



Will forever young! *Shakespeare & Contemporary Culture*

(edited by) Mariacristina Cavecchi, Cristina Paravano and Margaret Rose

The Bard is alive and kicking, isn't he? A rosy complexion, a confident look, even some signs of hair growing in that ever-transmogrified Droeshout's portrait that constitutes the only authoritative Polaroid we have of him. Countless recurrences, anniversaries, birthdays to remember the Sweet Swan of Avon. What indeed counts, however, is the intrinsic quality of the scientific research, and not the celebrative Shakespearian bandwagon on which many jump only to forget the reason why they are there. These AM pages pay homage to the steadiness and professionalism of what we consider the best Shakespearian research. This special issue, so neatly focused on Shakespeare, fits in a literary continuum that characterizes the editors' careers. The nature of contemporary literary criticism requires devotion and assiduity, being the figure of the omniscient critic a hopefully extinct one. And AM is proud to host, once again, this instance of professionalism.

Altre Modernità

The 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death offered an opportunity to scholars and practitioners all over the world to re-appraise and re-imagine his extraordinary vitality and legacy in contemporary culture. The Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Milan contributed to these worldwide events with a festival and an international conference, entitled *Shakespeare 400 – Will*



forever young!, whose proceedings are presented in this special issue. Through a series of case studies, we hope to make a contribution to the critical analysis of the way contemporary theatre, film, literature, rock music and so on appropriates, challenges and confirms the Elizabethan playwright's cultural authority. We also address, through the appropriations of Shakespeare, the ethical, social and political responsibilities we have as scholars, teachers and citizens.

It must be said that among the many conferences and symposiums organized to celebrate the two Shakespeare anniversaries (2014 and 2016), *Will forever young!* was rather unique in its kind.

First, the conference involved a group of young scholars who were chaired and guided by leading academics: Russell Jackson, Emeritus Professor of Drama at Birmingham University, where he held the Allardyce Nicoll Chair from 2004 until his retirement in 2016; and Douglas Lanier, Professor of English and Director of the University of New Hampshire London Program. The conference therefore facilitated a fruitful dialogue between academics of different generations and cultural traditions, with different sensibilities and expertise. It also meant we learnt more about the current research of Italian scholars working in the field. In actual fact, unlike previous generations, not many young researchers and PhD students seem interested in this field of research. This is an area that, on the contrary, we consider of vital importance not only in relation to Shakespearean studies, but also because it contributes to research devoted to our contemporary culture, on the one hand, and to the connection between the university and the surrounding territory, on the other.

Parallel to the conference, there were several other activities supported by Milan City Council and British Council intending to shorten the distance between students and artists, high and low Shakespeares, and to take the Bard outside the university lecture rooms and school classrooms onto the streets, into bars, gardens and prisons.

1. SHAKESPEARE & POPULAR CULTURE STUDIES

The study of the past and present negotiation between Shakespeare and popular culture is nowadays a well-established field of research, as the numerous recent publications prove. Suffice it to mention the two huge volumes of *Shakespeares after Shakespeare: An Encyclopedia of the Bard in Mass Media and Popular Culture* (2007), Richard Burt's attempt to map the present cultural proliferation and fragmentation of Shakespeare in mass culture, or "Shakespeare and Popular Culture," a long section in *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare* (2016), introduced by Douglas Lanier, the author of *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (2002), the first book-length study to consider deeply the modern Shakes-pop phenomenon.

Even if outside Italy Shakespeare and contemporary popular culture is today the subject of considerable academic interest, essays by Italian scholars devoted to Shakespeare and contemporary popular culture are thin on the ground, and even rarer



are those tackling Shakespeare in the Italian context – obviously, with the due exceptions.

First and foremost, we should mention the work carried out by Mariangela Tempera, a cutting-edge researcher, founder and director of the “Centro Shakespeariano”, whose cultural initiatives turned the University of Ferrara into a major international centre for the study of Shakespeare and the English Early Modern Age. In a truly pioneering spirit, she collected and made accessible to scholars, theatre and cinema practitioners an unparalleled collection of films and videos related to Shakespeare.¹ Her last international conference², “Shakespeare in Tatters. Referencing His Works on Film and Television,” explored the presence of references to Shakespeare’s work (citations, verbal/visual allusions, parodies, excerpts from performances, etc.) and contributed to the debate regarding the process of recognition and questioning at work every time we come across a new unexpected Shakespearean fragment on film and television (TV series, sit-coms, soap operas, etc.). The many Shakespearean quotes rearranged in changing and meaningful patterns by scholars from all over the globe and referring to very different film traditions are collected in a volume, edited by Alexa Alice Joubin, forthcoming with Palgrave Macmillan.

In Ferrara, Mariangela Tempera also conceived and promoted “Shakespeare dal testo alla scena,” a raft of workshops, readings, performances, exhibitions, multimedia projects, and not least the publication of the volumes in the eponymous series. In 2017 *Twelfth Night dal testo alla scena* came out. Edited by Keir Elam and reviewed in the section “The Recommended,” this is the first volume of the series to appear after Mariangela Tempera’s all too early death.

English Literature and British Theatre Studies academics at the University of Milan pursue a similar vocation. They share a lively interest in the reception of Shakespeare in contemporary Italian popular culture, and since the 1990s have time and again devoted their attention to the process which Douglas Lanier defines as “popularizing Shakespeare”, namely recasting the Elizabethan playwright “to accord with mass-produced popular culture” (Lanier 2016: 1265).

Several collections of critical essays bear witness to the continued efforts of the Milan team: *Shakespeare Graffiti. Il Cigno di Avon nella cultura di massa* (Cavecchi and Soncini 2002), the result of a workshop involving a group of students who collected data and asked how and why Shakespeare has appeared in such popular forms as television series, advertising, pop and rock music, cartoons and manga, pornography, and tourism; *Shakespeare and Scespir* (Caponi and Cavecchi 2005) on the contemporary Italian context.

¹For the catalogue (updated March 2015) see the link: <http://www.ilibridiemil.it/images/Image/Tempera_Catalogo.pdf> (27 September 2017).

²The conference was held at the University of Ferrara (2013) under the aegis of the University of Ferrara and the “Centro Shakespeariano”, in collaboration with the University of Milan and the University of Montpellier III.



An appraisal of critical studies devoted to Shakespeare and popular culture is not the objective of this introduction, and yet we think it is deeply significant that Italian criticism tends to investigate British and American popular culture rather than the Italian one. One of the reasons is of course the enduring appeal of Anglo-American culture, but also the lack of a deeply rooted tradition of these fields of studies at Italian universities, where there are no courses entirely devoted to Shakespeare on film, TV, or in popular culture. And even theatre studies courses, because of their interdisciplinary dimension, seldom find a place in the curricula. As a matter of fact, the essays included in this issue seem to confirm this tendency. Maria Elisa Montironi analyses the representation of Juliet, Ophelia, Cordelia and Lady Macbeth in the lyrics of rock artists in what is a study of Shakespeare's reception which includes the author's reflection on the role of women between the 1960s and the 1990s in the Anglo-American context. Mauro Gentile, likewise, investigates *Kill Shakespeare*, a twelve-issue graphic novel by the Canadians Anthony and Conor McCreery.

Much has still to be done in this field of study, even if the University of Milan has played an important role in pioneering research into the way Shakespeare intersects with contemporary popular culture. Researchers there have invited fellow academics to question the cultural politics of Shakespeare's popular appropriation and to inquire into the ways in which his work has been appropriated by mass-produced Italian popular culture, in the light of a process of popularising Shakespeare that "has accelerated and gone global in the last quarter-century" (Lanier 2016: 1265). The objective, to borrow Shaul Bassi's words in his compelling *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare*, is "twofold and chiasmatic." In actual fact, the Milan team wants to "ask how Italy explains Shakespeare and how Shakespeare explains Italy" (Bassi 2016: 3), seeking possible answers in various texts (not least, in the new media, such as web series and videogames), events and sites – as well as the 'official' and institutional ones.

Among the many "Milanese" initiatives, involving theatre practitioners, academics and students, that tackle Shakespeare's various lives and afterlives, one might start by mentioning the long-running seminar "Laboratorio Shakespeariano" launched by director Giorgio Strehler and Agostino Lombardo at Milan's Piccolo Teatro in the 1980s, in the wake of their collaboration on Strehler's production of *La tempesta* in 1978. After Lombardo's death in 2005, Anna Anzi, who was one of the first people in Italy to hold a chair in Theatre Studies and encourage a multidisciplinary approach in theatre criticism, directed the laboratory. The seminar ran an annual programme on Shakespeare, including some memorable lectures, such as those by Guido Fink devoted to Shakespeare on film and others by Carlo Pagetti on Shakespeare in Science Fiction.

In more recent times, more than a section of the international and intercultural conference *Shakespeare in the Maze of Contemporary Culture* (2012), organized by Mariacristina Cavecchi and Carlo Pagetti,³ went on to explore the Shakespearean

³The conference proceedings *Shakespeare in the Maze of Contemporary Culture/Shakespeare nei labirinti del contemporaneo*, M. Cavecchi, C. Pagetti (eds.), in STRATAGEMMI ΣTPATHHMATA.



traces/offshoots in the fields of formulaic narratives (science fiction, fantasy, thriller) and contemporary cinema, TV series and street art. Like a two-faced Janus, the conference gathered together Italian and foreign academics and practitioners. Among the participants, who discussed 'their' Shakespeare, were film critic Emanuela Martini, whose two volumes *Ombre che camminano* (1996) represent the first in depth Italian research into Shakespeare and cinema, and Fabio Cavalli, whose work at the maximum-security wing at Rome's Rebibbia prison, had just become known to a wider audience, thanks to Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's internationally acclaimed film *Cesare deve morire* (*Caesar Must Die*, 2012). His lecture strengthened our belief that it was important to re-enforce the link between academic research and the world outside and to re-read Shakespeare's texts in the light of our national issues and emergencies.

It is also worth remembering the attention paid to Shakespeare's afterlife in high and low culture by IASEMS, the Italian Association of Shakespearean and Early Modern Studies since it was founded in 2008. Indeed, the founding members, Mariangela Tempera (University of Ferrara), Carla Dente and Sara Soncini (Pisa University), Paola Pugliatti (University of Florence) and Romana Zacchi (University of Bologna) were and still are very interested in the ways the Bard has been appropriated and re-invented. In 2017 IASEMS paid a tribute to Mariangela Tempera's work with a conference, "Shakespeare and Popular Culture, as you like it" that explored Shakespearean drama and popular culture from the early modern to the contemporary age.

2. SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

In 2015 Mariacristina Cavecchi and Margaret Rose began what has become a much larger project at the University of Milan devoted to Shakespeare and prison. They took their first group of theatre studies students into the women's wing of Milan's San Vittore Prison, where Donatella Massimilla, director of CETEC, runs workshops that are often devoted to Shakespeare. The experience of seeing Massimilla and her student inmates at work on *The Tempest*, of interacting with the group and contributing to their engagement with the Elizabethan playwright, proved very important, both for them as teachers and for the students. In light of this they decided to continue work in this area, by setting up Shakespeare workshops in other prisons and embarking on academic research in the field.

As Cavecchi writes in her essay "Brave New Worlds. Shakespeare Tempests in Italian Prisons", Prison Shakespeare is a phenomenon, with a rich tradition. Italy, moreover, plays a central role in the history of such projects, both for the study of the subject and for the performance of Shakespeare in prison. Fabio Cavalli at Rome's Rebibbia prison and Armando Punzo at Volterra's prison have succeeded in producing

PROSPETTIVE TEATRALI, special issue 24-25. December 2012-March 2013, see: <<https://www.stratagemmi.it/shop/product-tag/shakespeare-in-the-maze-of-contemporary-culture/>> (27 September 2017).



strikingly new productions of the plays, with results that are significant for the prisoners who take part, but also for the wider community and theatre *tout court*.

On the one hand, Punzo was invited to introduce his work on Shakespeare⁴ and to present the video-installation *In cielo si combatte una guerra civile. Gli Shakespeare di Armando Punzo*, by Stefano Vaja, with music by Andrea Salvadori.

On the other, by taking students into prison Rose and Cavecchi have come to realise how Prison Shakespeare represents an extraordinary way of encouraging students to think about issues such as justice, crime, punishment, redemption as well as to lead them to critically engage with the ideas of prison, theatre and Shakespeare. During the festival, they co-organised a theatre workshop at the Juvenile Detention Centre “Cesare Beccaria” in Milan, thanks to the support of Milan University, British Council and the City Council, inviting Kingslee “Akala” Daley, poet, rapper and artistic director of the *Hip-Hop Shakespeare Company*. He and his team, who are committed to the much needed goal of bringing Shakespeare to young people in deprived urban areas, offered new incentives and motivation to students and inmates, by establishing a direct connection between the Bard and rap. The collaborative work on the rewriting and staging of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* meant the student group gained a better understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare, coming to perceive him as alive and still meaningful. Furthermore, this Elizabethan comedy served to bridge the gap between the world inside the prison and the outside. While the university students began to grasp the importance of culture as a deterrent against crime and how thin the line might actually be that separates them from the teenagers inside, the inmates had a chance to experience a new way of learning about themselves and the world they live in. Akala managed to communicate with them immediately, since the language of rap turned out to be a shared language.⁵ As the workshop activities got underway, the inmates embraced the opportunity to play, in its various meanings. It is no exaggeration to say that Shakespeare worked a small miracle; in the course of two days students and inmates grew indistinguishable, as they threw themselves into playing Titania, Bottom, Puck, and so on.

Marco Canani’s contribution, “Shakespeare in the ‘Gangsta’s Paradise’” gives a critical account of Akala’s empowering poetry and describes his workshop from the point of view of a young researcher. In line with Akala, Canani, too, reflects on the value of Shakespeare and, more in general, of the liberal arts in the education of future generations. “What is the purpose of education today? What are we teaching young people? What are we training the next generation to do? [...] Education, who does it belong to, and who doesn’t it belong to?”.

⁴See Armando Punzo in conversation with Renato Palazzi at the University of Milan for the conference *Shakespeare 400 - Will forever young!* at the link: <<http://www.compagniadellaforzezza.org/new/immagini-e-parole/videogallery/videogallery-altri-eventi-convegna-lectio-incontri/alla-ricerca-dellopera-segreta-di-shakespeare/>> (27 September 2017).

⁵See Akala’s interview by journalist Luigi Bolognini for the online newspaper *La Repubblica.it* at <<http://www.puntozeroteatro.org/da-la-repubblica-shakespeare-in-hip-hop-per-i-ragazzi-del-beccaria-il-rapper-londinese-akala-va-in-carcere/>> (20 August 2017).



3. SHAKESPEARE IN GARDENS

In collaboration with Martin Kater, director of Brera and Città Studi Botanic Gardens (University of Milan) (<www.museoortibotanicistatale.it>), as part of the Festival events, Rose, together with Cristina Puricelli, the curator of the Brera Botanic, Angela Ronchi, biologist and schools programme facilitator and researcher Cristina Paravano, guided secondary school students and the general public on dramatised walks through the botanic gardens in a bid to reveal the connections between Shakespeare and the plants and flowers he alludes to in his works. Renato Giuliani, Irina Brooks' right-hand man at the National Theatre in Nice, also led one of these visits, since he is a versatile actor, who is also deeply knowledgeable about the healing properties of herbs and plants, and their complex symbolism in Renaissance culture.

This activity was part of an ongoing project, led by Rose, at the botanical gardens in Milan, the ethos of which is to present reduced and rewritten versions of Shakespeare's plays focusing on his ideas on nature and the environment to people of all ages, social classes, backgrounds and ethnicities. It is hoped that many of these people, who aren't regular theatregoers, will become acquainted with Shakespeare's work through the 'garden' experience the Milan team is creating.

The response to these garden activities on the part of Milanese citizens, teachers and students, during the *Will forever young!* conference, made the Milan team realise they should take the Shakespeare and gardens project a step further. While there are already Shakespeare gardens at Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon, in about twenty places in North America as well as in Austria and Germany, there are none in Italy. To fill this gap, the Milan group hopes to plan a Shakespeare garden at the two botanical gardens. Unlike the already existing ones, which are themed gardens, the Milan Shakespeare gardens will be two designated paths through the already established botanical gardens. As they walk along the paths, visitors will find some of the plants and flowers Shakespeare mentions in his works. These specimens will be labelled, with verses from Shakespeare's plays where he mentions, a rose, rosemary, etc. Similar to the activities in other Shakespeare gardens, and the outstanding examples are undoubtedly the three Shakespeare gardens in Stratford-upon-Avon, the Milan initiative will hopefully include guided visits and interactive workshops for students and the general public, sometimes in collaboration with actors who will perform brief scenes from Shakespeare set in gardens and orchards, or which allude to the natural world. The Milan project, moreover, boasts several innovations. Visitors will sometimes be able to watch entire plays inspired by Shakespeare's love of the natural world, such as Rose's *Shakespeare nel Giardino delle erbe*, directed by Mauro Gentile. The play dramatises an imaginary visit by Shakespeare to Milan, where he meets Prospero, the Duke of Milan, and his daughter Miranda and engages in a lively exchange with them about Italian food and the natural world of Prospero's garden. Instead Rose's *A Walk in Shakespeare's Garden*, a



musical promenade play, directed by Massimilla, offering audience members a multisensorial experience, after its première in Milan, toured to Shakespeare's Great Garden in Stratford and the Botanics in Ferrara. Secondary school students, attending the scientific liceo "Pier Giorgio Frassati", during a project set up by Benedetta Parenti, have also written a play for the Botanical gardens, starting from *Romeo and Juliet* and focusing on Shakespeare and the natural world; *In Verona Veritas*, directed by Giuditta Mingucci, premièred at the Città Studi Botanics during the event, "Fascination of Plants Day" in May 2015. The Milan University group also aims to develop an app and audio guide to make the Shakespeare walk more accessible to more people and for longer hours than is possible at the moment. A documentary film, deriving from the Shakespeare garden experience, is also a possibility. This will be distributed to schools throughout Lombardy and will function as a teaching aid, prior to students visiting the Shakespeare garden. Our Shakespeare garden should ultimately contribute to creating two Shakespeare hubs in a busy city, where people can relax in the Bard's company.

4. RESTAGING SHAKESPEARE. REWRITING SHAKESPEARE

Theatres all over Milan drew attention to the Bard's outstanding legacy with a number of Shakespearean productions. These included some of the leading venues, such as the Piccolo Teatro, Teatro Elfo Puccini and Manifatture Teatrali Milanesi, and the smaller but nonetheless vibrant Teatro della Cooperativa, Pacta . dei Teatri, Teatro i. For almost three weeks students and citizens alike had the opportunity to see Shakespeare onstage, but also to take part in a series of "Backstages", where they could meet the directors and/or cast and discuss their choices and the reasons why they are still engaged with Shakespeare. For reasons of space we are unable to explore these events and discussions in any depth, but nonetheless we would like to begin this section with a question by Amy Scott-Douglass in the chapter she wrote for Richard Burt's *Shakespeares after Shakespeare* encyclopedia: "Once we theatre scholars acknowledge that excellent Shakespeare is staged on a daily basis, and that some of the greatest performances occur in the most unlikely places, how do we go about deciding which productions to write about and which productions to ignore?" (Scott-Douglass, 2007: 733). That's a difficult question to answer. Yet, following in Scott-Douglass's footsteps, delegates at the conference engaged with some contemporary spin-offs that poignantly express Shakespeare's vitality.

As far as Italy is concerned, in her essay "Three Italian practitioners seeking a more popular audience for Shakespeare," Rose concentrates on the productions of three Italian directors, Marco Ghelardi, Massimo Navone and Riccardo Mallus, who boldly experiment with alternative ways of staging Shakespeare and who are seeking new audiences among people, some of whom never go to the theatre, or if they do, they prefer lighter, more entertaining and contemporary playwrights than Shakespeare. Two of the most cutting-edge companies in Italy, whose activities are



well rooted in the suburbs of a big city also figure in this issue. On the one hand, Marcido Marcidorjs & Famosa Mimosa, a company founded in 1984 and currently based at the small theatre MARCIDOFILM! in “Barriera Milano”, the most multicultural area of Turin. As artistic director Marco Isidori acknowledges in his notes on *AmletOne!*, his radical company is never content with just telling a story and instead turns Shakespeare’s plays into a mere pre-text of representation. His presentation of *AmletOne!* might sound rather cryptic and obscure, but at the same time it’s allusively appealing, just like this company’s performances. In a similar way, Maddalena Giovannelli defines Renato Sarti’s Shakespearean productions at the Teatro della Cooperativa, such as *Amleto avvisato mezzo salvato* (*Hamlet forewarned is forearmed*), *La molto tragica storia di Piramo e Tisbe che muoiono per amore* (*The most lamentable story of Pyramus and Thisbe, who die for love*), *Otello Spritz*, as entertaining but at the same time thought-provoking. A politically and socially engaged actor, director and playwright, Sarti appropriates Shakespeare’s work in order to present the popular audience at his theatre located in Niguarda in the Milan suburbs with extremely urgent issues: the worrying rise of violence against women, illegal employment, the difficult dialogue between different cultures. In *Otello Spritz* spectators are not only turned into accomplices, but they are asked to take sides and engage actively in the making of the performance and in the outcome of Desdemona’s fate at the end of the play.

Undeniably, Tim Crouch’s cycle of five solo plays, *I, Shakespeare*, is one of the most audacious Shakespearean off-shoots in the United Kingdom; as Sara Soncini suggests in her essay, “This is you’: Encountering Shakespeare with Tim Crouch”, Crouch’s monologues open up to new spaces of creativity and co-creativity, as Shakespeare “is refashioned as a relational field in which the roles, positions and prerogatives of the multiple agents involved in the process of theatre” (spectator and spectacle, text and performance) are put into “a productive tension” that “simultaneously illuminate and enhance the kinetic quality of Shakespeare’s work, while at the same time pointing to the specific dimension of its reception.”

Over the centuries Shakespeare’s works have morphed into multiform shapes, and sometimes, his “resurrection” is to be taken literally, as described by Ruben Benatti and Angela Tiziana Tarantini. Indeed, in the essay “When Shakespeare met Raimi: David Mence’s *Macbeth Re-Arised*”, they analyse Melbourne-based playwright David Mence’s 2009 play, an exploration into what would happen if Macbeth came back as a zombie. This daring work entirely written in blank verse, which blends Shakespeare’s medieval Scotland with the manic zombies of Sam Raimi’s *Evil Dead* series, was a huge success and represents a clear example of how Shakespeare’s legacy is rooted in, and at the same time contributes to, contemporary popular culture.

Shakespeare’s legacy has also been celebrated through the creation of new plays and a film inspired by Shakespeare and his continuing topicality. In 2015 Rose and Cavecchi set up a playwriting competition which invites Milan University students to try their hand at writing a short play. During the “Will forever young!” conference,



the two judges, Corrado d'Elia, actor, director and artistic director of "Manifatture Teatrali Milanese", and Maria Eugenia D'Aquino, actress, director, teacher, and president of "PACTA. dei Teatri", selected the work of Simona Medolago, Ester Bossi and Davide Novello. Their plays, which are published in the section "The Creative" in the present issue, reveal what Shakespeare means to the younger generation and how his works can be refashioned and reshaped according to contemporary taste. In Medolago's award winning play, *Intervallo*, directed by Gentile and performed at Teatro Litta during the conference, two fugitives, strongly resembling Rosencrantz and Guildenstern or even Estragon and Vladimir, find themselves in a garden, waiting for someone to come along and give them a new chance in life. On an empty stage, three women similar to the three witches in *Macbeth* discuss issues related to life and death in Bossi's *Strands*, while the final debate in a presidential campaign between an unapologetic and ruthless Richard III and an ambitious, power-hungry Lady Macbeth presented by Novello in his *Fallimento* clearly alludes to what was at the time the recent American Presidential election campaign.

Besides our students, the festival also saw the involvement of a number of emerging practitioners like Alessandra Rizzuto, who choreographed a contemporary version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, entitled *Tempeste, or Delineavit-di chi sono i tratti del tuo volto?* by Mauro Gentile, a play written for the festival, which premiered at Teatro Arsenale. The action revolves around Shakespeare's wife, Anne Hathaway, and her beautiful dress (created by costume designer Susan Marshall), and delves into her intriguing and unusual point of view on the Elizabethan playwright's private life.

The conference also paid attention to Shakespeare cinema, understandably so, since Russell Jackson was on our scientific committee. Editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film* (2000, 2007), author of several monographs on Shakespeare and cinema and a consultant for Kenneth Branagh's Shakespeare films, he opened the conference, with the plenary lecture "Hamlet, Prince and Superhero". He guided us through the meanders of Shakespeare Films, where "the discourses of gender, nationality and authenticity figure largely, together with those of movie stardom and achievement" (Jackson 2007: 5) and also discussed the difficulties and opportunities that filmmakers encounter when they attempt to bring Shakespeare into "mainstream" and "popular" cinema. This is the case of Hamlet transformed into a contemporary "last action hero" in John McTiernan's film or in Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet 2000*. In his plenary lecture "Bard 2.0: The Future of Teen Shakespeare on Screen", Douglas Lanier likewise focused on contemporary Shakespeare cinema, but from a different angle; he sustained that the teen Shakespeare film boom, which he defined as the dominant screen Shakespeare genre at the turn of the twenty-first century, has morphed into the Shakespeare web series. According to Lanier, this is Shakespeare for "prosumers": teen consumers who are simultaneously producers, whose do-it-yourself, transgressive and participatory aesthetic rejects the commercial exploitation of the Shakespeare teen films of the past.

Are we perhaps witnessing the beginning of the end of the long lasting and happy marriage between Shakespeare and cinema? Only time will tell.



For now, a group of students from the Milan Cinema School, “Luchino Visconti” still believes in cinema as a means of investigation and has produced the docufilm *Shakespeare Out*. Directed by Emanuele Giorgetti and Paolo Sammati, the film, the first for these young filmmakers, was conceived in the wake of Al Pacino’s *Looking for Richard* and, despite its naïveté, is the first film to attempt to chart the impact of Shakespeare on popular culture, with a particular focus on Italy. Far more introspective is Cecilia Rubino and Peter Lucas’s *Remembering Shakespeare*,⁶ a forthcoming documentary that engages interviewees in a dialogue about memory, memorization and how Shakespeare’s words continue to live in us, as the filmmaker acknowledges in her introduction to the film in the section “The Creative.” As a matter of fact, as she concludes after carrying out interviews with people who have no connection to the theatre, but who could still remember lines from Shakespeare, “People remember the lines and phrases from Shakespeare that are deeply connected to their own personal stories and concerns.” Shakespeare can be still alive and kicking on the condition that he directly appeals to our sensibility and personal experience. Indeed, as Elisa Bolchi reminds us in her contribution, “‘Existence holding hands’ Winterson Retelling Shakespeare”, one of the main reasons why Jeanette Winterson decided to re-write *The Winter’s Tale* for the Hogarth Shakespeare project was personal and her cover novel *The Gap of Time* is shaped by her autobiography. That Shakespeare “is much more than ‘the guy who wrote *Romeo and Juliet*’ is at the core of the three American YA novels Cristina Paravano tackles in her essay, “‘The guy who wrote *Romeo and Juliet*.’ Shakespeare and Young Adult Fiction.” She argues that for the lead characters of novels such as Stephen Chbosky’s *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999), John Green’s *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012) and Lauren Oliver’s *Delirium* (2011), “reading [Shakespeare] is a formative experience that alleviates their pain, enables them to externalize their feelings, and to develop emotionally, psychologically and socially.”

Shakespeare’s private life and the ambiguous feelings he expressed in his *Sonnets* inspired the collection of 154 watercolours “I sonetti di William Shakespeare”, by artist Laura De Luca.⁷ In a very far and different context, Chinese scholar David Li Jun, too, in his essay addressing the fundamental changes in Shakespearean productions in China, “from official elitist, top-down moralizing to non-official, popular and entertaining”, concludes that in today’s Mainland China there are two major forms of appropriation: the “autobiographical Shakespeare” and the “anthropological Shakespeare”. A different view of “Shakespeare Eternal Voice” is offered by Tomasz Kowalski, who explores the area of fictional autobiographies and provides an original, well-documented account of two recent contributions, J. P. Wearing *The Shakespeare Diaries: A fictional Autobiography* (2007) and Christopher Rush’s *Will* (2007): these authors “create their own visions of Shakespeare equipped with emotions, moods,

⁶For selections from *Remembering Shakespeare* see <<http://www.rememberingshakespearefilm.com>> (27 September 2017).

⁷Laura De Luca’ exhibition, “I sonetti di William Shakespeare”, was held in the foyer of “Pacta. dei Teatri” as part of the festival. See De Luca’s website: <http://www.lauradeluca.net/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=334&Itemid=326> (27 September 2017).



likes and dislikes, all that which documented facts cannot provide". Kowalski concludes, quoting Anthony Burgess's words (Burgess 238), which confirm what both the conference and the festival have once again proved: "We are all Will".

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Shakespeare 400

Will Forever Young



17-18 November 2016
International Conference
Università degli Studi di Milano

Thursday 17 November
Teatro Litta (Corso Magenta 24)

9.30 Conference Opening

10.00 Plenary Speaker
Chair: Margaret Rose

Russell Jackson (Emeritus Professor, University of Birmingham)
Hamlet, Prince and Superhero

11.00 Coffee Break



11.15 Playwriting Award "Scrivere per il teatro" (II edizione) Committee: Corrado d'Elia (Manifatture Teatrali Milanesi) and Maria Eugenia D'Aquino (Pacta. dei Teatri)

Performance of the prize winning play (Director: Mauro Gentile)

12.00 *Pests and Tempests* by Rani Moorthy (Marco Ghelardi, Salamander Theatre)

Book launch Presentation of the volume *ExpoShakespeare. Il Sommo Gourmet, il cibo e i cannibali* edited by Paolo Caponi, Mariacristina Cavecchi, Margaret Rose (di/segni, 2016), in conversation with Alessandra Marzola (Università degli Studi di Bergamo).

13.30 Lunch Break (Il Boccascena, Teatro Litta, Corso Magenta 24)

15.00 Aula 113, Via Festa del Perdono 3, Università degli Studi di Milano

PANEL I Shake It Off! – Retelling the Bard in Contemporary Narrations

Chair: Douglas Lanier (University of New Hampshire)

Tomasz Kowalski (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań Poland)
Shakespeare's Eternal Voice: Fictional Autobiographies of the Bard

Mauro Gentile (Università degli Studi di Milano)
Kill Shakespeare – This Bard contains Graphic Language

Cristina Paravano (Università degli Studi di Milano)
Shakespeare and Young Adult Fiction: 'The Guy who wrote Romeo and Juliet'

Elisa Bolchi (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore)
'Existences holding hands': J. Winterson retelling Shakespeare

Friday 18 November 2016

Aula Crociera Alta, Via Festa del Perdono 7, Università degli Studi di Milano



9.30 Plenary Speaker

Chair: Mariacristina Cavecchi

Douglas Lanier

Bard 2.0: Social Media and the Future of Teen Shakespeare on Screen.

10.30 Panel II Shake It Up! – Shakespeare's Afterlives in Mass Culture

Chair: Russell Jackson

David Li Jun (University of International Business and Economics, Beijing) in Skype conversation

"The Popularization of the Bard: The Shakespeare Industry in China in the 1990s"

Francesca Gorini (Università degli Studi di Milano)

'The Play's the Thing': Shakespeare as Therapy in K. Branagh's In the Bleak Midwinter and T. Hooper's The King's Speech

11.00 Coffee Break

Aureliana Natale (University of Bologna/L'Aquila)

My Name is Shakespeare, Nice to meet You Again: Shakespeare Retold

Maria Elisa Montironi (University Carlo Bo, Urbino)

'Mark the Music': An Analysis of Offshoots of Shakespearean Female Characters in Contemporary Pop Music.

Ruben Benatti and Angela Tiziana Tarantini (Monash University, Melbourne) in Skype conversation: *When Shakespeare met Sam Raimi: David Mence's Macbeth Re-Arisen*

Marco Canani (Università degli Studi di Milano)

"Music do I hear? Ha-ha'. Some Reflections on Akala's Work, in London and Milan

12.45 Donatella Massimilla (CETEC) *Shakespeare on the road* (Fondazione Cariplo Project)

13.00 Lunch break by CETEC with Ape Car "To Bee or not to Bee".



14.30 Shooting Shakespeare

Chair: Renato Gabrielli (Civica Scuola di Teatro Paolo Grassi)

Docufilm *Shakespeare Out* by Emanuele Giorgetti and Paolo Sammati

Video *Shakespeare & Memory* by Cecilia Rubino (Lang College/The New School, New York) in Skype conversation

15.30 *Alla ricerca dell'opera segreta di Shakespeare. Tutte le riscritture shakespeariane di Armando Punzo.*

Chair: Mariacristina Cavecchi

Armando Punzo (Carte Blanche/Compagnia della Fortezza, Volterra) in conversation with Renato Palazzi.

Presentation of the video-installation *In cielo si combatte una guerra civile. Gli Shakespeare di Armando Punzo.* (Video projection by Stefano Vaja and music by Andrea Salvadori)

17.00 Conference Closing



Ringraziamenti

We thank all the students, actors, directors and scholars who took part in this Shakespearean adventure.

Our particular thanks goes to our Chancellor Gianluca Vago, and professors Daniela Candia, Luca Clerici, Alessandro Cassol, Marco Modenesi (Università degli Studi di Milano), Filippo Del Corno (Milan Arts Council) and Alison Driver (British Council Italy).

TEXTS BY: RUBEN BENATTI AND ANGELA TIZIANA TARANTINI, ELISA BOLCHI, ESTER BOSSI, MARCO CANANI, MARIACRISTINA CAVECCHI, MAURO GENTILE, MADDALENA GIOVANNELLI, MARCO ISIDORI, TOMASZ KOWALSKI, DAVID LI JUN, SIMONA MEDOLAGO, MARIA ELISA MONTIRONI, DAVIDE NOVELLO, CRISTINA PARAVANO, MARGARET ROSE, CECILIA RUBINO, SARA SONCINI.



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