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'Reappropriating' *Romeo and Juliet*: the Play Restored to Italy

The story of Romeo and Juliet has been reinvented in a number of musical adaptations. One of the boldest and most sophisticated attempts is *Giulietta e Romeo* (2007), a two-act Italian production with the music of the French-Italian singer and composer Riccardo Cocciante and with a libretto by the poet Pasquale Panella. As Cristina Paravano argues in this article, the work offers a unique opportunity to rethink Shakespeare and Italy from a suggestive contemporary Italian perspective. What distinguished this production from other musical adaptations was its strong intertextuality on a musical and textual level. By embracing forms of re-creation and re-vision, it created a profoundly and intrinsically Italian version of the story, drawing on and combining Italian musical, literary, and cultural traditions. The result was a combination of Cocciante's pop-rock background, contemporary pop-electronic music, operatic conventions and techniques, and Italian musical tradition, all filtered through the memory of Nino Rota's tunes written for Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*. On the other hand, Panella's libretto taps into Shakespeare's Italian sources: while keeping to the Shakespearean plot line, the author adds interpolations from Luigi da Porto's *Istoria novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti* (1530) and Matteo Bandello's novella (1554, 2: IX). The present paper evaluates how this innovative rendition enacts a further exchange between England and Italy so that metaphorically Italy 'reappropriates' its own story. Cristina Paravano . . .

Key terms: Shakespeare, Musical adaptation, Riccardo Cocciante, Pasquale Panella, Italian cultural identity

AFTER THE DISCOVERY of Juliet's death, the servant Peter asks the musicians to play some music to comfort him, claiming that

When griping grieves the heart doth wound,
And doleful dumps the mind oppress,
Then music with her silver sound . . .
With speedy help doth lend redress.

IV, v, 123-5, 138¹

Peter's praise of music is not surprising in such a lyrical tragedy as *Romeo and Juliet*, probably one of the first experiments 'in creating musical patterns without music'.² Predictably, over the centuries the story has been fertile ground for musical adaptations, and 'refashioned by each subsequent age in the image of itself'.³ The two lovers from Verona have been protagonists of a number of musical renditions, including symphonies (Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, 1870), ballets (Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, 1935), operas (Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, 1867) and

musicals (Bernstein's *West Side Story*, 1957; Presgurvic's *Roméo et Juliette: de la haine à l'amour*, 2001). Latterly they have been 'depicted and transformed in mass-marketed pop music directed primarily at young audiences',⁴ as in the case of Dire Straits' *Romeo and Juliet* (1980) and Dolly Parton's *Romeo* (1993).

Much critical attention has been devoted to the afterlives of Shakespeare's texts in music. A look at the most recent and exhaustive contribution to this field, Julie Sanders's *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings* (2007), reveals that, despite the Italian sources of the story and the setting in Verona, not many Italian musicians have adapted *Romeo and Juliet*, perhaps discouraged by the difficulties and 'intricacy of Shakespeare's orchestration of dance, music, speech, and gesture'.⁵

Sanders's study was published before the opening of the most sophisticated Italian

adaptation of the play, *Giulietta e Romeo* (2007), a two-act production featuring music by the French-Italian composer Riccardo Cocciante and a libretto by the poet Pasquale Panella. However, this work is conveniently listed in Vincenza Minutella's *Reclaiming Romeo and Juliet* (2013), which investigates the play's Italian origins and the dynamics of (re)appropriation by Italian translators, adaptors, and directors since the eighteenth century. Even though the numerous and various musical adaptations of the play are not discussed, the monograph provides a solid theoretical basis which is suitable for a critical analysis of Cocciante's work. In fact, Minutella identifies a tendency (from the 1970s onwards) to create productions which stress the Italianness of the story, where 'selected scenes from Shakespeare's play are mixed with related texts, such as the Italian *novelle*, the sonnets, and/or various rewritings of the same story'.⁶

In this regard, Cocciante's adaptation offers a unique opportunity to rethink the relationship between Shakespeare and Italy from a contemporary Italian perspective. His innovative production (albeit not fully appreciated by audiences and critics) enacts a further exchange between England and Italy so that metaphorically the latter 'reappropriates' its own story, while remaining within the Shakespearean framework. On the one hand, from a musical perspective I will discuss the multiple acts of filtration and mediation going on. Cocciante engages directly with the originary Shakespearean text, its Italian sources and centuries of performance traditions and dramatic conventions. As Bassi argues, 'Each new Italian staging, edition, and interpretation of Shakespeare is *an adaptation of an adaptation*, an act of translation that brings a text and a set of meanings back to their "original" context, creating in turn new texts and new meanings.'⁷

Cocciante seems to recapitulate centuries of Italian musical tradition from the Renaissance to the contemporary age, while re-working the tragedy within the conventions of a specific form, the 'opera popolare' ('popular opera'). This genre has some affinities with the operatic Italian tradition of

Verdi and Puccini, which exerted a strong influence on Italian music and still stands as a paramount cultural landmark.

On the other hand, the textual analysis of the libretto will reveal that this rendition re-italianizes the story by filtering *Romeo and Juliet* through the Italian novelistic tradition: while adhering to the Shakespearean plot-line, the author adds interpolations from Luigi Da Porto's *Istoria novellamente ritrovata di due Nobili Amanti* (*A Story Newly Found of two Noble Lovers*, 1530) and Matteo Bandello's *Giulietta e Romeo* (1554, 2: IX). Cocciante's *Giulietta e Romeo* refashions Shakespeare's play by combining the Italian musical, literary, and cultural traditions in a bid to create a profoundly and intrinsically Italian version of the story of Juliet and her Romeo.

An Italian Musical Identity

In 2007, in an interview with the music critic Mario Luzzato Fegiz in *Corriere della Sera*, Cocciante peremptorily distances his work from the tradition of musicals in England and in the United States:⁸

I musical hanno un linguaggio polveroso, che non ha legami col presente. È musica di cinquanta anni fa. Che non interessa i giovani. . . La mia è musica d'oggi, un mix fra la nostra musica popolare e la nostra tradizione.⁹

[The language of musicals is outdated and has no connection with the present. Their music dates back to fifty years ago and is unappealing to younger generations. . . My music, instead, is topical, a mixture of Italian pop music and our tradition.]¹⁰

In terms of genre, *Giulietta e Romeo* may be defined as an 'opera popolare' rather than a musical.¹¹ While critics are still debating what exactly this genre is, it is generally agreed that it has its origin in the European, mainly Italian, stage tradition; it is a kind of hybrid which combines Italian opera with elements deriving from the musical, and foregrounds a form of narration through songs instead of prose moments.¹² Therefore *Giulietta e Romeo* stands as an alternative to the musical and a sort of re-actualization of the Italian operatic tradition: its aim is to

recreate for a present-day audience what opera represented ‘for Italians in the nineteenth century: an art belonging to a much larger segment of the population rather than a diversion for court circles’.¹³

This specific popular opera originated from a partnership between Coccianti and Panella, a well-known Italian poet and lyricist. Their collaboration dates back to 2002, when Panella translated into Italian Luc Plamondon’s French libretto of *Notre Dame de Paris*, with music by Coccianti. Their close and fruitful relationship has been compared to that between Verdi and Boito, or Puccini and Giacosa, supreme examples of creative partnerships in the field of opera. Interestingly, neither was ever drawn to the

story of Romeo and Juliet for the purpose of an operatic adaptation. Moreover, Coccianti chooses a play whose ‘presence in the opera house is limited, at least in the now established performance canon’,¹⁴ if compared to the deep-rooted interest of symphony and ballet in this tragedy. Sanders mentions exclusively Vincenzo Bellini’s *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (1830) and Charles Gounod’s *Roméo et Juliette* (1867), but it is worth including also four significant Italian operatic versions, dating from the end of the eighteenth century to the early twentieth. Even if Coccianti and his librettist do not claim any connection with these Italian previous adaptations, there are some remarkable similarities:

Date	Title	Composer	Librettist	Acts
1796	<i>Giulietta e Romeo</i>	Niccolò Zingarelli	Giuseppe M. Foppa	3
	MAIN CHARACTERS Everardo Cappellio, Giulietta, Romeo, Teobaldo, Gilberto, Matilde			
	SOURCE Italian novelistic tradition			
1825	<i>Giulietta e Romeo</i>	N. Vaccaj	Felice Romani	2
	MAIN CHARACTERS Giulietta, Romeo, Capellio, Adele, Tebaldo, Lorenzo			
	SOURCE Italian novelistic tradition			
1830	<i>I Capuleti e i Montecchi</i>	Vincenzo Bellini	Felice Romani	2
	MAIN CHARACTERS Giulietta, Romeo, Tebaldo, Lorenzo, Capellio Capuleti			
	SOURCE Italian novelistic tradition			
1865	<i>Romeo e Giulietta</i>	Filippo Marchetti	Marco M. Marcello	4
	MAIN CHARACTERS Cappellio (Juliet’s father), Romeo, Giulietta, Tebaldo, Paride, Frate Lorenzo, Baldassarre, Marta (nurse)			
	SOURCE Shakespeare			
1922	<i>Giulietta e Romeo</i>	Riccardo Zandonai	Arturo Rossato	3
	MAIN CHARACTERS Romeo, Giulietta, Isabella, Tebaldo, Gregorio, Sansone, Bernabò, cantatore			
	SOURCE Shakespeare			
2007	<i>Giulietta e Romeo</i>	Riccardo Coccianti	Pasquale Panella	2
	MAIN CHARACTERS Romeo, Giulietta, Mercuzio, Benvolio, Tebaldo, Nutrice, Frate Lorenzo, Padre Montecchi, Padre Capuleti, Escalus			
	SOURCE Italian novelistic tradition, Shakespeare			

Cocciante seems to be following in his predecessors' footsteps: most of these operas are in two acts (or four) and the most recurrent title is *Giulietta e Romeo*, with the inversion of the protagonists' names, as in the title of Bandello's *novella*. Moreover, the operatic versions have fewer characters than the Shakespeare original and do not feature Paris, with the exception of Marchetti/Marcello's adaptation, which is explicitly Shakespearean in derivation. Also the characters of Cocciante's work are not exactly pared down from *Romeo and Juliet*'s *dramatis personae*: Juliet's and Romeo's mother as well as Paris have been omitted, for instance, in a bid to increase the focus on the lovers.

Finally, two tendencies may be noticed in the use of sources. The first three Italian operatic adaptations (Zingarelli/Foppa, Vaccaj/Romani, and Bellini/Romani), which openly 'bypassed Shakespeare and went back to the original Italian sources of the play',¹⁵ can be conceived as the first attempts to reclaim the lovers for Italy. The other two (Marchetti/Marcello and Zandonai/Rossato), instead, drew on Shakespeare. As I will argue later on, Cocciante incorporates the two opposing tendencies, shaping a work whose identity is based on the interaction between these two poles, the Italian *novelle* and the Shakespearean source text.

In *Giulietta e Romeo*, the recourse to operatic techniques and the influence of Italian opera not only contribute to strengthening the Italian identity of the production but also highlight some specific musical aspects related to Italy embedded in the Shakespearean tragedy. On the one hand, Cocciante reinterprets and modernizes several devices and conventions of the opera, such as the employment of recitatives and arias. He has defined many of the songs as arias, as with Mercutio's 'La regina della notte' ('The Queen of the Night'), which is the musical analogue to Shakespeare's Queen Mab's monologue. Interestingly, for opera enthusiasts, the title also evokes a famous character in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Königin der Nacht (The Queen of the Night).

The connection with the operatic world is also underscored by Harold Bloom, who sees

this monologue as a form of aria,¹⁶ and suggests that some specific qualities of opera are interwoven in the Shakespearean text. Melchiori likewise argued that in *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare has inserted in embryo 'some features of lyric opera'.¹⁷ Like Verdi's *Rigoletto* (1851) and Shakespeare's tragedy, *Giulietta e Romeo* is

saturated and integrated with strong dramatic and lyric beauty, poignant expressions of emotion and pathos, despair, romantic agonies, passions of love, and, of course, that tempestuous fury that churns the opera: revenge.¹⁸

Conversely, Cocciante's production has been labelled as 'madrigalistic'.¹⁹ While this term is used defamatorily to stigmatize the lack of appeal of the adaptation, it nonetheless emphasizes its Renaissance sonorities by evoking the Italian madrigal (a part song for three or four voices only). As Melchiori noticed, this musical form is to be found in *Romeo and Juliet*. The polyphonic complaint lament over Juliet's presumptive death is structured as a madrigal: 'The four characters involved, in view of their roles, suggest the four main varieties of human voices: Paris as tenor introduces the lamentation and is joined by the other three voices'.²⁰ A choral complaint similar to a madrigal marks the end of *Giulietta e Romeo*, when Lord Capulet, Lord Montague, and the Friar mourn the lovers' deaths.

Undeniably the production has a marked Italian musical identity. Besides operatic conventions and techniques, and Renaissance resonances, it also combines Cocciante's pop-rock background and contemporary pop-electronic music, all filtered through the memory of Nino Rota's tunes written for the soundtrack of Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), the most famous Italian film taken from the play, which 'has gained a canonized status among Italian audiences'.²¹ Thus *Giulietta e Romeo* seems to be in dialogue with previous musical adaptations, while absorbing the Italian musical tradition to give a 'new voice' to the 'distinctively sharp lyric quality' of the tragedy.²²

Italian Stage and Cultural Identity

The work's Italian identity and its experimental quality are evident also in terms of staging, costume design, and lyrics. The show premiered in Verona on 1 June 2007, arousing great expectations about a long tour in Italy and abroad. Coccianti insisted on not translating the text for possible performances abroad and instead provided surtitles for the audience.²³

The production and the cast were almost entirely Italian, including the set designer and director, while the costumes were designed by multi-award winner Gabriella Pescucci. Her costumes, a combination of design aspects from different eras, perfectly reflect the identity of the characters, an amalgam of Shakespeare and the Italian tradition, but projected into our contemporary age. Combining Renaissance style with modern dress and medieval allusions, the characters wear short-fitted Shakespearean jackets embellished with straps and metal studs worn over tight trousers tucked into boots for the men, and empire-line dresses, with textile decoration for the women. Thanks to her costumes, the characters appear to have just stepped out of a painting. They boast the rich fabrics of Titian, the subtle tones of Caravaggio, and the medieval romance of the pre-Raphaelites.

The same balance can be found in the libretto. Panella's text closely follows the Shakespearean plot line, the scene division, and its temporal articulation in a few days, while adding some details from Bandello's and Da Porto's *novelle*, concerning the protagonists' psychological insight and the conclusion. *Giulietta e Romeo* seems to be eliciting a sort of double reception: to understand the mechanism of adaptation and its implications, audiences are expected to recognize what comes from the original play and what from the Italian sources: 'It is the interplay between the two that generates meaning within the production.'²⁴

The first act of this popular opera roughly covers Shakespeare's Act I (Scenes i, ii, iv, and v) and II, 1. It opens with a song entitled 'Verona' as an overture that introduces the

young protagonists and points out some of the issues around which the story revolves: 'Amore, vita, morte' ['Love, life, death'] and 'un odio che si può toccare' [palpable hatred]. The text reinterprets in modern terms the 'ancient grudge' of the warring families, while retaining a powerful image from Bandello, 'l'odio abbarbicato ne i petti loro'²⁵ ['their chests so deeply scarred by their hatred']²⁶.

The portrayal of Mercutio, who performs the song, reflects the mixture of sources that characterizes the show. The character was developed by Shakespeare from a hint in Brooke's *Romeo and Juliet* (1562), an English translation of Bandello's *novella*. In Coccianti's adaptation, far from being a licentious 'debunker of the fashionable',²⁷ this purely Shakespearean invention is Italianized. His depiction loses the homosexual overtones often highlighted in musical and filmic adaptations, and seems to have absorbed the characteristics of his Italian counterpart, the young man Marcuccio, who dances next to Juliet at the ball. As we read in Bandello,

Era un uomo di corte molto piacevole e generalmente molto ben visto per i suoi motti festevoli e per le piacevolenze ch'egli sapeva fare, perciò che sempre aveva qualche novelluccia per le mani da far ridere la brigata e troppo volentieri, senza danno di nessuno, si sollazzava. (p. 95)

[He was a man of the court, and most agreeable, whose witty, pleasant ways made him a general favourite; he had always some good stories to set the company laughing, while his merriment brought with it harm to none. (p. 58)]

After the prologue, there are well-known incidents not included in the Italian sources such as the fight between the servants, Mercutio's monologue about Queen Mab and episodes that are clearly Shakespearean in derivation (Juliet forbids Romeo to swear upon the moon, for instance). It is from the scene at the ball onwards that Coccianti seems to rely more persistently on the filter of the Italian sources. Romeo's presence at the ball does not cause any violent reaction since, as in Bandello,

era anco giovinetto molto costumato e gentile,

era generalmente da tutti amato. I suoi nemici poi non gli ponevano così la mente come forse avrebbero fatto s'egli fosse stato di maggior etate.
(p. 93)

[He had the most charming manners, everybody liked him. His enemies paid him no attention, as they might have done had he been older.]

Moreover, as in both the Italian sources, it is at the ball that Juliet is first introduced to the audience, while in Shakespeare she appears onstage in I, iii, with her mother and nurse.

The Italian tradition is also noticeable on a thematic and textual level. Two songs associated with the scenes at the party, notably 'Occhi negli occhi' ('eyes in eyes') and 'La mano nella mano' ('hand in hand'), find verbal parallels more in Bandello's work than in Shakespeare's. 'Occhi negli occhi', for instance, is a celebration of the importance of sight and its power in love; the same idea is to be found in Da Porto's protagonists who 'in tanto che mai bene né l'uno né l'altro havea, se non quanto si vedeano'. (p. 47) [were never happy unless they constantly exchanged looks as a sign of their mutual love and admiration.] (p. 29)]

Cercare gli occhi con gli occhi
e dentro gli occhi cercare
il primo amore da fare
e farlo come lo sai
che con lo sguardo lo fai
tra gli occhi e gli occhi suoi. . .
Ma poi non bastano gli occhi
e non ti basta il pensiero
e vuoi la voce all'orecchio
e vuoi toccare con mano
e vuoi vedere che vedi
ad occhi chiusi tu.

Your eyes are looking for her eyes
and in those eyes looking for
your first love
and make love as you well know
with a glance exchanged
between your eyes and hers. . .
But then her eyes are not enough
And the thought of her is not enough
And you want her voice in your ear
And you want to touch her with your hand
And you want to see that you can see
With your eyes closed.

In the following extract Bandello has recourse to words evoking different sensory

domains progressively associated with love: sight, hearing, touching. The song offers the same logical progression from sight to touch, signifying an increasing desire for the partner.

Questa infinitamente le piacque e giudicò che la più bella ed aggraziata giovane non aveva veduta già mai. Pareva a Romeo quanto più intentamente la mirava che tanto più le bellezze di quella divenissero belle, e che le grazie più grate si facessero, onde cominciò a vagheggiarla molto amorosamente, non sapendo da là di lei vista levarsi; e sentendo gioia inusitata in contemplarla, tra sé propose far ogni suo sforzo per acquistar la grazia e l'amor di quella. . . Non conoscendo anco ella Romeo, ma parendole pure il più bello e leggiadro giovine che trovar si potesse, meravigliosamente de la vista s'appagava, e dolcemente e furtivamente talora così sotto occhio mirandolo, sentiva non so che dolcezza al core che tutta di gioioso ed estremo piacere l'ingombrava. Desiderava molto forte la giovane che Romeo si mettesse in ballo, a ciò che meglio veder si potesse e l'udisse parlare, parendole che altra tanta dolcezza devesse dal parlar di quello uscire quanta dagli occhi di lui le pareva, tuttavia che il mirava, senza fine gustare.
(p. 93-4)

[She pleased him infinitely and he deemed her the loveliest and most graceful young lady he had ever seen. The more he gazed at her, the more beautiful and charming she seemed to become, so he began to contemplate her lovingly. In fact, he could not take his eyes off her. A strange joy filled him as he looked at her, and he inwardly resolved to make every effort to win her over. . . Romeo was unknown to her, but he seemed to her the most handsome young man she had ever met, and she took a strange pleasure in looking at him, though she did this in a shy, furtive fashion, while in her heart she felt a rapture indefinably delicious and immeasurably sweet. She was willing that Romeo should dance with her, so that she could see him more clearly, and hear him speak, believing that in his voice there would be as great a charm as in his eyes.]

Another song, 'la mano nella mano', describes the first time Romeo and Juliet actually touch each other's hand:

ROMEO

La mano nella mano finalmente
che tocca con le dita le tue dita

se stringo la tua mano
io stringo la tua vita
la tua più mia che tua.

GIULIETTA:

La mano nella mano è il sentimento
io sento la tua mano che lo sente
le dita sulle dita
e finalmente abbiamo
la nostra vita in mano.

ROMEO:

Finally hand in hand
My hand touches your fingers with mine
If I take your hand,
I take your life
Your life which is more mine than yours.

JULIET:

My hand in your hand is a feeling
I feel your hand which feels it
My fingers on your fingers
And finally we have
Our life in our hands.

The emphasis is on Romeo and Juliet taking each other's hands, as in Bandello and Da Porto, who both concentrate on this bodily part. Actually, during the dance they both point out that Romeo's hand is warm, while Marcuccio's is cold:

'Sì, benedetto il vostro venire qui appo me;
perciocché voi almeno questa stanca mano
calda mi terrete, onde Marcuccio la destra mi
agghiaccia.' Costui preso alquanto d'ardire
segùi: 'Se io a voi con la mia mano la vostra
riscaldo, voi co' begli occhi il mio core
accendete.' (Da Porto p. 46)

[I bless your coming to me, for now your hand will at least keep my left hand warm while Marcuccio, with his touch, freezes my right one.' Romeo, thus encouraged, said: 'If by my hand I warm yours, your beautiful eyes have inflamed my heart.]

In the two lovers' speeches there are a number of verbal echoes taken from the Italian sources. After the discovery of Romeo's real identity, Juliet is emotionally torn apart and questions his intentions in the song 'Chi sei?' [Who are you?], when she wonders who he really is, whether a deceiver willing to take revenge or a faithful lover:

Ma tu chi sei?
e io perché
ti amo e poi

mi chiedo se
sei ingannatore
o sei l'amore
ma tu chi sei? . . .
La vita mia adesso so
che frase è se detta a te
la vita è tua, più tua che mia.

[But who are you?
And why
do I love you?
And then I wonder
Whether you are a deceiver
or a lover
But who are you?
Now I know what it means
if I say that you are my life
my life is yours, more yours than mine.]

Bandello's Juliet is likewise uncertain about Romeo's intentions:

Forse lo scaltrito giovine quelle parole per
ingannarmi m'ha dette, a ciò che ottenendo
cosa da me meno che onesta, di me si gabbia e
donna di volgo mi faccia, parendoli forse a
questo modo far la vendetta de la nemistá che
tutto il dí incrudelisce piú tra i suoi e i miei
parenti.

[Perhaps the roguish lad only said such words
to deceive me, and, having gained a shameful
advantage, would laugh to see me turned into
his trull, thus taking his revenge for the feud
that grows ever fiercer between his family and
my own!]

Yet she soon makes up her mind: 'Oimé, che
posso io dirvi se non ch'io sono assai piú
vostra che mia?' (p. 96) [Alas! What can I say
except that I am much more yours than
mine? (p. 59)]. Romeo expresses the same
feeling when he echoes a line from Bandello:

Devendo io ad ogni modo morire in questa
amorosa impresa, qual piú fortunata morte mi
può avvenire che a voi vicino restar morto?

[Indeed, if in this amorous enterprise I must
perish, what death more fortunate could befall
me than to die near you?]

Romeo sings:

Morirei
Ma le morirei vicino
Le darei
La vita come fosse un bacio.

[I would die
But I would die near her
I would give her
My life as if it were a kiss.]

In Act II Coccianti likewise follows the Shakespearean storyline and seems to be adhering more consistently to the spirit of the tragedy. The two most noteworthy changes are represented by the nature of Juliet's death and the conclusion. 'For a variety of reasons,' Dessen states, 'theatrical professionals continue to be unsatisfied with the closing moments of Shakespeare's plays as scripted in the Folio and the Quartos, so that a playgoer is especially likely to encounter some form of rescripting in Act V.'²⁸

In Presgurvic's musical adaptation, *Romeo et Juliette: de la haine à l'amour* (2002), the adaptor inserted an additional character, Death, who hands Juliet Romeo's dagger, which she uses to kill herself. This contributes to emphasizing the role of fate and death, looming presences over the lovers since the beginning of the play. Coccianti is much more radical. Departing from the originary Shakespearean text, the author relies on the Italian sources of the play. Juliet does not kill herself with Romeo's dagger, but she dies of a broken heart. She meets the same death in Bandello's story: 'In tutto si dispose voler morire. Ristretti adunque in sè gli spiriti, con il suo Romeo in grembo, senza dir nulla se ne morì.' (p. 139) [Being resolved to die, she gathered inside herself all her vital forces. Embracing Romeo once more, she straightway expired. (p. 88)]

Indeed, this change weakens the most moving moment of the play. Juliet's death is almost unimpressive, theatrically speaking, and fails to move the spectator. Coccianti probably left the most pathetic moment for the final dramatic choral song mentioned earlier, in which the Lords Capulet and Montague and the Friar interrogate one another regarding the death of the young lovers by persistently repeating 'Why', a word which powerfully resonates, without finding an answer.

It is Da Porto who concludes this work on an interrogative note, by asking a number of

unanswered rhetorical questions.

O fedel pietà che nelle donne anticamente
regnavi, ove hora se' ita? In qual petto hoggi
t'alberghi? Qual donna sarebbe al presente,
come la fedel Giulietta fece, sopra il suo
amante morta? Quando fie mai che di questa
il bel nome dalle più pronte lingue celebrato
non sia? Quante ne sarieno hora, che non
prima l'amante morto veduto harebbono, che
di trovarne un altro si harriano pensato, non
che elle gli fossero morte allato? Che s'io
veggio contr'ogni debito di ragione, ogni fede
et ogni ben servire obliando, alcune donne
quelli amanti, che già più cari hebbono, non
morti ma alquanto dalla fortuna percossi
abbandonare, che si dee credere che esse
facessero doppo la lor morte?

[Oh faithful love that formerly reigned in the
hearts of women, where have you fled? In
whose bosom do you dwell? Where is the
woman today who would act as the faithful
Juliet did towards her dead lover? When will
her fair name be celebrated by the most
eloquent tongues? How many women are
there now who, in these times, on seeing their
lovers dead, would not hasten to find out
others, sooner than die by their side? And
since I see that some women, ever contrary to
duty, reason, fidelity, and attachment, forget
and abandon these lovers, who were once
dear to them, not because of their death, but
only on account of their being persecuted by
fortune, what can we imagine they would do
after their death? (p. 51)]

At the end of this popular opera there is the same 'glooming peace' (V, iii, 304) mentioned by the Prince in the tragedy, which may suggest a reconciliation between the families which never takes place on Coccianti's stage. What dominates, though, is a sense of bewilderment since the characters have not realized the exceptional quality of Romeo and Juliet's tragic experience and can only wonder why this might have happened.

The Italian Cultural Legacy

'Some adaptations,' Guneratne argues, 'elicit a re-examination of Shakespeare's awareness of a Renaissance and its connection with Italianness.'²⁹ Coccianti's *Giulietta e Romeo* is among them. This *opera popolare* is an effective celebration of Italy's rich cultural, literary, and musical heritage, and enables us to

consider the relationship between Shakespeare's tragedy and Italian cultural tradition from a new perspective. Undoubtedly Coccianti succeeded in reclaiming Romeo and Juliet for Italy: he created an experimental show, conferring on it an Italian atmosphere with a strong Italian identity in terms of music, costumes, scenes, language, and two very Italian protagonists. Shakespeare's play still remains a canonical text but, intertwined with the Italian native tradition re-emerging in salient moments, is enriched with different psychological nuances.

The audiences' and the critics' reception, though, was not what Coccianti and Panella expected, since the show did not have a long run nor did it tour beyond Italy. We might presume that the musical and literary connections as well as the intertextual dialogue with the previous adaptations were too complex and articulated to understand. In 2006, one year before the first performance of this production, Melchiori claimed that all composers have so far failed in their attempt to create a musical rendition that exalted the intense lyricism of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.³⁰ Coccianti certainly managed to cast a new light on a part of the polyphonic subtext of this lyrical tragedy and strengthen its Italian identity (the Renaissance sonorities of the madrigal, some operatic conventions and techniques of Italian opera embedded in the play, and the musicality of the text itself, but failed to show the healing power of music, able to soothe, comfort, and inspire, that the servant Peter wished for).

Notes and References

1. All quotations from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* are from the Arden Shakespeare, ed. Brian Gibbons (London; New York: Routledge, 1980).
2. Giorgio Melchiori, 'The Music of Words: from Madrigal to Drama and Beyond: Shakespeare Foreshadowing an Operatic Technique', in Michele Marrapodi, ed., *Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 241–50, at p. 249.
3. Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 3.
4. Stephen M. Buhler, 'Reviving Juliet, Repackaging Romeo: Transformations of Character in Pop and Post-Pop Music', in Richard Burt, ed., *Shakespeare after Mass Media* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 243–64, at p. 243.
5. Anthony R. Guneratne, 'Shakespeare, Italian Music-Drama, and Contemporary Performance: Space, Time, and the Acoustic Worlds of *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Tempest*', in Michele Marrapodi, ed., *Shakespeare and the Italian Renaissance* (Farnham: Ashgate 2014), p. 317–32, at p. 326.
6. Vincenza Minutella, *Reclaiming Romeo and Juliet: Italian Translations for Page, Stage, and Screen* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), p. 117.
7. Shaul Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare: Place, 'Race', Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2016), p. 4.
8. Beside the Anglo-American tradition of musicals, we may presume that Coccianti also referred to another contemporary musical adaptation of the play, *Romeo et Juliette, de la haine à l'amour* (2001), with music and lyrics by Gérard Presgurvic, a very successful pop-rock version which has been touring all over the world since 2001. In 2014 it was also adapted into Italian with lyrics by Vincenzo Incenzo, while Coccianti's version was never revived.
9. Mario Luzzatto Fegiz, 'Romeo e Giulietta? Una guerra tra bande', in *Corriere della Sera*, 10 February 2007 p. 44. Available at <http://archivistorico.corriere.it/2007/febbraio/10/Romeo_Giulietta_Una_guerra_tr_a_co_9_07021005.shtml>, accessed: 1 September 2017.
10. The Italian translations are all mine, unless otherwise stated.
11. Nevertheless, Minutella lists the adaptation as a musical. See Vincenza Minutella, *Reclaiming Romeo and Juliet*, p. 224.
12. The main examples of *opera popolare* are Italian: Lucio Dalla's *Tosca Amore Disperato*, PFM's *Dracula Opera Rock*, Michele Guardì-Pippo Flora's *I Promessi Sposi-Opera Moderna*, to mention just the most significant.
13. William Ashbrook, 'The Nineteenth Century: Italy', in Roger Parker, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 169–205, at p. 170.
14. Julie Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 97.
15. James N. Loehlin, 'Introduction', in William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 'Shakespeare in Production' series (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 42.
16. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), p. 37.
17. G. Melchiori, 'The Music of Words', p. 249.
18. Burton D. Fisher, *A History of Opera: Milestones and Metamorphoses* (Miami: Opera Journeys Publishing 2005), p. 164.
19. Alberto Pellegrino, 'Romeo e Giulietta di David Zard a Verona', 26 October 2013 <www.musiculturaonline.it/romeo-giulietta-david-zard-verona/>, accessed 1 September 2017.
20. G. Melchiori, 'The Music of Words', p. 249.
21. V. Minutella, *Reclaiming Romeo and Juliet*, p. 113.
22. Brian Gibbons, 'Introduction', in William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Arden Shakespeare, p. 42.
23. Lidia Napoli, 'Giulietta e Romeo. Curiosità e dati', 2007, available from <www.teatro.it/rubriche/romeo_e_giulietta/curiosit_e_dati_9185>, accessed 1 September 2017]
24. Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr. 'Are you Shakespearience? Rock Music and the Production of Shakespeare', in Jennifer Hulbert, K. J. Wetmore, Jr., and Robert L. York,

ed., *Shakespeare and Youth Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 117–46, at p. 128.

25. All quotations from Bandello and Da Porto are from Daria Perocco, ed., *La prima Giulietta: edizione critica e commentate delle novelle di Luigi da Porto e Matteo Maria Bandello* (Bari: Palomar, 2008), p. 89.

26. The translation of Da Porto's and Bandello's *novelle* is from Adolph Caso, ed., *Romeo and Juliet: Original Texts of Masiuccio, Da Porto, Bandello, Shakespeare* (Boston: Dante University of America Press, 1992). If no page number is provided, the translation is mine.

27. B. Gibbons, ed., 'Introduction', p. 40.

28. Alan C. Dessen, *Rescripting Shakespeare: the Text, the Director, and Modern Productions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 109.

29. Anthony R. Guneratne, 'Shakespeare, Italian Music-Drama and Contemporary Performance', p. 318.

30. Giorgio Melchiori, *Shakespeare e l'opera* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2006), p. 55.