's good, by turning it into the opposite argument, that is, that Caesar was *not* ambitious, and therefore Brutus is *not* an honourable man, but an ungrateful murderer. He has been prevented from openly stating his case, so he resorts to the *ductus subtilis* technique, according to which the orator "simulates an opinion [Brutus *is* an honourable man], bringing it to the foreground (*thema*), with the hidden agenda (*consilium*) of obtaining the opposite effect in the audience, through provocation. The whole speech thus becomes an irony of simulation".[10] An irony of simulation, and of dissimulation (*dissimulatio*), which according to classical rhetoric makes use of grammatical *immutatio* (a change in the type of sentence: *interrogatio, exclamatio, syntaxis obliqua*) – with a predominance of irony, rhetorical interrogation, the tropes of *emphasis* and *litotes* (and periphrases and synecdoches), used to hide one's own opinion – as well as references to the situation of the speech and the figures of *detractio*, which are used to conceal one's oratorical powers.[11]

Shakespeare infers Antony's oratorical modality from Plutarch, who, however, does not articulate his linguistic strategy, except for one point in which he specifies that Antony moved the people's spirit by means of an "amplifying of matters".[12] And *amplificatio* is what constitutes Antony's persuasive strategy. The main tropes of this oratorical modality – which Shakespeare might have found, as any educated person at the time could, in the great treatises of the age, as well as the Latin classics, Cicero's *De Oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* – are the following: simulation (pretending to be what one is not); dissimulation (pretending not to be what one is); irony (stating the opposite of

10 See Heinrich Lausberg, *Elementi di retorica* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1969), p. 50.

11 Lausberg, pp. 237–39.

12 The *Life of Brutus* does not present the style of his eloquence: "Afterwards when Caesars body was brought into the market place, Antonius making his funerall oration in prayse of the dead, according to the auncient custome of Rome, and perceiving that his wordes moved the common people to compassion: he framed his eloquence to make their harts yerne the more…" (Plutarch, *Life of Brutus*, p. 1062). The *Life of Antony* gives more circumstantiated evidence: "And therefore when Caesars body was brought to the place where it should be buried, a made a funerall oration in commendation of Caesar, according to the auncient custome of praising noble men at their funerals. When he saw that the people were very glad and desirous to heare Caesar spoken of, and his praises uttered: he mingled his oration with lamentable words, and *by amplifying of matters* did greatly move their hearts and affections unto pity and compassion" (Plutarch, *Life of Antony*, p. 975).

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what one believes or what truly is); litotes (negating what one really intends to affirm); emphasis (implying more than what one is explicitly saying). Antony uses these figures of speech to stir his audience, denying from the very beginning what he has really come to say and do, that is, praise the dead Caesar: "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears. / I come to bury Caesar, *not* to praise him" (3.2.75 – 6). He has been granted permission to speak by Brutus, and cannot openly contradict him. Since Brutus has just stated that he killed Caesar because of his ambition, he is forced to concede this point. However, he does so only hypothetically:

> […] The noble Brutus
> Hath told you Caesar was ambitious.
> *If* it were so, it was a grievous fault,
> And grievously hath Caesar answered it. (3.2.79 – 82)

But is this really how things stand? Certainly, Brutus is an honourable man, and the conspirators are all honourable men. Still, Caesar did bring many slaves to Rome, and he did fill the State's coffers with their ransom money. Still, Caesar did refuse the royal crown he himself had offered to him three times at the feast of Lupercalia. Was this ambition? Even if it was *not*, Brutus remains an honourable man – a blatant contradiction that the people are left to make sense of: "Yet Brutus says he was ambitious, / And *sure* he is an honourable man". That word, "sure", conveys the full weight of the irony of dissimulation used by Antony in the first part of his speech. Then, declaring that he is overwhelmed with indignation because the people will not weep for Caesar, he goes on to reproach them:

> You all did love him once, not without cause;
> What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
> O judgement, thou art fled to *brutish beasts*,
> And men have lost their reason! (3.2.104 – 107)

Note the subtle allusion to Brutus in the association of *brutish* and *beasts:* if the people who have been given every reason to love Caesar do not mourn him, this means that they have become bestial because they have joined Brutus's cause, they have become Brutus's people, a people of brutes! Once again, Antony is taking a serious risk, for he is now insulting not the conspirators, but the people themselves, the very matter over which the historic game is being played, so to speak. He therefore closes this first allocution with a powerful theatrical effect: "Bear with me; / My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar, / And I must pause till it come back to me" (3.2.107 – 109). He apologises and lets his undue indignation subside, replacing it with an emotion that renders him speechless, as he shows the people Caesar's coffin (*there*), and his body, still hidden from their view.

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Many plebeian voices seem to readily conclude that Caesar has been grossly mistreated. And Antony weeps, as the fourth plebeian notes: "Poor soul, his eyes are as fire with weeping" (3.2.117). It is grief, but it is also, and above all, a *performance* of grief. His subtle, indirect strategy requires the oratorical completeness formerly conceived by Cicero, who, while advocating an ideal middle way between simplicity of style and elaborateness (or *perspicuitas* and *amplificatio*), believed the perfect orator should possess much more than verbal eloquence: "in the orator we must demand the subtlety of the logician, the thoughts of the philosopher, a diction almost poetic, a lawyer's memory, a tragedian's voice, and the bearing almost of the consummate actor".[13] And Antony *is* a great actor indeed.[14] He composes himself and starts speaking once more, again pointing to Caesar's coffin, "now lies he *there*" (3.2.121). He claims he could easily stir up the people, but he will *not* do so, so as not to do Brutus and Cassius wrong. Better to wrong Caesar, himself and the people, than to wrong such honourable men! And yet, he adds, there happens to be a will, which Caesar has left him and which he has just found – *but* he has no intention of reading it, since it would most certainly persuade the people to kiss Caesar's wounds and dip their handkerchiefs in his sacred blood. Naturally, the crowd shouts out for him to read it, but he does not relent, he restrains the people, he must work them up even more. In Plutarch's *Lives*, the reading of the will and the sight of Caesar's body, on which Antony builds his oration, are what stir the people to rebellion. But Shakespeare means to fully theatricalize Antony's great political rhetoric, and he therefore resorts to a *delay*, the fundamental device great literature employs when it aims to build up emotional suspense. The people urge him to read the will, but he repeatedly holds them back. Until he admits defeat. But only to produce his greatest *coup de theâtre:*

> You will compel me, then, to read the will?
> Then *make a ring* about the corpse of Caesar,
> And let me show you him that made the will.
> Shall I descend? And will you give me leave?
>
> ALL Come down. (3.2.159 – 63)

13 Cicero, *De Oratore*, trans. by E. W. Sutton, 2 vols (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942; repr. 1967), pp. 89 – 91 (Book I, XXVIII, 128).

14 In the *Life of Antony*, Plutarch thus summarised his oratorical modality: "He used a manner of phrase in his speech, called Asiatike, which carried the best grace and estimation at that time, and was much like to his manners and life: for it was full of ostentation, foolish braverie, and vaine ambition" (Plutarch, *Life of Antony*, p. 969). Ostentation, bravery, ambition are all traits of an excessive personality, able to shed genuine tears, but surely also to make a 'theatrical' use of them.

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He asks leave to do what he had intended all along: to descend and join the people (in Elizabethan theatre, this meant descending from the balcony), apparently becoming one among many, so that he may offer them the *spectacle* of Caesar's body. Yet, he pauses once again. In the *Life of Brutus*, Plutarch presents the scene as follows: "[…] and taking Caesars gowne all bloudy in his hand, he layed it open to the sight of them all, shewing what a number of cuts and holes it had upon it".[15] In the *Life of Antony*, this gesture is accompanied by words: "In fine to conclude his oration, he unfolded before the whole assembly the blouddy garments of the dead, thrust through in many places with their swords, and called the malefactors, cruell and cursed murtherers. With these words he put the people into such fury…".[16] The dramatic *actio* Shakespeare offers is different, and significantly more complex.

Like a skilful stage director, Antony arranges the plebeians in a circle around the body, he includes them in the rite *and* in the historical plan; he turns the members of the audience into actors of *his* scene, and they become History itself, almost in spite of themselves. In contrast to the scene in which the conspirators had encircled Caesar, this, as we have noted, is the circle in which Caesar's spirit, which represents the still-subsisting monarchic power, will be 'resurrected'. For as many as twenty-seven lines, Antony places all his emphasis *not* on Caesar's mangled body, which he does *not* uncover for the time being, but on his toga (or robe), blood-stained and torn. The toga is at the same time an indication of Caesar's rank and a shroud, for he had used it to cover himself as he was dying. The robe is thus a simulacrum, a shroud, a sign upon which Antony elaborates, using every emotional register at his disposal: the pathetic tone (he recalls the first night he saw Caesar wear it), the epic tone (that night, a long time before, had been the eve of Caesar's great victory against the Nervii), the blasphemous tone (he refers to the rent made by Brutus's cursed dagger), and the stoical tone (Caesar, overcome by Brutus's ingratitude, covered his face with that same robe). But the greatest pathetic and political effect is concentrated on the blow that Brutus, the "honourable man", has struck:

> Through *this*, the well-belovèd Brutus stabbed,
> And as he plucked his cursèd steel away,
> Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it,
> As rushing out of doors to be resolved
> If Brutus so unkindly knocked or no –
> For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel.
> Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!
> *This* was the most unkindest cut of all;

15 Plutarch, *Life of Brutus*, p. 1062.
16 Plutarch, *Life of Antony*, p. 975.

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> For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
> Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
> Quite vanquished him. Then burst his mighty heart,
> And in his mantle muffling up his face,
> Even at the base of Pompey's statue,
> Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell. (3.2.178 – 91)

Let us recall for a moment the ancient Lucius Iunius Brutus, who had extracted the knife from the chaste Lucretia's breast, letting blood gush out. That blood demanded revenge – a revenge that changed Rome's fate, turning the tyrannical monarchy into a republic: "And from the purple fountain Brutus drew / The murd'rous knife; and, as it left the place, / *Her blood in poor revenge held it in chase*". In *Julius Caesar* there is an opposite gesture: it is Marcus Iunius Brutus who has driven the knife into Caesar's body, and once again blood gushes out, but *not* to demand revenge; rather, to ascertain, in its disbelief, whether the murderous hand that has struck a blow and then removed the dagger really belongs to the beloved Brutus. There is much greater pathos here, precisely because the blood demands no revenge – and if it does, it does so only indirectly: the slain prospective monarch was *not* a tyrant, like Tarquinius. It is Antony's job to take up the task of exacting revenge, in the name of the absolute power he intends to share – perhaps in what is merely a temporary strategy – with the young Octavian, who will in fact be the one to become the new Caesar and the first Emperor.

Both a sign and a simulacrum in Antony's great gesture, the bloody robe has already moved the crowd to uncontrollable pathos. But the body, the material and powerfully symbolical evidence of what remains of the symbolic head, is what really determines the course of history. This is why Antony rebukes the crowd for surrendering to emotion and crying *only* at the sight of the torn robe. With a magnificent *coup de theâtre* he finally reveals the body slaughtered by the traitors:

> O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
> Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
> Whilst bloody treason flourished over us.
> O, now you weep, and I perceive you feel
> The dint of pity. These are gracious drops.
> Kind souls, what weep you when you but behold
> Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here!
> Here is *himself*, marred as you see with traitors.(3.2.192 – 99)

Let us consider the structure of the dramatic action at this crucial moment of the play. As has been mentioned, neither in Brutus's nor in Antony's *Life* does Plutarch go into detail when dealing with Antony's oration; however, he clarifies that Antony's culminating gesture is that of lifting Ceasar's robe, unfolding it for

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all to see, and drawing attention to all the gashes and tears made by the conspirators' swords. According to Plutarch, then, Antony starts speaking *after* revealing Caesar's body, which most likely is in the background, in a coffin or on a litter. The play, on the other hand, presents the action in a wholly different way. Since stage directions are lacking, we must work them out from the lines. Antony has descended in the midst of the plebeians, and he has arranged them in a circle around the covered body, but, with help from the first and second plebeian, he has also taken care to keep them at a certain distance from the coffin:

> 1 PLEB Stand from the hearse! Stand from the body!
>
> 2 PLEB Room for Antony, most noble Antony!
>
> ANTONY Nay, press not so upon me; stand far off.
>
> ALL Stand back! Room! Bear back! (3.2.167 – 70)

At this point, Antony points to the holes and tears in the toga, even identifying the individual persons responsible for each of them, in a paradoxical fiction. Finally, perceiving the people's emotion, he urges everyone to look ("Look you *here!*"), so that they may see the body he uncovers only *now*. For almost the entire duration of his long speech, the toga has remained on the body, like a shroud. The action is significantly different from the account given by Plutarch, and also from the one given by Appian, the Greek historian and philosopher, author of a *History of Rome* in 24 volumes dating to the second century AD.[17]

17 In her fine book, *La Roma Antica degli Elisabettiani* ("The Elizabethans' Ancient Rome", Bologna: Il Mulino, 1991), Vanna Gentili suggests: "è Appiano a fornire letteralmente la didascalia per l'*actio* di Antonio e a suggerire le lamentazioni dei plebei" ("it is Appian who literally provides stage directions for Antony's *actio*, and suggests the plebeians' laments", p. 70). She quotes a passage from Appian in an Elizabethan translation (p. 70): "Then falling into moste vehement affections, [Antony] uncovered Caesars body, holding up his vesture with a speare, cut with the woundes, and redde with the bloude of the chiefe Ruler, by the which the people lyke a Quire, did sing lamentation unto him […]", Appian, *Romanes Warres*, in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. by Geoffrey Bullough, 8 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957 – 75) v, p. 158. In Appian's account as well, then, Antony uncovers the body and shows the torn, blood-stained robe, but the body itself remains, for the time being, hidden from the people's view ("for hys body it selfe lying flat in the Litter, could not be seene"). Gentili argues that this is the detail that Shakespeare drew from Appian: "Appiano introduce un congegno meccanico per spingere oltre l'effetto già scatenante delle parole di Antonio: una statua semovente di cera che mostra ciò che altrimenti non è visibile" ("Appian introduces a mechanical device to enhance the already stirring effect of Antony's words: a self-moving wax statue that illustrates what would not be visible otherwise", p. 71). Here is Appian's version: "While the matter was thus handled and like to have come to a fray, one shewed out of the Litter the Image of Caesar, made of waxe […] Hys picture was by a devise turned about, and xxiii wounds wer shewed over al his body, and his face horrible to behold. The people seeing this pittifull picture, coulde beare the dolour no longer, but thronged togyther, and beset the Senate house, wherein *Caesar* was

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Shakespeare's Antony does not hold Caesar's robe in his hands or lift it with the point of his spear – Caesar's body is still in the coffin; rather, he exploits the effect of the final unveiling of that body.

By means of that extraordinary effect, he has already achieved his purpose, as the revenge-thirsty plebeians' cries and lamentations make clear: "Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! / Let not a traitor live!" (3.2.206 – 207). But Antony still holds them in check. The conspirators might still manage to persuade them otherwise. He thus employs a subtle *detractio*, a new irony of dissimulation, revelling in his oratorical skill: "I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts. / I am no orator, as Brutus is, / But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man…" (3.2.218 – 20). Since he has no speaking abilities, and since he is not Brutus!, he will have to let Caesar's wounds speak for him – the wounds he had evoked in the previous scene, begging them to give him voice and expression. He then directs the people to take another look at the body, at the wounds that speak more than words can say. But it is not yet over. He checks the crowd for one last time. They have forgotten the will. Caesar has left his people all of his grounds, his pergolas and his gardens this side of the Tiber. This is Antony's final, winning card. Rebellion erupts. The plebeians make their exit, carrying Caesar's body to a sacrificial pyre. The conspirators must flee from Rome.

Antony is now left alone on stage, in the Forum, as he pronounces two short lines which are crucial to the very import of this tragedy of history:

> Now let it work! Mischief, thou art afoot,
> Take thou what course thou wilt. (3.2.262 – 63)

He has unleashed evil, disaster, civil war. What will be, will be. It all depends on the course this "mischief" takes. He has controlled everything: the Senate, the conspirators, the people. But history obeys only its own uncontrollable, chaotic, and now violent, flux. A master of words, Antony cannot, however, master the course events will take. With something like Machiavellian disenchantment, he simply observes this upheaval of the centuries-old republican tradition. He has worked on the side of absolute or oligarchic power.

kylled, and set it a fyre, and the killers that fledde for their lives, they ranne and sought in every place […]" (Gentili, p. 71). Gentili believed this scenographic object to be of great importance, and that it may have struck Shakespeare's imagination: "In particolare, la vista di ferite rappresentate poteva suscitare nel pubblico reazioni emotive complesse" ("In particular, the sight of the represented wounds could rouse complex emotional reactions in the audience", p. 72). This is an interesting conjecture, but we may well ask why Shakespeare, with his keen theatrical sense, would not have introduced a similar iconic device to move the crowd, if he had indeed been following Appian. Rather, his dramatic action seems to be concentrated on the toga – *still covering* the body – as an extraordinarily effective icon, to be lifted only at the very end in order to show Caesar's body, covered in blood, surrounded by a human circle probably gathered on the proscenium.

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But let us return for a moment to Cassius, who had worked in favour of the continuity of the republican tradition, partly for personal reasons. He too had been left alone on stage, after "seducing" Brutus into the conspiracy, and had meditated on the intrinsic evil in the imminent violence he had directly inspired:

> Well, Brutus, thou art noble, yet I see
> Thy honourable mettle may be wrought
> From that it is disposed. Therefore it is meet
> That noble minds keep ever with their likes;
> For who so firm that cannot be seduced?
> Caesar doth bear me hard, but he loves Brutus.
> If I were Brutus now, and he were Cassius,
> He should not humour me. (1.2.305 – 12)

It is significant that both men, on opposite sides, stop after having reached their goal, to consider what they have achieved and evaluate it negatively, as if observing it from an external point of view. Shakespeare thus distances himself from both of the conflicting political parts. The noble Brutus is the only one he saves out of the republican group, although he does point out several of his contradictions, as well as a number of strategic mistakes he makes; he emphasises the opportunistic involvement of many of the conspirators, Cassius included. Indeed, Cassius's dubious moral standing is subsequently exposed by Shakespeare, who devotes the long second scene of the fourth act to his clash with Brutus, who had already denounced him as a "hollow man" with no moral sense: during the military expedition to Philippi, he had not hesitated at the prospect of extorting money from the subjugated population to subsidise his own legions. At the same time Brutus himself lacks complete integrity for he is not above abusing Cassius for denying him a loan out of that money, since he is morally incapable of doing the same to pay *his* own legions!

Within the monarchic party, Shakespeare effectively saves only Caesar: in the naming of his own name, which he utters much more often than "I", he incarnates the symbolic role he is called upon to play on the stage of history; but he is inwardly insecure, superstitious, almost lost, and at the same time tempted and frightened by the crown that is about to raise him to the status of king. When it comes down to it, Shakespeare does not fully condemn Antony either, for he has played his part to the best of his ability, looking upon the consequences as a historical necessity it was his fate to bring about, and not simply in the name of his own ambition. In the last act, on the other hand, Shakespeare does openly condemn the unfeeling Octavian, who will become Emperor of Rome.

The fate of the republican cause is decreed at Philippi. Funereal symbols forebode the defeat of the republican party. First Cassius, and then Brutus commit suicide, symbolically evoking Caesar's name! Octavian is poised to

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appropriate that very name. But it is Antony who utters the penultimate speech of the play, and it is once again a funeral oration, this time delivered on Brutus's body:

> This was the noblest Roman of them all.
> All the conspirators save only he
> Did that they did in envy of great Caesar;
> He only, in a general honest thought
> And common good to all, made one of them.
> His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, "This was a man". (5.5.68–75)

There is no simulation, no *amplificatio* over this dead body. This is an extraordinary eulogy that sets Brutus apart from all the other actors in this historic turning point. But Octavian interrupts it, and commands that the body be conveyed to his tent ("Within my tent his bones to-night shall lie", 5.5.78): *this* body may not and must not move anyone's soul. Octavian's only concern is his own triumph, and he will subsequently dispose of Antony as well – an event Shakespeare felt the need to stage in another great play, *Antony and Cleopatra.* A wholly different body will take centre stage in this new production – the erotic body of Cleopatra, which is also, in its own way, to affect the course of history.

Brutus and Antony, the two main characters in this play – more relevant even than Caesar – fade away. Shakespeare has used them to construct a political and psychological tragedy, not an ideological play supporting one or the other side. The two rivals are nothing more than pawns in a game neither can fully control: the game of History, which puts them on the stage in their turn, and then goes on to the next act.

Translated by Iolanda Plescia

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Part II Earthly and Heavenly Bodies

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Manfred Pfister

“Rome and her rats”: *Coriolanus* and the Early Modern Crisis of Distinction between Man, Beast and Monster

This was my contribution to the year of the rat which we had entered a few weeks before the conference. Under such an auspice, and also within the frame of our ACUME conference questioning Roman bodies, geographies and cosmographies, I ventured to add to the two most powerful, current readings of Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*, Janet Adelman’s psychoanalytical and Stanley Cavell’s political-philosophical reading,[1] my own zoo-anthropological attempt.

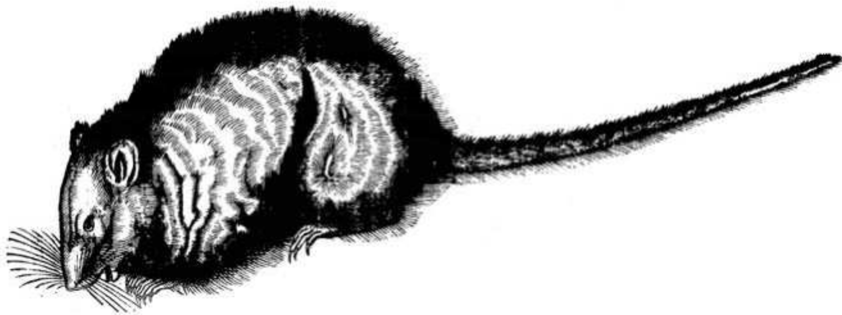

Fig. 1: Edward Topsell, *The Historie of Foure-footed Beastes […]* (1607)

I

Julian Barnes in his metahistorical and metafictional *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989) questions divine, human and animal agency as well as the differences between them.[2] He does this by representing world history from the

1 Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare’s Plays,* Hamlet *to* The Tempest (New York: Routledge, 1992), in particular pp. 146 – 64 and Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

2 Julian Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989). For the genre of historiographic metafiction at stake here see Ansgar Nünning, *Von historischer*

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Ark of Noah to the present in a series of episodes or 'fabulations' which reverse the accepted semiotic orders and shift the perspective from the authoritative ideological centres and the traditional makers and writers of history to what is usually marginalized: the underdogs, be they Amazonian Indians or Palestinians, woodworms or rats. Chapter 3, "The Wars of Religion", set in early sixteenth-century France, is *not*, as one might expect, about the Reformation and its contentious interpretations of the Eucharist or salvation *sola fide*, but about the status of obnoxious beasts or *bestioles* in the great scheme of things and whether rats destroying crops of barley or woodworms gnawing into a bishop's throne can be taken to court and charged with criminal acts just as human beings are. Barnes took his story of Bartholomé Chassenée, distinguished jurist and defender of the rats' and the woodworms' innocence and inculpability, from legal history[3] and the documents he quotes dramatize the clash between two doctrines on this issue. According to the first, that of civil law and traditional ecclesiastical teaching, animals, being without reason, are beyond jurisprudence ("Nec enim potest animal injuriam fecisse, quod sensu caret")[4] and, being God's creation, were created for man's good, providing him with sustenance and the help of their physical strength, or as instruments of God's punishment. The second doctrine considers such animals as either a postlapsarian diabolic creation or as the product of some spontaneous corruption of nature and thus throws open the question of "their status in the mighty hierarchy", leaving it to "those great doctors of the Church who weigh such matters" to decide upon it.[5]

As it turned out, however, it was less "the great doctors of the Church" who were to explore the crucial issue of differences and distinctions between man and beast than both the travellers to new worlds beyond the seas, encountering what seemed to them borderline cases between the human and the bestial, and early comparative students of human and animal anatomy and ethology such as Conrad Gesner on the Continent or, in his wake, Edward Topsell in England.[6]

Fiktion zu historiogaphischer Metafiktion, 2 vols (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1995).

3 Barnes's source is E. P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1906) as he acknowledges in his 'Author's Note', in Julian Barnes, *A History of the World*, p. 311. For a similar case in Normandy in 1386 see Andreas Höfele, '*Bestiarium Humanum:* Lear's Animal Kingdom', in *German Shakespeare Studies at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*, ed. by Christa Jansohn (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), pp. 84–98 (p. 84).

4 Quoted in Barnes, *A History of the World*, p. 66.

5 Barnes, *A History of the World*, p. 78.

6 See my paper on '"Man's Distinctive Mark": Paradoxical Distinctions between Man and his Bestial Other in Early Modern Texts", in *Telling Stories. Studies in Honour of Ulrich Broich on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday*, ed. by Elmar Lehmann and Bernd Lenz (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1992), pp. 17–33. Some parts of my account of this "crisis of distinctions" (René Girard) are integrated into the present paper. For the early modern state of the art in zoology

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II

As to "man's distinctive mark": the Victorian poet Robert Browning knew it with firm conviction in spite of – or even because of – Darwin. For him, it was man's potential for active self-improvement, his striving for "progress".[7] The Church Fathers and the medieval scholastic theologians, arguing from what appeared to them a solid Aristotelian basis, had also known it quite unambiguously. To Thomas Aquinas, for instance, it was the human soul – a rational soul that not only desires, but knows that it desires and submits its desires to the discipline of reason.[8] And other theologians insisted upon man's religious instincts and his immortal soul as the defining difference beyond the distinctively human capacity of free agency and moral responsibility identified by Aquinas.[9] The sainted theologian wrote when the new worlds and their inhabitants were yet undiscovered beyond the oceans encircling the known world; Browning, when the last blank spots on the globe were rapidly disappearing. In the period in between, however, and particularly in the early modern period, which had to bear the first brunt of these discoveries and of the concomitant advance leap in the scientific study of human and animal life, the old answers underpinning an anthropocentric view of man's undisputed supremacy on this earth lost their persuasiveness in the face of new experiences. The question itself became a deeply disturbing and incisive one[10] and triggered what René Girard has called in a related context a "crisis of distinctions", "a crisis affecting the cultural order".[11]

Any extension of the known world is riddled with doubts, contradictions and paradoxes. "And new Philosophy [i.e. science] calls all in doubt," John Donne

see Willy Ley, 'Introduction', in Edward Topsell, *The History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents and Insects* [1658], ed. by Willy Ley (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1967).

7 Robert Browning, 'A Death in the Desert', in *Poetical Works 1833–1864*, ed. by Ian Jack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 833.

8 For Aquinas on the differences between the animal and human soul see *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas,* ed. by Anthony C. Pegis (New York: Modern Library, 1948), pp. 483–86 and the illuminating discussion of this passage in Hayden White, 'The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea', in *The Wilde Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. by Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak (Pittsburgh, Ohio: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), pp. 3–38 (p. 18). A long-range view on the relations between man and animal is taken in Keith Thomas's magisterial study of *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), here in particular chapters I.1 to I.5. See also *Tierische Geschichte: Die Beziehung von Mensch und Tier in der Kultur der Moderne*, ed. by Dorothee Brantz and Christof Mauch (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008).

9 Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 32 f.

10 See John H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New. 1492–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 41–52.

11 René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. by Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 49.

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cried out in his *Anatomy of the World* in 1611 and evoked the vision of a world in disjointed fragments and decay:

> 'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone;
> All just supply, and all relation.[12]

His key images here are of hierarchies collapsing, of systems of differentiation running wild, and behind these images we sense the deep anxieties created in his and his contemporaries' minds by the new astronomy and cosmology, the Copernican revolution and the discoveries of the new continents and their inhabitants. Both tended to decentre and marginalize man in the universe or, more precisely, European man on the globe and among the creatures that inhabit it. And both called into doubt those axiomatic lines of demarcation on which any culture hinges: the division of the world into centre and periphery, self and other, the sacred and profane, the natural and unnatural, the human and the non-human. Such divisions are not a matter of mere ideas; they have a direct bearing on a whole complex of religious, social and political institutions that depend on and, in turn, sustain them. When fundamental divisions such as these become blurred, there is more at stake than just the traditional pieties of an accepted "world picture" (E. M. W. Tillyard); it rather threatens to undermine the very foundations of social hierarchy, political authority and religious teleology. And particularly the distinction between man and the rest of God's creatures on this earth is more than a matter of mere classification; it is a distinction on which rests man's distinguished status as the protagonist in the divine scenario of his Fall and Redemption. It is a difference that makes all the difference, and as such it provides the model, even the justification, for the subtler differentiations and distinctions in the social and political spheres. It is for this diversity that, in the transitional period between old and new paradigms, the binaries of soul and body, male and female, parent and child, master and servant or serf, civilized self and savage other, the English and the Irish or Scots, European man and aboriginal non-Europeans are frequently envisaged or imaged in terms of the distinction between man and animal.

III

In no period is the construction of such axiomatic categories a simple or single-minded process. There are always conflicting interests at stake and the official construction, i. e. the one favoured by the authorities in power and their political,

12 John Donne, *The Complete English Poems*, ed. by A. J. Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 276.

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religious and educational institutions, is always challenged by divergent constructions. Even during the Middle Ages, when the division between man and his bestial other seemed to be absolutely water-tight, there were powerful traditions of representation and modes of thinking at work that bridged the ontological chasm between man and animal: the bestiaries as well as the legendary accounts of Alexander's or Mandeville's travels and Ovid's newly popular *Metamorphoses* imagined and imaged fantastically hybrid semi-human and semi-bestial monsters, and the bestiaries again, along with the animal fable and animal epic, mirrored human characteristics and habits, human virtues and vices in their non-human protagonists.[13]

Such iconographies and modes of thinking continued into the early modern period in spite of its new sceptical insistence on autoptic observation. A text such as Sir Walter Ralegh's *Discovery of the Large, Rich and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* (1596), as much as it flaunts its own incredulity towards such fables of hybrid monsters and tries to hold on to a consolingly safe categorical distinction of man and animal, frequently gives in to mere hearsay:

> Next unto *Arui* there are […] a nation of people, whose heads appear not above their shoulders; which though it may be thought a mere fable, yet for mine own part I am resolved it is true, because every child in the province of *Arromaia* and *Canuri* affirm the same […]. Such a nation was written of by *Mandeville*, whose reports were held for fables many years, and yet since the East *Indies* were discovered, we find his relations true of such things as heretofore were held incredible: whether it be true or no the matter is not great, neither can there be any profit in the imagination, for mine own part I saw them not, but I am resolved that so many people did not all combine, or forethink to make the report.[14]

And even the zoological standard works of the period, Conrad Gesner's *Historiae Animalium* and Edward Topsell's 1607 adaptation of it, *The Historie of Foure-footed Beastes*, as much as they insist upon the old Aristotelian and Thomistic clear-cut criteria for distinguishing men from animals, continue to include in their anatomies of the animal world some of the traditional hybrids, "satyres" or "sphingae" for instance, puzzle over borderline cases such as "pigmeys" and certain apes, and in general link the realms of animal and human beings closely together by highlighting the material and moral uses of animals for man and reading them as allegorical mirrors for human comportment. Thus for Topsell, even what appears to be most distant from man, the serpent, can appear as his

13 See Höfele, '*Bestiarium Humanum*', p. 85.

14 Sir Walter Ralegh, *Selected Writings*, ed. by Gerald Hammond (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 111.

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closest relative. As he writes in his dedicatory letter to Richard Neile in his *Historie of Serpents* (1608):

I haue therefore now aduentured to put abroade into the World, the second Booke of Liuing-creatures, which entreateth of Serpents, and all venomous Wormes of the Earth and Waters, which for their Maker had the Sonne of GOD as well as men, for their antiquitie, were from the beginning before men; for their wit and disposition in nature, come neerest to men; for their seate and habitation, dwell in one and the same Element with men; for their spirits & inclination, are most vnreconcileable enemies to men; and for their vse and commodity, very beneficiall to men […].[15]

Here the traditional theological argument that both men and "venomous Wormes" are God's creatures and the 'modern' ethological observation that they are closely related to each other "in their wit and disposition" are immediately juxtaposed and together contribute towards unsettling any sharp line of demarcation between human nature and the animal world.

The concept of nature which the Elizabethans had inherited from the Middle Ages and which was piously re-affirmed in Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Politie* (1593–97) and fashionably refurbished in Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1605) was one of a divinely ordered and beautiful arrangement, a subtly graded "chain of being".[16] In this vision, man, to fulfil his own nature, to realize his own "kind", had to adapt himself to this ideal pattern. Partaking both in the animal and the intellectual and spiritual, he had to strive towards developing his intellectual and spiritual side and to train and constrain his reason in a way that its own logical order chimed in with the order of the physical universe. Once his own nature was brought into accordance with nature as the overriding pattern, there was no longer anything hostile to man in nature nor anything ambiguous about his own place as the intermediate link in a clearly defined hierarchy or scale of beings. Pico della Mirandola's metaphor for man's distinctive and unique position "in the middle of the world" was the "chameleon";[17] one and a half centuries later, for the physician Sir Thomas Browne, it was the

15 Edward Topsell, *The Historie of Serpents. Or, The Second Booke of liuing Creatures* […] (London: William Jaggard, 1608), p. A3.

16 See for the following John F. Danby, *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature. A Study of 'King Lear'* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948); in particular, 'Part I. The Two Natures', pp. 15–53. Shakespeare also was to suggest it in emblematic insets in a number of his political plays; Ulysses' speech about "degree, priority, and place" in *Troilus and Cressida* (1.3), Menenius Agrippa's "pretty tale" about the belly and the other members of the body in *Coriolanus* (1.1), the Gardener's allegory in *Richard II* (3.4) or the Archbishop of Canterbury's allegory of the bees in *Henry V* (1.2) immediately come to mind here.

17 See Pico della Mirandola, *Oration: On the Dignity of Man* [1486] quoted in *Renaissance Views of Man*, ed. by Stevie Davies (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), p. 67 f.

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"*Amphibium*".[18] Significantly, however, both metaphors, employed expressly to draw a clear and firm line between man and animal, are taken from the animal world, and this in itself gives away a sense of anxiety about the borderlines to be policed here. Clearly, the old consoling binary distinction of *either* man *or* beast was increasingly haunted by an awareness that this was less a case of *either-or* than one of *more or less*, that some animals can be less bestial or more human than others and some men less human or more bestial than others.[19] With such an awareness, the neat and tidy distinction threatened to break down and to dissolve into a continuum – "un dispositivo ironico", a spectacle anything but edifying, to quote Giorgio Agamben's recent reflections on such verifications of,

> l'assenza per *Homo* di una natura propria, tenendolo sospeso fra una natura celeste e una terrena, fra l'animale e l'umano – e, quindi, il suo essere sempre meno e più che se stesso (the absence of a nature proper to *Homo*, holding him suspended between a celestial and a terrestrial nature, between animal and human – a being always less and more than himself).[20]

The anxieties stirred by this awareness received further nourishment from the accounts the voyagers across the seas brought back from their journeys. For many of them, "any strange beast there made a man", to misquote Shakespeare's Trinculo first sighting Caliban in *The Tempest* (2.2.30 f). Far from confirming consoling notions of a harmonious and well-ordered nature, they contributed further towards blurring any sharply defined borderlines between man and animal. There were just too many borderline cases that threw the question of man or animal into high relief. What about the pygmies, for instance? Were they men, or animals, or some hybrid or missing link between man and animal? Albertus Magnus had opted for their status of apes, and for Topsell, summing up the latest research, they remain apes:

18 Sir Thomas Browne, *The Religio Medici and Other Writings*, intr. by Halliday Sutherland (London: Everyman Library, 1906), p. 38 f.

19 The Shakespearean *locus classicus* for this is, of course, *The Tempest*, but most of the tragedies, and in particular *King Lear*, also explore this crisis of distinction.

20 Giorgio Agamben, *L'Aperto: l'uomo e l'animale* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002), p. 35; trans. by Kevin Attell, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 29.

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> […] they are not men, because they have no perfect use of Reason, no modesty, no honesty, nor justice of government, and although they speak, yet is their language imperfect; and above all they cannot be men, because they have no Religion, which (*Plato* saith truly) is proper to every man. Besides, their stature being not past three, four, or five spans long, their life is not above eight years, and their imitation of man, doe plainly prove them rather to be Apes than Men.[21]

What made the vast compilations of accounts of colonialist encounters, for instance William Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589/90; 2nd edn. 1589 – 1600) or Samuel Purchas's *Purchas His Pilgrims* (1625), such unsettling reading was the fact that the savages encountered in them were – *pace* Ralegh – not at all the expected Mandevillean monsters but uncomfortably similar in shape and comportment to the discoverers and colonizers themselves. One strategy of coping with this bewildering discovery was to emphasize the observable differences between 'them' and 'us', i. e. to lower 'them' to the status of animals or wild beasts. Metaphors of bestiality therefore abound in the accounts of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century travellers and colonists. They may look like men, but they behave like, and indeed are, animals: thus ran the proto-anthropological argument. This line of argument was essential for the self-legitimization of the colonist and the slave-trader: a land that is virginal, uninhabited by human beings, can be rightly taken possession of; and creatures that, in spite of their human shape, are animals can be treated like a commodity. "'Virginia', one Englishman reported in 1609, 'is inhabited by wild and savage people, that live and lie up and down in troops like herds of deer in a forest'. 'We look upon them', wrote another, 'with Scorn and Disdain and think them little better than Beasts in Human Shape.' Indeed, others were prepared to 'set aside' their human shape".[22] I could pile up Hakluytian examples here, but having done that elsewhere, I refrain from doing so.[23] Nonetheless, my point should by now have become clear: the degradation of the "salvages and men of Ind" (*The Tempest*, 2.2.59) into animals served the same repressive and marginalising function that had been fulfilled by the old fantasies of monsters beyond the pale of the human, and indeed metaphors of beastliness and of monstrosity cohabit readily in many of these texts and reinforce each other.

As much as these texts grappled with empirical criteria for setting up firm boundaries between man and animal – among them language vs. speechlessness, fixed habitation vs. homelessness, dress vs. nakedness, cooked vs. raw food (including the meat of one's own kind, i. e. cannibalism), monogamy vs. pro-

21 Topsell, *The History of Four-Footed Beasts*, i, p. 3.

22 Richard Ashcroft, 'Leviathan Triumphant: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Wild Men', in *The Wilde Man Within*, ed. by Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak, pp. 141 – 81 (p. 151).

23 See Manfred Pfister, '"Man's Distinctive Mark"', p. 27 – 32.

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miscuity (including incest and sodomy), private property vs. communism, social and political organization vs. anarchy, religion vs. idolatry and so on – these criteria only produced further borderline cases rather than re-establishing the Thomistic theologians’ clear-cut demarcation. And even a papal decree, the *Sublimis Deus* issued by Paul III in 1537 and declaring *ex cathedra* that “the Indians are true men”, did not really settle the question once and for all.[24] For, after all, the ambiguous status of the aboriginal populations between animals and human beings, deplorable as it may have seemed from a ‘scientific’ point of view, proffered its own advantages for the nascent colonialist ideology: the savage had to be at the same time of a *different* species to legitimize his subjection, and of the *same* species to make him worth subjecting at all; he had to be at once a “human beast” and an unnurtured child of nature, if not a “noble savage”.[25]

IV

What has all this got to do with Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus?* After all, the play is neither set in Shakespeare’s early colonialist present nor does it map territories beyond the bourn of Europe as, in very different ways, *The Tempest* and *Antony and Cleopatra* do. Its setting is ancient Rome, one of the cradles of European civilization, and it has no encounters with barbaric or savage tribes to offer, as Shakespeare’s first Roman play, *Titus Andronicus*, did. Even Rome’s other here, Corioles, is not divided from the civilized centre by any sense of ethnic or developmental difference. And yet, as I shall try to show, *Coriolanus* is as anxiously obsessed with exploring the special status and the limits of man and his relationship with his bestial other, as the proto-anthropological observations and reflections of early modern travellers and zoologists were.

This begins already with the play’s genre and medium. The title page announces *The Tragedy of Coriolanus.* A tragedy is quite literally a ‘goat-song’, part of an animal rite in which some scapegoat is made to stand in for a human transgressor and sacrificed to appease the gods and restore order, or – by a metaphorical extension which reverses the man-animal substitution – in which some human hero is sacrificed as if he were such a scapegoat. This ritualistic and mythical matrix does, of course, apply to all tragedy, but it particularly shows through in a tragedy like that of Coriolanus which drives towards an “unnatural

24 See Lewis Hanke, ‘Pope Paul III and the American Indians’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 30 (1937), 65 – 102 and Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians* (London: Hellis & Carter, 1959), p. 23 f.

25 For this paradox see Tzvetan Todorov, *La conquête de l’Amérique: La question de l’autre* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982).

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scene" "the gods look down and laugh at" (5.3.185-86) and culminates in a ritualistic killing of the anti-social hero restoring a new sense of community in the final scene.[26] Moreover, in Renaissance England tragedy's "sweet violence"[27] was acted out on a stage and in a theatre that was not only in terms of spatial distance close to the nearby bear-and bull-baiting arenas with their spectacular blood rituals.[28] Here as there, the human and the animal are drawn closely together within the Southbank spaces dedicated to the nascent early modern entertainment industry[29] and the goat-song of tragedy assumes some of the excitement of bear-and bull-baiting in its metaphorical reversals of the roles of baiting man and baited beast. In such a context, Coriolanus turns into a cur-and rat-baiting provoker of animal ferocity, to be baited in turn as the "very dog to the commonalty" (1.1.26) and finally hunted down like a dangerous wolf, a tiger, a dragon.

The fictional Rome in which Shakespeare stages this baiting of Coriolanus – in the double sense of a *genetivus objectivus* and *subjectivus* – proves to be a fitting stage for such a rough display of the animal in man. It is not the classical and paradigmatically civilized Rome of the humanist, but an earlier, a pre-classical, an archaic Rome closer to its mythical origins than the Rome of a Julius Caesar or a Mark Antony. This aboriginal Rome involves a man-animal romance, its founders suckled by a she-wolf[30] – a retrospective utopia of maternal animal nurture which finds a distant echo in early modern visions of Rome as an agrarian society living off, and in harmony with, its herds of cattle and other useful animals. As Edward Topsell wrote – or rather translated from Gesner's "First Epistle" – in his *Historie of Foure-footed Beastes* in 1607, just a year or two before Shakespeare composed *Coriolanus:*

> Who is he but he knoweth [i.e. that does not know] that the Roman people had their originall from Sheapheards? Who knoweth not that *Faustulus*, the Nurse of *Romulus* and *Remus*, was a Sheapheard? And this was an argument hereof, because they builded their citty for Sheapheards, that they appointed amercements [sacrificial fines] by Oxen and Sheepe, and that they stamped their Mony with such pictures: and how many names are there among the Romans deriued from cattell

26 My references are to the Oxford Shakespeare edition, *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, ed. by R. B. Parker, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) and they are given after quotations in the text.

27 See Terence Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

28 See Andreas Höfele, 'Humanity at Stake: Man and Animal in Shakespeare's Theatre', *Shakespeare Survey,* 60: *Theatres for Shakespeare*, ed. by Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 118–29 (pp. 121–23).

29 See Indira Ghose, *Shakespeare and Laughter: A Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

30 See Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge*, p. 153.

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and sheep, as *Ouinius*, *Caprillus*, *Equitius*, *Taurus*, and sur-names also as *Annij*, *Capræ*, *Statilij Tauri*, and *Pomponij Vituli.*[31]

Such pastoral images of a Roman man-animal symbiosis contrast sharply, however, with the totally different apocalyptic state of affairs threatening the Rome of *Coriolanus.* As Menenius Agrippa warns the tribunes:

> Now the good gods forbid
> That our renownèd Rome, whose gratitude
> Towards her deserved children is enrolled
> In Jove's own book, like an unnatural dam
> Should now eat up her own. (3.1.292–96)

The unnatural nightmare scene Menenius evokes here is that of a Rome nursed and suckled by a she-wolf at the beginning and ending up as another, now undefined, she-animal, a cannibalistic dam that devours her own off-spring. The early modern travellers had observed human cannibalism among the savage tribes they discovered and, indeed, the word 'cannibal' for 'man-eaters' or 'anthropophagi' first entered the English language via the travellers' accounts circulating in Europe.[32] However, with a few exceptions such as the Frenchman Jean de Léry or the German Hans Staden, who had fallen into the hands of the anthropophagous Brazilian Ubatuba and had had months to study their behaviour,[33] they did not understand its ritualistic meaning and cultural import and considered it, therefore, as a criterion for the non-human or bestial nature of these tribes, which Othello described so graphically and movingly to Desdemona, winning her love with his stories "of the Cannibals, that each other eat; / The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders" (1.3.143–45). The notion of cannibalism, mind you, was only extended to the animal world by natural scientists in the late seventeenth century[34] and we are still only beginning to understand the logic – the 'bio-logic' and 'etho-logic' – of animal infanticide. For the early modern period both man devouring his own kind and animals their own off-spring were monstrous; they were both, to use a rich and pointed German word, *Untiere*, monstrously less and monstrously

31 Topsell, *Historie of Foure-footed Beastes*, no pagination.

32 The earliest reference quoted in the *OED* is from Richard Eden's 1553 translation of Sebastian Munster's *Cosmography*; Shakespeare uses the word five times (in *3 Henry VI*, 1.4 and 5.5; *2 Henry IV*, 2.2 and *Othello*, 1.3 and as the adverb 'cannibally' in *Coriolanus*, 4.5.193).

33 Jean de Léry, *Histoire d'vn voyage fait on la terre dv Brésil […]* (Paris: [n. pub.], 1578); Hans Staden, *Wahrhaft Historia und beschreibung eyner Landtschafft der Wilden, Nacketen, Grimmigen Menschenfresser Leuthen […]* (Marburg: Andreas Kolbe, 1557).

34 The earliest *OED* references here are to Jedidiah Morse's *American Geography* (1789) and Charles Darwin's *Earth-worms* (1881) and concern sharks and worms.

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worse than mere animals.[35] Menenius in his cautionary comparison brackets both *Untiere* together and thus short-circuits metaphorically internecine civil war with animal cannibalism, drawing this in upon a long-established political allegory going back to Lucan's *Pharsalia* and his English translators and adaptors.[36]

Menenius's cannibal trope is just one instance of many that link the human to the animal world in *Coriolanus*. Where Ben Jonson did that – with equally disastrous effect for the *Untier Mensch* – by way of a consistent animal fable and allegory in his satirical comedy *Volpone, or The Fox*, first published the year before *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare, in contrast, employs a web of animal images supporting the anthropological and political deep structure of the play. The density of this image cluster has frequently been noted by critics; indeed one of the most recent editors of the play, R. B. Parker, calculated that *Coriolanus* is in this respect "second only to *Troilus and Cressida* in the Shakespeare Canon".[37] And, of course, it had not gone unnoticed under the auspices of New Criticism earlier in the century. Caroline Spurgeon, however, in her classic account of *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells us* (1935), though aware of the particular frequency of animal images in the plays, overlooked its special relevance in *Coriolanus* and highlighted the play's images of the human body alone.[38] Thus it was the German scholar Wolfgang Clemen instead, writing his dissertation on *Shakespeares Bilder. Ihre Entwicklung und ihre Funktionen* independently of Spurgeon's work and publishing it the year after her book, who first fully acknowledged the important dramatic function of images of animals and of disease in *Coriolanus*. "Taken as a whole," he writes, "they represent the most intense characterization by means of imagery ever attempted by Shakespeare".[39] Such a typically New Critical focus on dramatic characterization ignores, of course, the anthropological implications of animal imagery that are my present concern here. I also receive little encouragement along these lines from J. C. Maxwell's article of 1947, expressly dedicated to 'Animal Imagery in *Coriolanus*'. For him,

35 See Ulrich Horstmann, *Das Untier. Konturen einer Philosophie der Menschenflucht* (Wien and Berlin: Medusa, 1983).

36 See Werner von Koppenfels, '"Our swords into our proper entrails": Lucan und das Bild des Bürgerkriegs in der Shakespearezeit', in *Bild und Metamorphose. Paradigmen einer europäischen Komparatistik*, ed. by Werner von Koppenfels (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), pp. 87–118.

37 R. B. Parker, 'Introduction', in William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. by R. B. Parker, pp. 1–154 (p. 79).

38 Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), pp. 347–49.

39 Wolfgang Clemen, *Shakespeares Bilder. Ihre Entwicklung und ihre Funktionen im dramatischen Werk* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1936); my quotation is from the English translation, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* [1951] (London: Methuen, 1966), pp. 154–58 (p.155).

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Shakespeare, by "stressing the allegorical element", the point-to-point correspondences between animals and the *zoon politicon* man "minimizes any insistence of a more intimate and subtle blending of the human and the bestial",[40] as he finds it in *King Lear*, and he sees the play entirely in the tradition of the beast fable, in which "the animals are in a sense humanized" and in which the beast imagery "far from laying stress on the sub-human element in man, merely affords an illustration, a comment".[41] It is precisely such a reductively one-sided reading of the central trope of this play that I wish to question here.

What tells against such a transparently allegorical reading already resides, to begin with, in the rhetorical energy with which the man-animal trope is articulated in the play's language. Mind you, there are the occasional *similes* which, by spelling out the various grounds of comparison between man and animal, still keep both realms reassuringly separate, "Holloa me *like* a hare" (1.9.7); "*like* an unnatural dam" (3.1.295); "I'd have beaten him *like* a dog" (4.5.52–3); "*like* conies after rain" (4.5.217); "*like* an eagle in the dovecote" (5.6.115). These are, however the exception to the vastly predominant stylistic rule of animal *metaphors* here and these do effectively short-circuit the realms of the human and the bestial and claim ontological identity. Menenius's "Rome and her rats" (1.1.159) suggests more than just similitude between Romans and rats; the metaphor, supported by its vigorous alliteration, turns the Romans into rats, the rats into Romans, indeed. And the same applies to the "very dog to the commonalty", Coriolanus (1.1.26), or the "curs" that bark at him, the plebeians (1.1.165), two mutually reflecting canine images which turn Rome into a kennel of vicious dogs.[42]

The rhetorical force and the cumulative impact of such tropes turning men into animals is further enhanced by their drawing upon all the grammatical resources of metaphor formation:[43] *adjectival* metaphors ("the *cormorant* belly", 1.1.118); *verbal* metaphors ("in Rome *littered*", 3.1.239; "once *chafed*, he cannot / Be *reined* again", 3.3.27 f); *genitive* metaphors ("souls of *geese*", 1.5.5; "take up a *brace* o'th' best of them", 3.1.244); and, again and again, *nominal* metaphors replacing the human with a bestial reference: "Who does the wolf love?" (2.1.7), "city of kites and crows" (4.5.42), "old goat!" (3.1.178) or "poor hen" (5.3.163). Some of these metaphors are part of a demotic rhetoric of insult and vituperation, others are sustained by the emblematic conventions of fable and bestiary, and others yet are freshly minted in the new empirical observatory

40 J. C. Maxwell, 'Animal Imagery in *Coriolanus*', *Modern Language Review*, 42 (1947), 417–21 (p. 418).
41 Maxwell, 'Animal Imagery', p. 420.
42 This canine metaphor will be continued and elaborated upon throughout the play (e.g. 1.1.203, 1.7.38, 2.1.253, 2.3.212, 3.3.121, 4.5.52 f, 5.6.108–13).
43 See Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Grammar of Metaphor* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1958).

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of the animal world. Together, they project a Rome inhabited by a menagerie of animals at each others' throats rather than Roman republicans negotiating their dissensions and their conflicts of interest with the help of that reason which was claimed to be man's distinctive mark and is frequently invoked in the play.

The 'anthropofugal' energies of the play which question man's self-image as the crowning centre of the *scala naturae* and shift *Mensch* towards the *Unmensch*[44] gain further power in the particular choice of animals making up the Roman menagerie. Most of them are cowardly, vicious or unappetizing animals, beasts of prey or carrion, and where 'higher' or 'nobler' animals are invoked, the invocation is regularly revoked or negated. Moreover, for a play that is, unlike the other Roman plays, uncommonly concentrated in its field of action, the narrowly circumscribed territory of Rome and its neighbour Corioles, the metaphorical menagerie is fantastically all-comprehensive: there are serpents from "Afric" (1.9.3), camels from Arabia (2.1.257) and from Asia raging tigers (3.1.314), in particular male tigers that you milk in vain for kindness (5.4.27–8). The rats inhabiting Rome (1.1.159) and gnawing their way into human garners (1.1.247–48) also are of non-European extraction and were beginning to be recognized in Shakespeare's England as carriers of the plague to all the ports of Europe.[45] There are, from the West Indies of the discoverers, "cannibally given" creatures between the human and the bestial, and beyond that there are, from the realms of legendary geography and zoology, which yet were included in Gesner's and Topsell's natural histories, many-headed hydras (3.1.95; see also 4.1.1–2), lonely dragons inhabiting poisonous fens (4.1.30) and fiercely fighting with each other (4.7.23) once they have taken off on their wings (5.4.14–15), and other hybrid monsters.

Together, the animals inhabiting the Shakespearean text of this play adumbrate a zoological completeness of species which suggests that of the animal world in Noah's Ark – or in Topsell's *History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents and Insects*, if it comes to that. There are, in the *mammal* class, dogs, and cats, mice and rats, foxes and lions, hares and conies, horses and asses and mules, lambs and goats and wolves, camels and apes and tigers; there are, in the *ornithological* section, geese and doves and cormorants, crows and kites, ospreys

44 For 'anthropofugal' see Horstmann.

45 See Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater. The Stuart Years* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 85–88. The role of the *Rattus rattus* and of the rat and flea cycle involved in spreading the plague was not yet really understood. Thomas Lodge, for instance, in his *Treatise of the Plague* (1603) still considers the plague to be "caused by a certaine indisposition of the aire", but refers already to "Rats, Moules, and other creatures, (accustomed to liue under ground), forsak[ing] their habitations" as a sign of an imminent plague. See Thomas Lodge, *A Treatise of the Plague* (London: Edward White and N.L., 1603), pp. B1v and C3v.

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and eagles; minnows and spawn stand in for the *ichthyological* species, snails, serpents and vipers for *reptiles*, and moths and flies and butterflies for *insects*. My classification is already inherent in early modern zoology, though Topsell also applies a more traditional theological typology which classifies animals according to their divinely ordained relationship with man, their uses and dangers for man:

> […] all the Divines observe both in the *Hebrew*, in the *Greek* and *Latin*, that they [the animals] were created of three several sorts or kinds. The first, *Jumentum*, as Oxen, Horse, Asses and such like, *quia hominum juvementa*. The second *Reptile*, *quia hominum medicina*. The third *Bestia, i. à vastando*, for that they were wilde and depopulators of other their associates, rising also against Man, after that by his fall he had lost his first image and integrity.[46]

All the “three several sorts or kinds” are there in *Coriolanus* as they were on Noah’s Ark where – in a significant metaphor bridging the Christian myth with science and the arts[47] – they, together with man, “*act[ed] their several parts in order upon the same Theater*”.[48] They are all there, but it is Topsell’s last sort or kind that have the greatest stage presence, the ‘beasts’ – allegedly – hostile to each other and to man, the rats, curs and wolves, the vipers and tigers.

It is these in particular which image the Romans, both Coriolanus and his opponents, as animals in a world which seems to bear out the old adage of *homo homini lupus*. And, similarly, the rats of Rome bear out the accumulated rat-lore of the time. Coriolanus “smells a rat” everywhere[49] and a rat, after all, “betrays herself with her own noise”, as Hamlet knows only too well when he kills the rat Polonius making a noise behind his arras.[50] The plebeians also “swallow sweet poison until they die”;[51] being ambitious, as Coriolanus thinks, they become “like poisoned rats, which when they have tasted their bane cannot rest till they drink, and then can much less rest till their death”.[52] In a crisis of battle or state,

46 Edward Topsell, ‘The Epistle Dedicatory’, in Topsell, *The History of Four-footed Beasts*, no pagination.

47 For ‘theatre’ as a concept applying both to philosophical and scientific treatises, experiments or collections and to the stage see Helmar Schramm, *Karneval des Denkens. Theatralität im Spiegel philosophischer Texte des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1969).

48 John Rowland, ‘The Epistle Dedicatory’, in Topsell, *The History of Four-footed Beasts*, no pagination.

49 M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), R31.

50 R. W. Dent, *Shakespeare’s Proverbial Language: An Index* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), R30.1. See *Hamlet*, 3.4.23 f and 4.1.9.

51 Tilley/ Dent, R32.1.

52 N. W. Bawcutt quotes this passage from Joseph Hall’s *Meditations and Vows* (1609) as a gloss to *Measure for Measure*, 1.2.128f – “Like rats that raven down their proper bane, / A thirsty

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they cowardly "leave the sinking ship",[53] and when famine strikes a community, as it does in Coriolanus's Rome, rats vie with each other and with man for food. There is an undated early broadsheet, "Bloudy news from *Germany* or the peoples misery by famine", which illustrates drastically the interchangeability of rats and humans being in such a case: it tells the story of a certain nobleman Harto from Mainz

> who when the people were decayed (by reason of a hard famine) he gathered the poorer sort in a Barn, and burned them (saying these are but as Rats that eat up all and do nothing else) but the allseeing God left not this wickedness unpunished; for he was so sore beset and beat with Rats, that his Castles top was never after free of them, and at last devoured by them.[54]

Men are interchangeable with animals because they are (like) animals in crucial aspects of their behaviour. And this applies in particular to men and animals in the plural; it is the collective that brings out the bestial in man. In this respect, the perspective of the play on the Roman *body politic* tends to converge with the glance of the travellers and discoverers at "the savages of Ind", a glance which is rarely directed at the individual but, characteristically, at the species, at the "wild and savage people that live and lie up and down in troops like herds of deer in a forest"[55] or, as André Thevet has it in his report on *The New Found World*, "wild and brutish people, without Fayth, without Lawe, without Religion, and without any civilization: but living like brute beasts".[56] In contrast to a travelogue, a stage tragedy, of course, cannot but single out outstanding or representative individuals for its representation of the *humanum genus*, but the cumulative impact of the pluralized or generalizing references to animals does highlight the genus and species and the generic relationship between man and animal. The "rabble" (1.1.216; 3.1.138; 4.2.35), "the mutable rank-scented meinie" (3.1.69),

evil, and when we drink, we die" – in his edition of the play (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 98.

53 Tilley / Dent, M1243. See also *The Tempest*, 1.2.147 f: "the very rats / Instinctively have quit it [the ship]".

54 The full title of the broadsheet is *Bloudy news from Germany or The peoples misery by famine, Being an example of Gods just judgement on one Harte a noble man in Germany of the town of Ments who when the people were decayed (by reason of a hard famine) he gathered the poorer sort into a barn, and burned them (saying these are but as rats that eat up all and do nothing else) but the allseeing God left not this wickedness unpunished; for he was so sore beset and beat with rats, that his castles top was never after free of them, and at last devoured by them. Tune of, Chievy Chase* (London: [n. pub.], [n.d.]). The text can be found in *Early English Books Online*, Chadwyck-Healey.

55 See note 22.

56 André Thevet, *The New Found Worlde, or Antarktike*, trans. by Thomas Hacket (London: Henrie Bynneman, 1568), p. 43.

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is like a cowardly and fickle herd of beasts and the tribunes are their herdsmen, “the herdsmen of the beastly plebeians” (2.1.92). They come, like hounds or horses, in “braces” (2.3.59; 3.1.244) or, like minnows (3.1.91), crows (3.1.141) or the pigeons in a dovecote (5.6.115), they are not worth counting and become more and more numerous like the “multiplying spawn” (2.2.76) of rivers and oceans. What is more, they are animals in the process of decomposition: they sink down the *scala naturae* to an offensively smelling “musty superfluidity” (1.1.224), to “musty chaff” (5.1.31) and to “rotten things” (3.1.180) spreading “infection” (3.1.312), “boils and plagues” (1.5.2) – in that respect not unlike rats, whose festering bodies bode imminent plague. Even worse, the “many-headed multitude” of the *plebs* (2.3.15) disrupts the *scala naturae* altogether: it is a beast turned monster. The monstrously bestial image of the human crowd ultimately goes back to the “composite beasts in the old myths”, the “many-headed sort of beast” with which the ruler has to struggle in Plato’s political philosophy, advised by him to “leave them to snarl and wrangle and devour each other” like a pack of wolves or curs.[57] Plato’s myth was revived in the political discourses of early modern England, projected upon the fabled monsters of many a traveller’s account and resurfaces here and in other plays by Shakespeare as the “beast with many heads” (4.1.1 – 2) and “multitudinous tongue” (3.1.158), the beast with the “horn and noise o’th’monster” (3.1.97).[58] Here is a contemporary image of it, complete with the animal allegory of wolf and lamb:

57 Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by Desmond Dee (London: Penguin, 2003), ix, 588a-589a.

58 See for the discourse of the many-headed monster Ian Munro, *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London. The City and its Double* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) and Christopher Hill, ‘The Many-Headed Monster’, in Christopher Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 181 – 204. I owe these references to Kai Wiegandt and his dissertation-in-progress on rumour and crowd on the early modern English stage.

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A LETTER,
Nine yeeres since, written and first published: Containing a
most briefe Discourse Apologetical, with a plaine demonstration,
and feruent Protestation, for the lawfull, sincere, and very Christian
course, of the Philosophicall studies and exercises, of a certaine studious
Gentleman: a faithfull Seruant to our late Soueraigne Lady, Queene
Elizabeth, for all the time of her Raigne: and (Anno 1603.
Aug. 9.) sworne Seruant to the Kings his most
excellent Maiestie.

A false witnesse shall not be vnpunished: and he that speaketh lyes,
shall perish. Prouerb. 19. vers. 5.

Fig. 2: Title page of John Dee, *A Letter[…]* (1604)

But what about the protagonist, the emphatic individualist and paragon of *Romanitas*, Coriolanus? His enemies may call him wolf, tiger and dragon or worse, two further steps down the *scala naturae*, mere matter, a "thing" (4.6.94), a "creeping thing", a "thing made for Alexander", i. e. a dead piece of sculpture, and an "engine" (5.4.14, 22 and 19), but does his *humanitas* not survive intact such metaphorical slurs cast upon him? For Brian Vickers, at any rate, he is a "true tragic hero" and he qualifies for that by being emphatically human and having, besides his faults, "appreciable human values" and "offer[ing] a way of living that we regard as precious".[59] And, after all, does he not aspire to the noblest beliefs of the Stoics: virtue as an end in itself, autonomy of will, perfect self-control? Ay, there's the rub: what aims at a superhuman perfection extending the human towards the divine, all too easily turns into its opposite and links man more closely with his bestial other: the autonomy of will can prove less flexible than the instinct of animals; too stern a cult of virtue and too strong a conviction of one's own virtuousness leads to a sense of superiority that endangers all social cohesion, even the natural gregariousness which man shares

59 Brian Vickers, '*Coriolanus* and the demons of politics', in Brian Vickers, *Returning to Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 135 – 93 (p. 188).

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with the animal; the Stoic's famous *ἀταραξία*, i.e. his perfect discipline of the body, the passions, and the emotions, can become indistinguishable from bestial insensitivity. This is precisely Coriolanus' case, and it is these paradoxes of the more and less than human that his tragedy anatomises with un-blinkered sarcasm – and that not only where his Stoic *ἀταραξία* breaks down in violent aggression against the beastly body of the populace – an aggression which seeks to exorcise the bestial other in himself – but right down to the end, when his martial and protective carapace is shattered like that of a dead insect or reptile, to reveal nothing inside but an enormous void. No wonder he is never given a soliloquy of any substance or importance[60] – in contrast to Shakespeare's other great Roman heroes, in contrast to a Brutus, a Julius Caesar or an Antony, there is just not enough inside him for deeper introspection to disclose![61]

60 His soliloquy in 2.3.109–20 is hardly more than an aside nor are the two brief soliloquies which frame scene 4.4 particularly introspective.

61 Here my argument merges with the argument I proposed three years ago in my contribution to an earlier Rome conference on the Roman plays, 'Acting the Roman: *Coriolanus*', in *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome*, ed. by Maria Del Sapio Garbero (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 35–47.

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John Gillies

“Mighty Space”: the Ordinate and Exorbitant in two Shakespeare Plays

> […] shall we now
> Contaminate our fingers with base bribes?
> And sell the mighty space of our large honours
> For so much trash?
>
> (*Julius Caesar*, 4.2.75 – 8)[1]

Much as in his Elizabethan contemporaries Marlowe and Jonson, Shakespeare’s global imagination is profoundly inflected by the Roman figure of ‘exorbitance’ whereby discovery or conquest beyond a traditional idea of the bounded world is at once glorious and morally (or even ontologically) transgressive. Thus Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* plays (c.1588) celebrate a monster whose lust for new worlds to conquer is matched only by the abyssal cruelty which – quite as much as geographic expanse – is progressively discovered in the course of the plays. Here the figure of exorbitance seems plainly indebted to the Armada victory of 1588 and the consequent Elizabethan appropriation of the Spanish imperial motto *Plus Ultre* and emblem of the twin Pillars of Hercules which, marking the terminus of the Mediterranean, were said to have been erected by Hercules to mark the Western limit of the ordained world, the world beyond which it was impious to venture.[2] Essentially the same imagination is encountered from the other side so to speak in Jonson’s *Sejanus* where Alexander the Great – pattern of all ancient world beaters and empire builders – is described as “that voluptuous, rash, / Giddy, and drunken Macedon” (giddiness being a symptom of exorbitance).[3] Jonson’s disenchantment with Alexander is more in tune with Cicero, Lucan and other Republican Roman rehearsals of the exorbitant impulse (principally “the rash behaviour of Gaius Caesar”),[4] than the Spanish imperial motto which had boasted the superiority of Columbus over Hercules, and the Spanish empire over

1 All Shakespeare quotations from *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works,* ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

2 See Earl Rosenthal, ‘*Plus Ultra, Non Plus Ultra*, and the Columnar Device of Charles V’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 36 (1973), 198 – 230.

3 Ben Jonson, *Sejanus*, in Ben Jonson, *Five Plays*, ed. by G. A. Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 99 – 218, (1.145 – 46).

4 Cicero, *On Duties* [*De Officiis*], ed. by M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Book 1, paragraph 26. Further quotations from *On Duties* are from this edition.

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the Roman. Jonson was thus mindful of what the inventors of the Spanish imperial boast had either forgotten or repressed: that the Hercules who set limits to the known world – such as those pillars supposedly erected at the strait of Gibraltar inscribed with the words *Non plus ultra* (no further) – was the same Hercules who made that famous choice between two paths, "the one of pleasure and the other of virtue" (*De Officiis*, 1.118), and also the monster-quelling Hercules who "undertook extreme toils and troubles in order to protect and assist all races of men" (*De Officiis*, 3.25). All these acts: setting limits, choosing virtue and quelling monsters, are ordaining acts, enshrining natural law within the human world.

In this paper, I should like to ask what Shakespeare makes of this (specifically Roman) *topos* of exorbitance. Shakespeare engages the *topos* principally in the Plutarchan plays (*Julius Caesar, Coriolanus, Antony and Cleopatra*) but also in plays such as *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest* whose essentially Elizabethan global vision shows traces of the ancient discourse of exorbitance. The question could take us in either of two different directions depending on whether we focus principally on the agents of exorbitance (conquerors and/or voyagers) and its ethnography (exotic characters, barbarians, savages), or whether we focus on the other side of the exorbitance equation: the moral/ontological norm which is hubrised (overflowed) by exorbitance. Such a norm belongs to the thought world of *servare modum, finemque tenere* (observe moderation and hold fast to the limit), effectively the motto of Cato the younger.[5] As I have already gone down the first of these two tracks in my *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (1994),[6] I shall take this occasion to go down the second: namely, the *normative* side of the exorbitance idea, that is to say, how exorbitance is imagined from the standpoint of that which it violates.

The first point I should make is that Shakespeare is not (like Jonson) a defender of the normative Republican world of *De Officiis*, in which natural law decrees the identity of benefit and virtue, effectively the *modum et finem* that Cato dedicates his life to serve. But neither is he (like Marlowe) a celebrator of exorbitance. His position is infinitely more complex than either of these. Both the exorbitant and the ordinate positions are exploded in Shakespeare. At the same time neither is transcended. There is no 'better' or 'more advanced' or 'more highly evolved' human position: no Hegelian 'synthesis' so to speak. Hence they both remain, less as ethical or political positions (or the vestiges of these positions) than as profoundly elaborated dream structures. A key feature

5 Lucan, *The Civil War* [*Pharsalia*], ed. and trans. by J. D. Duff, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), pp. 84–5.

6 John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

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of Shakespeare's vision of both positions is that it springs from and returns to what can only be described as a primal scene or scenery. That in turn originates less in the late Republican writing of Cicero or the even later Republican legend-spinning of Lucan and Seneca, than in the earlier Republican mythscape of the rape of Lucretia and the sacrificial expulsion of the Tarquins. Like Vico, for whom the ordaining of geographical boundaries in the ancient world is linked to a primal scene of sacrificial violence controlling the "infamous promiscuity" of people and things in the bestial state,[7] Shakespeare reverts again and again to the arche-myths of Republican Rome where the new order is founded on a sacrificial troping of the rape of Lucretia. The persistence of this archaic structure in the mature Shakespeare however, is less conscious than unconscious, and less an affirmation than a haunting, an occultation.

The words 'mature Shakespeare' bring me to my texts. In this paper, I will be focussing on two plays: *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice.* Brevity aside, there are several reasons for this choice. First, these plays deliberately echo each other: the use of Portia's name and legend in the *Merchant* clearly gestures towards the thought worlds of Plutarch, Cicero, Cato and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar.* Second is that each imagines the exorbitance *topos* in what we might think of as twin modes – imperial in the Roman play and mercantile in the Venetian play – each of which modes (and their parallelism) going back to Plutarch's *Lives* of Brutus and Cato, to the third chorus of Seneca's *Medea* (in which the origin of trade is linked with the exorbitant voyage of the Argo after the Golden Fleece), and to various passages in Cicero's *De Officiis* which seem echoed in the *Merchant* (we will return to these later). Finally, I am interested in these two plays because they say something about how the exorbitance *topos* migrates from an essentially Roman thought world to the Elizabethan thought world (in which London looks to Venice which in turn had looked to Rome).

Julius Caesar

Any grammar-school educated Elizabethan (familiar with Cicero's *De Officiis*)[8] should have expected *Julius Caesar* to turn on a contrast between ordinate Republicanism and exorbitant Imperialism. On the other hand, an awareness of

7 *The New Science of Giambattista Vico: Revised Translation of the Third Edition, 1774*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968). The expression is found throughout *The New Science*, but see especially pp. 294–96.

8 T. W. Baldwin, 'Ch. XLVIII: Upper Grammar School: Shaksper's Training in Moral Philosophy', in T. W. Baldwin, *William Shaksper's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), ii, pp. 578–616. After citing written Grammar School

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Plutarch might have primed them for a considerably more nuanced *agon* between the two notional exemplars, Brutus and Caesar. Taking his cue from Plutarch rather than Cicero, Shakespeare deepens the nuance so far that we might be forgiven for wondering what this contrast is about. My suggestion is that Shakespeare confounds their ostensible opposition in a deeper kinship, one of values no less than blood. In Shakespeare's Caesar, we find a relatively ordinary (if grandiloquent) man coupled to an exorbitant myth (which was never so lurid as in the first book of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, which Marlowe translated first into English and then into *Tamburlaine*). Crucially the *hubris* of exorbitance is not to be found in Shakespeare's Caesar. He has weaknesses of course, through which he is lured to his death, but these are neither exorbitant nor hubristic in the singular sense of Greek tragedy. Brutus too has a weakness, and crucially it is his weakness rather than his ordinate firmness that leads him to the murderous conspiracy which results in the overthrow of Caesar. This weakness is essentially the same in both men. Like Caesar, there is a fatal gap between Brutus as man and Brutus as legend. The weakness of both is precisely to seek identification with their mythic roles when essentially these roles do not suit them. The willed identification leaves them open to flattery. Caesar is persuaded by Decius Brutus (one of the conspirators) to ignore Calphurnia's warning dream and go to the forum as befits a man of his reputation. For his part, Brutus is flatteringly reminded by Cassius of his descent from Junius Brutus, the Republican patriarch who led the expulsion of Tarquin from Rome after his rape of Lucretia. For Plutarch indeed, Brutus's chief value to the conspiracy was his pedigree and reputation.[9]

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exercises including one based on *De Officiis* by Henry Hastings 1586–1643, fifth Earl of Huntingdon, and noting its consistency with the usage in the time of Edward VI "at the middle of the century", Baldwin opines: "The same methods would have been applied between times to William Shakspere. By reading these surviving materials of actual work done one can get a very concrete and pragmatic idea of what was required, no doubt, of Shakspere" (p. 579). Again: "the ethical or moral training of upper grammar school […] centred upon Cicero" (p. 581). Again, of a particular compilation of 1574, "it is clear that this collection with *De Officiis* and its concomitants was being frequently printed in London about the time Shakespeare would have needed a copy in grammar school" (p. 583). Baldwin also notes "the *De Officiis* was also current in parallel Latin and English" and that "in 1553, R. Tottel published a translation of Cicero's *De Officiis* by Nicholas Grimald. In 1558, this was joined with the Latin, and frequently reprinted in that form thereafter" (p. 585). The book shows up in the wills of more than one Stratford schoolmaster of Shakespeare's day (p. 584) and is ranked by one schoolmaster as next to the Gospels in moral authority (p. 586), as part of "the moral backbone of the educational system" (p. 586).

9 When Cassius tries to drum up a conspiracy against Caesar, nobody will join until Brutus "would be head of it […] for their opinion was that the enterprise wanted not hands or resolution, but the reputation and authority of a man such as he was, to give as it were the first religious sanction, and by his presence, if by nothing else, to justify the undertaking; that without him they should go about this action will less heart, and should lie under greater

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To a considerable extent, this paralleling of weaknesses can be found in Plutarch. The hints of Cassius's flattery are very strong in the *Life of Brutus*, while the episode of Caesar being flattered into the Forum comes from the *Life of Caesar.*[10] More tellingly however, Plutarch may well have furnished Shakespeare with the deep and ironic rationale of this comparison. Cheek by jowl with the narrative of Brutus's seduction by Cassius, Plutarch speaks of Brutus's "natural firmness of mind, not easily yielding, or complying in favour of everyone that entreated his kindness", such that:

No flattery could ever prevail with him to listen to unjust petitions: and he held that to be overcome by the importunities of shameless and fawning entreaties, though some compliment it with the name of modesty and bashfulness, was the worst disgrace a man could suffer. And he used to say that he always felt as if they who could deny nothing could not have behaved well in the flower of their youth.[11]

The idea of the compliant man here – the man whose modesty and bashfulness are overcome by immodest, shameless and "fawning entreaties" – echoes the language of Plutarch's essay *On Compliancy* in the *Moralia.* More importantly, Caesar's flattery by Decius Brutus also recalls some of the examples of compliancy in that essay: particularly those men who are unable to resist invitations by their enemies to dinner (fearing to look demeaningly suspicious) and so walk into traps that they should have foreseen.[12]

Must we suppose that Shakespeare had read this essay? It is highly likely, particularly as another key aspect of Brutus in both Plutarch and Shakespeare is echoed by *On Compliancy.* This is the gentleness and learnedness of Brutus. Both Shakespeare and Plutarch suggest that Brutus's weakness is nearly identical with what makes him so attractive as a personality: his respectfulness, his willingness to entertain the other point of view. Such a man is compliant because of a generosity of spirit which leads him to respect his interlocutor. For this reason, Plutarch thinks it problematic to wean young minds away from compliancy

suspicions when they had done it; for if their cause had been just and honourable, people would be sure that Brutus would not have refused it". Plutarch, 'The Life of Marcus Brutus', in *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. by John Dryden, rev. by A. H. Clough (London: Sampson Low, son, & co., 1859), v, p. 312.

10 Plutarch, 'The Life of Caesar', in *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. by John Dryden, rev. by A. H. Clough, iv, p. 321.

11 Plutarch, 'The Life of Marcus Brutus', p. 308.

12 Plutarch, *On Compliancy,* in *Plutarch's Moralia*, ed. and trans. by Phillip H. De Lacy and Benedict Einarson, Loeb Classical Library, 15 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), vii, pp. 42 – 89 (pp. 57 – 9): "Do not let your enemy embarrass you, nor fawn on him when he appears to trust you. For after you invite him he will invite you, and after he dines with you you will dine with him, once you have let the mistrust that was your preservation lose its keen edge under the influence of shame" (p. 59).

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because in doing so, one runs the risk of replacing respect with envy and churlishness.[13] Though there is a golden mean between these two extremes – versions of it are offered both by Plutarch and Cicero in the *De Officiis* – Shakespeare's play does not offer us one.[14] Instead the play offers us an antithesis. Thus Cassius is uncompliant where Brutus is compliant, but uncompliancy is not a virtue in Cassius because he is envious rather than respectful, stern rather than gracious, and ruthless rather than merciful. Cassius indeed is the perfect example of the danger represented by the uncompliant personality. Plutarch makes the point in a nice antithesis: "Cassius had from his youth a natural hatred and rancor against the whole race of tyrants […]. But Brutus was roused up and pushed on to the undertaking by many persuasions" (p. 311). In short, what Plutarch hints is that the same intolerance of tyrants that is the mark of Republican manhood, might be grounded in vice as much as in virtue. Cassius's envy trumps Brutus's gentleness and learnedness. Thus, Plutarch is sceptical of the story that Brutus was descended from Junius Brutus because the latter was: "of a severe and inflexible nature, like steel of too hard a temper, and having never had his character softened by study and thought, he let himself be

13 "Thus the cure is difficult, and the correction of such excesses not without risk. For as the farmer in weeding out some wild and worthless growth thrusts his spade in roughly with no further ado and turns up the root, or applies fire to the weed and blasts it, but when he comes to a vine in need of pruning or deals with an apple tree or olive, he handles it gently, fearing to strip the buds from some healthy part, so the philosopher, when he removes envy from a young man's soul, a worthless and incorrigible growth, or cuts off an early appearance of avarice, or self-indulgence running riot, draws blood, bears down hard, and makes an incision deep enough to leave a scar; but when he applies the knife of chastening discourse to a soft and delicate part of the soul – a description that applies to the part that suffers from compliancy and shyness – he takes heed lest unawares he amputate with these all feeling of respect. It follows that we must not scour too close in removing from the young the fear to disoblige, and thus make them inconsiderate and unyielding to a fault, but as those who pull down houses adjoining to a temple let the connected and neighbouring portions stand and shore them up, in the same way we must deal with compliancy, taking care not to remove with it the adjacent portions of respect and courtesy and gentleness where it hides and clings, while it bestows on the man who yields to pressure easily the flattering epithets of 'friendly', 'civil', and 'considerate of others', not 'rigid' or 'blunt'". Plutarch, *On Compliancy*, pp. 50 – 1.

14 Plutarch states the mean as follows: "Neither then should we be unmindful of these, who suffer from so great an infirmity, nor again should we approve the other unyielding and stern set of character; we should rather contrive an harmonious blend of both qualities, one that removes the ruthlessness of extreme severity and the infirmity of excessive courtesy" (*On Compliancy*, p. 50). Cicero too was critical of stern, unyielding and unsociable virtue in the *De Officiis* where he points out that duties have their roots in "the different elements of what is honourable […] the first learning, the second sociability, the third greatness of spirit and the fourth moderation" (Cicero, *De Officiis*, Book 1, paragraph 152). "In my view those duties that have their roots in sociability conform more to nature than those drawn from learning" (Book 1, paragraph 153). "[…] If greatness of spirit were detached from sociability and from the bonding between humans, it would become a kind of brutal savagery" (Book 1, paragraph 157).

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so far transported with his rage and hatred against tyrants that, for conspiring with them, he proceeded to the execution even of his own sons" (p. 302). Junius Brutus, in other words, resembles Cassius far more than he resembles Brutus.

Though the gentle Brutus is seduced into the conspiracy through his own compliancy, he dominates it immediately upon entering. From that moment the coup becomes his artifact, marked by his style rather than Cassius's. The most obvious signature of Brutus's style is the fatal lack of ruthlessness. What interests me however is less this than the bloody histrionics:

> […] Stoop, Romans, stoop,
> And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
> Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords;
> Then walk we forth even to the market-place,
> And waving our red weapons o'er our heads,
> Let's all cry 'peace, freedom, and liberty!' (3.1.105 – 10)[15]

To some extent, this scene originates in Plutarch ("[…]Brutus and his party marched up to the capitol, in their way showing their hands all bloody, and their naked swords, and proclaiming liberty to the people", *Brutus,* p. 321). But it has a deeper root in Shakespeare. The early poems and plays are full of founding acts of sacrificial Republican violence. Thus, in *The Rape of Lucrece*, Junius Brutus urges the Romans to "kneel" (1830) by the body of Lucrece, and "by this bloody knife […] revenge the death of this true wife" (1840 – 41). Then he "kiss'd the fatal knife to end his vow" (1843) and "They did conclude to beare Lucrece's body thorough Rome / And publish Tarquin's foul offence" (1850 – 52).[16] The common element in both these founding rituals of violence is their sacrificial character, something quite absent from Plutarch. Shakespeare's Brutus admonishes the conspirators, "Let's be sacrificers, but not butchers" (2. 1. 166). The death of Caesar the man is necessary only in order to expel Caesar's spirit (his potential ambition). For Shakespeare's Brutus – strikingly at odds here with Cicero and Cato – Caesar was not a tyrant, merely a potential tyrant. His death is neither deserved nor just.[17] He is guiltlessly chosen as a sacrificial victim is chosen, or as Lucrece chooses herself.

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15 All quotations from *Julius Caesar* are from the edition ed. by Marvin Spevack [1988], The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

16 All quotations from *The Rape of Lucrece* are from William Shakespeare, *The Poems*, ed. by John Roe, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

17 Cicero glances directly at the justice of Brutus's deed in the following: " […] what greater crime can there be than to kill not merely another man, but a close friend? Surely then, anyone who kills a tyrant, although he is a close friend, has committed himself to crime? But it does not seem so to the Roman people, which deems that deed the fairest of all splendid deeds. Did the beneficial overcome honourableness? No indeed: for honourableness

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Junius Brutus is not the only ancestral perpetrator of sacrificial violence in Shakespeare. Like Junius Brutus, Titus Andronicus murders a son (Mutius) for a perceived transgression of duty. Afterwards, in the lead up to killing his daughter Lavinia, Andronicus cites “rash Virginius” as a precedent for killing his daughter to annul the shame of her rape. Both these killings of violated Roman daughters are clumsy and brutal attempts to appropriate the death of Lucretia, though in the disastrous way that a botched sacrifice resembles a true sacrifice. In the terminology of René Girard, these ancient botchers instigate a “sacrificial crisis” whereby the violence which is normally channeled (or “differentiated”) by the sacrifice into a scapegoat figure escapes and ramifies (“undifferentiated”) in the society at large.[18] Finally Shakespeare offers us a version of the same personality in one of his Plutarchan plays. Caius Martius is a test case of what Cicero regarded as “greatness of spirit detached from sociability” (1.159), and a test case which proves that this Republican species of “brutal savagery” (1.159) almost coincides with its opposite, or exorbitant savagery (which Cicero calls “the wildness and monstrousness of a beast appear[ing] in human form”, 3.32). Thus Coriolanus almost tramples his mother under foot, as Caesar was said to have dreamed in an infamous dream of violating his mother (Plutarch) or Rome itself (Lucan) at the moment of crossing the Rubicon and invading Rome.[19] In a variation on the Republican cult of blood and wounds, Caius Martius’s transformation into Coriolanus is marked by his appearance as a man of blood at the gates of Corioles. His fault is not to have participated these same wounds with his fellow citizens when standing for consul.

The irony of Shakespeare’s gentle Brutus then is that in seeking to emulate the sacrificial violence of his supposed ancestor he botches the job in the way of Andronicus and “rash Virginius”, ancestor figures of a more primeval stamp even than Junius Brutus. The messy inconsistency of Brutus’s sacrificial violence contrasts with the grim seriousness of Portia’s: first wounding herself in the thigh and finally killing herself by eating hot coals. Brutus’s failure eventually produces something like Girard’s “sacrificial crisis” whereby the violence meant

followed upon what benefited” (*De Officiis*, Book 3, paragraph 19). He continues: “[…] there can be no fellowship between us and tyrants – on the contrary there is a complete estrangement – and it is not contrary to nature to rob a man, if you are able, to whom it is honourable to kill. Indeed the whole pestilential and irreverant class ought to be expelled from the community of mankind. For just as some limbs are amputated, if they begin to lose their blood and their life…and are harming the other parts of the body, similarly if the wildness and monstrousness of a beast appears in human form, it must be removed from the common humanity, so to speak, of the body. Of this sort are all those questions in which the issue is duty in particular circumstances” (*De Officiis*, Book 3, paragraph 32).

18 René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. by Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1979), especially Ch. 3, “Oedipus and the Surrogate Victim”, pp. 68 – 88.

19 Plutarch, ‘The Life of Caesar’, p. 291. Lucan, *The Civil War*, pp. 16 – 17.

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to be inhearsed with Caesar explodes in a chaos of undifferentiation (resulting in, among other things, the random death of Cinna the Poet, and the miscellaneous proscription of Antony and Octavius). "Sacrificial crisis" indeed is not a bad formula by which to understand the scrambling of the ordinate and exorbitant in this play. Where Shakespeare differs from Marlowe's and Jonson's take on this classical and early modern *agon* is precisely to 'undifferentiate' it.

How does Brutus manage to bring things to this pass? My own suggestion is that Brutus – like his play to an extent – has an unconscious which is disturbed by the Republican intolerance of tyranny and exorbitance. Unconsciously, Brutus seeks to live up to his Republican legend at Caesar's expense. In living up to the legend, he overcompensates. The play is suggestively silent on whether or not Brutus is actually descended from Junius Brutus. But it allows us to think so because of Brutus's credentials as Portia's husband and Cato's son-in-law. Shakespeare here seems to pass over Plutarch's strong hint that Brutus was Caesar's bastard. This is remarkable because Plutarch regards this as more plausible than the tradition of Brutus's descent from Junius Brutus. Both the life of *Brutus* and the life of *Cato* have identical accounts of how Cato, when urging capital punishment for Catiline against Caesar's pleas for leniency, required Caesar to show him a surreptitiously passed note. Upon seeing that the note was in fact a love letter from his own sister Servilia, Cato threw it back at Caesar with the words, "Take it, drunkard" (*Brutus* and *Cato*).[20] In the *Brutus*, Plutarch offers the thought that because Brutus was born "about that time in which their loves were at the highest, Caesar had a belief that he was his own child" (p. 306). In the *Cato*, Plutarch further notes that – in addition to Servilia – Cato's other sister and his wife too were known for incontinency, prompting this suggestive aside: "and so the life of Cato, like a dramatic piece, has this one scene or passage full of perplexity and doubtful meaning" (p. 394). Shakespeare is probably echoing these passages in *Henry VI. Part 2*, when the Duke of Suffolk speaks of Caesar as murdered by "Brutus' bastard hand".[21]

Could it be that the perplexity of Shakespeare's Brutus is somehow responsive to the notion that Brutus was Caesar's bastard, itself a 'perplexity' in the sense of comprising the single chink in the legend of Cato? It is interesting that Brutus's blood relationship to Cato is never mentioned, as if to have done so might have raised the spectre of Servilia and her adulterous liaison with Caesar. Of the two types of relationship to Cato that Shakespeare could have mentioned therefore, the unperplexed and non-blood relationship is the only one admitted. Brutus's

20 Plutarch, 'The Life of Brutus', p. 307, and 'The Life of Cato the Younger', in *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. by John Dryden, rev. by A. H. Clough, iv, p. 394.

21 William Shakespeare, *Henry VI. Part 2*, ed. by Michael Hattaway, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4.1.136.

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filial relationship to Caesar does emerge at one crucial moment however: in Caesar's words *Et tu Brute* (3.1.77). The phrase is not in Plutarch. Suetonius is the ancient source, where Caesar cries in Greek *καί σύ τέκνον* ("You too my child"). But it is unlikely to have come direct from Suetonius because the Latin line appears in a number of Elizabethan sources that Shakespeare must have known.[22] Yet however this Latin phrase found its way into Shakespeare's, it alone bespeaks a paternal relationship to Brutus. While it is possible that Shakespeare simply parroted the Latin line with no knowledge of its Greek origin – and thus of the father-son relationship directly conveyed in the Greek – the intimacy of the phrase is shocking in the dramatic context. At no prior point in the play has the personal relationship between Caesar and Brutus found direct expression. The shock of so intimate a betrayal is complete – "This was the most unkindest cut of all" (3.2.174). Antony's pun is underlined by Portia's earlier accusation of unkindness for Brutus's failure to include her in the conspiracy. The truer Brutus is to the inflexible precedent of Junius Brutus, the more *unkind* he is to his wife and his natural father. Far from passing over Brutus's natural kindness with Caesar then, Shakespeare uses it ironically. Yet he does not dwell on it. Such a relationship might have brought Brutus and Caesar so close as to collapse the *agon* between the ordinate and exorbitant altogether, and effectively contradicted Antony's eulogy over Brutus ("This was the noblest Roman of them all. / All the other conspirators save only he / Did that they did in envy […]. He only, in a general honest thought / And common good to all, made one of them", 5.5.68–72). If Brutus is the son of this "drunkard" (Cato's taunt at Caesar upon discovering his liaison with Servilia), then Brutus is thereby linked to the intoxicated strand of exorbitance imagery (Lucan's Caesar crosses the Rubicon in a frenzy, Jonson's Alexander is "that, voluptuous, rash, / Giddy and drunken Macedon" which was well known to Shakespeare, whose Antony is defined by this image (or versions of it) throughout *Antony and Cleopatra.*

While Brutus becomes overtly more in tune with his legend in the second half of the play (and less like the compliant tool of Cassius), he also drifts ironically towards the exorbitant end of the ordinance/exorbitance equation. The language of his reproof of Cassius for bribery and extortion is jarringly familiar:

> […] shall we now
> Contaminate our fingers with base bribes?

22 George L. Craik, *The English of Shakespeare* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1857), p. 191. Craik cites Suetonius 1.82 as the only ancient source, but adds: "It may have occurred as it stands here in the Latin play on the same subject which is recorded to have been acted at Oxford in 1582; and it is found in *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, printed in 1600, on which the *Third Part of King Henry VI* is founded, as also in a poem by S. Nicholson, entitled *Acolastus his Afterwit*, printed the same year, in both of which contemporary productions we have the same line: 'Et tu, Brute? Wilt thou stab Caesar too?'"

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> And sell the mighty space of our large honours
> For so much trash? (4.2.75 – 8)

In short, what is at stake for Brutus here sounds more like the "mighty space" of exorbitance than it does the *mores* and *fines* of Cato and Cicero. Moreover, as Gary B. Miles has pointed out, when Brutus simultaneously demands money from Cassius because "I can raise no money by vile means", it sounds like "the most contemptible self-righteousness".[23] In the mode of Harry Berger, we might say that Brutus here scapegoats Cassius, blaming him for the dirty work he needs doing but cannot afford to acknowledge.[24] The failing is significant because bribery and corruption (what Cassius is good at), are at the very root of exorbitant adventurism for Plutarch's Cato who points out that when high offices can be bought, so too can provinces and armies.[25] The armies whose ostensible purpose is to subdue the enemies of Rome beyond the *termini*, can be turned against Rome itself. Cato rams the point home to the senate by telling them "it was not the sons of the Britons or Gauls they need fear, but Caesar himself if they were wise" (p. 422). It is perhaps ironic that Brutus's Republican *auto da fé* after the murder of Caesar is trumped by what Cato would have seen as a massive posthumous bribe to the entire city of Rome.

The Merchant of Venice

Ostensibly at least the rupture between ordinacy and exorbitance is patched up in this comic play in which the maritime trading empire of Venice is reconciled with a traditional imagery of bonding along Republican Roman lines. Can we imagine Cato and Caesar kissing and making up, Cicero and Antonius shaking hands? It is something of this order that Shakespeare is trying to bring off. We should be wary however of assuming that such a project was unserious just because quixotic. Something of Shakespeare's motive conceivably went into a Japanese adaptation of *The Merchant* into a Kabuki play – *Zeni no yononaka*

23 Gary B. Miles, 'How Roman are Shakespeare's "Romans"', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40, 3 (1989), 257 – 83 (p. 280).

24 See Harry Berger, *Making Trifles of Terrors: Redistributing Complicities in Shakespeare* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

25 "The people were at that time extremely corrupted by the gifts of those who sought offices, and most made a constant trade of selling their voices. Cato was eager utterly to root this corruption out of the commonwealth; he therefore persuaded the senate to make an order, that those who were chosen into any office, though nobody should accuse them, should be obliged to come into the court, and give account on oath of their proceedings in their election. This was extremely obnoxious to those who stood for the offices, and yet more to those vast numbers who took the bribes" (Plutarch, 'The Life of Cato the Younger', p. 414).

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(*Life is as fragile as a cherry blossom in a world of money*, c. 1885).[26] To be sure the adaptor fused Shakespeare's play with Edward Bulwer Lytton's play *Money* (1840). But the adaptor's project is highly reminiscent of an Elizabethan financial system which had yet to come to moral terms with the notion of lending money at interest (usury). The context of the Japanese adaptation is the great leap forward of Meiji Japan from feudal isolation to an international trading and money economy. The point for the adaptor was to manage that leap without losing touch with traditional values, duties, in short 'bonds'. Hence, Bassanio's nineteenth century Japanese counterpart proves his moral credentials in the casket ordeal. But instead of choosing a lead casket (the Christian symbolism of which was meaningless in this context), he chose an iron casket (a hint that Japan should lose no time in industrializing). Needless to say, the subtext of *The Merchant* – where the two motives so elaborately stitched together at the textual level fall apart – was lost on the Japanese adaptor (as it was on most westerners in 1885). The tension between text and subtext is attested by the fact that this is perhaps the only Shakespeare play in which the one is systematically and diametrically contradicted by the other; the only play whose working propositions are all but disabled. It is not my place here to rehearse the now familiar ironies of the *Merchant*. What interests me is how and from where they are put together.

Emblematically speaking, the action of *The Merchant of Venice* unfolds between two poles: the bond of flesh which – according to the first century jurist Aulus Gellius – was of archaic Roman origin; and the archetypal trading venture (Jason's voyage for the 'Golden Fleece', at the eastern limit of the Black Sea, and through the Herculean limit of the clashing rocks or Symplegades). In each we detect the competing tendencies of the ordinate and exorbitant.

To my knowledge the bond of flesh has never been linked to the Republican discourse of ordinacy. But it might well have struck Shakespeare's existing gallery of primitively stern Republican types as a good thing. The penalty described by Aulus Gellius is actually a sentence of death or foreign slavery in the first instance. The debtor has bits cut off him only in the event of there being more than one creditor. In that event the debtor could be divided between two or more creditors, and "if they have cut more or less, let them not be held accountable".[27] As such, we can take the original law as the ultimate deterrent from getting into debt in the first place. The emphasis on foreign slavery is also

26 See Yoshihara Yukari, 'Japan as "half-civilized": an early Japanese adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Japan's construction of its national image in the nineteenth century', in *Performing Shakespeare in Japan*, ed. by Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers and John Gillies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 21 – 32.

27 *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius*, ed. by John C. Rolfe, The Loeb Classical Library, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1967), iii, p. 425.

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interesting. Evidently enslavement to foreigners is taken as equivalent to death or dismemberment.

For their part, Republican era writers were also remorselessly opposed to debt and foreigners. When still a child, Plutarch's Cato is asked by foreign allies to intercede in their attempt "to be made free citizens of Rome". Cato "made no answer, only he looked steadfastly and fiercely on the strangers" (p. 372). The later Cato was quite gracious to foreigners in their own country (he wasn't called *Cato Uticans* – after the North African city where he died – for nothing). The point is that foreigners weren't necessarily hateful on their own turf. But they were when seeking to become a part of Rome. Cato was similarly uncompromising on the subject of debt. Upon inheriting the estate of a cousin:

> he turned it all into ready money, which he kept by him for any of his friends that should happen to want, to whom he would lend it without interest. And for some of them, he suffered his own land and his slaves to be mortgaged to the public treasury. (p. 376)

The contrast between the hatred for foreigners and the kindness to friends is absolute. Cato's thinking on debt seems to have come from Cato the Elder of whom Cicero tells the following story in the *De Officiis:*

> Someone asked him what was the most profitable activity for a family estate. He replied, 'To graze herds well'. 'And what the next?' 'To graze them adequately.' 'And what the third?' 'To graze them, though poorly.' 'And what the fourth?' 'To plough'. Then when the questioner asked, 'What about money-lending?' Cato's reply was 'What about killing someone?' (2.89)

The joke transports us right back to the thought world described by Aulus Gellius. Cato the Younger is surely who Bassanio has in mind when describing Antonio – who also lends money to his friends without interest and also pawns his estate for the benefit of distressed friends – as "one in whom / The ancient Roman honour more appears / Than any that draws breath in Italy" (3.2.292–94). The comparison is stronger for Antonio's fierceness to Shylock, both as foreigner and as usurer. Certainly Cato was no merchant and Antonio no farmer, but judging by *De Officiis,* Antonio would have been approved by Cicero. Like Cato, Cicero finds nothing "more worthy of a free man than agriculture" (1.151), but trade on a large scale has his qualified support: "If […] men trade on a large and expansive scale, importing many things from all over and distributing them to many people without misrepresentation, that is not entirely to be criticized" (1.151). What is to be criticized are the following:

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those means of livelihood that incure the dislike of other men are not approved, for example collecting harbour dues, or usury. Again, all those workers who are paid for their labour and not for their skill have servile and demeaning employment; for in their case the very wage is a contract to servitude. Those who buy from merchants and sell again immediately should also be thought of as demeaning themselves. For they would make no profit unless they told sufficient lies [...]. (1.150)

Cicero would certainly have praised Antonio for "giving […] which proceeds from liberality" (2.61). Especially where (like Bassanio) the beneficiary needs money "in order to climb to a higher level, we ought not to be at all close-fisted" (2.61). Unlike Cato, Cicero approves trade unless "at the cost of another's disadvantage" (3.21). Profit at the expense of fellow citizens, "is more contrary to nature than death, than poverty […] it destroys the common life and fellowship of men" (3.21). Behind this distinction between honourable and demeaning occupations is natural law, duty, the ties that bind, the equivalence of benefit with virtue, or in the idiom of *The Merchant of Venice*, the 'bond'. Debt and particularly usury are most contrary to it, and indeed like "killing someone" (2.89). Unlike Cato, Cicero can contemplate foreigners in Rome without rage. However, "it is the duty of a foreigner or resident alien to do nothing except his own business, asking no questions about anyone else, and never meddle in public affairs, which are not his own" (1.125).

How close is the bond of flesh in Shakespeare to that in Aulus Gellius? Very close but not identical. Both are effectively death sentences. In a curious way, both resemble the primitive blood and wounds cult of early Rome: the wounds that indebt Rome to Coriolanus, Portia's "voluntary wound in the thigh" binding her to Brutus. Neither is about profit (Shylock got that one right). Literally worthless, neither is a bond in the material sense at all, more a zany kind of capital punishment. Each is patently a kind of joke (Portia's "if thou tak'st more / Or less […]", 4.1.321; Cato's "what about killing someone?"; Shylock's "to bait fish withal", 3.1.42) a *reductio ad absurdum* of duties, observances, bonding. There is nevertheless a significant shift. The Roman bond has the must of the statute book about it, Shakespeare's the tang of living folklore. Shylock's bond puts us in mind of the pawn shop rather than the scaffold. There is something hatefully familiar about it. Again, Shylock's bond is about revenge – pay-back as hurt rather than value – 'wild justice' rather than 'justice' or equivalence.

Before moving on to Shakespeare's Portia, the master figure of bonding in the play, a brief foray into the exorbitant image of the "golden fleece" is necessary. As I have already expounded this symbol in *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*, I will not rehearse too much of it here. The key point is that Shakespeare is attentive to the resonance of this symbol in the third chorus of Seneca's

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Medea, where it functions as a symbol of maritime trade, of venturing into the unknown, of the death of the Golden Age pre-money economy, also of an erotics and danger of the exotic (the source of the wealth). In the *Medea*, trade, wealth and career are intimately and tragically fused with exotic dalliance and marriage. Something of this doubleness (profit and sex) defines Bassanio's relationship to Portia from the very first ("In Belmont is a lady richly left, / And she is fair" 1.1.160–61).The equivocation is meant to be disarmed by the casket test, but is not – certainly not if we are at all attentive to the subtext. Antonio too lives at the sign of the golden fleece. The loan to Bassanio is made in its shadow. And fatally, the money is mixed up with an unsearchable erotics. As we have already seen however, Antonio is also a Venetian Cato or Cicero, an exemplar of duties, bondedness – or of that free lending to friends that cements the natural law community of men. The two motives – exorbitant and ordinate – cross over in him. The loan to Bassanio has to be raised by posting a bond of flesh (a joke of course, but a joke with an unconscious).

This is where Portia fits in.[28] The name is no accident. This frisky young bluestocking represents the marital side of bonding (already an echo and antitype of Shylock's bond of flesh). In her refusal to settle for a corner in Bassanio's affections, we might hear an echo of the Roman Portia begging admittance to her husband's innermost confidence, not be parked in the 'suburbs' of his pleasure. The ring is Portia's symbol no less than the 'argosies' are Antonio's. Portia's father (another Cato avatar?) seems to have designed the casket test specifically as insurance against the profit motive. Lead is a worthless metal of exchange. This is just the point. Portia is for keeps not for bargaining. To be sure, the language of the casket test is New Testament ("he who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath", 2.7.09) but somehow the casket test automatically manages to exclude the foreigners, recalling Cato rather than the ecumenism of the Gospels and the mission to the Gentiles. Ironically, the casket test which signally fails to pick up the dollar signs in Bassanio's eyes works a treat here. Portia intuits what the casket test is really about, and goes on holiday when Bassanio comes to Belmont. But she is no jester. Along with Shylock, Portia is the most serious figure in the play. Portia and Shylock are alike in not being diminished or even seriously challenged by an ironic subtext.

Portia's championship of the bond leads her to oppose Shylock's version of the bond of flesh. The contest between mercy and cruelty can have only one winner. Cruelty is hopelessly at sea, mercy has all the right words and moves. In a

28 I would contest the pertinence of Richard Halpern, *Shakespeare Among the Moderns* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 188: "Portia's very name derives from the Latin *portio*, a word related to *pars* or *part*, which in turn comes from an Indo-European base meaning 'to sell, hand over in sale', whence L. *par, parare, to equate.* Portia's name suggests a process of portioning, or proportioning, dividing, equating, or trading".

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symbolic sense, the confrontation is straightforward. Shylock's bond has to be repudiated by Portia as a vile parody of the marriage bond. Portia's tactic however – not just relying on the killer quibble but deferring its application to the killer moment – is morally questionable. Cicero might actually have disapproved on moral grounds:

> Injustices can also arise from a kind of trickery, by an extremely cunning but ill intentioned interpretation of the law. In consequence the saying 'the more Justice, the more injustice' has by now become a proverb well worn in conversation. Many wrongs of this type are committed even in public affairs; and example is that of the man who, during a truce of thirty days which had been agreed with the enemy, laid waste the fields by night, on the grounds that the truce had been established for days, but not for nights. (1.33)

In fact, Cicero has not been alone. For hundreds of years Portia's tactic has struck countless audiences as shoddy (in fact the "quality of mercy" speech is all but undeliverable by modern actors schooled in Stanislavskian motive hunting). For all this, Portia's integrity has remained untouched. What she is really about is marriage and rings. When in Venice she is simply doing as the Venetians do, and she is after all in disguise. Her moral authority in the fifth act – her "good deed in a naughty world" (5.1.91) – is undimmed.

This brings us to the final confrontation of the play: Portia and Antonio. Again the lines of battle are clearly drawn. However 'royal' a merchant he may be, Antonio is still only a merchant. Fungibility is his middle name. Even money without strings has strings on it. In Antonio's illegitimate claim on Bassanio we remember Cato's disapproval of trade in any guise, and also that Cicero's approval of trade was provisional on its being big and international. In the end, Antonio is exorbitant. The contrast with Shylock tells us that he always has been. After all, the usurer is a *mensch.* He has a house, a family, a daugher, a dead wife he still has feelings for, a Christian wretch of a servant (an Ishmael) he has a place for. And when not buying and selling with the Christians, he tells it like it is. Hence Antonio's final come-uppance. Squirming desire, the ugly secret, the dirty money, the tarnished fleece, the cruising to Colchis – all are outed. There is none of the ancient Roman honour about Antonio at this moment. Cato is entirely on Portia's side, the side of true duty, observance, troth-plight, rings.

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Gilberta Golinelli

Floating Borders: (Dis)-locating Otherness in the Female Body, and the Question of Miscegenation in *Titus Andronicus*

Within the recent debates in Postcolonial and Gender Studies, *Titus Andronicus* has been re-considered as one of the first Shakespearean plays in which the dramatist deals with the question of race and the fear of ancient taboos concerning contamination and miscegenation.[1] In this Roman play anxiety about the permeability of race is not only depicted by the violent assimilation and integration of the so-called barbarians within Roman culture and vice versa, but also by the identification of the barbarous and primitive/savage with the female. This process of assimilation and projection is embedded within the Renaissance political and cultural discourse on the formation of English and national identity where the question of race and gender were deeply interwoven. As Arthur L. Little Jr has shown in his recent *Shakespeare Jungle Fever. National-Imperial Re-vision of Race, Rape and Sacrifice*, during the sixteenth century gender, race and sexuality gave shape to early modern England's national-imperial vision, although, at the same time, "that vision, in turn, shaped England's notion of gender, race, and sexuality".[2]

In *Titus Andronicus* the stereotypical representation of Aaron as a *blackamoor* thus serves to reinforce race prejudices which were already rooted in the English culture of the period and, at the same time, to bring out the monstrosity of femininity, the dangerous and the uncontrolled sexuality of a white woman, Tamora, who is also the savage that inhabits one of the margins of the Roman Empire, its northern and not yet entirely subdued periphery.

Within this perspective, my analysis will investigate the savage female body of Tamora as a complex site of debatable questions, as the place where Shakespeare

1 For a more critical examination of this issue, see Ayanna Thompson, 'The Racial Body and Revenge: *Titus Andronicus*', *Textus*, 2, 13 (2000), 325–46; Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) and *Shakespeare and Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

2 Arthur L. Little Jr, *Shakespeare Jungle Fever. National-Imperial Re-vision of Race, Rape and Sacrifice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 1.

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literally locates the encounter between different races: the extremely white Goths with the Romans, who are supposed to inhabit the centre of the empire and the *oikumene*, and the extremely white Goths and the Romans with the blacks, who lived on the opposite border of the Roman empire, the extreme and partly penetrated South. Tamora's body, which is incorporated into Rome through her marriage with the Roman emperor Saturninus, becomes a site of performed contradictions, the female body being itself a liminal space where the Renaissance culture of display could project ancient desires and taboos, but also dislocate the result of a subversive union, since to the Romans the queen of the Goths herself represented and embodied otherness. In comparison with other Shakespearean plays in which the dramatist deals with dangerous unions, such as *Anthony and Cleopatra* or *Othello*,[3] in *Titus Andronicus* there is more than one miscegenation. These mixed unions complicate the violent encounter between various forms of otherness and reveal the dialogue taken up by the play in the contemporary debates on ethnic origins and difference which are particularly examined in the travel accounts on the New World, as well as the debates on birth, procreation and medical practices within an early modern European context obsessed with borders and margins. According to Thomas Betteridge:

> Early modern Europe found, imagined and manufactured new borders for its travellers to cross. It celebrated and feared borders as places or states were meanings were created and transformed. […] Borders were places that people lived on, through and against. Some were temporary, like illness, while other claimed to be absolute, like that between the civilized world and the savage, but to cross any of them was an exciting, anxious and often potentially dangerous act.[4]

In the representations of the New World, which was perceived by Renaissance culture as the new border of the known world that needed to be incorporated into the old one, the female body became a fruitful rhetorical device employed to depict the attitude of Western civilization towards the *terra incognita*. As a metaphor of negotiation used by the colonizers to make the other intelligible, the body also had the power to describe the new land and its inhabitants within the

3 For a more detailed analysis on this issue see Rita Monticelli, 'Matrimoni impossibili e relazioni pericolose in *Othello*', in *I volti dell'altro, letterature della diaspora e migranti*, ed. by Paola Boi and Radhouan Ben Amara (Cagliari: Antonino Valveri, 2003), pp. 213 – 39, and Lynda E. Boose, 'The Getting of a Lawful Race. Racial Discourse in Early Modern England and the Unrepresentable Black Woman', in *Women, Race, and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 35 – 55.

4 Thomas Betteridge, 'Introduction: Borders, Travel and Writing', in *Borders and Travellers in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Thomas Betteridge (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 1 – 14 (p. 1).

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same political and sexual hierarchies which regulated gender relationships at home. In order to understand the political relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, as Luis Adrian Montrose reminds us,[5] both the image chosen by Michel de Certeau in his book *The Writing of History*[6] – which depicts the first encounter between a European explorer, probably Amerigo Vespucci, and the new found land of America – and the author's analysis of the famous engraving, are highly significant:

> An inaugural scene […] The conqueror will write the body of the other and trace there his own history. From her he will make a historical body – a blazon – of his labors and phantasms […] What is really initiated here is a colonization of the body by the discourse of power. This is writing that conquers. It will use the New World as if it were a blank, savage page, on which Western desire will be written.[7]

It is by explaining the allegorical meaning of the engraving – where the land 'America' is personified as a naked and wonder-struck female who is awakened from her slumber by the explorer – that de Certeau reveals the rhetorical and iconic strategy of the writing of history during the age of discovery, and the fundamental function it plays in the Old World's act of conquest of the New World. In this process of possession and assimilation, where meanings were created and transformed, the metaphors adopted to exemplify and justify the appropriation of the new and 'unknown' were in fact emblematic. While on the one hand the submitted and conquered land was often described as a virgin who offered herself to the voluptuous gaze and possession of the conquerors, on the other the margins and borders which still had to be marked, crossed and dominated by the colonizers were mostly defined through a violent, aggressive and dangerous female. The borders of the New World, as once had been those margins within Europe itself, for example Northern Europe or Britain for the Roman Empire,[8] were thus inhabited by monsters, cannibals, amazons and women warriors who had to be tamed and subdued. This is also what occurs with Tamora in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. She is captured and then in-

5 Louis Adrian Montrose, 'The Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery', in *New World Encounters*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 177 – 217, in particular pp. 178 – 80.

6 The image in question is the engraving by Theodor Galle [ca. 1580] after Johannes Stradanus [ca. 1575] entitled *America*.

7 Michel de Certeau quoted in Louis Adrian Montrose, 'The Work of Gender', p. 182.

8 See John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*; Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Frank Lestringant, 'Dei buoni selvaggi nel cuore dell'Europa: Corsi, Sardi e Lapponi', in *Il primitivismo e sue metamorfosi. Archeologi di un discorso culturale*, ed. by Gilberta Golinelli (Bologna: Clueb, 2007), pp. 45 – 67.

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corporated into Rome not only as a woman at the head of the Goth army, but also as a barbarous and lascivious queen without a king, an Amazon whose lustful extremism is made explicit from the first act of the play with the presence of her black lover, Aaron, on the stage. As indicated by the stage directions:

> Sound drums and trumpets, and then enter Martius and Mutius, two of Titus' sons, and then [man bearing coffins] covered with black, then Lucius and Quintus, two other sons; then Titus Andronicus [in chariot] and then Tamora the Queen of Goths and her sons Alarbus, Chiron, and Demetrius, with Aaron the Moor and others as many can be.[9]

The descriptions of amazons or untameable women warriors, like Tamora, in sixteenth century travel accounts have been interpreted as possible projections of ancient taboos, which evoked ancestral fears of a female dominion that could both subvert political and sexual hierarchy, and give the female the power to control birth, genealogy and the difference amongst races. Louis Adrian Montrose has pointed out how:

> Sixteenth century travel narratives often recreate the ancient Amazons of Scythia in South America or in Africa. Invariably, the Amazons are relocated just beyond the receding boundary of terra incognita. […] This cultural fantasy assimilates Amazonian myth, witchcraft, and cannibalism into an anti-culture which precisely inverts European norms of political authority, sexual licence, marriage practices, and inheritance rules. The attitude toward the Amazons expressed in such Renaissance texts is a mixture of fascination and horror. Amazonian mythology seems symbolically to embody and to control a collective anxiety about the power of the female not only to dominate or reject the male but to create and destroy him.[10]

Moreover, in many travel reports of this period, which are so important for the early modern construction of the patriarchal imaginary, the virgin land inhabited by natives, monsters or marvels acquires a connotation that is so markedly feminine that the encounter between different races is also described as a violent act of contamination and infection which occurs in the female body and more specifically in her reproductive sexual organs. As Jonathan Sawday brilliantly highlights in *The Body Emblazoned* (1996), the early modern age was both the age of the discovery of the interior body, and the age of great travels and geographical conquests. In his opinion sixteenth century Renaissance culture:

9 William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, in *The Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 125–52 (1.1.s.d.). All quotations from *Titus Andronicus* are taken from this edition.

10 Louis Adrian Montrose, 'Shaping Fantasies: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture', *Representations*, 2 (1983), 61–94 (p. 66).

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[…] was not a neutral or disinterested arena. It was a voracious consumer of the vestiges of the human frame. Within the ornate architecture of the Renaissance and Baroque anatomy theatres, the body was produced as the flimsy vehicle for a complex ideological structure which stretched into every area of artistic and scientific endeavour in the early modern period.[11]

Within a culture that was devoted to the dissemination of knowledge of the human body as a rich metaphor for colonial discourse, as we have seen, the female body and the uterus in particular was conceived and depicted as "a separate organ which possessed its own will" and secrets.[12] Located within the uncontrolled body of the woman, the reproductive sexual organ operated according to its own laws and hid itself from the searching and dominating gaze of the natural scientist or 'conqueror' or 'colonizer'. Moreover, although the womb was "an object sought after with intensity in Renaissance anatomy theatres",[13] the mechanism of procreation and birth in itself were considered by the patriarchal culture a dangerous topic to be investigated in any depth. Once the uterus was dissected and seen in the anatomy theatres, it then had to be 're-written' through a process of representation in order to become a legible container, which could be explicitly controlled and submitted under male authority. The same colonial language which was used to tame and possess the virgin land of America by the colonizers, was adopted by scientists to 'write', control and then submit under the male authority the female body and her sexual organ. As a body part, the womb was thus the field where the *fetus* was nurtured but at the same time it could also become a subversive metaphorical space where the hierarchy between male and female needed to be guaranteed and consolidated.

For Renaissance culture the female was by nature a defective male. According to Aristotle it was the male who contributed the form of humanity through his semen, while woman contributed only brute matter, a substance less pure and less sanctified than semen itself. Hippocrates and then Galen preferred to describe human conception as occurring from two seeds, though they differed on the relative importance of each. All these theories, in any case, were re-interpreted in the early modern period in order to emphasize and consolidate a sexual hierarchical difference, which acquired a political significance during the act of procreation. In fact, the act of generation "brings man and woman into a relationship that is both complementary and hierarchical".[14] It was only by controlling the reproductive process of birth, which was supposed to be con-

11 Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned. Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 4.

12 Sawday, p. 10.

13 Sawday, p. 222.

14 Montrose, 'Shaping Fantasies', p. 73.

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ducted by the male only, that the male's name and property could be guaranteed from one male generation to the next. The female body – the womb in particular – was the vessel within which legitimate children were conceived and nurtured until their birth, but it was also a location where the biological process of birth still remained out of the control of the male's gaze. The uterus was the place where the baby could be contaminated and infected, as a result of the mother's misbehavior, or imagination. This is for example the thesis reported by Ambroise Paré in *Des Monstres et Prodiges* (1573) where he still believed that:

> Les anciens qui ont recherché les secrets de Nature ont enseigné d'autres causes des enfans monstrueux, et les ont referez à une ardente et obstinee imagination que peut avoir la femme ce pendant qu'elle conçoit, [...] Par semblable raison Hippocrates sauva une Princesse accusee d'adultere, par-ce qu'elle avoit enfanté un enfant noir comme un more, son mary et elle ayans la peau blanche, laquelle à la suasion d'Hippocrates fut absolute, pour le portraict estoit attaché à son lict.[15]

But the idea of a possible contamination caused by the misbehaviour or imagination of the mother is also described in many other works and translations which were wide-spread in European high and popular culture before and during the time of Shakespeare.[16]

In addition to this, the fact that during the sixteenth century fathers and men in general were not yet allowed to assist women in labour, increased the anxiety about birth as a private event which was conducted within a domestic sphere only. As Kate Philips underlines "birth was not yet included in the category of hard medicine, but it was considered rather as part of everyday life, and it therefore remained entirely within the realm of the female experience".[17]

In other words, the act of birth did not belong to the realm of theoretical knowledge, but it was conducted under the practical knowledge of the female family members or midwives in general.[18] Unlike men, who were not allowed to touch the woman's genitals during birth, midwives had the power and the right to directly intervene in the act of labour in order to determine the infant's

15 Ambroise Paré, *Des Monstres et Prodiges* [1575–78], Édition Critique par Jean Céard (Geneve: Droz, 1971), pp. 35–6.

16 Notably in Edward Fenton's translation of Pierre Boaistuau, *Histoires prodigieuses les plus mémorables qui ayent esté observées, depuis la Nativité de Iesus Christ, iusques à nostre siècle: Extraites de plusieurs fameux autheurs, Grecz, & Latins, sacrez & profanes* (Paris: Jean Longis & Robert le Mangnier, 1560).

17 Kate Philips, 'Capturing the Wandering Womb. Childbirth in Medieval Art', *The Haverford Journal,* 3 (2007), 40–55 (p. 42).

18 For a more detailed discussion on the issue of birth, see the above mentioned essay by Philips, 'Capturing the Wandering Womb', and also Maria Del Sapio Garbero, *Il bene ritrovato. Le figlie di Shakespeare dal* King Lear *ai* Romances (Roma: Bulzoni, 2005).

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position in the womb, or to "swaddle the baby for warmth after the birth".[19] Together with the mother, they were the only ones who could control births, paternity, the sex and the race of the new born child. They were therefore in the position, when it occurred, to manipulate births or substitute children according to the needs of the mothers and fathers. They could replace boys with girls, black children with white children. They could reinforce and at the same time contest the idea of patriarchal lineage, but also the medieval theories concerning procreation or childbirth which still circulated in the high culture of the sixteenth century. As reported by Gail McMurray Gibson:

> surviving medical texts inform us that childbirth practices and especially the presiding over those customs by midwives and female attendants were remarkably consistent from the early middle ages until those practices gradually began to be replaced by the science of male-dominated obstetrics in the 17th century or later, or even much later.[20]

Historical evidence suggests that the uncertainty regarding the experience and understanding of pregnancy was extended to the whole process, from the moment of conception to delivery.

In *Titus Andronicus*, the link between a particular man and child, be it a boy or a girl, is a focus of anxious concern, whether the concern is to validate paternity or to contest it. In this play, the anxiety acquires a multifaceted significance since the question of birth is not only located in Tamora's savage body, but is also embedded in a social and political context which is already put into question by its being deeply contaminated even before the encounter with the barbarous. Not only does the Goth Chiron, when talking about Rome, affirm that Scythia "[w]as never […] half so barbarous", but Demetrius adds: "Oppose not Scythia to ambitious Rome" (1.1.132), while the Roman Marcus tells his brother Titus, who has just killed his son Mutius and refuses to bury him according to the Romans rites:

> My Lord, this is impiety in you.
> […]
> Thou art a Roman; be not barbarous. (1.1.352–75)

It should also be added that, as Coppélia Kahn has pointed out,[21] the play itself opens with a political crisis within the patriarchal lineage system, since one of

19 Philips, p. 43.
20 Gail McMurray Gibson quoted in Philips, p. 42.
21 See Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), in particular: 'The Daughter's Seduction in *Titus Andronicus*, or Writing is the Best Revenge', pp. 46–76.

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the two public ceremonies, which are staged at the very beginning, is the election of the new emperor. On the one hand, there is the vicious Saturninus, first-born, who demands to be elected on the basis of his being the legitimate heir of the empire. On the other, we find the second-born Bassianus, who asks for pure election by evoking the nobility, justice and continence of the imperial seat, which could be threatened by a lascivious heir:

> And suffer not dishonour to approach
> The imperial seat, to virtue consecrate,
> To justice, continence, and nobility,
> But let desert in pure election shine,
> And Romans fight for freedom in your choice. (1.1. 13 – 17)

Although Saturninus will become the new emperor of Rome thanks to Titus and his primogeniture, the entire system of patrilineage is already questioned by the possibility of the election itself, which attributes power not to the legitimate heir but to whoever is able to satisfy the crowd's expectations.

It is however by inscribing the issue of birth within the complicated process of contamination between Goths and Romans, Goths, Romans and moors, or black and white, that Shakespeare's play contests the value of patriarchal lineage, and, at the same time the possibility of marking or tracing definitive borders between different types of otherness.

The whole play concerns the question of lineage and birth and these issues emerge from a plot full of violent deaths, violations and mutilations towards bodies which offers various levels of interpretation for the play. It is birth that highlights and confirms that in Rome there is more than one miscegenation, this being the proof that at the centre of the empire it is now impossible to distinguish the limits of and borders between differences, between barbarians and Romans or, as we will see, between black-moor and white-moor. In this play, as John Gillies has demonstrated,[22] we have more than one mixed union. We have the official wedding between Tamora and Saturninus, when the savage is incorporated in Rome, Lavinia's rape by the Goths Chiron and Demetrius, and then the union between the Roman savage Tamora and the black Aaron, which overtly threatens and infects the body politic and the Emperor's name and property with the birth of a black-moor child.[23]

In *Titus Andronicus*, the question of birth also seems to deconstruct the rhetorical strategies that gave shape to the Renaissance Moor and Renaissance otherness in general, since in the play borders and otherness are at the same time

22 See Gillies, pp. 10 – 137.

23 For a discussion of the political meaning of Lavinia's rape see not only Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare*, pp. 46 – 7, but also Little Jr, *Shakespeare Jungle Fever*, in particular 'Picturing the Hand of White Women', pp. 25 – 58.

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visible and contested by the permeability of race and borders themselves, by the fact that both body and language could reveal and conceal the truth. For example, no one knows that Tamora is pregnant until the fourth act, when the nurse declares that the empress has delivered a black baby.

In addition to this, one should remember that, with the help of a generalized topography of the body which was 'illustrated' in the anatomical theatre of the period, surgeons and barbers but also the audience who participated in the event, discovered that not only were male and female equal or at least anatomically complementary in the process of procreation (if we consider the real and objective shape of the female sexual organ which they presumably could see when they made a dissection), but also that under the skin all races and colors looked the same.

As Francesca T. Royster has argued, "symptomatic of a pre-existent instability of race and of the boundary between civilized and barbaric in the play is Shakespeare's experimentation with language and names":[24] the play's Moor is given a Jewish name and a high and sophisticated language, not in line with the stereotype of the villain or the outsider he is supposed to embody; and Shakespeare gave Tamora's Gothic sons Greek names. Chiron and Demetrius sometimes speak Latin and quote passages from the classics even though with some ridiculous mistakes. This seems proof that race in the age of Shakespeare worked less as a fixed identity category than a semiotic container to be filled according to the different ideological needs.

But there is more to say about the issue of birth since birth is located in Tamora's body, an emblematic location: it is both the border and the margin where the patriarchal culture of the sixteenth century projected taboos which were linked to the subversion of culturally accepted norms. It is also the space where discourses on birth, origins, race and identity interweave.

Tamora was the Queen of the Goths, once savage, but now apparently and formally Roman through her marriage to the new Emperor of Rome, Saturninus. Her body epitomizes and evokes the idea of otherness that the Romans, and probably the English too, had about the Goths and the barbarians in general. They were the savage inhabitants of the margins of the empire who became civilized once the Romans had incorporated them within their patriarchal order. It is significant to underline that the Goths themselves seem aware of this process of hybridization, of the fact that they would soon be contaminated by the encounter with the Romans, becoming unable to recognize or identify their own identity. The Goth Demetrius, who is captured by Titus and brought into Rome

24 Francesca Royster, 'White-limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51, 4 (2000), 432–55 (p. 442).

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with his mother and his brothers, evokes right from the beginning the help of the gods, declaring:

> The selfsame gods that armed the Queen of Troy
> With opportunity of sharp revenge
> Upon the Thracian tyrant in his tent
> May favour Tamora, the Queen of Goths –
> when Goths were Goths, and Tamora was queen –
> To quit the bloody wrongs upon her foes […] (1.1.136 – 41)

In the political system of the Roman Empire, the Goth Tamora is expected to give the emperor a baby who, by patriarchal lineage, must guarantee the continuity of the Romans' system of values, which was at the core of the Romans' consolidation of power and identity.

But Tamora's body also evokes the fascinating and attractive power of the female which needs to be tamed, Tamora herself representing the margin which both metaphorically and now literally has entered the centre of the empire. She is therefore a controversial site which epitomizes patriarchal culture's ancient desires for dominion and fear of a female that they are unable to control, and for a certain type of domestic knowledge which is still a female dominion.

Tamora's body is thus uncontrolled not only because it is the body of a savage, as we have seen, but also because the function of the female sexual organ was still a taboo for the scientific knowledge of the period, unable to understand birth, but also the origins of and differences among different races.[25]

The fact that Tamora bears a black-skinned child so similar to the father and so 'different' from the ones born in Rome, "the fair-faced breeders of our clime" (4.2.68) as the nurse declares, not only indicates how easy it was in the Elizabethan period to substitute adulterous children after their birth without being discovered, but it also puts into question the theories of the period which 'scientifically' demonstrated the differences between various peoples and the hierarchy which existed among races. In line with the sixteenth century cultural practices related to childbirth, it is Tamora's nurse who brings the baby to Aaron and not directly to the official father (we are not even informed whether the emperor of Rome knew that his wife was pregnant). Tamora's nurse confesses that "Cornelia the midwife, and myself, / And no one else but the delivered Empress" (4.2.140 – 41) know that the future emperor of Rome is a black child: "A joyless, dismal, black and sorrowful issue. / […] a babe, as loathsome as a toad" (4.2.66 – 7). After having decided not to kill the baby, as Tamora had ordered to avoid being "forever shamed", and being aware that it is impossible

25 For a detailed discussion on the English sixteenth century debates on the question of origins and race, see Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama*, in particular 'Climatic Culture: the Transmutation of Ethnographic Knowledge', pp. 23 – 67.

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for his own 'black' son to be accepted as heir to the throne of Rome, Aaron decides to substitute the infant with another one, who is also the son of a blackmoor, but similar to its white mother.

He tells Chiron and Demetrius, but also the Elizabethan audience present in the theatre, that the wife of a Muliteus, one of his countryman:

> […] yesternight was brought to bed.
> His child is like to her, fair as you are.
> Go pack with him, and give the mother gold,
> And tell them both the circumstance of all,
> And how by this their child shall be advanced
> And be received for the Emperor's heir (4.2.152 – 57)

While on the one hand this episode could make the public of the period aware of how easy and wide-spread the manipulation and the control of birth, genealogy and patrilinearity was within a male realm of knowledge which refused to be involved during the act of birth; on the other it could also question the constructions and the consolidation of racial differences. The union between a white woman and a black man which gives rise to a child "fair as you are", who could even become the future emperor of Rome, contests the visual border which existed between white and black, and put into doubt the idea that it was the male who contributed the form and the color of humanity through his semen, while the woman contributed only brute matter. This birth erases the last difference which is thought to be visible in an already contaminated society, revealing the identity crisis of Renaissance man, who by anatomizing the body and marking or mapping the borders of the new lands, sees how complicated and disturbing it was not to define otherness but to accept sameness. In the play, the borders and margins between differences are paradoxically overcome by the questioning of those same visible traits which were perceived as real evidence for the construction of differences. In the play no one is in fact able to explain to the audience why a white baby was born to a black father and a white woman, or at least to admit that in Rome, and probably in London, there was more than one 'moor' already integrated among the Romans to the point of getting married to a white woman.[26] Although the episode is destined to remain marginal in the play, the audience is made aware that in Rome and probably in London, as Francesca Royster underlines, "there could be other white-moor children, who became more threatening than those of the blacks", since they are not visible, recognizable and therefore locatable or dis-locatable on the margin or the border of

26 For a more critical debate on the presence of black people and of mixed unions in England during the early modern age see the important study by Imtiaz Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500 – 1677. Imprints of the Invisible* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

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the empire or society.[27] At the same time the impossibility of locating white-moor children, or any other kind of otherness in an acceptable place, reveals the fictionalized and wandering nature of borders and margins, which were used as rhetorical devices not only to construct and then make differences legible, but also to establish them as tools of power and cultural ideology.

27 Royster, p. 453.

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Andrea Bellelli

Where do diseases come from? Reflections on Shakespeare's "contagion of the south"

MARCIUS All the contagion of the south light on you,
You shames of Rome! You herd of – Boils and plagues
Plaster you o'er, that you may be abhorred
Farther than seen, and one infect another
Against the wind a mile! (1.4.30 – 4)[1]

Which is the southern disease that Marcius invokes in *Coriolanus* as a curse upon his soldiers, and why should a disease be characterized as coming from some specific place? Before analyzing these points, it is relevant to note not only the strength of Marcius's invective, but also that no such specific curse is reported by Plutarch, who merely states that Coriolanus reproached his men who abandoned him in Corioles. Thus Shakespeare's image of a disease characteristic of "the south" is original and deserves some comment: which disease is Shakespeare hinting at and how would his audience interpret his words? We can note that besides coming from "the south" this disease (i) causes clearly visible skin lesions ("boils and plagues"); (ii) it is contagious ("one infect another"); and (iii) it causes the diseased to be "abhorred", rather than pitied.

Marcius's disease "of the south" is syphilis

There can be scarce doubt that at least one of the diseases of the South in Shakespeare's mind is syphilis (the sexually transmitted infection by *Treponema pallidum*; also called 'pox', 'big-pox' or 'French-pox'; *lues gallica*), since in

1 All references to Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, and other plays, are from *The Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, William Montgomery, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Other plays quoted from are, *Romeo and Juliet, The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Measure for Measure*, *Timon of Athens*, *The Tempest.* References are given, after quotations, in the text.

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Troilus and Cressida, Thersites accuses Patroclus of being in love with Achilles and wishes "the rotten diseases of the South" on their homosexual relationship:

> THERSITES [...] Now the rotten diseases of the south, guts-griping, ruptures, catarrhs, loads o' gravel i'th'back, lethargies, cold palsies and the like (*Troilus and Cressida*, 5.1.17 – 20)

Thersites' list of pertinent symptoms includes the quite characteristic neurological manifestations of tertiary syphilis; moreover Thersites had already invoked "the Neapolitan bone-ache" upon the Greek heroes who made war for a woman (*Troilus and Cressida*, 2.3.18), the Neapolitan disease being a common name of syphilis (see below).

Since syphilis is a 'disowned' disease that every author blames on some country different from his own, I was interested in finding out whether it had been attributed generically to the South (rather than to Italy, France or Spain) by anyone other than Shakespeare. I found that the Dutch physician Severinus Eugalenus, who in 1604 wrote a book on scurvy, held that scurvy is characteristic of northern countries whereas syphilis (pox) comes from the South; his opinion is quoted by James Lind in his *Treatise of the Scurvy* (first published in 1753):

> [Eugalenus] seems to have been of opinion [...] that all distempers were the same formerly as at present. To this our author, however, makes two exceptions in the pox and scurvy; where he imagines that one travels from the North, the other from the South [...].[2]

Why was syphilis thought to come from the South? Are there other diseases that Shakespeare would have alluded to as coming from the South? In what follows I shall try to answer these two questions.

The geographical origins of diseases

Before discussing the real or reputed origin of syphilis, it may be of interest to briefly review the hypotheses of classical medicine on epidemic diseases. Epidemic diseases have long been known to be characteristic of specific regions or countries and in some cases have been known to move following predictable paths from their regions of origin to other places that are at times very far away. Indeed in classical medicine the place of origin of epidemic diseases offered relevant diagnostic clues and was often included in the very name of the illness, e.g. cutaneous leishmaniasis was commonly called 'the oriental sore' (its Italian name, 'bottone d'Aleppo', being even more precise about its putative origin).

2 James Lind, *Treatise on the Scurvy*, 3rd edn [1772] (Birmingham, AL: The Classics of Medicine Library, 1980), p. 11.

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Until the end of the nineteenth century and the discoveries of Koch and Pasteur, there were two basic theories about epidemic diseases, whose origins can be traced to the Greek physicians of the fifth century BC: those of the 'miasms' and the 'contagion'.

Hippocrates believed that epidemics were caused by noxious environmental stimuli or agents acting on every member of the population, independently of any other member. Examples of such negative environmental influences were bad air (miasm), corrupted food or polluted water, the negative influence of the stars and so on. This theory attributed great relevance to specifically pathogenic locations and had a powerful impact on classical medicine. It shaped the names and concepts of several diseases, e.g. malaria is so named after the hypothesis that it is due to 'bad air'(in Italian 'mala aria'), and the French are even more explicit in calling the same disease *paludisme* (after the Latin word *palus*, marsh); the Italian name *influenza* (flu) refers to a supposed negative influence of the stars. Crude as it may appear, the miasm hypothesis was justified by circumstantial evidence (e.g. malaria is more frequent in populations living on marshy lands, and the flu is more common during the cold season, i.e. under specific constellations), and avoided creating a gap between sporadic and epidemic diseases: an epidemy was imagined as the sum of many individual sporadic cases. Nowadays the miasm hypothesis is essentially untenable, but professional intoxications, and diseases due to lack of essential nutrients such as avitaminoses or hypothiroidism due to iodine deficiency may well represent its heirs. These diseases may often be associated with specific places or regions because of the location of the pertinent environmental stimulus; e.g. scurvy (due to the lack of vitamin C) and ricketts (due to the lack of vitamin D) are more prevalent in Northern countries, whereas hypothiroidism due to lack of iodine is more prevalent in inland regions.

The opposite view, that epidemic diseases are transmitted from the sick to the healthy, via germs or inanimated particles is also found in ancient Greek and Latin writings, e.g. in atomistic philosophy (mostly preserved in Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*). Tucidides, in his famous description of the plague of Athens explicitly refers to interhuman contagion. Paradoxically, the hypothesis of contagious diseases was more popular among lay people than among physicians, mainly because it demanded a radical distinction between sporadic and epidemic diseases, that few physicians were prepared to espouse. The hypothesis, though largely incomplete in its classical formulation (e.g. it lacked the concept of indirect transmission via insect vectors or polluted water), was confirmed by the great discoveries of medical microbiology at the end of the nineteenth century. Transmissible diseases often have a characteristic region of origin due to the existence of human or animal reservoirs of the causative agent, and may spread like fire in massive epidemics: thus plague (caused by *Yersinia pestis*) and

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cholera (caused by *Vibrio cholerae*, although unknown in Europe before the nineteenth century) both have reservoirs in Asia and are defined as coming from the East.

Why should syphilis be a "contagion of the south"?

Even though there are animal diseases caused by related microorganisms, syphilis is exclusive to humans, and has no known animal reservoir; moreover the only natural modality of transmission is sexual intercourse although blood transfusion may occasionally be blamed. These two conditions made syphilis widespread and prevented any specific location from constituting a privileged reservoir, until antibiotics created a difference between rich and poor countries. Thus the reason for assigning a specific geographical origin to syphilis is only historical and cannot be related to the disease being better adapted to some specific environment.

Syphilis was first recorded in Europe amongst the French troops besieging Naples in 1494, whence the name of *lues gallica* or French-pox, even though the French blamed it on the Italians and called it the Neapolitan disease. The Italian physician and naturalist Girolamo Fracastoro (Fracastorius; 1478 – 1553) was amongst the first to suggest, in a poem entitled *Syphilis, sive Morbus Gallicus* (1530), that the disease originated in Latin America, and reached Europe via Spain:

> Oceano tamen in magno sub Sole cadente
> qua misera inventum nuper gens incolit orbem
> passim oritur, nullisque locis non cognita vulgo est.
> (It had its origin in the world recently discovered in the large West
> Ocean, that is inhabited by poor people, and there it is known
> everywhere).[3]

Although Fracastorius clearly states that the disease comes from the West (*sub Sole cadente*), Columbus's America would as easily qualify as a Southern land. For although the mariners of the time were able to estimate latitude (by the declination of the stars, most notably the Polar star) and Columbus was aware of having landed in a tropical country, determining longitude, at least in the open sea, was a major problem. Moreover Columbus's aim to reach the East by traveling westwards was the source of some confusion about the longitude of the New World that was initially thought to be 'the Indies'. Thus everyone in the seventeenth century must have thought that the New World, or at least its ex-

3 Girolamo Fracastoro, *Syphilis, sive Morbus Gallicus*, facsimile reprint of 1st edn. [1530] (Reggio Emilia: Tecnostampa, 1984), 109 – 11, my translation.

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plored parts, were 'South', whereas few would have ventured to classify it as East or West. Furthermore, syphilis was supposed to have reached Europe via Spain, France and Italy, and all these countries would qualify as Southern for England-based authors, as they most surely did for the Dutch Eugalenus.

It is probably uninteresting in this context that Fracastorius's hypothesis, though still viable,[4] has been challenged on the basis that the agent of the 'Bejel', an African non venereal infection by *treponemes*, is more similar to that of syphilis than the *treponeme* characteristic of central America (the agent of the 'Pinta') or those present in both the New and the Old World (like the agent of the disease known as 'Yaws', 'Pian' or 'Framboesia'). The supporters of the latter hypothesis suggest that syphilis arose during the fifteenth century (or even before), presumably in Africa, because of a mutation of the *Treponema* causing 'Bejel' or a similar disease; the coincidence with Columbus's travels would be fortuitous.

In his *Syphilis sive Morbus Gallicus*, Fracastorius adhered to Hippocrates' miasmatic hypothesis; but in a later poem (*De contagione*, 1546) he not only supported the contagion hypothesis, but suggested that epidemic diseases are transmitted by living *sporae*, thus refusing the Democritean hypothesis of disease-causing inanimated particles or atoms. This innovative and quite striking hypothesis made Fracastorius's name known in sixteenth century Europe, and probably converted many physicians to the hypothesis of contagion. In sum, in Shakespeare's times, syphilis was assumed to have come from tropical America and was recognized by many, both physicians and lay people, as transmissible from the ill to the healthy.

Syphilis, although it would have been unknown to Marcius, was very prevalent in Europe, and notably in England,[5] from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries; thus its name would have raised horror and fear amongst Shakespeare's audience, contributing to the success of the play. Moreover during its first epidemics the disease was more virulent than it is now, probably because of both the lack of natural immunity in the population and the greater virulence of the *Treponema pallidum* (prokaryotes mutate and evolve quite rapidly, and adapt to their host by reducing their virulence). A painting by Hans Holbein the younger (dated 1523) portrays a young man suffering from syphilis and clearly shows the "boils and plagues" that Marcius wishes upon his soldiers, thus justifying its common names pox, big-pox and French-pox (smallpox being variola). Nowadays the first manifestation of syphilis is limited to the venereal ulcer, and secondary syphilis causes a skin rash. We would probably not recognize the disease in Shakespeare's description and Holbein's portrait; moreover syphilis

4 Bruce M. Rothschild, 'History of Syphilis', *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 40 (2005), 1454–63.
5 Johannes Fabricius, *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1994).

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has spread so widely that its 'Southern' origin has been forgotten. Finally, syphilis always bore on itself the added shame of being the mark of a dissolute lifestyle, to be abhorred rather than pitied, as Marcius says.

What about other diseases?

We cannot safely exclude that other diseases could also have been identified as coming from the South; however most tropical diseases such as schistosomiasis or onchocercosis do not thrive out of their original habitats and, even though they were known from antiquity, they would not have had any appeal to Shakespeare and his public. Malaria (the ague; infection by *Plasmodium* parasites) nowadays is surely a 'Southern' disease, but in Shakespeare's lifetime it was relatively common in Northern Europe, and notably in England;[6] moreover it does not cause boils and sores, and it is not transmitted directly from man to man; it was, rather, assigned to the miasms of the marshes. For these reasons, it seems unlikely that Shakespeare or his audience would have thought of the ague as a disease of the South, or that they would have identified it in Marcius's invective.

Bubonic plague (due to the infection by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*) was a recurrent epidemic disease at the time, causing skin lesions (the buboes); since the Shakespearean text refers to "boils and plagues", it deserves consideration. Besides indicating the specific disease by *Yersinia pestis*, the term 'plague' is also a generic name for any epidemic disease, and in the text it seems to indicate a cutaneous sore (from the Latin *plaga*, infected wound); thus it is unlikely that Marcius's "plagues" should be taken as indicative of bubonic plague. Bubonic plague is only transmitted from man to man when the lungs are infected: it is usually propagated by a vector, the rat flea; but the infection runs such an acute course and it is so virulent that it may appear to be caused by interhuman contagion. The lethality of bubonic plague is approximately 50 %; the pulmonary and hemorragic (black or red plague) variants are almost invariably fatal. Major outbreaks of plague occurred in London in Shakespeare's lifetime in 1563, 1578 – 9, 1582, 1592 – 3, and 1603.

Plague is quoted in several of Shakespeare's dramas, e.g. *The Tempest* (1.2.366), and *Timon of Athens* (4.3.109), where the disease is attributed to the evil influence of Zeus (and its planet Jupiter). Moreover, the story of Romeo and Juliet is imagined to happen during a plague epidemics (*Romeo and Juliet*, 5.2.10). All these quotations, however, should be taken with caution, since, as

6 Paul Reiter, 'From Shakespeare to Defoe: Malaria in England in the Little Ice Age', *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 6 (2000), 1 – 11.

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already stated, 'plague' may simply stand for major epidemic. Although bubonic plague cannot be excluded as a candidate for Marcius's disease, it was known to come from the East (it has a large reservoir in Asiatic wild rats) rather than from the South. Thus it is a weak candidate.

Smallpox is a viral infection caused by *Poxvirus variolae*; its lethality in different oubreaks ranged from 2 % to 40 %. An important outbreak occurred in London two years before Shakespeare's birth in 1562. Smallpox is highly contagious and it is transmitted directly from man to man; it causes skin lesions, but it does not come from the South (if anything, it comes from the East).

Leprosy (infection by *Mycobacterium leprae*) causes skin lesions and it is surely feared and abhorred; it is transmitted directly from man to man, but it is poorly contagious and it does not produce true epidemics. This disease has multiple *loci* of origin both in the South (Africa) and in the East (Asia), thus it could be identified as another "contagion of the South" by Shakespeare's public, and it is remarkable in this context that it has been in some way associated with syphilis at least in the name: the "hoar leprosy" in *Timon of Athens* (4.3.36) would be syphilis.

Disease on stage: other references to syphilis in Shakespeare's writings

A special attention to syphilis has been noticed by several scholars and biographers in a number of Shakespeare's writings.[7] Dr. John Ross ventured so far as to argue that the Bard may have actually suffered of the disease and of the consequences of the mercury therapy in use at the time.[8] Although inferences like the latter are highly uncertain in the absence of skeletal remnants to be examined by an expert pathologist, the amount of literary evidence (i. e. quotations from Shakespeare's works explicitly referring to syphilis) is very significant.

The most relevant quotations are found in *Troilus and Cressida* (see above); others are found in *Timon of Athens*, and in *Measure for Measure* where the disease recurs as "pox" (4.3.23) and as "the French velvet" (1.2.34) and similar terms. Quite frequently one character in a drama curses another by invoking a disease; we may however remark that when syphilis is used as a curse, it often occurs in a context that suggests contempt or scorn; whereas hate is often expressed by cursing with other diseases, as for example, bubonic plague. Fi-

7 Anthony Burgess, *Shakespeare* (New York: Alfred A. Knops, 1970).
8 J. J. Ross, 'Shakespeare's Chancre: Did the Bard Have Syphilis?', *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 40 (2005), 399–404.

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nally, syphilis occurs in Shakespeare's plays as the disease affecting certain characters, like Falstaff, for example, who confesses of suffering from gout and pox (*Henry IV,* part 2, 1.2.245 – 46).

I have been surprised by the wide array of nicknames under which Shakespeare concealed references to syphilis: his plays must have been a sort of riddle game between him and his audience. Since the toxic and poorly effective therapies of the time could not prevent the disease from running its dramatic course, severely ill patients, with evident lesions, must have been a common encounter in every European town between the sixteenth and nineteenth century; and many members of his audience were probably actually suffering from the disease. Even if we take this consideration into account, it remains that Shakespeare's hints at syphilis demand quite a remarkable medical competence on the part of his audience, and that they are hard to decipher for the modern reader, regardless of his or her expertise in modern medicine. We can only guess that hints to a disease like syphilis, with its sexual and moral implications, may have caused bursts of laughter among the play-goers (or at least among those of them who were not affected by the disease), thus adding a burlesque and sarcastic note even to the most dramatic moments of the play.

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Giovanni Antonini and Gloria Grazia Rosa

Shakespeare and Mandragora

Introduction

In *Antony and Cleopatra* (1.5.5), Cleopatra asks Charmian for mandragora to "sleep out this great gap of time, my Antony is away".[1] The psychoactive mandragora plant can be considered a 'Roman' plant since it grows natively in the Roman countryside, as well as in other Mediterranean areas. Mandragora is referred to six times altogether in the Shakespearean corpus, all in the dramatic works. In three of these (*Henry IV part 2*, *Henry VI part 2* and *Romeo and Juliet*) mandragora is not referred to as a pharmacological agent but as a 'magic plant' and is called by its common name 'mandrake'. On the other hand, in the other two works where it is mentioned (*Antony and Cleopatra* and *Othello*), the mandragora's pharmacological properties are correctly described, according to the pharmacopoeias known at that time.

In the present essay we will look at the knowledge and perception of mandragora in Shakespeare and in other European authors of the Renaissance. Moreover, we will analyse how that knowledge and perception have been modified in contemporary times, trying to draw some general conclusions.

Mandragora, knowledge in the Renaissance

The plant genus Mandragora belongs to the flowering Solanaceae family that includes both edible plants (tomato, potato, eggplant) and psychoactive ones (tobacco, deadly nightshade or belladonna, mandragora). Mandragora (or mandrake) is endemic in the Mediterranean region and because of its curious bifurcations which give it a resemblance to the human figure (male and female, corresponding to *mandragora vernalis* and *mandragora autumnalis*, re-

1 All quotations from *Antony and Cleopatra* are from the Arden edition ed. by John Wilders (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

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spectively), and its identity as a psychoactive drug, mandragora has long been recognized as a 'magic plant'.

Mandragora is present in the Bible (Genesis 30, 14–16), believed to help barren women to conceive. In ancient time, mandragora was described by several philosophers and surgeons.[2] In particular, mandragora was first described by Theophrastus in the fourth century BC for the treatment of wounds, gout, sleeplessness, and as a love potion. Then the Roman author Gaius Plinius Secundus (Pliny the Elder, AD 23–79), who died during the great eruption of Mount Vesuvius which destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum, wrote *Historia Naturalis* into which he collected much of the knowledge of his time. Concerning mandragora he wrote: "It is given [...] for injuries inflicted by serpents, and before incisions or punctures are made in the body, in order to insure insensibility to pain. Indeed for this last purpose, for some persons the odour of it is quite sufficient to induce sleep".[3] Also the ancient Greek physician Pedanius Dioscorides (ca. 40-ca. 90), who practiced medicine as an army doctor, recognized not only the analgesic and sleep-inducing properties of extract of mandrake, but its usefulness as an anaesthesia. Dioscorides is famous for having written a five volume book *De Materia Medica* considered to be a precursor to all modern pharmacopoeias, in which he describes how mandragora can induce anaesthesia – in the sense of an absence of sensation – in people about to undergo surgery or the cauterization of wounds.[4] Subsequently, Galen of Pergamum (ca. 130 – ca. 200) advised on the combined use of mandragora and alcohol before surgery as an anaesthetic. However he noted that it did not induce insensibility except in doses high enough to risk killing a patient. Later, the Byzantine Greek physician Paul of Aegina or Paulus Aegineta (ca. 625– ca. 690), included a section on madragora in his medical encyclopaedia, *Medical Compendium in Seven Books*, describing in detail its extreme soporific effects when imbibed, which created a condition very similar to lethargy or apoplexy.[5]

In the Middle Ages, with the loss of most of the ancient knowledge, mandragora came to be called 'Satan's apple', the name deriving from the yellow fruit resembling a small apple that causes poisoning in cattle when eaten. At that time, it was said to grow under gallows and gibbets, springing from the sperm

2 Robert S. Holzman, 'The Legacy of Atropos, the Fate Who Cut the Thread of Life', *Anesthesiology*, 89, 1 (July, 1998), 241–49 (p. 241). URL: <http://www.anesthesiology.org/pt/re/anes/fulltext.00000542-199807000-00030.htm> [accessed 28 February 2008].

3 'Mandragor, circaeon, Morion, or hippophlomos two varieties of it: twenty-four remedies', in *The Natural History of Pliny* [*Historia Naturalis*], trans. by John Bostock and H. T. Riley (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1856), v, pp. 139–40 (Book 25, chap. 94).

4 See T. H. Silvester, 'On the use of mandrake as an anaesthetic in former times', *The Pharmaceutical Journal*, 7, 9 (May 1, 1848), 519–22 (pp. 520–21).

5 Silvester, p. 520.

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ejaculated by hanged men. As Jeremy Scott mentions in *The Mandrake Root: an Anthology of Fantastic Tales:*

[Mandrake] was prized for its reputed medicinal qualities, but there was a catch. Not only was the root of the plant poisonous in any but the correct dosage but the process of extracting it from the soil was considered to be fraught with danger. According to popular superstition the proper way to uproot a mandrake root, which resembles a human torso in shape, was by attaching one end of a cord to the root and the other to a dog, which was forced to extract the plant by pulling it from the earth. The ritual was to proceed in such a way that the plant should not be rent with excessive force as such violence might cause the plant to scream, and anyone hearing this scream was sure to die very soon afterwards. The ritual had to take place by moon-light, preferably in the immediate vicinity of the corpse of a hanged criminal still suspended on the gallows.[6]

Mandragora's psychoactive properties were finally recognized in the sixteenth century thanks to the translation of ancient authors. The theories of Galen of Pergamum (ca. 130 – ca. 200) dominated Western medical science for over a millennium, though his work survived only on account of Arabic translations of his texts. In 1532 Alban Thorer, Luca Antonio Giunta and Johannes Bernardus Felicianus published in Venice the Latin translation of Paulus Aegineta's *Medical Compendium in Seven Books.*[7] For Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica*, possibly the most famous medical text until the sixteenth century, there is Amato Lusitano's translation into Latin printed in 1558.[8] There is also an English translation of the *Gaius Plinius Secundus Historia Naturalis* made by Philemon Holland and printed in 1601.[9]

In addition to the translations of ancient authors, during the sixteenth century in Europe several herbals and pharmacopoeias were printed, many of these pointing out mandragora's properties. Pier Andrea Mattioli (1500 – 1577) translated Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica*, identifying the described plants, and added 562 woodcut illustrations. As Tess Ann Osbaldeston points out in her Introduction to *The Herbal of Dioscorides the Greek*, "Mattioli experimented on prisoners to determine the lethal thresholds of various poisonous plants, en-

6 Jeremy Scott, 'The Rude Red Tree – a logocentric approach to "Altarwise by Owl-light"'. URL: <www.welshpedia.co.uk/literature/redowl.shtml>.

7 *Pauli Aeginetae De medica materia libri septem* trans. by Alban Thorer, Lucas Antonius Iunta, Johannes Bernardus Felicianus (Venezia: Lucas Antonius Iunta, 1532).

8 *Dioscoridis Anazarbei De Medica Materia Libros Quinque*, ed. by Amatus Lusitanus (Lugdunum: Thobaldus Paganus, 1558).

9 Philemon Holland, *The Historie of the World, Commonly called the Naturall Historie of C. Plinius Secundus*, trans. by Philemon Holland (London: Adam Islip, 1601).

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suring the medical popularity of his books".[10] Mattioli illustrated the plant mandragora in the 1562 edition without the anthropomorphous interpretation.[11] In 1540 Theodor Dorsten (ca. 1500 – 1552), a German botanist, published an illustrated herbal (*Botanicon*) in Frankfurt without entering into great details on the mandragora's properties, while in 1574 Rembert Dodoens published another herbal in Spain (*Purgantium aliarumque eo facientium, tum et radicum, conuoluorum ac deleteriarum herbarum historiae*), with a quite accurate illustration of mandragora.[12] Another pharmacopoeia (*Alexandrini Medicamentorum opus in sectiones quadragintaocto*) was published in 1550 by Nicolaus Myrepsus illustrating the sleeping properties of mandragora.[13]

The first herbal published in English was *The Grete Herball* (printed by Peter Treveris in 1526) which is a translation from the anonymous French *Le Grant Herbier*. This book, though still depicting the plant anthropomorphically (see page 11), expresses doubt that mandrake has any magic powers while recognizing that it causes sleep, and can be used to treat headache, apostumes (abscesses), 'the flux of the womb' (menstruation).[14]

Renaissance knowledge of the sleep-inducing and anaesthetic activities of mandragora was quite exact. The plant is now acknowledged for the anticholinergic activities of its alkaloids, which are mainly scopolamine[15] and atropine[16] and similar drugs. Scopolamine was used in the USA up to 1990 as an over-the-counter sleep-aid but has been withdrawn for its serious adverse effects in the case of over-dosage. It is worth noting that both scopolamine and atropine have been used as recreational drugs, although they are very dangerous since they produce hallucinogenic effects in high doses.

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10 Tess Ann Osbaldestron, 'Introduction', *The Herbal of Dioscorides the Greek,* trans. by Tess Ann Osbaldestron (Johannesburg: IBIDIS Press, 2000), p. 32.

11 Pietro Andrea Matthioli, *Commentarii denuo aucti in libros sex Pedacii Dioscoridis Anazarbei De medica materia* (Lugdunum: Gabriel Coterius, 1562).

12 Rembert Dodoens, *Purgantium aliarumque eo facientium, tum et radicum, conuoluorum ac deleteriarum herbarum historiae libri IIII* (Antwerp: Christophorus Plantinus, 1574).

13 Nicolaus Myrepsus, *Medicamentorum opus in sectiones quadragintaocto* (Lugdunum: Balthazar Arnoletus, 1550).

14 *The Grete Herball* (London: Peter Treveris, 1526) URL: <http://hsci.cas.ou.edu/galleries/16thCentury/GreteHerball/1526/> [accessed 28 February 2008].

15 'Scopolamine', *Hazardous Substances Data Bank* (HSDB), National Library of Medicine, USA, record 51-34-3, URL: <http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/sis/search/r?dbs+hsdb:@term+@rn+51-34-3> [accessed 28 February 2008].

16 'Atropine', *Hazardous Substances Data Bank* (HSDB), National Library of Medicine, USA, RECORD 51-55-8. URL: <http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/sis/search/r?dbs+hsdb:@term+@rn+51-55-8 > [accessed 28 February 2008].

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Mandragora in Shakespeare

It is probable that Shakespeare was familiar with the pharmacological properties of mandragora, when he wrote *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Othello*, since in both cases mandragora is referred to as sleep-inducing.

In *Antony and Cleopatra,* Shakespeare cites mandragora properly:

> CLEOPATRA Ha, ha!
> Give me to drink Mandragora.
>
> CHARMIAN Why, madam?
>
> CLEOPATRA That I might sleep out this great gap of time
> My Antony is away. (1.5.3 – 6)

In *Othello* Shakespeare refers again to mandragora as a sleeping drug:

> IAGO […] Not poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world
> Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou owedst yesterday. (3.3.332 – 35)[17]

However, as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, in three other works written by Shakespeare before *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Othello* – *Henry IV Part 2*, *Henry VI Part 2* and *Romeo and Juliet* – mandragora is not referred to as a pharmacological agent but rather in terms of its legendary properties. It is interesting to note that in all three of these plays the plant is called by its common name 'mandrake':

In *Henry IV Part 2*, Shakespeare refers to mandrake twice as an epithet:

> FALSTAFF […] Thou whoreson mandrake, thou art fitter to be worn in my cap than to wait at my heels.(1.2.14 – 15)[18]
>
> FALSTAFF […] and the whores called him mandrake. A came ever in the rearward of the fashion […]. (3.2.309 – 10)

In *Henry VI Part 2* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare refers to the ancient legend that the crying of eradicated mandragora drives people mad or kills them. In *Henry VI Part 2*, the plant's acoustic powers are used as the lethal object of comparison in a simile.

> SUFFOLK A plague upon them! Wherefore should I curse them?
> Could curses kill as doth the Mandrake's groan,
> I would invent as bitter-searching terms,
> As curst, as harsh, and horrible to hear,

17 *Othello*, ed. by Michael Neill (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
18 *Henry IV, Part 2* , Arden Shakespeare, ed. by A. R. Humphreys (London: Methuen, 1966).

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Delivered strongly through my fixèd teeth,
With full as many signs of deadly hate,
As lean-faced Envy in her loathsome cave.
(3.2. 309 – 15)[19]

Also in *Romeo and Juliet*, mandragora is used in a simile, but here the focus is on its acoustic power to destroy mental sanity.

JULIET Alack, alack, is it not like that I
So early waking, what with loathsome smells,
And shrieks like Mandrakes torn out of the earth,
That living mortals, hearing them, run mad.
(4.3.45 – 8)[20]

Mandragora in other European Renaissance literatures

During the Renaissance, other European writers and poets referred to mandrake, both correctly and incorrectly, according to the knowledge at that time.

In 1518, the Florentine Niccolò Machiavelli wrote *La Mandragola*, one of the masterpieces of Italian theatre, a satire based on a bed-trick and dealing with the corruptability of society. Callimaco who is in love with Lucrezia, pretending to be a doctor, tells Lucrezia's husband that she should drink a potion made from the mandrake root, in order to become pregnant. In Machiavelli's play mandrake, in its supposed power of fertility, is a reflection of medieval beliefs:

CALLIMACO *Voi avete ad intender questo, che non è cosa più certa ad ingravidare una donna che dargli bere una pozione fatta di Mandragola. Questa è una cosa esperimentata da me dua paia di volte, e trovata sempre vera, e, se non era questo, la reina di Francia sarebbe sterile, ed infinite altre principesse di quello stato.*

CALLIMACO You must understand this: there is nothing more certain to make a woman conceive than to give her a potion made with Mandrake root. That is something I have tested half a dozen times, and always found true. If it were not for that, the Queen of France and countless other Princesses of that realm would be barren. (2.6)[21]

The French poet and writer of fables Jean de la Fontaine (1621 – 1695) wrote *La*

19 *Henry VI, Part 2* , ed. by Michael Hattaway, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
20 *Romeo and Juliet*, Arden Shakespeare, ed. by Brian Gibbons (London: Methuen, 1980).
21 *The Mandragola*, in *The Comedies of Machiavelli*, bilingual edition ed. and trans. by David Sices and James B. Atkinson (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985), pp. 153 – 276 (pp. 194 – 95).

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Mandragore, nouvelle tirée de Machiavel, in which he appropriated the Florentine's story about Callimaco, Lucrezia and the mandrake in French verses.

Cette recette est une médecine
Faite du jus de certaine racine,
Ayant pour nom Mandragore; et ce jus
Pris par la femme opère beaucoup plus
Que ne fit onc nulle ombre monacale
D'aucun couvent de jeunes frères plein.

Dans dix mois d'hui je vous fais père enfin;
Sans demander un plus long intervalle.
Et touchez là: dans dix mois et devant
Nous porterons au baptème l'enfant.

(The remedy all obstacles removed;
'Tis from the root of certain tree expressed;
A juice most potent ev'ry where confessed,
And Mandrake called, which taken by a wife;
More pow'r evinces o'er organick life,
Than from conventual grace was e'er derived,
Though in the cloister youthful friars hived.

TEN months from hence I'll you a father make;
No longer time than that I ask to take;
This period o'er, the child to church we'll bring).[22]

The Italian poet Giovanbattista Marino, in his mythological poem *Adone*, written in 1623, referred to the soporific effect of mandragora.

Fa cerchio ala città selva frondosa
che dà grato ristoro al corpo lasso.
La mandragora stupida e gravosa
e'l papavere v'ha col capo basso.
(Canto 10, verse 95)

(All around the town there is a leafy forest,
which gives pleasing relief to a weary body.
The stupid and onerous Mandrake lives there
and poppy, which proceeds hanging its head.)

22 Jean de la Fontaine, 'La Mandragore, nouvelle tirée de Machiavel', in *Contes et nouvelles en vers* (Amsterdam: Barbou, 1762), pp. 75 – 88 (p. 78); 'The Mandrake' in *Tales and Novels of Jean De La Fontaine*, anonymous transl. (New York: [printed privately], 1925), vol. 2, pp. 77 – 92 (p. 80).

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And further:

> Doppio forte e gravoso è quel licore
> composto e di mandragora e di loto.
> Grato ala vista appare ed al sapore,
> ma secreto nasconde un fumo ignoto
> di sì strana virtù, di tal vigore,
> ch'opprime gli occhi e toglie il senso e'l moto,
> atto a stordir non pur le menti umane
> ma d'Esperia e di Stige il drago e il cane.
> (Canto 13, verse 112)
>
> (Of strong and onerous opium is that liqueur,
> composed both of Mandrake and of lotus.
> Pleasing it is to eyes and with a nice taste,
> but it hides an unknown smoke,
> which has such a strange virtue and such a vigour,
> that oppresses the eyes and dulls the senses,
> and paralyzes human bodies and minds…)[23]

Even the Italian poet Torquato Tasso (1592 – 1594) wrote about the sleep-inducing property of 'Mandragora' and poppy in his poem *Mondo creato:*

> La Mandragora e l'oppio il sonno allice […]
>
> (Mandrake and poppy make people sleepy […])
> (third day, line 1080)[24]

The French writer François Rabelais (1494 – 1553) referred to mandrake in his famous work *Gargantua et Pantagruele*, which tells the story of two giants: a father, Gargantua, and his son, Pantagruele and their adventures, written in an amusing, extravagant and satirical vein. Here is the account of how the physician Rondibilis counselled the cowardly and crafty knave Panurge:

Secondement par certaines drogues et plantes lesquelles rendent l'homme refroidi maléficié et impotent à génération. L'expérience y est en nymphea heraclia amérine saule sénevé péniclymènos tamaris vitex Mandragore ciguë orchis le petit la peau d'un hippopotame et autres lesquelles dedans les corps humains tant par leurs vertus élémentaires que par leurs propriétés spécifiques glacent et mortifient le germe prolifique ou dissipent les esprits qui le devaient conduire aux lieux destinés par nature ou oppilent les voies et conduits par lesquels pouvait être

23 Giovanbattista Marino, *Adone*, ed. by Giovanni Pozzi (Milano: Adelphi, 1988), our translation.

24 Torquato Tasso, *Il mondo creato*, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1951), our translation.

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expulsé Comme au contraire nous en avons qui échauffent excitent et habilitent l'homme à l acte vénérien. (Book 3, chap. 31)

(Secondly, the fervency of lust is abated by certain drugs, plants, herbs, and roots, which make the taker cold, maleficiated, unfit for, and unable to perform the act of generation; as hath been often experimented in the water-lily, heraclea, agnus castus, willow-twigs, hemp-stalks, woodbine, honeysuckle, tamarisk, chaste tree, Mandrake, bennet, keckbugloss, the skin of a hippopotam, and many other such, which, by convenient doses proportioned to the peccant humour and constitution of the patient, being duly and seasonably received within the body–what by their elementary virtues on the one side and peculiar properties on the other–do either benumb, mortify, and beclumpse with cold the prolific semence, or scatter and disperse the spirits which ought to have gone along with and conducted the sperm to the places destined and appointed for its reception, or lastly, shut up, stop, and obstruct the ways, passages, and conduits through which the seed should have been expelled, evacuated, and ejected).[25]

The English poet John Donne (1572 – 1631) mentiones mandrake in his song *Go and catch a falling star*, referring to its property of helping barren women to conceive. He further evokes its association with the devil because the fork-rooted plant resembles a cleft-foot (as previously mentioned, mandrake in earlier times was called 'Satan's apple').

> Go and catch a falling star,
> Get with child a Mandrake root,
> Tell me where all past years are,
> Or who cleft the Devil's foot […]
> (lines 1 – 4)[26]

Mandragora in contemporary literature

In our own times, there are recurring instances of literary references to mandragora which deliberately ignore current knowledge of the plant's properties in favour of legendary mediaeval beliefs. Here are a few examples:

Ezra Pound (1885 – 1972) used mandrake as a metaphor in his poem *Portrait d'une femme:*

25 'Gargantua et Pantagruele', *Book 3, Oeuvres de Rabelais, édition variorum* (Paris: Dalibon, 1823), v, pp. 65 – 6; 'Gargantua and Pantagruel', *Book 3, The Works of Rabelais*, translated by Sir Thomas Urquhart and Motteux (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1864), ii, p. 83.

26 John Donne, 'Go and catch a falling star', in John Donne, *The Complete English Poems,* ed. by A. J. Smith (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 77.

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You are a person of some interest, one comes to you
And takes strange gain away: […]
Pregnant with Mandrakes, or with something else
That might prove useful and yet never proves[…][27]

Samuel Beckett (1906–1989), in Act 1 of *Waiting for Godot* presents two attendants who discuss the possibility of hanging themselves. In their dialogue, reference is made to the belief that mandrake is seeded by the ejaculation of hanged men.

ESTRAGON Wait.

VLADIMIR Yes, but while waiting.

ESTRAGON What about hanging ourselves?

VLADIMIR Hmm. It'd give us an erection.

ESTRAGON (highly excited). An erection!

VLADIMIR With all that follows. Where it falls Mandrakes grow. That's why they shriek when you pull them up. Did you not know that?

ESTRAGON Let's hang ourselves
Immediately![28]

The Welsh poet Dylan Thomas (1914–1953) mentions the mandrake root in two of his poems – *Foster the light* and *Altarwise by Owl-light* – in both cases with attention to its acoustic property.

Of mortal voices to the ninnies' choir,
High lord esquire, speak up the singing cloud,
And pluck a Mandrake music from the marrowroot.
(*Foster the light*, lines 16–18)[29]

Altarwise by owl-light in the half-way house
The gentleman lay graveward with his furies;
Abaddon in the hangnail cracked from Adam,
And, from his fork, a dog among the fairies,
The atlas-eater with a jaw for news,
Bit out the Mandrake with to-morrow's scream.
(*Altarwise by Owl-light*, lines 1–6)[30]

27 Ezra Pound, 'Portrait d'une femme', in *Selected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1957), p. 16.
28 Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (New York: Grove Press, 1954), p. 12.
29 Dylan Thomas, *Foster the light* in *Collected Poems 1934–1953* (London: Phoenix, 2000), p. 50.
30 Dylan Thomas, *Altarwise by Owl-light,* in *Collected Poems 1934–1953* (London: Phoenix, 2000), p. 58.

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In J. K. Rowling's astoundlingly successful *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, mandrake is cultivated by Professor Sprout to cure the petrification of several characters who had looked indirectly into the eyes of the Basilisk. The author makes use of the legend of the mandrake's scream and anyone tending mandrakes wears earmuffs to dull the sound of the scream, if the plant must be transplanted.

Professor Sprout was standing behind a trestle bench in the centre of the greenhouse. About twenty pairs of different-coloured earmuffs were lying on the bench. When Harry had taken his place between Ron and Hermione , she said, "We'll be repotting Mandrakes today. Now, who can tell me the properties of the Mandrake?".
To nobody's surprise, Hermione's hand was first into the air. "Mandrake, or Mandragora, is a powerful restorative", said Hermione, sounding as usual as though she had swallowed the textbook. "It is used to return people who have been transfigured or cursed, back to their original state".
"Excellent. Ten points to Gryffindor", said Professor Sprout. "The Mandrake forms an essential part of most antidotes, It is also, however, dangerous. Who can tell me why?"
Once again, Hermione's hand was first to be raised, as she explained that the cry of the Mandrake is fatal to anyone who hears it.
She pointed to a row of deep trays as she spoke, and everyone shuffled forward for a better look. A hundred or so tufty little plants, purplish green in colour, were growing there in rows. They looked quite unremarkable to Harry, who didn't have the slightest idea what Hermione meant by the "cry" of the Mandrake.
"Everyone take a pair of earmuffs", said Professor Sprout. There was a scramble as everyone tried to seize a pair that wasn't pink and fluffy. "When I tell you to put them on, make sure your ears are completely covered", said Professor Sprout. "When it is safe to remove them, I will give you the thumbs-up. Right – earmuffs on".
Harry snapped the earmuffs over his ears. They shut out sound completely. Professor Sprout put the pink, fluffy pair over her own ears, rolled up the sleeves of her robes, grasped one of the tufty plants firmly, and pulled hard.
Harry let out a gasp of surprise that no one could hear. Instead of roots, a small, muddy, and extremely ugly baby popped out of the earth. The leaves were growing right out of his head. He had pale green, mottled skin, and was clearly bawling at the top of his lungs.
Professor Sprout took a large plant pot from under the table and plunged the Mandrake into it, burying him in dark, damp compost until only the tufted leaves were visible.
Then, Professor Sprout told the class: "As our Mandrakes are only seedlings, their cries won't kill yet", she said calmly as though she'd just done nothing more

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exciting than water a begonia. "However, they will knock you out for several hours [...]".[31]

In addition to the mention of the plant itself in plays, poems and novels, scopolamine, one of the active substances present in mandragora, achieved literary fame in the last century because it was thought to have the powers of a truth serum. The appeal of truth serum started in 1916 when Dr. Robert House, in Ferris, Texas, reported on a woman who, during labour, had fallen in a state of 'twilight sleep' induced by scopolamine (used as an anaesthetic). When the woman's husband could not find a scale to weigh the child, his wife was able to tell him where it was, despite the fact that she was still under the effect of the drug. Dr. House convinced himself that scopolamine could have forensic applications, and could induce people to give truthful answers. Dr. House presented his findings before the Section on State Medicine and Public Hygiene of the State Medical Association of Texas at El Paso on May 11, 1922, and published them in the September, 1922 issue of the *Texas State Journal of Medicine*. His article was reprinted nine years later in *The American Journal of Police Science* and its content subsequently made popular when it was reported by journalists of widely circulating magazines like *Time*.[32]

The possibility of using a quite common drug as a truth serum immediately infected the imagination of mystery writers. Among these should be cited one of crime fiction's all-time classic novels, *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940)by Raymond Chandler. Detective Marlowe, locked up in a private sanatorium, is administered Scopolamine both to quiet him down and to get him to reveal what he knows. Scopolamine is also featured in the World War II action classics by Alistair MacLean *The Guns of Navarone* (1957) and *Where Eagles Dare* (1967) as a *Schutzstaffel* truth-serum. The source for these last three references is the *Medical Wiki Encyclopedia* page on 'Scopolamine' maintained by C. Michael Gibson, Associate Professor at the Harvard Medical School (MA, U.S.A.), where readers can access further references to the substance in popular culture.[33]

31 J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), pp. 91 – 2.

32 Robert E. House, 'The use of scopolamine in criminology', *The American Journal of Police Science*, 2, 4 (Jul. – Aug., 1931), 328 – 36.
URL: <http://www.jstor.org/ > [accessed 28 February 2008]; 'Scopolamine confession', *Time Magazine*, Nov. 18, 1935,
URL: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,755351,00.html> [accessed 28 February 2008].

33 URL: http://www.wikidoc.org/index.php/Scopolamine.

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Conclusions

Shakespeare as well as other great poets of the Renaissance utilized either mandragora's known pharmacological properties or its medieval imaginary magic properties with complete nonchalance, according to the needs of the plot. Not uncommonly they used legends and fantastic images about mandrake even in their tragical works. This twofold use of mandragora is also present in contemporary literature, with a difference: the 'magic' properties of the plant are utilized in poems and fantasy novels that bear no relation to reality, while the psychoactive pharmacological properties of the active substances present in mandragora are used only in 'hyper-real' mystery or war novels.

As a general conclusion, it seems possible to apply this remark made about mandrake to other natural phenomena which had both a rational and a magic or imaginary interpretation in the past. We therefore believe that in the Middle Ages there was no distinction between a scientific and a magic or fantastic interpretation of mandragora (and possibly, by extension, of natural phenomena) due to ignorance and the prevalence of magic and superstition over science. In the Renaissance, on the contrary, the difference between magic and scientific knowledge became more evident and authors were well acquainted with this distinction, but they had not solved it perceptively, using legendary tales in fantasy works as well as in dramas based on reality. Only after the Renaissance did the distinction between magic and science reach a complete separation both as knowledge and as perception.

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Maddalena Pennacchia

The Stones of Rome. Early Earth Sciences in *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*

Observations on the earth's structure and processes can be traced back to a number of celebrated Latin texts, such as Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* or Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones*, which founded their *auctoritas* mainly on Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, a book that, in its turn, critically resumed presocratic thought on physics and reformulated its questions in terms of the principles of causality. The circulation of such 'scientific' texts increased considerably during the Renaissance, thanks to the fact that they were printed in book form and translated into vernacular languages.[1]

Even though such knowledge could hardly be called Geology – a discipline that was to develop as an independent science only as late as the nineteenth century (Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* dating to 1830) – it nonetheless attracted fast-growing interest and prompted a copious production of original writings devoted to the description of stones and earth phenomena. 'Proto-geologists' – whom the history of science classifies under the general label of 'early modern naturalists',[2] – such as George Bauer (Agricola), Conrad Gesner, Girolamo Cardano, Bernard Palissy, Ulisse Aldrovandi, Michele Mercati, to mention only a few, created an international network exchanging letters, stone specimens and opinions from all over Europe, thus laying the foundations for the future geological mapping of the Old Continent.[3]

1 For the role of both print and translation in the dissemination of scientific ideas see Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), in particular 'Part Three: The Book of Nature Transformed', pp. 453–682; *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), in particular 'Part III. Translation and Science', pp. 161–216; and R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries* [1954] (Cambridge, London, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

2 See Paula Findlen, 'Natural History', in *The Cambridge History of Science: Early Modern Science. Volume 3*, ed. by Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp 435–68.

3 About this early scientific community see Martin J. S. Rudwick, *The Meaning of Fossils.*

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These scholars felt entitled to classify and study minerals (what was later to be called 'mineralogy'), formulate hypotheses concerning the origin of odd rocks that looked like bones, shells or plants (the future 'paleontology' and 'paleobotany') and search for rational explanations for phenomena such as earthquakes, lava eruptions and magnetism (what we now call 'geophysics'). They put themselves to the task of questioning earthly bodies by comparing their empirical observations with the knowledge transmitted by the ancients: in other words, they were looking both into '*the* book of nature' and into 'books *on* nature'.

The above mentioned *Naturalis Historia* was a favourite touchstone; it is not by chance that it was one of the first texts in Europe to become a printed book, published in Venice in 1469.[4] The encyclopaedic quality of Pliny's 'History of Nature' was very much praised by his translator into English, Philemon Holland. In his 'Preface to the Reader' (1601), Holland wrote that the book had the great merit of dealing with "all things even from the starrie heaven to the centre of the earth". Natural bodies, therefore, were all included in the book and ordered according to the principle of the Aristotelian *scala naturae*. In particular, Pliny is engaged in questions of 'geology' for a good part of the second book of his work. Interestingly enough, Holland – whose fame had been established by his translation of Livy's *Romane Historie* – attached to his 'Preface', "in manner of a Corollarie, the opinion of one grave and learned preacher", in order to eliminate any doubt that, "in attributing so much unto Nature, *Plinie* seemeth to derogat from the almightie God".[5] And, indeed, his expedient was not redundant.

A 'history of the world' – as the title of the English version claimed – did not mean to Pliny a chronological ordering of events, but rather a descriptive classification of natural bodies. What we may now judge as a 'fault' may have, on the contrary, facilitated, or even favoured, the circulation of his book in an age of fiery religious disputes, where any 'heathen' viewpoint on nature had to be carefully checked.

The early Fathers of the Church had long provided their biblical-based version on the origin and final cause of the earth, even reaching the point of 'calculating' the age of the world. Theophilus of Antioch (115 – 181 AD), for instance, who founded Christian chronology, went backwards through the information in the Old Testament "until the date of Adam and Eve could be

Episodes in the History of Palaeontology (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 13 – 15.

4 See David Oldroyd, *Thinking about the Earth: A History of Ideas in Geology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 21.

5 Philemon Holland, 'The Preface to the Reader', in G. Plinius Secundus, *The Historie of the World*, trans. by Philemon Holland (London: Adam Islip, 1601), no pagination.

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determined. Then the very year of Creation might be known. […] 5529 BC".[6] In so doing any idea of 'cycle' with reference to earth phenomena was effaced and replaced, instead, with the concept of a linear, progressive history of the world. The only changes on the earth surface had been caused, according to this vision, by one catastrophic event, namely Noah's flood, which had been accepted as an historical biblical fact.

Early modern 'proto-geologists', for their part, started, explicitly or implicitly, to reconsider the ancient idea of an infinite time, a necessary postulate when the performance of great cycles of geomorphological changes had to be imagined, as Aristotle had argued.[7] They therefore started to store information in their own books and notebooks, as if trying to decode the language of stones in order to make them 'tell' their actual story. Stones thus become, in many of their writings, the protagonists of a cosmic narrative, in which the interfacing between rational observation and imaginative response resulted in a fascinating spectacle for the reader.[8]

Is there any echo of such an imaginative and scientific 'geological' interest in Shakespeare's work[9] and, more specifically, in the Roman Plays?

In his book, *Shakespeare. Genesi e struttura delle opere*, Giorgio Melchiori writes that "The Muse of the Roman Plays is History", i. e. the representation of men's condition on earth in absolute terms.[10] What if Shakespeare turned not only to historical sources for his Roman plays, but also to those ancient and modern 'proto-geological' writings that read stones as if they were the pages of the world's diary? After all, Rome *was* the 'city of stones', the place where the precious marble of statues, the porous travertine of palaces and public buildings,

6 Oldroyd, *Thinking about the Earth*, p. 22.

7 In book I of *Meteorologica* (chapter XIV) for instance, Aristotle writes, "It is therefore clear that *as time is infinite and the universe eternal* that neither Tanaïs nor Nile always flowed but the place whence they flow was once dry: *for their action has an end whereas time has none*". Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, ed. and trans. by H. D. P. Lee, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinmann, 1962), p. 119 – 21 (my emphases).

8 See the many textual instances reported both in the already mentioned Rudwick, *The Meaning of Fossils*, and in Pascal Richet, *A Natural History of Time*, trans. by John Venerella (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007).

9 For a 'proto-geological' reading of *The Tempest* see my 'Stones on Canvas and on Stage: Early Earth Sciences in Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*', in *The Renaissance and the Dialogue Between Science, Art, and Literature*, ed. by Klaus Bergdolt and Manfred Pfister, Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissance-forschung, xxvii (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, forthcoming).

10 Giorgio Melchiori, *Shakespeare. Genesi e struttura delle opere* (Bari: Laterza, 1994), p. 512 (my translation).

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and even the rounded pebbles set in mortar that paved the roads gave the place its globally praised and recognizable aspect.

The model of the 'geological cycle', as a succession of phases of disturbances and quiet, together with the related processes of 'solidification' and 'liquefaction' that ruled the formation of rocks according to early earth sciences, seems indeed to surface in the Roman plays and particularly in *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, where I will try to single out two sets of tropes, one related to an 'earthquake' imagery, and the other to a 'fossil' imagery.

The succession of movement and stasis, concretion and dissolution, in these two plays affects earthly bodies and human bodies alike. What's more, the main human bodies concerned, Caesar's and Coriolanus's, are not 'common' bodies, but bodies that enjoy also a kingly status, for they share a condition in which the Body natural and the Body politic "are incorporated in one Person".[11] It follows that further layers of meaning are added to the play's complex imagery.

In *Julius Caesar* a violent movement shakes Rome in the night of the conspiracy, an 'earthquake' that is both a physical event, agitating the whole chain of being, and the image of the incontrolable fits that will affect Rome's body politic – the civil war – when its 'head' is overthrown. In *Coriolanus*, on the other hand, the hero's body almost suffers a process of crystallization and turns into a precious stone, a 'fossil' which the Roman citizens will carelessly throw away for its uselessness.

Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar, Act 1, scene 3. It is the crucial night of the conspiracy, when an awesome tempest strikes Rome.[12] The sound of thunder fills the air and lightning seems "to open the breast of heaven" (1.3.50 – 1) as if it were "dropping fire" (1.3.10). An appalled Casca, on his way back from taking Caesar home, meets Cicero, who, with sceptical coolness – not at all affected by the "disturbed sky" (1.3.39) – asks him: "Why are you breathless? And why stare you so?" (1.3.2). Casca's reply is yet another question:

> Are not you mov'd, when all the sway of earth
> Shakes like a thing unfirm? (1.3.3 – 4)

11 Edmund Plowden, *Report*, quoted in Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 9.

12 All quotations refer to William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. by T. S. Dorsch [1955], Arden edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

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What do the words 'sway of earth' mean in this context? According to T. S. Dorsch, Shakespeare is referring to "the whole realm of earth",[13] while, more recently, David Daniell states that:

> [t]he earth seems to sway in the storm. Caesar holds sway, that is rule (*OED* sway *sb.* 6a). He is feared to be 'all the sway of earth', that is, force in one direction (*OED* sway *sb.* 3, 4), though he now 'Shakes like a thing unfirm'.[14]

Taking these critical annotations as a starting point, I would like to further stress the linguistic link that the word 'sway' creates between the realm of nature and the realm of human politics, between the 'body of the Earth' and the 'body of Caesar' (as the epitome of the Ruler). The respective position of these two bodies in the chain of being and in the socio-political hierarchy is crucial. Should they shake, their motion would necessarily be transmitted to all bodies that rest secure on them, both physically – as happens with all the creatures arranged in the Aristotelian *scala naturae* whose foundation is in the mineral kingdom – and metaphorically – as happens with those human beings who, like the 'inconstant Casca', are "moved" – differently from the 'constant' Cicero – by the political (and natural) events.[15] The two lines spoken by Casca, and the whole description of the frightening night of the conspiracy, depict a catastrophic scenery,[16] in which the earthquake imagery functions as the 'objective correlative' of a radical revolution of the world order.

Even though tremors are not among the prodigies mentioned in Plutarch's source, a reference to the phenomenon can be found in the last book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as Alessandro Serpieri points out.[17] It is there that we read how in the days before the assassination, "with an earthquake shaken was the town".[18]

But even leaving aside the Roman historical sources, we may suppose that Shakespeare had some kind of direct or indirect experience of earthquakes that he wanted to use in his play in order to recreate a feeling of terrified instability in the audience. It is not an idle consideration to remember that the most violent

13 Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. by T. S. Dorsch, p. 24, n. 3.
14 William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. by David Daniell, Arden edition (London: Thomson Learning, 2004), p. 184 n. 3.
15 On the stoic concept of 'constantia' and its controversial use in Shakespeare's Roman plays, see Geoffrey Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
16 On the concept of 'verbal scenography' see Masolino D'Amico, *Scena e parola in Shakespeare* (Torino: Einaudi, 1974).
17 Alessandro Serpieri, 'Julius Caesar', in *Nel laboratorio di Shakespeare* (4 vols), iv, *I drammi romani*, ed. by Alessandro Serpieri, Keir Elam and Claudia Corti (Parma: Pratiche Editrice, 1988), pp. 15–129 (pp. 84–5).
18 Ovid, *Metamorphoses. Translated by Arthur Golding* [1567], ed. by Madeleine Forey (London: Penguin, 2002), XV, 896 (p. 460).

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seismic event ever recorded in the history of England took place on 6th April 1580, during the Easter week, when William was sixteen. It is known as the 'Dover Straits Earthquake' and it triggered freak waves in the Channel that caused shipwrecks at sea, inundations along the coast and damage to masonry in London.[19]

Some Shakespearean scholars refer to the seism in relation to *Romeo and Juliet*,[20] and more specifically to the lines in which the Nurse states: "'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years".[21] Brian Gibbons comments as follows:

> The fact that Shakespeare could rely on some memory of earthquakes in England would have made the Nurse's claim sound plausibile to those spectators (the great majority) who would not recognize this as a touch of local Veronese color.[22]

The 1580 earthquake aroused, indeed, much curiosity, as is witnessed by the exchange of letters between the poet Edmund Spenser and his Cambridge university friend, Gabriel Harvey, professor of Rhetorics.

The correspondence between the two 'wits' was published under the name of *Three proper wittie familiar Letters, lately passed betweene two Vniversitie men, touching the Earthquake in April last, and our English reformed Versifying* – a title that shows an equal interest in natural phenomena and prosody – and was one of several publications entered that same year in the Stationers' Register on the subject of the earthquake.[23]

So Spenser writes to Harvey from London:

> I thinke the *Earthquake* was also there wyth you (which I would gladly learne) as it was here with vs: ouerthrowing diuers old buildings, and peeces of Churches. Sure verye straunge to be hearde of in these Countries, and yet I heare some saye (I knowe not howe truly) that they haue knowne the like before in their dayes.[24]

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19 The earthquake is now supposed to have been of an approximate magnitude 5.7 ML. See the website of the *British Geological Survey*, URL: http://www.bgs.ac.uk/news/news/KentQuake.pdf.

20 See Sidney Thomas, 'The Earthquake in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Modern Language Notes*, 6 (1949), 417–19.

21 William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by Brian Gibbons, Arden edition (London: Methuen, 1980), 1.3.23.

22 Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by Brian Gibbons, p. 27 n.

23 "On the two days which followed the earthquake five items dealing with it were entered in the Stationers' Register; and during the next three months at least a dozen more pamphlets and ballads on the subject were listed there". Rudolf Gottfried, 'Appendix I – B. The Earthquake', in *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed by Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, Frederick Morgan Padelford, Ray Heffner, 10 vols (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1932–1949), x: *Spenser's Prose Works*, ed. by Rudolf Gottfried (1966), pp. 477–79 (p. 477).

24 Edmund Spenser, 'Three proper wittie familiar Letters, lately passed betweene two Vniversitie men, touching the Earthquake in April last, and our English reformed Versifying. Letter

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Harvey's response is a delightful piece of scientific/humanistic literature. The scholar starts by giving an account of his own experience of the event, which took place while he was spending the evening "in a Gentlemans house" in Essex, playing cards with "*[a] coople of shrewde wittie new marryed Gentlewomen*" and their husbands.[25] Asked for an explanation by the two frightened gentlewomen – whom he has in the meantime renamed "*Mystresse Inquisitiua*" and "*Madame Incredula*" – he condescends to the request in a playful style, even punning on *terrae motus* and *terrae metus*. But then, asked again by "the Gentleman of the house", who entreats, "let vs men learne some thing of you too", Harvey's tone changes, and he starts a new 'chapter' of the letter, entitled "Master H's short, but sharpe, and learned Iudgement of Earthquakes". There he lectures on earthquakes in Aristotelian fashion, explaining the material and formal causes of the event, and scolding, as 'Cicero' will do in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, those who wish to attach a "Supernaturall" meaning to the "motions". Here follows a small sample of Harvey's discourse:

The Materiall Cause of Earthquakes (as was superficially touched in the beginning of our speache, and is sufficiently prooued by *Aristotle* in the seconde Booke of his *Meteors*) is no doubt great abundance of wynde, or stoare of grosse and drye vapors and spirites, fast shut vp, and as a man would saye, emprysoned in the Caues, and Dungeons of the Earth: which winde, or vapors, seeking to be set at libertie, and to get them home to their Naturall lodgings, in a great fume, violently rush out, and as it were, breake prison, which forcible Eruption, and strong breath, causeth an Earthquake.[26]

Gabriel Harvey is simply repeating the almost hackneyed Aristotelian theory that was shared by all Latin 'naturalist' writers such as Pliny and Seneca, or even Lucretius (*De rerum natura*) and Strabo (*Rerum geographicarum*). This theory, as we have just read, attributed the cause of earthquakes to the movement of subterranean winds, forming through water evaporation in the cavities of the earth, and trying to escape to the surface.[27] But the image drawn by Harvey of a natural element "emprysoned" and "seeking to be set at libertie", causing troubles to the body of the Earth, as if that body were ill, is very suggestive when read in the context of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Notice that the word "Erup-

III', in *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed by Edwin Greenlaw and others, x: *Spenser's Prose Works*, ed. by Rudolf Gottfried, pp. 15 – 17 (p. 15).

25 Gabriel Harvey, 'A pleasant and pitthy familiar discourse, of the Earthquake in Aprill last', in *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed by Edwin Greenlaw and others, x: *Spenser's Prose Works*, ed. by Rudolf Gottfried, pp. 449 – 77 (p. 449).

26 Gabriel Harvey, 'A pleasant and pitthy familiar discourse', p. 453.

27 Aristotle had stated that "the cause of earth tremors is neither water nor earth but wind" (Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, p. 205).

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tion", correctly employed by Harvey for its settled 'geological' implications, is used by Cassius to describe the strange 'meteorological' turmoil of the "dreadful night", when, once again, he compares Caesar to 'Nature', i. e. the ghastly growth of his power to the frightful natural disorders:

> Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man
> Most like this dreadful night,
> That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars
> As doeth the lion in the Capitol;
> A man not mightier than thyself, or me,
> In personal action, yet prodigious grown,
> And fearful, as these strange *eruptions* are.
> (1.3.72 – 8, my emphasis)

Even though we will never know if Shakespeare read Harvey's famous 'Earthquake letter', he seems well informed about ancient and early modern 'proto-geological' knowledge.

Moreover, the earthquake imagery in *Julius Caesar* is not limited to the night of wonders, but the association of the verb 'to move' with the nouns 'stone' and 'earth' recurs throughout the whole first macro-sequence of the play (Acts 1 – 3). Common people are addressed as "stones" by Marullus in the very first scene ("You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!", 1.1.35) and later in the play, by Antony, who during his funeral oration for Caesar, stirs the Roman masses saying that the view of the poor mangled corpse "should move the stones of Rome to rise and mutiny". These linguistic choices engender a fascinating metaphorical effect that enscribes the Roman civil wars within an awesome scenery of earth tremors and landslides.[28]

Shakespeare may have consulted both the *Naturalis Historia* and *Naturales Quaestiones* in Latin or even English – but the latter's translation by Thomas Lodge was published only in 1616 – and Aristotle's *Meteorologica* in Italian – which was repeatedly translated in Italy since 1542[29] –, but my feeling is that he may have been more attracted by Seneca's text because of the exquisite literary quality of that writing.

Naturales Quaestiones is a splendid philosophic treatise on physics. Being "addressed in a quasi-epistolary form to Lucilius Junior, procurator of Sicily",[30] it retains an autobiographical flavour that renders the main problem with which

28 For further links between the political aspects and the earthquake imagery, see my "Il teatro della terra", in Maddalena Pennacchia Punzi, *Tracce del moderno nel teatro di Shakespeare* (Napoli: ESI, 2008), pp. 19 – 38 (pp. 27 – 30).

29 See Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage*, p. 511.

30 John Clarke, 'Introduction', in *Physical Science in the Time of Nero. Being a Translation of the Quaestiones Naturales of Seneca*, ed. and trans. by John Clarke (London: Macmillan, 1910), pp. xxi-liv (p. xxxii).

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Seneca is concerned – that is, physical change – all the more intriguing. In accordance to his stoic creed Seneca saw geo-physics as a cycle of expansion and contraction, corresponding to human tension and relaxation.[31]

It is within this conceptual framework that the sixth book of *Naturales Quaestiones,* in which Seneca reflects on earthquakes, should be read.[32] This book is both an informed pamphlet on *terrae motus* and a meditation on the frailty of human life, or even on the impossibility of escaping one's fate, a general truth that becomes self-evident in the experience of an earthquake. It is in the form of a series of rhetorical questions that Seneca starts his reflections:

> Si quod unum immobile est in illo fixumque, ut cuncta in se intenta sustineat fluctuatur, si quod proprium habet terra perdidit, stare, ubi tandem resident metus nostri? (Where will our fears finally be at rest if the one thing which is immovable in the universe and fixed, so as to support everything that leans on it, starts to weaver; if the earth loses the characteristics it has, stability?)[33]

A diffuse frightened restlessness affects people when the Earth loses its stability (and we cannot but think of Casca's cue, "Are not you mov'd, when all the sway of earth / shakes like a thing unfirm"), because danger looms not only on individuals but, in ever enlarging circles, on families, cities, nations and regions:

> Hoc malum latissime patet ineuitabile, auidum, publice noxium. Non enim domos solum aut familias aut urbes singulas haurit; gentes totas regionesque submergit [...] (But the disaster of an earthquake extends far and wide, is inevitable, insatiable, deadly for the entire state. It gulps down not only homes and families or individual cities; it inters entire nations and regions [...]).[34]

The moral of Seneca's discourse on earthquakes is stated explicitly in the end, when he exhorts Lucilius to accept the truth that "Mors naturae lex est" ("Death is a law of nature")[35] and that it is necessary to make oneself familiar with death through meditation so that, if necessary, one can face it with manly behaviour.

A stoic teaching that Shakespeare's Brutus certainly made his own.

31 Oldroyd, *Thinking about the Earth*, p. 18.

32 Seneca, 'Earthquakes', in Seneca, *Naturales Quaestiones*, ed. and trans. by Thomas H. Corcoran, The Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinmann, 1971), ii, pp. 127–223.

33 Seneca, 'Earthquakes', p. 128, p. 129.

34 Seneca, 'Earthquakes', p. 130, p. 131.

35 Seneca, 'Earthquakes', p. 222, p. 223.

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Coriolanus

The earth is in motion and the populace in commotion in *Julius Caesar*, but when Shakespeare wrote *Coriolanus*, a few years later, tremors are coming to a standstill, so to speak, both in 'his' Rome and in London. Elizabeth had died and the crown had passed from the 'volcanic' Tudors to the 'sedimentary' Stuarts. The magmatic status of Elizabethan culture, no longer bubbling as in the early days of the earth, had already started to solidify.

This turn from 'movement' to 'stasis' can be detected in the passage from one play to the other. Caesar's body, for instance, is addressed by Antony in his funeral oration as a "bleeding piece of earth" (3. 1. 254); in this line the image of blood flowing seems almost to vitalize the inorganic matter, a 'miracle' – the turning of stones into moist organic tissues – that will also be attributed to the marble of "Pompey's statue (which [during Caesar's assassination] all the while ran blood)", (3.2.190 – 91). In *Coriolanus*, on the other hand, blood stops flowing and clots on the hero's body, described as an inorganic gem-stone, invulnerable and precious but utterly unelastic, the 'objective correlative' of the title character's problematic 'constancy'.[36]

In scene 4 of Act 1, Caius Martius and Titus Lartius stand before the city of Corioles with their soldiers, waiting for the Volsces to make the first move. From the city walls, two senators appear and address Martius, defying him; their words heat him up for the fight, "They do disdain us much beyond our thoughts, / which makes me sweat with wrath".[37] The temperature of Martius's body seems to rise to a 'boiling point', when he rushes into the battle and starts slaughtering enemies; but his soldiers do not possess his same tremendous destructive power and are "*beat back to their trenches*" (1.4.s.d.). Martius, then, goes ahead and seeing that the gates of Corioles are being opened hurries into the town alone. The gates close behind him.

When the news is brought to Titus Lartius, he judges that Martius is dead and gives a sort of funeral speech, using the past tense:

> Oh noble fellow!
> Who sensibly outdares his senseless sword,
> And when it bows stands up. Thou are left, Martius:
> A carbuncle entire, as big as thou art,

36 In the third chapter of his *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, entitled 'Seneca and the Stoic Hero' (pp. 38 – 62), Geoffrey Miles points out how Seneca used the metaphor of the rock to visualize his ideal of constancy (pp. 45 – 50). This suggestion has been very helpful for my interpretation of the mineralogical imagery that I found in the play.

37 William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. by Philip Brockbank, Arden edition (London: Methuen, 1976), 1.4.26 – 7. All quotations are from this edition and given in the text after quotation.

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> Were not so rich a jewel. Thou wast a soldier
> Even to Cato's wish, not fierce and terrible
> Only in strokes, but with thy grim looks and
> The thunder-like percussion of thy sounds
> Thou mad'st thine enemies shake, as if the world
> Were feverous and did tremble. (1.4.54 – 63)

In order to praise Martius as a 'marvel' of nature Lartius declares, firstly, that the hero's extraordinary inflexibility was superior to that of his sword (a metal object that can bend, while he did not); secondly he celebrates his incalculable value by declaring him more precious than a human-size gem-stone, and precisely a "carbuncle"; third, he compares him to an earthquake,[38] recalling the effect of his "looks" and "sounds" on his enemies, who "shake[d]" with terror as if they were experiencing the very conditions in which "the world [is] feverous and […] tremble[s]".[39]

In his euology Titus Lartius displays a 'geo-mineralogical' imagery that runs throughout the play and that would seem to be related to the Roman *virtus* of 'constancy', so ardently praised by Seneca. More specifically, I am referring to a long passage in *De Constantia sapientis*,[40] where the spiritual qualities of the constant sage are visualized through a series of images recalling the natural properties of rocks and diamonds:

Quomodo quorundam lapidum inexpugnabilis ferro duritia est nec secari adamas aut caedi vel deteri potest sed incurrentia ultro retundit, quemadmodum quaedam non possunt igne consumi sed flamma circumfusa rigorem suum habitumque conservant, quemadmodum proiecti quidam in altum scopuli mare frangunt nec ipsi ulla saevitiae vestigia tot verberati saeculis ostentant; ita sapientis animus solidus est et id roboris collegit, ut tam tutus sit ab iniuria quam illa quae rettuli. (As the hardness of certain stones is impervious to steel, and adamant cannot be cut or hewed or ground, but in turn blunts whatever comes into contact with it; as certain substances cannot be consumed by fire, but, though encompassed by flame, retain their hardness and their shape; as certain cliffs, projecting into the deep, break the force of the sea, and, though lashed for countless ages, show no

38 Philip Brockbank comments on the lines writing that, "[t]he same metaphor is used of an earthquake in *Mac.*, II. iii. 59 – 60, 'the earth / Was feverous and did shake'". Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. by Philip Brockbank, p. 131 n.

39 And, indeed, the "Ague" – a putrid fever characterized by "violent chills" – had been mentioned by Gabriel Harvey in his attempt to explain earthquakes to the 'fair ones', using the well known comparison between the human body and the body of the earth. The latter, in analogy with the former, "consisteth of many diuers and contrarie members, and vaines, and arteries, and concauities, wherein […] be very great store of […] fumes, and spirites, either good, or bad, or mixte" (Harvey, 'A pleasant and pitthy familiar discourse', p. 451).

40 I am indebted to Miles for drawing my attention to this passage from Seneca (*Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, p. 41).

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traces of its wrath, just so the spirit of the wise man is impregnable, and has gathered such a measure of strength as to be no less safe from injury than those things which I have mentioned).[41]

It is with reference to this passage that Geoffrey Miles remarks how in Seneca's tragedies featuring Hercules (*Hercules Furens* and *Hercules Oetaeus*), "the *sapiens*' invulnerability and invincibility are […] made literal", but the effect "is grotesque and disturbing, like Shakespeare's similar picture of Coriolanus in battle".[42]

My argument is that Coriolanus's 'grotesequeness' springs from his metamorphosis into a 'natural oddity'. What in Seneca was just a simile – the sage's spirit is "solidus" *like* a rock – becomes literal in Shakespeare's play, where the hero's body – the physical part of identity – undergoes what we may call, with Aristotle, a process of "solidification".[43]

As I see it, Shakespeare questions 'constancy' – one of the most debated Roman virtues – as if he were carrying out a 'mineralogical study' of a puzzling specimen of Roman 'stone', whose formation he closely observes from the beginning and whose qualities he puts to the test from a dramatic perspective (Coriolanus as a rigid Senecan character), from a psychoanalitical perspective (Coriolanus as his mother's son), from a political perspective (Coriolanus as the representative of an old-fashioned aristocratic regime).

But let us follow the dramatic action a little more closely. Titus Lartius has just finished performing his tribute, when Martius unexpectedly reappears on stage, "*bleeding, assaulted by the enemy*" (1.4.s.d.). The movement of his body, just like that of an earthquake, is transmitted to his fellows who are 'moved' "to fetch him off, or make remain alike" (1.4.62). So "*They fight and all enter the city*" (1.4.s.d.). It will take five more agitated scenes to get to the end of the battle, and each time, we will see Martius "mantled" (1.6.29) in running blood.[44] It is only at the end of scene 9 of Act 1, that the hero declares himself to be "weary" (1.9.89), as if the heat of his initial "wrath" (1.4.27) were cooling down. Cominius finally invites him to reach the tent, because Corioles is taken and "the blood upon [Martius's] visage dries" (1.9.91).

It is precisely in this scene (1.9) that 'Martius' is transformed into 'Coriolanus' before our eyes:

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41 Seneca, *De Constantia*, in *Seneca Moral Essays*, ed. and trans. by John W. Basore, The Loeb Classical Library, 3 vols (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), i, pp. 48 – 105 (p. 57).

42 Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, p. 60.

43 Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, p. 315.

44 For a recapitulation in these final scenes of Act 1 of the many textual loci where the blood on Martius's body is referred to, see Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. by Philip Brockbank, p. 131 n.

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COMINIUS [...] and from this time,
For what he did before Corioles, call him,
With all th'applause and clamour of the host,
Martius Caius Coriolanus! (1.9.61 – 4)

This onstage metamorphosis almost presents itself as a process of mineral formation, as a "solidification" that involves a transition of the blood covering Martius's skin "from fluidity to solidity".[45] Once the military action is ended and the hero has spent all his kinetic energy – his 'earthquake' power – his "internal heat" in cooling down dries the blood on his skin,[46] making it adhere to his body like an armour that resembles a "carbuncle", the red gem-stone – a ruby – whose name has just been pronounced by Lartius.[47]

We read about this useful war accessory in Plutarch's *Life of Caius Martius Coriolanus:* "he esteemed armour to no purpose" because he "exercise[d] his body to hardness".[48] The 'hardness' of Coriolanus's body is of a kind that no fatigue can exhaust nor blade scratch, it is uncanningly 'inorganic'. Hardness was, in fact, the quality that, according to the Renaissance vision of the world order, characterized bodies belonging to the mineral kingdom, the inanimate section of the Aristotelian chain of being. In the minutely detailed hierarchy of the chain, which stretched continuously from aetherial spirit to the basest matter, there existed within each class of bodies a *primate* or chief kind. Gem-

45 Following Aristotle, "solidification" was considered to be, in the sixteenth century, the main process of mineral formation. See Rachel Laudan, *From Mineralogy to Geology: The Foundations of a Science, 1650 – 1830* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 20 and in general all the second chapter 'Mineralogy and Cosmogony in the Late Seventeenth Century', pp. 20 – 46.

46 In Book IV, part V of *Meteorologica*, Aristotle puts forward a hypothesis on mineral formation, starting from the observation that "[a] body defined by its own limit must be either hard or soft, for it either yields or does not", and adding also that "softness and hardness are the result of solidification"(p. 315). Further on he writes that "solidification is a form of drying [...] Things are dried either by being heated or by being cooled, heat internal or external being the active cause in either case. For even things that are dried by cooling, like wet clothes, and in which the water has a separate existence, are dried by their internal heat which, when driven out by the sorrounding cold, evaporates the moisture if the amount of it is small" (p. 317). Finally, "[d]rying [...] is always due to heat or cold, heat internal or external always being the active cause and evaporating the moisture. By external heat I mean, for example, what happens in boiling, by internal what happens when the moisture is removed and consumed by the action of the thing's own heat as it leaves it" (p. 319).

47 Coriolanus in his carbuncle armour recalls one of Marlowe's "angels in their crystal armours". Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, ed. by J. S. Cunningham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), Part I, 5.1.155.

48 Plutarch, 'The Life of Caius Martius Coriolanus', trans. by Thomas North [1579], in William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. by Philip Brockbank, Appendix, pp. 313 – 68 (p. 315).

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stones – such as diamonds or carbuncles – were at the top of the classification of minerals and possessed the quality of their class to the maximum degree.[49]

Together with his new name, the hero acquires, therefore, the characteristics of a 'fossil' – a word that in the sixteenth century referred to any object 'dug up' from the earth[50] – and specifically of a gem-stone, the carbuncle, that was classified according to its hardeness and dryness, and that – like all the other bodies of its class – mellowed very slowly, and was fire resistant.

These characteristics perfectly fit Coriolanus. Just as the carbuncle cannot be changed by external agents, so the hero is not to be changed by the actions of commoners around him. As Aufidius notices, "his nature is no changeling"(4.7.10 – 11), and, later, when commenting on his refusal to grant audience to Menenius, he confirms his view: "You keep a constant temper" (5.2.92).

The other side of the 'constancy coin', however, is an incapacity to be 'moved' by the people's authentic needs, and first of all by their hunger, a fault that will seal Coriolanus's political ineptitude and his complete inadequacy in responding to the new course of the Roman Republic, where the opinion of the 'rabble' and of its representatives, the tribunes, has to be taken into account if one wants to survive – at least, politically. In *Coriolanus*, where the metaphor of 'feeding' plays a crucial role,[51] the 'inorganic' nature of the hero's body is the sign of his having always been "destined to remain […] inedible food for the hungry mouths of the Roman plebeians: an agency not of harmony, but of disharmony".[52]

49 Eustace Mandeville W. Tillyard, *The English Renaissance: Fact or Fiction?* (London: Hogarth Press, 1952), particularly Chapter III.

50 The all-inclusiveness of the word 'fossil' reveals a fundamental problem in early mineralogy, namely that of finding a new method for the classification of minerals. George Bauer, known as Agricola, who is considered to be the father of modern mineralogy, was the first to reject in his book *De natura fossilium* (*On the Nature of Fossils*, 1546) the arbitrary alphabetic listing of 'fossils' which had been usual in medieval compilations known as *lapidaria*, the lists of stones classified by "size, color weight, heraldic significance, medicinal use, and symbolic function". He started, instead, to group them together by their physical properties, trying to modernize Aristotle's theory of the four elements and the medieval theories of mineral formation he could find in Avicenna and Albertus Magnus. The result was the organization of minerals in four classes: 'metals', 'congealed juices' (salts/sulfurs), 'stones', and 'earths' that he distinguished on the basis of their reactions to fire and water. This classification lasted well into the eighteenth century and formed the 'common sense' of mineralogy. Laudan, *From Mineralogy to Geology*, p. 22 f.

51 See Janet Adelman, '"Anger's My Meat": Feeding, Dependency, and Aggression in *Coriolanus*', in *Representing Shakespeare. New Psychoanalitic Essays*, ed by M. M. Schwartz (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 129 – 49.

52 See Maria Del Sapio Garbero, '"A goodly house": Memory and Hosting in *Coriolanus*', in *Shakespeare in Europe: History and Memory*, ed. by Marta Gibinska and Agnieszka Romanowska (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2008), pp. 225 – 38 (p. 229).

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Coriolanus's constancy, on the other hand, is already presented as a 'controversial quality' in Plutarch's *Life*,[53] where we read:

> men marvell[ed] at his constancy that he was never overcome with pleasure nor money, and howe he would endure easily all manner of pains and travailles […] But for all that, they could not be acquainted with him, as one cittizen useth to be with another in the cittie. His behaviour was unpleasant to them by reason of a certain insolent and sterne manner he had, which bicause it was too lordly, was disliked.[54]

In the play the tribunes stir the populace on the basis of "[Coriolanus's] soaring insolence" (2.1.252), and Sicinius adds that his "insolence" will be precisely the "fire to kindle [the people's] dry stubble; and their blaze / Shall darken him for ever" (2.1.255–57).

'Fire' reverberates with meaning in the context of the mineral metaphor: as Pliny reminds us in Book XXXVII of his *Naturalis Historia* – in which he deals with precious stones – the 'carbuncle' holds "the first rank" among "fiery red gemstones" ("ardentium gemmarum") and it is "so-called because of [its] fiery appearance" ("a similitudine ign[is] appellat[us]").[55] Being a gem-stone, on the other hand, the 'curbuncle' rightly belongs to "substances" that, as we read above in Seneca's *De constantia sapientis*, "cannot be consumed by fire, but, though encompassed by flame, retain their hardness and their shape". However, if fire cannot change the shape of gem-stones, it can certainly darken their transparency.

Fire and water were actually used in proto-chemistry to experiment with changes in the status of matter and there are many references to these two 'aristotelian' elements in the play, since Coriolanus's adversaries seem to be looking for a 'chemical' formula to destroy him.[56]

Solidification could, according to Aristotle, be reversed through a process of "liquefaction", or "the melting of a solid". The two processes were closely interrelated:

53 For Shakespeare's use of the classical sources in this play see Claudia Corti, 'Coriolanus', in *Nel laboratorio di Shakespeare* (4 vols), iv, *I drammi romani*, ed. by Alessandro Serpieri, Keir Elam and Claudia Corti (Parma: Pratiche Editrice, 1988), pp. 251–342.

54 Plutarch, 'The Life of Caius Martius Coriolanus', trans. by Thomas North [1579], p. 314.

55 Pliny, *Natural History*, ed. and trans. by D. E. Eichholz, The Loeb Classical Library, 10 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinmann, 1962), x, p. 238–39.

56 Notice that from the beginning of the earth sciences, earthquakes and mineral formation were studied one in relation to the other: "Since heat and water are the major agents of geological change, this established a continuum between the investigation of minerals in the cabinet or laboratory and the understanding of the processes of change on the face of the earth. Mineralogists quickly applied refinements and discoveries in the former to new theories about the latter". Laudan, *From Mineralogy to Geology*, p. 27.

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So of things which solidify owing to hot or cold, those that dissolve are dissolved by the opposite property: for those that solidify owing to dry heat are dissolved by water, that is by moist cold.[57]

It is Coriolanus's mother who possesses the formula to melt her son's firmness, she who "framed" Coriolanus as her "warrior" (5.3.62 – 3), knows how to undo the frame. Volumnia will 'soften' her son's rocky constancy by employing a 'liquid agent'. She certainly "is not a nourishing mother", to put it in Janet Adelman's words, for she cannot produce "the milk of human kindness",[58] but she is capable, instead, of distilling in the laboratory of her body a liquid that, like a powerful acid, triggers a reaction in her son's body: tears.

In scene 2 of Act 5, Coriolanus is still "the rock […] not to be wind-shaken", as the Volscian Second watch admiringly defines him for his inflexible behaviour towards Menenius, whom he even used to call father in Rome (5.1.3). But something radically changes in the following scene, when his mother begs him to save Rome from devastation. As soon as she arrives in his presence, she bows, and in Coriolanus's imagination it is "[a]s if Olympus to a molehill should / In supplication nod". The earth has started moving again, and the "cornerstone" of the Capitol, Coriolanus (5.4.1), is destined to fall; in the presence of his crying mother, he even declares: "I melt, and am not of stronger earth than others" (5.3.28).

In the majestic scene of Volumnia's petition for Rome we can hardly imagine her crying, 'queenly' as she is, even though she tells her son, "thy sight, which should / Make our eyes flow with joy […] / Constrains them weep" (5.3.98 – 100). But Aufidius reports to the "Lords of the City" (5.4.s.d.), that it was for "his nurse's tears" that Coriolanus has turned his back on them: "He has betray'd your business, and given up, / for certain drops of salt, your city Rome" (5.6.92 – 3).

Volumnia's tears are, in Aufidius's carefully chosen words, "drops of salt". It does not seem superfluous to remember that the word 'salt' had entered the repertory of the sixteenth century alchemists with the discovery of the most spectacular salt derivatives, the mineral acids, with which alchemists, in the privacy of their cabinets, could distil aggressive 'vitriol waters'.[59]

Aufidius can indeed be compared to an alchemist, when he silently watches the scene of Volumnia's petition, observing with his expert eye the chemical reaction of Coriolanus's body to his mother's vitriolic tears. In telling the Volscian Lords what happened, Aufidius sounds like one who is reporting the

57 Aristotle, *Meteorologica* , p. 319.
58 Adelman, '"Anger's My Meat"', p. 130.
59 Robert Multhauf, "The Beginning of Mineralogical Chemistry", *Isis*, 1 (1958), 50 – 3.

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results of an experiment. He limits himself to communicating the "liquefaction" of the hero's gem-stone protection and the final separation of Coriolanus from Martius (5.6.87 – 90).

No longer 'identical' to his invulnerable 'armour', Martius's seems almost to 'dissolve': he becomes an easy target for the "conspirators" who cluster around him, hiding his body from the audience's view: "*[t]he conspirators draw, and kill Martius, who falls*" (5.6.s.d.). His death is bathetic.

If the dead body of Caesar – who had shared the fate of being assaulted and killed by an overwhelming number of conspirators – is turned by Antony's rhetoric in the public market-place into a "bleeding piece of earth" – an image of fertility and life capable of nourishing the hopes and imagination of the Roman people – Martius's gem-like dryness makes his corpse a sterile object. Even in death, he stands outside of the great circle of life, destined to remain "inedible food"[60] for his own people and for posterity, a stone icon of precious – but tragically useless – old-fashioned stoic heroism.

60 Del Sapio Garbero, '"A goodly house", p. 229.

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Gilberto Sacerdoti

Spontaneous Generation and New Astronomy in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

Cleopatra's Egypt is a wondrous land. We might say, indeed, that it is *literally* so, since the very slime or mud of that land seems to have something wondrous about it. Not only do we know, from Antony, that there is a "fire that quicken's Nilus' slime" (1.3.68 – 9), but in the seventh scene of the second act we read of "strange serpents" and "crocodiles" that are "bred" out of the Egyptian "mud" by the "operation" of the Egyptian "sun" (2.7.24 – 7). In other words, in Egypt – whose Queen, by the way, is herself a "serpent of old Nile" (1.5.25) – crocodiles and serpents have the custom of being born by 'abiogenesis', or 'equivocal generation', or 'spontaneous generation' – a "doctrine", writes Case, which "was current in Shakespeare's day", and according to which "living matter can be produced from matter without life".[1]

But are we so sure that Egyptian matter is really without life? Madeleine Doran, in her essay 'On Elizabethan "Credulity"', writes that yes, the theory that certain animals were bred in such a way was fairly common at the time, and "it had ordinarily no more colouring of the marvelous about it than any other little understood operation of nature" – and yet in this case, she writes, the properties of the Egyptian mud communicate a "note of wonder at a strange thing in a strange land".[2]

As a matter of fact, the doctrine of spontaneous generation has quite illustrious fathers. We first find it in Anaximander, where life arises from mud when exposed to sunlight. We then find it in a mythical form in Plato's *Politicus,* where animals and men sprout from the earth after the cataclysms that mark the end of each cycle of life, and in a scientific form in Aristotle's treatises *De Generatione Animalium* and *De Corruptione et Generatione*, in Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, which follows the doctrine of Epicurus, and in Avicenna's *De diluviis.* And in the

1 I follow the Arden edition, ed. by Maurice R. Ridley (London: Methuen, 1974). Ridley's edition reprints many notes from the previous Arden edition, ed. by R. H. Case ([n.p.]: Methuen, 1920).

2 Madeleine Doran, 'On Elizabethan "Credulity"', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1 (1940), 151 – 76 (p. 172).

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sixteenth century we find it in such eminently impious thinkers as Pomponazzi, Cardano, Vanini and Giordano Bruno. Though "current in Shakespeare's day", according to Case, the occurences of such a doctrine in contemporary thought are far from being good examples of "credulity".

In 1592, for instance, the Venetian Inquisitors asked Giordano Bruno: "Have you ever held that men can be born by corruption as other animals, and that this happened after the Flood?" Bruno answered that that was "Lucretius's opinion", that he had heard about it, but never held it as his own.[3] He was lying, for while in England, he had several times made use of the theory of spontaneous generation, and certainly not in a 'credulous' context. In his *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante*, published in London in 1584, for instance, he writes that men can be born directly from "the motherly womb of nature", exactly as certain other animals are. According to Bruno, this is actually what happened both in the Old World after the Flood, and in the New World: for how else was it possible to explain that in America, at the moment of its discovery, there were both animals and men, though the continent was separated from the rest of the world? If life had been created directly by God in the Middle East once and for all, as it is written in the Bible, then men and animals should have been transported to America within the belly of some amenable whale, or by a ferry service operated by "ships existing before the invention of the first ship".[4] In other words, the theory of spontaneous generation offers a 'naturalistic' or 'materialistic' explanation of the origins of *all* life which reduces the Biblical account to a ridiculous fable, and is as disruptive of Biblical creationism as Darwin's theory will be three centuries later.

The same theory is to be found in *De l'infinito, universo e mondi*, published in London in the same year. For, by the "operation of the efficient sun", writes Bruno, the "mass" of matter can produce "innumerable forms" of life by the mere "force and virtue of nature".[5] And this happens in all the innumerable worlds of Bruno's new infinite universe, which is everywhere full of life without a Biblical God having to intervene infinite times in an infinite number of worlds in order to produce the infinite variety of universal life. And again, in Bruno's long Lucretian poem, the *De immenso*, published in Frankfurt in 1591, both serpents and men are born out of an animated matter manifestly 'quickened' by a life-giving fire.[6]

Such, then, is the context of spontaneous generation in Bruno: matter, for him, is *not* without life, and the interior animation that makes it produce the innumerable forms of life is also the force and virtue thanks to which all the

3 See Luigi Firpo, *Il processo di Giordano Bruno* (Roma: Salerno, 1993), p. 187, p. 285.
4 See Giordano Bruno, *Dialoghi italiani*, ed. by Giovanni Aquilecchia (Firenze: Sansoni, 1958), p. 797.
5 See Bruno, *Dialoghi italiani*, p. 534.
6 See Giordano Bruno, *Opere Latine*, ed. Carlo Monti (Torino: UTET, 1980), p. 584.

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infinite worlds of his infinite universe (earth included, of course) move in infinite space. The source of universal life and the source of universal motion are one and the same immanent force. But what about the context in which our "strange serpents" and "crocodiles" are bred of the Egyptian mud by the operation of the Egyptian sun?

The seventh scene of the second act is very peculiar: it is the only one which takes place on board a ship, and it is, properly speaking, a masque, since it ends with an "Egyptian Bacchanal" (2.7.103) in which all take hands and dance in a ring while singing a Hymn to Bacchus "as loud as their strong sides can volley" (2.7.110). The scene is, then, both an operatic interlude, and a play-within-the-play. But it is also more than a little absurd: what takes place on board Pompey's ship should be the proper celebration of an all-important political treaty between the triumvirs and Pompey – yet, what they actually do is drink copiously, listening to Antony's tales of the marvels of Egypt, and then sing and dance as so many Sileni in a Bacchanal. Caesar himself declares in the end that "our graver business frowns at this levity", and that this "wild disguise hath almost Antick'd us all" (2.7.121–23). But then the Silenic style is a well known Renaissance technique for hiding something serious under a veil of grotesque or antic levity, and this "wild disguise" might well be disguising some "graver business". Since the beginnings of Shakespeare's plays do often hint at their gravest themes, let us take a look at how this play-within-the-play begins.

The scene opens with some servants who, while bringing the wine for the banquet, talk about Lepidus, a rather ridiculous and inept character, who, though a triumvir, is not to be compared with the other two. His situation is thus described by the first servant:

> To be called into a huge sphere, and not to be seen to move in't, are the holes where eyes should be, which pitifully disaster the cheeks. (2.7.14–16)

The rough meaning is clear enough: Lepidus, who is called to act in the huge sphere of world politics along with the other triumvirs, and yet is not seen to move in it, is a pitiful disaster. And yet it is not so clear what are, precisely, "the holes where eyes should be", nor whose "cheeks" are pitifully "disastered" by his not being seen to move in a "huge sphere".

What is clear enough is that the servant is making use of a metaphor, in which Lepidus, the huge sphere of politics and his not being seen to move in it are compared to something else. That the metaphor is of an astronomical kind is also rather clear, and it has been duly recognized as such by both Dover Wilson in the Cambridge and Case in the Arden editions. But while Dover Wilson is

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content to write simply: "Metaphor taken from the old astronomy",[7] Case tries to explain how it actually works.

> *Spheres* has been regarded as an allusion to the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, and the hollow concentric spheres, each of the first seven with its planet, with which that system surrounds the earth. The servant's elliptical speech seems to compare (1) such spheres, supposing their planets were *unseen*, to disfiguring eyeless sockets; (2) great positions in life, meanly tenanted, to spheres in such a case; and, finally, Lepidus, the man of no account, to the hypothetically non-luminous planets.

Case's explanation presents quite a number of serious setbacks. The first is that the servant does not speak of "*spheres*" in the plural, as Case mistakenly writes in his note, but only of *one* "huge sphere" in the singular. And *helas*, how many and momentous consequences are implied in the presence or absence of that "s"! For the abolition of the Ptolemaic *spheres*, and their substitution with *one* huge and indeed infinite sphere is the main characteristic of Bruno's new universe, and after him of the whole modern cosmology. In fact, what Bruno does, basically, is to pick up the new earth of Copernicus, while at the same time setting it in an infinite space where all limits have been abolished. In the *De immenso* he even apostrophizes the shadow of the great astronomer, inviting him to dismantle that sphere of the fixed stars which in Copernicus's finite universe still prevented the "sacred breast" of "divine nature" from infinitely expanding itself without bourn in the "wide All". Yes, thanks to Copernicus's "venerable mind" that old, immobile earth which in the old cosmology was the lowest and vilest object of the cosmos had indeed become a planet (and therefore a star) as noble (and as mobile) as all the other stars. But this wonderful discovery runs the risk of "amounting to nothing", writes Bruno, because Copernicus had not proceeded to abolish that last constraining bourn that in his finite heaven still does not allow the "sacred breast" of nature to swell *ad infinitum* in an infinite space.[8] Bruno's universe is then *one* infinite sphere – a "Sphaera cuius centrum est ubique et circonferentia nusquam", according to the Hermetic (and therefore Egyptian) image which Bruno quotes in *De la causa*, printed in London in 1584.[9]

Having founded his explanation on the false premise of a multiplicity of *spheres*, Case proceeds to pitifully 'disaster' the poor servant's astronomical metaphor. For, according to him, Lepidus, who is not seen to move in the huge sphere of world politics, is not being compared to the one and only thing which

7 *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. by John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).

8 See Bruno, *Opere latine*, p. 573.

9 Bruno, *Dialoghi italiani,* p. 321.

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in the old astronomy was not seen to move for the good reason that (like Lepidus) it did not move *de facto.* According to Case he is, rather, being compared to the seven "hypothetically non-luminous planets" – i. e. to seven different objects, which of course, being planets, *do* move, but are not seen to move because they are "hypothetically non-luminous", and therefore "unseen". But such a situation, in which we must suppose *ad hoc* that each and all of the seven planets are not seen to move because they are "hypothetically non-luminous" is an impossible and absurd astronomical conjuncture both in the old and in the new astronomy. Indeed it would be admissible only in that famous Hegelian night in which "all cows are black" – which in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* is a metaphor for the very naïveté of emptiness of knowledge.

For all its absurdity, though, Case's explanation is simply the inevitable result of his sharing the common assumption that Shakespeare, in his artistic naïveté, had no knowledge at all of the new cosmology. But once we have the courage not to take that assumption for granted, the servant's metaphor is clear enough. Lepidus, who is not seen to move in the huge sphere of world politics (as the other 'stars' of world politics do), is being compared to the one and only thing that in the huge sphere of the old cosmos was not seen to move because (like Lepidus) it did *not* move – i. e., the earth. But from the point of view of the new astronomy, where the earth *is* a star, and therefore moves, to presume that the earth is motionless is tantamount to disfiguring the face of the universe. From this new point of view, the old astronomy literally *dis-asters* the cheeks of the universe, for it takes off one of its legitimate stars, leaving a pitiful hole where there should be an eye.

Examples of such a point of view were readily available in Shakespeare's England. Given that all the "innumerable stars" *do* move, writes for instance Bruno in his *Cena delle ceneri* (published in London in 1584), there is "no reason at all" for presuming that the earth, "which we cannot prove to be different from any other star which shines in the firmament" should be motionless. Why should precisely the earth, which is teeming with life, be the "only heavy and cold body" of the whole cosmos? Why should it be the one and only corpse in an universe where all celestial bodies move because they are all animated and alive?[10] In fact Bruno looked at Copernicus's new mobile earth from an animistic, Hermetic and therefore 'Egyptian' point of view, and for some valid reasons.

In *Corpus Hermeticum* XII we read that "the energy of life" is nothing but "movement", and that "in the world" there is "nothing" which is "immobile". As for the earth itself, though it "seems to be immobile", on the contrary, it is "subject to a multitude of movements". For, says Hermes, "would it not be ridiculous to suppose that this nurse of all beings should be immobile, she who

10 Bruno, *Dialoghi italiani,* p. 162.

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causes to be born and gives birth to all things?"[11] This same Hermetic passage had been quoted in Cornelius Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia*, in his chapters on the world soul and on universal animation. It is absurd, he says, that what gives life should be lifeless, "and since everything which moves is alive, even the earth, through the movement of generation and alteration, it too is alive".[12] No wonder then that in Bruno's *Cena*, the earth, which is "our perpetual nurse and mother" is herself alive, and "it moves that it may renew itself"; for "the interior principle in things is the cause of their movement […] Therefore the earth and the heavenly bodies move in accordance with individual differences in their intrinsic principle."[13]

In this 'Egyptian' and animistic context, then, the movement of the earth and its capacity to give birth to all things (crocodiles and strange serpents included) are two aspects of the same thing. For the earth has within itself an energy of life, an intrinsic principle, a soul, which is the immanent cause of both its movement and its generative powers. Once the old astronomy is abandoned, then, not only does the servant's astronomical metaphor easily make sense, but it becomes an excellent introduction to the strange breeding faculties of the Egyptian mud. Of course, between Lepidus, who (like the old earth) is not *seen* to move because he *does not* move, and the new earth, which is not seen to move "and yet it moves", as someone famously said, there is quite a difference. But I am delighted to say that nothing could illustrate it better than the "Egyptian Bacchanals" that follow, for precisely that something that at the beginning of the scene is not seen to move though it actually moves, is seen in the end to be moving. And here is how.

Once the great men have exhaustively talked about crocodiles and serpents, and once they have "washed their brain" (2.7.97) with a sufficient amount of a certain "conquering wine" (2.7.105), Enobarbus, who has previously said that "truth should be silent" (2.2.108), organizes and choreographs an "Egyptian Bacchanal" in which all must "take hands" and dance in a ring to the accompaniment of a "loud music", while at the same time chanting at the top of their voices the refrain of a song sung by a boy singer. Here are his instructions in full:

> All take hands.
> Make battery to our ears with the loud music;
> The while I'll place you; then the boy shall sing,
> The holding every man shall bear as loud
> As his strong sides can volley. (2.7.107 – 11)

11 Quoted in Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 242.
12 Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia*, II, 56; quoted in Yates, p. 243.
13 See Bruno, *Dialoghi italiani*, p. 109, pp. 154 – 56.

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Both "battery" and "volley" are terms taken from artillery, and here are the song and the refrain which are then shot and discharged into our ears. The song of the boy singer is:

> Come, thou monarch of the vine,
> Plumpy Bacchus, with pink eyne!
> In thy fats our cares be drown'd,
> With thy grapes our hairs be crown'd. (2.7.111 – 14)

And the refrain chanted by all as loud as their strong sides can volley is:

> Cup us, till the world go round,
> Cup us, till the world go round! (2.7.115 – 16)

Since its first word is "Come", the song is, properly speaking, a prayer entreating a theophany, and both Sternfeld and Noble, two well known specialists of Shakespearean songs, have been able to show that both for its incipit and for its metrical structure this song is an imitation of Rabanus Maurus's *Veni Creator Spiritus*, the famous Christian Hymn which in Pentecostal liturgy entreats and celebrates the descent of the Holy Ghost – "Veni, creátor Spíritus, / mentes tuórum vísita, / imple supérna grátia, / quæ tu creásti péctora." "Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest, / and in our souls take up Thy rest; / come with Thy grace and heavenly aid / to fill the hearts which Thou hast made". Or "Creator Spirit all Divine, / come visit every soul of Thine. / And fill with Thy Celestial Flame / the hearts which Thou Thyself did frame".[14] Now, our problem, with this "Bacchic equivalent of the *Veni creator*", as Noble calls it, is: does the god whose manifestation is here entreated manifest himself, or does he not? Does the prayer work, or does it not?

It all depends on the refrain, or, better, on which of its two possible interpretations we are willing to give. For, what exactly is the meaning of "Cup us till the world go round, Cup us till the world go round!"? Of course, no one can deny that it can mean: "Make us so drunk and giddy that the world is *seen* to go round though in reality the world stands still and what goes round is our head". In this case, of course, the god's visitation, instead of revealing the truth, merely shows a false appearance. A poor theophany indeed, we might say.

But no one can deny that "Cup us till the world go round, Cup us till the world go round!" can also mean: "Make us so drunk and giddy that the world (which seems to stand still, and yet goes round) is *seen* to go round as in reality it does".

14 See Frederick W. Sternfeld, *Music in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 86 – 7; Richmond S. H. Noble, *Shakespeare's Use of Song* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), pp. 127 – 28. For a further discussion, suggesting a different hymn as source of the song, see Peter J. Seng, 'Shakespearean Hymn-Parody?', *Renaissance News*, 18, 1 (Spring 1965), 4 – 6.

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And in this case, of course (*in vino veritas*), not only does the god of wine (who is also the god of mysteries) manifest himself, but thanks to his theophany, that glamorous truth which is normally hidden by sensible appearances is made apprehensible to the senses themselves. For, unless you are drunk and dizzy, of course, the Copernican truth *contradicts* the senses, so that several years later, for instance, Galileo still felt an "admiration without bourn" for its discoverer, and still wondered how it could pass that in Copernicus "reason could make so much violence to the senses that against their testimony it became master of their credulity".[15] But thanks to Dionysos and his "conquering wine", reason and the senses, in these drunken Sileni, are reconciled – and thanks to the violence of the refrain shot and discharged into our shattered ears, as much, indeed, can happen to ourselves.

As for the ingenious equivocation between the spinning of the head and the spinning of the earth, this is not *that* original. In a work published in 1604 (i. e. four years earlier than the registration of this play) George Abbot, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and later Archbishop of Canterbury, remembers that in 1583 an "Italian Didapper, who intituled himself *Philoteus Iordanus Brunus Nolanus*" had visited Oxford, and "to become famous in that celebrious place […] he vndertook […] to set on foote the opinion of Copernicus, that the earth did goe round […]; whereas in truth it was his own head which rather did run round, & his brains did not stand stil".[16]

After four centuries, of course, it is easy to admit that if Bruno's head "did run round", his dizziness was nonetheless more enlightened than the stillness of the Archbishop's brains. But at the beginning of the seventeenth century it was not so easy, or safe, to admit it, for Bruno had charged his Copernican truth with such radical anti-Christian meanings that it actually was a "truth that should be silent", or at least treated as a secret – a truth, that is, to be communicated only in such a disguised way that not everyone would be able to hear it. For, in the one infinite sphere of his new universe there is no place for a transcendent God outside or above nature, but only for a god who in the end is nothing but the soul and energy of life which animates nature from within itself. Since "god, as an absolute, has nothing to do with us", Bruno had no use whatever for the supernatural Christian God, or for the Christian means of communicating with Him. But in his view some older, pre-Christian religions had been wiser: for instance that of the ancient Egyptians of his *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante*, which held that god "communicates himself to the effects of nature, and is more intimate with them than nature itself; so that if he is not nature itself, he certainly is

15 See Eugenio Garin, *Rinascite e rivoluzioni. Movimenti culturali dal XIV al XVIII secolo* (Bari: Laterza, 1975), p. 280.

16 Quoted in Yates, p. 208.

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nature's nature".[17] If Spinoza's formula will be *Deus sive natura*, that of Bruno's Egyptians was, then, *Deus sive natura naturae.*

As we have seen, the mobility of the earth was due, for him, to an energy of life, an intrinsic principle, a soul, which is the immanent cause of both its movement and its generative powers. And if it is true, as the Catholic Encyclopedia writes, that "Bruno was not condemned for his defence of the Copernican system of astronomy […], but for his theological errors", it is also true that among these errors there was the following: "That the Holy Ghost is the soul of the world". But then, since on the one hand the soul of the world is the cause of the earth's 'Copernican' movement, and on the other that immanent soul takes the place of the transcendent Holy Ghost, what could be more appropriate, from this mortally erroneous theological point of view, than celebrating this Copernican revelation with a Bacchic equivalent of that *Veni Creator Spiritus* which in Christian liturgy celebrates the descent of the Holy Ghost?

But if the Song, after all, is an appropriate, if audacious, way of celebrating this revelation of the Copernican revolution, so is the dance. One of Copernicus's acknowledged sources was the doctrine of the Pythagoreans. Indeed, the English translation of his *De Revolutionibus*, first published by Thomas Digges in 1576 (which ran through 7 editions, the last one published in 1605), bore the title: *A Perfit Description of the Caelestiall Orbes according to the most aunciente doctrine of the Pythagoreans, latelye revived by Copernicus.* Now, in his *Life of Numa*, Plutarch recounts some interesting things, which Shakespeare, of course, could not have ignored, given that Plutarch's *Life of Antony* is the source of our play. Numa, writes Plutarch, was "a familiar friend and scholar of Pythagoras the philosopher", who in his turn had been instructed by Egyptian priests, and

> Numa […] built the round temple of the goddess Vesta, in which is kept the everlasting fire: meaning to represent not the form of the earth, […] but the figure of the whole world, in the middest whereof (according to the Pythagoreans opinion) remaineth the proper seat and abiding place of fire, which they call Vesta […]. For they are of opinion, neither that the earth is unmoveable, nor yet that it is set in the middest of the world, neither that the heaven goeth about it: but say to the contrary, that the earth hanged in the air about the fire, as about the centre thereof. Neither will they grant, that the earth is one of the first and chiefest parts of the world: as Plato held opinion in that age, that the earth was in another place than in the very middest, and that the centre of the world, as the most honourable place, did appertain to some other of more worthy substance than the earth.[18]

17 See Bruno, *Dialoghi italiani*, pp. 776–77, p. 783.

18 *Plutarch's Lives Englished by Sir Thomas North*, ed. by William. H. D. Rouse (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1898), i, p. 223, p. 247.

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Since the Pythagoreans, followed by Numa and even by Plato, held that the earth moved around a noble body of fire, Copernicus was indeed reviving their "most aunciente doctrine". But these Pythagoreans, beside building temples which imitate the figure of the universe, had also devised some mysterious, holy and choreographic ways of imitating and celebrating the movement of the earth. For, though "there are may institutions of Numa, the reasons whereof are hidden and kept secret", as for instance when he prescribes "to turn a turn about when they do reverence to the gods", yet, writes Plutarch, "as for the turning which he willeth them to make, that worship the gods: they say it presenteth the turning which the element [i.e. the earth] maketh by his moving".[19]

This is precisely what the drunken Sileni of this Egyptian Bacchanal are doing with the rotatory motion of their dance. And so, that same "truth that should be silent", and that is shouted and shot into our shattered ears with such violence that we run the risk of not hearing it, is also shown unto our dazzled eyes – but then, so contrary to the senses is that hidden truth that it requires a violent assault on at least two of the five.

Such a choreographic device, however, is not such a novelty for an Egyptian Bacchanal which is also a masque, for early modern masques were actually based on ancient Egyptian examples. Sir Roy Strong, in his book on Renaissance festivals, reminds us that the dances performed in masques were "moving geometrical hierogliphs" which "by their movement mirrored the order of an Hermetic Universe"; and he quotes the example of Ménestrier (author of *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du Théâtre*), who writes that "all the dances" of the wise Egyptians (who were Plato's instructors) were actually "hieroglyphs of action" which represented the movement of the celestial bodies.[20]

If *all* the Egyptians' dances were a representation of the movement of the celestial bodies, it is not that surprising, then, that the dance of this Egyptian Bacchanal should represent the movement of that celestial body that only the new astronomy, reviving the most ancient doctrines of the Pythagoreans, recognized as such… But then, that the wise Egyptians could make of their dances so many hieroglyphs and mysteries representing celestial movements or truths

19 *Plutarch's Lives*, p. 254 – 55.

20 Roy C. Strong, *Art and power: Renaissance festivals, 1450 – 1650* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1984), p. 61; see Claude-François Ménestrier, *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du Théâtre* (Paris: R. Guignard, 1682), pp. 35 – 6: "Les Egyptiens qui furent des Sages reglez jusq'aux plus petits choses, firent les premiers de leurs Dances des hierogliphiques d'action, comme ils avoeint des figures pour exprimer leur Mysteres. Platon qui fut leur Disciple & leur admirateur, en put assez louer l'esprit de celuy, qui le premier mit en Concert & en Dance l'Harmonie de l'Univers & tous les mouvements des Astres […] toutes les Dances que faisoient les Egyptiens representoient les mouvements celestes & l'Harmonie de l'Univers".

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that should be silent was still the opinion of none less than Isaac Newton, who right at the beginning of his *System of the World* faithfully repeats Plutarch's news that Numa and the Pythagoreans, together with Plato, thought that the earth moves around the Sun, and that Numa's rotatory liturgy celebrating the rotatory motion of the world was also inherited from the Egyptians. For

> It was the ancient opinion of not a few in the earliest ages of philosophy […] that the Earth, as one of the planets, described an annual course about the Sun, while by a diurnal motion it was in the meantime revolved about its own axe; and that the Sun, as the common fire which served to warm the whole, was fixed in the center of the Universe. This was the philosophy taught of old by Philolaus, Aristarchus, Plato in his riper years and the sect of the Pythagoreans. And this was the judgement of Anaximander, more ancient than any of them, and of that wise king of the Romans, Numa Pompilius; who, as a symbol of the figure of the World with the Sun in the center, erected a temple in honour of Vesta, of a round form, and ordered perpetual fire to be kept in the middle of it. The Egyptians were early observers of the heavens. And from them probably this philosophy was spread abroad among other nations […] And in the vestal ceremonies we may yet trace the ancient spirit of the Egyptians. For it was their way to deliver their mysteries, that is, their philosophy of things above the vulgar way of thinking, under the veil of religious rites and hierogliphick symbols.[21]

So much, then, for the graver business that is wildly disguised under the levity of these Egyptian Bacchanals.

One last remark. That such a grave business as the earth's animation and mobility can be treated in such a silenic and esoteric way in this play-within-the-play can come as a total surprise only if we have not taken adequate note of how this play begins. For the first words uttered by the play's protagonists happen to be:

> CLEOPATRA If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
>
> ANTONY There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.
>
> CLEOPATRA I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd.
>
> ANTONY Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth (1.1.14 – 17)

This seems to be simply a good example of what a Roman soldier said in the first line of the play, i. e. that "this dotage of our general's / O'erflows the measure" (1.1.1 – 2). Yet, the "levity" of this piece of foolish amorous chatting is contradicted by the extreme seriousness of Antony's final quotation from the famous 21st chapter of St. John's *Revelation*, where the apostle declares: "And I saw a new

21 Isaac Newton, *A Treatise of the System of the World* (London: F. Fayram, 1728), pp. 1 – 2.

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heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away". And if we take good note of this apocalyptic quotation we realize with a certain wonder that these four lines do also "disguise" a "graver business" of an astronomical kind, and that, indeed, we can ourselves "find out" how this "new heaven, new earth" is made. More precisely, in these four lines we can find out the new heaven, and in the play-within-the-play the new earth.

These four lines, in fact, are actually a syllogism, and the adverb "then" introducing the last sentence ("then must thou needs find out […]") forces us to draw from the premises the necessary conclusions. Now, if Cleopatra, and we along with her, "must needs find out" a new universe, it is because the old one, having a bourn, is a beggarly universe, and therefore a pitifully unworthy physical proof of Antony's infinite love. Which amounts to saying 1) that the new universe that we "must needs find out" is necessarily infinite, and 2) that the old, finite universe is a pitiful thing.

But of all places London was the strangest for a play beginning with the protagonist stating the necessity of finding out a new infinite universe that overflows *any* measure, for on the one hand, an infinite universe was a very rare item indeed, at the time, and on the other, of all places London was precisely the one and only where it was not too difficult to find it – in print. And so, since the infinity of the universe was, along with the mobility of the earth, the core of all the works that Bruno published in England, it is not *that* surprising, then, that the new infinite heaven that we must needs find out at the very beginning of this Shakespearean play has precisely the same characteristics, and the same radical implications, of Bruno's infinite universe. For,

1) Bruno's new universe, just like the one of our two lovers', is an infinite *field* without any "bourn" whatever. Being *one* infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and the circumference nowhere, infinite nature is *one* infinite space whose physical qualities are everywhere the same, and where God, far from abiding in that metaphysical something which in the old universe was beyond physical space, is *inside* physical nature.[22]

2) Bruno, just as it happens in our four lines, deduces the necessity of discovering a new infinite universe from the principle that an infinite love, in order to be proved and acknowledged as such, must produce some infinite physical effect – if, on the contrary, the effect is measurable, then it is proof of a measurable, and therefore 'beggarly' love. And if a finite universe would be an unworthy proof of Antony's love, how much more unworthy would it be of the infinite love that all Christian theologians attributed to God. A God producing a finite universe is, according to Bruno, either an impotent God, or an idle God, or an "envious" God: a miser who in his stinginess chooses "scarcity" and "ster-

22 See Bruno, *Opere latine*, p. 453.

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ility" rather than communicating his super-abounding infinity to an equally infinite and super-abounding nature.[23]

3) In his *De l'infinito*, Bruno, just like our two lovers, deduces the necessary infinity of the universe through "a couple of syllogisms" which demonstrate that "whoever says that the effect is finite, he also assumes that the divine power is finite", so that whoever holds that the universe is finite (as all Christian theologians did) is demonstrably blasphemous.[24]

And finally, 4) Bruno, just like Antony, identifies the discovery of a new infinite universe with the fulfillment of the prophecy of *Revelation* XXI, thus abolishing not only the old Aristotelian universe that for fifteen centuries had been the architectural framework of the Christian cosmos, but the very Christian idea of Apocalypse as a supernatural Revelation by a supernatural God – because his Apocalypse, just like Antony's, is a Revelation that we must and can "find out" with our own mind by merely washing our brain, and not something that, being revealed by God, we must 'wait for'.

Nonetheless, if finding out a new heaven at the very beginning of this play *is* surprising, in the end, it is not more so than finding out a new earth in our play-within-the-play – or viceversa, as you like it.

23 See Bruno, *Dialoghi italiani*, p. 104, p. 350, pp. 380 – 81, pp. 383 – 84.
24 Bruno, *Dialoghi italiani*, p. 385.

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Nancy Isenberg

Dancing with the Stars in *Antony and Cleopatra*

Maria Del Sapio opens this volume with the statement: "In the Renaissance analogical exchange between the order of the microcosm and that of the macrocosm, the trope of the human body plays a pivotal role" (p. 13). This paper explores that metaphorically vehicular body in a particular state of action – dance – that held a position of enormous importance in Renaissance culture and politics.[1] Taking the Egyptian Bacchanal scene in *Antony and Cleopatra* as its starting point, very much under the influence of Gilberto Sacerdoti's contribution in this volume, and working from the perspective of the staging and choreography of the scene, it will explore the ways Shakespeare's ancient Roman rulers in their drunken reeling, while articulating subversive attitudes towards changing cosmographies (as Sacerdoti convincingly argues) are also defiantly questioning the politics of dancing bodies from a variety of perspectives.

Praised by some, criticized by others, dance was a wide-spread practice in Shakespeare's England that crossed through all social strata from the Royal Court to the village square. Both Queen Elizabeth and her successor James I were fine and enthusiastic dancers, their courts distinguished by the role that pastime played as active and passive entertainment.[2] Social dancing was a popular practice also among town and rural folk, although their dancing was of a different nature, connected with ritual and/or seasonal celebrations.

Shakespeare's stage resonated with the vocabulary and imagery of dancing

1 See Roy C. Strong, *Splendor at Court. Renaissance Spectacle and the Theater of Power* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), p. 140. See also, by the same author, *Art and power: Renaissance festivals, 1450–1650* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1984). Strong's studies are fundamental to the understanding of dance entertainment in the Renaissance as political propaganda, negotiation and even aggression.

2 Further on dancing at the courts of Elizabeth and James, see three studies by Barbara Ravelhofer: 'Dancing at the Court of Queen Elizabeth', in *Queen Elizabeth I: Past and Present* ed. by Christa Jansohn (Münster: LIT, 2004), pp. 101–15; *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume, and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); 'Memorable Movements. Rhetoric and choreography in early modern courtly entertainment', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 22, 1 (1997), 1–18.

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mirroring the keen interest in dance of his times, and he often staged dance as part of the dramatic action, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Winter's Tale*. In the comedies, dancing typically figures harmony and order restored, in the tragedies it tends to signal ironically the opposite. In Shakespeare's later plays, mostly romances, the themes of order and discord are woven together through the verbal and performative discourses of dance. The history plays never call for dancing on the stage, nor do the Roman plays, with the one exception of the Egyptian Bacchanal.[3]

The dancing in *Antony and Cleopatra* is exceptional also in being at odds with all prevailing conventions of dance in early Stuart England, where and when the play was written, and as such, as this paper aims to prove, adds to our understanding of how Shakespeare – quoting again from Del Sapio's Introduction – employs "the extended and expanding geography of Ancient Rome" as a means for "questioning the nature of bodies and the place they hold in a changing order of the world and universe" (p. 17).

The European Renaissance, looking to its cultural origins in the Greek enlightenment, made dance the protagonist of two important creation myths: one myth explained the beginning of the universe as a choreography that tamed chaos into divine harmony. In England, Sir John Davies, in *Orchestra, or A poeme of dauncing* (1596), celebrating Elizabeth I, for example, would recognize in the moment "[w]hen the first seedes whereof the world did spring" the origins of dancing as well ("Dauncing […] then began to be"). In that moment

> The Fire, Ayre, Earth, and water did agree,
> By Loues perswasion, Natures mighty King,
> To leaue their first disordred combating;
> And in a daunce such measure to obserue,
> As all the world their motion should preserue.[4]

The other myth, a reversal in a sense of the cosmogenic one, construes the origins of the human practice of dance as an inspired imitation of the dance of the heavenly spheres. Sir Thomas Elyot was one of the early propagators of this myth in Britain. In *The boke named the Gouernour* (1531), his compendium of advice for aspiring, upward-bound aristocrats that spelled out the rules of elite conduct and instructed on how to shape one's social profile especially through

3 Alan Brissenden's *Shakespeare and the Dance* (Hampshire: Dance Books, 2001; 1st edn Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981) remains the primary authority on the subject of the uses of dance in Shakespeare, and provides the basis for this summary review of the topic. See also, for descriptions of the dances in Shakespeare, Jim Hoskins, *Dances of Shakespeare. A brief guide* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2005).

4 Sir John Davies, *Orchestra or A poeme of dauncing Iudicially proouing the true observation of time and measure, in the authenticall and laudable use of daucing* (London: I. Robarts for N. Ling, 1596), no pagination, stanza 17.

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the shaping and high profiling of one's body, he presented the myth in these terms:

> [t]he interpretours of Plato do thinke, that the wonderful and incomprehensible ordre of the celestiall bodies, I meane sterres and planettes, and theyr motions harmonicall, gaue to them, that intentifly, and by the depe serche of reason beholde their coursys, in the sondry dyuersities of nombre and tyme, a fourme of imitation of a semblable motion: whiche they called daunsynge. Wherfore the more nere they approched to that temperaunce, and subtyle modulation, of the sayd superiour bodyes, the more perfect and commendable is theyr daunsynge: which is mooste lyke to the trouthe of any opinion that I have hitherto founden.[5]

These myths, whose principal classical sources are Plato's *Timaeus* and Lucian's *De Saltatione*,[6] worked within elitist culture to authorize the practice of dance, helping to shape the arguments that presented it as the vehicle through which, thanks to a Pythagorean kinship of numbers and proportions, the harmony of the celestial spheres was reproduced in the human microcosm.[7]

Renaissance conduct manuals, like Elyot's, taking their cue from Italian humanist dance tracts, could thus argue in favour of dance as a nobilitating activity, one that refines the mind, soul and body and brings the dancer in communion with the Heavenly Being. Those early fifteenth century dance tracts, fashioned on the model of humanist philosophical discourse, were written by Italian dance masters who were not only accomplished in their 'measures' (as certain elite dance movements were called), but in mathematics and astronomy as well. The three most influential of these dance masters were Domenico da Piacenza and his pupils Guglielmo Ebreo and Antonio Cornazano.[8] Their works learnedly

5 Sir Thomas Elyot, *The boke named the Gouernour deuysed by syr Thomas Elyot knight* [1531] (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1537), p. 73.

6 See Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. and annot. by Desmond Lee, trans. rev. introd. and further annot. by T. K. Johansen (London and New York: Penguin, 2008); and Luciano, *La danza*, ed. by Simone Beta, trans. by Marina Nordera (Venezia: Marsilio, 1992).

7 See, for example, Françoise Syson Carter, 'Celestial Dance: A Search for Perfection', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 5, 2 (1987), 3 – 17.

8 See Domenico da Piacenza, *De arte saltandj & choreas ducendij De la arte di ballare et danzare,* title from the ms. copy housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS fonds it. 972; Guglielmo Ebreo, *Ghuglielmi ebrei pisauriensis de praticha seu arte tripudi vulghare opusculum feliciter incipit*, title from the ms. copy housed in the New York Public Library, New York, Dance Collection, *MGZMB-Res. 72 – 254 and Guglielmo Ebreo, *De Pratica Seu Arte Tripudii: On the Practice or Art of Dancing,* ed., trans. and introd. by Barbara Sparti (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Antonio Cornazano, *Libro dell'arte del danzare*, title from the ms. copy in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome, Codex Capponiano, 203 and Antonio Cornazano, *The book on the art of dancing*, trans. by Madeleine Inglehearn and Peggy Forsyth, introd. and annot. by Madeleine Inglehearn (London: Dance Books, 1981). See also Otto Kinkledey, *A Jewish Dancing Master of the Renaissance (Guglielmo Ebreo)* (Brooklyn: Dance Horizons, [1966]; 1st edn: New York: [n. pub.], c. 1929).

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explain the kinetic and rhythmic nature of dance in the same Pythagorean and Platonic terms of number and proportion used to describe the cosmos and the movement of the celestial spheres.[9] As Jennifer Nevile explains, "the study and contemplation of numbers was a means for human beings to move beyond the earthly world to knowledge of, and participation in, the divine world".[10] Therefore, elite dance, it could be argued, was a means by which the truth of the cosmos revealed itself and could be comprehended.

Such dancing, as it figured the order, reason and harmony of the heavens, was thought to have an edifying impact not only on the participants but on the viewers as well. And so it was argued – in defense of this favorite pastime of the sovereigns of Europe and their courts, England being no exception – that their dancing served a moral and ethical purpose. For Elyot, for example, dancing was:

> [...] of an excellent vtilitie comprehending in it wonderfull fygures [...] of vertues and noble qualities, and specially of the commodious vertue called prudence, whom Tulli defyneth to be the knowlege of thinges, which ought to be desyred & folowed: and also of them, whiche ought to be fled from or eschewed. And it is named of Aristotel the mother of vertues [...] This vertue beinge so commodious to man, and as it were the porche of the noble palayce of mannes Reason, wherby all other vertues shall entre, [...] I haue deuised, how in the fourme of [...] the hole description of this vertue prudence may be founden out and wel perceyued, as wel by the daunsers, as by them whyche standynge by, wylle be dylygente beholders and markers.[11]

Skiles Howard's *The Politics of Courtly Dancing in Early Modern England* (1998) lays the groundwork for exploring beyond these commonplace that lock elite social dancing into discourses of 'heavenly lineage' and dancing in masques and on the public stage into "a celebration of the transcendent order and perpetual harmony of the firmament". She discusses the ways in which elite dancing evolved "into a means of courtly self-fashioning, an instrument for the acquisition and exercise of social power". Her work brings into perspective the ways in

9 For more on this topic, see Françoise Carter, 'Number Symbolism and Renaissance Choreography', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 10, 1 (1992), 21–39; and A. William Smith, 'Structural and numerical symbolism in fifteenth-century Italian dance', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 19 (1992), 243–59.

10 Jennifer Nevile, *The Eloquent Body, Dance and Humanist Culture in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 106. This volume provides a most thorough and insightful study of the Italian humanist dance treatises with a rich bibliography of other materials written then and in our times.

11 Elyot, pp. 79–80. For an extended discussion of the classical origins of the concept of cosmic harmony, see James Miller, *Measures of Wisdom. The Cosmic Dance in Classical and Christian Antiquity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

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which dancing "reflected and participated in the broad social and political changes of early modern England: the rise of the centralized state, the emergence of the patriarchal family, the polarization of religious factions and the acceleration of exploration and colonization". She explores dancing, "a visual and kinetic discourse by which social norms were circulated", as a site of contestation between countervailing social forces. Her work is a cornerstone of my ongoing research on Shakespeare and dance and has been influential in shaping the way I have come to approach my subject. Although the present study, as it unfolds, will most often specifically refer to other works, Howard's contribution stands visibly in the background.[12]

As Alan Brissenden points out in *Shakespeare and the Dance*, there is a notable rise in the frequency of dance (staged or alluded to) in Shakespeare's work around the middle of the first decade of the seventeenth century. Brissenden associates this increased interest with James's rise to the throne and his patronage of Shakespeare's company. James's love for and indulgence in dancing is well known, especially but not only within the context of court spectacle which as we know is an indicatively extravagant feature of his reign.[13]

King James and his court danced with the stars, and so, as Gilberto Sacerdoti shows us in 'Spontaneous Generation and New Astronomy in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*' in this volume, did the triumvirs – in an Egyptian Bacchanal on Pompey's ship – in Act 2, scene 7 of *Antony and Cleopatra*, written only a few years after Shakespeare's company came under the wing of the new king.[14] But the stars and the dancing that engaged the staged ancient Roman triumvirs seem from certain perspectives to be on a collision course with those of the real early modern English ruler.[15]

12 Skiles Howard, *The Politics of Courtly Dancing in Early Modern England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), pp. 2 – 3 and book jacket front flap. See also Mark Franko, *The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography (c. 1416 – 1589)* (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, 1986); and, more recently, *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politick, 1250 – 1750*, ed. by Jennifer Nevile (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). More in general on the cultural significance of the dancing body, see for example, Judith Lynne Hanna, *To Dance is Human: A Theory of Nonverbal Communication* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); and Helen Thomas, *The Body, Dance and Cultural Theory* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

13 Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance*, p. 17.

14 This scene has inspired at least one other specific study: Susanne L. Wofford, 'Antony's Egyptian Bacchanals. Heroic and Divine Impersonation in Shakespeare's Plutarch and *Antony* and *Cleopatra*', *Poetica: An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies*, 48 (1997), 33 – 67.

15 For studies which deal with Shakespeare and the new cosmology, see for example: Hardin Craig, 'A Cutpurse of the Empire: On Shakespeare Cosmology', in *Tribute to G. C. Taylor*, ed. by Arnold Williams (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), pp. 3 – 16; Henry Janowitz, 'Some Evidence on Shakespeare's Knowledge of the Copernican Revolution and the "New Philosophy"', *Shakespeare Newsletter*, 51, 3, 250 (Fall 2001), 79 – 80; Moriz Sondheim,

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The Egyptian Bacchanal, for all its lofty references to a most revered ancient culture, is by definition boistrous revelry carried out in a state of alcohol-induced intoxication. Its executors manifest drunkenness ("Come, thou monarch of the vine, / Plumpy Bacchus with pink eyne! / In thy vats our cares be drowned; / With thy grapes our hairs be crowned", 2.7.111 – 14), clamorous shouting ("Make battery to our ear with loud music: / […] The holding every man shall beat as loud / As his strong sides can vollery", 2.7.107 – 10), and dancing dizzily out of control ("Cup us till the world go round! / Cup us till the world go round!", 2.7.115 – 16):[16] not exactly a mirror of celestial harmony!

The previously mentioned elegantly elaborated arguments in favor of dancing's nobilitating functions for body, mind and soul were countered in other tracts that passionately contended quite the opposite. "O deceytfull Daunce, it is the mother of all euill, the sister of all carnall pleasures, the father of all pryde" warned, for example, John Northbrooke in *A treatise wherein dicing, dauncing, vaine playes or enterluds* […] *are reproved* (1577). "Dauncing is the vilest vice of all, and truly it cannot easily be sayde what mischiefes the sight, and the hearing do receyue hereby", he further admonished, adamantly condemning dance as "[a]n exercise doubtlesse not descended from heauen, but by the Deuilles of hell deuised".[17] The former texts were the work of self-entitling elitist culture, the latter were the product of a Puritan opposition, partly concerned with moral conduct among common folk and partly appalled by the Italian (i. e., Catholic, and hence, in their view, corrupt as well as lascivious) influence clearly manifest in courtly dance.[18]

'Shakespeare and the Astrology of His Time', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 2, 3 (January 1939), 243 – 59; Peter Usher, 'Shakespeare's Support for the New Astronomy', *The Oxfordian*, 5 (2002), 132 – 43; Kent T. Van den Berg, *Playhouse and cosmos: Shakespearean theater as metaphor* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985). More generally, see for example, Clifford Davidson, 'Renaissance Dramatic Forms, Cosmic Perspective, and Alienation', *Cahiers Ėlisabéthains: Late Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 27 (April, 1985), 1 – 16; Francis R. Johnson, *Astronomical Thought in Renaissance England. A Study of the English Scientific Writings from 1500 to 1645* (New York: Octagon Books, 1968); S. K. Heninger, *Touches of sweet harmony: Pythagorean cosmology and Renaissance poetics* (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1974); Jean Perrin, 'Human Spectacle, Cosmic Spectacle', in *The Show Within: Dramatic and Other Insets. English Renaissance Drama (1550 – 1642)*, ed. by François Laroque (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry – Montpellier III, Centre d'études et de recherches élisabéthaines [1992]), pp. 399 – 416.

16 All quotations from *Antony and Cleopatra* are from the Arden edition ed. by John Wilders (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

17 John Northbrooke, *Spiritus est vicarius Christi in terra. A treatise wherein dicing, dauncing, vaine playes or enterluds with other idle pastimes [et]c. commonly vsed on the Sabboth day, are reproued by the authoritie of the word of God and auntient writers. Made dialoguewise by Iohn Northbrooke minister and preacher of the word of God* (London: [n. pub.], 1577), p. 123 and p. 136.

18 For a more detailed discussion of the subject, see Howard, chapter two: 'Imitating the Stars

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So when Antony and his mates stagger about in their inebriated revolutions, they are hardly elaborating a controlled, contained and elegantly executed choreutic discourse like that which authorized the king's dancing. Their "wild disguise [which] hath almost anticked us all" and whose "levity" is frowed upon by their "graver business" (2.7.124–25 and 120–21) aligns itself rather with Barnaby Rich's view, expressed in the "Epistle Dedicatorie" of his *Farewell to Military Profession* (1581), where he confesses that:

[a] Rounde is too giddie a daunce for my diet, for let the dauncers runne about with as muche speede as thei maie: yet are thei never a whit the nier to the ends of their course, vnlesse with often tourning thei hap to catch a fall. And so thei ende the daunce with shame, that was begonne but in sporte.[19]

And yet, one might argue, we ought to expect those dancing Romans, as figures of ruling power, to be somehow signaling the current ruler of England. Sacerdoti reads their irreverence Silenically, viewing it through this "well known Renaissance tradition for hiding something serious under a veil of grotesque or antic levity" (p. 329) as philosophically cosmological, challenging the concept of an immobile earth. For in their alcohol-induced dizziness Shakespeare's ancient Roman dancers can perceive earth as a rotating planet and not a fixed star, which, through a series of further Silenic references in the dialogue preceding the dancing, is set in an infinitely expanding universe, with no centre or borders. But for those not indoctrinated into Bruneian thinking, and therefore excluded from this reading, the decadent ruckus might be parodying (and no less dangerously, if one thinks of the possible consequences) the much talked about debouching that went on at James's court. Lawrence Stone describes the situation in no uncertain terms:

As a hated Scot, James was suspect to the English from the beginning, and his ungainly presence, mumbling speech and dirty ways did not inspire respect. Reports of his blatantly homosexual attachments and his alcoholic excesses were diligently spread back to a horrified countryside.[20]

Stone in support of his reference to the King's pederasty, offers this quotation from a private letter from James to the Duke of Buckingham:

Celestial: Rival Discourses of Dancing in Early Modern England', pp. 46–68. See also Mary Pennino-Baskerville, 'Terpsichore Reviled: Antidance Tracts in Elizabethan England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 22, 3 (1991), 475–93.

19 Quoted in Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance*, pp. 9–10.

20 Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution: 1529–1642* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 89.

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For God so love me, as I desire only to live in this world for your sake, and that I had rather live banished in any part of the earth with you than live a sorrowful widow's life without you. And so God bless you, my sweet child and wife, and grant that you may ever be a comfort to your dead dad and husband.[21]

In its bold ridicule of political and personal respectability, the dancing performed on Pompey's ship aligns itself in many ways with what goes on in antimasque, the subgenre of court spectacle that was coming into fashion in those same years in which Shakespeare's play was written. Given that the masque had the function of displaying and authorizing elite power, the antimasque is considered to be a brief parentheses of misrule, disorder, discord, chaos, or some such – "a site of contestation and potential subversion", as David Bevington and Peter Holbrook synthetically describe it in their introduction to *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*[22] – whose ultimate function was to provide the pretext that then allowed for a reaffirmative return to rule, order, concord, harmony in a closing masque dance.

It is not a coincidence that this new development in court spectacle arose around the time of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, possibly the very year in which Shakespeare was writing *Antony and Cleopatra.* And just as the (failed) conspiracy to assassinate the king and most of the ruling aristocracy by blowing up the House of Parliament signals a weakened monarchical authority and the building crisis of aristocratic authority in general, so perhaps analogically does the Egyptian Bacchanal, as it corrupts the trope of the elite dancer on Shakespeare's stage. But whereas the threat to order represented by the antimasque is then contained by the harmonious executions of the concluding masque choreographies, thus reauthorizing aristocratic political entitlement, the dancing in *Antony and Cleopatra* ends with one triumvir passed out and the other two requiring assistance to be escorted off the ship.

The conspiratorial link just identified between this scene and real world

21 Quoted in Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution*, p. 89, with no specific bibliographic reference.

22 David Bevington and Peter Holbrook, 'Introduction', in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. by David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 12 (discussing Hugh Craig's article, 'Jonson, the antimasque and the "rules of flattery"', pp. 176–96). Further on performance, dance and entertainment under the reign of James I, see for example, Alan Brissenden, 'Jacobean Tragedy and the Dance', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 44, 4 (Autumn, 1981), 249–62; Anne Daye, '"Youthful Revels, Masks, and Courtly Sights": an introductory study of the revels within the Stuart masque', *Historical Dance*, 3, 4 (1996), 5–22; Frederick Kiefer, 'The dance of the madmen in *The Duchess of Malfi*', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 17, 2 (1987), 211–33; Russell West, *Spatial representations and the Jacobean stage: from Shakespeare to Webster* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002).

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politics in Shakespeare's times finds further support in the dialogue between Menas and Pompey that precedes the bacchanal revelry:

> MENAS [...]
> Thou art, if thou darest be, the earthly Jove:
> Whate'er the ocean pales, or sky inclips,
> Is thine, if thou wilt ha't.
>
> POMPEY Show me which way.
>
> MENAS These three world-sharers, these competitors,
> Are in thy vessel. Let me cut the cable,
> And when we are put off, fall to their throats.
> All there is thine. (2.7.67 – 74)

Whether or not we choose to read this scheming dialogue as specifically referencing the Gun Powder Plot, in any case, as an antifact to the dancing, it certainly casts a hue of deceitfulness on it, and by extension, as I see it, on the state of Jacobean politics in general.

According to Sacerdoti, the dancing is purposely intended to be deceitful, aiming to induce a state of spinning vertigo that will allow the dancers to mistakenly perceive the world going round (which it does, but which they cannot perceive without the deception of their tipsy twirling) (p. 333). The choreography ("All take hands" 2.7.109) calls for a circle dance: the most ancient and most sacred perhaps of all choreutic shapes traceable to virtually all primitive societies. It is a powerful signifier of bonding, because all participants share equally, through continual and evenly distributed exchange of place, the same space, rhythm, pace and perspective and through the erasure of spatial beginning and end. The dancers on Pompey's ship are deceived/deceiving in their circle dance, where they are not at all bonded but only appear to be. Might this not in fact be mirroring the shaky harmony among the ruling forces in Britain: the Houses of Lords and Commons and the monarchy at the beginning of the seventeenth century?

Circle dances are not infrequently trance-inducing, and the trances they induce are supposed to have the power to reveal some sacred Truth. In this respect, there is coherence here in the choreography of the bacchanal dancing, in Sacerdoti's reading. But even when circle dances do not reach that level of influence on the participants' minds, the sense of bonding is irresistibly strong. So strong that over time they have preserved their magical connotations, and in societies where magic is believed to be the work of the devil, they typically connote the work of witches – like the weird sisters' circling three times thrice, hand in hand in Act 1 of *Macbeth,* written only a year or two perhaps before *Antony and Cleopatra.*

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> The Weïrd Sisters, hand in hand,
> Posters of the sea and land,
> Thus do go, about, about,
> Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
> And thrice again, to make up nine.
> Peace, the charm's wound up. (1.3.32 – 7)[23]

As Brissenden points out, the function of their dancing in this scene is "to foster deceit and destruction".[24] The temporal proximity of *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra* makes one wonder whether there might be a nod and a wink towards the weird sisters' dancing in the Egyptian Bacchanal scene. Such an intertextual association might be read as a disguised discourse of contempt for contemporary political authority in so far as the triumvirs can be seen as figuring that authority, or as a cover-up for the true meaning of the Romans' dancing (as Sacerdoti describes it), aimed at deceiving any suspicious 'outsiders' in the audience into seeing cosmological pretenses for the triumvir's round as nothing more than witchcraft and blasphemy.

Further on the theme of deceit, why does the scene take place on a ship? Why not on land? In an enclosed space? A political reading aligns the vessel – self-contained and surrounded by water – with England, thus framing the reading of political corruption and decadence geographically. A cosmological one focuses on the water rather than the vessel: "false […] as waters" says Leontes,[25] echoing Othello's "as false as water".[26] In the scene preceding the bacchanal dancing, Pompey welcomes Antony, Caesar and Lepidus aboard his ship, which gesture of cooperation Menas immediately criticizes in an aside to Pompey ("Thy father, Pompey, would ne'ev have made this treaty", 2.6.83 – 4). Then follows an extended exchange between Menas and Enobarbus, in the first thirteen lines of which there occur two mentions of 'sea' and two of 'water' counterpointed by four references to 'land', and followed by a remark about women's deceitfulness ("Enobarbus: But there is never a fair woman has a true face", 2.6.101 – 102). This remark metonymically colours the water references with the same proverbial, female engendered deceitfulness we found in the water references in *Winter's Tale* (referred to women in general) and *Othello* (referred specifically to Desdemona), which analogy – water/deceitfulness/nature of women – lends

23 Line quoted from the Oxford Shakespeare edition of *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, ed. by Nicholas Brooke (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

24 Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance*, p. 66.

25 Lines quoted from the Cambridge edition of *The Winter's Tale,* ed. by Susan Snyder and Deborah T. Curren-Aquino (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.2.130 – 31.

26 Line quoted from the Oxford Shakespeare edition of *Othello*, ed. by Michael Neill (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.2.133.

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itself to reinforcing and engendering the theme of deceitfulness we have already identified in the dancing scene which follows. Since the Romans about to become dancers will hardly be exhibiting the "soldierly, severe, self-controlled, self-disciplined" behaviour that defined Roman *virtus*,[27] the locale on board the ship and the circumscribing references to water would seem also to serve to subvert those Roman values from a gender perspective.

Subversion is identifiable even in the actors' stage presence, where as the executers of the choreography they are provocatively in contradiction with current convention: in the roles of rulers, political authorities or even simply members of social elite, actors are typically assigned courtly dances, stately, elegant, and composed in their movement to figure in the ordered, controlled quality of the choreography both the self-contained aristocratic body and patriarchal rule. It is the common folk, like the artisans in *Midsummer Night's Dream* for example, who leap about dancing themselves into a sweat. The "battery to our ears with the loud music" and the "holding" to the boy's singing that "every man shall beat as loud / As his strong sides can volley" (2.7.109 – 12) clearly indicate a letting go of all self-containment and self-control, thus mocking even in the choreographic assignment not only the trope of Roman *virtus*, but also what was considered acceptable conduct for a ruler, and most likely for James himself, whose reputation as a decadent lush, as already discussed, was not helping to shape his figure of authority among his subjects. Nor were the rumours of his homosexual practices, which return to mind when we consider the above mentioned engendered undertones of the watery locale.

A ship on water was a common coastal sight in early seventeenth century England. The English had already claimed new territories in Newfoundland in 1583, and Roanoke, along the coast of North America, took in its first settlers two years later. The English East India Company had been in place since 1600, enjoying a trade monopoly with Asia, Africa and America, and 1607 – a year or so after the writing of *Antony and Cleopatra* – Jamestown, Virginia would be established. That *Antony and Cleopatra* provided the means to explore questions of expansionism, empire and encounters with otherness, and that Shakespeare's Roman plays signalled a privileged historical connection between early modern England and the ancient *caput mundi* is well known. Maria Del Sapio's recent volume *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome* for example, containing contributions by several of the authors in this volume, addresses

27 G.K. Hunter, 'A Roman Thought: Renaissance Attitudes to History Exemplified in Shakespeare and Jonson', in *An English Miscellany: Presented to W. S. Mackie*, ed. by Brian S. Lee (Cape Town and London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 94, quoted in Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 13.

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precisely these points.[28] Thus it seems that a scene aboard a ship might in some way be connected with British expansionism, or that it would at least bring the question to the fore in the audience's mind. The men are gathered to celebrate a newly agreed alliance, one that is not altogether convincing however. In truth, there are no two men in the group who are truly and unwaveringly loyal to one another, as the play's narrative will confirm as it continues to unfold. This new pact among them is something like the continually shifting trade agreements among expanding nations at the time the play was written. And the boisterous, unrefined way the pact is celebrated is much more in keeping with the conduct of the newly establishing merchant class than with that of political rulers, while the semantic cluster of political power ("my brave *emperor*", "*monarch* of the vine", "*conquering* wine", "With thy grapes our hairs be *crown'd*", 2.7.113 – 16, emphasis mine) keeps us in mind of the analogy between imperial powers, ancient and early modern.

Renaissance choreographies (like architectural and garden design), were concerned with "manipulating, controlling, and ordering space".[29] Pre-Copernican courtly dance choreographies prescribed sure and steady movements in clearly marked geometric patterns around and about the dance space, from one predetermined fixed point to another. The attention was not on the dancers' bodies but on the patterns they drew with them, for through the well-known series of isomorphic relations, the sovereign and his court enjoyed an unquestioned, privileged place in a finite geocentric universe.

In the late sixteenth century, dance at court became increasingly 'spectacular'. Along with elaborate scenes, costumes and stage machinery, the dancing itself took on new energy; the steps and moves became more complicated and difficult. There was a clear shift in attention from progression through space (patterns imitating those of the heavenly spheres) to what the body itself is doing. The court was saying 'look at me', 'here I am, still at the centre of things' (in a desperate attempt at self-assertion not only in a heliocentric universe but even a Bruneian, infinitely expanding one), 'my command of my body' figures my political power.

There was an epistemological shift in act, in the heavens, and on earth and in the performance space at court. The men especially began to acquire more vigour in their jumps and leaps, their lusty and expansive movements were no longer figuring the movement of the spheres, but rather those of 'earthly' exploration and conquest. Initially professional dancers had been hired to do the strenuous dancing – the members of court performing the more stately bits – but

28 *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome*, ed. by Maria Del Sapio Garbero (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009).
29 Nevile, *Eloquent Body*, p. 123.

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by Shakespeare's time, the princes and dukes and lords were competing with them, taking over their space – resembling in a sense the territorial takeovers in act across the world map.

Using courtly dance as a tool to read cultural and political change, juxtaposes with strong emphasis the Copernican revolution, the questioning of hierarchy in government and society, gendered aspects of patriarchal rule[30] and the beginnings of colonizing efforts. The Egyptian Bacchanal scene in *Antony and Cleopatra*, viewed in this perspective, brings together questions of bodies, cosmographies and geographies. This scene tugs away from the old cosmology, subverts the trope of heavenly derived sovereignty, and in its own parodic way signals not only an expanding universe, but also an expanding political geography which can provide a new privileged centre for its enactors to replace the one they lost in the old cosmological order of things.

How exactly this scene might have been staged in Shakespeare's time remains a mystery. The earliest records of *Antony and Cleopatra*'s stage history date from 1669.[31] There is in fact no clear evidence of its having made it onto the stage in Shakespeare's lifetime. Might one issue or other it touches upon have led to its being censored?

30 The subject of this paper does not allow for discussions of the complex gender implications that come to the fore in both elite and popular couple dancing. For more on the topic, see, for example, Howard who works consistently with a gender approach.

31 Sara Munson Deats, 'Shakespeare's Anamorphic Drama: A Survey of *Antony and Cleopatra* in Criticism, on Stage and on Screen', in *Antony and Cleopatra: New Critical Essays,* ed. by Sara Munson Deats (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 1 – 94 (p. 36).

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Nancy Isenberg

Afterword: "A Space for Farther Travel"

The final words of this volume are dedicated to the concept of 'interfacing', the keyword of the European Socrates/ETNP Acume 2 research program which gives cooperative, reciprocal agency to the categories of knowledge it links together. Here will be described a proposal for a web-based model for collaborative, work-in-progress interfacing, envisioned during the period in which the two Roman Acume 2 local research units were meeting periodically. These meetings took the form of a series of workshops and seminars implemented and conducted by Maria Del Sapio originally in preparation for the international conference, "Shakespeare and Rome: Questioning Bodies, Geographies and Cosmographies", but which, by unanimous enthusiastic consensus, continued well beyond that event.

They brought together the members of the local units "Constructions of Bodies in Renaissance Culture" coordinated by Maria Del Sapio and "Knowledge and Perception of Natural Phenomena" coordinated by Giovanni Antonini, including researchers in the humanities and natural sciences (see the 'Acknowledgements' at the beginning of this volume for details on the complex, synergetic organization of the research). The objects of our collective study were, one by one, Shakespeare's Roman works, and texts by Bacon (*Novum Organum*, 1620) and Galileo (*Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences,* 1638).

During the months preceding the conference, we began to think about how the rich interdisciplinary pooling of perspectives and observations that was taking place during our meetings might be conveyed during the upcoming event. We were keen to find ways to incorporate our different voices and perspectives, and at Maddalena Pennacchia's suggestion, began devising contributions in the form of hypertexts, where one of us would provide the basic structure and connective discourse and others would 'plug in' where appropriate with their specific contributions.

As time went on, with our meetings, electronic exchanges of supplementary materials, and ongoing email discussions between one meeting and other, our interfacing experience revealed itself to be complexly interconnecting our on-

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going individual research. This led to the idea that we might facilitate this networking by creating a digital environment where our widely differing work in progress, competences, experiences, and work and communicative styles could mingle and negotiate cooperation in such a way as to open up new perspectives on our objects of study, encourage the exploration of new possibilities regarding interdisciplinary research methodologies (procedures and end products), provide an open (interacting with the digital 'universe' outside our 'environment') and live (constantly evolving) resource centre, stimulate thinking about innovative interdisciplinary teaching and learning formats.

A dedicated webspace was conceptualized as a complex (multidirectional, multilayered, multidimensional) network of contributions employing connectors that can interface contributions according to a variety of criteria. The architecture of this webspace (see Fig. 1) would consist of several concentric, mutually permeable zones (all zones 'open', i. e., reciprocally permeable) floating in an englobing 'environment' consisting of two coexisting, all-encompassing thematic zones: of 'bodies, geographies, and cosmographies,' and 'knowledge and perception of natural phenomena' (the themes that identify the local research units). The environment would contain concentrically: a 'system' (Shakespeare's works), a 'hub' (the centre of activity and exchange within the Webspace) containing 'portals' (each of the specific Roman works by Shakespeare).

Figure 2 with its interconnecting pathways starting at the portal labelled *Antony and Cleopatra* aims to show, by way of example, how our individual projects might give and take conceptual energy to and from one another, and to demonstrate the potential for an unlimited variety of hypertextual organizations.

Typically a contribution or 'node' would be linked to the Shakespearean texts and/or to other existing contributions in any of the concentric zones of the Webspace. Such nodes would provide 'semantic' content and might take the form of annotations to bits of text, glosses for individual lexical items, bibliographies, glossaries, or complementary commentary providing cultural contextualization.

Contributions might be in any form compatible with an electronic environment (including graphs, images, audio/video-clips, links to websites outside our Webspace, etc). The 'links' or 'arches' that interconnect nodes would provide the Webspace with a 'syntax'. The creation of 'routes' and 'maps' that interconnect nodes would be, as we see it, one of our goals. As we worked together we might signal to each other nodes that needed to be filled with content.

Two-dimensional conceptual and mind maps, and renderings of semantic and syntactic networks portrayed within the finite bounds of a computer screen or piece of paper, however great its dimensions, will never achieve a satisfactory

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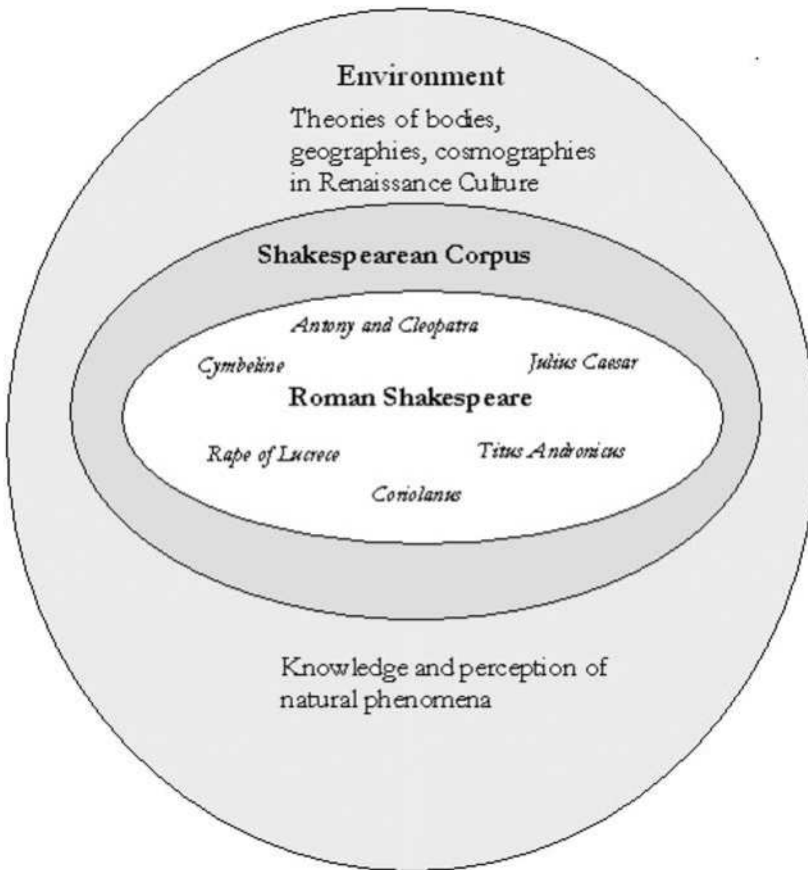

Fig. 1. The webspace environment

representation of the boundless possibilities of not necessarily hierarchized or prioritized connections. It is hoped nonetheless that the highly simplified diagrams offered here in spite of their visual and conceptual flatness, can provide representations at least of the main ideas of the model. The Venn diagram below (Fig. 3) shows how conceptual environments overlap and influence one another.

The technological demands for structuring and maintaining such a web project (requiring the continual inserting and interconnecting of contributions) would be considerable. Decisions would need to be made regarding the software to use, the degree of privacy/publicness to give to our project, the degree of interactivity to give it (who can post or change contributions?). Wikipedia is one extreme example of this type of openness. (This section of the description of the

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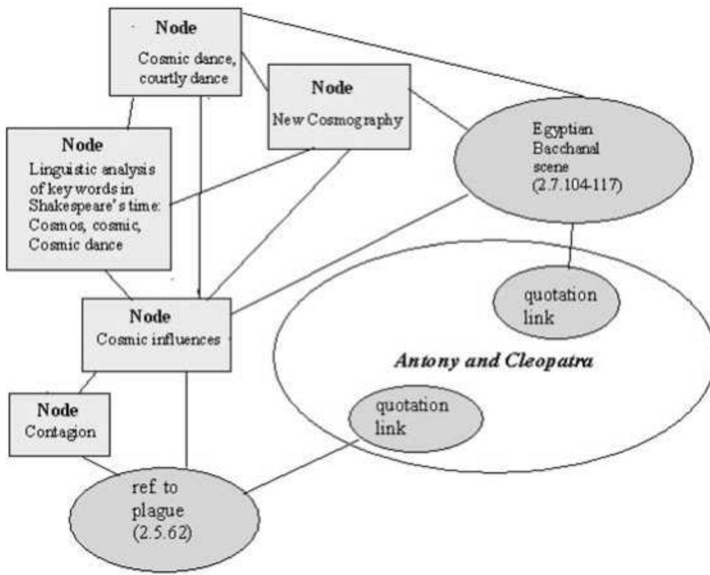

Fig. 2. A sample of interconnecting pathways: *Antony and Cleopatra*

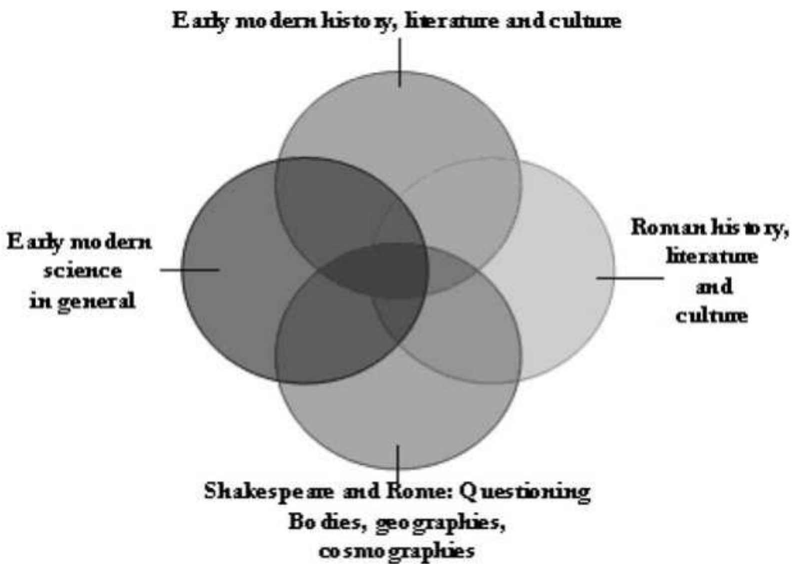

Fig. 3. Example of permeability among environments

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model would benefit immensely from a contribution by an expert in semantic webs.)

The above mentioned issues cannot be addressed merely from a technological perspective. Policies would need to be established by the governing authorities, in this case the European Socrates/ETNP Acume 2 research program coordinators and steering committee in collaboration with the subproject coordinators, about the degree of control to exercise over contributions and who exercises control.

Although the Webspace was conceived as a collaborative procedural tool, it could produce 'finished' outputs for a larger usership involving multiple contributors and which could maintain the form of a cohesively connected network of nodal contributions, or it could serve as an 'open resource centre' constantly updated and revised and as a model for interdisciplinary teaching and learning formats.

Considered within the wider context of the new media revolution where knowledge is considered to be always in-process and interactive, and where text-making is seen as dynamic and participatory, the idea of the Webspace brings to the fore some of the challenges that revolution is posing to scholarly research methodology, for it raises questions, for example, regarding the distinction between work in progress and finished products, cohesion in the presence of varying discourse typologies and linguistic registers, traceability of sources, and conceptual and textual authorial identity. Negotiating policy on such issues, with contributions from the sciences and the humanities whose output management requirements and conventions – as we have come to appreciate first hand thanks to our Acume 2 experience – are markedly different, would in itself provide invaluable insights into changing research methodologies.

A digital environment like the one imagined here, in sum, would allow us to explore (using a few body metaphors) head on, eye to eye, mind to mind, the challenge at the heart of the Acume 2 project to cope with some of the gaps between the sciences and the humanities and to thus move forward a bit more elbow to elbow. Bending slightly the sense of Varrius's words in 1.2.32 of *Antony and Cleopatra*, we see it as "a space for farther travel".

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The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Lovell Beddoes (2007, co-edited with Michael Bradshaw). She is currently preparing the edited collection *Solo Performances: Staging the Early Modern Self* (Rodopi, forthcoming) and the monograph *Science, Politics and Friendship in the work of Thomas Lovell Beddoes* (for University of Delaware Press). Her primary interests are in British and German political and scientific discourses from 1750 to 1850, historical constructions of subjectivity in Romanticism and in the 20th century as well as early modern discourses of interiority and science.

Maria Del Sapio Garbero is Full Professor of English Literature at Roma Tre University. She has written extensively on Shakespeare, romantic and Victorian literature, women's writing, the culture of the *fin de siècle*, Modernism, Postmodernism. Her works on Shakespeare include *Il bene ritrovato. Le figlie di Shakespeare dal* King Lear *ai* Romances (Bulzoni, 2005); and as editor, *La traduzione di Amleto nella cultura europea* (Marsilio, 2002) and *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome* (Ashgate, 2009).

Maurizio Calbi is Associate Professor of English Literature and History of English Culture at the University of Salerno (Italy). He has previously taught at the University of Essex, Loughborough University and The Open University (Britain). His recent publications include a monograph, *Approximate Bodies. Gender and Power in Early Modern Drama and Anatomy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), and a number of articles on Shakespeare, early modern drama and culture, postcolonial literature (especially the work of Caryl Phillips) and contemporary rewritings/re-visions of Shakespeare. He is on the Editorial Board of the Routledge periodical *Shakespeare* and the *Yearbook of the Spanish and Portuguese Society for English Renaissance Studies.* He is currently working on a monograph provisionally entitled *Shakespeare's Ghosts: Alterations of Shakespeare in Contemporary Culture* as well as on a book-length study of the ethics of postcolonial writing in the work of Caryl Phillips.

Simona Corso is a member of the Comparative Literature Department of Roma Tre University, where she teaches English Literature. Her research interests include the eighteenth century, Shakespeare and Jacobean Theatre, postcolonial studies and narratology. Her publications include *Postcolonial Shakespeare*, edited with Masolino D'Amico (Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2009), *Letteratura e Antropologia*, edited with Massimo Bonafin (Edizioni dell'Orso, 2008), *Automi, termometri, fucili. L'immaginario della macchina nel romanzo inglese e francese del Settecento* (Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004) and articles on Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, James Joyce, Derek Walcott and V.S. Naipaul. Her

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modernist women's writing, the interaction between written literature and audio-visual media, and Shakespeare on screen.

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