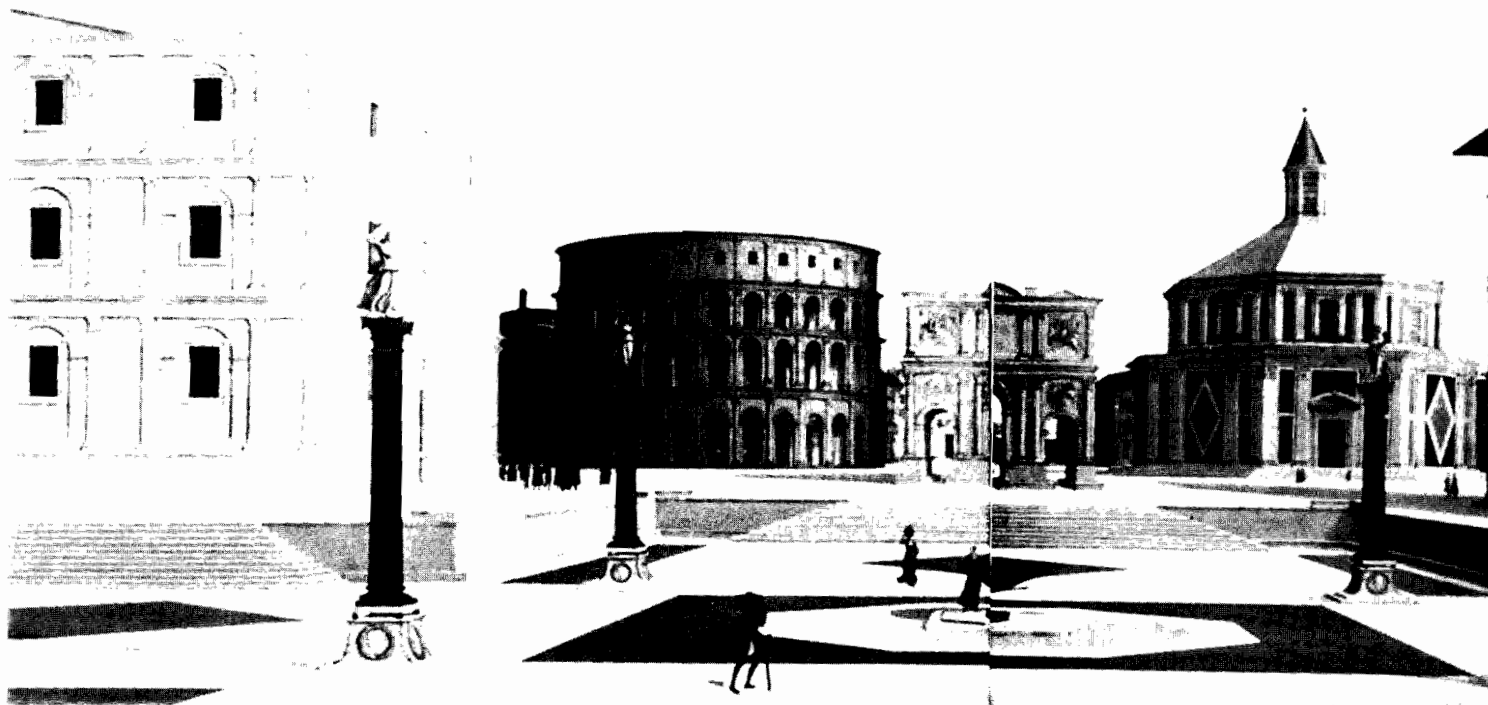


Shakespeare



View of an Ideal City, Anonymous, Italian, late fifteenth century.
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The City

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Jack

Shakespeare and Italy



The City and the Stage

Jack D'Amico

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Some Versions of Italy

THIS BOOK EXPLORES what Shakespeare imagined about Italian life in cities such as "fair Verona," where he set the scene in *Romeo and Juliet* (prologue 2). Through Italy, I argue, Shakespeare could imaginatively project the promise and the danger of a more open society. In the sources he used, or his more general knowledge of Italian life, he perceived certain dominant characteristics of family, government, and society. The analogous structures of everyday life in and around London played an important role in his conception and its representation on the stage, for his Italy was not a place to which one escaped from the everyday, but rather a place where familiar structures were subtly reconfigured. In this process the analogy between the Italian city as theater and the stage itself took on a special significance. His Italian cities recast the familiar much as his theater did, for openness and freedom of movement, distinctive features of his stage, characterize life in his Italian city-states.

In his plays, Shakespeare uses many devices to merge his Italy with London and its surrounding landscape. He moves between the distant setting and the local scene to refresh the imagination, reminding the audience of how strange the features of their city appear when seen from a new point of view and of how familiar the urban landscape of a foreign city becomes when represented on London's stage. He may have conceived of Italian life as particularly theatrical because of what he knew of the customs and temperament of its people, but I think his conception

owed as much to his sense of the inherent theatricality of urban life. The Italian city-state is London reduced to typical theatrical spaces, such as the piazza, the street, and the garden. The fact that Shakespeare's conception of the Italian city-state draws on salient features of London also acts as a brake on stereotypes. The city-states Shakespeare recreates on his stage are as much Italy Anglicized as the *Inglese Italianato*.

There have been a number of excellent studies of what Shakespeare may have known about and where he may have gained his knowledge of Italy. To explore how he uses the basic elements of his stage to create the Italian city-states of his comedies and tragedies, I structure the argument around key centers of life within the city. This approach breaks up the treatment of individual plays but creates, I think, a fresh perspective on the way Shakespeare treats these Italian settings and the unique social and political forms he imagines within them. It also allows us to consider how the basic elements of his urban perspective change in different kinds of plays and at different points in his career.

Shakespeare's stage does not present the audience with a theatrical set that fixes the image of place; it is open to the shifting perspectives that can be generated by language, props, structures placed on the stage (Hotson 131), costume, music, and the ingenious use of the facade, the pillars, the heavens, and the trap. The reconstructed Globe theater in London promises to enrich our sense of the theatrical dynamics of Shakespeare's stage. While attending performances of *Henry V* and of *The Winter's Tale* at the reconstructed Globe, I was struck by the fact that the frequent and subtle shifts in wind, sunlight, clouds, and temperature, combined with the movements of the audience, remind one, as much as the chorus does, of the theatrical enterprise of creating an imagined world on a stage in a particular part of the city of London. Audience and performers gathered within the walls of the gallery share a locus that has the potential to become any imaginable setting. But at the same time the theaterplace, like a marketplace, is never canceled, even as the exchange of places takes shape in the imagination. This double consciousness of the imagined and the present repeatedly removes and returns the sense of place, transports while reminding the spectators of where they are. The shared enterprise of theater works despite and because of distractions—airplanes now and street vendors then.

One is also struck by the imposing effect of the stage facade, the gallery, pillars, and heavens all painted to create an architectural structure rich in classical allusions, with its splendid capitols, arches, and astrological figures viewed from the wooden benches that never let you forget where and who you are. This architectural frame, when combined with costume and language, can certainly be used to evoke settings that are geographically and culturally distant from the audience, whether that other place is imagined to be Bohemia, France, the English court, or Italy.

The Choruses of *Henry V* and *The Winter's Tale* articulate a relationship between the audience and the play that remains constant at some level throughout the performance. The sense of presence creates an equally important and strong sense of participation. Certain lines naturally lend themselves to the kind of stage business that creates a sense of inclusion. The audience does not merely observe the distant goings-on but participates in the trial of Hermione, or the exposure of the English traitors Cambridge, Scroop, and Northumberland. With time, directors will, I think, learn that staged attempts to prompt audience involvement create a false note. The stage itself does the job and should be allowed to draw in an audience, or to create those distractions that the play and the improvisational skills of the actors must digest. The unique combination of a gallery that encloses while leaving the audience exposed to the open air is repeated in the great thrust stage, which centers the action amidst the spectators and is at the same time enclosed by its splendidly painted pillars and heavens. The structure sets up a very basic dynamic of inclusion and exclusion, confinement and exile that extends from the action of the play to the relationship between the play and the audience. Just as Hermione, at one moment the pregnant center of Sicilia, can suddenly be exiled from the court and imprisoned, the audience can just as suddenly be drawn into the action that unfolds in this seemingly distant court, made to participate in the trial of Hermione and to feel implicated in her suffering.



Shakespeare does not write city comedy or citizen comedy, terms that have been used to describe plays about citizens, portrayed sympathetically

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cally or satirically, plays which share London settings, themes, and character types, and which may have been written with particular theaters and playgoers in mind (Gurr, *Playgoing* 165; Leggatt 4; Gibbons 24). Shakespeare works within an imagined urban space that contains a full range of character types, whose interests are not focused on the dominant preoccupations of city comedy, marriage and money. The Italian city-state as he conceives of it includes variations on the court as well as the marketplace. The cities are not merely, nominally Italian, for through them Shakespeare dramatizes a distinctively open way of life that remains constant in comedy and tragedy, in the street or within the household.

In his essay "Shakespeare and Italy, or, the law of diminishing returns," Manfred Pfister discusses the limitations of many studies of Shakespeare's Italy and makes the following suggestion: "Starting perhaps from Robert Weimann's analysis of the spatial dialectics of *locus* and *platea* in Shakespeare and the popular theatre of his time, one would have to study how the construction of the fictional other, the other place, is fore-grounded in the theatrical representation itself and what purposes this serves" (300). This approach would trace the relationship between *platea*, the nonrepresentational and nonlocalized setting identified with the open space of the thrust stage, and *locus*, cities such as Messina, Venice, or Padua. Weimann identifies the *platea* with a popular tradition of theater that typically undercuts the illusion of place through direct address, wordplay, and parody. In this scheme, the English clowns dominate the *platea*, while the Italian *locus* remains somewhat distanced from the audience. Leo Salinger contrasts the realistic dialogue of Italian comedy with Shakespeare's use of verse to create a richer, more learned language, which distances his characters, who are "presented to their first spectators as foreigners from distant, semi-fictitious countries" (*Traditions* 220).

But there is also interplay, as Giorgio Melchiori suggests when he says that "the very *lazzi* ultimately derived from the *commedia dell'arte* are metamorphosed, are translated into the language of the society in which Shakespeare and his audience moved" (105). In the prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's Chorus draws the audience into the "two hours' traffic" between the Italian story and the world of the audience: "The

which if you with patient ears attend, / What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend." The Chorus appeals to that imaginative venture of theater which requires the patient auditors to participate in a joint enterprise that will mend any particular misses. In this venture neither the stage, nor the scene that is Verona, can be easily segmented into the familiar and the alienated. Whatever he knew, or may have believed about Italy, that country became for him the paradigm of a certain kind of society, an urban world teasingly familiar and yet different in the degree of its openness to exchange and transformation. What he imagined of that world and could bring his audience to imagine through the instrument of his theater were cities whose quick pace tests but never quite loses touch with familiar hierarchies.

Shakespeare has a conception of Italy that cannot be reduced to the "other," if by that we mean a version of the most common prejudices and stereotypes of his age. And it is his stage that provides the basic theatrical vocabulary for his representation of urban life in the Italian city-states of Verona, Venice, Messina, and Padua. As recreated on his stage, the piazza, the street before a house, the garden, and the courtly or domestic interiors articulate his understanding of the unique character of Italian society. To reverse the perspective somewhat, I want to look at how the stage bridges the worlds of England and Italy by means of what we might call spatial analogies. The cities he represents in his plays mean something to the English audience because they are made up of recognizable features of English urban life, things like walls, houses, gates, and gardens. The life lived within these imagined cities has a distinctive character with which the audience can, for the two hours or more of the play, imaginatively traffic (Bruster 35).

In her discussion of the relationship between London and Italy, Angela Locatelli maintains that "every setting, no matter how distant and exotic, is meant as analogous (whether a similarity or opposition is created) to London, and its strangeness is given as the equivalent of London's booming diversity, a diversity which was absolutely necessary to its acquisition of the status of 'capital' or primarily significant 'locus' in the state" (71). In a similar vein, Murray J. Levith observes that "Italy serves in part as metaphor for Shakespeare's England—the metropolitan virtues and vices of Italian places are those of the Queen's and King's cities" (11), and

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G. K. Hunter asserts that "the foreigner could only 'mean' something important, and so be effective as a literary figure, when the qualities observed in him were seen to involve a simple and significant relationship to real life at home" (*Identities* 13). Cities grew as centers for the exchange of everything from goods and services to information, status, and identity (Mumford 255). This characteristic of the city becomes enhanced in Shakespeare's Italian settings and is closely identified with the urban geography of open spaces and intersections, the central square, the market, the crossroads, the port, and the city street.

The analogy between market and theater has been explored in a suggestive way by Jean-Christophe Agnew, who argues that "we need to know how the market was made meaningful at the very moment that meaning was becoming marketable" (12). The movement from "the personal and ceremonial apparatus of the marketplace" to the "relatively impersonal framework of a money and credit market" was mirrored in a theatrical world whose protean character blurred the distinctions of rank, gender, and nation that were, for many, the basis of social order (49). Lombard Street is a place-name that reminds us of the Italian merchants who took over financial operations after the Jews were expelled from London in 1290 (50). But the shift from a marketplace that contained trade to an expanding marketplace required the English to follow the aliens: "All along the sixteenth-century 'commercial axis' that linked the Antwerp and London exchanges, new forms of liquidity were developing that overflowed, where they did not burst, the mold of medieval commerce" (49). And theater created a parallel axis of imaginative travel. Lena Orlin sees the early modern market as "implicated in the move away from a culture of relatively high self-sufficiency and self-containment to one of getting, trading—and travelling—to achieve the new standard of living" ("The Performance" 186). While this new standard might have been identified as the destabilizing other, the Italian city of Shakespeare's plays has its laws and its hierarchies, its walls and gates that can channel or thwart the dynamic energies of the urban world.

The city enclosed within its walls is an important characteristic of Shakespeare's urban geography (Braudel 492–95), but in many ways his conception of Italian cities and their relationship with the outside world comes closer to the vision of Giovanni Botero, who sees trade as the very

essence of the city and a part of God's divine plan: "It seems in very truth that God created the water, not only for a necessary element to the perfection of nature, but more than so, for a most ready means to conduct and bring goods from one country to another. For His Divine Majesty, willing that men should mutually embrace each other as members of one body, divided in such sort His blessings as to no nation did he give all things, to the end that others having need of us, and contrariwise we having need of others, there might grow a community, and from a community love and from love an unity between us" (Botero 6, trans. Peterson 237). This point of view is shared by Herman Kirchner in his "Oration on Travel" from *Coryat's Crudities*. Journeys, he argues, are necessary because heavenly providence has dispersed the gifts and delights of the world so that "we must needs undertake journeyes and voyages to those renowned places, wherin this fragraney and most heavenly plenty doth harbor" (Coryat 1:125).

The city is the goal of the traveler because the city is by its nature a place of accessible variety and exchange. The London Shakespeare knew was a city of great commercial and industrial activity which provided access to the court, the Inns of Court, and to various forms of entertainment—the drinking, whoring, and theatergoing that were not limited to the urban world but which flourished there. And his immediate world, the world of commercial and artistic venture, began to attract a variety of ambitious, talented men to London in the 1570s.

Steven Mullaney and John Gillies examined the place of the stage within the "marginalized" space of London and mapped the dangerous, transgressive elements of the theatrical other. The plays reflect some of the anxieties aroused by much that was considered dangerously fluid in the rapidly changing economic, political, and social life of London. For many, theater itself might have been as foreign as the Italy represented on the stage. Traditional values—patriarchal, aristocratic, agrarian—mixed with a variety of new currents—Protestant, mercantile, and urban. Responses to these crosscurrents were as varied as the historical and critical scholarship that has studied them. As I see it, Shakespeare does not equate the potential for exchange in his Italy with a form of transgressive otherness that had to be circumscribed to maintain traditional values in the emerging nation-state. This general view of the transgres-

sive, with many learned and subtle Philip Armstrong, Stephen Greenblatt, and Alvin Kernan, among others, in the rise of the new humanism and the dramatic intrigues of the court and the glories of the city.

Shakespeare projects an imagined urban settings and creates urban centers in which the rigidity of the social system are softened by the reality of status, as pervasive within the city. The city, undergones a theatrical sea change for a reshaping, if not a transformation regarding the social composition of the public theaters and the patrons who are found a way to address those whose wealth, as well as those who would have and Shakespeare's Italian cities as an

Whatever dangers might have appeared as threats to the old hierarchy, to patterns of conduct—Shakespeare's theater production could work toward something together as works of art, and the theater played out in piazzas, houses, Shakespeare often omits reference to places, such as Piazza San Marco, or to he shapes geography to conform to the place near a river or a port and not far he does this in the chapters that follow asked to imagine in Shakespeare's text a distant place and a familiar place, are introduced to the audience in the English lines.

To create the urban settings of Venice drew on characteristics of the parish

sive, with many learned and subtle variations, has been explored by Philip Armstrong, Stephen Greenblatt, Richard Helgerson, A. J. Hoen-selaars, and Alvin Kernan, among others. Italy brought with it the promise of the new humanism and the dangers of the old Catholicism, the intrigues of the court and the glories of art.

Shakespeare projects an imagined spirit of openness into the Italian settings and creates urban centers in which the privileges of rank and the rigidity of the social system are softened, if not entirely forgotten. The reality of status, as pervasive within the Italian city-states as within England, undergoes a theatrical sea change, which enhances the potential for a reshaping, if not a transformation, of society. Scholars may differ regarding the social composition of the audiences that patronized the public theaters and the patrons who attended the private, but the players found a way to address those whose interests were vested in power and wealth, as well as those who would have identified London, the theater, and Shakespeare's Italian cities as analogous centers of exchange.

Whatever dangers might have appeared in this shifting landscape—threats to the old hierarchy, to patterns of identity, and to ethical codes of conduct—Shakespeare's theater provided an example of how transformation could work toward something of great constancy. The plays held together as works of art, and the theatrical enterprise prospered. Italy is theater played out in piazzas, houses, gardens, and streets. We know that Shakespeare often omits reference to what might have been well-known places, such as Piazza San Marco, or the Roman theater in Verona, while he shapes geography to conform to the place of performance in London, a place near a river or a port and not far from a market. I will elucidate how he does this in the chapters that follow. Like every foreign setting we are asked to imagine in Shakespeare's theater, his "fair Verona" is both a distant place and a familiar place, an Italian city to be sure, but a city introduced to the audience in the English vernacular of the play's opening lines.



To create the urban settings of Venice, Verona, or Padua, Shakespeare drew on characteristics of the parishes and wards of London shared by

the Italian communes: "Propertied urban inhabitants were attached tenaciously not merely to a city but to a street, a parish, an ambience—to a radius of perhaps 150 meters" (Martines 37). But there is an important difference. Shakespeare's Italy is not an emerging nation-state dominated by a central court; his Italian city-states are not satellites revolving around Rome. Some, perhaps most notably Venice, are very distinctive urban centers, and they are all, in a sense, variations on what Lewis Mumford calls "the walled container" (321), enclosed within walls that create an identity, defining a space within which one can be protected, or from which one can be banished. The Italian city-states of Shakespeare's theatrical world retain their separate identities, but they also exist in a greater social and political landscape that encourages social, commercial, and political transactions between these urban centers. William Thomas in *The History of Italy* gives a favorable account of the temperate climate, the "havens open to trade of all nations" (8), and the cosmopolitan character of the cities and of the ideal Italian gentleman: "to his superior obedient, to his equal humble, and to his inferior gentle and courteous; amiable to a stranger and desirous to win his love" (12). Reading Thomas Coryat, who provides an instructive analogue, one has the impression that the traveler moves within an archipelago of cities and towns that dot Lombardy, each offering a unique combination of walls, towers, palaces, churches, and gardens, each with its own customs, antiquities, and works of art and of manufacture. Harry Levin remarks that "Shakespeare delighted in the diversity of the Italian city-states, the movement and interaction from one community to another, often subject to the quasi-epical intervention of their civic dynasties" (22).

Peter Burke calculates that by 1300, twenty-three cities in north and central Italy had a population of 20,000 apiece and that by 1550 there were forty towns with over 10,000 and twenty with over 25,000 inhabitants. Within the towns were to be found gentlemen, merchants, moneylenders, guildsmen, artisans, tradesmen, shopkeepers, and laborers. A striking number of these towns, many of which became city-states, were also centers of study—with thirteen universities among them (*Italian Renaissance* 53). Cities located on or near the seaside, on great rivers, or along the Roman Via Emilia became natural centers of commerce, as well as of banking (223). According to the *Cambridge Economic History of*

Italy, "The two areas which in 15th-century Italy had advanced concentrations of trade, industry, and culture—the lateral formed by the Italian cities and the strip of the Netherlands that had been part of the Holy Roman Empire—was not merely coincidence that the men of the cities had been most successful in escaping from feudal interference and in keeping their own centralized political control offered

I see these cities as analogous in the way they existed in and around London, enclosed in their own air, gathering places for nobles, merchants, and the margins of the more conservative towns. They found a way to draw on various traditions, from the universities to the oral and folk traditions.

How does Shakespeare exploit this geography? He sets the stage on the side and yet close to the city, and the stage is a vast, open space, dimensions, to create a theatrical impression of a city. The geography of the stage maps the city, and the stage that corresponds in general terms to the city of the theater. The open stage becomes a vast space, with galleries, with perhaps a house consisting of a sense of the walls that enclose a city. The stage is a mistake of Shakespeare's approach to the theater, that he mistakes the stage for a set. John R. Elliott's stage-picture: "Sometimes it is a scene that is beyond its parent limits; at other times it is limited by its own continuations beyond the bounds of the stage."

The Italian city takes shape around the students, merchants, and lovers within the urban landscape. These dimensions mirror the freedom and mobility of the Italian setting allows Shakespeare to bring them together in an imagined place of credit, and even of identities.

As we, the contemporary English, move into this urban landscape

Italy, "The two areas which in 1500 represented the richest and most advanced concentrations of trade, industry and wealth were the quadrilateral formed by the Italian cities Milan, Venice, Florence and Genoa; and the strip of the Netherlands that ran from Ypres . . . to Antwerp. It was not merely coincidence that these were the areas where the tradesmen of the cities had been most successful in emancipating themselves from feudal interference and in keeping at bay the newer threat of more centralized political control offered by the new monarchies" (Rich 492).

I see these cities as analogous in many ways to the theaters that existed in and around London, enclosed within walls and yet set in the open air, gathering places for nobles, merchants, and craftsmen, centers at the margins of the more conservative traditions that prospered because they found a way to draw on various traditions, from the academic world of the universities to the oral and folk traditions of street theater.

How does Shakespeare exploit the place of his stage, its location outside and yet close to the city, and the space of the stage, its internal dimensions, to create a theatrical impression of Verona or Venice or Padua? The geography of the stage maps the foreign setting, giving it a shape that corresponds in general terms to the dimensions of the public amphitheater. The open stage becomes a street or square; the facade and the galleries, with perhaps a house constructed on stage, combine to create a sense of the walls that enclose a city or a household. It is a basic characteristic of Shakespeare's approach to theatrical space that the audience never mistakes the stage for a set. John Russell Brown says of Shakespeare's stage-picture: "Sometimes it is a self-contained whole, bounded by apparent limits; at other times it is limitless and flowing, suggesting continuations beyond the bounds of the stage" (133).

The Italian city takes shape around a square, a space that gathers to it the students, merchants, and lovers who move with considerable freedom within the urban landscape. These distant and yet familiar urban spaces mirror the freedom and mobility that drew young men to London. The Italian setting allows Shakespeare to pick up various threads and weave them together in an imagined place open to the exchange of letters, bills of credit, and even of identities.

As we, the contemporary English-speaking students of Shakespeare's plays, move into this urban landscape, we need to examine the assump-

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tions that we bring to the imaginative experience of Italy, assumptions that derive from a literary and cultural tradition that took shape between Lord Byron and E. M. Forster. Some of these assumptions about the attractions and the dangers of travel to Italy existed in Shakespeare's day, and they have been canvassed thoroughly. Italy could be seen as both the center of humanist learning and the dangerous seat of Catholicism, the country of Castiglione's graceful courtier and of the evil "Machiavel" (Raab 56).

Some of these stereotypes Shakespeare works into the plays. But it is the interconnected nature of Italian urban centers rather than their dangers that is central to Shakespeare's theatrical conception. We know that commerce and banking created important links that extended between the Italian cities and beyond them to northern nation-states and to eastern trade routes. In a related way the growth of humanism in Italy connected the courts, the academies, and, eventually, the universities that flourished in various urban centers, particularly in the region of Lombardy. John Stephens maintains that the "learned academicians and aristocratic circles . . . conceived of themselves inhabiting a 'republic of letters' in which reason united scholars in a commonwealth, as it had before them for Erasmus, Petrarch and Valla" (149). This intellectual commonwealth reached beyond the medieval class of "clerical intellectuals" to include a diverse class of public servants and princes, men such as Niccolò Niccoli, Federigo da Montefeltro, and Lorenzo de' Medici (149).

The ladies and gentlemen who participate in the dialogue recreated by Baldassare Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier* inhabit this republic of humane letters. They have gathered in Urbino from other important city-states such as Verona, Genoa, and Florence. As Sir Thomas Hoby says in his prefatory "epistle" to Lord Hastings, his translation brings the courtier who in other languages "hath a long time haunted all the Courtes of Christendom" to the court of England, where Lord Hastings is to serve as his patron (Castiglione 2). The courtier, through this book, enters into a dialogue on courtly fashions, as well as on the moral and political issues of governing the self and the state. This commonwealth of humane letters connects Italian city-states, European courts, and the world of the ancients, as Hoby makes clear in his discussion of how "Castilio hath folowed Cicero" (3).

Roger Ascham, who believes that C and diligently followed but one year young gentleman more good, iwis, tha in Italy" (Ryan 55), enters into this dialogue begins his *Schoolmaster* with "A Preface dialogue setting to London, where, during friends gather in Sir William Cecil's chamber were of Her Majesty's most honorable her in very good place" (Ryan 5). Luck company of so many wise and good n discussion between Sir William Cecil Walter Mildmay (founder of Emmanuel . . . that divers scholars of Eton be run beating'" (6). A second conversation b Sackville takes place at a window in th Ascham and the queen had been read osthenes against Aeschines for his false Philip of Macedonia." The details are in Ascham appreciates how dramatic setti of the dialogue form. His conversation subjects related to the "bringing-up of that Ascham "'put in some order of w talk'" (8). Though the book that follo 1568) does not continue the dialogue fo move beyond narrow questions of ped sider themselves members of the cour six of the best-given gentlemen of this not so much good will, spend not so hours, daily, orderly, and constantly, knowledge as doth the Queen's Majesty

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Roger Ascham, who believes that Castiglione's book "advisedly read and diligently followed but one year at home in England, would do a young gentleman more good, iwis, than three years' travel abroad spent in Italy" (Ryan 55), enters into this dialogue in a significant way. He begins his *Schoolmaster* with "A Preface to the Reader" that transfers the dialogue setting to London, where, during the plague of 1563, a group of friends gather in Sir William Cecil's chamber; "[for] the most part [they] were of Her Majesty's most honorable Privy Council and the rest serving her in very good place" (Ryan 5). Lucky to find himself that day "in the company of so many wise and good men," Ascham briefly recounts a discussion between Sir William Cecil, Sir Richard Sackville, and Sir Walter Mildmay (founder of Emmanuel College) of the "'strange news . . . that divers scholars of Eton be run away from the school for fear of beating'" (6). A second conversation between Ascham and Sir Richard Sackville takes place at a window in the queen's privy chamber, where Ascham and the queen had been reading "that noble oration of Demosthenes against Aeschines for his false dealing in his embassy to King Philip of Macedonia." The details are important because they show that Ascham appreciates how dramatic setting contributes to the rich texture of the dialogue form. His conversation with Sackville ranges over many subjects related to the "bringing-up of children" and leads to the request that Ascham "put in some order of writing the chief points of this our talk" (8). Though the book that follows (posthumously published in 1568) does not continue the dialogue form, Ascham does not hesitate to move beyond narrow questions of pedagogy to address those who consider themselves members of the court of humane letters: "Point forth six of the best-given gentlemen of this court, and all they together show not so much good will, spend not so much time, bestow not so many hours, daily, orderly, and constantly, for the increase of learning and knowledge as doth the Queen's Majesty herself" (56).

Given the important differences between the archipelago of Italian city-states, whether princely courts or republics, and the emerging nation-states of England, France, and Spain, the Italian model of commerce in goods and money, as well as of intercourse in arts and humane letters, influenced English life and was certainly available to Shakespeare. One of the two works of Machiavelli's translated and printed during Shake-

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spere's lifetime, *The Art of Warre . . . Set Forthe in Englishe* by Peter Whitehorne (1560), takes the form of a dialogue between Cosimo Rucellai and Fabrizio Colonna set in the "Orti Oricellari," the walled gardens of the Rucellai family (Raab 52). The friends who met there from 1517 to 1520 included Cosimo and Zanobi Buondelmonti, the men addressed in the proem to Machiavelli's *Discourses* (de Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell* 113), as well as Luigi Alamanni, Batista della Palla, and Lorenzo di Filippo Strozzi, to whom *The Art of War* is dedicated. Machiavelli's evocation of a conversation that develops from its dramatic setting under the shade trees in the garden exemplifies the commonwealth of humane letters that Stephens describes.

Despite the very real restriction on speech created by princely tyrants and by the requirement that courtiers themselves be prudent, these works can be seen as contributing to the ideal image of a spirited exchange of ideas within the Italian cities. Shakespeare draws on these admittedly complex impressions of the Italian courts and cities to create a sense of fluidity within the urban settings of his plays. At the same time, the plays do not neglect the many barriers that crossed the urban world. Though symbolically flanked by the open port and the potentially open marketplace, and alive with the exchange of goods and ideas, the cities also have the capacity, like the stage, to wall in open spaces, to close gates, doors, and windows.



Whether performed at court or in the public theater, the plays were set on a stage that allowed for quick transitions from interior to exterior settings, from a garden to a bedroom, from the outward thrust of adventure to the felt pressure of the established structures that control the household and the city. Despite the absence of scenes painted in perspective, there are times when we will be reminded of the *città ideale*, or ideal city of Italian Renaissance painting, for the walled cities we imaginatively enter contain temples, palaces, gates, monuments, and tombs. But the fixed, monumental character of the city as seen in the idealized space of Renaissance painting is not the dominant characteristic of Shakespeare's

Italian city-states. The sense of place imaginatively and theatrically reshaped of the society that Shakespeare created loosens the cultural assumptions then and now and the loosening of restraints, moral and social, creates a climate that makes life, for those who prefer the more primitive, closer to nature and to the life of his Italian city-state with a sophistication that expands experience without undermining it.

Kenneth R. Bartlett provides a context for Italy, from the Tudors who considered the Italian humanism and the *vita civile*, "to the patina of culture, manners and social life of the *cortegiano* a model of aristocratic life especially in England" (49). The genre is represented in William Thomas's *Historical Grammar* (1550) finds its opposite in *Schoolmaster* (1570). The great cities, the best breeders and bringers-up of the "well-speaking but also for well-doing, in a world" (Ryan 60) are now, according to those English who travel there experience *italianato è un diavolo incarnato*; they take their shape and fashion but become devils in the freedom of Italian cities takes on a different perspective: "And being brought up in Italy to be there, where a man may freely disagree with whom he lust—against any prince, against God himself and his whole religion—against the Ghibelline, either French or Spanish, against any party, of some faction, he shall never be contented and if he meddle not overmuch with the free liberty to embrace all religions and to be out any let or punishment, Jewish, Turkish, Ascham sees freedom degenerating into religious apostasy.

Italian city-states. The sense of place is more dynamic, capable of being imaginatively and theatrically reshaped in each scene. The open character of the society that Shakespeare creates in the Italian plays is not, as cultural assumptions then and now might suggest, simply the result of a loosening of restraints, moral and societal, in that other, Mediterranean climate that makes life, for those who view it from the outside, somehow more primitive, closer to nature and to the instincts. Shakespeare infuses his Italian city-state with a sophistication and a sense of freedom that expands experience without undermining existing social structures.

Kenneth R. Bartlett provides a concise survey of English travelers to Italy, from the Tudors who considered Italy as "the graduate school of humanism and the *vita civile*," to the gentlemen who looked for "the patina of culture, manners and social finesse which had made the image of the *cortegiano* a model of aristocratic behavior throughout Europe, but especially in England" (49). The generally positive image of Italy presented in William Thomas's *History of Italy* (1549) and his *Italian Grammar* (1550) finds its opposite in the critical passages from Ascham's *Schoolmaster* (1570). The great cities of Italy, such as Rome, once "the best breeders and bringers-up of the worthiest men, not only for wise speaking but also for well-doing, in all civil affairs, that ever was in the world" (Ryan 60) are now, according to Ascham, enslaved to vice so that those English who travel there exemplify the Italian proverb "*Inglese italianato è un diavolo incarnato*; that is to say, 'You remain men in shape and fashion but become devils in life and condition'" (66). And the freedom of Italian cities takes on a decidedly sinister cast from Ascham's perspective: "And being brought up in Italy, in some free city, as all cities be there, where a man may freely discourse against what he will, against whom he lust—against any prince, against any government, yea, against God himself and his whole religion—where he must be either Guelf or Ghibelline, either French or Spanish, and, always compelled to be of some party, of some faction, he shall never be compelled to be of any religion, and if he meddle not overmuch with Christ's true religion, he shall have free liberty to embrace all religions and become, if he lust, at once, without any let or punishment, Jewish, Turkish, papish, and devilish" (74). Ascham sees freedom degenerating into political factionalism and religious apostasy.

Kenneth Bartlett makes the point that although later visitors "might not have shared [William] Thomas' laudatory vision of the peninsula, they could not escape the contours which his great book gave to their intellectual maps" (56). As David Frantz points out, the positive and the negative images of Italy owed much to the written word: "On the one hand the English admired and imitated much in the way of Italian learning, general culture, and especially literature. On the other hand, they abhorred and feared Italy as a land of Catholicism, lewd living, and lewd writing" ("Festum" 141). Both the idealization and the vilification of Italy are fictions drawn from literature or the equally imaginative accounts of travelers. George B. Parks, in his excellent survey of this ambivalence, makes the point that Ascham "decried the wickedness glorified in Italian fiction then becoming popular in English translation." He observes that the enthusiasm for things Italian first expressed by William Thomas "is best attested by the numerous editions in England of Castiglione's *Courtier*, in the English of Thomas Hoby (1561) and the Latin of Bartholomew Clerke (1571)" ("Decline and Fall" 342). The more colorfully negative representations of Italy, frequently quoted out of context, attack the dangers of travel itself, as we see in the banished English earl from Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) who includes Italy in the forbidden ports of call: "Italy, the Paradice of the earth and the Epicures heaven, how doth it forme our young masters? . . . From thence he brings the art of atheisme, the art of epicurising, the art of whoring, the art of poysoning, the art of Sodomitrie" (McKerrow 2:301). David Frantz argues that just as Nashe "ridicules literary forms and conventions that present a positive view of things Italian, so too will he ridicule 'tragicall tales' and 'eligiacall histories' that portray a negative view of Italy" ("Festum" 155–56). What Nashe expects of his readers, that they understand the character of the speaker as part of the characterization of a place, would certainly apply to spectators responding to the dramatic perspectives represented within a play. In his *Pierce Penilesse* (1592), Nashe attacks the seemingly infinite forms of devilish pride and hypocrisy to be found at home and abroad, including Italy, "the Academie of manslaughter, the sporting place of murther, the Apothecary-shop of poyson for all Nations" (McKerrow 1:186). On the other hand, Frances Yates tells us that "Italians forced to live in England for business or other reasons

had long regarded their sojourn here as a land" (*Florio* 31).

And one must add that Shakespeare's language may have been sufficient to provide an Italian available in London, such as the *Urbano*, an important source for *The Merchant of Venice*. An English translation has been found (1578), and the translation, *The Civile Conversation of the Italian Tutor*, introduced standards of fashionable conduct for an Italian tutor to the earl of Southampton, and was published in *Eruditione and Culture in England with his Letters* (1578) and *Second Frutes* (1591), and in *The Worlde of Wordes* (1598) (Yates, *Florio* 31). Between 1584 and 1589 the printer John Wolfe printed of Pietro Aretino and Machiavelli, usually in two volumes (110; Hoppe 244). In 1584, as part of Wolfe's venture designed "to exploit English fashion and the desire to read, even if in a half-Italian, was likely to be available in English" ("Florio" 31), he brought out Machiavelli's *Il prencipe* and *discorsi di N. Machiavelli sopra la prima* and *Historie fiorentine, Libro dell'arte de' guerra* on separate title pages for the plays *Machiavelli's* and *Castelvetto*, Italian exile, teacher, and translator. *Castelvetto*, Wolfe responded to the Italian in London, printing Aretino's *Quattro* in 1588 and 1589, followed by Giovanni Boccaccio and Torquato Tasso's *Aminta* in 1591. Sheila E. Dimsey asserts that the printer was the first edition of Guarini's pastoral apocrypha "the keenness with which literary London embraced any new development in Italian letters" (159).

In addition to the printed translations, there were *horne's Arte of Warre* (1563, 1573), *Florentine Historie* (1595)—seven manuscripts survived, comprising three separate trans-

had long regarded their sojourn here as a banishment in a barbarous island" (*Florio* 31).

And one must add that Shakespeare's knowledge of the Italian language may have been sufficient to provide him direct access to works in Italian available in London, such as Ser Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone*, an important source for *The Merchant of Venice*, of which no English translation has been found (Shaheen 161-69). George Pettie's translation, *The Civile Conversation of M. Steeven Guazzo* (1581), introduced standards of fashionable conduct from Italy, and John Florio, Italian tutor to the earl of Southampton, was actively promoting Italian literature and culture in England with his language manuals, *Firste Fruites* (1578) and *Second Frutes* (1591), and his Italian-English dictionary, *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598) (Yates, *Florio* 36; Frantz, "Florio's Use" 48). Between 1584 and 1589 the printer John Wolfe was publishing editions of Pietro Aretino and Machiavelli, using false Italian imprints (Sellars 110; Hoppe 244). In 1584, as part of what G. K. Hunter calls a commercial venture designed "to exploit English fascination with Italian wickedness and the desire to read, even if in a half-understood language, works never likely to be available in English" ("Italian Tragicomedy" 127), Wolfe brought out Machiavelli's *Il prencipe: con alcune altre operette* and *I discorsi di N. Machiavelli sopra la prima deca di T. Livio*, and in 1587 *Historie fiorentine, Libro dell'arte della guerra*, and *Lasino doro* (with separate title pages for the plays *Mandragola* and *Clitia*). With Giacopo Castelvetro, Italian exile, teacher, and nephew of the critic Lodovico Castelvetro, Wolfe responded to the interests of a courtly, literary circle in London, printing Aretino's *Quattro comedie* and sexy *Ragionamenti* in 1588 and 1589, followed by Giovanni Battista Guarini's *Pastor fido* and Torquato Tasso's *Aminta* in 1591 (Clubb 50; Henke, *Pastoral* 47). Sheila E. Dimsey asserts that the printing of *Il Pastor fido* one year after the first edition of Guarini's pastoral appeared in Venice (1590) illustrates "the keenness with which literary London of Elizabeth's time followed any new development in Italian letters" (424).

In addition to the printed translations of Machiavelli—Peter Whitehorne's *Arte of Warre* (1563, 1573, 1588) and Thomas Bedingfield's *Florentine Historie* (1595)—seven manuscripts of *The Prince* have survived, comprising three separate translations, and three of *The Dis-*

courses, two incomplete (Orsini 5–33). And to this list of Italian works available in England one must add Giordano Bruno's five Italian dialogues printed in 1584–85 by John Charlewood, with false imprints (Yates, *Giordano Bruno* 259). As Felix Raab asserts, "Everything indicates that, at least from the middle 'eighties onwards, Machiavelli was being quite widely read in England and was no longer the sole preserve of 'Italianate' Englishmen and their personal contacts, as had been the case earlier" (52–53). Reflecting on Shakespeare's knowledge of Livy via Machiavelli, Anne Barton notes that "it would be more surprising if it could be proved that Shakespeare had managed to avoid reading Machiavelli than if concrete evidence were to turn up that he had" (122). Shakespeare's use of the *novelle* of Giraldi Cinthio, Matteo Bandello, Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, and Boccaccio, translated or in the original Italian, has been sifted by Geoffrey Bullough, Kenneth Muir, Howard C. Cole, and Charlotte Pressler. Leo Salinger remarks that "the greatest creative writer whose influence can be felt widely diffused through Shakespeare's plays, however indirectly, is Boccaccio" (*Traditions* 323), and Mario Praz asks rhetorically whether Shakespeare avoids the more stereotypical horrors and thrills of the Senecan-Italian dramatic tradition "because the acquaintance he had with Italian things enabled him to take a more sober view of Italian society than the current one circulated by religious and conservative fanatics and cherished by the thriller-seeking crowd" (148). It is likely that Shakespeare was familiar with the reputation, the dramatic techniques, and the stock figures of the *commedia dell'arte* (Campbell 32) and quite possible that he or a fellow actor, such as the peripatetic Will Kemp, might have had direct contact with Italian actors (Henke, *Pastoral* 56–57; Louis B. Wright 518).

The final question is what all of this may have to do with our understanding of the plays. What "Italian things" among the sources and possible barometers of opinion do we use, for example, to frame the opening of *The Taming of the Shrew*? Following Ascham, we might be prepared to imagine the audience suspicious of an Italian educational program, especially when Tranio steers his master from "Aristotle's checks" to a curriculum that satisfies an important breadth requirement still in effect among students—"No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en" (1.1.39). But from William Thomas in 1549 to Thomas Coryat in 1611, the posi-

tive reputation of the universities of civil law, remained constant: "more tions doe live in Padua, then in any hither come in, many from France, gland, etc. who with great desire flourish sake, as to a fertile nursery, and s learning" (Coryat 2:297–98). For S idea of the confluence of students fr of learning and experience seems s kind of doctrine that might have be

The value of a humanist education separated from some general notion his edition of Ascham, John E. B. M Council (December 16, 1580): "The convenience growing to the realm by and others her subjects, in the parts part they are nourselled and nouris Italian *novelle* might have aroused the Italy of Machiavellian policy, o peared dangerously subversive, wh genuinely attractive departure from gland. As Lawrence Ryan points out Circean enchantment was hardly ne vigorous and memorable expression many Elizabethans and is by no me peoples even today" (Ascham, Ryan

The dangers and enchantments of from complex attitudes toward trav speare's plays is represented as a coll a potential for metamorphosis that experience of travel to London or fro self. Jonas Barish maintains that the "a conservative ethical emphasis in v der, stability, constancy, and integri emphasis that prizes growth, process versatility of response. In one case w

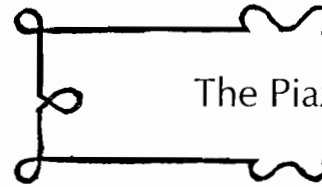
tive reputation of the universities of Italy, and especially of Padua for civil law, remained constant: "more students of forraine and remote nations doe live in Padua, then in any one University of Christendome. For hither come in, many from France, high Germany, the Netherlands, England, etc. who with great desire flocke together to Padua for good letters sake, as to a fertile nursery, and sweete emporium and mart town of learning" (Coryat 2:297-98). For Shakespeare's dramatic purposes, the idea of the confluence of students from various cities as to a market town of learning and experience seems more important than the particular kind of doctrine that might have been picked up there.

The value of a humanist education could not, on the other hand, be separated from some general notions of the dangers of travel to Italy. In his edition of Ascham, John E. B. Mayor quotes a letter from the Privy Council (December 16, 1580): "The Queen's Majesty found the daily inconvenience growing to the realm by the education of young gentlemen, and others her subjects, in the parts beyond the seas: where for the most part they are nourselled and nourished in Papistry" (222). The bawdy Italian *novelle* might have aroused apprehension as well as thrills. And the Italy of Machiavellian policy, or courtly manners, might have appeared dangerously subversive, whether seen as a passing fad or as a genuinely attractive departure from the cultural and ethical norm in England. As Lawrence Ryan points out, "This notion of Italy as a place of Circean enchantment was hardly new with Ascham, but his is the most vigorous and memorable expression of a prejudice that was shared by many Elizabethans and is by no means dead among English-speaking peoples even today" (Ascham, Ryan xxx).

The dangers and enchantments of Italy cannot be easily separated from complex attitudes toward travel and theater. The Italy of Shakespeare's plays is represented as a collection of urban spaces that enhance a potential for metamorphosis that could easily be identified with the experience of travel to London or from within London to the theater itself. Jonas Barish maintains that the antitheatrical prejudice belongs to "a conservative ethical emphasis in which the key terms are those of order, stability, constancy, and integrity, as against a more existentialist emphasis that prizes growth, process, exploration, flexibility, variety and versatility of response. In one case we seem to have an ideal of stasis, in

the other an ideal of movement, in one case an ideal of rectitude, in the other an ideal of plenitude" (117). To the extent that Shakespeare's Italy is identified with theater itself, it would seem to stand in opposition to the conservative ethical values Barish defines. But as he also shows, for certain of Shakespeare's characters—Falstaff, Hamlet, Edgar, and Cleopatra—"multiplicity seems an enlarging and liberating principle, conferring something like heroic stature" (127).

We must be careful not to let our interest in the attitudes that comprise a textured background obscure our reading of the plays (Jones 252). Within Shakespeare's Italian city-states change often constitutes the means by which voyagers help others achieve stability: "But Nature to her bias drew in that" (*Twelfth Night* 5.1.260). London was the great meeting place of change and stability, the city itself an urban structure defined by its walls, monuments, and stable traditions, but a living structure that was changing rapidly. Lawrence Manley sees this duality in the pages of John Stow's *Survey of London*: "If Stow's opening and closing accounts of ritual help to establish, in the manner of a map, a symbolic terrain that inscribes the civic order and its past upon the urban landscape, his personal survey of that contemporary landscape reveals, as do the endlessly varied routes actually walked by a city's population, a mobility and heterogeneity on which no symbolic or ritual system could hope to impose a complete or stable order" ("Of Sites and Rites" 52). Shakespeare's voyages within the city of London provided the basis for the Italian ethos that takes shape on his stage.



The Pia

Furthermore, the city ought to be a view to housing and other essential things, to provide pleasant areas and open spaces for recreation, away from the race courses, gardens, ambulatories, and so on.

—Leon Battista Alberti, *On Architecture*
in *Ten Books of Architecture*

SHAKESPEARE'S LONDON was not a city with swimming pools. As the swimmer-poet wrote, "For, bating Covent Garden, I can hit on no other place in Great Britain" (39–40). The architect and landscape designer brought Italian scenic design to England; the fourth earl of Bedford and created what was called "the piazza" (Trease 126), or "London's first piazza" (124), but he did this in 1630–32, long after Shakespeare's death (Power, "East and West" 178). Nevertheless, there was within London that Shakespeare could have seen, the piazza or square, the signature of the Italian ethos.

We do not know exactly when Shakespeare came to London. Nor from what direction he came. If he came from the Borough High Street past the Bankside, he would one day rise, he would either h