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ITALIAN DIRECTORS OF SHAKESPEARE: PRODUCTION HISTORY, 1945-
1983

City University of New York

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ITALIAN DIRECTORS OF SHAKESPEARE:
PRODUCTION HISTORY 1945-1983

by

Aviv Orani

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1986

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

ITALIAN DIRECTORS OF SHAKESPEARE:
PRODUCTION HISTORY 1945-1983

by

Aviv Orani

Advisor: Professor Margaret Knapp

The emergence of the theatre of the director in Italy is closely associated with the growing popularity of Shakespearean dramaturgy since the Second World War. As in the nineteenth century, the postwar Italians rarely regarded Shakespeare as a classical figure but, rather, as their contemporary. Often utilizing the plays to provoke politically motivated controversy, their productions explored social issues that disturbed the country.

The purpose of my dissertation is to examine the changing trends in staging Shakespeare in Italy after the Second World War and to discover the qualities which rendered his work pertinent to that society. Particular emphasis is placed on the unique ways Italian directors found to forge the bond between Shakespeare and the modern spectator.

A number of Italian directors were interviewed and observed as they worked on their productions. Numerous theatres, actors, and designers were contacted to obtain the additional information necessary to view the productions in a larger perspective. Based on this primary source material combined with newspaper reviews and other critical studies the dissertation attempts to identify the predominant trends in postwar Shakespearean theatre in Italy.

Following a brief historical background the dissertation traces the work major directors of Shakespeare since 1945. An attempt was

made to select productions which reflect a variety of styles, from traditional to avant-garde aesthetics. The first generation of postwar directors, namely Luchino Visconti, Orazio Costa, Giorgio De Lullo, Franco Enriquez, and Franco Zeffirelli are contrasted with the last of the great mattatori (master-actors such as Renzo Ricci, Vittorio Gassman, Giorgio Albertazzi and Glauco Mauri) who continued to enthrall the audiences, even as the theatre of the director was taking over the stage. Shakespearean dramaturgy also played an important role in the repertory of the newly established teatri stabili (resident theatre companies). Particularly noted are the Piccolo Teatro di Milano under the leadership of Giorgio Strehler, the Teatri Stabili di Genova and Roma directed by Luigi Squarzina, the Teatro Stabile di Torino directed by Gianfranco De Bosio, and among the later companies that of L'Aquila directed by Antonio Calenda. The impact of the 1968 student movement is observed in the work of the avant-garde directors, such as Aldo Trionfo, Luca Ronconi and Carmelo Bene, who employed Shakespeare's plays to voice their personal philosophies. An entire chapter is devoted to Giorgio Strehler whose work spans and epitomizes the major developments of staging Shakespeare in Italy. Included is also an analysis of some statistical data on the performance record of Shakespeare's plays produced since 1945. Based on all of these findings my dissertation summarizes, documents and draws appropriate conclusions on the production history of Shakespeare in postwar Italy, and finds him second only to Pirandello as the most popular playwright in the country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A dissertation is the culmination of a long process of study and the product of constant assistance by advisors, family, and friends. In the brief space allowed, it is difficult to adequately thank all the people who have contributed to the end result. Still, one hopes that in this condensed manner at least some of the feeling of gratitude can be expressed.

First and foremost I would like to thank my main advisor, Professor Margaret Knapp, whose meticulous attention to detail never ceased to impress and amaze me. It is from her that I learned one of the most important lessons in research, that of scholarly accuracy and analytical approach. I will always be indebted for the understanding, care and time she devoted to the project.

My interest and fascination with Italian theatre found a ready and stimulating mentor in Professor Charles Gattnig. His insightful comments always revealed some unexpected twist in researching the subject and generated invaluable information. I also greatly appreciate the contribution made by Professor Vera Roberts, whose editorial expertise and sharp critical approach helped to shape the scope and the content of the dissertation.

Gathering the documentation for this project would have been impossible without the generous assistance of the staff of the Burcardo library in Rome, and the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano. I am particularly indebted to Laura Lombardi and her assistant Franco Viespro who gave generously of their time and knowledge. I am also grateful to Anita Blasi, Gianfranco De Bosio, Ambra Danon,

Emanuele Luzzati, Lorenzo Salveti, and Aldo Trionfo, who shared their private theatre collections. The quality of my research was greatly enhanced by having the opportunity to interview major figures of the Italian theatre, thus providing invaluable primary source material on the subject. My appreciation therefore is extended to Giorgio Albertazzi, Gianfranco De Bosio, Antonio Calenda, Tino Carraro, Giulia Lazzarini, Agostino Lombardo, Renato Lupi, Emanuele Luzzati, Michele Placido, Luca Ronconi, Lorenzo Salveti, Luigi Squarzina, Aldo Trionfo, and Franco Zeffirelli.

With the possible exception of the candidate, the joys and sorrows of the dissertation are best known to his family. I was lucky having been surrounded with constant support and understanding on both sides of the Atlantic. I am grateful to my parents-in-law, Larry and Esther Rubinstein, and in particular, my mother-in-law, who selflessly acted as typist for the first part of my doctoral studies and would have willingly continued doing so had she not been saved by the computer age. As for my parents in Israel, Nira and Jacob Mordel, they have shown tremendous fortitude by having survived the third doctoral dissertation in a row with at least one more child to go. Despite the long distance between us, they have actively participated in and contributed to my work, and their love and deep caring was always felt here.

Finally, this dissertation is the fruit of the nurturing and the support I have received from two very special women in my life: one who instilled in me the highest goals and the other who helped me to realize them. Dedicating the dissertation to the memory of my mother, Esther Mordel, I always remain indebted to her inspiration, high academic standards and encouragement. Having reached what she

worked so hard to achieve but never had the chance to realize, I regret missing out on the opportunity to celebrate with her the award of this degree that meant so much to both of us.

The other woman who completed and shared this process with me is my wife. Dear Adrienne, thanks for always believing in me and diligently paving the way for the dreams of my childhood to be realized. Coping with one dissertation is hard enough. But after successfully defending your own doctorate to go through this "path of thunder" again calls for a very special person. I will always cherish the warmth and care of your love. Remember it is you who made it possible for me to write these words of gratitude, as I am completing this final, and the most enjoyable section of the dissertation.

Aviv Orani

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In an article published in Harvard Drama Review, Italian literary scholar Agostino Lombardo noted that our age found in Shakespeare its greatest and truest mentor. Identifying with the non-naturalistic quality of Shakespeare's work, the twentieth century

through the symbolist movement in literature, cubism and futurism in the arts, the language of music, dance, and the movies, . . . has developed a conception of theatre freer from the boundaries of "imitation," "verisimilitude," "illusion," "psychology." And such conception has created a sensibility which can approach Shakespearean drama and its non-naturalistic, symbolic language with an attitude nearer to that of the Elizabethan than that of the eighteenth or the nineteenth century.¹

Besides the non-naturalistic form, the twentieth century found in Shakespeare a similar outlook on life: the passage from the Medieval world of absolutes and ideals to the modern world of doubt, self criticism, anxieties, tensions, delusions, political and social turmoil. Thus close in many ways to the Elizabethans, our age sees in Shakespearean theatre a "vehicle and mirror, interpreter and

¹Agostino Lombardo, "A Theatre for Modern Man," Harvard Drama Review 1 (January 1984): 4.

creator."² This theatre represents not only an aesthetic experience, but above all an instrument of knowledge. Shakespeare abdicates the dominion of a mere theatrical form to give his

theatre a cognitive function to which all other functions are subordinate. The theatre remains show, entertainment, amusement, but it becomes first of all experience through which the playwright and the actor and the audience—in a community event which prodigiously goes back to the very roots of the theatre—try to reach that knowledge, if scarce, and that truth, if fragmentary, which is possible to man. When Brecht writes, defining the epic theatre, that "the spectator was no longer in any way allowed to submit to an experience uncritically," we realize the weight and the range of Shakespeare's lesson to the modern theatre, and to the modern man.³

Twentieth-century theatre often strikes us with its metalanguage, conducting a personal discourse among the playwright, director, actor and even the audience. Theatre meditates on the world that surrounds us and transforms that world, portraying the metaphorical implications of its essence. The empty space of the stage that seems to negate the imminence of illusion, fosters its very conception. Like the Elizabethans, the modern spectator is no longer asked to suspend the make-believe of artificially constructed sets, but is allowed, even encouraged, to roam freely in the infinite universe of imagination. Discussing this concept in his seminal book The Empty Space, Peter Brook described Shakespeare's stage as an all-encompassing emblem of the world we live in:

The Elizabethan playhouse, with its flat open arena and its large balcony and its second smaller gallery, was a diagram of the universe as seen by the sixteenth-century audience and playwright—the gods, the court and the people—three levels, separate and yet often intermingling—a stage that was a perfect

²Ibid., p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 10.

philosopher's machine.⁴

In a similar manner this machine has become the most sought after tool by modern directors, enabling them to devise an infinite variety of interpretations when approaching Shakespeare's canon. Particularly evident is the case of the rise of the theatre of the director in Italy after the Second World War. According to Lombardo, the best Italian theatre of these years manifested itself in Shakespearean productions by Giorgio Strehler, Luigi Squarzina, Luca Ronconi and Carmelo Bene.⁵

Any study of theatrical phenomena, particularly when associated with a single dramatist, tends to favor either a literary or a historical approach. While theatre historians and practitioners, as Robert Weimann noted, are mostly concerned with interpretation of Shakespeare, the literary scholars "feel concern over the interpretation of Shakespeare."⁶ That is, whereas theatre practitioners see Shakespeare as a means, critics see his work as an end. In both cases the two parties seem to lose something in the process, and that is the creative tension of these seemingly opposite critical perspectives. In the best examples of the "contemporary Shakespearian theatre, both the modern and the Elizabethan world interact; a modern perspective confronts a Renaissance vision" and the art of staging reconciles "the tension

⁴Peter Brook, The Empty Space (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 86.

⁵Lombardo, p. 4.

⁶Robert Weimann, "Shakespeare on the Modern Stage: Past Significance and Present Meaning," Shakespeare Survey 20 (1967): 114.

between Renaissance values and modern evaluation."⁷ The friction produces the sense of exhilaration, leaving its memorable imprint on theatre history. Examination of this "friction" in the case of the postwar Shakespearean theatre in Italy lies at the heart of my dissertation.

Ever since Shakespeare's name and his plays were introduced in Italy at the end of the eighteenth century, his drama as well as his popularity suffered many changes. His plays were radically revised by opera composers and moralists. They were nationalized by the romantics, and acted as pièces de resistance by the famed nineteenth-century attori (master-actors). During the revolutionary events of Risorgimento (the movement for the unification of Italy, 1815-1876) his dramaturgy even became the subject for philosophical and political debate. Alessandro Manzoni and other national leaders in their rhetoric and Giuseppe Verdi in his music derived from Shakespeare inspirational material to stir Italians to unite and rise against Austrian rule. Since the emergence of the sovereign independent Italian state, Italian theatre and Shakespeare have become inseparable companions on the passage from the glorious memories of past splendor into the turbulence of the modern world. After the devastations of the Second World War and the legacy of almost twenty years of fascist dramatic literature, Italian directors came to believe that only Shakespearean drama could rescue the otherwise bleak repertory of their theatres. The organization of state theatres and some of the private touring companies became associated with his name, much as

⁷Ibid., p. 115.

it is presently associated with the Royal Shakespeare Company in England. Major trends in theatre were exemplified by Shakespearean productions. The historically reconstructed Elizabethan theatre could be found in such productions as Strehler's Richard II, Richard III and Henry IV, while fantastic realism permeated the spectacles of Visconti's Rosalinda (As You Like It) and Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet. The acute social symbolism of Squarzina's Troilus and Cressida and Julius Caesar reached out to a politically-conscious audience, following in the footsteps of the Brechtian epic style introduced by Strehler in Coriolanus. Serious personal exploration brought a mood of melancholy and pessimism to Trionfo's Titus Andronicus and Twelfth Night. Of course, one should not neglect to mention the peculiar, but critically perceptive adaptations of Bene's Macbeth, Hamlet, or Othello. Finally, a major contribution was made by Ronconi and Strehler in their respective productions of Richard III and The Tempest, which blended penetrating irony with a poetic use of the theatrical medium. No matter what style was in fashion, in all of these productions there could be found social purpose. As in the nineteenth century, the postwar Italians rarely regarded Shakespeare as a classical figure but, rather, as a contemporary. Hence the great popularity of Polish critic Jan Kott's book Shakespeare Our Contemporary in Italy.

The purpose of my dissertation is to examine the changing trends in staging Shakespeare in Italy after the Second World War and to discover the qualities which rendered his work pertinent to that society. Who were the directors that contributed to his popularity? What effect did the structural changes within Italian

theatre have on its repertory in general, and Shakespeare in particular? How did the 1968 student movement influence the choice of classical dramaturgy and interpretation of Shakespeare by the avant-garde directors? Could one draw any correlation between the political life of the country and Shakespearean productions? Did the tradition of the mettatori persist into the postwar period? Did it influence the emergence of the theatre of the director? Was there any interrelation between the critical interpretation of Shakespeare by the literary scholars, and theatrical presentation of the bard by the directors? And finally, what is the contribution of the Italian directors and what unique ways did they find to forge the bond between Shakespeare and the modern spectator?

Unfortunately, there is little criticism available on the subject in English. Most of the literature bypasses the phenomenon as a small part of a larger study covering a much greater scope of material. The articles that appeared infrequently in American periodicals provided merely a glimpse of Shakespeare on the contemporary Italian stage. A special Italian theatre issue of the Tulane Drama Review in the Spring of 1964 provided a panoramic summary of postwar Italian theatrical activities, in which Shakespearean productions could only be mentioned in passing. Mario Prosperi's article in the March 1978 issue of The Drama Review "Contemporary Italian Theatre" contains only two short references to Elizabethan dramaturgy. Ainslie's translation of Benedetto Croce's acclaimed book of 1919, Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966) made an important contribution to the study of nineteenth-century Shakespearean literary criticism in Italy, but was not concerned with the stage history of Shakespeare.

An excellent Jan Kott review of Strehler's The Tempest in the 1979 Spring issue of Yale/Theatre revealed but a single jewel in the treasure chest of the postwar Italian Shakespearean theatre.

Italian research has provided scholarly analysis of nineteenth-century Shakespearean productions in Milan; e.g. Hilary Gatti's well-known study Shakespeare nei teatri milanesi dell'ottocento (Shakespeare in the Nineteenth-Century Milanese Theatres [Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1968]), and Mario Corona's La fortuna di Shakespeare a Milano, 1800-1825 (The Fortunes of Shakespeare in Milan [Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1970]). Another fascinating study is Laura Caretti's Il teatro del personaggio (The Theatre of the Protagonist [Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1979]) that is comprised of six articles on various aspects of the nineteenth-century mattatori tradition and the influence of Romanticism on the Shakespearean repertory of the Italian theatre. Considerably less comprehensive work of this sort has been done on the later period. The June 1964 issue of Sipario attempted to survey the major developments of Shakespeare in Italy since the war; however, because of the limited format, it could not provide an in-depth study. Leonardo Braggaglia's Shakespeare in Italia (Rome: Trevi Editore, 1973) offered an easy to read survey of the major figures who have contributed to Shakespeare's popularity in Italy between the years 1792-1973, but it remains a very general and incomplete work. Anna Cavallone Anzi's Shakespeare nei teatri Milanesi del novecento (Shakespeare in the Twentieth-Century Milanese Theatre [Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1980]) sets as its goal to categorize, almost in an encyclopedic manner, all of the productions done in Milan between 1904-1978. Each entry

names the principal cast (without specifying all of the actors who were engaged in the production and the characters they played) and summarizes the most important reviews. The subject is pursued no further. No critical conclusions are derived. Written in much the same fashion is Bruno De Cesco's Un quarto di secolo con Shakespeare (A Quarter of a Century with Shakespeare [Verona: Edizione del Comune di Verona, 1979]), which discusses the history of the Shakespearean Festival in Verona since its founding by Renato Simoni in 1948. In addition to entries on every single production, the book includes an introduction which provides a general overview of the history of Shakespeare in Italy. It also pays tribute to Renato Simoni and summarizes his career. But again, the book is basically intended as reference material for the public at large. Numerous journal and newspaper articles by Silvio D'Amico, Gigi Lunari and Mario Praz are invaluable research sources, but their orientation is mostly literary, discussing such problems as dramatic criticism, translation, etc. Performance aspects enter their criticism sparingly, mostly in reviews of specific productions.

Perhaps the most prolific contribution was made by Agostino Lombardo, the leading scholar on the Elizabethan theatre in Italy. Some of his articles were even published in English, such as "A Theatre for Modern Man" printed in the January 1984 issue of Harvard Drama Review and "Shakespeare and Italian Criticism" which appeared as a separate chapter in Peter Demetz et al., eds. The Disciplines of Criticism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). These articles are, however, mostly concerned with problems in translating Shakespeare, the changes in the critical approaches to analyzing the works of the great bard, and other specific aspects of literary

criticism. Lombardo offers a fascinating theory in drawing a parallel between the Elizabethans and our own age; nevertheless, concern with the performance aspects in his studies is minimal, except when he reviews a specific production for a daily newspaper. Of great interest is a book Shakespeare e Jonson (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1979) compiled by Lombardo from the materials of the symposium on the Elizabethan theatre held by the Teatro di Roma and Istituto di Letteratura Inglese e Americana dell'Universita di Roma from November 1977 through May 1978. In it there is provided a transcript of the speeches and discussions on this subject by the leading figures in contemporary Italian theatre. But again, as some of the participants have later noted, parts of the material are inaccurate and fragmented. Under Lombardo's guidance there was also published a whole series of works by his students and some of his colleagues. Among the more important is Anna Busi's Otello in Italia (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1977), which surveys the history of Othello translations, productions and criticism from 1777 to 1972. Also, some of the dissertations which Lombardo supervised provide ample material for research in specific areas of the subject. For instance, Anita Blasi's "Il lavoro su Shakespeare di Luigi Squarzina" ("The Work on Shakespeare by Luigi Squarzina," University of Rome, 1981-1982) discusses in great detail both critical and theatrical aspects of the director's treatment of Shakespeare's work. However, the scope is limited only to one director, and is primarily concerned with the dramatic criticism of the plays. No comparative study with other Shakespearean productions in Italy or identification of theatrical trends was made.

Several books dealing with the careers of the major directors examined the appropriate Shakespearean productions, but because of their specific focus did not trace the development as a whole. Such was Franco Quadri's study of the work of avant-garde directors, including Luca Ronconi and Carmelo Bene, in his books Il Rito Perduto (The Lost Rite [Turin: Einaudi, 1973]) and Tradizione e ricerca (Tradition and Research [Turin: Einaudi, 1982]). Similarly, Enrico Groppali traced the careers of Aldo Trionfo, Mario Missiroli and Giancarlo Cobelli in Il teatro di Trionfo, Missiroli, Cobelli: La disperazione travestita (Theatre of Trionfo, Missiroli, Cobelli: The Disguised Despair [Venice: Marsilio Editori, 1977]). Luigi Allegri's Tre Shakespeare della Compagnia del Collettivo (Florence: Liberoscambio, 1983) examined the collective enterprise of the Parma theatre company Teatro Due to mount a Shakespearean trilogy based on an adaptation of Hamlet, Macbeth and the two parts of Henry IV. Strehler's career was the subject of dissertations by Edvige Piccinelli entitled "Le regie teatrali di Giorgio Strehler al Piccolo Teatro di Milano" (University of Rome, 1976) and by Gabriella Fogli entitled "La fortuna di Shakespeare in Italia: Strehler interprete del Coriolano e de Il Gioco dei Potenti" ("The Fortunes of Shakespeare in Italy: Strehler Interpreter of Coriolanus and The Game of the Powerful," University of Bergamo, 1979). There were also ample publications by directors themselves such as Visconti's Il mio teatro (My Theatre [Bologna: Cappelli, 1979]), Strehler's Per un teatro umano (Towards A Human Theatre [Milan: Feltrinelli, 1974]) and Il Re Lear di Shakespeare (Shakespeare's King Lear [Verona: Bertani, 1973]), Squarzina's Misura per Misura di William Shakespeare (Measure for Measure by

William Shakespeare [Rome: Officina, 1980]) and a similar publication edited by Lombardo on Timone d'Atene (Rome: Officina, 1983), Trionfo's Re Giovanni (King John [Turin: Teatro Stabile di Torino, 1973]) and Bene's Sovrapposizioni (Superimpositions [Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978]) just to mention a few. Most of these studies did examine certain Shakespearean productions but never addressed the issue of the specific Italian contribution in staging Shakespeare as our contemporary.

After having interviewed a number of Italian directors, observed them working on the plays and in some cases even having assisted in the staging process itself, it is my intention to provide the long needed overview. Numerous theatres, actors, and designers were contacted to obtain the additional information necessary to view the productions in a larger perspective. Pertinent criticism, such as newspaper reviews, production programs, and promptbooks were enhanced with some as yet unpublished primary source materials consulted at the Library of Burcardo in Rome and the archives of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano.⁸ Following the introduction, the second chapter of the dissertation will survey the history of Shakespeare in Italy up to 1947. Since a comprehensive discussion of all Shakespearean productions would be impossible within the confines of a single dissertation, the main body of my

⁸All of the newspaper reviews in this dissertation were obtained from the Biblioteca Burcardo in Rome where they are assembled alphabetically in the clipping files under the name of the playwright, the play, and the director. Newspaper reviews for the section on Strehler and some other productions were obtained from the archives of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano where they are arranged in a similar manner. The page numbers in both cases are indicated only when they appeared on the original clipping.

work concentrates on an in-depth study of some of the major productions staged in the country since the Second World War. The selection is based on the directors' reputations. Most of them were among the founders, and still serve as the artistic directors, of the nation's most important state companies, which are the backbone of Italian theatre. Independent directors and other representatives of the major private companies were also given their due attention. Generally, I have avoided analyzing the achievements of individual actors, but exceptions were made in the case of the actor-managers, whose producing companies left an indelible mark on the Italian theatrical scene. An attempt was made to select productions which reflect a variety of styles. The dissertation includes the work of seasoned directors as well as of the younger generation, covering a wide aesthetic spectrum from traditionalists to avant-garde artists. As a result, although in the majority of cases this study follows a chronological pattern of organization, each one of the above mentioned groups was respectively assigned an individual chapter in order of their historical emergence. Chapter III deals with the first generation of the independent postwar directors, namely Visconti and his followers. Chapter IV discusses the last of the great maestri who continued to enthrall the audiences, even as the theatre of the director was taking over the stage. Chapter V examines the establishment of the teatri stabili and the role Shakespeare's dramaturgy played in their repertory. Chapter VI observes the impact the 1968 student movement had on Italian theatre and the formation of the avant-garde directors, who employed Shakespeare's plays to voice their personal philosophies.

Chapter VII is devoted entirely to Giorgio Strehler because his work spans all of these areas and epitomizes the development of the postwar Italian theatre. The last chapter attempts to evaluate the predominant trends observed and to answer the questions raised in Chapter I. It also provides some statistical data on the performance record of Shakespeare's plays produced in Italy after 1945, with a cumulative analysis of the results. Based on all of these findings my dissertation summarizes, documents and draws appropriate conclusions on the history of Shakespeare on the postwar Italian stage.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The spread of Romanticism across the European continent in the nineteenth century renewed a fascination with the gothic spirit of the middle ages as well as with the art and literature masterpieces of the Renaissance. Among the latter, Shakespeare's plays occupied a particularly important place in the formulation of poetical and philosophical principles. He was unanimously adopted by the Romantics as their spiritual and literary mentor. This was the time when his works were being translated into all of the European languages and in many cases, Shakespeare was even considered a national poet as in Germany and Poland among other countries.¹ The

¹It is interesting to note that theories attributing Shakespeare's nationality to other countries have persisted into the twentieth century as well. Suffice it to mention Jerzy Sito, "Shakespeare, Poland's National Poet," Delos 3 (1969): 147-58; and Santi Paladino Shakespeare sarebbe il pseudonimo di un poeta italiano which appeared in the form of a pamphlet in Reggio Calabria in 1929. The latter was later reprinted as Santi Paladino, Un italiano autore delle opere Shakespeariane (Milan: Gastaldi, 1955). This publication advanced the hypothesis that Shakespeare's plays and sonnets were actually written by Michelangelo Florio and translated into English by his son Giovanni. A revered Italian Shakespearean scholar Mario Praz responded to this publication and accused the author of pure speculation. He suggested that Paladino's contention was based on Giovanni Florio's will which the author failed to consult, due to his inability to locate it. Mario Praz, on the other hand, successfully obtained the will and proved its

interest in history and in nature as reflections of man's ever-changing internal world, a subject thoroughly examined by Shakespeare, was seen as a most appropriate and timely source for Romantic inspiration. More and more theatres included Shakespeare's plays in their repertoires, although in many cases they were first adapted according to local standards and conventions. The plays became major theatrical spectacles with elaborate scenery and, above all, a tour de force for the leading actors. The plays also provided a vehicle for an emotional association, in the highest degree, with the forces of nature. The element of humanism was then revitalized and became the chief component of Shakespeare for the European audience.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, interest in Shakespeare in Italy was rather vague and limited, reaching the peninsula last among the other European countries.² Critical remarks by scholars and travelers were sporadic and did not have much influence, in spite of the fact that Shakespeare was first

irrelevance: see Mario Praz, "International Notes: Italy," Shakespeare Survey 10 (1957): 120.

²Unless otherwise indicated the brief historical account of Shakespearean criticism in Italy is based on the following sources: Hilary Gatti, Shakespeare nei teatri milanesi dell'ottocento (Bari: Adriatica Editrice 1968), pp. 1-35; Agostino Lombardo, "La fortuna di Shakespeare in Italia," Terzo Programma 1 (Edizioni Radio Italiana 1965): 129-81 which was then reprinted and translated into English as Agostino Lombardo, "Shakespeare and Italian Criticism," trans. Anthony Mortimer in Peter Demetz et al., eds., The Disciplines of Criticism (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 531-80; Mario Corona, La fortuna di Shakespeare a Milano, 1800-1825 (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1970), pp. 9-35, 93-144; and Beatrice Piscini, "Per un teatro reale," in Laura Caretti, ed., Il teatro del personaggio: Shakespeare sulla scena italiana dell'800 (Rome: Bulzoni, 1979), pp. 65-79.

mentioned in Italian sources as early as 1667. At that time an essayist, Lorenzo Magalotti, reported of his trip to England and in his account included a list of the noted playwrights, among whom we find the name of "Shakespier."³ In the course of the following several decades Italian familiarity with the Elizabethan playwright was limited to mangled and confused variations on the spelling of his name. In 1726 a Paduan abbot, Antonio Conti, wrote a tragedy entitled Cesare. Although its plot was vaguely reminiscent of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, the author hardly acknowledged the source but stated that "Sasper [sic] is the Corneille of the English, but much more irregular than Corneille, though like him pregnant with grand ideas and noble sentiments."⁴ In the same period another abbot, Paolo Rolli, described Shakespeare as a "wondrous genius" who

wrote certain tragedies which I would call historical, since they represent historical happenings concerning the illustrious kings and nobles of his nation: and in these the events and the characters that participate are so vivid and so poetically expressed with most fitting style as not to be bettered. An example which I could wish followed in other nations.⁵

As the mention of Shakespeare's plays became a more frequent phenomenon, so did the defamatory remarks on his "vulgar" style of writing. It was in these terms that Shakespeare was frequently referred to, because familiarity with his works was indirect, attained through the eyes of the French neoclassicists. Italians

³Piero Reborà, "Fortuna e comprensione di Shakespeare in Italia," in Interpretazioni anglo-italiane (Bari: Adriatica, 1961), p. 54.

⁴Conti, cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 532.

⁵Rolli, cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 532.

had basically adopted the Voltairean view: although Shakespeare had much to offer, his works had to be constrained and modified according to the principles of truly classical models. In his Letters Concerning the English Nation (1733) Voltaire stressed that "Shakespeare boasted of a strong, fruitful genius: he was natural and sublime, but had not so much as a single spark of good Taste, or knew one Rule of the Drama."⁶ In 1768 he called Shakespeare's nature "beautiful but uncivilized; he has neither regularity, decorum, nor art."⁷ In several letters to the French Academy (1776-1778) he accused Shakespeare of obscenity, ridiculed him as a "gille de village" and called him "a barbarian not devoid of genius."⁸

Following the example of the French, the Italians reiterated Voltaire's position almost verbatim. In 1743 Saverio Quadrio acknowledged that although Shakespeare was endowed with genius he had "no knowledge of the just rules."⁹ Carlo Denina (1761) admired the "sublime . . . qualities for the making of a great poet" but found the playwright "in the dark as to the rules of the theatre."¹⁰ Saverio Bettinelli (1766) emphasized Shakespeare's "rough and bestial ignorance of history and manners."¹¹ And finally Pietro

⁶Voltaire, cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 533.

⁷Voltaire, "Letter to Horace Walpole, July 15, 1768" in Bernard F. Dukore, ed., Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski (New York: Holt, Rinehart Winston, 1974), p. 286.

⁸Voltaire, "Letters to the French Academy," cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 534.

⁹Quadrio, cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 534.

¹⁰Denina, cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 534.

¹¹Bettinelli, cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 534.

Napoli-Signorelli (1777) summarized the prevalent criticism of the period by suggesting that the major defects in Shakespeare's art stem from the "neglect of the unities, yoking of the lowest comedy to the most sublime tragedy" and the "introduction of the marvelous."¹² Because of these "monstrous flaws" Shakespeare reached Italy in the "upgraded and corrected" form of Jean-Francois Ducis's French translation. Since the original Shakespeare was "unrepresentable," the latter plays conveyed the required code of morals, set in a strict neoclassical form. The action was localized in as limited a space as possible. The end result was often quite the opposite from the original. Ducis's reduction of Hamlet, which was performed in France in the early 1700s, provides a good example. In it, the translator claimed that it was his reverence for high morality that led him to "avoid indecent and vile Shakespearean phraseology and various monstrous effects."¹³

Despite all of this veneration of French neoclassicism there were still heard some voices of praise. In a discussion of his Malcontenti (1754) Goldoni praised Shakespeare and admitted to having tried in his writings to "imitate such a worthy Author, and to bring his name before those who perchance do not already know it."¹⁴ In 1756 there appeared the first Italian version of a

¹²Napoli-Signorelli, cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 535.

¹³Quoted by Gatti, p. 33. Unless otherwise indicated all subsequent translations from Italian are mine.

¹⁴Goldoni, cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 537. For Goldoni's attack on unity of place see his Memoirs in Eric Bentley, ed., Genius of Italian Theatre (New York: New American Library, 1964), pp. 524-26.

Shakespeare play. Domenico Valentini did not only translate Julius Caesar, but also provided a critical study as part of the preface. In it he attacked the "severe and superstitious" imposition of the French neoclassical rules by calling them

ample enough for mediocre talents; but for an imagination so strong, so rapid, so lively as that of Shakespeare they appeared too narrow, and had he retained himself within those narrow limits we would certainly be deprived of great beauties.¹⁵

In 1753 there was also published Giuseppe Baretti's A Dissertation upon the Italian Poetry (written in English). Baretti was angered by Voltaire's preconceived notion of epic poetry and placed Shakespeare among the greatest figures of world literature. To insure the greater impact of his views and to keep up with the international dialogue, in 1777-1778 Baretti published simultaneously in London and Paris Discours sur Shakespeare et sur Monsieur de Voltaire. As was noted by Lombardo, this treatise became the "first serious and extensive study of Shakespeare in Italy," from which there emerged a much clearer picture of the bard "than the rough sketch of the previous years."¹⁶ According to Sergio Rossi, "though its reasoning was precise, the Discours remained an isolated effort, and . . . did not bring any critical reaction of note."¹⁷ At the same time, more and more Shakespeare plays were being translated into Italian. In 1777 Alessandro Verri published the first Italian versions of Hamlet and Othello. The 1770s also saw the first performances of

¹⁵Valentini, cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 538.

¹⁶Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," pp. 539, 541.

¹⁷Sergio Rossi, "Reviews of Caleidoscopio Shakespeariano and Lettura del Macbeth," Shakespeare Quarterly 24 (Spring 1973): 234.

Shakespeare in Italy. Although these productions of Hamlet (1774) and Romeo and Juliet (1778) were performed in French and were based on Ducis's adaptations, these were nevertheless considered events of major importance. The first performance of Shakespeare in Italian took place almost two decades later, somewhere between 1791 to 1793.¹⁸ In 1798-1800, Giustina Renier Michiel published Opere drammatiche di Shakespeare volgarizzate da una Dama Veneta, which contained Othello, Macbeth, and Coriolanus. Major Italian literary figures together joined in the praise of Shakespeare. Vittorio Alfieri decided to destroy his play called Romeo and Juliet after reading Shakespeare's version.¹⁹ Vincenzo Monti saw in Shakespeare the model for poetic and dramatic writing.²⁰ And a noted Italian dramatist and poet of the time, Ugo Foscolo, expressed his enthusiasm in a statement made in 1802:

Homer, Dante and Shakespeare, the masters of superhuman genius, have possessed my imagination and inflamed my heart: I have bathed their verses with burning tears, and I have adored their divine shadows as though I could see them presiding on the lofty summits towering over the universe and reigning over eternity.²¹

Ugo Foscolo's writing anticipated an extraordinary burst of

¹⁸Leonardo Bragaglia, Shakespeare in Italia: Personaggi e interpreti, vita scenica del teatro Shakespeariano in Italia (Rome: Trevi Editore, 1973), p. 168. Here Bragaglia cites a performance of Hamlet by the Antonio Marrocchesi company, which took place in 1793 in Florence at Teatro di Bargognissanti. On the other hand, Silvia Carandini, "Shakespeare e gli elisabettiani sui palcoscenici Italiani," in Agostino Lombardo, ed., Shakespeare e Jonson (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1979), p. 305, cites the same first performance of Hamlet in Italian to take place in 1791.

¹⁹Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 544.

²⁰A detailed account of Vincenzo Monti's impressions and treatment of Shakespeare is provided in Corona, pp. 37-65.

²¹Foscolo, cited by Corona, p. 23.

enthusiasm for Shakespeare which was experienced with the rise of Romanticism. Although the flame of Romanticism was ignited in Italy almost two decades after it started to dim in the rest of Europe, the heated polemic here extended far beyond literary circles and set in motion social and political reform.²² The resurgence (Risorgimento) seized the entire country, culminating in the unification of Italy and the victorious marches of Garibaldi. The source of this romantic inspiration in Italy was Shakespeare.²³ The fever was started when, upon her return from Germany in 1816, Madame de Staël chose a periodical, Biblioteca Italiana, to launch a promotion campaign for Shakespeare using Schlegel's ideas. The Schlegelian notion of Shakespeare, as Lombardo explained, "includes all of the components of Romanticism from liberty of form to exaltation of art and the artist, from aspiration toward the infinite to unrest and melancholy, from religious anguish to the fever of feelings and passion."²⁴ Capitalizing on these ideas in her article "Sulla maniera e l'utilità delle traduzioni" de Staël advocated a major literary reform to take place in Italy, the basis of which was to be found in translating Shakespeare:

Italians would greatly benefit from the diligent translations of the recent English and German poets. This could bring a breath

²²For detailed analysis of the impact of romantic ideology on the Risorgimento revolutionary movement see Luigi Salvatorelli, The Risorgimento: Thought and Action (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

²³The philosophical and political importance of Shakespeare to the debate on Romanticism in Italy is best illustrated in the anthology by Egidio Bellorini and A. M. Mutterle eds., Discussioni e polemiche sul Romanticismo, 1816-1826 (Bari: Laterza, 1943, reprint 1975).

²⁴Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 548.

of fresh air into the state of stagnation in which our citizens are buried when they are content with antiquated mythology. . . . If letters can be enriched through the translations of poetry, translating drama should be of even greater benefit, since theatre is the master of literature. Vivid and accurate translations of Shakespeare by Schlegel have been performed in the theatres of Germany as though Shakespeare and Schiller were fellow citizens. Very similar results could be easily attained in Italy.²⁵

Encouraged by Madame de Staël's promotion campaign and moral support, Michelle Leoni published the first complete Italian translation of Shakespeare's tragedies in 1819-1821.²⁶ This edition also included a translation of Samuel Johnson's "Preface to Shakespeare." In support of Shakespeare and Madame de Staël's initiative, literary figure Giovanni Berchet proclaimed the universality of the Bard's plays:

Homer, Shakespeare, Calderon, Corneille, Racine, Schiller all of them are my fellow Italians as much as Dante, Ariosto and Alfieri. The Republic of letters is one for all and all of its poets are indisputable citizens.²⁷

Calls of protest from the other camp echoed the statement of

²⁵Anna de Staël-Holstein, "Sulla maniera e l'utilità delle traduzioni," Biblioteca Italiana (April 1816) quoted by Corona, p. 97. De Staël helped to popularize Schlegel's ideas in France and Italy through the publication of her collection of writings entitled Of Germany. In the original French this collection is available as Anna de Staël, De L'Allemagne, 5 vols. (New York: French and European Publications, 1967). The most recent English translation is that of 1861 which is published as Anna de Staël, Germany, 2 vols., trans. O. W. Wight (New York, 1861). No publisher is indicated in this rare edition, which is available at the General Research in Humanities Division of the New York Public Library, reference number E.C.F.

²⁶Michele Leoni, Traduzione delle tragedie di Shakespeare (Verona, 1819-21). Previously Michele Leoni translated Giulio Cesare (Milano: De Stefanis, 1811); Macbeto (Pisa: Capurro, 1813); Amleto, Otello, Romeo e Giulietta (Florence, 1814); Cimbelino (Pisa: Capurro, 1815); and Riccardo III (Florence, 1815).

²⁷Berchet, cited by Corona, p. 102.

indignation made by the noted poet, Giacomo Leopardi.

Italians, go read the Greeks and the Romans, and leave aside these Northern writers, and if you cannot resist the temptation of reading them, at least do not imitate their examples. . . . Many Italians frequently find in these writers exaggerations and overblown gigantic images, but rarely do they find the true, the most sublime and the most sacred purity of nature.²⁸

An article signed by "A. C." which appeared in the same Biblioteca Italiana where the Shakespeare campaign was first launched, attacked the lack of unities and "dramatic atrocities and vulgarity, that seems to appeal to the taste of the English and Madame [de Staël]. This, however, could only ignite indignation in our sensitive hearts."²⁹ In spite of these outbursts of scorn, to the great dismay of the purists and neoclassicists, interest in Shakespeare continued to grow and find greater and stronger supporters. As a result, soon the roles were reversed and the neoclassicists found themselves on the defensive. Giovanni Gherardini, who, ironically enough, translated Schlegel, in 1816 sided with the neoclassicists. Under the general pressure, he too came to acknowledge the genius of Shakespeare, but remained of the opinion that the plays' enormous defects overshadowed their accomplishments. He then, as summarized by Corona, proceeded to defend neoclassical aesthetics based on the following logic:

If there is decadence in Italian theatre, it is not because it follows aesthetic models which no longer serve their purpose, but because it succumbs to the oppression of artistic freedom that is exercised in the present political conditions.³⁰

²⁸Giacomo Leopardi, Scritti vari inediti (Florence: Le Monnier, 1906), pp. 156-64.

²⁹A.C., cited by Corona, p. 106.

³⁰Corona, p. 110.

No sooner were these thoughts expressed, than the Romantics were raising Shakespeare as a banner to generate a global political resurgence. The major spiritual leaders of Risorgimento, Giuseppe Giusti, Alessandro Manzoni, and Giuseppe Mazzini, joined in the polemic. In his theoretical writings, Manzoni perceived social and cultural aspects of theatre as inseparable from the contemporary political climate of the country. Furthermore, by examining historical dialectics and universal themes of freedom and patriotism, contained in Shakespeare's dramaturgy, he sought to apply the plays as an illustration of Risorgimental ideology. Shakespeare, as noted by Patrizia Beronesi, thus served Manzoni as more than a mere stimulus for an intellectual debate.³¹ The implications of his theories and the general notions of theatre as a powerful means for achieving political changes had far-reaching effects. Thus, for instance, in one of his letters Manzoni used Shakespeare as a spokesman in a polemic with the neoclassicists. Responding to their outrage over his disregard for the unity of time, Manzoni, in the name of Shakespeare, pronounced his own rhetorical and ambivalent verdict: "You contend that the spectator comes to the theatre to see real facts? I have never intended to evoke in him such illusions, but, perhaps, to make him believe that the events, of which he has thorough knowledge, and that have

³¹Patrizia Beronesi, "Il prologo storico di Manzoni," in Caretti edition, p. 60. Manzoni's dialectical approach to Shakespeare is thoroughly explored by Beronesi on pp. 19-63.

happened many centuries ago, can happen again!"³² In times of political instability and Austrian occupation such remarks were sufficient to ignite Mazzini, Verdi, and the rest of Italy with resurgent passion. Where Shakespeare's plays served Manzoni as an example of the dialectics of history, for Verdi and Mazzini they became a means to voice the call for liberty. Thus, treason and the assassination of the legitimate ruler in Verdi's Macbeth exemplified political oppression, a feeling which was even further invigorated by inserting a chorus "Patria oppressa."³³ In 1836, in the midst of the political struggle, Giuseppe Mazzini wrote:

In Shakespeare . . . liberty lives: a day perhaps, an hour, has subdued a life to necessity, but in that day, in that hour, the man was free and the arbiter of his future. . . . In the doctrine that emerges from the plays of Shakespeare, the creature is responsible for his own actions.³⁴

From then on, the history of Shakespeare in Italy was inseparable from politics. It marked, according to Corona, "a recovery of our own culture, and our historical and political conscience."³⁵ Although an aesthetic polemic might seem to a non-Italian reader too far removed from an actual political struggle, those words spoken by the spiritual fathers of the Risorgimento movement had more than a purely intellectual appeal.

The Risorgimento fever also generated the desire for more of Shakespeare's work. In 1841, Carlo Rusconi published the first

³²Manzoni, cited by Beronesi in Corona, p. 29.

³³The relation between Shakespeare, Verdi, and the Risorgimento is more thoroughly examined later in this chapter.

³⁴Mazzini, cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 562.

³⁵Corona, p. 112.

prose translation of Shakespeare's complete works.³⁶ Shakespeare, as Sergio Rossi noted, "was read by every artist and every cultivated person."³⁷ By the mid 1840s, a thirst for Shakespeare swept across the entire intellectual community and produced the first major Italian scholar on the subject, Francesco De Sanctis. In a series of lectures given in Naples in 1842-1844 and 1846-1847, De Sanctis provided a comprehensive critical study of Shakespeare's dramaturgy.³⁸ He placed Shakespeare side by side with Dante, Ariosto, and Goethe, and called them all "omnipotent men who live with their imagination in that infinite space which frightens us."³⁹ With great admiration, he spoke of Shakespearean poetry in which "as in nature one can hardly separate form and idea."⁴⁰ In the tragedies, he detected a unity of character which prevails over any other dramatic needs: "If other writers have busied themselves with the unities, it is because they did not, like Shakespeare, rise to this superior unity."⁴¹ Finally, he proposed that the five great

³⁶Teatro completo di Shakespeare tradotto dall'originale inglese in prosa italiana da Carlo Rusconi (Naples: Puzziello, 1841).

³⁷Rossi, p. 235.

³⁸The transcripts of these lectures were later collected and first published by Benedetto Croce as La Critica (1919) and then as Francesco De Sanctis, Teoria e Storia della Letteratura, 2 vols. (Bari, 1926). In 1975 all of De Sanctis's writings were collected and published as Francesco De Sanctis, Purismo illuminismo storicismo. Lezioni, 2 vols., (Turin: Einaudi, 1975). Particularly illuminating on this subject is Piscini's article "Per un teatro reale," pp. 65-79.

³⁹De Sanctis, cited by Lombardo, "Italian Criticism," p. 566.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 563.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 565.

tragedies represented the entire spectrum of life:

the most grim and the most tender things that can be imagined, the most barbaric and the most delicate. A vast and astonishing understanding, equaled only by the mental energy of the poet, who thus stands beside Aeschylus and Dante who conceived figures such as Prometheus and Capaneus.⁴²

From De Sanctis, we can actually trace a direct lineage to the major Italian Shakespearean scholars of recent years: De Sanctis--Croce--Praz--Lombardo. Benedetto Croce collected De Sanctis's lectures and published them in 1919. That year Croce also published his own monumental work Ariosto, Shakespeare, Corneille, which became a cornerstone of modern Shakespearean criticism.⁴³ In the next generation, a student of Croce, Mario Praz, produced a whole body of Shakespearean studies, including the 1947 annotated edition of the complete works, with Italian text side by side with the English original.⁴⁴ Gabriele Baldini, Giorgio Melchione, and Agostino Lombardo, following in the footsteps of their teacher, Praz, published several new editions of complete works of the Elizabethan bard and furthered the study of Shakespearean criticism in Italy.⁴⁵ In fact, some of the best Shakespearean productions in recent years, including Strehler's acclaimed 1978 Tempest, used

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Later the book was translated and currently is available in English as Benedetto Croce, Ariosto, Shakespeare, and Corneille, trans. Douglas Ainslie (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966).

⁴⁴William Shakespeare, Teatro, ed. Mario Praz (Florence: Sansoniana Straniera, 1943-47).

⁴⁵William Shakespeare, Opere complete, trans. and ed. Gabriele Baldini (Milan: Rizzoli, 1964); Giorgio Melchione, ed., Opere complete di Shakespeare (Milan: Mandadori, 1977).

Lombardo's translations.

Although the 1840s experienced a great surge of Shakespearean criticism which had sprung from De Sanctis, as far as the general public was concerned, Shakespeare on stage was still a rather rare and strange phenomenon. The productions that dominated the Italian theatre of those years continued to use the "upgraded" neoclassical models à la Ducis. Such were the adaptations done by Mercier, another French author of the comédie larmoyante style. These were considered better suited to public taste and, above all, they were morally acceptable. Among several such mutilated versions of Shakespeare, the 1826 Cesare della Valle translation of Romeo and Juliet was closest to the original and spared the public the belabored sentimentality of Mercier. This reduction was even successfully performed by the leading actors of the time, Tommaso Salvini and Adelaide Ristori. It was not until 1856 in Milan that Ernesto Rossi, another leading actor-manager, produced the first Italian Othello closely following the original text. Shortly after its success, the play was performed by Salvini throughout the Veneto region, eventually ensuring the popularity of the relatively unaltered version across the peninsula. The major problem Shakespeare's plays were yet to overcome stemmed from the audiences' presumed familiarity with musical versions.

Shakespeare first appeared on the Italian stage in the form of opera libretti and choreographic scores in the late eighteenth century. Italy's cultural life of the time was dominated by musical events. It was in 1778 that the famous La Scala Opera House first opened its doors to the public. Since their origin in the sixteenth century, opera and ballet were considered truly national forms and

were usually preferred over drama. Apostolo Zeno is generally credited with being the first to have borrowed a Shakespearean subject and applied it to the composition of an opera in the beginning of the 1700s.⁴⁶ However, his Hamlet was based directly on the story of Saxo Grammaticus. There were no traces in it of the Shakespeare masterpiece. Similarly, the first productions of Romeo and Juliet and Othello were based primarily on their Italian sources. The plays were utilized merely as an outline for the librettists' own creations. Shakespeare was credited as a source for the libretto for the first time, in the introductory note to Giuseppe Froppa's opera Giulietta e Romeo, which was performed at La Scala during the 1796 Carnival festivities. In it the author openly referred to Shakespeare's play as a source for his inspiration.⁴⁷ It was, however, stressed again and again that the play served merely as secondary material. Only after the composition of Rossini's Otello (1816) and the 1822 productions of Bellini's I Capuletti ed i Montecchi did Shakespeare gain popular appeal in Italy, although his plays were still treated merely as a framework for the plot of the operas. The characters were often compared with those of classical mythology. Their soliloquies were often improvised, utilizing entire sections from the Greek and Roman plays. Hamlet not only

⁴⁶Gatti, p. 11. Unless otherwise indicated the brief historical account of Shakespeare in Italian opera and ballet of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is based on Gatti, pp. 11-28; Lacy Collison-Morley, Shakespeare in Italy (Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1916), pp. 80-85; and Corona, pp. 13-14. For some of the more prevalent conventions in adapting Shakespeare to opera see Winton Dean, "Shakespeare in the Opera House," Shakespeare Survey 18 (1965): 75-93.

⁴⁷Cited in Gatti, p. 12.

compared his predicament with that of Orestes, but, as was the common practice, would speak a direct translation of the Greek text.⁴⁸ Here again the influence of the French neoclassicists was strongly felt.

Taking equal liberty with the text, following the 1847-1848 revolution, was Verdi's Macbeth. Although the spirit of the Risorgimento and longing for the revived homeland dominated the opera, Shakespeare was not lost in the process. In fact, the fervor and admiration with which Verdi addressed the play was unprecedented in Italian operas at the time. In more ways than one, along with patriotic devotion, his life-long commitment was to translate the true dramatic content of these works into music, in a form as close as possible to the original. His last two operas, Otello and Falstaff, crowned these efforts. It is indeed largely because of Verdi's devotion that Shakespeare's popularity spread to the very remote corners of the peninsula. Shakespeare was an idol in the eyes of Verdi: Verdi, on the other hand, was the banner, the unifying force among the Italians. Hence, indirectly, the English playwright became the spiritual source for the Italian Risorgimento.⁴⁹ Consequently, it is evident why the first authentic dramatic presentations of Hamlet and Macbeth in 1850-1851 virtually coincided with Verdi's efforts. It is interesting to note, though, that in

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁹For further information on Verdi and the Risorgimento see George Martin, "Verdi and the Risorgimento" in W. Weaver and Martin Chusid, The Verdi Companion (New York: Norton, 1979), pp. 13-41; For further information on Verdi and Shakespeare see Gina Guadalini, "I due Macbeth e i molti Lear di Verdi" in Caretti, pp. 115-46; George Hauger, "Otello and Otello," Music and Letters (1969): 176-85.

spite of the audience's familiarity with the subject from operatic versions, almost twenty years later the playbill to Rossi's 1869 production of Giullietta e Romeo still read as a "tragedy in five acts, never yet presented in Milan."⁵⁰

Almost at the same time as in opera, Shakespeare was being introduced as a subject for ballets. The plays provided the choreographers with an exotic atmosphere and setting. By the middle of the nineteenth century, music was still largely treated as the only important element of the performance. The first ballet on a Shakespearean subject was the 1787 La Scala production of Giulietta e Romeo. However, according to the surviving documents, it used Shakespeare only as a framework.⁵¹ Hamlet followed in 1792. Here the choreographer argued that although indebted to Shakespeare for the plot outline he felt free to depart from it according to the needs of the ballet.⁵² Around 1818 Shakespeare was finally accepted in the artistic circles of Italy as a model for the Romantics. Viganò's ballet Otello, produced that same year, was considered by many critics a definitive application of these Romantic principles.

After opera and ballet had laid the groundwork for the popularity of Shakespeare, the true battle for sustaining the dramatic value of the plays was initiated by the nineteenth-century Italian master-actors. Commonly known as the great mattatori, Ernesto Rossi, Adelaide Ristori, Tommaso Salvini and other master-

⁵⁰Cited in Gatti, p. 33.

⁵¹Gatti, p. 23.

⁵²Cited in Gatti, p. 24.

actors (some of whom were also actor-managers) expanded the Shakespearean repertory and turned him into the reigning playwright of the Italian stage at the turn of the twentieth century.

According to Gatti, Gustavo Modena (1803-1861) was the first Italian actor to be credited with approaching Shakespeare directly and rejecting the neoclassical adaptations.⁵³ He also refused to exploit cheap melodramatic effects which might assure commercial success. Following the theoretical treatises of his romantic contemporaries, he filled his Shakespearean characters with a passion echoing the powers of nature. The 1842 production of Othello, based on the original rather than on Ducis's adaption, was a total fiasco. The audience was appalled. Coming to the Milanese theater, they expected to see a tragedy. They were scandalized when the curtain revealed a typical Goldonian scene. Brabantio and Iago's exchange of insulting remarks on the corner of a Venetian campielo reminded the audience of a familiar setting from the long forgotten and by then too vulgar commedia dell'arte.⁵⁴ It offended the most conservative circles of society without getting the support of the more open minded members of the audience. Nevertheless, Modena's performance left a lasting impression on the general public and promoted the appreciation of the Shakespearean theatre. Eventually, his vision was more fully realized by his students Ernesto Rossi (1827-1896) and Tommaso Salvini (1829-1915), respectively considered the most celebrated Romeo and Othello of the nineteenth century.

They were applauded not only by the home audiences but also by

⁵³Gatti, p. 40.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 45.

the most discriminating Shakespearean critics across Europe and America. After attending Rossi's production of Romeo and Juliet on its tour in Paris in 1876, Henry James noted that the forty-nine-year-old master compelled the audience to forget his age. Robust and mature, Rossi portrayed the role consumed with passion: "It is impossible to imagine anything more picturesquely, more intensely ardent."⁵⁵ Salvini often suggested that there was no other actor who could say "I love you" with as much passion as Rossi in the role of Romeo.⁵⁶ Rossi's staging of the last scene of Romeo and Juliet, however, elicited a vigorous critical attack. The English critics were appalled by a "scandalously mutilated" adaptation of Shakespeare, a "too Mediterranean" display of passion and an overly melodramatic staging.⁵⁷ In Rossi's staging, having stabbed himself, Romeo lived to realize his mistake, as Juliet was waking from her deep sleep. Of this scene Henry James wrote:

Besides enabling the hapless couple to perish in each other's arms, this gives Rossi an opportunity for a great stroke of dumb show--the sort of thing in which he decidedly excels. . . . He returns to [the tomb], finds it empty, looks about him, and sees Juliet standing a short distance off, and looking in the dim vault like a spectre. . . . His movement of solemn terror as he slowly throws up his arms and continues to rise and rise, until, with his whole being dilated, he stands staring and appalled, on tiptoe, is, although it is grotesque in description, very well worth seeing.⁵⁸

In view of the major changes Romeo and Juliet had undergone in some

⁵⁵Henry James, Scenic Art: Notes on Acting and the Drama, 1872-1901, ed. Allan Wade (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1948), p. 54.

⁵⁶Salvini, cited by Gatti, p. 75.

⁵⁷See James, p. 53, and Gatti, p. 75.

⁵⁸James, p. 54.

of the nineteenth-century London and American productions, the objections raised to these textual revisions may have been caused by the annoyance English critics felt when compelled to recognize the superiority of the Italian actor in the native English repertory.

English critics also objected to Rossi's overly emotional portrayal of Hamlet. His typically romantic Danish prince, in their opinion, was distinguished by an ultra-sensitive and extraordinarily humane perception of the world.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the day after Rossi's Hamlet opened at Drury Lane on 28 April 1876, Henry Irving presented the Italian actor with a picture of Kemble as Hamlet. The inscription read: "To Ernesto Rossi, the most worthy of the great Shakespearean actors."⁶⁰ The legendary Giuseppe Garibaldi suggested that Rossi's Hamlet possessed humanity that is greater than myth. He then told the actor: "This Shakespeare of yours is a truly great magician. He kept me awake the entire night. If he has the same effect upon you, then you, surely, sleep very little."⁶¹ According to the Belgian reviews, the actor successfully rendered the complex nature of the Danish prince:

This mixture of sensibility and bitterness, of heroism and timidity, enthusiasm and negation requires a kind of super-creation from the actor. In a superior way, Rossi brought all

⁵⁹A summary of these reviews is quoted by Gatti, pp. 71-73, and Mario Corsi, "Interpreti di Shakespeare in Italia," Il Dramma 25 (1 January 1949): 112.

⁶⁰Irving, cited by Corsi, p. 112.

⁶¹Garibaldi, cited by Corsi, p. 113. This and other memoirs by the actor are recorded in Ernesto Rossi, Quarant'anni di vita artistica which has been translated into English as Ernesto Rossi, Forty Years on a Stage, trans. G. Shuvalova (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1976).

those various masks into relief.⁶²

L'Independance Belge suggested that Rossi thoroughly penetrated into Hamlet's innermost thoughts and admirably expressed his rage coupled with fear:

terror, emotion, sarcasm, the agony of a mind which tries to uplift itself but incessantly falls back, madness linked with sagacity, reason mingled with hallucination: Rossi has shown it all to us.⁶³

Rossi's Shylock and Lear, according to De Vos's summary, were unfortunate and plaintive old men, who probed the essence of human suffering to an extent far surpassing theatrical convention.⁶⁴ The Belgian La Gazette noted that "this King Lear was taken from nature itself, he was alive and actually suffering."⁶⁵ In the dying scene, according to Marvin Rosenberg, Rossi showed "facial and bodily manifestations of rigor mortis, complete with death rattle, changed to an easier, quiet death."⁶⁶ Rossi's Macbeth visibly aged in the course of the performance. De Vos wrote that

When he arrived for the banquet scene Macbeth had visibly grown older. But confronted by Banquo's ghost, he suddenly grew older by ten years; and when he was about to sit down on the same throne, where a moment before the ghost had been seated, an atrocious horror took possession of him.⁶⁷

⁶²Review from the La Gazette of 12 March 1876 quoted and translated in Josef De Vos, "Shakespeare Performances by Ernesto Rossi and Tommaso Salvini in Flanders in 1876-1877 and 1891," Theatre Research International 4 (May 1979): 187.

⁶³Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 187.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 188, 190, 194.

⁶⁵Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 188.

⁶⁶Marvin Rosenberg, The Masks of King Lear (Berkeley: University of California, 1972), p. 320.

⁶⁷De Vos, p. 189.

The stage business that followed, however, generated some mixed feelings among English critics, particularly Henry James:

As Macbeth leaves the apartment with his wife, after the departure of the guests, he stumbles upon his long mantle, trips, falls, and rolls over with his heels in the air. His mind is so full of supernatural horrors that he thinks the ghost of Banquo is still playing him tricks, and he lies crouching and quaking, to see what is coming next. It is a handsome somersault, certainly, but I do not think it can be called acting Shakespeare.⁶⁸

By far the most controversial was Rossi's portrayal of Othello. According to the Belgian reviews his Moor "showed nature itself in its sharp and mordant crudity, the cries of jealousy and the creeping of the flesh."⁶⁹ L'Etoile Belge also emphasized that Rossi was "no tragedian of conventions, but an artist of realism, who identified himself with his character to such a degree that the audience was kept under the spell of illusion."⁷⁰ L'Independance Belge "thought there was not the slightest touch of sentimentality in his interpretation. 'Rossi only shows us his flaming passion which hides nothing, neither his burning desire nor his sorrowful rage'."⁷¹ This exhibition of sensuality, violence and terror, which was praised by the Europeans, scandalized English and American critics. William Winter found Rossi's Moor "radically wrong and supremely repulsive," obsessed with "gloating, uxorious animalism . . . sneaking suspicion . . . hysterical garrulity . . .

⁶⁸James, p. 47.

⁶⁹Quoted by De Vos, p. 185.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 186.

blatant vehemence . . . [and] hideous brutality."⁷² Henry James objected to "a kind of bestial fury, which does much to sicken the English reader of the play. Rossi gloats in his tenderness and bellows in his pain."⁷³ But James also observed that

Rossi is both very bad and very fine; bad where anything like taste and discretion is required, but "all there," and much more than there, in violent passion. The last act reduced too much, however, to mere exhibitional sensibility. The interesting thing to me was to observe the Italian conception of the part—to see how crude it was, how little it expressed the hero's moral side, his depth, his dignity—anything more than his being a creature terrible in mere tantrums. The great point was his seizing Iago's head and whacking it half-a-dozen times on the floor, and then flinging him twenty yards away. It was wonderfully done, but in the doing of it and in the evident relish for it in the house there was I scarce knew what force of easy and thereby rather cheap expression.⁷⁴

The objections to Rossi's animalistic portrayal found no public support in the case of Tommaso Salvini. Although some English critics chided Salvini's wild outbursts and beastly crouching, the audience and the most judicious experts disagreed.⁷⁵ In Boston, Edwin Booth, playing Iago opposite Salvini's Othello, thought him to be "very gentle, kind, and modest."⁷⁶ The American poet William

⁷²Winter, cited by Marvin Rosenberg, The Masks of Othello: The Search for the Identity of Othello, Iago, and Desdemona by Three Centuries of Actors and Critics (Berkeley: University of California, 1971), p. 118. English and American reviews of Rossi's Othello are summarized by Rosenberg on pp. 117-18 and Arthur Colby Sprague, Shakespeare and the Actors (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), p. 212.

⁷³James, p. 175.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 55.

⁷⁵A summary of reviews is provided in Rosenberg's Masks of Othello, pp. 103-114.

⁷⁶Booth, cited in Rosenberg's Masks of Othello, p. 104. This performance took place on May 10, 12 and 15, 1886. Corsi, p. 115, also noted that on another occasion, Booth played a minor role in Hamlet with Salvini portraying the protagonist.

Henley admired the actor's "naturalistic" interpretation: "Salvini's Othello . . . is heroic and romantic, but it is profoundly and terribly natural and true."⁷⁷ Emma Lazarus relished "the indescribable accent with which he utters the very name of the 'divine Desdemona'" and thus easily understood how "the gentlest of women" could forgive "his killing her, when she had his perfect love for a little while."⁷⁸ In comparison to Rossi, Salvini's interpretation of the role, according to the Belgian reviews, was also considered subtler and more detailed: "the birth of jealousy, its progress, the precariousness of love, then the outbreak and domination of violent and terrible passion were strikingly reflected in the expressive and mobile physiognomy of the Moor."⁷⁹ Later the English critics even admitted that in certain scenes Salvini surpassed the legendary Edmund Kean, and had something to teach the celebrated Henry Irving.⁸⁰ What was first criticized in Galaxy as Salvini's "surrendering his manhood to the wild beast" and "blind, furious jealousy" that tears and controls him, George Henry Lewes found to be carefully devised by the actor.⁸¹ When taunted by the ancient's insinuations, Othello eventually burst with seizures of fury and, shaking Iago

as a lion might shake a wolf, he finishes by flinging him on the

⁷⁷Henley, cited in Rosenberg, Masks of Othello, p. 104.

⁷⁸Lazarus, cited in Rosenberg, Masks of Othello, p. 105.

⁷⁹Quoted in De Vos, p. 191.

⁸⁰Corsi, p. 115.

⁸¹The Galaxy review is quoted in Rosenberg, The Masks of Othello, p. 114.

ground, raises his foot to trample on the wretch--and then a sudden revulsion of feeling checks the brutality of the act, the gentleman masters the animal, and with mingled remorse and disgust he stretches forth a hand to raise him up. I remember nothing so musically perfect in its tempo and intonation, so emotionally perfect in expression, as his delivery of this passage--the fury visibly growing with every word, his whole being vibrating, his face aflame, the voice becoming more and more terrible, and yet so completely under musical control that it never approached a scream. Kean was tremendous in this passage; but Salvini surpassed him.⁸²

Henry James considered Othello

a sort of compendium of [Salvini's] accomplishments; he puts everything into it, and the part, as he plays it, has so full a volume that it may almost be said that it embraces all the others. There are touches in Salvini's Macbeth, touches in his Lear, very naturally, that are absent from his picture of the overwrought Moor; but it carries him to his maximum, and what he puts into it above all is an inexhaustible energy. . . . the depth, the nobleness, the consistency, the passion, the visible, audible beauty of it, are beyond praise.⁸³

According to James, Salvini's "rendering of the part is the portrait of an African by an Italian. . . . [The Moor's] passion beginning in noble repose and spending itself in black insanity" is conceived with a wealth of "Italian imagination."⁸⁴ The excessive animalism which James found objectionable in Rossi, in Salvini enhanced the character with intense humanity. The tiger-like pacing "with his eyes fixed on [Desdemona] and filled with the light of her approaching doom," in the critic's opinion constituted the "finest piece of tragic acting that I know. . . . It is impossible to imagine anything more living, more tragic, more suggestive of a tortured soul and of generous, beneficent strength changed to a

⁸²George Henry Lewes, On Actors and the Art of Acting (New York: Smith, Elder and Co., 1875; reprint ed., New York: Grove Press, 1957), p. 226.

⁸³James, p. 171.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 173.

purpose of destruction."⁸⁵ Henry James concluded the description of the final scene by relishing every single detail of Salvini's performance in the aftermath of strangling Desdemona:

Then the still more tiger-like spring with which, after turning, flooded and frenzied by the truth, from the lifeless body of his victim, he traverses the chamber to reach Iago, with the mad impulse of destruction gathered into a single blow. He has sighted him, with the intentness of fate, for a terrible moment, while he is still on one knee beside Desdemona; and the manner in which the spectator sees him—or rather feels him—rise to his avenging leap is a sensation that takes its place among the most poignant the actor's art has ever given us.⁸⁶

In 1895 on the tour to Moscow and Petrograd, having already played Othello for forty years, the Italian actor gained the admiration of the young Stanislavsky. Fascinated with the hypnotic powers of Salvini, the Russian director proceeded to analyze the components of its success. Some elements of Stanislavsky's widely acclaimed system of acting, in some part could be attributed to the observations of this highly passionate and at the same time scrupulously methodical technique for interpreting Shakespeare. In his book My Life in Art, Stanislavsky recalled with great excitement one such memorable performance of Othello:

This ladder down which Othello descended in the full sight of the spectators from the heights of bliss to the depth of destructive passion, Salvini molded with such clearness, with such merciless logic and such irresistible persuasiveness that the spectator saw all the detailed curves of the suffering soul of Othello and sympathized with him from the depths of the heart.⁸⁷

The psychological truth expressed through a single mesmerizing

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 174, 189.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 174.

⁸⁷Constantin Stanislavski, My Life in Art, trans. J. J. Robbins (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1924; reprint ed., New York: The World Publishing Co., 1968), p. 270.

gesture struck Stanislavsky with its simple effectiveness. His fascination with the magical aura Salvini possessed is especially well described in the account of the first scene. Stanislavsky noted that in the beginning of the play Salvini's performance was rather bleak and obscure. Soon, however, it became clear that it was the actor's deliberate choice. The carefully orchestrated portrayal was based on the principle of the contrasts of chiaroscuro:

Salvini approached the platform of the doges, thought a little while, concentrated himself and, unnoticed by any of us, took the entire audience of the [Bolshoi] Theatre [around four thousand spectators] into his hands. It seemed that he did this with a single gesture—that he stretched his hand without looking into the public, grasped all of us in his palm, and held us there as if we were ants or flies. He closed his fist, and we felt the breath of death: he opened it, and we knew the warmth of bliss. We were in his power, and we will remain in it all our lives, forever.⁸⁸

Stanislavsky was most impressed with the actor's studious approach in the preparation of the role. Salvini's research went as far as reading Giraldi Cinthio's History of Venice and The Moor's Invasion of Iberia.⁸⁹ Every evening before the performance the actor took the time to meditate and gradually transform himself into the character. This preparation became the cornerstone principle of Stanislavsky's theory. The performance as a whole was carefully orchestrated to generate at the critical moments sparkles of enchantment and passion. This Othello became a model for Stanislavsky of how to approach a play in general and a specific role in particular. He saw in Salvini's creation not merely a

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 266.

⁸⁹The source for Shakespeare's Othello is found in Giraldi Cinthio's collection of short tales entitled Hecatommithi (1565).

perfect work of art to be admired, but also a learning device, exceptionally useful for future applications. He compared it with a bronze statue that comes to life in the final fusion of all of its artistic components:

One part of it . . . [Salvini] molded perfectly in his monologue in the Senate scene. In other scenes and acts he molded the other parts. Put together they formed an immortal monument of human passion, of jealousy arising from Romeo-like love, complete trust, insulted love, noble horror and wrath, and inhuman revenge.⁹⁰

For over three decades, beginning in 1856, Salvini performed Othello, at certain periods almost daily, and won critical acclaim as the greatest Moor of the nineteenth century.⁹¹ His other Shakespearean characters gained lesser recognition; however, they too were molded by this sage of human nature. "He simplifies them," noted Henry James, "but he makes them deeply dramatic, and his splendid powers of execution give back to them in vividness and reality what they lose in the poetic line."⁹² His Macbeth was portrayed with broad human traits, as a man whom the audience could "deeply pity, and whose delusions and crimes we understand, and almost forgive."⁹³ His Hamlet, according to Henry Lewes, combined many traits and appeared "strange, enigmatic, but always tender;" in one scene his "tenderness, dashed with insurgent reproaches, runs through the interview with his mother," while in the very next,

⁹⁰Konstantin Stanislavski, My Life in Art, trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 195?), p. 471. Another edition of My Life in Art is quoted because it provides a superior translation of this particular passage.

⁹¹See Corsi, p. 112 and The Masks of Othello, p. 102.

⁹²James, p. 190.

⁹³Ibid., p. 175.

during the mock-play, "the growing intensity of emotion . . . culminates in a great outburst of triumphant rage as he wildly flings into the air the leaves of the manuscript he has been biting a second before, and falls exhausted on Horatio's neck."⁹⁴ De Vos suggested that this Hamlet

was a real monomaniac His madness surged up and showed itself in a thousand ways in his physiognomy, gestures and vocal modulations. His "to be or not to be" started very soberly, but as his doubts about a morrow after death took possession of him, he burst out full of terror.⁹⁵

In Lear this madness found still another form of expression. It was the madness of an old age "mixed with reason and memory" that only deepened the sense of suffering:

The tenderness, the temper, the senility, the heart broken misery, the lambent madness, the awful desolation of the king—he touches all these things as a man of genius alone can touch them.⁹⁶

Both Rossi and Salvini reached their artistic maturity through Shakespeare. Their fascination with the Elizabethan bard not only earned them world-wide acclaim as Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, or Romeo, but also led Italians to accept Shakespeare no longer as a "barbarian" but as one of the greatest playwrights of all time. Above all, it familiarized the Italian audience with the original dramatic works and widened the existent Shakespearean repertory, which came to include The Merchant of Venice and Julius Caesar as performed by Rossi, and King Lear and Coriolanus as performed by Salvini. In the case of Julius Caesar Rossi's achievement set a new

⁹⁴Lewes, p. 231.

⁹⁵De Vos, p. 191.

⁹⁶James, pp. 179-80.

standard for the Italian theatre. He restored to Shakespeare's play its integrity by not cutting the other parts to enhance the principal role for the bravura of a mattatore-protagonist.⁹⁷

Rossi's and Salvini's enthusiasm for Shakespeare was equally shared by Adelaide Ristori (1822-1906) and Eleonora Duse (1858-1924). Although neither excelled in Shakespearean repertory to the same degree as the two great male actors, some of their characters left an indelible mark on the history of the Italian theatre. Lady Macbeth was the only Shakespearean role Ristori played in the course of her long artistic career. This portrayal, nevertheless, gained her fame and recognition across Europe and America. Her first encounter with the ambitious Queen occurred when Ristori received the text of the sleepwalking scene from the well-known translator of the time, Giulio Carcano.⁹⁸ She then performed it for the first time at the Lyceum theatre in London in 1856 as part of a recital consisting of several dramatic excerpts.⁹⁹ Alone on a sparsely lit stage, the actress successfully conveyed through this single episode, the essence of the entire play. She recited the soliloquy as though it were a dialogue with Macbeth. In her delirium, according to Laura Caretti, she conjured up the driving forces of

⁹⁷Gatti, p. 75.

⁹⁸Laura Caretti, Il teatro del personaggio: "La regia di Lady Macbeth," p. 149; Unless otherwise indicated the discussion of Ristori's interpretation of Lady Macbeth is based on Caretti, pp. 147-80; for Ristori's personal impressions of the role see Adelaide Ristori, Ricordi e studi artistici (Turin/Naples: Roux, 1887), pp. 55, 212-29.

⁹⁹Corsi, p. 116.

what Michel Foucault calls "madness of just punishment."¹⁰⁰ Here Caretti refers to the following passage from Foucault's acclaimed book Madness and Civilization:

To the moral world, also, belongs the madness of just punishment, which chastises, along with the disorders of the mind, those of the heart. But it has still other powers: the punishment it inflicts multiplies by nature insofar as, by punishing itself, it unveils the truth. The justification of this madness is that it is truthful. Truthful since the sufferer already experiences, in the vain whirlwind of his hallucinations, what will for all eternity be the pain of his punishment Thus Lady Macbeth's delirium reveals to those who "have known what they should not" words long uttered only to "dead pillows."¹⁰¹

The confrontation between the conscience of the heroine and her ambition thus took place physically on the stage in Ristori's presentation. Her body was literally possessed alternately by Macbeth and by Lady Macbeth, representing the two opposite poles of the human dilemma. The murders which preceded this scene were thus recaptured and relived in the course of the confrontation of the two forces contending for her entire being. Ristori identified totally with both roles. The increasing pace of the soliloquy and the overpowering remorse eventually burst into a nightmare foreshadowing the tragic outcome of the play's events.

One of the performances of the sleepwalking scene was attended by Alexander Dumas in Paris in 1857. The noted French writer applauded Ristori's ability to transform a single scene into a microtragedy. In it, he wrote,

with a prologue, catharsis and resolution, on its own the character creates a terrifying scenic action From her

¹⁰⁰Caretti, p. 159.

¹⁰¹Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 30.

very entrance the audience was thrown into a state of catalepsy. The mere heavy, mechanical movements and the blank voice suddenly reigned over the entire auditorium. Her ambivalence between her diabolic nature and painful suffering, between violence and desperation left the public suspended between terror and pity all the way through to the final and liberating explosion of applause.¹⁰²

The extraordinary success of this delivery prompted Ristori to stage the play in its entirety the following year. In her desire to remain the sole protagonist of the tragedy she wanted to suppress and cut other parts, including that of Macbeth. She also requested that the play be renamed Lady Macbeth. It was at this point that the translator, Giulio Carcano, refused to collaborate with the actress any further and withdrew his name from the program.¹⁰³ Although the drama was mutilated as a result of Carcano's withdrawal, the title was not changed and Ristori's performance overshadowed the inadequacy of the text. In the Daily News, as cited by Caretti, it was noted that during the final soliloquy when Ristori had torn an imaginary infant from her bosom and thrown it onto the floor, the eyes of the entire audience were glued to the empty spot on the stage: "Suiting the action to the word, in a spirit almost dangerously accurate, she looked down at her own bosom, and gradually closing her open hand, she seemed to tear in the very act the infant from her nipple and dash it to the

¹⁰²Dumas, cited by Caretti, p. 160.

¹⁰³Riccardo Duranti, "La doppia mediazione di Carcano" in Il teatro del personaggio, p. 107. In the years 1874-1882 Giulio Carcano published the first complete verse translation of Shakespeare's plays in Italian: Giulio Carcano, ed. and trans., Teatro completo di Shakespeare, 12 vols. (Milano: Hoepli, 1874-1882).

earth."¹⁰⁴ In another scene

when Macbeth first appears she rushes upon him as upon an instrument with which she is to accomplish her purpose. She not only commands him--domineers over him with a show of persuasion, but casting her arms about him as about a child she dandles him, as it were, into obedience to her wishes.¹⁰⁵

In 1873 Ristori visited London for the fourth time; now she played Lady Macbeth in English with English actors at the Drury Lane Theatre.¹⁰⁶ In 1885, while on a tour in New York she was admired by Edwin Booth who then joined the company and played Macbeth to her queen.¹⁰⁷ Although Henry Lewes was less impressed with Ristori's portrayal of the role and claimed that the Italian actress was seeking "conventional signs of interpretation," he admitted that she "used them with consummate skill."¹⁰⁸

Eleonora Duse first gained a national reputation in 1873 when she was only thirteen. She played Juliet in a production mounted in Verona by her family of traveling actors. Her meteoric rise from the obscurity of a third-rate theatrical company to international celebrity took less than seven years. By the age of twenty, she had already successfully performed Electra, Therèse Raquin, and a whole gallery of Shakespearean ladies, including Desdemona, Cordelia, and Ophelia, all over Europe.¹⁰⁹ Most memorable of all, however, was her portrayal of Cleopatra which had its debut in Milan in November of

¹⁰⁴Quoted by Caretti in English, p. 176.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Corsi, p. 116.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Lewes, pp. 150-51.

¹⁰⁹Bragaglia, p. 95.

1888.¹¹⁰ A noted Italian poet and composer, Arrigo Boito, was commissioned to translate the play which was then staged, in a grand Baroque fashion, by Gabriele d'Annunzio.¹¹¹ In spite of the grand spectacle, Duse's sensuous portrayal stole the show. Her performance could leave no man indifferent. Duse herself claimed that with every utterance, "with every word I felt my blood rushing through my entire body and coloring the uttered phrases with passion."¹¹² Henry Irving, after one of these performances, called Duse's Egyptian queen "divine."¹¹³ A noted Italian critic of the time, Jarro (Giulio Piccini), wrote that the effectiveness of Duse's

delivery surpassed all expectations. [When she learns of Antony's marriage to Octavia] her Cleopatra was flawless and satisfied every whim of the spectator who could hardly wish for anything more. The audience, thus made fully content, relished in the intellectual joy offered by her performance.¹¹⁴

Laura Caretti noted that in "Duse's Cleopatra and Ristori's Lady

¹¹⁰A detailed discussion of this production can be found in L. Vazzoler, Eleonora Duse e Arrigo Boito: Lo spettacolo dell'Antonio e Cleopatra di Shakespeare, Biblioteca Teatrale, no. 6-7 (Rome: Bulzoni, 1973), pp. 65-119; R. M. Colombo, "Una creatura umana: l'Antonio e Cleopatra di A. Boito e E. Duse" in Agostino Lombardo, ed., Studi Inglesi: Raccolta di Saggi e Ricerche (Bari: Adriatica, 1974), pp. 367-407; Hilary Gatti, "Arrigo Boito discepolo di Shakespeare" in Lombardo Studi inglesi, pp. 317-65.

¹¹¹Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938) was a major Italian playwright, novelist and poet. He is best known for his play La figlia di Iorio (Iorio's Daughter, 1904) and his novel Il piacere (The Child of Pleasures, 1894). The latter is one of the significant texts of European Decadence. His work was strongly influenced by Nietzsche and the Symbolists.

¹¹²Bragaglia, p. 95.

¹¹³Irving, cited in Bragaglia, p. 96.

¹¹⁴Jarro (Giulio Piccini), "La Cleopatra della Duse" in the section on "Shakespeare tra i mattatori," Sipario 19 (June 1964): 24.

Macbeth, there were immortalized the only two great femmes fatales of the legendary Shakespearean mattatori. Between the two, there was covered the entire span of this golden period.¹¹⁵ Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare had not only been introduced but also thoroughly explored by the Italian theatre. Within less than fifty years, Shakespearean drama had grown from infrequent melodramatic performances into the bulk of the Italian stage repertory. From an oblique "barbarian," incapable of competing with the supreme powers of opera, Shakespeare had become a national poet. To commemorate Rossi, Angelo De Gubertis wrote about the great Italian actor what is equally true of Salvini and other noted mattatori of the nineteenth century:

Specifically dedicating himself to the cult of Shakespeare, he has secured for himself immortality in the memory of the Italians, who will always remember, that it was due to his merit that the greatest among the modern poets after Dante became our national bard.¹¹⁶

At the turn of the century, as a new emphasis was placed on ensemble playing, the great age of the mattatori drew to a close. With it ended the first golden period of Shakespeare in Italy. In 1880 Giovanni Emanuel (1848-1902), who considered Shakespeare the greatest verista of dramatic literature, established a company that was dedicated to developing the minor characters.¹¹⁷ In his

¹¹⁵Caretti, p. 148.

¹¹⁶De Gubertis, cited by Gatti, p. 97.

¹¹⁷A summary of Emanuel's accomplishments is provided in Gatti, pp. 165-68. The term verista derives from Verismo. Verismo is an Italian cultural movement of the later nineteenth century. It has certain affinities with Naturalism and Realism in the rest of Europe, but has special Italian meaning. Although subject to many interpretations, it is best characterized as the objective exploration of the contemporary political and sociological problems

productions even the protagonists no longer had the grandiose dimensions of Rossi and Salvini, but they were more complex and better suited to contemporary needs. The characters' interior features were carefully studied and reflected in their make-up. They were no longer interpreted solely to exploit their emotional potential. The extraordinary talents of Rossi and Salvini had often obscured the rich content of the text. Now the text was brought to the fore, and because of Emanuel's efforts both the audience and the actors were forced to gain a more profound understanding of Shakespeare's works. The process would be completed with Ermete Zacconi (1857-1948), who brought out in the characters their common humanity and came to the logical realistic resolution: the great heroes have no place in contemporary society, and thus Shakespeare's tragedy no longer serves to promote a tragic protagonist.¹¹⁸

Although this first period of Shakespeare on the Italian dramatic stage had only fifty years to blossom (1856-1906), the fruits it bore enriched not merely local theatrical activities but the world theatre as well. In these years, as illustrated in table 1, derived from the production data listed in Gatti's book, there were performed at least four hundred productions of Shakespeare in Milan alone.¹¹⁹ Changes in the cast or performance space were

in Italy, following the Risorgimento. The most widely recognized exponent of the movement is Giovanni Verga and his short story "Cavalleria rusticana" (which was afterwards written as a play, and then adapted into an opera by Pietro Mascagni).

¹¹⁸Gatti, p. 169. Zacconi's work on Shakespeare is discussed in greater detail in the later section of this chapter in relation to the state of the Italian theatre in the 1930s.

¹¹⁹See the Production Chronology Appendix in Gatti, pp. 185-223.

counted as separate productions. Although the data reflected in the table also comprises the productions of the first half of the nineteenth century, their number is very low. It is interesting to note, however, that the repertory consisted primarily of four plays: Romeo and Juliet--at least 135 productions; Othello--125 productions; Hamlet--124 productions and Macbeth--38 productions. The other seven plays were: Coriolanus, King Lear, Henry V, Richard III, Antony and Cleopatra, The Taming of the Shrew and The Merchant of Venice. These were performed on very rare occasions. It also should be stressed that both Romeo and Juliet and Othello scored the greatest success partially due to their Italian sources.

TABLE 1

SHAKESPEAREAN PRODUCTIONS IN MILAN FOR THE YEARS 1800-1899

Play	Romeo & Juliet	Othello	Hamlet	Macbeth	King Lear	The Merchant of Venice	Taming of the Shrew	Coriolanus	Henry V	Richard III	Antony & Cleopatra
Play	89	91	118	23	16	8	5	3	-	1	1
Ballet	4	2	2	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Opera	35	26	4	12	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Operetta	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Puppet show	5	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Farce/Parody	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	135	125	124	38	16	8	5	4	2	1	1

Although in the period prior to the 1930s, the passion for Shakespeare had calmed down, those years brought to their full fruition the seeds planted at the turn of the century. Rossi and Salvini, Emanuele and Zacconi in particular left a significant mark

on the development of Shakespearean staging all across Europe. Their influence was felt in the productions of Reinhardt, Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, and Copeau, just to mention a few. In the work of these fathers of modern directing Shakespeare found new life compatible with the demands of modern times. The reign of the mattatori in Italy, however, persisted through the first half of the twentieth century. The productions mounted by companies headed by actor-managers continued to promote the role of the protagonist, with a great disregard for the rest of the play. Shakespeare was cut, revised, rewritten, changed entirely—all to suit the private whim of a mattatore who was first and foremost interested in advancing his own career. Even in the case of Ermete Zacconi, who distinguished himself with great attention to detail and a methodical, naturalistic treatment of the dramatic material, the gap between the protagonist and the rest of the company remained wide open.¹²⁰ His fellow actors still remained, as was the case with Salvini's troupe when it was reviewed by Henry James in 1883, "of a quality which it is a charity not to specify."¹²¹ As a result, even Zacconi's greatest achievements were highly personal, having very little to do with the play as a whole. His best known portrayal, that of King Lear (1926), struck the chord of compassion and torment

¹²⁰Unless otherwise indicated the account of Zacconi's activities is based on the following sources: Gatti, pp. 168-70; Anna Cavallone Anzi, Shakespeare nei teatri milanesi del novecento (1904-1978) (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1980), pp. 34, 49-50, 56-57; Bragaglia, pp. 72-73.

¹²¹James, p. 169.

in every spectator. According to Renato Simoni, he was no longer merely a king, but an incarnation of all of suffering humanity.¹²² But again, the actor could have accomplished the same effect by reciting the lines on a bare stage, with no supporting cast at all. In 1917, at the peak of his career, Zacconi played Macbeth. At the time Corriere della Sera admired his ability to "penetrate the most profound psychological insights of the character." However, the same critic also noted

the absence of unity in the production, due to the tremendous gap between the protagonist and the rest of the company. The arbitrary adaptation of the text and poor quality of translation further undermined the overall dramatic impact.¹²³

His remarkable portrayals of Petruchio, Iago, and Othello were distinguished by an extraordinary psychological accuracy; however, this very concern was widely ignored in relation to the rest of the production. The essential human truth emanating from Zacconi's Hamlet, whom he played with consummate histrionic skill at the age of seventy-six, was shattered by the actor's own disregard for the principles of staging propriety. After all, Shakespeare's advice to "hold the mirror up to nature," was not merely limited to the protagonists.

Similar flaws characterized the productions mounted by Ruggero

¹²²Renato Simoni, "Re Lear," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 21 May 1926. Unless otherwise indicated all of the newspaper reviews in this dissertation were obtained from the Biblioteca Burcardo, Rome, where they are assembled alphabetically in the clipping files under the name of the playwright, the play and the director. The page numbers are indicated only when they appeared on the clipping.

¹²³Quoted in Anzi, p. 34.

Ruggeri (1871-1953).¹²⁴ The actor particularly distinguished himself as Hamlet (1915-26) and Macbeth (1916-39).¹²⁵ In 1915 Renato Simoni noted that, as Hamlet, Ruggeri reached artistic maturity, soaring as a protagonist in one of the greatest masterpieces of dramatic literature.¹²⁶ On the tour to London in 1926 the critics compared Ruggeri's Hamlet with that of Irving.¹²⁷ Laurence Olivier, after one of these performances, came over to the actor, knelt and kissed his hands. In 1926 Simoni called Ruggeri a direct descendent of the best traditions of the great Burbage.¹²⁸ But earlier, in a 1915 review, the critic also noted that the translation of the text left a lot to be desired and many unnecessary cuts were made.¹²⁹ While Antonio Gramsci praised Ruggeri's ability to endow Hamlet with the most human qualities, he also pointed out that unless the same attention to detail is given to the rest of the characters

Hamlet will remain a touchstone piece for a great mattatore and not the masterpiece by William Shakespeare. . . . As a result, when leaving the theatre, the audience will continue to feel betrayed and disillusioned.¹³⁰

Productions mounted by Memo Benassi's (1891-1957) company

¹²⁴Unless otherwise indicated, the account of Ruggeri's activities is based on Anzi, pp. 30-33, 51-52, 68-69; and Bragaglia, pp. 73-77, 87-94.

¹²⁵The 1939 production of Macbeth was staged by Sharoff and is discussed later in this chapter.

¹²⁶Renato Simoni, "Amleto," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 21 April 1915.

¹²⁷London reviews are reported in Bragaglia, pp. 93, 254-55.

¹²⁸Renato Simoni, "Amleto di Ruggeri," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 10 June 1926.

¹²⁹Simoni, "Amleto."

¹³⁰Gramsci, cited in Anzi, p. 32.

similarly mistreated Shakespearean drama, placing the emphasis upon the protagonist's performance. Among all of Benassi's Shakespearean roles, Shylock stands at the apex of his histrionic achievements.¹³¹ Having first created the role for Reinhardt's 1933 production in Venice, Benassi continued to build the characterization for the rest of his artistic career. He played Shylock for over twenty years, moving the audience to tears without inducing pity for his interpretation of the protagonist. He was, as Simoni noted, "human and theatrical, at times absorbed in himself and at others, passionate. His every word was significant and incisively uttered in the best tradition of the great interpreters of Shylock."¹³² In the later stagings of The Merchant of Venice this majestic interpretation, unfortunately, overshadowed the rest of the production. It was done, as De Bosio noted,

in accordance with the prevailing Italian system: that is, cutting everything that seemed inappropriate to the actor and leaving only the part of the protagonist. Thus, his role was very important and interesting, although occasionally mannered. However, the play as a whole was destroyed.¹³³

The rich and complex Venetian production as it was mounted by Reinhardt thus was reduced, as Anzi suggested, "into a shallow, Milanese edition [of 1943]. There remained only Shylock's

¹³¹Unless otherwise indicated the account of Benassi's activities is based on Anzi, pp. 76-78, 81-82; Bragaglia, pp. 110-12.

¹³²Renato Simoni, "Il Mercante di Venezia," Corriere delle Sera (Milan), 18 July 1934.

¹³³Gianfranco De Bosio, interview [in Italian], Milan, 3 May 1984.

character, who acquired greater depth, complexity and grandeur."¹³⁴ The postwar edition, according to De Bosio, cut the entire fifth act "since Shylock had no lines in it," to better ensure Benassi's personal triumph.¹³⁵ Such was also the fate of the other Shakespearean protagonists played by the actor with his company. His Oberon, Mercutio, Hamlet, and even Shylock, in the final count were deprived of their dramatic setting and the support of the other characters. Benassi died in 1957 while rehearsing King Lear at the Teatro Stabile of Bolzano. His long artistic career ended with a final ironic twist: a frustrated old man unable to impose his will upon a changing world eventually found his stage incarnation and thus left us forever.

"A more global and profound approach to Shakespeare," as it was suggested by Anzi, "came only with the age of the director. New integral translations, new critical readings, new insightful stagings of the immortal plays soon followed."¹³⁶ Italy, having survived the fever of experimentations in various artistic forms of the 1920s, was ready to revert to Shakespeare. Although the mattatore tradition lost some of its popularity, it did not die completely. A whole line of celebrated Shakespearean interpreters continued to promote an even greater love for this repertory. Zacconi astounded the audience when, at the age of eighty, his Lear carried the dead Cordelia on stage in 1937. Shylocks by Ermete Novelli and later by Memo Benassi in the Campiello of Venice brought

¹³⁴Anzi, p. 78.

¹³⁵De Bosio, interview.

¹³⁶Anzi, p. 52.

forth the unbearable pain of the merchant and forced even the greatest anti-Semites to commiserate with him. "To be or not to be" was recited by Ruggeri from backstage and by Ninchi in the orchestra pit, and Benassi soliloquized while playing chess. Hamlet was performed by both male and female actors: Vittorio Gassman's, the most masculine interpretation, contrasts with the most sensuous performance, that of Manuela Kustermann. However, the influence of the mattatori and their impact on the theatre of the postwar years could no longer be compared to that of their predecessors of the nineteenth century. In a completely different milieu of the theatre of the director, the postwar mattatori could no longer reign supreme on the Italian stage. In view of the growing interest in ensemble productions, their futile attempts to regain past glory (as will be demonstrated in Chapter IV) clashed with the times and appeared out of place. Shakespeare became by far too well known and appreciated to be treated merely as a pièce de resistance by a single protagonist who sought to excel in his histrionic skills.

Shakespeare was produced in the cities as well as the provinces, in prose, poetry, and local dialects. The postwar directors experimented with the Elizabethan bard through some of the most innovative and controversial of staging techniques. Bologna University even prides itself on being the only place in the world where one can obtain a degree in Hamleteria. This Shakespearean Renaissance, which blossomed after the second World War and in recent years culminated in imaginative conceptions by Ronconi, Bene, and Strehler, was inspired to a great extent by the open-air productions of the 1930s. These open air spectacles were produced

at historical sites and staged by leading European directors, who, at the time, were reaching their professional peak. The influx of the French, German and Russian schools of staging contributed to an eventual authentic Italian conception.

Most historians as well as directors themselves agree with De Lullo's opinion given in response to a question about the origins of directing in Italy:

One should look back to the summer productions of the thirties; A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Merchant of Venice as mounted by Reinhardt, Othello by Sharoff or As You Like It by Copeau, to establish the foundations of the Italian Shakespearean school.¹³⁷

Furthermore, some critics even maintain that these three masters were instrumental in introducing and defining the role of the director on the Italian stage. Corrado Pavolini claimed that prior to Reinhardt the actor-manager was responsible for mounting the productions.¹³⁸ Sharoff himself in an article that appeared in Il Dramma in November 1933 argued that "the director's appearance on the Italian stage is a rather recent phenomenon. . . . His role is that of the author's interpreter in the service of the audience."¹³⁹

Pietro Sharoff (1886-196?) who is the least known among the three directors mentioned by De Lullo, studied acting and directing

¹³⁷Giorgio De Lullo, "Tre domande ai registi: Giorgio De Lullo" Sipario 19 (June 1964): 44. See also the interview with De Bosio; and pp. 32-33 of Paolo Grassi and Giorgio Strehler, "Sixteen Years of the Piccolo Teatro," trans. Ruby Cohn and Michael Campo, Tulane Drama Review 8 (Spring 1964): 27-43; Silvia Carandini, "Shakespeare e gli elisabettiani sui palcoscenici italiani" in Agostino Lombardo, ed., Shakespeare e Jonson (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1979), p. 307.

¹³⁸Corrado Pavolini, "Alla scoperta di Shakespeare: dal matatore al regista" Sipario 19 (June 1964): 32.

¹³⁹Pietr Charoff [Pietro Sharoff], "Dite la vostra che ho detto la mia" Il Dramma 9 (November 1933): 55.

at the Moscow Art Theatre Studio.¹⁴⁰ Often working as Stanislavsky's assistant, as well as performing in productions by Meyerhold and Vakhtangov, he absorbed from the three giants of the Russian theatre a rigid systematic approach coupled with an inclination towards fantasy and invention. In his productions the extravagant spectacular melodramatic gestures of Rossi and the grandiose character portrayals of Salvini were tempered and brought to their natural resolution. His Shakespearean protagonists were placed within natural circumstances and developed with due psychological analysis, yet without detriment to the fantasy and poetic mystery of their originals.

Having emigrated to Italy from Russia in 1933, he produced Othello in the courtyard of the Doge's Palace in Venice that same year.¹⁴¹ The play was staged with a spectacular, festive atmosphere and with ingenuity, e.g., the background, which overlooked an actual Venetian lagoon, was used for the arrival of the Moor's ship at Cyprus.¹⁴² Having on hand an actual historical setting enabled Sharoff to fulfill Stanislavsky's dream. The production complimented the famous Othello of the Moscow Art Theatre (planned but never produced). There, after careful examination of the

¹⁴⁰Biographical information on the director is based on Enciclopedia dello spettacolo, 1965 ed., s.v. "Sharoff."

¹⁴¹Unless otherwise indicated the discussion of this Othello and other productions mounted by the director is based on Anzi, pp. 62-63, 68-69, 73-75; Anna Busi, Otello in Italia (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1973), pp. 261-68. Photographs from the 1933 Othello and the sketch for the set design of the 1939 Macbeth were published in Shakespeare e Jonson, plates 25, 26 & 37.

¹⁴²Silvio D'Amico, "Theatre in the Open Air," World Theatre 3 (Autumn 1954): 32-33.

materials pertaining to the period, and after furnishing the stage with authentic props, Stanislavsky intended to fill the pit of the orchestra with water to allow Iago and Cassio to enter the stage floating on a gondola.¹⁴³ Sharoff, in turn, recreated the pomp without having to worry about the authenticity of the setting. The end result was a systematically devised production having a lot to offer to both the lovers of spectacle and the connoisseurs of psychological drama. His other Shakespearean works of these years distinguished themselves with Vakhtangov-like "fantastic realism": the 1938 Merry Wives of Windsor glittered with the colorful, almost mask-like quality of the characters; Twelfth Night, mounted the same year, blazed with stunning vitality; and the 1939 Macbeth possessed certain traits of cubism tempered with Ruggieri's passionate romantic interpretation of the title roles. Reviewing the Twelfth Night (1938), Simoni called it "a beautiful production, refreshing, full of variety in which Sharoff succeeds in conveying exemplary and extraordinary genius."¹⁴⁴

Sharoff succeeded in molding a fantastically realistic Shakespeare, rejoicing in having found the true historical setting for several of the bard's plays. Max Reinhardt (1873-1943), on the other hand, amused himself in a fountain of fantasy that erupted in the Florence Boboli Gardens enchanting all in A Midsummer Night's

¹⁴³For an indepth analysis of the mise en scène to Stanislavsky's Othello, see Konstantin Stanislavsky, Stanislavsky Produces Othello, trans. Helen Norwak (New York: Theatre Arts, 1984).

¹⁴⁴Renato Simoni, "La Dodicesima Notte" Corriere della Sera (Milan), 23 December 1938.

Dream. This production, mounted in the summer of 1933, is considered by some critics the true birthday of Shakespeare in Italy.¹⁴⁵ In many respects it resembled the MGM movie of the same year, only now, with the Boboli Garden for a setting, A Midsummer Night's Dream carried that magical quality which permitted it to transpose the audience along with the characters from reality into a dream. All who attended the performance had, in effect, journeyed and experienced the world of illusion. Max Reinhardt, wrote Ermano Contini, "magically transformed the Boboli Gardens into a fabulous forest echoing with sighs and songs, peopled with sprites and fairies, shot with colour and light and flame, and blazing at the end, for the sumptuous triumph of the nuptial celebrations."¹⁴⁶ Silvio D'Amico further elaborated upon this extraordinary vision:

[Reinhardt] took advantage of the great stone staircase of the Boboli Gardens in Florence, and of the lawns and trees which surround it, to provide a miraculous production of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Out of the depths of the Tuscan night torches first flickered. Then the growing and changing light turned the staircase to copper, gold and snow . . . the lawns became ethereal fields; the trees, crowned with sparks, became alive and the fountains flowed with fire. It was, in a very literal sense, out of the landscape, transformed into a dream scene, that the brave gentlemen and fair, love-smitten ladies were born. Along the parterres fairies fled, scarcely setting foot to ground, dressed in fragments of the sky, while puckish sprites frolicked in the shrubbery, on the steps and high up in the branches of the trees.¹⁴⁷

A Gesamtkunstwerk in its truest sense, A Midsummer Night's Dream incorporated not only music, dance, costumes, pageantry and drama but also made the Boboli Gardens and its scattered spectators an

¹⁴⁵Pavolini, p. 30.

¹⁴⁶Ermanno Contini, "The Sense of Grandeur in the Italian Festivals," World Theatre 1 (Spring 1951): 49.

¹⁴⁷D'Amico, pp. 28-30.

intrinsic part of Shakespeare.

The Merchant of Venice, staged in 1934 in one of the small squares of Venice, the Campo Sant Trovaso, had much the same effect.¹⁴⁸ Silvio D'Amico suggested that

Max Reinhardt, who had discovered certain similarities between Shakespeare's imaginary city and present day reality, produced A Isicl Merchant of Venice on the Campo San Trovaso, extending the playing space to the bridges and the canal, where gondolas plied up and down and pairs of lovers mingled their lyrical effusions with those of the final act.¹⁴⁹

The historical hump-back bridges, floating gondolas, and the nearby Jewish ghetto helped the 1930s audience to travel back four hundred years into an imaginary Shakespearean world of Renaissance Italy. There, in front of them, they could see and experience the actual place where the legendary merchant supposedly lived. The constant "physical presence of the actual setting" surrounding the spectator, according to Renato Simoni, "allowed the action to alternate from Shylock's residence, located on one bank of the canal, to Portia's Belmont, on the other, to the bridge and even to the piazza."¹⁵⁰ The director filled the play with additional action that served either to clarify the dramatic developments which were to follow or to set the psychological framework of a character. Simoni discussed the scene of Jessica's abduction as an example of such an elaborated mise en scène:

Shylock returns home and discovers his daughter having fled from

¹⁴⁸photographs from this production are published in Shakespeare e Jonson, plates 27, 28.

¹⁴⁹D'Amico, p. 32.

¹⁵⁰Renato Simoni, "Il Mercante di Venezia," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 18 July 1934.

the house. Through the windows we could see him dashing from one room to another, and hear sobs of his anguish and rage. These are the seeds for the famous soliloquy of desperation to follow much later in the play.¹⁵¹

The production was overflowing with similar emotionalism and simple human sympathy that sought an outlet even at moments of condemnation and of laughter. In this setting Memo Benassi easily triumphed as Shylock, but this triumph was sustained by the ingenuity of the staging devised by Reinhardt. Reinhardt's theatre, as Anzi summarized from the reviews of the time,

is intended as a dream, fantasy or a play. Above all it is intended as an aesthetic reality which the director believed in and to which he had dedicated his entire artistic career. Every gesture, every change in a light cue was devised with careful precision. To him our theatre will remain indebted for inventiveness, order, reason and the vigor of his improvised solutions. To him our actors remain indebted for causing their intonation to emanate from the stage action and thus move the public.¹⁵²

Finally, Jacques Copeau's (1878-1949) As You Like It, again in the Boboli Gardens in the summer of 1938, completed this preliminary period of explorations in various methods of staging Shakespeare.¹⁵³ His interpretation departed from Reinhardt's conception: the dream is reality as much as reality is but a dream. Through Shakespeare, Copeau tried to express a somewhat belated symbolic statement. According to his conception, the play combined the poetry of pain and love. Meditating on every single joke, one could perceive and understand life itself. Instead of allowing the action to flow

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Anzi, p. 77.

¹⁵³Unless otherwise indicated, the analysis of this production is based on Dante Coccia, "Come vi garba in Boboli" Theatrica 4 (July 1933): 144-47.

freely, surrounded by the immensity of the Arden forest, as the vast area of the Boboli Gardens naturally suggested, Copeau chose to constrain his characters within the limited space around a huge rock constructed specifically for the production.¹⁵⁴ Thus was introduced the symbol of fate which set limits and mercilessly crushed the illusions of the characters. The critics who attended the performance, unaccustomed to such a suggestive and stylistic conception, and deprived of the spectacular elements of other major theatrical summer events, found the production most disappointing. Dante Coccia in his review of the play in the July issue of Theatrica noted the following: "The major disappointment was Jacques Copeau, whom we could remember from Santa Uliva [the 1933 production in Piazza Signoria, Florence]. We expected from him a quite different use of this ideal setting for Shakespeare's work."¹⁵⁵ The critic further attacked what he considered the misrepresentation of the poetic value of the text and the dramatic content:

The production lost much of its fascination, whereas Shakespeare's poetry was gradually attenuated and got dispersed. The action feebly weakened to the point when it sometimes appeared loose and disconnected The actors seemed to appear like figurines rather than characters. . . . The picture was reminiscent of Watteau.¹⁵⁶

This description, although very critical, still brings to mind Maeterlinck and his theory of symbolic tragedy.¹⁵⁷ Here both the

¹⁵⁴The description of the set is based on the production photographs published in Shakespeare e Jonson, plates 33-36.

¹⁵⁵Coccia, p. 146.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷See Maurice Maeterlinck, "The Tragical in Daily Life" in Bernard F. Dukore, ed., Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), pp. 726-31;

action and the drama are stripped to their bare essentials. They are accentuated only at the critical moments when the human puppet, under the veil of illusion, falls prey to senseless fate. This rather revolutionary interpretation, specifically designed for the Italian audience, quite understandably caused many raised eyebrows. But it also left a significant mark on the history of directing in Italy and was to be referred to quite often in later productions. Even Dante Coccia himself, infuriated with this conception as he was, in the end had to agree:

The production although not perfect, yet praiseworthy in great part, was liked and applauded. It is justly considered one of the more interesting productions of Maggio Fiorentino, that will be laudably performed through June.¹⁵⁸

These European directors presented three of the most complex, controversial and exciting ideas in the interpretation of Shakespeare: Sharoff's fantastic characters in a realistic setting, Reinhardt's magic of incantation, and Copeau's subdued, somewhat pessimistic, stylized approach. Among them, they furnished the Italian theatre with a bottomless well of possible readings for the Elizabethan bard. From them, the directors of the post-war period sought the source for their individual creations. From the variety of combinations of these three trends emerged a very Italian, introverted, sometimes realistic and at times poetic, but always very personal and modern conception of Shakespearean theatre. Shakespeare, as presented henceforth, as Corrado Pavolini noted,

won't be all veristic nor psychological, nor can it be all

Maurice Maeterlinck, "The Modern Drama" in Dukore, pp. 731-36.

¹⁵⁸Coccia, p. 147.

realistic or heroic, stylistic or historical, aristocratic or popular: most probably a bit of all these qualities together and a hundred others that could still contradict those mentioned above . . . without actually posing a contradiction in terms.¹⁵⁹

These three directors also laid the foundations for the major theatrical festivals which have been conducted ever since in Italy on an annual and biannual basis. In Florence, Reinhardt and Copeau launched the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in 1933, which subsequently became one of the most prestigious international events in the cultural life of Europe. The 1934 production of The Merchant of Venice inaugurated the famed Venetian Biennale. After the Second World War, Venice played host to a specifically Italian repertory, specializing in Goldoni. Shakespearean productions were passed on to the Verona Festival, which had its first season in the summer of 1948. All of these festivals promoted, as it was noted by D'Amico:

the presentation of plays in places not originally destined to this use, but chosen for some special occasion because they seemed to invite some particular form of dramatic life. We recall a moment of Pirandello's famous play when his "six characters in search of an author" become aware that, in order to resuscitate their drama, they lack an essential player, the dubious Madame Pace. Some of them then begin to reconstruct the "milieu" in which she lived--her room with its furniture, its mirror and its divan. Thus suggested and almost brought into being by her setting, Madame Pace finally appears in flesh and blood. This miracle is repeated each season in Italy in the most diverse localities: cathedral squares and public places, courtyards, gardens, cloisters and seaside beaches--where the accidental but effective reality of the scenery eventually brings the actors and their play to birth.¹⁶⁰

Side by side with foreign directors, the enthusiasm for the open air spectacles was shared and promoted by Guido Salvini (1893-1965), the grandson of the legendary Tommaso Salvini. Guido Salvini

¹⁵⁹Pavolini, p. 31.

¹⁶⁰D'Amico, p. 27.

assisted both Reinhardt and Copeau, and was instrumental in founding the Maggio Fiorentino and the Biennale of Venice. From Reinhardt, Joseph Macleod wrote, Salvini learned the effective control and significant shaping of crowds; from Copeau he learned that an open-air show need lose nothing in deep, spiritual, and in this case [Santa Uliva] religious, meaning.¹⁶¹ For the second Biennale in 1937, Salvini mounted a mammoth production of Romeo and Juliet with Memo Benassi in the role of Mercutio.¹⁶² In the court-yard of Ca' Foscari the director constructed a scenic background of old Verona thirty yards long and twenty-four yards high. One hundred and fifty costumes were designed for this occasion. The monumental impression of this vast undertaking, however, fades in the light of Salvini's 1938 spectacle, D'Annunzio's La Nave. To stage the play, Salvini excavated a canal across the tip of the Isola di Sant'Elena, thus creating a separate island. Twenty-six fully grown pine-trees were planted to assure the realism of the setting. There was also constructed the full-size facade of a cathedral and an actual ship to sail into the harbor of the Venetian Lagoon. In full view of the four thousand spectators, who were seated in the mainland on a specially constructed grandstand, the ship anchored and the sailors and other characters of the play proceeded to disembark. A similar

¹⁶¹Joseph Macleod, "Guido Salvini," Theatre Research 7 (Summer 1966): 112. Along with Reinhardt's A Midsummer Night's Dream the Maggio Fiorentino was inaugurated with Copeau's production of Santa Uliva staged in the cloisters of Santa Croce. Unless otherwise indicated all subsequent references to Guido Salvini are based on this article, pp. 110-16.

¹⁶²Detailed analysis of this production is provided in Gino Damerini, "Romeo e Giulietta in una regia di eccezione rappresentata in Ca' Foscari," Gazzetta del popolo, 21 July 1937.

sensationalism was attempted in Salvini's 1950 Romeo and Juliet, which was staged at the Verona Piazza dei Signori, believed to be the actual residence of the Capulets.¹⁶³ Here the director even obtained permission from the authorities to temporarily remove the bronze statue of Dante which obstructed the view of the spectators. On this occasion D'Amico noted that the director's request "was accepted as a gesture of courtesy from Italy's great poet to his English peer. For the space of a few days he was ceding him his place."¹⁶⁴ According to De Cesco, Salvini's mammoth undertaking was closer to cinema than theatre:

The director clearly preferred long shots and panoramic visions over close-ups. The majesty and vastness of the setting required broad and vigorous treatment of the material, in which the lucidity of the drama could be easily lost. However, Salvini's strategic staging did not leave anything unnoticed. . . . [That included] the crowd scenes, scuffles, the horseback confrontations by the squires, choirs, music, tolling of the bells, flaring torches, skillfully designed lighting cues, etc.¹⁶⁵

Mediterranean infatuation with the display of passion characterized the general conception. In broad handwriting, on the red cover of the Regiebuch, Salvini placed three words: "Blood, Temperament and Nerves."¹⁶⁶ This trio clearly predominated in every scene. No cast could have better presented the invigorating drive of the "Italian" characters than the one assembled for this occasion, headed by

¹⁶³Detailed description of this production with some photographs is provided in Bruno De Cesco, Un quarto di secolo con Shakespeare (Verona: Edizione del comune di Verona, 1979), pp. 88-93.

¹⁶⁴D'Amico, p. 34.

¹⁶⁵De Cesco, p. 90.

¹⁶⁶Guido Salvini, cited by De Cesco, p. 91.

Vittorio Gassman as Romeo and Renzo Ricci as Mercutio.¹⁶⁷ Still, an overpowering theatricality indisputably was the chief aim: "Histrionic words became veritable history, and the audience was continually electrified by beauty after beauty."¹⁶⁸ Although the establishment of a national theatre was Salvini's life-long ambition, mounting open-air spectacles became his trademark. Within this form little justice could be done to Shakespeare, but it is, indeed, through the popular nature of the spectacles that a fascination with the immortal plays flourished. National history, familiar sites, folk legends and the plays themselves were all intertwined, making Shakespeare inseparable from local traditions and a truly popular author.

The extraordinary boom in grand spectacles in the 1930s might also be attributed to the rise of Fascism in Italy. Political rallies, major sports events, and mass assemblies at the Piazza della Vittoria in Rome or the Arena of Verona--all of which were promoted by Mussolini as means to generate public support--have a common denominator with the spectacular productions of Shakespeare. It is not by chance that the two phenomena coincide within the same time frame. In both of them, overgeneralizations and appeal through pathos and visual elements were essential. Besides the above productions by Sharoff, Reinhardt, Copeau, and Salvini, the repertory and the state of the Italian theatre of the 1930s was

¹⁶⁷The work of both of these actors is discussed in greater detail later, in Chapter IV. Among the other celebrity participants, there were also engaged Edda Albertini (Juliet), Tino Carraro (Tybalt), Paola Barboni (Nurse), Antonio Crast (Chorus), Salvo Randone (Friar Laurence), just to mention a few.

¹⁶⁸Macleod, p. 114.

deplorable. The period prior to the war in Italy was marked by a dulling of the critical faculties of the entire population as part of the general brainwashing campaign. One of the leading Italian theatre historians, Vito Pandolfi stated:

Fascist oppression had greatly dulled our consciousness of the condition and potential of society as a whole and of various classes that compose it, and it is precisely this consciousness that the theatre was meant to illuminate.¹⁶⁹

However, contrary to such idealistic notions, grand spectacles seemed to provide the proof that the impoverished nation could majestically rise to rule the world. Discussing those years, Grassi and Strehler wrote of spiritual destitution in the country in general and in theatre in particular:

Beneath its revolutionary appearance and its military rhetoric, Italian fascism consolidated petty-bourgeois tendencies although in a few cases it encouraged feeble attempts at an ideological theatre of "corporate" inspiration. It stopped any fundamental reform; it blocked all communication with the living European theatre.¹⁷⁰

Even some of the classics of Western dramaturgy were considered inappropriate by the nationalist fanatics. They also objected to Shakespeare's plays except for cases when they provided a vehicle for a truly Italian "Renaissance" pageantry. Grassi and Strehler further noted that

Unlike the Nazi theatre, the Italian fascist theatre was anachronistic and entirely bourgeois. . . . The great actors of the early twentieth century disappeared; the repertory was outrageously impoverished. Between 1930 and 1943, the Italian stage was dominated not by neo-classical drama, but by dramas of adultery, the worst boulevard theatre, the worst "French"

¹⁶⁹Vito Pandolfi, "Italian Theatre Since the War," trans. Robert White Linker, Tulane Drama Review 8 (Spring 1964): 88.

¹⁷⁰Grassi and Strehler, "Sixteen Years of the Piccolo Teatro," p. 28.

theatre. . . . Laverdan replaced Alfieri, Sardou replaced Shakespeare, Scribe replaced Goldoni. . . . Italy spoke of conquering an empire and applauded actors who sprawled on divans. Even the physical plants of the theatre were lamentable. Actors played in rented costumes; there were no dress rehearsals (Visconti was the first who had the courage and means to close his theatre for an entire evening for a dress rehearsal); there were no directors. Phony stars and fake prima donnas reigned, and the arbiter of the plays was the bourgeois public, elegant in its furs, decollete, and dress-coats. It was hard to know whether the show was on stage or in the auditorium.¹⁷¹

The political apathy and indifference that the Italian theatrical community demonstrated in those years had a far-reaching effect on institutionalizing the medium as a platform for government propaganda. This phenomenon was encouraged by the enormous subsidies Mussolini's regime allocated to some of the companies and mostly to the major festivals. The costs of some single events at these festivals were ten times higher than the entire yearly budget of an average theatrical troupe. Ermanno Contini stated that "for these occasions, the state distributes subsidies amounting to a third of a whole budget allocated to dramatic art, and provides a larger sum for a single enterprise of this nature than the best companies are able to obtain for the productions of the whole year."¹⁷² Teatro Comunale of Florence, which was constructed in the early 1930s, still stands as a monument of the impoverished culture that had compromised its artistic integrity to the tastes of the fascist authorities and bureaucrats. After visiting Italy in 1949, Eric Bentley discussed the far-reaching repercussions of this phenomenon:

The truth is that many artists who had no special political

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁷²Contini, p. 43.

convictions whatsoever were willing to be friendly with their fascist governments in return for permission to continue practicing their art. Since fascist governments are nice to such non-Jewish celebrities as are nice to them, a modus vivendi was clearly possible. These celebrities continued their "life in art" with funds from the government. . . . what is wrong with Italian theatre today is that it still smells of fascism. . . . The statue of the Duce is gone and the inscriptions are curtained off. It is the special aestheticism of the Fascist era that persists.¹⁷³

And indeed, even after the liberation, it took several years for the Italian theatre to shake the stigma of the fascist mentality.

¹⁷³Eric Bentley, "A Traveler's Report," Theatre Arts 33 (October 1949): 44.

CHAPTER III

LUCHINO VISCONTI AND HIS FOLLOWERS: ORAZIO COSTA, GIORGIO DE LILLO, FRANCO ENRIQUEZ, AND FRANCO ZEFFIRELLI

World War II ended with Italy placed in an ambivalent situation. On the one hand, the country was defeated, while on the other, a strong sense of euphoria was generated among the people. Dreams of independence and national unity, first advanced over a century ago in the times of the Risorgimento, were now becoming a reality. In the aftermath of Mussolini's capitulation to the Allied forces, the leadership of various political factions were agreed upon the principal goal: to reconstruct Italy as a free and united nation. This unity, according to Norman Kogan, "had enabled the country to change peacefully from a monarchy to a republic and to produce a constitution for this new republic."¹ By 1 January 1948 a new constitution was completed. "It established a policy based on the principles of parliamentary democracy, universal adult suffrage, civil rights, and legal protections and extensive decentralization

¹Norman Kogan, A Political History of Post War Italy: From the Old to the New Center Left (New York: Praeger, 1981), p. 2. Unless otherwise indicated, the subsequent discussion of the state of Italy after the war is based on Kogan, pp. 1-16.

of the highly unitary state."²

Besides this unprecedented political unity, Italy also found itself in a relatively favorable economic condition. Although part of the country was in ruins, the industrialized Northwest remained intact. American political interest in ensuring Italy's stability and the government's immunity to takeover by any extremist group, led to a relatively easy economic recovery. Thus, as early as 1949 the country's economy was producing at higher than prewar levels. That year Italy joined NATO and later the European Coal and Steel Community and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Soon the country was trading with the entire world community, regardless of ideological or political labels. The government also moved quickly to promote the growth of mass tourism.

Although lifestyles were rapidly changing, conservative immobility characterized a vast majority of the population, including the political leadership. As early as May of 1947, Communist and Socialist parties had been ejected from the Cabinet, and by April of 1948 the Christian Democrats secured their victory in the first Parliamentary election. The sudden surge of hope which characterized all areas of life following the aftermath of the Fascist collapse came to a halt. According to Vito Pandolfi, "the suffering, the concerns, the moral and spiritual abjectness of the new—yet old—elite, its impotence and political stagnation, reached a dead end."³ The old ways seemed to prevail. The economy no longer

²Ibid., p. 3.

³Vito Pandolfi, "Italian Theatre Since the War," trans. Robert White Linker, Tulane Drama Review 8 (Spring 1964): 88.

could compete with the faster-growing labor force and, by 1950, unemployment was on the rise again. Similar stagnation was experienced in the cultural life of the nation in general, and theatre in particular. Nicola De Pirro, who had been in charge of the cultural sector under Mussolini, was appointed the head of theatrical activities. After a visit to the country in 1949, Eric Bentley wrote:

When one visits Italy itself, one wishes that the government spent less on tours and isolated festivals and special productions in palace gardens, and more on the establishment of regular theatres with regular performances. Government officials are perhaps more interested in the tourist trade than in the art of the theatre. The price of admission to their special productions is suited to the pocket of rich visitors and not at all to that of the Italian public, yet there seems to be no general protest.⁴

This analysis indicates a remarkable similarity to the state of Italian theatre prior to the war, when it catered to the taste of the petty bourgeoisie. This time, however, there was also experienced a tremendous lack of national drama, particularly in contemporary playwriting. "Since the time of Gustavo Modena," Pandolfi wrote, "when a united Italy and a national theatre were first dreamed of, the perennial difficulty of developing a truly national, popular dramatic language resulted in a lack of good plays."⁵ The shortage of new scripts was attributed by Pandolfi to the stringent means of censorship exercised by the authorities, "which have no equal in any other area of government control. They cut down rising authors and make the search for new expression in

⁴Bentley, p. 44. Here Bentley also reports of De Pirro's appointment.

⁵Pandolfi, p. 89.

our theatre impossible."⁶ Pandolfi thus concluded that:

The generation born around the turn of the century, the writers who were successful around the same time as Pirandello . . . were unable to overcome the double impasse of Fascism and war. The next generation reached maturity during Fascist capital rule and more or less adapted itself to it. . . . The writers who were about twenty years old on the eve of the war . . . seemed to have been dazed by events which they failed to grasp fully. . . . The sense of exhaustion began to appear clearly in the thirties, when the cultural effects of Fascism were felt. This impoverishment became even more serious and general later because, after the short respite of 1945-46 (which was not long enough to affect the theatre), we fell once again and even more drastically under the domination of a single ideology [conservatism and clerical encroachment], the only one that was permitted a voice.⁷

In this atmosphere of increasing frustration and lack of innovation, Shakespearean dramaturgy and the emerging theatre of the director seemed to provide the only ray of hope. Together, the two successfully filled the gap which was left wide open by the absence of contemporary Italian plays, and started to shift the attention of the public from the autonomous literary tradition of the Italian playwrights and the histrionic tradition of the actors to the creative process of the production as a whole.

By the end of the war, as was suggested by Grassi and Strehler, "throughout Europe the day of the great director (Stanislavsky, Reinhardt, Copeau, etc.) had ended; but in Italy it had not yet begun."⁸ However, by 1948, as the general enthusiasm for liberation seemed to sink into oblivion, a sense of purpose and a systematically developed methodology started to emerge in the productions of the young Italian directors. It soon became clear

⁶Ibid., p. 90.

⁷Ibid., pp. 90-92.

⁸Grassi and Strehler, p. 27.

that the fragmentary nature which until then had characterized the high achievements of a few, primarily foreign, directors, was giving way to native Italian artists. Now, as Sandro De Feo suggested, "production in Italy was able to develop steadily rather than spasmodically."⁹ In this process Shakespeare, as suggested by director Luigi Squarzina, provided a vehicle for an unrepressed artistic and "political discussion, which is always present in Shakespeare even when it is metaphoric."¹⁰ It was then that the passion for the bard, according to Squarzina, found its greatest popular outpouring.¹¹ It was also then, according to Sandro De Feo, that "definite trends developed and producers of international repute emerged, . . . [whose productions contained] the impeccable finish . . . behind which one can sense the perfect harmony between intelligence and discipline."¹² Among them particularly noted is the work of Luchino Visconti and his followers Orazio Costa, Franco Enriquez, Giorgio De Lullo, and Franco Zeffirelli, whose approach to Shakespeare well characterizes the enterprise of the postwar independent directors.

Luchino Visconti (1906-1976) is considered the true father of the postwar Italian theatre and cinema.¹³ His two most prominent

⁹Sandro De Feo, "Theatre Production of Yesterday and Today," World Theatre 11 (Summer 1962): 137.

¹⁰ Luigi Squarzina, interview [in Italian], Rome, 18 April 1946.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²De Feo, p. 137-38.

¹³For a comprehensive treatment of Visconti's career see Luchino Visconti, Il mio teatro, ed. Caterina D'Amico e Renzo Renzi, 2 vols. (Bologna: Capelli Editore, 1979). This two volume edition

Shakespearean works, Rosalinda (As You Like It, 1948) and Troilus and Cressida (1949), in spite of having been highly criticized, still remain the cornerstones in the history of the postwar revival of the Elizabethan dramatist. Rosalinda (Rome: Teatro Eliseo, 26 November 1948), with sets and costumes designed by Salvador Dali, celebrated the splendor of theatrical spectacle as no other of Visconti's work before or after. This did not prevent the director from carefully molding each individual trait for every single character, including those of the extras. Like Stanislavsky, Visconti devised a life story for each of the dramatis personae. Every gesture was delineated with care and precision, painting an exemplary Renaissance masterpiece on the stage-canvas. At times one might even wonder whether he was witnessing the rehearsal process or an ongoing modeling session of one of the Renaissance or Baroque painters. Although visually the production left the audience breathless, Shakespeare's drama seemed to have been lost.

Visconti devised several criteria in staging Rosalinda. As much as he was fascinated with Stanislavsky's theories, first and foremost he sought to free himself and the rest of Italian theatre from the manacles of the prevailing "style" of Russian realism. His aspirations seemed closer to Sharoff and to Vakhtangov's "fantastic realism." The prewar productions of A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Merchant of Venice by Reinhardt had already experimented with Shakespeare as source material in recreating a live fable. In them,

provides extensive coverage, including Visconti's articles and remarks along with a general historical survey of his productions written by the editors. It also includes several critical essays by some of the leading Italian theatre scholars on the subject.

Reinhardt had applied strictly realistic forms to achieve such a result. In this respect Visconti felt much closer in spirit to Jaques Copeau. He stated:

We have subjected theatre to all of the Neorealism that it could bear. . . . It is not Realism or Neorealism, but Fantasy that enhances the liberty of the spectacle. . . . Certainly today, the time is more suited to Shakespeare than Chekhov.¹⁴

And, indeed, in As You Like It the director found freedom of theatrical invention and that pure joy of "a musical divertissement that evoked serene thoughts."¹⁵ The play, consequently, was not approached from an analytical perspective, burdened with heavy literary criticism, but as a lucid, brilliant piece, poking fun at human imperfections.

To realize this project, Visconti assembled the best talent Italian theatre had to offer, and invited Salvador Dali to design the sets and costumes for the production. Dali, sensing the freedom of the stage conception, combined simplicity with fantasy in his design.¹⁶ Mario Praz suggested that in the designer's hands "surrealism takes possession of Shakespeare's pastoral amid a rich riot of colour and wild imagination."¹⁷ Dali's set contained three painted curtain drops, shaping the space for the main action into a

¹⁴Luchino Visconti, "Sul modo di mettere in scena una commedia di Shakespeare," Rinascita 5 (December 1948): 467-68.

¹⁵Visconti quoted in Leonardo Bragaglia, Shakespeare in Italia (Roma: Trevi Editore, 1973), p. 214.

¹⁶For the sketches of the costumes, set designs and detailed floor-plan see: William Shakespeare, Come vi piace, edizione a cura della Compagnia italiana di prosa diretta da Luchino Visconti (Roma: Edizione d'Arte Carlo Bestetti, 1948).

¹⁷Mario Praz, "International Notes: Italy," Shakespeare Survey 3 (1950): 118.

trapezium which in turn was surrounded with a cyclorama. The main effect was achieved through playing with lights. By utilizing the transparency of the curtain and of the paint, a slight change of lights could instantaneously transform a regal hall into a pastoral forest, then into a garden or even into a magical cave. The stylized costumes, lacking any clear period characterization, added to the brilliance of this fable-like invention. Indeed, there was no doubt that the woods of Arden had cast their spell onto the stage of the theatre. Having in this manner reconstructed the magical forest, Giovanni Calendoli pointed out, the director and his designer attained "the actual vision of lost happiness."¹⁸ Mario Praz summarized that here "the Augustan age, modified by Renaissance pastoralism, interpreted by a modernist, surrealist painter [resulted in] one of the strangest performances of Shakespeare that the present age has seen."¹⁹ Silvio D'Amico in turn concluded that the production successfully transported the Shakespearean tale "outside the narrow confines of time and space, into an unreal world of illusion."²⁰

The splendor of the production was not limited merely to beautiful sets, costumes and magical transformations. The mere names of the actors engaged in the production were enough to generate public enthusiasm. Suffice it to mention Vittorio Gassman, Ruggero

¹⁸Giovanni Calendoli, cited in Visconti, *Il mio teatro*, vol. 1, p. 129.

¹⁹Praz, p. 118.

²⁰Silvio D'Amico, "Incontro dei nostri campioni coi personaggi di Shakespeare," *Il Tempo* (Roma), 27 November 1948.

Ruggeri, Rina Morelli, and a young Marcello Mastroianni. To further enhance the spectacular nature of Rosalinda there were also engaged over two dozen extras, a complete symphonic orchestra, choir and ballet. Indeed, very little was left to the imagination. In an almost operatic fashion, the music by Elizabethan and Edwardian composers, including Purcell and Morley, accompanied the action throughout the performance. In fact, as Arnaldo Frateili noted, the psychological insights were clearly

sacrificed in the phantasmagoria of the sets and costumes, the choreography of the ballet pieces, in the resounding horns of the hunt and the ancient music. But in return one experienced a production of the first order which is rare to see on the Italian Stage.²¹

Calendoli, however, also objected to the absence of a clearly formulated message in the production. Although he found the performance to be generally enchanting, he was still disturbed by the absence of at least a minimal didactic purpose in staging Shakespeare's work. To convey such a message, in the critic's opinion, was the primary responsibility of any theatrical undertaking.²² Recalling the production, De Bosio claimed that it was "a feast for the eyes," but its staging and setting could have as well suited virtually anything. "It would have almost been improved, were it sung as an opera instead of recited."²³ Visconti was also accused of having too much stage action and excessive use of spectacle. His mise en scène and the supposedly trivial behavior

²¹Arnaldo Frateili, "Rosalinda (Come vi piace) all'Eliseo," Il Giornale della Sera (Roma), 30 November 1948.

²²Calendoli, p. 131.

²³Gianfranco De Bosio, interview [in Italian], Milan, 3 May 1984.

of the characters were compared to a carefully choreographed festive dance.²⁴ Responding to these accusations, Visconti argued that "a modern production moves towards dance not in an aesthetic sense but as an expression of the liberated movement."²⁵ He further added that a Shakespeare play can be best viewed

as a musical concerto bordering on the ballet; its characters are involved in a dialogue and their interrelation is best expressed through music and dance; the greatest challenge of the story is in its improbability and variation on the theme of the fantastic This is how I conceived the idea of the ballet realized by Dali in the 18th century autumnal frame filled with color, joy and melancholy. The 18th century used in this fairytale is not a historical one. . . . It is enveloped in a cloud descending from the Olympus of joyous mythology. Hence the acting is harmonized with songs and music . . . which graciously evoke the atmosphere of ancient amusements."²⁶

Such an approach to Shakespeare triggered a fierce critical controversy. Many were annoyed by the director's audacity in treating a classical text freely with no reverence or respect for traditional values. Monelli accused Visconti of having sacrificed the enchantment of As You Like It "to bizarre and risky trappings."²⁷ The critic concluded that even though the director in fact used the integral Shakespearean text and tried to render it as literally and as accurately as possible, "entire lines would somehow pass unnoticed and the play of the words find no response."²⁸ Even

²⁴Paolo Monelli, "Una commedia di Shakespeare," La Nuova Stampa (Torino), 28 November 1948.

²⁵Visconti, Il mio teatro, vol. 1, p. 467.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 468-69.

²⁷Monelli, "Una commedia di Shakespeare."

²⁸Ibid.

the reserved Pandolfi pointed out that the fairy-like charms of the production distracted the attention from the main Shakespearean ideas.²⁹ This critic also noted that the director's best intentions in assembling an exemplary cast did not bear the expected result due to the difficulty in forging a unified ensemble out of the individual sparks of great talent. On the other hand, the great majority of the critics applauded Visconti's courageous venture into a new field of theatre. Sergio Sollima wrote that although the production contained some shortcomings, the director affirmed his talent by courageously tackling a classical text, exploring new methods in staging Shakespeare and thus rendering him more palatable for the contemporary audience.³⁰ He applauded the director's efforts in breaking down the fourth wall and liberating the stage from the oppressive setting of the three walls of the realistic convention.

It is hard to judge the true reaction of the audience since those critics who liked the production pointed out that the spectators were jumping out of their seats,³¹ while Monelli, who disapproved of Visconti's undertaking, claimed that the public remained cold and even manifested its disapproval by shouting and whistling.³² Whatever may be the case, the fact remains that in

²⁹Vito Pandolfi, "Rosalinda o come vi piace," Il Drama 25 (January 1949): 128.

³⁰Sergio Sollima, "Rosalinda ovvero: come piace a Luchino Visconti," Vie Nuove, 28 November 1948.

³¹Frateili, "Rosalinda," and D'Amico, "Incontro."

³²Monelli, "Una commedia di Shakespeare."

spite of the unprecedentedly high price of the tickets, all of the seats for the seven performances were sold out in less than twenty minutes.³³ It also remains a fact that the production is still consistently referred to as a cornerstone and a major achievement in the history of the Italian theatre.

Following the success of Rosalinda, the organizers of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino intended to commission Visconti to stage an adaptation of Orlando Furioso.³⁴ The director's concept for the epic poem was to be realized in a series of concomitant scenes taking place in various sections of the Boboli Gardens to which the audience would be enticed by the actors themselves. The project fell through, due to the lack of time to prepare a suitable dramatic adaptation of Ariosto's medieval romance.³⁵ Visconti in turn suggested as an alternative to stage Alfred de Musset's Lorenzaccio at the Palazzo Pitti. He conceived of erecting a huge podium on which the audience would be seated and that would be moved inside the halls and the courtyards of the palazzo where the action would take place. Again the project could not be realized because of the impossibility of closing some of the major galleries of the Palazzo Pitti for over a month of rehearsals and construction in the midst of the summer tourist season. At that time the staging of Troilus

³³For further details regarding the production see collected materials in Visconti, Il mio teatro, vol. 1, pp. 125-38.

³⁴Maggio Musicale Fiorentino is an annual festival, conducted in Florence during the months of Spring and early Summer. The 1949 production of Troilus and Cressida was mounted under the auspices of this festival.

³⁵A very similar conception received worldwide recognition when it was mounted almost twenty years later by Luca Ronconi.

and Cressida was first conceived. Thus, when eventually realized it was shaded with the relics of Medieval/Renaissance literature and art which were very much on the mind of the director. That is how the premiere of a Shakespeare play never before seen or heard in Italy took place.

Troilus and Cressida (Florence: Boboli Gardens, 21 June 1949) was produced a year after Rosalinda and caused no steaming controversy comparable to Visconti's first Shakespearean production. Even though Troilus and Cressida was much more expensive, involved a much larger cast (over 30 actors and 100 extras, ballet dancers and singers) and raised the price of the tickets to an unheard-of figure, most of the critics enthusiastically endorsed Visconti's enterprise. The explanation for this affirmative response of the press probably lies in the more conventional approach to Shakespeare by the director. While Zeffirelli, who designed the production, transformed classical Greece into an oriental-medieval fairy-land, Visconti directed the play by inhabiting the stage with characters and situations which very closely resembled reality. If in Rosalinda one could easily detect Shalvov's influence, echoing with elements of Vakhtangov's "fantastic realism," the fantastic approach to Troilus and Cressida unmistakably belonged to the kingdom of Reinhardt's A Midsummer Night's Dream. In this case, however, instead of a magic forest, we were presented with magnificent fairy castles. Dali's sets for Rosalinda with their free reign of fantasy reflecting life through a mirror of sensations were replaced with Zeffirelli's designs for Troilus and Cressida, which were more tangible and sustained fairy-tale illustrations familiar to us from childhood story-books. The

fairyland, vibrant with music and dance, and inhabited with courageous warriors and knights who crusaded with horses and swords, seemed to come to life each time night descended upon the Boboli Gardens.

At the exact spot in the Gardens where fifteen years before Max Reinhardt had presented his Midsummer Night's Dream, the designer Franco Zeffirelli constructed the entire city of Troy, which resembled the Land of Oz and the hometown of Aladdin and Scheherezade from One Thousand and One Nights, all rolled into one. Silvio D'Amico's radio-broadcast review, probably best describes this setting.

The entire city, painted white, was surrounded with a belt of crenelated walls and was swarming with colorfully dressed oriental inhabitants who could be easily seen mingling in the streets and even in their own quarters, since the designer had erected the city on a sharp slope. Outside the walls the Greeks were camped. They contrasted the soft oriental forms, with an occidental splendor: armor of rounded shields, enormous crests, herds of cavalry and infantry and splendid military counsels of generals and the king. In times of truce the drawbridge would be lowered so that the formidable champions of the two worlds could meet in courteous negotiations and without disdain to gallantly challenge each other, the result of which would be either a duel or a massacre.³⁶

Angioletti's description complements this magnificent picture:

The fantastic transformation of Troy into an oriental medieval city; the sumptuous and marvelous costumes from Persian miniatures; the carefully guarded rhythm of extras; the meticulous excellence of the cavalry, displayed individually and in the course of the battle scenes; the delicate music inspired by the Provençal songs; the emergence of the lights of the dawn and the shadows of the night; and this ingenious solution in presenting a vast panoramic view of the whole city besieged by the Agamemnon camp without sacrificing the private, chamber

³⁶Silvio D'Amico's radio broadcast quoted in Il mio teatro, vol. 1, p. 166.

scenes between women and soldiers taking place inside quarters, on the alcoves, balconies and even on top of the towers of the minarets: all of this ambience and landscape was resolved with the perfect awareness of stylistic unity.³⁷

Visconti's fascination with the Oriental interpretation of the play was so strong that in 1963 he was seriously contemplating a return to Troilus and Cressida, this time set in the Casbah during the Algerian war—a much more radical approach to the play than the earlier version.³⁸ In 1949 the director's concern was merely to render the story of Troilus and Cressida as a universal fable, taking place once upon a time in the natural surroundings of the fairy Babylonian Citadel. Reminiscing on how Visconti related the idea of the production to him, Zeffirelli recalled the director's "vision of Troy as a city of the Middle East, virtually Persian, invaded by the crusaders. It all went back to the medieval miniatures, but blown up to suit the enormous 400 foot wide stage in the open air. . . . A mammoth production, engaging all of the major Italian actors . . . and armies of extras."³⁹

And indeed the cast included such veteran actors as Renzo Ricci, Memo Benassi, and Paolo Stoppa, as well as the best performers Italian theatre would offer in the years to come: Vittorio Gassman, Giorgio De Lullo, Marcello Mastroianni, Giorgio Albertazzi, Rina Morelli, just to name a few. Besides the actors,

³⁷G. B. Angioletti, "Troilo e Cressida," Il Mondo (Roma) 2 July 1949.

³⁸For further information on the history of Visconti's staging of Troilus and Cressida see: Il mio teatro, pp. 158-71.

³⁹Franco Zeffirelli, interview [in English], Rome, 28 April 1984.

gifted artists were also engaged off-stage. Suffice it to mention the designer Franco Zeffirelli, and Franco Enriquez who assisted the director. It has often been said that after this Troilus and Cressida no Italian theatre, or festival for that matter, could ever afford to assemble a similar cast. Strangely enough, however, at the time critics did not shower the actors with the praise one might expect. Their reviews were rather reserved. Ferruccio Troiani noted that out of the entire cast only four suited their parts well: Vittorio Gassman (Troilus), Memo Benassi (Thersites), Paolo Stoppa (Pandarus) and Elena Zareschi (Cassandra).⁴⁰ Memo Benassi was rewarded with exceptional recognition. In his review Renato Simoni called this performance "filled with bitter comedy and wonderous power that hurls with invention, spitting base guile, squirting with poison and blood."⁴¹ To this praise Angioletti added that Benassi's portrayal "was probably the best Thersites even Shakespeare could imagine: satanical, perfidious and fury-possessed."⁴²

Perhaps the overall reserved appraisal of the acting could be attributed at least partially to a rather cold initial reception by the audience. All of the reviews noted this strange reaction, suggesting that the high price of the tickets attracted mostly "the snob audience," who could not afford to be publicly seen enjoying the performance.⁴³ Angioletti posed much the same question,

⁴⁰Ferruccio Troiani, "Troilus and Cressida di Shakespeare," Momento Sera (Roma), 23 June 1949.

⁴¹Simoni, cited in Bragaglia, p. 142.

⁴²Angioletti, "Troilo e Cressida."

⁴³D'Amico, cited in Il mio teatro, vol. 1, p. 170.

bewildered by the "cold but courteous applause, and the spectators' incapacity to visibly react."⁴⁴ Hence the enthusiastic unanimous praise with which the critics showered Visconti's directorial concept is even of greater value. The anonymous critic R. G. of Il Giornale d'Italia called the production "a small miracle of theatrical ingenuity--which appears even more fantastic under the open skies."⁴⁵ As if responding to these sighs of wonder Renato Simoni wrote:

Certainly Luchino Visconti's imagination, strict discipline, directorial authority and good taste in composition have performed miracles. However, the most amazing of them all is that he has triumphed, without having altered a single line of the original text, which frankly did not merit such respect.⁴⁶

Silvio D'Amico added:

Visconti treats Shakespeare with brilliant grandeur, overpowering the intimate moments of disdain. Instead of being shaded with a war-like quality, the combat scenes resembled festive, well choreographed and bloodless knightly tournaments (clearly contradicting the text since Troilus and Cressida is a bitter satire soaked in blood). The general conception nevertheless . . . remained quite pleasing and filled with vitality, which was also due to the splendid host of actors assembled by the director.⁴⁷

Once again the bitter and sinister Shakespearean comment upon human follies and war seemed to have passed unnoticed. The acute Shakespearean dramatic sensitivity was submerged in the splendor of Zeffirelli's costumes and sets. Nevertheless, in spite of these numerous textual inconsistencies and contradictions, in spite of the

⁴⁴Angioletti, "Troilo e Cressida."

⁴⁵R. G. "Eccezionale spettacolo da uno Shakespeare Minore," Il Giornale d'Italia (Roma), 23 June 1949.

⁴⁶Simoni, cited in Bragaglia, p. 141.

⁴⁷D'Amico, cited in Il mio teatro, vol. 1, p. 167.

apparent initial cold attitude of the audience and in spite of the critics' reserved evaluation of the actors' performance, the production triumphed, eliciting the admiration of the public, "who flooded the immense natural amphitheatre" and "crowned the efforts of the director and his collaborators with ceaseless, cordial applause."⁴⁸

Visconti's approach to Shakespeare thus could be best characterized as a compilation of fantasy and realism that resulted in a memorable spectacle. While the characters of his productions inhabited imaginary castles and magical forests, they were also portrayed with psychological accuracy and verisimilitude. While experiencing sensational theatricality, the audience attending these performances were never allowed to forget the truly human nature of the drama they were presented. This fantastic treatment of Shakespearean dramatic realism also came to characterize the productions of Visconti's follower, Orazio Costa-Giovangilli (b. 1911).

Costa's approach to the bard's work focused mainly on the comedies, which the director would invariably refurbish with Italian characteristics. Thus, the end result often had much more to do with the traditions of commedia dell'arte than with the Elizabethan theatre. Although the director did not neglect to address the form and the issues of Elizabethan tragedy, his preference was for a picturesque and romantic treatment of the material. In 1953 for his production of Macbeth with the Piccolo Teatro di Roma (Rome: Teatro

⁴⁸ R. G. "Eccezionale spettacolo;" D'Amico, cited in Il mio teatro, vol 1, p. 170.

delle Arti, 24 February 1953), the director commissioned his sister Valeria Costa to design a set resembling the three-level structure of an Elizabethan theatre. The actual mise en scène, however, transformed the performance from a visually laconic rhetorical production into a highly spectacular, fairy-like treatment of Macbeth, reminiscent of the sixteenth century Italian intermedii, rather than the staging traditions of Shakespeare's Globe.⁴⁹ Over fifty actors took part in this production.⁵⁰ Splendid costumes, inventive illusionary effects, and almost operatic tableau scenes caused much commotion and excitement among the audience. Silvio D'Amico wrote that Costa's staging was ingenious, capturing "the emotional vehemence and spasms of the vast Shakespearean drama."⁵¹ However, he also noted that it was somewhat misguided in placing

too much emphasis upon the fable-like and demonic qualities . . . instead of emphasizing the intimacy of the protagonists' drama. . . . The staging sagacities sometimes were insufficient to indicate and produce the grand symphonic nocturne of remorse, insomnia, sleepwalking and imminent terror.⁵²

The actors' individual performances, however, according to the critics, left much to be desired.⁵³

In the later years, as if responding to such accusations, Costa

⁴⁹For iconographic material on the set design see Orazio Costa, "Tre domande ai registi," Sipario 218 (June 1964): 43. For critical analysis of the production see Raul Radice, "Macbeth di Shakespeare," Il Giornale d'Italia (Rome), 26 February 1953; Andre Charmel, "La critica di velluto," Il Drama 29 (15 March 1953): 5-6.

⁵⁰Silvio D'Amico, "Al teatro delle arti Macbeth di Shakespeare," Il Tempo (Rome), 25 February 1953.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Silvio D'Amico, "Il Teatro," L'Approdo 2 (January/March 1953): 110.

⁵³Charmel, p.6; D'Amico, "Il Teatro," p. 110.

claimed his role as a director was limited to that of a coordinator. In an interview given prior to the opening night of his Merry Wives of Windsor (Verona: Teatro Romano, 31 July 1976) he suggested that in staging his aim is to

contribute to the formation of an actor, without depriving him of the acute sense of responsibility in the creative process of the production. I prefer calling myself a "coordinator" since I feel it to be more congenial. I believe this sign of communal interpretation is indispensable in avoiding the suppression or excessive exaltation of the actor's ego about his individual performance.⁵⁴

These remarks probably reflected the major role played by Tino Buazzelli as Falstaff in this production. This veteran actor of the Italian stage captured the interest of the audience even prior to the performance. It seems that Costa recognized the superiority of the actor's portrayal to any possible directorial reading of the play, especially in view of Buazzelli's presence, and thus stepped aside, abandoning the "theatre of the director" in favor of the old tradition of the great attatore. Nevertheless, within the limits of such an approach, Costa demonstrated a most effective and subtle staging technique.⁵⁵ Giacomo Carducci's and Dafne Ciarrocchi's setting was very simple, comprised of three tapestries, of which only the central one would change to indicate the locale of the scene.⁵⁶ However, in this very modest simplicity there were left

⁵⁴Costa, quoted in, Giancarlo Vigorelli, "E Shakespeare incontrò Bosch," Il Giorno (Milan), 1 August 1976.

⁵⁵For further discussion on the staging see G. A. Cibotto "Al teatro Romano di Verona Le allegre comari," Il Gazzettino, 5 August 1976.

⁵⁶Franco De Ciuceis, "Falstaff inedito per Buazzelli," Il Mattino (Naples), 10 March 1977.

some of the richly colored features of Costa's earlier work. Most remarkable of all was the final scene in Windsor Park. Analyzing it, Vigorelli stated that it seemed as though Shakespeare's characters were stepping out of a Hieronymus Bosch painting of the nocturnal masquerade, populated with some of the typical commedia stock types. "In all of this tragic folly, which is Shakespeare," he wrote, "bouncing between damnation and mercy, with the striking lucidity of Hieronymus, the turbid insanity was overpowering."⁵⁷ The staging thus effectively generated not only a strong audience response but also conveyed a grotesque dramatic conflict. A colloquial Italianized version of the text, which also included an idiomatic translation of the names of the characters, added not merely to the humor, but also to the acutely grotesque sensations pervading the production, letting its fluidity assume a natural Italian pace and accelerated tempo.

Among all of Costa's Shakespearean productions, the most typical and interesting is his interpretation of Twelfth Night. Costa staged the play three times during his career: twice as an aspiring young director in 1944 and 1950, and then in 1971, as an accomplished and recognized figure of the Italian theatre. Ironically, however, whereas the first two were well received and widely praised, the last one was largely denounced and severely criticized. The 1950 Twelfth Night (Rome: Teatro delle Arti, 17 November 1950) could best be characterized as a festive celebration of Shakespeare in the carnivalesque atmosphere of an Italian

⁵⁷Vigorelli, "Incontro Bosch."

comedy.⁵⁸ Sets, costumes, mise en scène—all incorporated a very colorful, light, vivid and above all comic and romantic notion of the play. Suspended tableau curtains, designed by Tulio Costa (the director's brother), with a grand staircase in the very center of the stage, reflected an exuberant theatricality.⁵⁹ The commedia-like portrayal of Malvolio and the other characters entertained the audience, who enjoyed the gaiety of the performance.⁶⁰ Costa admitted that in his production, for the first time in Italy,

the twins Viola and Sebastian were played by two different actors, to better underscore the theatricality of the piece. Thus maintaining the sense of a 'festa all'italiana' I approached it as a sentimental lyrical drama and sought to accentuate in it both the farce and commedia.⁶¹

Twelfth Night had been staged by Costa in this fashion once before, in 1944 after the liberation of Rome. In both productions, 1944 and 1950, Shakespeare served the director as a festive occasion for an "Italian Renaissance expressed with absolute freedom and fluency of

⁵⁸Critical appraisal of the production is largely based on G. D. C. "Teatro: Shakespeare alle Arti," L'Avanti (Rome), 18 November 1950; Rosso di San Secondo, "La dodicesima notte di Shakespeare," Il Giornale d'Italia (Rome), 19 November 1950; G. C., "La dodicesima notte," La Voce Repubblicana (Rome), 19 November 1950; Anonymous, "Al Piccolo Teatro La dodicesima notte," Il Quotidiano (Rome), 18 November 1950.

⁵⁹For iconographic material on the production see Agostino Lombardo, ed., Shakespeare e Jonson (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1979), Appendix plates 56-57; and Federico Frascani, "Nei giardini della Villa Floridiana La dodicesima notte," Sipario 52 (August 1950): 13-14.

⁶⁰Silvio D'Amico, "La dodicesima notte inaugura il Piccolo Teatro," Il Tempo (Rome), 18 November 1950.

⁶¹"Tre domande ai registi," p. 43. In the few previous Italian productions of Twelfth Night the same actor or actress played both Viola and Sebastian. In most cases the recognition scene was played with the substitute actor.

movement."⁶² And indeed, the 1950 production was permeated with the joy of life, laughter and exuberance. A review which appeared in Il Quotidiano stated that Costa had succeeded in playing with "the comic elements enhancing the production with gusto and vivacity, that although sometimes seemed excessive, yet never surpassed the limits of harmonious [dramatic] development."⁶³ The production was a triumph, acclaimed unanimously, as it appears from the reviews, by both the critics and the audience.

Quite different was Costa's concept in 1971 (Milan: Castello Sforzesco, 15 July 1971). The director here abandoned frivolous commedia for an aura of melancholy. Jan Kott's "bitter Arcadia" clearly descended upon the production.⁶⁴ In the footsteps of Malvolio, instead of the funny lazzi gags, there followed a cold and deadly sense of irony. Laughter was banished from these episodes and in its place came a sense of compassion, and even more so a sense of accusation. The joyous romantic atmosphere of 1950 was replaced with literally icy and sterile sets.⁶⁵ Eugenio Guglielmetti designed the stage as a vast glacier populated with creatures truly devoid of human emotions. This partially realistic, partially fantastic

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³"Al Piccolo Teatro La dodicesima notte."

⁶⁴The concept of "bitter Arcadia" was introduced by Jan Kott in his Shakespeare Our Contemporary, trans. Boleslaw Taborski (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1964; reprint ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1974), pp. 237-92. For the summary of this theory, see the section on Trionfo's production of Twelfth Night in Chapter VI.

⁶⁵For further detailed analysis of the production see: Anna Cavallone Anzi, Shakespeare nei teatri milanesi del novecento (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1980), pp. 207-10; Bruno De Cesco, Un quarto di secolo con Shakespeare (Verona: Edizione del Comune di Verona, 1979), pp. 236-39.

approach was too abstract not only for the audience, but for the actors as well. The critics noted the absence of a unifying interpretation among the performers. They frequently accused some actors of overplaying, and the others of underplaying.⁶⁶ Placing the responsibility for such diverse acting upon the director, De Monticelli attributed it to Costa's failure "to reconcile the two distinct spheres of the play: that of the lyric comedy of romance . . . and, on the other hand, the rustic commedia buffa."⁶⁷ This review seems clearly to indicate that the critic hoped to see in this 1971 edition a 1950 interpretation, and hence was very much disappointed when presented with this quite polar approach. Indeed, it was clear that with the loss of the joyous exuberance and romance, the 1971 production also lost an enthusiastic public response. The critics mercilessly condemned the unnecessary melancholy which they found to be superimposed, and hence pseudo-intellectual.⁶⁸ Although it is hard to judge this production from the available material, the above seems to suggest that its public fiasco was largely due to the shock that both the audience and the critics experienced when confronted with an unexpectedly cynical approach by the director, whom they grew to know as "a festive Italian" interpreter of Shakespeare's comedies in general, and Twelfth Night in particular. After all, although by that time Kott's theory had already been introduced into Italy, nobody applied it so

⁶⁶Reviews quoted in Anzi, pp. 208-09.

⁶⁷Roberto De Monticelli, "L'aria della notte disperde la regia," Il Giorno (Milano), 17 July 1971.

⁶⁸De Cesco, p. 238.

ferociously in staging Shakespeare's comedies and specifically in producing Twelfth Night, which traditionally was perceived as a typical pièce à l'italienne.

Having worked with both Visconti and Costa, Giorgio De Lullo (1921-1981) applied those experiences in his own work on Shakespeare. He also incorporated some of the aspects learned from Strehler, in whose productions De Lullo gained fame as an actor.⁶⁹ Like Visconti, De Lullo preferred to adorn Shakespeare with a fable-like, fairy quality. Like Costa, he enhanced his productions with a flair of romance and left ample space for the histrionic display of individual actors, thus emphasizing traditional elements of Italian theatre. In this respect his fascination with Twelfth Night is quite natural, especially in view of the fact that he himself acted in it on numerous occasions, including the 1950 Costa production. As a true disciple of Costa, De Lullo also produced Twelfth Night twice, once in 1961 and then in 1979. In fact, the 1961 endeavor was his first Shakespearean staging.

In his first version (Verona: Teatro Romano, 8 July 1961) De Lullo transformed the play from its original Renaissance setting into the early nineteenth century, a time permeated with "the fragrance of Romanticism, à la Musset," as the director himself defined his concept.⁷⁰ Splendidly dressed characters in tails and crinolines found themselves in almost illusionary, pastoral

⁶⁹Strehler's work on Shakespeare will be examined in detail in Chapter VII of this dissertation, where there is also provided analysis of De Lullo's performance.

⁷⁰Giorgio De Lullo, "Tre domande ai registi," Sipario 19 (June 1964): 44.

gardens.⁷¹ On the green lawns of the Verona Roman theatre there were dispersed Corinthian columns and several statues, including a bas relief of Shakespeare. In some ways this neoclassical atmosphere was reminiscent of Strehler's 1948 Tempest in the Boboli Gardens, in which De Lullo played Ferdinand.⁷² The simplicity of this set, the vivid lighting, and the splendid figures of the characters presented a truly idyllic picture with an aura of Romanticism. Pier Luigi Pizzi's sets and costumes were, in fact, so beautiful that critics claimed that they distracted attention from the actors' performance.⁷³ Nevertheless, the reviews did not fail to notice the playfulness that characterized the production. Almost unanimously the critics acclaimed the acting of every member of this very young cast. They stressed that the interpreters succeeded in exhibiting individual histrionic brilliance without detriment to a comprehensive ensemble harmony. "The production progressed like an uninhibited game, filled with fantasy," wrote Kezitch, "largely dependent on the most exquisite ingenuity of the players."⁷⁴ The staging was filled with theatrical inventiveness and lazzi-gags, e.g., while Sir Toby and the other revelers were hiding in barrels,

⁷¹For iconographic material on the production see: Lombardo, plates 71-72; De Cesco, p. 146; the front page of Sipario 16 (August/September 1961).

⁷²This 1948 Tempest is discussed in great detail in Chapter VII, dealing specifically with Strehler's work.

⁷³A brief summary of the reviews is quoted in De Cesco, p. 147; Also see Giorgio Prospero, "La notte dell'Epifania come una farsa romantica," La Tribuna (Rome), 20 January 1962, p. 3.

⁷⁴T. Kezich, "La dodicesima notte a Verona," Sipario 16 (August/September 1961): 85-86.

Feste was taunting Malvolio. The identical mise en scène of the episode in the 1979 production, according to Vincent F. Petronella, produced "exquisite hilarity thanks not only to Malvolio's foolish ways but also to the eavesdroppers' heads intermittently popping out of the barrels to speak an aside or to get a better look at Malvolio."⁷⁵ Another memorable scene was that of the duel between Viola/Cesario and Sir Andrew to the pace of a dance. These farcical elements were well orchestrated to the music of Fiorenzo Carpi and in time acquired, as Vice wrote, almost an Offenbachian quality.⁷⁶ The critic further noted that the director thus had successfully delineated two distinct planes in his interpretation of Twelfth Night: that of suave romanticism along with bawdy bufoonery.⁷⁷ Nevertheless it seems that these external qualities, the splendid Romanticism, along with the commedia-like treatment of much of the material, overshadowed the melancholy of the play. The subtle irony was turned into a farcical joke and a tongue-in-cheek "poetry" instead of a sincere display of pathos. Hence the end result, as one might have predicted, was crowned with an enormous success among the audience, while very little had changed in the traditional manner of staging this Shakespeare comedy in Italy.

Eighteen years later, in De Lullo's approach to Twelfth Night, many of the fundamental stage conceptions were unaltered (Rome: Teatro Eliseo, 1979). Suffice it to mention that the romantic notion

⁷⁵Vincent F. Petronella, "Theatre in Review: La Dodicesima Notte," Theatre Journal 33 (May 1981): 255.

⁷⁶Vice, "Le prime Romane," Il Messaggero (Rome), 20 January 1962.

⁷⁷Ibid.

permeating the production, the gay commedia theatricality, including some of the identical lazzi, (e.g. barrels), even certain elements of the set, like neoclassical Corinthian pillars, once again designed by Pizzi, stayed the same. The change took place in the tone of the production. The pervading melancholy attained a visual expression as the action moved from a blossoming garden to the deserted white sands of a beach. It was as though the times had transformed the enchanting cultivated English gardens into a wilderness of sand, with an occasional Corinthian pillar as a reminder of past glory.⁷⁸ For those familiar with the splendor of the 1961 production, even the very first visual images of this new Twelfth Night conjured up the themes of Shelley's "Ozymandias." Here lay the "shattered visage" of the Romantic dream.

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.⁷⁹

The splendid costumes of the "bel epoch" vanished, and were replaced with simple, vaguely period attire that could have been worn at any time between the 1920s and the 1960s. The courts of Orsino and Olivia reminded Tommaso Chiaretti of

Oxford lads moving with the ease of Wimbledon tennis players, dressed in pants, shirts and ties, recalling Forster's A Passage to India. This magical, abstract and unpredictable Shakespearean Illyria was treated both as a refined fishermen's village, and a

⁷⁸For a detailed physical description of the set see: Roberto De Monticelli, "Sabbia, amore e allegoria con Shakespeare," Il Resto del Carlino (Bologna), 18 March 1979; Renzo Tian, "La prima spiaggia," Il Messaggero (Rome), 18 March 1979.

⁷⁹The poem quoted from M. H. Abrams et al, eds., The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 3rd ed., Vol. 2 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1974), p. 535.

glarry phantasm à la Tunisia.⁸⁰

Paolo Poesio perceived this ambience of the dramatic action as placed outside any specific geographic or historic reality as the main justification for the great disparity of the costume styles.

Hence

Feste could assume the robes of a Mediterranean urchin, Viola be dressed as a student of a British college, Olivia could wrap herself in floating veils and Sir Andrew evoke laughter by dressing as a Scotchman.⁸¹

Adorned with a red wig, Andrew was a good natured spoof of an Englishman who had found himself by mistake on an Italian stage. The exotic metaphysical landscape thus was effectively contrasted with the vibrant figures of the protagonists. At one time, for instance, as Petronella observed, "Olivia wore a flaming magenta gown of sheer, translucent fabric in what was the most memorable use of color in the play."⁸² Sharply distinct with his glittering black eighteenth-century tails, Malvolio was clearly out of time and place, whereas the pastel, undefined costumes of the other characters easily blended in with the sands in the background. Malvolio looked, as Poesio suggested, like "a gigantic black insect, both ridiculous and pitiful, evoking memories of his distant progenitor--a commedia dell'arte mask."⁸³ And still, in spite of such a grotesque portrayal, the dramatis personae at all times

⁸⁰Tommaso Chiaretti, "Il dolce gioco dell'androgino," La Repubblica (Rome), 18/19 March 1979.

⁸¹Paolo Emilio Poesio, "La favola degli inganni," La Nazione (Florence), 24 November 1979.

⁸²Petronella, p. 255.

⁸³Poesio, "La favola."

remained, as it was observed by Francis Lane, "characters rather than foils."⁸⁴

Although all of the exterior trappings of the production undeniably suggested the director's shift of tone from jolly to pensive, the actual interpretation did not change much. The notion of an impatient young generation overburdened with the senility and pedantry of their elders remained as the predominant theme. The actors continued to play a game in poking fun at Malvolio's expense, exploiting without pity his rigid and antiquated perception of the world, almost in an inhuman fashion. But the lazzi lost their enchanting humor and blazed with cruelty. "One might even say," Poesio wrote, "that De Lullo himself looked back upon his own past with irony, sweeping away any melancholic hesitations or concessions."⁸⁵ The accusatory yet funny mood of this bitter Arcadia had about itself a sense which was, as Mauro Manciotti remarked, "vaguely Fellinian in nature, conveying reality that was expressed through the interaction of the characters."⁸⁶ The traces of a lost romantic illusion were present everywhere. The mood was set from the start as the director added a prologue to the play:

Olivia, alone and in mourning, walked out on what served as a combined terrace and pier of about six feet in height and ten feet in length. A sea breeze blew toward her, causing her silky attire to stream behind her. She became a consciously romantic image of a pensive, beautiful young woman bathing herself in soothing air currents. In the background, Nino Rota's music

⁸⁴John Francis Lane, "Shakespeare in Italy," Shakespeare Quarterly 31 (Autumn 1980): 429.

⁸⁵Poesio.

⁸⁶Mauro Manciotti, "Shakespeare all'italiana," Il Secolo (Genoa), 18 March 1979.

supplied the aural equivalent of the visual image.⁸⁷

A few months prior to his death, the acclaimed composer of such motion-picture scores as The Godfather, Doctor Zhivago and Romeo and Juliet enhanced this production with an almost operatic score. Music, Francis Lane wrote, "overwhelmed the performance."⁸⁸ The poetic quality of the text, somewhat lost in the translation, was abundantly restored through the visual aspects of the production and the melodies bathing the stage. The pathos thus generated mesmerized the audience.

This sensuous atmosphere, echoing with melancholic undertones, did not undermine the commedia-like vitality of the production. It rather fused the two into a single force of gioia di vivere. In fact this philosophy found its best advocate in the brilliant performance of Massimo Ranieri who played the combined role of Feste/Fabian. His fool, contrary to Kott's theory, was full of vitality. Dressed as a French sailor from Marseille, accompanying his songs with a baby concertina and excelling in comedic virtuosity, he was closer to a whimsical Harlequin than a melancholic Feste. He first appeared on the stage "perched on top of a pole" as "a human weathercock."⁸⁹ Later, having slid down the pole, he played "the go-between who tried to oblige all masters and brought his own note of melancholy as we wondered where his own affections tended."⁹⁰ His moods and his actions were dictated by the winds of fortune, which he merely

⁸⁷Petronella, p. 255.

⁸⁸Lane, p. 428.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 429.

⁹⁰Ibid.

reflected. Ranieri's fool supported with songs, dances and acrobatics the vibrant playfulness of the rest of the cast, and pushed the De Lullo concept, as De Monticelli noted, towards the genre of a musical comedy.⁹¹ In this new form it combined the essential characteristics of Twelfth Night, as perceived by both the old Italian tradition and the new trends in staging Shakespeare's comedy which were stimulated by Kott. Although the histrionic agility of commedia and romance were supposed to have been banished from this new version, their presence was justified as the best means for an ironic treatment of the material. They also remained as a confirmation of the preference of the Italian audience and the suitability of the Italian actors for the traditional form. It is indeed this sensitivity to local needs and his own natural inclination that assured the enormous success of De Lullo's second version of Twelfth Night, whereas Costa's later radical reinterpretation was doomed to failure.

In his other Shakespearean productions De Lullo's preference for a histrionic and "romantic" treatment of the material became even more apparent. Commedia dell'arte aspects often pervaded not only the comical sections of the plays but the serious ones as well. Such, in fact, was the case of the production of Two Gentlemen of Verona (Verona: Teatro Romano, 5 July 1965). De Lullo based his concept on the original scenario entitled "La storia di Felice e Filomena." De Cesco wrote on the subject:

Giorgio De Lullo conceived his production in a definitely humorous key, rather than sentimental. He invents an abundance of

⁹¹De Monticelli, "Sabbia."

comical pursuits even for the characters, that at a first reading, do not seem well suited for this purpose (i.e. the Duke of Milan, Turio, Lucetta, etc.). He inoculates them with some of the lazzi which were already successfully applied on some other occasions and leaves the actors free to improvise in realizing these histrionics. The end result thus is always natural, fervent, fragrant and colorful.⁹²

Critics, however, objected to such an Italianized, liberal treatment of Shakespeare. Francesco Bernardelli, for instance, found that this excessively "jolly" experimentation, in applying a farcical and satirical "flavor" to the production, overshadowed the sensitive, delicate moments of Shakespeare's poetry. He wrote:

There remains nothing subtle or evanescent. The comic and even buffonesque vein consistently invade the stage, provoking a frequently rowdy jubilation of voices, lazzi, and plays on words. All of these external, easily produced effects that amuse the audience dispel the intimate moments, the exquisite images, the fascinating wording for which we are so much indebted and in awe of Shakespeare.⁹³

Nevertheless, such criticism was clearly in the minority, and even those opposed to De Lullo's disregard for the "sanctity" of Shakespearean poetry could not conceal their admiration for the beautiful realization of his productions.⁹⁴ Pizzi's magnificent costumes and pastorally neoclassical sets with his favorite Corinthian pillars left hardly anyone indifferent. Even the critical Bernardelli had to admit that "a human eye could hardly wish for anything more beautiful."⁹⁵ But the main emphasis of this produc-

⁹²Bruno De Cesco, Un quarto di secolo con Shakespeare (Verona: Edizione del comune di Verona, 1979), p. 170.

⁹³Francesco Bernardelli, "I due gentiluomini di Verona di Shakespeare ai Giardini di Palazzo Reale," La Stampa (Turin), 22 July 1965.

⁹⁴Giorgio Polacco, "Un tenue disegno a matita presagio dei grandi ritrati," Il Piccolo (Triest), 8 July 1965.

⁹⁵Bernardelli.

tion, as its commedia adaptation suggested, was placed upon the actors. Carlo Terron pointed out that De Lullo incorporated in his staging the rhythmic vivacity and playfulness of individual actors, "which was governed by a well educated sense of parody."⁹⁶ However, this fascination with the actors' histrionic skills was not merely limited to the comic material. They were also praised for accurate psychological portrayals.

In his production of Julius Caesar (Rome: Teatro Argentina, 1 May 1971) De Lullo contrasted a sustained, methodical exploration of character with the exuberant bravura typical of his other work. A purely rhetorical delivery was substituted for the fast tempo and buffoonery De Lullo had used in staging Shakespeare's comedies. His efforts were directed to illuminating the subtle literary nuances of the play. The word and poetry were seminal to the performance, which underscored the director's commitment to the critical study of the text. Shakespeare, in De Lullo's conception, acquired, as Giorgio Prosperi suggested, Seneca's tragic inspiration:

From the start there was rejected any seductive notion, any triumphant or memorable solution. Sometimes motionless and bare as an oratorio, sometimes stylized to resemble . . . Japanese theatre, the production found its major support and force in Shakespeare's text. . . . The choruses were reminiscent of a classical tragedy rather than Shakespeare. The director frequently resorted to speaking in unison and with an emphasis on themes spoken by the crowd. There was not even a remote indication of a naturalistic ensemble. Brutus and Marc Antony delivered their two great orations in solitude, standing on the podium amidst the bare stage. The mounting tension was due only to the power of the words and their intonation. The battle scenes were staged schematically, almost in an abstract manner.

⁹⁶Carlo Terron, "Verona scopre un nuovo Shakespeare," Corriere Lombardo (Milan), 7/8 July 1965.

Everything depended solely upon the text.⁹⁷

The challenge of the conception rested almost entirely upon the actors' shoulders and upon their ability to deliver the text with sufficient rhetorical power. Having at hand some of the greatest veteran actors the Italian stage could offer made the superb realization of this task possible. The cast included Renzo Ricci as Julius Caesar, Romolo Valli as Brutus and De Lullo himself playing the role of Marc Antony. The absence of a vivid mise en scène amidst the dispersed Roman statues of Pizzi's beautifully plain sets again centered the focus upon the histrionic skills of the performers.⁹⁸ By limiting the actors primarily to their vocal interpretation, De Lullo attained in Julius Caesar the profound poetical impact of an ancient tragedy. Being first and foremost an actor himself, he thus also confirmed his dedication to the "actor's theatre."

Like Costa and De Lullo, Franco Enriquez (1927-1980) saw his role as a director limited to that of a coordinator. His Shakespearean productions were always primarily concerned with creating the most tangible and uninhibited mise en scène to allow the leading actors to demonstrate the full range of their talent. In part this approach might be attributed to an early association of the director with the major mattatori of the Italian theatre who commissioned Enriquez to stage Shakespearean productions for their companies. In these productions, governed by the whim of the leading

⁹⁷Giorgio Prospero, "Un Giulio Cesare senza . . .," Il Tempo (Roma), 1 May 1971.

⁹⁸Detailed descriptions of the sets are provided in Prospero, and in Raul Radice, "Giulio Cesare nel risorto Argentina," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 3 May 1971.

actor, his artistic freedom had been limited. The participation of such accomplished stars as Renzo Ricci and Eva Magni attracted the chief attention of the audience and the critics. In these early years after World War II the cult of the mattatore still dominated the Italian stage, in spite of the formation of some state supported repertory companies, pioneered by Renato Simoni, Luchino Visconti and Giorgio Strehler, devoted to the advancement of a "director's theatre." Enriquez, who had worked with both Visconti and Strehler, was still too young and relatively unknown to oppose the personal whims of the actor-managers who employed him. Consequently, he concentrated on polishing his blocking techniques and other areas of the directing craft. In these first productions his name was hardly even acknowledged by the critics. Thus, it is not surprising that his 1951 Antony and Cleopatra and 1955 King Lear were endowed with very little imagination or theatrical invention.⁹⁹ Working with these private companies run by the actor-managers, Enriquez acquired invaluable experience in producing Shakespeare. None of the Italian directors could rival him in the number of Shakespearean productions which he had staged. It is also through this experience with the private companies that Enriquez had first formulated his characteristic approach. Within the confines of a traditional theatre of the mattatore he made Shakespeare glitter with

⁹⁹It should be noted that the 1951 Antony and Cleopatra was staged by Enriquez in alternation with Bernard Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra, which constituted his directorial debut. For further analysis of the 1951 Antony and Cleopatra and 1955 King Lear see: Renato Simoni, "Antonio e Cleopatra," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 13 January 1952; Carlo Terron, "Come un poema sinfonico la cosmica follia di re Lear," Corriere Lombardo (Milan), 5/6 November 1955; Giorgio Prosperi, "Il Re Lear di Shakespeare interpretato da Renzo Ricci," Il Tempo (Rome), 1 February 1956.

excitement, using rather conventional staging techniques and a minimal preparation time. In an interview, Emanuele Luzzati, who designed many of Enriquez's productions, was still full of amazement when recalling the 1962 The Taming of the Shrew. Filled with disbelief he stated that it took less than two and a half weeks "to patch up" the production, which was then successfully performed all over the world for fourteen years.¹⁰⁰ The 1961 Love's Labours Lost and even more so the 1966 As You Like It are, indeed, some of the most characteristic examples of such an approach.

As You Like It (Verona: Teatro Romano, 27 June 1966) generated great interest since the play had not been presented in Italy since Visconti's legendary production of Rosalinda in 1948. The eager anticipation could also be attributed to the director's close association with Visconti, whom Enriquez assisted on numerous occasions. Although Enriquez embarked on quite an independent interpretation of the play, the influence of his mentor was apparent. The use of colorful costumes and sets designed by Emanuele Luzzati, the transformations in full view (the towers surrounding the stage would turn and instantaneously transform the palace courtyard into the forest of Arden), the elaborate use of music (the production was even compared to an operetta), all of the above were clearly reminiscent of Rosalinda.¹⁰¹ An exceptionally close

¹⁰⁰ Emanuel Luzzati, interview, Turin, 2 May 1984.

¹⁰¹Physical descriptions of the set and stage effects are based on the following sources: the interview with Luzzati; De Cesco, pp. 171-75, 183-85; Anzi, pp. 172-75; Raul Radice, "Come vi piace di Shakespeare al Teatro Romano di Verona," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 28 June 1966. The last three sources also provide detailed analyses of the mise en scene and the individual performances of the

orchestration of the bravura performances of the individual actors completed the picture. Although the stage conception did not shed a new light or provide fresh insight on the play, it nevertheless manifested, as De Cesco noted, "a potent magic of the theatre," which further explored Reinhardt's and Visconti's earlier interpretations.¹⁰² Carlo Terron's review best summarizes this effect:

Franco Enriquez orchestrated a vivid production. Although some might challenge its informative accuracy, the originality, coherence and effectiveness were undeniable. The director enhanced the forest of Arden with theatrical allegory where travesty and fantasy reigned. . . . Fairy-like and filled with romance, the stage was turned into a real place for tricks and lazzi, where the clown Touchstone acquired the function of a true demiurge. Whatever was lost in his fairy metaphysics was gained in amusing concreteness.¹⁰³

Like Costa and De Lullo, Franco Enriquez also adapted Shakespeare's plays to an Italianized form, particularly in those cases where they were based on the novellas of the Italian Renaissance. The frequent application of typically commedia-like stage business in Love's Labours Lost and As You Like It are just two of the numerous examples. The merging of easily identifiable Italian locales with the stylized elements of an Elizabethan stage was another form frequently applied by the director. In this fashion Emanuele Luzzati utilized the Venetian Ponte Reale as the focal setting for Enriquez's 1967 The Merchant of Venice (Verona:

actors. Analysis of the musical score can be found in Alberto Blandi, "Come vi piace in stile 'ye-ye' diverte e stupisce il pubblico ieri sera a Verona," La Stampa (Turin), 28 June 1966.

¹⁰²De Cesco, p. 183.

¹⁰³Carlo Terron, "Foresta d'amore," La Notte (Milan), 28 June 1966.

Teatro Romano, 8 July 1967).¹⁰⁴ The bridge extended along the width of the stage, and functioned both as a symbol of Venice and as the tiring-house of an Elizabethan theatre. The area under the bridge was utilized as an inner stage, and the area above the bridge as the second level. The passages under the two slopes served as the entrance doors. Unfortunately this highly sophisticated design was undermined by a superficial interpretation of the text. Its intense drama was reduced to an oversimplified, comical farce, catering to the tastes of the enthusiastic public at large, but disappointing the critics.¹⁰⁵

In the production of Macbeth (Verona: Teatro Romano, 9 July 1971) Enriquez rejected purely external theatrical effects and sought to clarify the psychological portrayal of the protagonists. The characters were treated as universal representatives of mankind's passage from the medieval world to the modern one, not only in its narrow literary sense, but also figuratively depicting man's continuous struggle to break through the shell of the mystery surrounding him.¹⁰⁶ The director chose to view human ambition, Lombardo suggested, as an inseparable part of "love, . . . sterility . . . and solitude . . . all of which converge within the great theme of evil: evil as it is observed by Shakespeare in every phase of its destructive passage from ambition

¹⁰⁴The set description is based on the iconographic material obtained from Emanuel Iuzzati.

¹⁰⁵A summary of critical reviews is quoted in Anzi's Shakespeare nei teatri milanesi del novecento, pp. 176-79.

¹⁰⁶For further analysis of the production see De Cesco, pp. 231-36, and Anzi, pp. 211-15.

to fraud, from illusion to folly."¹⁰⁷ Obsessed with absolute power and desire to dominate Nature itself, the incarnation of the modern man--Macbeth--blindly followed Machiavelli's canons, and thus ploughed his way through the ruins and bloodshed of human progress. On this path to discover a new world the futuristic sets of Luzzati resembled an alien vessel, ironically underlining the very futility of this plight.¹⁰⁸ A gigantic metal capsule replaced the Medieval fortress and served as a nightmarish labyrinth of man's search to affirm his power and glory. On this unnatural surface, surrounded with a rigid and cold environment, there was exposed human agony, the product of man's own invention.

In a similar fashion Enriquez chose to stage Coriolanus (Rome: Teatro Argentina, 9 November 1975). With Freudian accuracy, he portrayed the Corioli savior as a person suffering from psychoneurosis.¹⁰⁹ Instead of the metal setting, this time the designer Gianni Polidori set the play amidst a collage of wooden pieces mounted on a revolving stage.¹¹⁰ The production, as it was observed by Renzo Tian, combined characteristics of various theatrical styles.¹¹¹ For example, there could be found a typical

¹⁰⁷Agostino Lombardo, "Macbeth: un simbolo dell'arte drammatica," Sipario 26 (October 1971): 16-20.

¹⁰⁸The set description is based on the iconographic material obtained from Emanuel Luzzati.

¹⁰⁹Carlo Rosati, "Coriolano eroe della contraddizione: colloquio con il regista," Paese Sera (Rome), 2 November 1975.

¹¹⁰The set description is based on the iconographic material obtained from the archives of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano.

¹¹¹Renzo Tian, "Una spettacolare machina scenica per il tragico Coriolano di Shakespeare," Il Messaggero (Roma), 10 November 1975.

expressionistic set design, as well as a Brechtian alienation effect in the interpretations of the actors, who consistently ventured "towards the comic and grotesque."¹¹² With this impersonal approach to the characters there was combined a highly naturalistic portrayal of neurosis. A strong tendency to render Coriolanus contemporary was aided by a set used as the cogs of the Grand Mechanism. Kott's theoretical influence was quite evident. The end result, according to Guerrieri, could be best characterized as a "Brechtian Renaissance Collage."¹¹³ Only a Marxist view was missing from the critical melange. First applied in Italy by Strehler in staging Coriolanus at the Piccolo Teatro di Milano in 1956, Marxism had become inseparable from Brecht's theories in general, and this play in particular.¹¹⁴ Critics accused Enriquez of having ignored the major role played by the plebians and of having oversimplified the socio-political issues raised by the drama.¹¹⁵ However, apart from these few reservations, Franco Enriquez's innovative approach was generally praised and was enthusiastically received by the public.

Out of his numerous Shakespearean productions, Enriquez is best known for his production of The Taming of the Shrew. He staged the

¹¹²Agostino Lombardo, "Prosa recensioni: Coriolano," Sipario 30 (December 1975): 20.

¹¹³Gerardo Guerrieri, "I duelli di Coriolano in una clima da circo," Il Giorno (Milan), 10 November 1975.

¹¹⁴Detailed analysis of the 1956 production of Coriolanus is provided in the section on Strehler.

¹¹⁵Lombardo, p. 20, and Roberto De Monticelli, "Eroe antico senza grinta d'oggi," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 10 November 1975.

play several times, starting in 1956. When in 1962 he was commissioned to produce it for the Verona Festival, he had already worked on it twice before. However, it was this 1962 production (Verona: Teatro Romano, 15 July 1962) which earned the director a worldwide reputation. His The Taming of the Shrew was performed all across Europe, South America and even Russia for a total consecutive run of over fourteen years.

An uncut version of the text was used in this production. Such an undertaking had no precedent in the staging history of the Shrew in Italy. The scholarly accuracy of the approach was here coupled with the pulsating energy and vitality of commedia dell'arte. Using both the Shakespeare prologue and the rarely published epilogue from the earlier Elizabethan play The Taming of a Shrew, the director framed the main action as a play within a play, emphasizing what Lodovici called "the play between the dream and reality, between folly and wisdom."¹¹⁶ The directorial concept utilized the lesson Enriquez had learned from Reinhardt's and Visconti's treatment of the Arcadian comedies. It was also colored with overtones of Strehler's 1948 Tempest.¹¹⁷ But above all it blazed with Enriquez's own personal insignia.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶Quoted in De Cesco, p. 112.

¹¹⁷Detailed discussion of the 1948 Tempest in the Boboli Gardens is provided in the section on Strehler.

¹¹⁸The following discussion of the mise en scène is based on the material provided in De Cesco, pp. 110-114, 153-55, 260-64; Anzi, pp. 139-40; Gastone Geron, "Bisbetica tutta divertimento," Il Giorno (Milan), 19 July 1974; Cesare Rodi, "La Moriconi, Bisbetica di lunga vita," Il Giorno (Milan), 18 February 1976. Iconographic materials obtained from Luzzati and the archives of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano were the sources for the description of the set and

In the prologue the actors, dressed in the attire of the early nineteen twenties, arrived in a car loaded with props, costumes and sets. The lord who decided to play a practical joke on the drunken Sly hired this troupe to realize his plan. Soon after, flats were erected, props were in place and the actors changed their contemporary dress to sixteenth-century costumes in plain view of the audience. Guerrieri wrote:

In this manner, the Shrew became a historical comedy, played in sixteenth-century period costumes. In them there was something remote and fabulous that resisted any modern critical analysis. And at the same time thus was created a critical perspective between the play and the prologue, which enabled one to comparatively evaluate the two realities.¹¹⁹

Luzzati's design underscored this formula. A bare stage was transformed from place to place by merely changing some props and a sign which informed the audience of the locale. Rich, colorful costumes were overstylized, emphasizing their theatricality. The atmosphere reminded one of a popular fair, at which a company of strolling actors was entertaining the gathered crowds with their farcical comedies. There could also be detected the firmly rooted tradition of commedia dell'arte. The production overflowed with lazzi and histrionic inventions. It was pulsating, as De Monticelli noted,

with the clamorous rhythm of the well-orchestrated, silly clownery: inflated and glittering costumes, festive, swift, and mimic buffoonery, a continuous sense of rotation around an ideal ring, the amusing change of Luzzati's backdrops vividly painted with houses, windows and doors as though taken directly from a

costume design.

¹¹⁹Gerardo Guerrieri, "Domatore di donne al Teatro Romano," Il Giorno (Milano), 19 July 1974, p. 5.

child's drawing.¹²⁰

Another critic added: "the colorful and rowdy festivity . . . reverberated with caricaturistic overtones, at times even suffocating the true sense of poetry and thought in Shakespeare's work."¹²¹ However, the unity of the undertaking was unquestionable. The actors distinguished themselves by their extraordinary virtuosity. De Monticelli compared them to the cast of the zanni dell'arte, whereas Guerrieri called Glauco Mauri's portrayal of Petruccio a cross between Pierrot and Falstaff.¹²² Performing with the sparkle and amusement of traditional popular Italian comedy the actors immediately inspired an enthusiastic response and secured the audience's involvement in this jolly event. When the last scene from The Taming of the Shrew was over and the somber Sly was thrown off the stage back to the pit, where he had been first discovered, the epilogue further underscored the mutual dependence which had developed between the stage and the spectators. The actors collected their belongings, loaded the truck and were on their way to another show, to play their tricks again before newly assembled crowds, leaving the theatre, as they had come, traveling by car in a search for new adventures. As the lights of the stage dimmed and those in the auditorium were lit, the audience, along with Sly, was left perplexed by what separates fiction from reality. In fact the production continued to puzzle the audiences for one of the longest

¹²⁰Roberto De Monticelli, "La Bisbetica e rimasta giovane," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 19 July 1974.

¹²¹Quoted in Anzi, p. 139.

¹²²Guerrieri, "Domatore," and De Monticelli, "La Bisbetica e rimasta giovane."

runs (over fourteen years) in the history of Italian theatre, comparable only to that of Strehler's legendary Arlecchino. This is indeed the best testimony to Enriquez's success and the natural adaptability of this classic Shakespearean comedy to an evanescent, popular commedia style.

Among all of Visconti's followers, Franco Zeffirelli (b. 1923) seems to have best assimilated Visconti's realistic training in recreating fantastic images of the past. One might even say that in Zeffirelli "holding a mirror up to nature," that is, to the Italy of Shakespeare's times, reached its perfection. When asked to stage Romeo and Juliet for London's Old Vic Theatre in 1960, the director was faced with a problem no other Italian director had to deal with before—staging Shakespeare in the original language. Zeffirelli was confronted, as he himself put it in an interview, with

a century old debate—the use of poetry in verse or the dramatic use of verse; the contemplation on poetry or the dramatic use of poetry. I decided for the second way, which is to use poetry dramatically, to make characters advance the story in a more pulsating manner, more exciting. That, of course, created tremendous upheaval. . . . It was a breakaway from the dead tradition which kept them [English audiences] aback, glued to Shakespeare, and rediscovered that they could identify with Shakespeare, something that they shunned or long since gave up hoping for.¹²³

Unlike their English colleagues, Italian directors, in staging an already translated text, were spared the poetic complexities of the language and thus felt much freer to experiment. It is because of this attitude that Zeffirelli had to reconcile his Italian stage upbringing with the English reverence for the Elizabethan bard. He

¹²³Franco Zeffirelli, interview [in English], Rome, 28 April 1984.

revitalized Romeo and Juliet by introducing elements of Italian folklore and the typical atmosphere of Renaissance Verona. The beautiful, realistic and at the same time, fairylike, Shakespearean fable of love acquired intense theatricality as well as dramatic conflict. The emphasis shifted from poetical eloquence to dramatic development: namely, the generation gap and the family vendetta blocking the union of the young lovers. Zeffirelli flooded the stage with the passionate display of Mediterranean temperament. The enthusiastic reception of the English critics and audience insured the run of the production well into 1962. It brought the Old Vic company, as John Russell Brown summarized the event in Shakespeare Survey, "greater success than [it had] enjoyed for more than a decade."¹²⁴ An editorial in Theatre Notebook spoke of "revelation;" The Observer of "revelation, even perhaps a revolution," and Theatre World of excitement, "unity of presentation," and a "reality which lifted one inescapably back to medieval Italy."¹²⁵ In World Theatre, Ossia Trilling called it "breathtaking in its pictorial and dramatic punch, though often at the expense of the poetry."¹²⁶ The greatest innovations of Zeffirelli's production, Brown concluded,

lay in unifying words and stage-business, in making the actors' speech as lively and fluent as their physical action. The result was that the dialogue did not appear the effect of study and care, but the natural idiom of the characters in the particular situation. It is a long time since Shakespeare's text has been so enfranchised. . . . Changes of tempo, pitch and volume were used to strong dramatic effect. . . . This director knows more about

¹²⁴John Russell Brown, "S. Franco Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet," Shakespeare Survey 15 (1965): 147.

¹²⁵Quoted in Brown, p. 147.

¹²⁶Ossia Trilling, "How Different Can One Be?" World Theatre 13 (Summer 1964): 101

musical speech than most of those working in our theatres today.¹²⁷

It is interesting to note that when the same production (Verona: Teatro Romano, 4 July 1964) was staged four years later in Verona, with an Italian cast, the response of the critics and audiences was rather restrained. "It is one thing," wrote Carlo Terron, "when such a production is done in the original language. . . . It is quite different when it is done in translation."¹²⁸ Although such an approach could be considered provocative for the English audience, for Italians it was repetitive of a long established tradition, starting with the works of Reinhardt, Sharoff and Visconti. "Besides superb orchestration of the movement, the production seems incoherent, vague, deprived of any internal critical justification," noted Lazzari.¹²⁹ "In spite of the brilliant staging, I am not quite sure that the fencing scenes can satisfy a true poetical thirst. Such exhibition of virtuosity can excite the general public's enthusiasm, but annoys those who are better read," wrote Achile Fiocco.¹³⁰ Rebora complained that the director was too interested in the erotic chronicle of the two lovers instead of "the tone itself, which expresses wondrous desire."¹³¹ Undeniable, however,

¹²⁷Brown, pp. 149-50.

¹²⁸Carlo Terron, "Gli adolescenti 'arrabbiati' di Shakespeare," Corriere Lombardo (Milan), 12 February 1966, p. 3.

¹²⁹Arturo Lazzari, "Sospeso al terzo atto Romeo e Giulietta," l'Unita (Rome), 6 July 1964.

¹³⁰Achile Fiocco, "Romeo e Giulietta di Shakespeare al Teatro Quirino di Roma," Novità da Vedere (Rome), 11 October 1965.

¹³¹Roberto Rebora, "Giulietta e Romeo," Sipario 19 (August/September 1964): 74-75.

was the exceptionally accurate, realistic depiction of the enchanting Verona of the Renaissance.¹³² On the stage of the Roman Amphitheatre, Zeffirelli constructed a typical piazza. Surrounded by the actual panorama of the city, it merged make-believe with reality. Actually this technique had been applied by Renato Simoni in his own version of Romeo and Juliet, also staged at the same Teatro Romano sixteen years earlier.¹³³ Although the vitality, the beautiful sets, and the splendidly staged fencing quarrels of the two families were warmly applauded, the production in general, as Anzi summarized in her review, was far from satisfactory and left both the audience and the critics perplexed.¹³⁴

In the 1963 Hamlet (Rome: Teatro Eliseo, 4 December 1963) Zeffirelli departed from purely realistic methods. Even the sets and costumes, unlike his other work, were highly stylized, permeated with symbolic suggestions and implications.¹³⁵ Strong theatricality and, above all, a highly realistic style of acting, along with comprehensive directorial remarks on the life story and every single event in the molding process of the characters, left a predominantly Viscontian mark on his work.¹³⁶

¹³²Physical description of the set and costumes is based on the iconographic material provided in Brown and De Cesco, p. 163.

¹³³A more detailed account of Renato Simoni's 1948 Romeo and Juliet is given later, in the section on Strehler.

¹³⁴Anzi, p. 171.

¹³⁵Physical description of the set and costumes is based on the iconographic material in Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, Appendix plates 73-75.

¹³⁶General summary of the concept and the reviews is provided in Anzi, pp. 144-47.

More than any other Zeffirelli production this Hamlet caused a fierce debate, heated by the apparent clash between the director's concept and the actor Giorgio Albertazzi's interpretation of the protagonist. Zeffirelli perceived Hamlet as an existential tragedy.¹³⁷ The cause of his calamity stemmed from Hamlet's inability to choose. The Danish prince was paralyzed through his rejection of any personal or political violence, imperative in the given historical situation. Albertazzi, on the other hand, perceived the protagonist to be his own stage incarnation: the actor's ego, an amplified reflection of his personal reality.¹³⁸ In an open letter to Laurence Olivier, Albertazzi declared that an actor plays Hamlet to better understand himself.¹³⁹ In the program notes he added that the decision to portray the noble prince was dictated by the sense of shame in "humanity that allows more than its third to die of hunger. . . . Hamlet is an exasperated cry of protest by the last survivor of Western Civilization, before the end, before the final

¹³⁷A summary of Zeffirelli's position is provided in Anzi, pp. 146-47; Renzo Tian, "L'Amleto di Zeffirelli," Terzo Programma 1 (1964) :268; Alberto Perrini, "Amleto non vale 130 milioni," Lo Specchio (Rome), 15 December 1963; Giorgio Prospero, "L'Amleto di Albertazzi e Zeffirelli," Il Tempo (Rome), 5 December 1963; and Mosca, "Senza mistero," La Notte (Milan), 6 December 1963.

¹³⁸An indepth analysis of Albertazzi's position is given in Raul Radice, "L'Amleto di Albertazzi," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 5 December 1963. Also see Bruno Schacherl, "Un Amleto aclettico," Rinascita (Roma), 7 December 1963. It should be also noted that a virtually identical cast, with Albertazzi in the title role, performed another version of Hamlet under the direction of Frank Hauser six months earlier, in July of 1963, at the Teatro Romano of Verona. Although generally regarded as insignificant, this production had to have an effect on the actors. Detailed analysis of that production is provided in De Cesco, pp. 155-59.

¹³⁹The letter is quoted in its entirety in M. R. Cimanghi, "L'Old Vic domani crollera?" Il Popolo del Lunedì (Rome), 21 September 1964.

silence."¹⁴⁰ It might seem that such contradictory approaches could not produce an integrated, unified interpretation of the play. However, through this very clash of ideas a mesmerizing production emerged. It was performed in over fifty-five cities in Italy, won the first prize in the Paris theatre festival, received a warm welcome in Zurich, Stuttgart and Vienna, and was generously praised on its tour to London.

Abandoning the relics of the Renaissance fascination with the supernatural, Zeffirelli located the action in an atemporal place. The Ghost, noted the critic of the London Times, was

no longer a perturbed spirit from the dead but a projection of the Prince's super-ego. At his visitations Giorgio Albertazzi undergoes an almost epileptic transformation, mouthing in sympathy with the whispered commands from the wings and speaking many of the Ghost's lines himself.¹⁴¹

The scenes with the Ghost provide a good illustration of how well the actor and the director found valid grounds of support for their respective positions. The Ghost was heard but never seen. His voice was a recording performed by Albertazzi himself. Hamlet's interaction thus could be seen either as an intellectual exercise in dialectics (which was Zeffirelli's view) or as an expression of the romantic fever with which the protagonist was burning (which was Albertazzi's view). The modern set design with surrealistic allusions added even further to the diversity of possible readings. The stage, as it was noted in The Times article, mirrored

the human condition: at floor level a maze of concentric circles

¹⁴⁰Theatre program to Hamlet, Teatro Eliseo, 4 December 1963.

¹⁴¹Anonymous, "Hamlet as a Modern Man," The Times (London), 16 September 1964, p. 15.

converge on a downstage pit (metaphors for introspection and death), and behind them a dun-coloured cyclorama stretches the eye to an infinity of nothingness. It is an image both of Hamlet's mind and of a blank universe in which man can rely on nothing but himself. And in these empty indifferent spaces the busy little activities of the Danish court shrink into insignificance.¹⁴²

A round shaft, located in the downstage area, in time acquired highly symbolic connotations. At the most dramatic moments, as if physically trying to alienate himself from the others, Hamlet would withdraw into it, seeking there his own private shelter. For Zeffirelli it graphically represented the drama "taking place inside Hamlet's brain."¹⁴³ Albertazzi, of course, might have provided quite a different interpretation. Indisputable, however, as Giorgio Prospero puts it, was the fact "that in this abstract, hard-to-define space, the drama was focused and intellectualized," which nevertheless did not prevent Albertazzi's Hamlet "from burning with flames of passion, which left only ashes around him."¹⁴⁴ His performance, the London Times claimed, had been "based on intellectual ferocity, and for every scene of elation . . . there [was] a counterbalance of disgust."¹⁴⁵ Renzo Tian recorded a very similar impression:

When this stage configuration succeeds in liberating itself from certain baroque heaviness and finds simplicity and balance . . . the production unexpectedly soars on the wings of inspiration; but at other times the heavy weight of the designed frame overburdens the scene, pushing the true spirit of the tragedy to

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Zeffirelli, interview.

¹⁴⁴Prospero, "L'Amleto di Albertazzi e Zeffirelli."

¹⁴⁵"Hamlet as a Modern Man," p. 15.

the background.¹⁴⁶

As a result, although the disagreement generated supporters on both sides, this unpredictable quality of the production and its open, unresolved approach to the play became the chief components in its success. The London Times justly noted that "Zeffirelli is too good an artist to straitjacket a masterpiece to fit a theory."¹⁴⁷ Thus, even a Sipario reviewer, having objected to the graphic solution to the play, eventually acknowledged its vital contribution:

Franco Zeffirelli concentrates on Hamlet's ability to fulfill the ruthless order, and develops the action in concentric circles, thus calling upon the whole arsenal of omnipresent staging devices: the iron gray sets, artificial fog, diffused light, electronic music, sounds and noise, which sometimes reach highly suggestive effects, and at other times seem to burden the poetic text with an element of distraction, and thus show a slight lack of taste, like an over-refined dish with too composite a smell, not the least of which are the costumes that combine Elizabethan and nineteenth-century styles. However, the high quality and beauty of the production, created by Zeffirelli, are most definitely unquestionable.¹⁴⁸

This last remark probably best summarizes not only Zeffirelli's productions of Shakespeare, but those of the other Visconti followers as well. In all of them, aesthetic appeal, theatrical spectacle, elements of the Italian traditional theatre and accurate realistic portrayal of the characters set within a fantastic milieu of these productions revealed for the Italian audience an as yet unknown side of Shakespeare's plays. Costa's attention to detail, De Lullo's aesthetically enchanting atmosphere, Enriquez's brilliant

¹⁴⁶Tian, p. 268.

¹⁴⁷"Hamlet as a Modern Man," p. 15.

¹⁴⁸Anonymous, "L'Amleto di Albertazzi," Sipario 19 (January 1964): 31.

commedia vitality, and Zeffirelli's virtually flawless composite picture of the Italian Renaissance ensured the popularity of Shakespeare with the Italian audience and set the stage for the theatre of the director. Growing interest in the exuberance of Shakespeare's comedies began replacing the reign of the heroic protagonists. Comprehensive directorial treatments of the plays gained the audiences' enthusiastic reception; however, they still could not compete with the admiration held for some of the mattatori.

CHAPTER IV

THE POST WAR MATTATORI: RENZO RICCI,

GIORGIO ALBERTAZZI, VITTORIO GASSMAN, AND GLAUCO MAURI

With the end of the Second World War a new era of theatre making was on its way. Although the theatre of the director reached Italy virtually half a century after it had been established in the rest of Europe, the fever swept the country almost instantaneously. It was as though the curtain that was falling on Italian fascism at the same time laid to rest the glorious but exhausted tradition of the mattatori. It also released the spirit of ensemble playing, which had been mostly barred until then from the legitimate stage. New private and state supported companies were formed. Directors were finally realizing Pirandello's dream of seeing on native Italian soil unified ensemble productions, untouched by the ego of the great actor-managers. Nevertheless, the centuries-long worship of the great masters of the stage could not be easily uprooted as the seeds of the new form were planted. Some of the major traditions survived the turbulent winds of reform and have reached the legitimate stage even in the most recent productions. Among the postwar mattatori who stand out not only for their portrayals, but also for the productions they have mounted and companies they have established are Renzo Ricci, Giorgio Albertazzi, Vittorio Gassman,

and Glauco Mauri. Renzo Ricci (1899-1978), the last of the great mattatori, thrust himself upon the scene of the post-war Italian theatre with enthusiasm equal to that of his younger colleagues—the directors. He continued the tradition inherited from his father-in-law, the renowned Ermete Zacconi. He first established his company as an actor-manager in 1926.¹ Since then he had portrayed nineteen Shakespearean characters. Some of his performances left an indelible mark on the history of Italian theatre. The productions themselves, however, like those of his predecessors, often received quite negative reactions. His 1936 portrayal of Hamlet, for instance, was praised by Renato Simoni, but the critic also noted that as a whole the production was misguided, leaving the rest of the characters to wander in support of the protagonist.² They lacked rounded characterizations and were inconsistent, due to excessive cutting of their lines.³ Similarly, Simoni admired Ricci's tragic Othello (1941): "His character gradually lost ornate, amorous eloquence and was eventually submerged in burning anguish and fury."⁴ To assure this personal triumph, the critic concluded, the drama itself was sacrificed. Anzi noted that as a result quite often reviewers would fail to discuss, or even mention, the parts of Iago

¹Biographical data on Ricci is based on the interview with the actor provided in Anna Cavallone Anzi's Shakespeare nei teatri milanesi del novecento (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1980), pp. 338-48.

²Renato Simoni, "Amleto al Manzoni," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 28 November 1936.

³Ibid.

⁴Renato Simoni, "Otello," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 14 February 1941. For further analysis of the production also see: Anna Busi, Otello in Italia (Bari: Adriatica, 1973), p. 267.

and Desdemona.⁵ The post-war modernized version of Hamlet (Milan: Teatro Nuovo, 3 May 1946), staged as a rehearsal in turn-of-the-century dress, also received negative reviews.⁶ Simoni wrote that although externally it "was modernized, the staging better suited costumed players."⁷ Mosca contended that its success was a tribute entirely to Shakespeare: "Hamlet would not fail even when performed by a troupe of nudists."⁸ In spite of this general condemnation, the praise for Ricci's individual performance was unanimous.⁹

By that time Ricci was well established as a legend, joining the ranks of the great mattatori of all times. Every one of his performances was eagerly anticipated and warmly received by the general public. "Although we [the critics]," wrote F. Rispoli, "tend to repudiate this form [of theatre], the audience was clearly impressed and crowned the performance with applause."¹⁰ The friction between the interests of the two groups--the tradition of the mattatori supported by the general public, and the search for a

⁵Anzi, p. 75.

⁶In an interview Ricci claimed that Strehler staged the play, without actually taking credit for it: Anzi, p. 344. Strehler on the other hand, as reported by Anzi, claimed that his collaboration was limited to lighting: Anzi, p. 86. For critics' reactions see: C. L., "Una prova di Amleto, Secolo Nuovo (Milan), 4 May 1946; C. T., "Amleto da mezza stagione," La Lettura (Milan), 14 May 1946; Ven., "Amleto di Shakespeare," Il Mattino d'Italia (Milan), 4 May 1946.

⁷Renato Simoni, "Amleto," Corriere d'Informazione (Milan), 4 May 1946.

⁸G. Mosca, "Teatro," Oggi (Milan), 14 May 1946.

⁹See all of the above reviews.

¹⁰F. Rispoli, "Le prime del teatro: Re Lear con Ricci all'Eliseo," Italia Nuova (Rome), 1 November 1947. All of the reviews quoted above also acknowledge the highly enthusiastic reception.

stimulating theatrical experience advanced by the intellectual elite and critics--found in Ricci's case a particularly clear exemplification. The change in climate was clearly perceived by the actor himself. He stated that the process of transition from the actor-manager format to that of the director had started in the early thirties. "After World War II directors definitively took over Italian theatre."¹¹ And still, in spite of this apparent change, the actor continued to head his company well into the 1970s. At first the productions mounted by the troupe were staged by Ricci himself, according to the canons of the old school. The 1947 King Lear (Rome: Teatro Eliseo, 31 October 1947) and Othello (Rome: Teatro Eliseo, 12 November 1947) continued to fight a doomed battle for the lost reign of the mattatore. In both, Ricci's interpretation received mostly rave reviews, but the staging was severely criticized. The critic from Il Quotidiano wrote in reference to Othello: "We would have preferred a more contained interpretation . . . and better apportioned stage effects."¹² As to King Lear, Il Messaggero noted:

Ricci confronted the task with courage that should be applauded, even though his troupe did not seem to merit such an ardent undertaking. . . . Many scenes were collapsed together or even altogether eliminated. Even some of the essential ones were cut, including almost entire sections of the Fool.¹³

¹¹Interview in Anzi, p. 341.

¹²p. P., "Otello all'Eliseo," Il Quotidiano (Rome), 13 November 1947. For other reviews on Otello see: Arnaldo Frateili, "Otello all'Eliseo," Il Giornale della Sera (Rome), 14 November 1947; R. S. S., "Otello al Teatro Eliseo," Il Giornale d'Italia (Rome), 14 November 1947. Anonymous, "Otello di Shakespeare," Momento-Sera (Rome), 14 November 1947.

¹³E. G., "Re Lear all'Eliseo," Il Messaggero (Rome), 1 November 1947.

According to V. Marinucci, Ricci demonstrated a superior "physical interpretation, that requires temperament, breath and most extraordinary virtuosity."¹⁴ Silvio D'Amico in comparing the actor's characterization to the self-portrait of Michelangelo in the Last Judgement asserted that "the old man is a fool, who is violent and infantile, hoping in spite of delusions."¹⁵ However, in a more extended review that appeared in l'Illustrazione Italiana, D'Amico concentrated on some of the flaws in the production.¹⁶ According to the critic, reduction of the play into two acts had a damaging effect on the tragedy. The play was harder to absorb with no breaks in between. Through elimination of Gloucester's subplot Ricci-the-manager sacrificed the universal implications of the play "to cater to Ricci-the-actor." By placing the sole protagonist in the limelight "he mutilated the parts of the others." The critic also noted the poor quality of the translation, whose author was not even acknowledged in the program. Franco Monicelli supported D'Amico's analysis:

In the footsteps of the great Zacconi Signor Ricci proposed to illuminate the majestic Michelangelo-like protagonist of the tragedy. He did so through sacrificing . . . the entire complexity and suggestive dramatic architecture of Shakespeare. . . . The rest of the cast played in the shadows of Signor Ricci . . . navigating the performance to an inevitable

¹⁴V. Marinucci, "Renzo Ricci in Re Lear," Il Momento (Rome), 1 November 1947.

¹⁵Silvio D'Amico, "Re Lear all'Eliseo," Il Tempo (Rome), 1 November 1947. For other reviews of the production see: Carlo Terron, "Re Lear all'Eliseo," Il Popolo (Rome), 1 November 1947; P. Masserano Taricco, "Il Re Lear di Ricci all'Eliseo," L'Italia Socialista (Rome), 2 November 1947.

¹⁶Silvio D'Amico, "Ricci in Re Lear a Roma," l'Illustrazione Italiana (Rome), 16 November 1947.

ship-wreck.¹⁷

Even Ricci's individual performance suffered some blows. Arnaldo Frateili stated that Ricci's portrayal could suit the anguish of "a crazy old man, but not of a king."¹⁸ According to La Voce Repubblicana, he was "too preoccupied with playing 'a great actor' to be good."¹⁹

After these inflammatory reviews, the veteran actor succumbed to the pressure and started to employ directors to assist in the staging. He also expanded his activity by participating in the productions of other theatre groups. In 1949 he played Brutus opposite Memo Benassi's Marc Antony in Guido Salvini's Julius Caesar. The same year he was also invited to participate in Visconti's monumental Troilus and Cressida as Achilles. In 1950 he played Richard III in Strehler's production at the Piccolo Teatro and Mercutio in Guido Salvini's Romeo and Juliet, opposite Vittorio Gassman as Romeo. In 1957 he portrayed the Duke in Squarzina's critically acclaimed Measure for Measure at the Teatro Stabile di Genova. He also began to bring in other directors to stage plays with his own company. In 1955 Franco Enriquez was invited to direct King Lear. In addition to Eva Magni, who was married to Ricci, the actor succeeded in assembling an extraordinary cast including Anna

¹⁷Franco Monicelli, "Re Lear," Momento Sera (Rome), 2 November 1947.

¹⁸Arnaldo Frateili, "Re Lear all'Eliseo," Il Giornale della Sera (Rome), 2 November 1947.

¹⁹G. C., "Re Lear all'Eliseo," La Voce Repubblicana (Rome), 1 November 1947.

Proclemer, Giorgio Albertazzi and Glauco Mauri.²⁰ In 1964 Maner Lualdi staged Othello for the company. This time Ricci's "majestic performance," as it was called by Carlo Terron, was in balance with an "unforgettable Iago," who was portrayed by Gianni Santuccio.²¹ Although in these later productions the focus was still upon the protagonist and Ricci's authoritative stature determined the choices made by the young directors, fidelity to Shakespeare's text was preserved to a greater degree. It is interesting, however, to note that in the interview given to Anzi, Ricci claimed that "in the old times the actors were much more respectful of the text, than the directors of today."²²

In spite of all of these shortcomings, which seem to be an intrinsic part of any great mattatore, Ricci's extraordinary talent always shone through. He mesmerized the audiences and left an aura of some mystical power, a bond that united them. The noted Italian playwright and critic Diego Fabri wrote that Ricci "pursues determination till it becomes a mystic sacrifice every time he creates a new character."²³ Shortly before his death the actor himself spoke of the secret to this magic he possessed:

In theatre I am fighting for humanity. I feel it is my duty to defend it as much as possible. . . . I say to you all: savor tenderness even more than love, because it is at the base of everything. It is rarely mistaken or left unrewarded. Carry tenderness in your character if the author bestows it upon you.

²⁰For the summary of reviews see Anzi, pp. 120-21.

²¹Carlo Terron, "Trionfa al S. Erasmo un Otello intimista," Corriere Lombardo (Milan), 24/25 January 1964.

²²Interview in Anzi, p. 341.

²³Diego Fabri, "Farewell to the Mattatore," World Theatre 11 (Summer 1962): 130.

This is something that will always win the audience over It can be found even in the smallest parts And remember, when tenderness is treasured by two beings, you could never lose somebody dear to you.²⁴

And indeed his testament will never be lost in the hearts of millions, as it is spread and carried on by his descendants. Among the best known carriers of this torch today, endowed with the mystical powers of a mattatore, are Giorgio Albertazzi, Vittorio Gassman and Glauco Mauri.

Throughout Albertazzi's (b. 1923) career the need to reattain the lost glory of the great Italian mattatore emerged with ever-growing transparency. The actor's attempt to alienate and liberate himself from the restricting ensemble staging of the "director's theatre," became more and more apparent. To fulfill this aspiration, Albertazzi, in collaboration with his wife Anna Proclemer, a noted Italian actress, organized their own touring company, which in its organization and artistic doctrine resembled the legendary companies of the great nineteenth-century mattatori. With this company, Albertazzi sought not only to portray the grandest of the protagonists in dramatic literature, but also to assume full responsibility for artistic and administrative leadership. He contributed as director and translator, as well as dramaturg. The plays produced by the company underscored the great histrionic art of its two organizers, namely Albertazzi and Proclemer, whose own personal perception of the theatre was consistently expressed in performances. Gradual subjugation of the director's concept to their own needs as actors was apparent.

²⁴Interview in Anzi, p. 347.

Starting from Zeffirelli's production of Hamlet through Guicciardini's Antony and Cleopatra, and culminating in Richard III, Albertazzi eventually restored to himself the laurels and the executive power of a mattatore. The price of this achievement was detrimental to the general artistic concept. Albertazzi thus restored to the Italian stage not merely the glorious art of the great nineteenth-century actors, but also the mediocre quality of their productions. The praises bestowed upon his individual interpretations were counterbalanced with severe criticisms of the rest of the performance.

Such was the case with Antony and Cleopatra (Vicenza: Teatro Olimpico, 19 September 1977). Critics were perplexed in evaluating the production. Most of them attacked Guicciardini's overly intellectual approach, but were themselves at fault for an overly complex, pseudoanalytical and confusing interpretation of the play.²⁵ The only aspects which met unanimous approval and unequivocal recognition was Albertazzi's and Proclemer's performances as the Roman Triumvir and the Egyptian Queen. It seems, Sergio Colomba wrote, that Albertazzi and Proclemer "once again invite us to witness an exceptional, first rate performance in the

²⁵See the following reviews: Giorgio Prosperi, "Nello sfacelo del potere il piacere e la morte," Il Tempo (Rome), 4 February 1978; Enrico Groppali, "Antonio e Cleopatra traditi dalla regia," Sipario 32 (November 1977): 12-13; Odoardo Bertani, "Questa tragedia e apocrifica," Avvenire (Milan), 17 September 1977; Guido Davico Bonino, "Antonio e Cleopatra complici nel potere e nella passione," La Stampa (Turin), 8 December 1977; Donata Righetti, "Albertazzi tra amore e politica," Il Giorno (Milan), 7 October 1977; Gino Nogara, "Shakespeare sulla scena palladiana," Il Mattino (Naples), 20 September 1977; Renzo Tian, "Fasto barocco per Antonio e Cleopatra," Il Messaggero (Rome), 4 February 1978. For the debate that preceded the opening night see: G. A. Cibotto, "Una 'prima' mancata," Il Gazzettino (Venezia), 16 September 1977.

best tradition of the Actor's theatre, which awakens the dormant passions and calls the public to arms."²⁶ Carlo Terron wrote:

I doubt if I could find an appropriate term to describe the performance of the two protagonists. There was a deliberate ambiguity dominated by two acute intelligences and two equally ingenious high levels of histrionics, which makes it impossible to choose whom to praise first. Even prior to the tragic notes of the second part, their performance could be compared to a play between two tigers: at times tender and at times cruel. And they say that the great era of the mattatori is over!²⁷

This ardent interpretation of the two lovers found very little support in the general conception, however. Guicciardini sought to express in the play a different perspective on history.²⁸ He perceived the two soldiers who consistently intervened in the dramatic action as Shakespearean fools. Their role was to comment with historical objectivity on the events taking place. Since the production was first performed at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, the Palladian structure naturally provided a Renaissance perspective on Roman history.²⁹ It became an arena, as De Monticelli surmised from the program notes, for the confrontation of Apollonian and Dionysian worlds, respectively represented by Octavius and Marc-

²⁶Sergio Colomba, "Due semi-eroi sul viale del tramonto," Il Resto del Carlino (Bologna), 17 September 1977.

²⁷Carlo Terron, "In groppa a Shakespeare si cavalca la tigre," La Notte (Milan), 6 October 1977.

²⁸An in-depth analysis of Guicciardini's mise en scène with the statements made by the director and Albertazzi appears in Agostino Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, pp. 187-97.

²⁹A separate set was designed by Lorenzo Ghilia for the tour of the production across the country. It resembled a huge chamber. The box stage was enclosed by three walls and a ceiling. Two doors were placed on the sides of the back wall. Choir steps ran across the base of the two side walls. This description of the set is based on the sketches and designs obtained from the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano.

Antony.³⁰ Guicciardini and Albertazzi, whose translation was used in the production, contended that this ever growing friction was due to the increasingly irreconcilable differences between the rational, practical needs of Western civilization and its imposition upon the mystical Eastern powers: nations seeking to subjugate the personal freedom of an individual or politics trying to tame love. "We sought to show . . . how these two components coexist and enter into a dialectical discourse," wrote Guicciardini.³¹ The production was thus directed first and foremost to satisfy his personal perception of theatre as a prism of certain cultural-historical experiences quintessentially reflected in the text of a drama.³² He saw the play through the perspective of the turbulent epoch which produced it. However, this highly intellectual approach found itself almost totally opposed to the characterization of the two protagonists, whose autumnal love superseded in force and beauty the passionate spring fever of Romeo and Juliet. Only here, as Emilio Poesio noted, instead of "the blind hate between the two families, upon the shoulders of the Roman warrior and the Egyptian Queen there rested the drama of political equilibrium and imbalance, the different

³⁰Roberto De Monticelli, "Ecco rifatto Antonio e Cleopatra," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 17 September 1977. This point is further expanded by the critic in his follow-up article. There De Monticelli even calls it "the last tango in Alexandria," as it is performed in the shadows of the confrontation between the "mysterious Orient and rational, realistic West, private and political interests, according to the canons of contemporary fashion." For further analysis see: Roberto De Monticelli, "Troppi temi e tutti insieme," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 7 October 1977.

³¹Lombardo, p. 189.

³²Ibid., p. 188.

vision of power and its effect upon the people."³³

In the Giovanni Pampiglioni production of Richard III (Verona: Teatro Romano, 29 August 1983), Albertazzi eventually gained undivided recognition as a mattatore. As always, this was accomplished to the great detriment of the production as a whole. In an interview Albertazzi admitted that whereas he "was doing one thing, the others were doing another."³⁴ Albertazzi's portrayal of the scheming hunchback was based on his previous work on Wedekind's King Nikolai and Pirandello's Henry IV. Richard III did not interest him as a king, deprived of all moral values, seeking to gain absolute power, but rather as a metaphor for an actor playing a role on the stage.³⁵ His protagonist, much like Albertazzi himself, was an actor seeking supremacy on the great stage of the world. Consequently, as Poesio pointed out, all of the components in this rapport "between an actor and a character, an actor and history, an actor and life and an actor and death" acquired extraordinary significance.³⁶ His Richard was not merely an aesthete who learned his lessons from Machiavelli's The Prince, but above all a man possessed with a masterful ability to reincarnate evil for evil's

³³Paolo Emilio Poesio, "Rinata con Shakespeare la Proclemer-Albertazzi," La Nazione (Florence), 17 September 1977.

³⁴Giorgio Albertazzi, interview [in Italian], Rome, 22 April 1984.

³⁵Albertazzi explained his interpretation in the interview cited above.

³⁶Paolo Emilio Poesio, "Il re muore, l'attore trionfa: Albertazzi fra tragedia e gioco," La Nazione (Florence), 10 November 1983. Poesio previously reviewed this production in his article "Il potere genera mostri: Albertazzi e Shakespeare a Verona," La Nazione (Florence), 31 August 1983.

sake. Lusardi wrote:

Albertazzi-Richard III is a master of playfulness, a cruel joke, a carnevalesque travesty in black, twisted advances, who knows how to smirk, to writhe, to instigate the sons of war, to chant the rhythmic pacing of silenced pauses, and unexpectedly display omnivorous and vital sensuality. Life is not a theatre, but theatre is life. What is subtly transmitted between the lines of history is the electricity of existence, an adolescent enthusiasm and the glittering beauty of the word.³⁷

His Richard was a man whose pretense was imposed upon him by his very nature, and who performed this pretense with the "macabre and feverish histrionics of a professional player."³⁸ Renato Palazzi further noted:

All those who were destined to die ascending the bloody throne are but apparitions on the grand stage of history. Like them, driven by the inevitable dramatic events of a play, behind the mask of the merciless usurper, there was hidden the metaphor of an actor, with all of his craft, ambiguity, fantasy and desperation, all of the ferocity and candor of the great comedian.³⁹

The eventual clash between god-like ambition and human limitations, the paradox of self-deception and the drive to uncover the true identity hiding behind the mask of power put an end to the rule of the king. Thus ended the pretense and role-playing. But when, cornered like an animal, Richard was stabbed to death, he still crawled to the very proscenium, letting his last breath expire over the apron edge. His leaning head, suspended like a bridge between the stage and auditorium, continued to stare with anguished open eyes as the house lights came up. Thus, Albertazzi contested the end

³⁷Stefano Lusardi, "Il Riccardo III di Albertazzi," STILB 3 (July-December 1983): 5.

³⁸Renato Palazzi, "Albertazzi, un Riccardo III grottesco disperato," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 31 August 1983, p. 18.

³⁹*Ibid.*

of his illusion, which extended beyond the play into the very core of reality, preventing even the curtain from separating the stage from the living world.

Albertazzi triumphed. His interpretation was acclaimed by De Monticelli as a "proof of a truly great actor."⁴⁰ Cibotto wrote that Albertazzi succeeded in obtaining the power of Richard III through entirely "vocal interpretation, without ever stumbling on mannerism."⁴¹ But it was also equally noted that the rest of the production was virtually nonexistent. Inadequate stage direction (Poesio), confusing and irrelevant sets (Palazzi), poor ensemble acting (both critics)--left the concept resting entirely on Albertazzi's shoulders.⁴² "The discourse which starts and ends with the interpretation of the protagonist," wrote Palazzi, "scarcely finds support in a substantially ineffective production."⁴³ Albertazzi indeed attained his undivided recognition, the price of which, according to De Monticelli, who generously applauded the actor's undertaking, was "a mediocre production."⁴⁴

Like Albertazzi, Vittorio Gassman subjugated dramatic structure and a general conception of the plays to attain public recognition. A month after Albertazzi's Richard III, Gassman presented his version of Macbeth (Verona: Teatro Filarmonico, 15 September 1983).

⁴⁰Roberto De Monticelli, "Grande exploit di Albertazzi," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 1 March 1983, p. 25.

⁴¹G. A. Cibotto, "Un grande affresco tragico," Il Gazzettino (Venice), 31 August 1983.

⁴²Poesio, "Il potere," and Palazzi, p. 18.

⁴³Palazzi, p. 18.

⁴⁴De Monticelli, p. 25.

True to the tradition of the great mattatori, the name of the director was absent from the program listing. Although many actors took part in it, all of them were clearly subordinate to that of the protagonist played by Gassman. Even Anna Maria Guarieri, who portrayed Lady Macbeth, stepped into the background. Claiming fidelity to the original text, Gassman sought to restore the tragic integrity of the play. No cuts were made. Gassman, who translated this particular version of Macbeth, left it open for a wide range of readings. Giuseppe Liotta wrote:

Gassman does not take any liberties. He preserves the implicit function of the text and of the mise en scène. . . . The tragedy evolves as a double play. It took place on a two level wooden stage, connected on both sides by high stairs, ably designed by Paolo Tommasi. . . . There the intrigue brooded and burst with naturalistic allure. . . . The actors' introspective declamation invaded the auditorium like an echo reverberating with sound effects, conveying a sense of missiles exploding in the unconscious of the characters. All of it, combined with well-choreographed pictorial tableaux, retrospectives and queer acrobatic demonstrations, resulted in a grotesque, expressionistic masque.⁴⁵

On the other hand "the choir of the witches reconstructed an ancient ritual. . . . There was also evident Gassman's fascination with the idea of a theatre as a game on a grand scale."⁴⁶ Frequent allusions to theatre within theatre could be detected everywhere: "change of costumes in full view, discovery of the scenic illusions, heavy-handed mise en scène, in short all that would break the suspension of theatrical disbelief."⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the great gap lying

⁴⁵Giuseppe Liotta, "Recensioni: Macbeth," STILB 3 (July-December 1983): 40.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

between the mature, brilliant interpretation of the protagonist and the young, inexperienced supporting cast was quite evident and undermined scrupulous literary fidelity. The young actors were left on their own. Without a director, depending solely upon the help of the great mattatore, they were clearly unequipped to realize such a major project.

The 1982 Othello (Ravenna: Teatro Comunale, 17 January 1982) suffered from similar shortcomings. With the exception of Giulio Brogi, who played Iago, critics noted a very poor supporting cast.⁴⁸ Alvaro Piccardi's contribution as a director was hardly acknowledged at all. Old, traditional sets and costumes by Lorenzo Ghiglia were compared to "bric-a-brac . . . filled with acronyms of power and pomp."⁴⁹ The undivided attention of the audience was directed to Gassman's portrayal of Othello. De Monticelli noted:

By virtue of its protagonist and due to the charismatic power which emanates from him, Gassman's Othello is linked to the great typically Italian tradition of productions expressly conceived for a mattatore.⁵⁰

And indeed his performance dominated the evening. Specifically, there was noted the scene in the bed-chamber, where the actor succeeded in maintaining a deadly silence in the auditorium for over twenty minutes. He achieved "that rare moment of authentic communication by stunning [the audience] with never-yet-experienced

⁴⁸Ugo Ronfani, "Otello si sente vecchio, Gassman no," Il Giorno (Milan), 19 January 1982; Roberto De Monticelli, "Un'arte e una vita nell'Otello di Gassman," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 18 March 1982.

⁴⁹Ugo Ronfani, "Mattatore, ma col cuore di un uomo," Il Giorno (Milan), 18 March 1982.

⁵⁰De Monticelli, "Otello di Gassman."

emotion."⁵¹ One could hardly refrain from comparing it to the above-quoted remarks by Stanislavsky on Salvini's Othello, which had captured the entire audience of the Bolshoi Theatre in the palm of his hands. It is unfortunate that an actor of this stature was surrounded with a mediocre cast in an unimaginative production.

Gassman had addressed Othello once before. The historic 1956 production of the play (Rome: Teatro Quirino, 1 November 1956) which he had directed in collaboration with Luciano Lucignani was well received and earned him, then a rather young actor, immediate public acclaim. As in 1982, so in 1956 Gassman assembled his own private touring company to produce the play. The organizational structure and artistic objectives of these troupes, consequently, were very similar to the nineteenth-century troupes of the great mattatori. Pursuing, in this manner, the creation of an appropriate setting for his histrionic skills, in 1956 Gassman, at successive performances of Othello, alternated the roles of Iago and Othello with Salvo Randone. Thus each actor was compelled to change his performance entirely from one evening to the next. Gassman's Iago and Othello were filled with youth and exuberance, and acted upon impulsive and passionate drive.⁵² According to Mario Praz, particularly effective was his portrayal of Iago, whom he enhanced with "a little of Hamlet's ambiguity."⁵³ Salvo Randone's interpretations of the

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²For a brief summary of the reviews of the production see Anzi, pp. 122-24. Gassman's interpretation of Othello and Iago are specifically discussed on p. 123.

⁵³Mario Praz, "International Notes: Italy," Shakespeare Survey 11 (1958): 121.

Ancient and the Moor painted the portraits of experienced men of war, with distinctly pensive features, who ironically fall prey to the ultimate test of human corruption.⁵⁴ In this manner, the whole focus and the principal forces of the tragedy shifted with every performance. Only the framework, Giulio Coltellacci's realistic sets with a touch of symbolism, remained the same.⁵⁵ The reactions of the supporting cast and even the suggestive nature of Fiorenzo Carpi's widely praised music, acquired distinctly different coloration. Like Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, with the change of perspective, the principal features of the production altered, as the audience gazed with the eyes of a different reality.

Charismatic portrayal always distinguished Gassman's protagonists. Othello and Iago, Macbeth and Hamlet, Orlando and Richard III, Romeo and Troilus—all of them found a vibrant life in the gallery of the actor's creations and became milestone examples of Shakespearean interpretations.⁵⁶ Even though they found themselves at times surrounded by mediocre casts (through the fault of Gassman himself), they never failed to inspire the audience with passion and leave a sparkle of histrionic genius. Gassman, Diego Fabri wrote,

sees in the theatre . . . an exceedingly artistic and popular means of putting over his own personal message, which naturally passes from the script into the show, an aspiration which makes

⁵⁴Anzi, pp. 123-24.

⁵⁵Mario Praz, however, suggested that the setting's "nets and grates hinting at Othello's soul in the fetters of jealousy" were not particularly effective (p. 121).

⁵⁶*Rosalinda* (1948), *Troilus and Cressida* (1949), *Hamlet* (1952) and *Richard III* (1968) are discussed in detail in the respective sections on Visconti, Squarzina and Ronconi.

him seem extraordinarily alive even in his mistakes.⁵⁷

If being a mattatore was a part of this mistake, then it was also his extraordinary calling, one that enriched the heritage of the Italian theatre.

It was Glauco Mauri (b. 1930) who eventually accomplished the task of fully realizing one's histrionic potential without compromising on overall artistic considerations. He combined his efforts with three other essential participants in the theatrical event: a director (Franco Enriquez), a designer (Emanuel Luzzati), and an actress (Valeria Moriconi). Together in 1962 they formed La Compagnia dei Quattro (The Company of the Four) which proved to be one of the most successful theatrical associations in the history of the Italian theatre. Having a permanent limited nucleus allowed its members greater flexibility in fulfilling their own personal aspirations, which seemed impossible to realize in a regular repertory company. The other members of the troupe were contracted for on a production-by-production basis. The company launched its career with a series of classical and Shakespearean plays.⁵⁸ Soon after, it gained the reputation of a respectable theatrical troupe. After the monumental success of The Taming of the Shrew (1962), their fame spread across the continent. So did Mauri's reputation. In these productions he portrayed a whole gallery of Shakespearean characters: Touchstone in As You Like It (1966), Bottom in A

⁵⁷Fabri, p. 128.

⁵⁸The more important Shakespearean productions of the company are discussed in the section on Enriquez. All of the productions staged by the director between the years 1962-1972 were mounted for La Compagnia dei Quattro.

Midsummer Night's Dream (1962), Berowne in Love's Labour's Lost (1961), Shylock in The Merchant of Venice (1967), Macbeth in 1971 and most notable of all Petruchio, in The Taming of the Shrew (1962 through 1976). Diego Fabri once said:

Often it is enough for an actor to meet a new character for the miracle to occur, a gifted artiste, until then unrecognized, emerges suddenly and in a single stroke reveals his whole personality. To express himself fully, the actor will always need that solid pedestal: the character created by the writer.⁵⁹

Shakespeare's characters in general and Petruchio in particular served Mauri as that very vehicle within the setting of La Compagnia dei Quattro. Besides the projects of the company he was also engaged by other private producers as well as state theatres. At the Verona Shakespeare Festival he was invited to play Titus Andronicus in 1968 and Malvolio in 1979, both of which were directed by Aldo Trionfo. In 1964 he portrayed Thersites for the widely acclaimed Squarzina Troilus and Cressida at the Teatro Stabile di Genova. Richard II (1966) and Richard III (1979) found their incarnation in Mauri's performance at Teatri Stabili di Torino and l'Aquila which were staged respectively by Gianfranco De Bosio and Antonio Calenda.⁶⁰ In this manner Mauri found the golden mean in attaining the glory of a mattatore without compromising the artistic integrity of the productions as a whole.

The tradition of the Shakespearean mattatori promoted after the war by Ricci, Albertazzi, and Gassman could no longer prevail as the dominant force of the Italian theatre. It was outdated and appeared

⁵⁹Fabri, p. 132.

⁶⁰These productions are discussed in further detail in Chapters V and VI devoted to Trionfo, Squarzina, De Bosio, and Calenda.

out of place in a theatre taken with ensemble playing. The solutions found by Mauri, to surround himself with a director, a designer, permanent company members, etc., proved to be the secret of success in the post-war period. The teatri stabili, indeed, provided the very best setting for such a collaboration.

CHAPTER V

TEATRI STABILI AND SHAKESPEARE:

LUIGI SQUARZINA, GIANFRANCO DE BOSIO, AND ANTONIO CALEDA

The general euphoria of liberation at the end of the war rapidly spread across all areas of Italian society. It was very evident in the enthusiasm of the artistic community. Countless proposals to undertake new theatrical projects flooded the press. In these years also the roots of Italian cinematography were planted. The cinema quickly recorded on film the surge of hope expressed in the streets and at home, and thus effectively affirmed itself as a rapidly growing industry. A wave of fresh air was also felt in the theatre. Andrea Camilleri wrote:

With restrictions lifted, an indiscriminate flood of plays poured in from abroad, and the keen interest of the public which filled the theatres betokened a new lease of life. The illusion was further strengthened by the brilliant exploits of certain producers who had patiently served their apprenticeship during the early years of the war.¹

The productions mounted by Visconti and his followers stimulated new ideas and reinforced the sense of a prosperous and bright future. Disillusion, however, soon set in. Although the manacles of repression were officially lifted from the Italian theatre, its

¹Andrea Camilleri, "The Trend Towards Permanent Companies," World Theatre 11 (Summer 1962): 155.

organizational infrastructure did not change significantly. The private companies, run by the actor-managers who performed throughout the years of war, were the only ones which continued to attract audiences. "Once the public's curiosity was satisfied, the old state of affairs returned: already by 1946, only one company, that of Renzo Ricci, could lay any claim to success."² The old ways seemed to provide a security blanket for a country that had undergone a major social and economic upheaval. The bourgeois ruling class seemed to favor a tempered reform in all matters of culture, rather than undertaking major organizational changes.

Paolo Grassi wrote:

private enterprise continued to see the theatre as a mainly commercial undertaking intended to satisfy, not a thirst for culture, but the need for entertainment and escape peculiar to the bourgeois public. The masses, through lack of any natural interest in this type of drama and, above all, for financial reasons, were completely missing from the life of the theatre.³

The ghost of the past continued to haunt the theatrical activities of the postwar years. The policy of subsidies and government control instituted by the Fascist regime continued "to preserve artificially the life of an invalid and to prolong his complaint."⁴ As a result, in spite of all the liberation euphoria, Italy remained on the whole ignorant of the vital artistic experiments conducted in Europe and America.

The need for reform had been voiced by Silvio D'Amico even

²Ibid.

³Paolo Grassi, "The Milan Piccolo Teatro," World Theatre 11 (Summer 1962): 167.

⁴Camilleri, p. 155.

before the war. In his pamphlet "Tramonto del grande attore" ("The Death of the Great Actor") and other articles, the critic attacked the cult of the mattatore.⁵ He expressed the urgent need to put a stop to the subjugation of the dramatic integrity of the plays to the private interests of the actor-managers. He called consistently for reorganization of the theatre and expansion of its dramatic repertory. In 1935, he instituted in Rome an Academy of Dramatic Arts which was dedicated to systematically exploring and advancing theatrical education. During that first year the students of the Academy produced three plays: Gozzi's Il corvo, Pirandello's Questa sera si recita a soggetto and Goethe's Faust. According to Strehler, who saw these productions, "that season marked the birth of modern theatre in Italy, a theatre of directors as well as actors."⁶ Later "the Piccolo would simply systematize the elan that sprang from D'Amico's Academy of Dramatic Art."⁷ At the end of the war, the first class of his graduating students shaped the history of Italian theatre in the years to come. Suffice to mention such names as Marcello Mastroianni, Marcello Moretti, Vittorio Gassman, Orazio Costa, Giorgio De Lullo, Anna Proclemer and a few years later, Glauco Mauri and Luca Ronconi.

Concerns similar to those of Silvio D'Amico were also expressed

⁵D'Amico's pamphlet and various other material on the subject are available at the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro under "D'Amico clippings." D'Amico's controversy with Anton Bragaglia is also discussed in Sandro De Feo, "Theatre Productions of Yesterday and Today," World Theatre 11 (Summer 1962): 135-36.

⁶Paolo Grassi and Giorgio Strehler, "Sixteen Years of the Piccolo Teatro," Tulane Drama Review 8 (Spring 1964): 33.

⁷Ibid.

by Paolo Grassi and Giorgio Strehler. While an editor of Avanti, Grassi published an article called "Theatre and People."⁸ With it, he launched a campaign for a new theatre. He recommended establishment of "permanent companies"--teatri stabili--that would function on the basis of repertory ensembles. He deemed it

a matter of urgency that the theatre should be freed from the commercial criteria which held it fatally in bond to the old "boulevard" type of repertoire, and should seek in the concept of "public service"--in its highest meaning--a new gauge of appreciation.⁹

According to Grassi, the theatre should function as a cultural, civil and moral institution dedicated to attracting and educating the masses. A repertory of high artistic quality would quench the thirst for knowledge and culture. He proposed a "proper business organization responsible for directing this activity and for going in search systematically and scientifically of this public which the high prices of the bourgeois theatre and the emptiness of the usual repertoire had for so long alienated."¹⁰ Finally, he called for the support of public funds. He assigned this responsibility to various government bodies such as the State, the Region, and the Municipality, which were to act as intermediaries and to encourage this "activity on the same basis as for schools."¹¹ The municipal theatres were thus to be reorganized and run by the local community. "The tax relief from this reform should free the company of

⁸ Paolo Grassi, "Teatro e popolo," Avanti (Rome), 29 April 1945.

⁹ Grassi, "The Milan Piccolo Teatro," pp. 167-68.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 168.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 170.

financial worries and allow it to undertake a worthwhile cultural policy" while retaining the low price of tickets.¹²

This proposal generated a wide and elaborate controversy, which echoed even in the American press. Eric Bentley in Theatre Arts warned of the danger that the government subsidies posed.¹³ According to Bentley, Italian theatre could become a playground of fascist aesthetics since the head of its theatre program, Nicola De Pirro, had also been in charge of Italian theatre under Mussolini. Similarly, James Clancy in the Educational Theatre Journal warned that "there can be no suspicion that the Italian theatre is supinely enjoying the position of kept-mistress to a former fascist politicist."¹⁴ Strong words of protest were also voiced by the mattatori. Actor-manager Salvatore De Marco claimed:

Government funds, as you can well observe and as I have had occasion to confide in you, have been a cursed detriment. The dramatic Theatre, in order to be able to rise again and to breathe deeply and fully, needs only one thing from the government, that the governmental machine with its gears, laborers and engineers, ignore it, overlook it and be completely disinterested in its functioning.¹⁵

These potential dangers in pursuing the policy of government funding were acknowledged by Grassi and Strehler. Thus, they sought public funding from the local communities and opposed government intervention through the policy of sovvenzioni. To prove that their

¹²Camilleri, p. 156.

¹³Eric Bentley, "A Traveller's Report," Theatre Arts (October 1949): 40-44, 89-90.

¹⁴James H. Clancy, "Letter from Naples," Educational Theatre Journal 2 (March 1950): 65.

¹⁵Salvatore De Marco statement in Il Dramma (October, 1949): 54 quoted and translated by Clancy.

concept was feasible, they obtained a rent-free building from the municipal authorities in Milan and formed the first theatrical troupe of this kind in the country. On 14 May 1947, the literally small auditorium of the Piccolo Teatro of Milan opened its doors to the public when the curtain rose on Gorky's The Lower Depths. The repertory that year also included Les nuits de la colere by Armand Salacrou, El magico prodigioso by Calderon de la Barca, Il servitore di due padroni by Carlo Goldoni, I giganti della montagna by Luigi Pirandello, The Storm by A. N. Ostrowskii, Crime and Punishment by Dostoevsky, and Murder in the Cathedral by T. S. Eliot. This extensive repertory in a single season was crowned with three Shakespearean productions in the summer months of 1948: Richard II was mounted in the home auditorium in Milan, a spectacular edition of The Tempest was produced at the Florence Boboli Gardens, and Romeo and Juliet at the Roman Amphitheatre in Verona, inaugurating a Shakespearean festival held there annually since then.

The brilliance of the execution and the astounding success of this vast undertaking proved the effectiveness of Grassi's and Strehler's plan beyond a shadow of doubt.¹⁶ The extraordinary success of the Piccolo Teatro of Milan prompted the establishment of still another Piccolo Teatro in Rome under the direction of Orazio Costa and through the support of Silvio D'Amico. There were soon established teatri stabili in Genoa, Turin, Bolsano, Trieste, Naples, Catania, Palermo, Bologna, and other cities of the

¹⁶The three Shakespearean productions are discussed in the section on Strehler. For the reviews of other productions see: Fabio Battistini, Giorgio Strehler (Rome: Gremese Editore, 1980), pp. 48-59, 64-65.

peninsula. Andrea Camilleri wrote:

"Little theatres" were soon swarming all over the peninsula; some came into existence through the promotion of amateur companies or university theatres, others through the localization of touring companies. Economic factors played a hand: the difficulty of finding big enough halls, the physical impossibility of reaching every town in the country, the high cost of rail transport and the effect of certain official regulations.¹⁷

As a result of economic constraints, some of the companies had to close their doors after only a few seasons. Such was the case with Costa's Piccolo Teatro di Roma which existed between 1948 and 1954. Nevertheless, the great majority of the companies survived and flourished under the enthusiastic leadership of their directors. Piccolo Teatro di Milano, teatri stabili of Genoa and Turin set the standards for the others and soon gained international reputations. Their greatest achievement was in having accomplished all of the goals set initially by Grassi and Strehler. They launched the era of the director's theatre. With the birth of the director, Antonio Calenda suggested, "there was also awakened a desire to confront the great themes of the theatre, and consequently a variety of theatrical experiments."¹⁸ Along with obtaining growing public financial support, they also assumed responsibility for cultivating art and educating the masses. Their theatre companies often performed at schools and factories. As a result of this extensive campaign, in less than fifteen years the Piccolo Teatro of Milan could boast of having over eighty percent of its subscribers

drawn from social classes who used never, or hardly ever, to go to the theatre: students, office workers, civil servants, and teachers. Ninety productions, over four thousand performances,

¹⁷Camilleri, p. 164.

¹⁸Antonio Calenda, interview [in Italian], Rome, 26 April 1984.

one hundred and five towns visited in twenty-six countries all over the world, hundreds of performances in sixty-six Italian towns—these figures are the sum of our efforts, the data of our material activity.¹⁹

Through lectures, publications, post-production meetings, these theatres successfully excited public appreciation of, and familiarized audiences with, a wide range of repertory. Under their auspices there were published several important studies on the history of the theatre, dramatic criticism, and other works dealing specifically with the productions which were mounted. Thus, under Gianfranco De Bosio's artistic leadership Teatro Stabile di Turin started to issue in 1964 a periodical entitled Quaderni del Teatro Stabile di Torino. Ivo Chiesa and Luigi Squarzina through Teatro Stabile di Genova published a series of studies in dramaturgy: Antologie di critica drammatica. Teatro Stabile di Roma, reorganized in 1965 by Vito Pandolfi, issued a series entitled Collana del Teatro di Roma covering a wide range of subjects, such as studies of individual authors and topical reviews. Throughout 1977-78, in collaboration with the University of Rome, the theatre organized a series of symposia on Elizabethan theatre, the results of which were later published as a book.

Besides the classics of world dramaturgy, teatri stabili also popularized such Italian authors as Goldoni and Pirandello, while including contemporary playwrights as well. Some of these theatres even established adjoining schools that provided education for aspiring actors, designers and directors who learned from the experienced masters. Shakespeare became the cornerstone of the

¹⁹Grassi, "The Milan Piccolo Teatro," p. 170.

repertory, including many of his rarely produced plays. According to Lorenzo Salveti, "Shakespeare represented the decisive moment of this discovery, of this breath of fresh air in the dramaturgy of all times and nations."²⁰ Great Italian poets and writers were commissioned to fashion new translations. Thus, the belief in Shakespeare's plays as vehicles for the star's performance started to vanish. The work of the teatri stabili, on the contrary, encouraged further delving into a highly emotional and intellectual experience. The following discussion of Shakespearean productions mounted by such directors as Strehler, Squarzina, De Bosio, Calenda and later Trionfo illustrate this effort. The history of their productions is inseparable from the ideology of the teatri stabili they headed for many years.

The career of Luigi Squarzina (b. 1922) is closely associated with two major teatri stabili. For fourteen years, he headed the company of Genoa and then, in 1976 (until 1983), in the renovated Teatro Argentina he assumed the artistic leadership of the Teatro Stabile di Roma. In both theatres, Squarzina's devotion to Shakespeare underlay the repertory. His fascination with the "dark comedies," the period which the director defined in the works of the bard between Hamlet and Troilus and Cressida, placed particular emphasis on the examination of the philosophical implications of the human condition.²¹ According to Squarzina, "theatre returns to Shakespeare when it is no longer used as court entertainment or an exercise in dialectics. That is when it becomes a national and

²⁰Lorenzo Salveti, interview [in Italian], Rome, 20 April 1984.

²¹Luigi Squarzina, interview [in Italian], Rome, 18 April 1984.

truly popular form."²² The "problem plays" in fact provided this vehicle for rediscovering the universal human dilemmas implied in Shakespeare. Extensive dramaturgical work, including historical research, lectures, symposia, and publications, preceded the productions. One of the foremost contemporary Italian playwrights, who spent several years studying at Yale, Squarzina's work as a translator provided particularly valid insights into the plays.²³ The texts of his productions were published along with comprehensive annotated critical analyses. Some of these translations were even reprinted in later major Italian editions of Shakespeare's complete works as well as being used for the dubbing of the BBC television series.²⁴ Consequently, they provide not merely a valid source for production histories, but for literary scholarship as well. It is through Squarzina's effort that the first uncut version of Hamlet was performed in Italy in 1952. Squarzina is also credited with the first Italian staging of Measure for Measure in 1964.

In 1952 Gassman and the then young, still unknown director Luigi Squarzina collaborated in producing Hamlet (Rome: Teatro Valle, 26 November 1952). It was this production which led the two

²²Ibid.

²³Biographical information on Squarzina is based on the appendix from Anita Blasi, "Il lavoro su Shakespeare di Luigi Squarzina" (Tesi di laurea in Lingue e Letterature Straniere Moderne, Università degli studi di Roma, Academic year 1981-82), pp. 334-41.

²⁴The translation of Measure for Measure was published in Giorgio Melchiori, ed., Opere complete di Shakespeare (Milan: Mandadori, 1971). Translations of Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida and Measure for Measure were used for dubbing the BBC series of Shakespeare's Complete Plays broadcast by Italy's television network RAI 3 from 1983 through 1985.

artists to go their separate ways along the path of the postwar Italian theatre. For Gassman, the production was seen as a vehicle to attain for him recognition as a regista. For Luigi Squarzina, this 1952 Hamlet affirmed the only possible way of producing Shakespeare: to remain as faithful as possible to the source. In fact, for the Italian audience, Caioli wrote, this was the first time they were meeting Hamlet the play, and not merely a star performance of the protagonist accompanied by a pagliacci secondary cast.²⁵ In this integral approach to a Shakespearean masterpiece Squarzina also sought to rediscover the wisdom of the Elizabethan bard for our times. This inquiry inevitably brought the director to the repertory companies whose secure setting sponsored by the state enabled him and the actors to concentrate on the general conception of the drama as a whole. It allowed time for the play to mature within an ensemble. The state's support also eliminated any possible threat of sacrificing artistic integrity to commercial success. Thus, Hamlet remains the only Shakespearean play Squarzina produced in a private setting. The rest of his Shakespearean productions were done at teatri stabili.

In Hamlet, Squarzina's conception theatrically externalized his critical approach. To the extent that relevant issues of our contemporary society were addressed through the medium of an Elizabethan play, external, figurative means of staging were applied to highlight the philosophical implications of the drama. In an interview Squarzina noted that today the rhetorical means used by

²⁵Vladimiro Caioli, "Un Amleto Partigiano," Idea (Rome), 14 December 1952.

Shakespeare are best translated by using visual aids. "I sought to explain them through the grammar of images."²⁶ This perspective became much clearer in the director's later work on Julius Caesar (1971), where the discourse between Brutus and Antony was literally depicted by using huge television screens in a fashion similar to a political campaign. In this manner Squarzina's first fascination with the romantic notion of Shakespeare became a vehicle to attain critical clarity. He made certain that both his Hamlet (1952) and Measure for Measure (1957) were furnished with colorful and spectacular designs.²⁷ The external devices merely helped the director to sharpen the focus upon the characters and their internal contradictions. Mario Chiari's impressionistic sets, along with a carefully devised lighting score brought the characters into a bas-relief. Also integrated into this procedure was the use of Giuseppe Piccioli's music. "A musical theme," Blasi wrote, "propelled the change of action with the same intensity that was achieved through the lights."²⁸ The design and sound effects thus set the stage for a highly intense psychological confrontation, not so much between the dramatis-personae, as between the actors and the spectators. Gassman utilized this momentum to its fullest potential. His Byronic Hamlet, according to Mario Praz, excelled in the "delivery of the

²⁶Squarzina, interview.

²⁷Physical description of the sets for Squarzina's productions is based on the iconographic material obtained through the courtesy of Anita Blasi from her private collection. Besides the research for her thesis on the subject, she has also served for many years as Squarzina's secretary at the Teatro di Roma.

²⁸Blasi, p. 33.

soliloquies, and a generally thoughtful and restrained interpretation."²⁹ To stress the rhetorical aspects of the drama, Squarzina directed the actor to differentiate tonalities in Hamlet's voice, each coming as a strong, critical, virtually *verfremdungs-*like comment on the situation. As a result Gassman's Hamlet, isolated with Rembrandtesque light, spoke with a dialectic purpose in mind. Friendly and indifferent, passionate and ironic, enchanting and hypocritical, his Danish Prince, as it was noted by Gerardo Guerrieri, would change the tone of voice according to the set mood and the state of mind of the character.³⁰ The internal contradictions were externalized and amplified, and covered a wide range of vocal registers, using the voice as an expressive instrument in demonstrating the intentional, anti-realistic choice made by the director. Strong emphasis was also placed, as Viridia noted, "on the complexity of contrasts, rather than the exterior drama taking place."³¹ Reviewing the production of Measure for Measure (1958) six years later, Galloni noted Squarzina's extraordinary talent, calling him a director

who has succeeded in assimilating the best of the European Shakespearean theatre. Playing with "chiaroscuro," shaping the light over the characters in dark and light shades to externalize their characteristic features, Squarzina's choice leads him towards a relevant compromise with "the realistic drama,"

²⁹Mario Praz, "International Notes: Italy," Shakespeare Survey 7 (1954): 112.

³⁰Gerardo Guerrieri, "L'Amleto di Gassman," Sipario 19 (June 1964): 65.

³¹Ferdinando Viridia, "L'Amleto di Shakespeare nell'interpretazione di Gassman," La Voce Repubblicana (Rome), 30 November 1952.

illuminating the psychological internal conflicts.³² Most notice, however, was given to the integral approach to Hamlet and its exquisite translation done by Squarzina himself. Alberto Casella stated that Squarzina's "excellent translation, in its style and fidelity to the original, provided the basis for the production."³³ Caioli praised the new edition of Hamlet, comparing its impact on the future of Shakespeare's drama in the country with the legendary role played by Manzoni's I Promessi Sposi in shaping the Italian language during the revolutionary years of the Risorgimento.³⁴ Furthermore, the critic emphasized the newly discovered social message which enhanced Hamlet with the power of a Verdian republican. Anzi also dwelt on the integral approach to the drama and the director's predominant concentration on the play as a whole. The Hamletic dilemma, she wrote, was approached no longer as that of the character but as pertaining to the tragedy as a whole.³⁵ Consequently, the protagonist was engaged in an external struggle and not in that within his own personality. Anzi wrote: "He was fighting Elsinore, the staging and the court: this 'republican' Hamlet was intended to underscore the social relevance with thought and tastes of our own era."³⁶ The contemporary relevance was virtually unanimously praised by all critics, including Silvio

³²Giannino Galloni, "Una novità del 1604," Sipario 13 (January 1958): 14.

³³Alberto Casella quoted by Blasi, p. 20.

³⁴Caioli, "Un Amleto Partigiano."

³⁵Anzi, p. 113.

³⁶Ibid., p. 114.

D'Amico, Ferdinando Virdia, and Masserano-Taricco.³⁷ On the other hand this very republican Hamlet depended on the Elizabethan world and setting. Mario Chiari's sets reflected this notion. They were Elizabethan in form (the stage was constructed in two levels) and fantastic in notion. Symbolic distortions rendered by a modern perspective brought the set closer to the audience's experience. According to Anzi, specific scenes emanated from designated locations (quasi-medieval luoghi deputati [mansions]) and thus graphically suggested the progress of the tragic action.³⁸

It is indeed this external, methodical over-exaggeration which enabled Squarzina to use Shakespeare's drama as a dialectical device, more effectively than even Brechtian plays intended for this precise purpose. The director's didactic approach came forth in the very choice of the plays themselves. Staging Measure for Measure for the Teatro Stabile di Genova (Genoa: Piccolo Teatro, 22 December 1957) helped him to realize several purposes. First and foremost he introduced a Shakespeare play never yet produced in Italy.³⁹ Squarzina was determined, if not to discover Shakespeare, then at least to excavate the obscure elements in his work that were most applicable to the modern audience. According to Blasi, he not merely "translated the play from one language into another, but

³⁷Silvio D'Amico, "Amleto," Illustrazione Italiana (Rome), 16 November 1952; P. Masserano-Tarico, "L'Amleto di Shakespeare," Il Paese (Rome), 29 November 1952; Virdia; Emilio Posenti, "Amleto di W. Shakespeare," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 9 January 1954.

³⁸Anzi, p. 116.

³⁹Various conjectures for the belated interest of Italian theatre in Measure for Measure are raised in Pietro de-Logu, "Misura per Misura di Shakespeare: strano connubio fra Plauto e Boccaccio," Il Messaggero (Rome), 23 December 1957.

attempted to create a vivid rapport between the actor and the spectator."⁴⁰ Secondly, as Squarzina himself later admitted, the "continuous breaking of dramatic structure rendered Measure for Measure one of the most epic texts written by Shakespeare."⁴¹ Although he approached the text several times in the course of his career (1957, 1976, 1979) in all of the productions an epico-dialectic reading consistently prevailed. If in 1957 his main preoccupation lay with acquainting the Italian audience with an unfamiliar text and in so doing to teach a valid lesson "in dialectic morality and justice," in the 1976 and 1979 productions the emphasis lay in exposing, through theatrical devices, the corruption of a power structure.⁴² As Squarzina later pointed out, the 1957 production depicted a parable on the current state of affairs in Genoa, drawing parallels with the city's major political figures of the time, such as Egidio Ariosto, Cardinal Siri, Judge Sossi and others.⁴³ The focus was directed towards questioning censorship at the time of the conservative right-wing crisis in Italy. During these years, Genoa often seemed to be the only surviving islet where liberal ideals could be expressed freely. Thus, for instance, Fellini's La Dolce Vita had its premiere in Genoa because of the strict Roman censorship. And yet, the very

⁴⁰Blasi, p. 209.

⁴¹Luigi Squarzina, "Misura per Misura," in Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, p. 182.

⁴²Ibid. p. 180.

⁴³Luigi Squarzina, Misura per Misura di William Shakespeare (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1980), p. 14.

same Teatro Stabile di Genova entered into a fierce confrontation with the clerical elite after producing Sartre's La Diable et le Bon Dieu (1962). It seemed that the puritanism of the city's elite who insisted that several scenes be cut from the play because they perceived a "threat to the moral and religious values of the outstanding citizens," found its reflection in Squarzina's depiction of Shakespeare's Vienna.⁴⁴ Gianni Polidori's stage put the fable of Measure for Measure within a fairy setting, combining two-dimensional backdrop painting and a frame structure. Rembrandtesque use of light to carve the figures of the characters even further underscored their allegorical, "unreal" stature. The moral of the fable was quite evident.⁴⁵

Coming back to Measure for Measure (Rome: Teatro Argentino, 22 December 1976) twenty years later, Squarzina's approach assumed a much more subtle and yet more forceful dialectic criticism of the social power structure. He produced Measure for Measure with the company of the Teatro Stabile di Roma twice, in 1976 and in 1979; however, the only change between these two productions was the cast. The set executed by Emanuel Luzatti consisted of a Tower of Babel placed in the middle of the stage.⁴⁶ It was constructed of various

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵For further in-depth analysis of the production see Blasi, pp. 208-41. It should also be noted that the part of the Duke in this production was played by Renzo Ricci. In spite of this fact and the favorable critical response, the production, according to Squarzina's own estimates, failed to gain wide popularity (Squarzina in Lombardo, p. 180).

⁴⁶Physical description of the set and costumes is based on the iconographic material obtained through the courtesy of Emanuel Luzzati.

stage elements such as ladders, boxes, and porticos. And it seemed as though the whole structure was about to collapse. In this fashion, the crumbling tower epitomized the Vienna of the play. On its bottom levels there could be found "red light districts" of bordellos and dark prison cells. Its higher levels were allocated to the court and on the very top of this pyramid of social hierarchy there was placed the omnipotent Duke. Besides its clear graphic association with the biblical Babel, the structure was also used as a three-level Elizabethan stage. This fascination with the Elizabethan scenic space found in Squarzina's staging its particular application. At times it even evoked the Brechtian rotating stage of Mother Courage. It represented, as Squarzina himself put it, a variety of symbols:

Babel city in chaos, Angelo's staircase to the throne of power, society on all of its diverse levels . . . and at the same time it was a multi-leveled Elizabethan stage where nothing is ever defined in too concrete terms, where there is no place for realism Everything is here in a continuous rotating flux so that the audience can immediately accept it as an ideal setting for what is about to occur.⁴⁷

In this manner, as Renzo Tian noted, the production

even in the figurative line of its costumes, designed by Luzzati, swung between gloomy puritan nightmare and grotesque flashes of vaudeville. Its characters ultimately expressed themselves in a convulsive masque.⁴⁸

Such a grotesque representation found its basis in the fundamentally theatrical situation of the play. The Duke's disguise and transfer of authority to Angelo, while stepping aside to "the dark corners of the court" to observe the drama, was interpreted by Squarzina as the

⁴⁷Squarzina, in Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, p. 176.

⁴⁸Renzo Tian, "Il potere scrive il copione per la città del disordine," Il Messaggero (Rome), 23 December 1976.

ultimate exercise of a play within a play. In this manner, the code of laws handed to Angelo was not only the constitution of Vienna or the religious gospel, but most prominently the production script. The Duke's gestures, Blasi wrote, "direct the exits and entrances of the other characters, as well as light cues and the movement of the curtain."⁴⁹ The Duke was treated not merely as a legal, monarchical, divine authority, but the dramatic author as well. He was not merely deus ex machina but the dramatic machina itself. He was seen as a cruel puppeteer playing with the emotions of his characters. The ambiguity of this game was extended beyond his power, as, eventually, he lost control of the situation. The Book of Laws—the script of the play, as Lombardo noted, was merely a scenario in which the ultimate outcome of the drama depended on the characters and not the original author.⁵⁰

This Pirandellian approach was effectively combined with Brechtian didacticism. In the course of the play, Squarzina introduced several choruses from Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe. In the latter play, which had its premiere in Copenhagen in 1936, Brecht translated the puritanism of Measure for Measure into racial persecution. The use of these choruses in Squarzina's production equated extreme puritanism with racism and denounced it on the basis of a class struggle. It provided another example of the many-faceted, contradictory interpretation of the play. This multi-dimensional approach to Shakespeare was supported by the critics.

⁴⁹Blasi, p. 263.

⁵⁰Lombardo, in the introduction to Squarzina's Misura per Misura di William Shakespeare, p. 8.

According to Renzo Tian, "through developing a sense of ambiguity, Squarzina successfully evoked, in a very subtle manner, a variety of meanings, which are present in the play."⁵¹ Anzi attributed the success of the production to the director's "ability to present the text in a concise and enjoyable manner, while leaving it ambiguous, elusive, variegated, and filled with bitter and facetious irony."⁵² Probably the best observation was made by Lombardo:

It isn't that Squarzina deforms Shakespeare or even "modernizes" it. Neither does he arbitrarily superimpose spurious elements. His Shakespeare becomes "our contemporary" in the best sense of this word. His delicate, rather penetrating reading is done with vigilant consciousness of a modern man.⁵³

In the early sixties, Squarzina had already found an ally to this ideology in Jan Kott. Kott's notable Shakespeare Our Contemporary, that was being published in Italian at the time, served Squarzina as a springboard for his production of Troilus and Cressida (Genoa: Teatro Duse, 19 November 1964).

Kott contended that Shakespeare addressed contemporary issues relevant not merely to the Elizabethans but to our own society as well. Drawing the parallel between the two periods, he pointed to the timely issues raised in the plays. Discussing Troilus and

⁵¹Tian.

⁵²Anzi, p. 263.

⁵³Agostino Lombardo, "Shakespeare critico del potere," Rinascita (Rome), 14 January 1977. Other sources consulted in the research of the production were: Tomasso Chiaretti, "Dramma viennese tra Verdi e Brecht," la Repubblica (Rome), 23 December 1976; A. Blandi, "Vienna corrotta con Shakespeare," La Stampa (Turin), 4 February 1977; A. Savioli, "L'ambiguo plagio del potere svelato nel gioco teatrale," l'Unita (Rome), 23 December 1976; Donata Righetti, "Sotto la torre di Babele il potere gioca al teatro," Il Giorno (Milan), 12 January 1980; Anonymous, "Shakespeare secondo Squarzina," Il Corriere della Sera (Milan) 12 January 1980.

Cressida, he came to a conclusion equally valid for the Greeks, the Elizabethans and modern spectators: the play was perceived as a grotesque about the world which Cressida realizes to be "too vile and cruel for anything to be worth defending."⁵⁴ Troy, the critic contended, "is anachronistic with her illusions about honor and loyalty, in the new Renaissance world where force and money win."⁵⁵ Kott pointed out how little the world has changed since then. Kings are still cuckolds, Helens remain the same tarts, heroes like Achilles and Ajax are but buffoons. "There are no gods and there is no fate."⁵⁶ There is only absurd butchery in the name of false values and, at the best, betrayed and cheated illusions. For Hector, "the war has lasted seven years. People have died for Helen. To give Helen back would be to deprive those deaths of any meaning."⁵⁷ That would require forfeiting ideals for bitter reality. In accordance with the way of the world destruction is left to escalate. Only professional fools can face this pathetic grotesque. Only they who see others act as fools are fortunate to survive and profit. The two clowns of the tragic comedy produced by Squarzina were Pandarus among the Trojans and Thersites among the Greeks. In this way the director had appropriately chosen the modern metaphor of Kott's theory. Pandarus acted as a Levantine pimp and

⁵⁴Jan Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, trans. Boleslaw Taborski (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1964; reprint ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1974), p. 81.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 79.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 77.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 78.

Thersites, as noted in the London Times, was "a journalist loaded with cameras, spitting out barbaric slang worthy of a sound track of a Fellini film,"⁵⁸ Both of them thus remained the outsiders capable of facing and using reality for profit, but careful enough not to get involved.

In Troilus and Cressida, as it was suggested by Giannino Galloni, "Squarzina sought to establish a rapport between the problematics of our modern world and that of Shakespeare."⁵⁹ However, this controversial version went beyond pure exterior trappings such as modern dress or colloquial phraseology. It affirmed the timelessness of the issues involved. One could hardly relate his version to a specific period. Gianni Polidori's costumes and sets were easily recognizable symbols of power, militarism and the absurdity of love placed amidst this perverse, bloated and lustful world.⁶⁰ The characters, as Vice noted, although clearly of Homeric origin "were parodied and sometimes even subjected to an extremely ferocious caricature."⁶¹ Cressida, the poetic idea of love and innocence, at the very beginning "appears in a bikini and puts on sunglasses as her servant rubs her back with suntan

⁵⁸Anonymous, "Shakespeare as Italians Represent Him Nowadays," The Times (London), 4 January 1965.

⁵⁹Giannino Galloni, "Si battono col mitra Greci e Troiani," L'Unita (Milan), 20 November 1964.

⁶⁰Physical description of the set and costumes is based on the iconographic material obtained from Blasi. Some of the production photos are also reprinted in Lombardo Shakespeare e Jonson, Appendix, plates 78-80 as well as in Roberto Reborà, "Troilo e Cressida dopo Hiroshima," Sipario 20 (January 1965): 5-10.

⁶¹Vice, "Troilo e Cressida di Shakespeare con greci e troiani vestiti da parà," La Stampa (Turin), 20 December 1964.

lotion."⁶² The sublime Helen was totally mesmerized with her favorite television soap opera, oblivious to the lives around her.⁶³ Although the production was indeed contaminated with a contemporary dialectical jargon and attributes like airplanes, paratroopers, and grenade explosions, its events were by no means arrested in the present time. It was a fable which constantly repeated itself where death wins for the sake of nothing--for the sake of the betrayed myth called Helen.

This 1964 Troilus and Cressida of the Teatro Stabile di Genova was a far cry from the 1949 fairy castles of Visconti. Shakespeare was no longer a romantic myth for the Italian audience. His drama was a poignant and bitter accusation, a tour de force exploration of self-deceit, and a confrontation with actual reality. It no longer provided an escape to the enchanting Arcadia or set a stage for the romantic heroism to burn on a stake in the blazing fire of tragedy. This world had no heroes; only those who were not fooled by its illusions survived.

In spite of this approach, unprecedented in Italy, Troilus and Cressida was enthusiastically received. Critical reservations were few. Colombo criticized Squarzina for forcibly reducing this complex Shakespearean drama into a "one sided nihilistic moral à la Beckett or expressionistic epic à la Brecht."⁶⁴ The few such reproaches, were, however, overwhelmed by the general praise. Carlo Terron

⁶²Anonymous, "Shakespeare as Italians Represent Him Nowadays."

⁶³Vice, "Troilo e Cressida . . . vestiti da parà."

⁶⁴A. Colombo, "Troilo e Cressida," Lettura 20 (January 1965): 51.

admired the "absolute coherence, unequivocal persuasiveness and indisputable effectiveness presented with an exemplary authority and fascinating fantasy."⁶⁵ Giuseppe Bartolucci noted that the production's principal attraction was its mesmerizing and natural correspondence between Shakespearean drama and our times.⁶⁶ Concluding his review, he even defined Squarzina's achievement as an important step in the history of the Italian theatre. Theatre, in Squarzina's treatment, Bartolucci stated, became "an intellectual factor, rather than an aesthetic one."⁶⁷

As the roar of the European revolutionary idealism of 1968 was settling down and the radical anti-establishment philosophy was eventually giving way to more conservative positions, many of the most prominent Italian directors, including Squarzina, started to place stronger emphasis on the general issues at hand rather than specific political criticism of the society and its internal corruption.⁶⁸ Although social dialectics remained an important component of their approach, they were no longer viewed as a principal method for raising issues of a political nature. The clearly identifiable political views which characterized the productions of the early sixties were abandoned in favor of a broader philosophical approach to politics as a study of human

⁶⁵Carlo Terron, "Entusiasti o indignati quasi come alla Scala," Corriere Lombardo (Milan), 21-21 January 1964.

⁶⁶Giuseppe Bartolucci, "Troilo e Cressida," Paese Sera (Rome), 20 November 1964.

⁶⁷Ibid. For further analysis of the production see Blasi, pp. 67-104, and Anzi, pp. 152-56.

⁶⁸For further information on the revolutionary events of 1968 see the introductory section of Chapter VI.

behavior.

It is this global view that differentiated Squarzina's production of Julius Caesar (Genoa: Teatro Duse, 2 October 1971) from the narrow, accusatory tone of the 1964 Troilus and Cressida. Although both of these Shakespeare plays contain ample grounds to advance a political argument, in staging Julius Caesar for the Teatro Stabile di Genova the director addressed the conflict between democracy and tyranny as a perpetual, inevitable struggle of human existence.⁶⁹ To illuminate these issues, he juxtaposed mass media and absolute dictatorship. In this way Julius Caesar no longer served as a springboard for the director to express his political associations, nor was it a personal drama of the legendary Roman protagonists. The director perceived it as a recurrent historical web that humanity is destined to be caught in. Caesar's presence on the stage, consequently, was limited only to the assassination scene in the Senate. The symbol of Caesarism interested Squarzina the most. No room was left for the spectator to sympathize with Julius Caesar the man. The focus was upon the concept of dictatorship versus republicanism. The personal drama faded into the background.

When one compares this production to Squarzina's staging of the play in 1949 during his collaboration with Guido Salvini a radical change in approach is quite apparent.⁷⁰ Whereas the 1949 mise en

⁶⁹Detailed analysis of the production is provided in Blasi, pp. 146-203.

⁷⁰For the production of Julius Caesar by Guido Salvini in the Verona Roman Amphitheatre see De Cesco, pp. 78-82.

scène was highly operatic, colorful and spectacular, this 1971 production was very economical in the external theatrical devices. The director avoided mass scenes as much as possible and transformed them into a direct confrontation between the principal characters—the speakers and the cheering crowds—the audience. Instead of an actual performance the public was presented with a lecture in the form of a rhetorical discussion. Gianfranco Padovani's sets consisted of metal frames and construction scaffolds with two towers on the sides and several Roman statues placed in various locations.⁷¹ The stage was thrust into the audience with stairs leading directly to the orchestra. At times it resembled a hastily constructed scaffold for a demonstration, at other times it looked like a prison camp. It seemed as though the whole of humanity, represented by the audience, was imprisoned in the web of tyranny. It was kept there as a captive for the speeches to be delivered. One might even say the public, indeed, was literally exposed to some of the brainwashing methods of the mass media. Consequently, the sets and the form of staging could be easily associated with Brechtian Lehrstücke. This idea was further reinforced by the use of projections on a wide screen during Brutus's and Marc Antony's orations. A series of slides that accompanied those speeches depicted current government and dictatorship overthrows happening all over the world. Shakespeare's play thus served merely as a theoretical base for analyzing the nature of contemporary political currents. In fact, Squarzina underscored his production with a

⁷¹Physical description of the sets and costumes is based on the designer's original sketches and production photographs obtained through the courtesy of Anita Blasi.

poignant statement closing both acts of the drama, respectively ending with the deaths of Julius Caesar and of Brutus. As the curtain was falling, Cassius's words rang true:

How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted on
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!
(Julius Caesar III, i, 111-3)

And so the cycle, alternating tyranny and republicanism, was destined to continue. Julius Caesar thus expressed Squarzina's personal perception of history. Through it, as Raul Radice noted, the director advanced "his own criticism and views on the eternal political game which makes the world go around."⁷² Through this Julius Caesar Squarzina established his own form of Lehrstucke, comprising elaborate setting, projections, and direct dialogue with the audience. Although the production was generally favorably reviewed, its reception lacked the enthusiasm of Squarzina's other Shakespearean work. Several critics, including Franco Quadri, applauded some of the director's inventive methods of staging; however, they claimed these singular instances were insufficient to render the production effective as a whole.⁷³ Quadri consequently criticized Squarzina for too simplistic an approach, and for failing to explore more intricate dramatic structures and hence for lacking persuasiveness.⁷⁴ Even Squarzina himself acknowledged having succeeded halfway: "Having staged Julius Caesar, I felt cheated of

⁷²Raul Radice, "Giulio Cesare a Genova," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 3 October 1971.

⁷³For the summary of the reviews see Blasi, pp. 201-03.

⁷⁴Franco Quadri, La politica del regista (Milan: Edizione il Formichiere, 1980), p. 523-24.

the result."⁷⁵ In spite of these reservations, the production remained, as Silvia Carandini suggested, an important work reflecting the change of artistic climate in Italy following the cultural revolution of 1968.⁷⁶ It was, as she further noted, "a rigorous inspiration of a political and civil nature."⁷⁷

Squarzina's staging of Timon of Athens (Rome: Teatro Argentina, 21 April 1983) during his last season as artistic director of the Rome State Theatre proved to be his most mysterious Shakespeare. The audience, accustomed to Squarzina's pronounced directorial conceptions, this time was surprised to find the production overflowing with poetic ambiguity. Although the theme of monetary corruption prevalent in the play could be easily exploited as a key to Marxist philosophy, the emphasis was placed upon the study of human folly and suffering.⁷⁸ Timon's character grew into the dimensions of King Lear. To sharpen the character's internal conflict with greater vividness, Squarzina even converted Apemantus into an exterior incarnation of Timon's unconscious longing and desires. Casting an actress in the role of the philosopher, the

⁷⁵Squarzina in Lombardo Shakespeare e Jonson, p. 183.

⁷⁶Silvia Carandini, "Shakespeare e gli elisabettiani sui palcoscenici italiani," in *Ibid.*, p. 310.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸My summary of the directorial concept is based on Luigi Squarzina, "E il niente mi porta tutto" in Agostino Lombardo, ed., Timone d'Atene di William Shakespeare (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1983), pp. 15-24. It should also be mentioned that Timon of Athens was the only Shakespearean production for which Squarzina did not furnish his own translation. The translation used was that by Lombardo, who also provided the text for the acclaimed Strehler production of The Tempest (1978), which is discussed later in this dissertation.

director hoped, as Chiaretti suggested, to reinforce the idea of Timon's alter ego "and in so doing the character's secular nature, his reason and . . . relentlessness."⁷⁹ The male-female attraction helped to further reinforce this idea. However, the principal focus still remained on Timon himself. Gianrico Tedeschi's portrayal of the character, as Sergio Surchi noted, was especially "cordial, tossing a faint, ambiguous smile stemming from his painful realization."⁸⁰ The director's fascination was caught by this contrast between the changing human emotions, joy and sorrow. Squarzina wrote that what attracted him to the play was its polarity or rather division into a consistent, "morphological reading of the two parts: the liveliness of the Mystery play and then the solemnity of a Morality."⁸¹ The director further extended this contrast in comparing the play with the tradition of the Japanese theatre. He saw in the first part of Timon of Athens an action-filled Kabuki fable that was resolved in the second part by a motionless and sacral Nô.⁸²

Paulo Tommasi's sets and costumes augmented this perception.⁸³ The designer proposed a simple, geometrical, two-level structure

⁷⁹Tommaso Chiaretti, "Che noia gli uomini . . . meglio solo nella botte," la Repubblica (Rome), 29 April 1983.

⁸⁰Sergio Surchi, "E col Timone Squarzina lascia il teatro di Roma," La Nazione (Florence), 29 April 1983.

⁸¹"E il niente mi porta tutto," p. 18.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Physical description of the set and costumes is based on the designer's sketch provided on the cover of Ibid., as well as some photographs accompanying the newspaper reviews discussed in this section.

divided into rectangular sections, resembling blocks of cement. It contained the bare essentials of an Elizabethan stage but could also be viewed as a seven-portal Roman stage. Using colorful Renaissance costumes on the sober background of the set created the visual contrast Squarzina sought. In this Athens, according to Chiaretti, there flourished the fairs of Baghdad and the splendor of Turandot's court.⁸⁴ It swirled with agitation: servants mingled with guards and senators "taken directly from a Renaissance painting Feasts were everywhere, ambiguous masks, flamboyant courtesans were carried on the carriages."⁸⁵ The very next moment the stage could be instantaneously transformed into a deserted grotto. It would become, as Guido Bonino noted, "an empty and still theatre structure, a heavy skeleton in front of which rose a powerful, contorted tree—the tree of Timon's desperation, of his superb and scornful solitude."⁸⁶

The production was received with great enthusiasm. Cibotti did not even hesitate to call Squarzina's staging "impeccable."⁸⁷ Renzo Tian noted the great change in the director's artistic orientation as compared to the period of his work at the Genoa Theatre: the search for greater poetic meaning which Squarzina initiated in his work on Julius Caesar with the Genoa State Theatre now crowned his

⁸⁴Chiaretti, "Che noia gli uomini."

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Guido Davico Bonino, "Timone e Squarzina lasciano Atene," La Stampa (Turin), 29 April 1983.

⁸⁷G. A. Cibotto, "Una regia impeccabile," Il Gazzettino (Venice), 29 April 1983.

achievement as an artistic director of the Teatro Stabile di Roma.⁸⁸ An optimistic tone prevailed over the bitter philosophy of Timon, as Squarzina retreated to solitude and left the scene of the public theatres to continue his own work as an independant director and playwright.

Among the pioneers of the public theatre movement side by side with the Stabile di Genova and the Piccolo di Milano, a prominent role was played by the Teatro Stabile di Torino. Two years after its inception in 1955, Gianfranco De Bosio (b. 1924) became its artistic director. Shortly after, the company gained national and then international acclaim as it toured across the country and Europe. De Bosio began his work by exploring the national heritage. He introduced into the repertory a series of Ruzzante plays. These efforts were coupled with research on early Italian dramaturgy. Through his initiative, leading scholars of the Renaissance period like Roberto Tessari, Ludovico Zorzi, Italo Sordi, Giacomo Oreglia and others were engaged by the theatre. In a few years, they produced major publications on commedia dell'arte. Ruzzante's heretofore largely neglected body of plays made him one of the most popular authors in the years to come.

During the eleven years of De Bosio's leadership, Teatro Stabile di Torino also undertook the study of the classics, among whom Shakespeare was clearly given prominence. What distinguished De Bosio most from the other directors of teatri stabili was his systematic preparation and his long-term commitment to the projects

⁸⁸Renzo Tian, "Contro l'oro un odio antico," Il Messaggero (Rome), 29 April 1983.

he undertook. Before producing Shakespeare, he found it imperative for the theatre to furnish the public with a definitive translation.⁸⁹ Only a definitive version, such as the one available in German done by Schlegel, could lay the foundations for, and breed, a local theatrical tradition. He perceived this to be the primary responsibility of any publically-funded institution. He advocated these ideas while also serving on the board of directors of the Verona Shakespeare Festival. In an interview, he stated:

All of the Shakespeare translations used in the [Italian] theatre were in prose, including the texts by such famous poets as Quasimodo and Montani. Prose necessarily reduces and modifies Shakespearean thought. . . . Thus, it should be the primary objective of the Verona Shakespeare Festival to generate a definitive body of Shakespearean translations in verse. The best of the Italian poets should be commissioned to produce this work and thus put an end to the provisional production scripts aimed at resolving the linguistic problems of the moment.⁹⁰

For the first two decades of his directing career, De Bosio avoided staging Shakespeare. He contended that the absence of an accurate verse translation rendered the director's task impossible.⁹¹ It also considerably impeded the actors' ability to perform the play. The Italian actors consequently failed to consistently develop the necessary approach to Shakespeare and thus were unsuited for any projects of the kind. The director further

⁸⁹Gianfranco De Bosio discussed his experience with Teatro Stabile di Torino and his views regarding the staging of Shakespeare in an interview [in Italian], Milan, 3 May 1984.

⁹⁰Ibid. After leaving Teatro Stabile di Torino in 1968, De Bosio was appointed as director of Ente Lirico di Arena di Verona and also served on the board of directors of the Verona Shakespeare Festival.

⁹¹The following argument is based on the director's views expressed in Gianfranco De Bosio, "Tre domande ai registi," *Sipario* 19 (June 1964): 45.

argued that the appearance of such a translation might tempt him to venture his hand at Shakespeare. Although thoroughly convinced of his position, De Bosio welcomed the Shakespearean productions of other directors and consistently included them in the repertory of the Teatro Stabile di Torino. He also used that time to lay the foundations for the company's future Shakespeare projects in a fashion similar to their work on Ruzzante. Eventually the time seemed ripe to put his convictions into practice. Keeping the utmost fidelity to the poetic value of the text, De Bosio began work on Richard II (Turin: Teatro Alfieri, 26 February 1966) in 1965.

The choice of the play was dictated by the combination of its poetic beauty coupled with the explicit nature of its historico-political parable.⁹² To realize his primary objective, De Bosio employed one of the greatest living Italian poets, Mario Luzi, to translate the play in blank verse corresponding to the original. Although no comparable meter could be found in Italian, one year later, the poet had successfully accomplished his task. Meantime, De Bosio reviewed the most recent literary criticism of the play and formed his directorial concept around theories by John Palmer and Jan Kott. In his book, Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare, John Palmer viewed the play as a reflection of the changing medieval world with its loss of a divine supremacy and its eventual transition into the Renaissance world where man

⁹²Gianfranco De Bosio, "Un regista italiano di fronte a Shakespeare," in Shakespeare: Riccardo II e Wesker: Radici, Quaderni del Teatro Stabile di Torino, no. 6 (Turin: Teatro Stabile di Torino, 1966), p. 30. Besides De Bosio's article in the publication cited, there is also recorded the staging conception, Mario Luzi's translation of the play, and the work on the production.

consistently struggled to affirm his own supreme reign.⁹³ On the other hand, Jan Kott's theory suggested that Richard II along with the other histories provided a parable of the cyclic nature of power, defining it as an outcome of the Grand Mechanism.⁹⁴ De Bosio's conception integrated these two theories. In an interview, he stated the following:

For me Richard II is an extraordinary tragedy beyond a mere history of England. . . . It is a parable of power . . . exploring the process by which the ferocious and hated monarch in losing his power . . . acquires humanity. At the same time the universally admired Bolingbroke, who represents democracy mounting the throne of power, turns into a man of stone. It is this cycle of history that fascinated me the most.⁹⁵

The unveiling of individual conscience from under an elaborate shell of regal attire, and the rediscovery of man's limited power in a universe controlled much less by gods than by political aspirations, became the primary focus of the production. Emanuel Luzzati's sets and costumes further underscored this conception.⁹⁶ Embellished, medieval stained-glass windows surrounded the stage. Their rich colors were changed according to the mood of the scene. The enormous structure placed in the middle of the stage figuratively depicted Kott's idea of the Grand Mechanism. While in the beginning of the drama, Richard II could be found on its very top, almost twelve feet above the stage level, as the play

⁹³John Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare (London: St. Martin's, 1967), pp. 118-79.

⁹⁴Jan Kott, "The Kings," in Shakespeare Our Contemporary, pp. 3-55.

⁹⁵De Bosio, interview.

⁹⁶Physical description of the sets and costumes is based on the original design sketches and the production photographs generously furnished by Luzzati.

progressed and the structure turned around, the once powerful king found himself literally imprisoned under its cogs and eventually crushed by its weight.⁹⁷ Bolingbroke, in turn, climbed this rotating structure all the way to the top. His throne pedestal literally became the prison for the humiliated Richard.

A similar effect was achieved through the use of lavish costumes. The robes made the king. Without them he turned to nothing. De Bosio contended that Shakespeare's relevance as a contemporary author

couldn't be communicated through the costumes of today. . . . Only through the Medieval world can one derive a parable which might interest us. . . . It is imperative to understand that we are telling the story of yesterday to the people of today since we are convinced that in every story there is something that is of interest to us all.⁹⁸

Thus, the director found it necessary to also incorporate in his production universal folklore elements, for which he acknowledged the influence of Peter Brook.⁹⁹ The theatricality of the simple folk-tale form of the dethroned king assured the direct impact of the implied message.

Rehearsing the play, De Bosio placed the main emphasis on the actors' interpretations. It was not so much their perception of the character that interested him the most but rather their ability to propel the poetic verse loaded with Shakespearean wisdom into the auditorium. By doing so, the text would gradually mold the characters and the characters eventually form the general

⁹⁷De Bosio, interview.

⁹⁸"Un regista italiano di fronte a Shakespeare," pp. 39-40.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 40.

conception. This method enabled the director to arrive at a result, as some critics suggested, never before seen in Italy.¹⁰⁰ The sensitive poetic translation served as the source for the actors' inspiration and helped them to convey its universal implications. De Bosio, as Giorgio Striglia noted, thus "succeeded in generating among the secondary characters an authentic antagonistic force . . . or choral dramaticism which the original text of Richard II has very little of."¹⁰¹ Hence, the play became, in the words of La Stampa, a dramatization of a chess game, the objective of which was not only to determine the winner but also, and more importantly, to reveal the personal tribulations of the players.¹⁰² The focus remained upon Richard II whom Glauco Mauri successfully portrayed in accordance with De Bosio's own definition not only as a protagonist but also as a human marionette in this fatal game.¹⁰³ Striglia called this interpretation one of the most moving portrayals of the actor's career.¹⁰⁴ And, indeed, this in-depth, almost anatomical study of the character illuminated with the sensitive and poetic Luzi's verse-translation brought to life one of the greatest masterpieces in the gallery of Shakespeare's Kings.

The jeopardy posed even for an absolute ruler by the cycle of

¹⁰⁰A summary of critical reviews is provided in De Cesco, pp. 177-78.

¹⁰¹Giorgio Striglia, "Come un playboy politico Riccardo II di Shakespeare," Il Tempo (Rome), 27 February 1966.

¹⁰²A. Bl., "La tragedia di re Riccardo II presentata dal Teatro Stabile di Torino," La Stampa (Turin), 27 February 1966.

¹⁰³"Un regista italiano di fronte a Shakespeare," p. 33.

¹⁰⁴Striglia, "Come un playboy."

history and his human vulnerability, expressed by De Bosio in Richard II, was emblematic of the concerns of the Italian directors of the sixties. The sense of stagnation and the the growing desire for artistic renewal was prominent not only among the permanent companies, but in Italian theatre in general. Experimentalism and an increasing frustration with a didactic political orientation in the repertory characterized the theatrical activities of the country.

Typically, state-supported theatres are known to represent a more conservative approach whereas avant-garde trends are promoted by smaller theatrical groups. These groups are usually associated with the exploitation of the dramatic text for political purposes, seeking to undermine the establishment. In Italy, however, as could be seen from the productions by Strehler, Squarzina, Trionfo and De Bosio, the political treatment of the text became the norm in the state-supported theatres in the sixties.¹⁰⁵ According to Calenda, "at the time everything in Italy was politicized. When politico-operative measures were not taken by a director he was blacklisted and looked upon with skepticism."¹⁰⁶ Thus, while the conservative establishment promulgated social doctrine, the avant-garde revolutionized the treatment of dramatic material by advocating complex philosophical interpretations.¹⁰⁷ They abandoned the

¹⁰⁵See sections on: Strehler's Coriolanus (1957) and The Game of the Powerful (1965); Squarzina's Measure for Measure (1958) and Troilus and Cressida (1965); De Bosio's Richard II (1966); Ronconi's Measure for Measure (1967) and Richard III (1968); and Trionfo's Titus Andronicus (1967).

¹⁰⁶Antonio Calenda, interview [in Italian], Rome, 26 April 1984.

¹⁰⁷Detailed analysis of the trends in the Italian avant-garde

traditional banality of the political manifesto for the poetic ambiguity implied in Shakespeare's plays. This unique Italian situation eventually led the teatri stabili to reevaluate their position. Gradually they sheltered avant-garde experimentalism under their wing and together pursued alternatives for the didactic staging methods. As a result of this trend, while in other countries state-supported companies were defending the conservative position of the establishment and fighting against more politically-oriented small theatres, in Italy, paradoxically enough, teatri stabili found themselves joining forces with the avant-garde in the common cause against the commercially-oriented private companies.

Antonio Calenda (b. 1940) is the best example of this unique relationship between the state-supported theatres and the enterprise of the avant-garde. In 1969, at the age of 29, he was employed by the Aquila State Theatre to stage Coriolanus (Verona: Teatro Romano, 4 July 1969) only a few months after the extraordinary success of the Berliner Ensemble's Coriolanus in Italy. One could hardly imagine a more challenging project to mount following the acclaimed Brechtian version. But it is precisely in the example of this production that we can see the severity of the counter-establishment approach to the play advanced by Calenda. The director was not interested in any of the political associations or socio-didacticism the play could easily provide the grounds for.¹⁰⁸ On the contrary, under the auspices of the state-supported theatre he challenged the

is provided in Chapter VI.

¹⁰⁸The following analysis of Calenda's position is based on the interview and De Cesco, pp. 215-22.

highly acclaimed Brechtian dialecticism with an unresolved poetic ambiguity. He sought to uncover the deeper problematic nature of the drama, its praise for the heroism of a fascist protagonist at a time when Italy was experiencing revolutionary turmoil. He purposely avoided illuminating the sociological framework to the drama and thus set his protagonist on an even higher pedestal. In doing so he also prevented the expected condemnation of the totalitarian dictator and eliminated a simplistic, black and white, didactic presentation of the play. Calenda stated:

Coriolanus confronted and explored the very roots of this great dilemma. We were dealing with a figure of a fascist. However, precisely in this very grandeur of ambition Coriolanus grew into a tragic character. Hence it was very difficult for me to justify a character who, seeking war, was tragic and thus a positive figure. This was the most difficult dialecticism to be solved. I was accused of having avoided the explicit political vein underlying the play as it was done by the Berliner Ensemble. But then the Berliner Ensemble cut the final scene. Shakespeare's end was replaced by another that justified their approach. Shakespeare's greatness, however, is in his very poetic ambiguity. Thus, we never know all the way to the very end who is right in this political discourse which is human discourse as well, consequently a moral one. . . . The greatness of his theatre is in dealing with absolute values to such an extent that there is no way of resolving them.¹⁰⁹

This approach by a young director challenging the establishment was greeted with great enthusiasm by the critics. Giorgio Prosperi applauded Calenda who "in spite of his young age did not feel obligated to follow current ideology."¹¹⁰ He dared, as the critic pointed out, "not to be liked by all those who seek to violate art and history to make it consistent with their political

¹⁰⁹Calenda, interview.

¹¹⁰Giorgio Prosperi, "Un Coriolano rispettoso dello spirito di Shakespeare," Il Tempo (Rome), 6 August 1969.

philosophy."¹¹¹ A review in La Stampa suggested that although this Coriolanus "wasn't actually revolutionary, it was undoubtedly modern and original, and would trigger a great debate."¹¹² Raul Radice felt that Calenda transferred the tragedy onto the plane of grotesque, "however, he did so without amputating and reducing the text to facilitate an emphasis on the dominating theme of his choice."¹¹³ Lodovico Mamprin, who criticized the production, found himself in the minority. He claimed that "an attempt to desecrate [the establishment] clearly failed, since Calenda was unable to resolve his discourse in a unified and consistent manner."¹¹⁴

From the available reviews, it is rather hard to determine the actual use and effect of the setting. Franco Nonnis constructed a pentagon fortress in the middle of the stage, several towers of which would sometimes rotate and reveal the characters.¹¹⁵ From behind the walls of this pentagon the populace and the senators would threaten Coriolanus, graphically setting him aside in the position of a courageous and admirable fighter able to defend himself on his own. The rest would take refuge in the seclusion of the fortress. Giorgio Prospero praised the plasticity of this group movement and compared it with the daring efforts of the Living

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²A. Bl., "Stasera Coriolano nei Giardini Reali," La Stampa (Turin), 19 July 1969.

¹¹³Raul Radice, "Coriolano a Verona," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 8 July 1969.

¹¹⁴Lodovico Mamprin, "Verona: Coriolano," Sipario 24 (August 1969): 44.

¹¹⁵Description of the set is based on Paola Lovato, "Il Coriolano," Sipario 24 (August 1969): 45.

Theatre and at other moments with the well-thought-through mise en scène of the Berliner Ensemble.¹¹⁶

The idea of the theatre as a metaphor for Shakespeare's poetic ambiguity was even further explored in Calenda's production of As You Like It (L'Acquila: Teatro Comunale, 5 April 1977), after he was appointed in 1975 to head Teatro Stabile dell'Aquila at the age of 35. The director interpreted the drama largely according to Jan Kott's theory of the Bitter Arcadia.¹¹⁷ Along with Elizabethan melancholy he also injected the production with some of the principles of the Theatre of the Absurd. Calenda contended that its endless, unresolvable cycle, incapable of generating hope but only augmenting the sense of melancholy, rendered As You Like It closest to the contemporary taste of Beckettian philosophy.¹¹⁸ In this play, the director suggested, Shakespeare reflected with most acute irony on the cultural conventions of his period. This Calenda regarded as the predominant feature of our contemporary theatre. Theatre thus became a conceptual metaphor to allude not only to cultural conditions but also to mental confusion stemming from stagnant and unsatisfying reality. In these terms, Arden represented a magical place where desires, unrestricted by the burden of convention, could aspire to reach out for their realization, and the unconscious could eventually attain its identity. Arden also represented Arcadian

¹¹⁶Prosperi, "Un Coriolano rispetaso."

¹¹⁷Jan Kott, "Shakespeare's Bitter Arcadia" in Shakespeare Our Contemporary, pp. 237-92.

¹¹⁸Antonio Calenda, "La messa in scena di A piacer vostro," in Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, pp. 115-6. The following analysis of Calenda's staging concept is based on this article, pp. 115-28.

culture, the culture which Shakespeare would not assimilate and would purposely subject to dialectical scrutiny and irony. As a result of this operation, melancholy pervaded and the stage, where dreams were supposed to come true, became a scaffold for ridicule. In place of an enchanting Arcadia, Calenda thus presented a grotesque cabaret. He pointed out that Arden no longer functioned as a stage "for a Pirandellian theatrical game of theatre within a theatre. Quite the contrary is true. It is taken as a critical stimulus to awaken the temporarily dormant unconscious faculties."¹¹⁹

Jaques and Touchstone were essential to the process. Both are fools in the best Shakespearean sense of the word or in modern terms the conferencier of this cabaret performance. Both are "the two sides of the same coin and at the same time, in their contradiction, they complement each other."¹²⁰ Touchstone assists the reigning duke whereas Jaques is in the service of the exiled one. Touchstone is an intellectual in spite of his position as a professional fool who showers the court with his cruel jokes. Jaques on the other hand is a dissatisfied intellectual who sees in others and in himself a fool. "Touchstone lives of himself, whereas Jaques becomes aware of himself. They are two extreme poles of existential consciousness surrounding which we find all of the other characters."¹²¹

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 121.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 123.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 125.

Since Arden and the court were perceived by Calenda as the two mutually reflected images, he chose to present them on the same stage. For that reason, Nicola Rubertelli's cobblestoned courtyard set, did not change throughout the performance.¹²² In fact, it could be easily associated with both a typical medieval courtyard and a theatrum mundi from the 1619 designs of Ars Memoria.¹²³ Thus, on the same stage there coexisted simultaneously two worlds: the world of reality which was set in the court and the world of theatre set in Arden. A mere light cue was sufficient to alter the appearance and the court could be instantaneously transformed into a nightmare called Arden, vibrant with the motley of Ambra Danon costumes. The two worlds not only coexisted but reflected each other in a parable, rendering an image like a distorting mirror. Every character had its double. There were two dukes, the usurper and the deposed one, both played by the same actor. There were also two fools, Touchstone and Jaques, providing an ironic comment for each other and for others. But above all, the "two in one" formula naturally produced an androgynous paradigm of Rosalind—a female part, supposedly played by an actor, interpreted by an actress, pretending to be a man. This quadruple travesty blended the opposites and allowed reality to find its true identity through the sensation of a dream.

¹²²The physical description of the set and costumes is based on the original designer's sketches and production photographs generously furnished by Ambra Danon.

¹²³For further discussion of the iconographic material of the period see: Harriett Bloker Hawkins, "All the World's a Stage: Some Illustrations of the Theatrum Mundi," Shakespeare Quarterly 17 (Spring 1966): 174-78. Hawkins also provides an extensive analysis of the Elizabethan concept of theatre as a metaphor representing the world and the universal order.

In spite of the complexity of its conceptual approach, the production generated a favorable response among critics. Giorgio Prosperi found its expressionistic cabaret form successfully adapted to Shakespeare's text.¹²⁴ Paolo Emilio Poesio pointed to the originality of the directorial interpretation that opened with a grave solemnity and developed through laughter and parody that accentuated the melancholy outcome of the play.¹²⁵ Vanna Gentili applauded Calenda's rendition of Jaques in the key of a Beckettian clown.¹²⁶ Although having some reservations regarding the similarity between Touchstone and Jaques, she generally agreed with Calenda's insightful and stimulating conception. Judging from the above reviews, the audience, the majority of whom had no literary preparation for such a critical interpretation, found the production exciting, stimulating and entertaining. Calenda thus realized his critical conception through theatrical means, and rendered it successful on all levels of appreciation.

Contrary to Calenda's prior work, the production of Richard III (Turin: Teatro Alfieri, 7 December 1979) for the Teatro Stabile dell'Aquila emanated from an unequivocal and concrete directorial concept. Relatively few, though very expressive, scenic elements served to reinforce the development of the drama.¹²⁷ The bare

¹²⁴Giorgio Prosperi, "Incontri, esilio, amore nella foresta di Arden," Il Tempo (Rome), 6 April 1977.

¹²⁵Paolo Emilio Poesio, "Una favola nella foresta," La Nazione (Florence), 11 November 1977.

¹²⁶Vanna Gentili, "Il fool in Shakespeare e nel teatro elisabettiano," in Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, p. 140.

¹²⁷The following physical description of the set and costumes is based on the original designer's sketches and production

stage, designed by Nicola Robertelli, was laid out with cement blocks and faded into the dark mist of the background. Red brocade curtains were occasionally lowered in several parts of the stage, opening and closing to define a specific area for the action to occur. They reminded the audience of the theatricality of Richard's play-acting. According to Francis Lane

Calenda took a hint from the many lines which refer to playing a part. In the final stylized battle sequence, as Richard's short reign neared its conclusion, one curtain after another closed on him till he was left alone downstage in front of the footlights to shout "My kingdom for a horse!"¹²⁸

Frequent use of side lighting carved the characters with special distinction. Their dark, pre-Raphaelite Medieval attire, designed by Ambra Danon, lent itself especially well to the solemn processional mood. It seemed as though they were gathered to celebrate a black mass. Calenda's Richard III was no longer, as the Italian audience had grown accustomed to seeing, a study of an English monarch on the Elizabethan stage. "Calenda was interested in the theatrical rather than historical aspects of the play."¹²⁹ There were no analytical principles of the Grand Mechanism either. According to Lane, the "theatrical 'game' removed some of the sinisteress from the intrigue."¹³⁰ The pomp and circumstance of the coronation and the

photographs generously furnished by Ambra Danon. Description of the scene changes is based on Paolo Emilio Poesio, "Il sangue chiama sangue," La Nazione (Florence), 5 January 1980; and Roberto De Monticelli, "La corona di Riccardo III salda sul capo di Glauco Mauri," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 11 January 1980.

¹²⁸John Francis Lane, "Shakespeare in Italy," Shakespeare Quarterly 31 (Autumn 1980): 430.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid.

eventual canonization of the Machiavellian Prince prevailed.¹³¹ Although some critics, like Roberto De Monticelli and Guido Bonino, observed in this almost apocalyptic vision of Dante's Inferno traces of Freudian psychoanalysis (with the implied transference of our own restrained violent ambitions), the prevalence of a diabolic ceremonial rite was undeniable.¹³² Whether the effect was described by Bonino as a director's fascination with Nietzsche's superhuman genius or by Emilio Poesio as a diabolical force of destiny, the ultimate realization of this sweeping power was quite vivid.¹³³ As the tragedy drew closer to its end, it seemed Death itself embraced Richard in its arms and, having attired him in the glittering silver armor, built a monument to the superhuman aspiration he had incarnated. Describing Glauco Mauri's portrayal of the king, Emilio Poesio pointed out the diabolical power the actor breathed into the character.¹³⁴ His victims, mesmerized by the histrionic spell, fell under his claws as Richard crushed them while climbing to the throne. In spite of the apparent contradiction in terms, the critic concluded, Mauri's negative protagonist gained almost positive stature.¹³⁵ This observation was confirmed by the director. In an

¹³¹The definition of his stage conception is derived from the Calenda interview.

¹³²"La corona di Riccardo III" and Guido Davico Bonino, "Il Riccardo III di Glauco Mauri grande artigiano della finzione," La Stampa (Turin), 9 December 1979.

¹³³Bonino, "Il Riccardo III . . . artigiano," and Poesio, "Il sangue chiama sangue."

¹³⁴Poesio, "Il sangue chiama sangue."

¹³⁵Ibid.

interview Calenda stated that towards the end of this "desperate tragedy" Richard would "virtually evolve into a positive character, struck with existential pain."¹³⁶ And at the same time, as Guido Bonino noted, the actor managed "to strip from his character any veil of sacredness and inject him with a great dose of irony."¹³⁷ Francis Lane suggested that

Glauco Mauri, one of the few Italian actors who can combine a traditional manner of stage presence and speaking with a familiar modern idiom of communicability, put over the irony of Richard's self-indulgent play-acting without condescending to wink too much at the audience. In this performance as in this production the Great Mechanism of History gave way to that of Theatre. Machiavelli wouldn't have approved. But the audiences of the 1980s do.¹³⁸

In the production of A Midsummer Night's Dream (Verona: Teatro Romano, 7 July 1982) Calenda picked up the discourse he had started in the 1977 As You Like It. Only this time instead of locating the action in the courtyard, the designer Paolo Tomassi constructed a huge wall running across the proscenium.¹³⁹ At the time when the lovers flee to the forest of Arden, the wall was ruptured in its very center and revealed the reign of dreams that emerged out of the mist. Elaborating upon the idea of the bitter Arcadia, the director down-played the comical aspects of the play. His Puck, true to Kott's suggestion, was a black, devilish creature, reincarnating the combined image of Harlequin and Ariel, and presiding over the

¹³⁶Calenda, interview.

¹³⁷Bonino, "Il Riccardo III . . . artigiano."

¹³⁸Lane, p. 430.

¹³⁹Physical description of the sets and costumes is based on the iconographic material generously furnished by the director.

show.¹⁴⁰ The focus centered again upon the poetic ambiguity of the work, placing as much emphasis as possible upon the text itself. The power of its verse and the suggestive nature of the words were supposed to stimulate the audience to derive their own conclusions.

Somewhat taken aback by the lack of spectacle in a traditionally spectacular play, the critics were divided in their opinions. There were those, such as Ugo Volli, who reproached Calenda for the absence of theatricality and its replacement with what they called a "costumed recital of Shakespearean poetry" by inferior actors.¹⁴¹ The other camp agreed with Luciano Ravazin, who praised the director's originality and courage to deviate from the accepted tradition.¹⁴² It would be, however, hard and inappropriate for me to derive any further conclusions, since the material I obtained on the production is too scarce for any generalization.

The overall example of Calenda's productions, all of which were mounted with the Teatro Stabile dell'Aquila where he continues to serve as one of the youngest artistic directors in the country, clearly points to the growing interest in a yet unknown Shakespeare dressed in new clothes but speaking a rather conservative and philologically accurate verse. The new and yet only the second generation of Italian directors, instead of rebelling against the theatre of their elders, incorporated the ideology of their mentors

¹⁴⁰Jan Kott, "Titania and the Ass's Head," and "Prospero's Staff," in Shakespeare Our Contemporary, pp. 213-17, 315.

¹⁴¹Ugo Volli, "Il duca d'Atene re della notte tra gli elfi di Shakespeare," la Repubblica (Rome), 10 July 1982.

¹⁴²Luciano Ravazzin, "Dietro il muro della realtà il bosco mitico dei desideri," L'Arena (Verona), 9 July 1982.

as a foundation for their own ventures.¹⁴³

The lessons derived from Squarzina, De Bosio, and especially, as we will later see from Strehler, served the directors of Calenda's generation as an indispensable barometer to measure the changing climate of the Italian scene. Brought up to believe in the principle of conceptual staging over the commercial success generated through the star system, they found themselves naturally siding with the teatri stabili. However, tired of the established canons in staging Shakespeare, they sought more daring approaches. In this manner, within the confines of the state-supported establishment, they have produced a very avant-garde theatre.

¹⁴³As it was already demonstrated in the previous chapters, one must bear in mind that the theatre of the director in Italy came only after World War II. The productions prior to that were either mounted by foreign directors or actor-managers.

CHAPTER VI

SHAKESPEARE AND THE AVANT-GARDE:

ALDO TRIONFO, LUCA RONCONI, AND CARMELO BENE

Discussion of the Italian avant-garde theatre would be incomplete without prefacing it with some background on the political climate in the country, especially since the theatre's popularity noticeably increased in the aftermath of the events of 1968. "During the fifties," as Mario Prospero noted, "there was little concern for the avant-garde in Italy."¹ The theatre of the director, having not yet completed its first decade, had barely stabilized itself and was primarily exploring classical dramaturgy. The French absurdists who flooded the European stage were widely ignored in Italy. The country, having barely recovered from the ashes of World War II and having just reorganized its system from a colonial monarchy to a democratic republic, was still clinging to rather conservative values.² Suffice it to mention that a divorce bill under heavy restrictions was eventually approved only as late

¹Mario Prospero, "Contemporary Italian Theatre," The Drama Review 22 (March 1978): 18.

²My historical analysis of the general situation in Italy in the 1950s and early 1960s is based on Norman Kogan, A Political History of Post War Italy (New York: Praeger, 1981), pp. 6-16.

as December 1970. Although economic growth was expanding at a rapid pace, and between the years 1959 to 1963 it was second only to that of Japan, the highly conservative nature of Italian society prevailed. Although by 1965, as Kogan pointed out, "Italy was no longer the provincial, backward, and autocratic country of the Fascist period," it was, nevertheless, zealously guarding the principles of authoritarian hierarchy and conservative morality, and was unlikely to tolerate excessive liberalism.³ Consequently, the theories of Artaud and the plays of such authors as Ionesco, Genet, Beckett, de Ghelderode, and Cocteau were not likely to gain much support especially among the cultural elite and thus were not included in the repertory of either private companies or the establishment. In 1964 Grassi and Strehler stated that teatri stabili in general, and the Milan Piccolo Teatro in particular, "have habituated our public to a wider, more 'social' theatre. To give them Ionesco or Godot would be to deceive them."⁴ Consequently, even workshop productions of these plays were scarce. Among the best known were those mounted in the late fifties by Aldo Trionfo with the Genoa cabaret-theatre company of La Borsa d'Arlecchino. But even Trionfo, who is considered the pioneer of the Italian avant-garde, after guest performances under the auspices of some teatri stabili, and after generating critical acclaim, failed to gain wide popularity or produce followers.⁵ Instead, he temporarily abandoned

³Ibid., p. 16.

⁴Grassi and Strehler, "Sixteen Years of the Piccolo Teatro," p. 40.

⁵For further information on this early experimentation by Trionfo see Enrico Groppali, Il Teatro di Trionfo, Missiroli.

this repertory and in the early sixties committed himself to staging Brecht and other classical dramaturgy with the state theatres. It was not until a decade later that the Italian theatre started to experience a shift of interest. This shift was triggered, to a great extent, by the country's growing unrest and dissatisfaction with the social and political situation.

"The years between 1968 and 1970 mark a turning point in postwar Italian history," writes Norman Kogan in his A Political History of Italy: The Postwar Years.

What struck Italy with full force . . . was a social explosion initiated in the universities that then spread to the other parts of society. The student movement erupted in early 1968. The May revolt in the Parisian universities stimulated the Italian students further, although in no single week did the violence in Italy equal the intensity of the May Week in France. Behind the surge of drama and excitement lay growing academic frustrations, national disappointments, and international myths. . . . The Cuban revolution and the figures of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara; the cultural revolution in China and the figures of Mao-Tse-Tung and Lin Piao; the Vietnamese war of the North against the South and against United States intervention, a struggle led by Ho Chi Minh--all provided mythologies and charismatic heroes to stir youthful imaginations. Closer to home the Prague Spring with its hopes and final delusions was an additional stimulant. . . . In the heated utopian atmosphere the distance of the myths made them more attractive.⁶

The attack soon extended beyond the universities and was directed against society at large, condemning any form of consumerism, industrial imperialism, world power structure and the social and political order of the establishment. Intellectuals, journalists, writers, actors, directors, and other artists joined the ranks of the students contesting bourgeois culture, sexual repression and

Cobelli (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 1977), pp. 13-28.

⁶Norman Kogan, A Political History of Italy: The Postwar Years (New York: Praeger, 1983), pp. 232-3.

exploitation. They rejected, as Gianni Statera summarized, "bureaucracy, organization, structure--anything that recalled the system--[refusing] institutional as well as . . . cultural and ideological authority."⁷ Although the protests sometimes manifested themselves in violent confrontations with the police, sit-ins, strikes, even occupation of the university buildings, they were mostly limited to agitated utopian advocacy. The revolution never reached its direct political objective of an overthrow of the government, and remained, as Gianni Statera put it, "illusive".⁸ The battlefield gradually shifted from an actual confrontation to an ideological debate. Utopian idealism eventually reached the point of exhaustion in 1969 and gradually disintegrated, without any social or economic changes in the political structure. The sense of betrayal and frustration ultimately resulted in the outbreak of terrorist acts in the fall of 1969. Terrorism became a key political tactic and rapidly escalated, keeping the country in constant fear for over a decade; it eventually abruptly ceased with the murder of Aldo Moro.⁹

A more apparent and positive effect of the Revolution could be noted in the cultural life of the country, which was most vividly reflected in theatre. The success of the teatri stabili brought its own dissatisfaction. As the permanent companies acquired the public

⁷Gianni Statera, Death of Utopia: The Development and Decline of the Student Movement in Europe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 96.

⁸Ibid, p. 131.

⁹For further detailed analysis of the events see Statera, pp. 120-41, 247-59 and Kogan, 1983, pp. 228-40.

support and stature of an establishment, frustrations with their organizational format and political role grew. Within their infrastructure there were identified traces of fascism that, according to Trevor Joscelyne, "had re-emerged in the postwar 'democracy'."

The immediate problem, then, was not only what to present and how to present it, but within what kind of structure to present it, when the control of the Stabili, the content and the manner of production, even the audience, appeared to have become so institutionalized. . . . Already, in 1966, leading personalities had called for a conference, held at Ivrea the following year, to debate the means of escape from the petrified condition of Italian theatre.¹⁰

The opening phrases of the statement issued at the Ivrea Conference produced a truly revolutionary indictment of the state of the cultural stagnation in the country:

With a state of continuing regression widespread in many key sectors of national life, these years have witnessed a decay in the life of our theatre, rendered more acute and insidious by its current state of apparent health. This is a dangerous appearance in that it conceals the fact that its structures are aging and failing to adapt; that the interference of political and administrative bureaucracy in public theatres increases; that power groups hold a monopoly; that the theatre is deaf to a significant international repertory; that experimental initiatives, to which life has sought to be given in the course of these years, have died as a result of criminal apathy.¹¹

Although the artistic leadership of the teatri stabili had long since recognized the need to incorporate and support the avant-garde

¹⁰Trevor Joscelyne, "Gesto o testo? The Crisis of the Milanese Avant-Garde in the Early 1980s," Theatre Research International 9 (Spring 1984): 50-51.

¹¹Quoted and translated by Trevor Joscelyne, pp. 51-2. The original text of appeal was published in Sipario 21 (November 1966): 2-3. This document and other source materials of the Italian avant-garde are gathered in Franco Quadri, L'Avanguardia teatrale in Italia (Materiali 1960-1976), 2 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1977). The appeal and transcripts of the Ivrea discussions are reproduced by Quadri on pp. 135-7, 138-48.

enterprise, and, indeed, tried to do so, their status as government supported institutions promoted the inevitable break.¹² The political and cultural upheaval also strengthened the appeal "to revitalize the stage, create a new theatre, and sweep away the institutionalized structures and methods of theatre that had obstinately remained bourgeois."¹³ At the climax of the spring events of 1968 a long-harbored discontent with the organizational structure of the Italian theatres materialized in the form of a major crisis. In a matter of a few months the artistic directors of the two leading state theatres, Piccolo Teatro di Milano and the Teatro Stabile di Torino, resigned. By the end of the 1968-1969 season Teatro di Roma lost its director when Vito Pandolfi retired. Both Giorgio Strehler and Gianfranco De Bosio based their decisions upon the lack of artistic freedom they experienced due to constant financial manipulation by the public bureaucracy and political interest groups.¹⁴ Both of them expressed an urgent need for enlarging their theatrical facilities to accommodate a constantly growing audience and the smooth administrative and artistic operation of these theatres. Piccolo Teatro di Milano, in spite of

¹²In the mid-sixties Piccolo Teatro even established another stage for the popular experimental activities—Teatro Quartiere at the piazzale Cuoco.

¹³Joscelyne, p. 51.

¹⁴The major reasons for the resignation of these directors are summarized in the following interviews published in Sipario: Tullio Kezich, "Il diritto di sbagliare: A colloquio con Giorgio Strehler all'indomani delle sue dimissioni dal Piccolo Teatro," Sipario 23 (August-September 1968): 27-28; Franco Quadri, "Il momento della negazione: un'inchiesta sulla situazione del teatro di prosa in Italia oggi," Sipario 23 (August-September 1968): 19-20. The latter contains a letter to the publisher from Gianfranco De Bosio.

its growing international reputation and major role as a primary theatrical institution of the country, could house in its auditorium no more than 800 people; its stage measured eighteen by twelve feet and its crammed dressing rooms barely had cold water.¹⁵ The situation in Turin was not much better.¹⁶ Both directors felt suffocated in the current conditions, frustrated with dilettantism and powerless within the machinery of public bureaucracy.

The revolutionary momentum of the unrest initiated by the student movement was also utilized by the rest of the theatre community.¹⁷ On 31 May 1968 the headquarters of the 14th Triennale Festival in Milan was occupied by militant cultural worker activists. On 7 June the Biennale Festival in Venice was boycotted by its participants. On 24 June the national playwrights' association issued a declaration of protest. Similar statements calling for an immediate reform were issued soon after by the Congress of the Italian Drama Critics and the Italian Actors Guild. The main demands in all of the above manifestos called for the following changes:

¹⁵The quoted data regarding the theatre was obtained from the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro.

¹⁶It is interesting to note that only in October of 1973 did the Turin theatre finally acquire its new modern residence at the Teatro Reggio, and the plans for building new facilities at via Rivoli for the Piccolo Teatro of Milan were approved only as late as 1980. For the design of these facilities see: Comune di Milano, Da via Rovello in via Rivoli. Sempre con Milano. Il Piccolo Teatro degli anni '80 (Milan: Gabriele Mazzotta, 1980).

¹⁷The following summary of events and demands posed in various manifestos is based on the documentary material provided in "La stagione del nostro scontento," Sipario 23 (October 1968): 10-15, 72.

1. Total autonomy and artistic freedom of the theatrical institutions.
2. Unconditional financial support from public sources and complete exemption from any taxation.
3. Total reform and democratization in the administrative structure of the publically supported theatres.
4. Immediate improvement of physical conditions including: construction of the new theatrical facilities, enlargement of the current auditorium space, provision of several performing facilities in all geographical centers of the country for the continuous rotation of the city and regional repertory companies.
5. Easy public access and mobility of these companies, including lowering of the ticket prices to maintain their true nature as a public institution. Promotion of theatre in the neglected geographical regions of Italy.
6. Maintaining direct rapport between the collective masses, the political life of the country and the artistic objectives of the cultural institutions.
7. Encouragement and support of the new theatrical currents growing from outside the institutional structure.

On a more private level directors expressed the urge for experimentation, which seemed to be impossible within the setting of the establishment. The crisis seemed to have provided a perfect opportunity to suspend the artistic life of the nation in a temporary euphoria. The utopian notion of an ideal theatre was not merely put forward but also was anxiously awaited with realistic expectations. The crisis eventually produced some changes, but no reform within the infrastructure of the teatri stabili took place. Physical conditions in some theatres were improved. There were also founded several autonomous theatrical cooperatives on the basis of an association of the participating artists, such as Gli Associati and Gruppo della Rocca. They managed their own administrative affairs and thus were also freer to experiment in pursuit of their

personal artistic objectives. Independence from the political bodies and the democratic process of decision-making by all the associates lent these troupes the sense of a major artistic victory and a new beginning. In the years immediately following 1968, there were also formed a number of experimental groups: La Fabbrica dell'Attori, Nuova Scena, Teatro Maschera, Centro di Ricerca per il Teatro, and others. Together with the Gruppo Sperimentazione Teatrale, founded in 1965, they have explored through collective creation new ways of approaching contemporary problems and reaching wider audiences. Discussing one such idealistically-oriented group, Lamberto Trezzini suggested that they nourished "the dialectical rapport between men of theatre and the community" and intended "to live and operate according to these principles."¹⁸ However, in time many such companies disintegrated and gave over their autonomy to the publically-supported institutions. Thus, for instance, the independent cooperative enterprise of Gli Associati was eventually acquired by ATER (Associazione Teatri Emilia-Romagna) and starting from 1977 was again run by the public institutions, i.e., regional political bodies.¹⁹ Other troupes gradually assumed the form of the private companies, thus losing the democratic and artistic principles which had led to their inception. Few of the associations, as is the case with the Compagnia del Collettivo di Parma, have successfully survived.

¹⁸Lamberto Trezzini, "La seconda rivoluzione," *Sipario* 23 (November 1968): 36.

¹⁹ATER is an Association of Theatres of Emilia Romania region. It was originally formed in 1964 as a regional circuit of several independent theatre groups.

The period following 1968 was marked with unprecedented enthusiasm and interest in exploring new social aspects of performance. Italian theatre tried to generate as much direct contact with the political life of the nation as possible. Several politically-oriented theatre groups, dedicated to alternative and often neglected audiences, started to emerge. Among the best known was the Comunità group founded by Dario Fo in 1968. La Comunità, wrote Mario Prospero,

travelled outside the usual circuits . . . but its purpose in so doing was specifically to propagandize through the use of didactic farce and political caricature. The performances were actual political manifestations, including speeches, debates and passing the hat for incarcerated comrades.²⁰

However, the majority of the directors as well as the public at large perceived the revolutionary objectives of theatre to be limited to the confines of its own form. An interview conducted by Franco Molè with student activists revealed that they attributed to theatre only a minor role. Its task was primarily to reform its own system by means of demystification, through "cultural and artistic intervention upon itself."²¹ Similarly, Strehler acknowledged that in art revolutions are carried out through the medium itself.²² This position was summarized in unequivocal terms by an exponent of the Italian avant-garde, Mario Missiroli, who stated that "the theatre can be revolutionary insofar as it revolutionizes itself, not in

²⁰Mario Prospero, p. 28.

²¹Franco Molè, "Gli studenti e il teatro dopo Valle Giulia," Sipario 23 (May 1968): 17.

²²Kezich, p. 27.

trying to bring off the political revolution."²³ And, indeed, the most lasting and widespread change in the post-1968 Italian theatre is seen in the growing interest in provocative, unconventional forms. It is within this setting that the Italian avant-garde finally started to flourish, gaining increasingly greater popularity.

Unlike its French counterpart of the fifties, the Italian avant-garde did not originate in playwriting, but, as Mario Prosperi justly pointed out, "directly in the *mise-en-scène*."

In the Italian theatre, directors who were most influenced by the Absurd movement (Trionfo, Bene, etc.) did not solicit new plays, nor did they necessarily concentrate on staging plays by the French Absurdists. Rather, they worked directly on the traditional repertoire, attacking key works by means of parody. They interpreted these works on a metalinguistic level, the performance being reduced to an essay, a demystification, an analysis and commentary about the original play and its sociological and political implications. . . . The operation was intended to be the sarcastic antidote to bourgeois education, and the authors claimed that it was much more "political" than the Brechtian fables propounded by the institutional theatre. They dismantled the play, then examined its pieces with the estranged, critical eye of the sociologist, pointing out the implications of language and behavior, unmasking the class structure underlying a given morality, and expressing--most unscientifically--a value judgment against the object of unmasking. . . . The interpreter went beyond a faithful or sympathetic reading and treated the work as "an alienated object, a source of criticism" according to Brecht's definition.²⁴

Shakespeare's plays provided an invaluable source for such exercises, especially in view of the fact that these directors, as an added objective, sought to undermine the mythical content of the classical fables themselves (i.e., Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Pinocchio, Orlando Furioso, Faust, Salome, etc.). Such an operation

²³Missirolli, quoted by Mario Prosperi, p. 28.

²⁴Ibid., p. 18-20.

also helped to ridicule the traditional fascination of Italian theatre with the baroque. Shakespeare's plays could no longer shield the bourgeois taste, but now were made to bite with the venom of critical irony. Having broken the safe mythological framework of the plays, the directors transformed Shakespearean drama into a merciless weapon, forged to chastise the social system and bourgeois values. Cynicism was let out of the bottle and with a sneer, the repudiating grimace transformed the stage of classical drama into an absurd grotesque.

The best exponent of such an operation or rather the founding father of this method in Italy was Aldo Trionfo (b. 1921). Mario Prospero summarized the director's conceptual formula as follows:

A fusion of two genres [literary theatre and cabaret performance] eventually came to define Trionfo's style Trionfo manifested a tendency toward "pastiche," which Enrico Groppali defines as "an ambiguous, subtle medley of different genres addressed to the intelligent capability of the audience to be a sarcastic accomplice, a mocking voyeur." Music invaded the action with a critical function; it was no longer used as mere psychological comment. Mime was also released from interpretive service. Provocative gags, the use of transvestites and striptease resulted in a kind of burlesque in which materials of diverse origins were used to arrange a consistent speech by their contrast and juxtaposition. . . . Trionfo . . . applied this procedure to certain literary classics by imposing his style from outside the text.²⁵

Particularly effective was the application of this method by Trionfo to Shakespeare's plays. Titus Andronicus (Verona: Teatro Romano, 23 July 1968), staged during the very 1968 summer of Italian discontent, set the ironic tone of the new style. Trionfo used the play as a platform to contest and call attention to the values our

²⁵Ibid., p. 20.

society promulgates.²⁶ Massacre, mutilation, rape, political intrigue, cold-blooded murder and absurd sacrifice in the name of the greater good of social morality--all of these elements which were explored by Shakespeare, at least in part, to stimulate the fascination of the Elizabethans with gory spectacle--served Trionfo as the very reflection upon our own morality. He stated: "When I practice theatre my primary purpose is to . . . use the medium in advancing a discussion concerning our own society. Titus has always fascinated me precisely because of that."²⁷ His interpretation, consequently, focused on the parable nature of the tragedy, exposing social foundations "through the demolition of their principles."²⁸ The director perceived the world of Titus Andronicus engaged in the universal Grand Mechanism of self-destruction, in the ruins of which there could be uncovered the cause of the holocaust. There lay the secret of what has been bringing Western Civilization to ruin from its very dawn across the great empire of Rome and the reign of the English Kings, and that is still threatening yet unborn nations. The universal nature of this mechanism Trionfo sought to portray in a timeless manner. Sets, costumes, acting--all were equally reminiscent of our own world, as well as those of Elizabethans or

²⁶Unless otherwise indicated, the analysis of the production and the description of the mise en scène are based on the following sources: Enrico Groppali, "Tito Andronico: lo spaesamento dell'oggetto" in Il teatro di Trionfo, Missiroli, Cobelli, pp. 64-70; Ettore Capriolo, "Un processo al sistema: intervista con Aldo Trionfo sulla messinscena del Titus Andronicus a Verona," Sipario 23 (August-September 1968): 36-39; De Cesco, pp. 200-22; Anzi, pp. 189-95.

²⁷Capriolo, p. 37.

²⁸Anonymous, "Milano: Tito Andronico," Sipario 24 (September 1969): 49.

ancient Romans. In this manner the director drew a symbolic parable by identifying the uniformity of externally different epochs. He underscored the universal principles governing them all. Trionfo stated:

Good theatre extends over three periods at a time: the period in which the characters live (which might even be an imaginary one) . . . , the time of the composition and the time of the performance. Although these three periods do not necessarily coincide, good theatre ought to combine them. . . . Only then it can acquire universal value and [Shakespeare] can become our contemporary.²⁹

Titus Andronicus thus became a mirror to what had transpired only two months earlier in France and Italy. It became a poetic moral to the revolutionary protests of 1968. In it Trionfo succeeded in projecting, as Italo Moscati later pointed out, "the radical negative character of the principal foundations of our society, which are easy to miss behind their inoffensive, reliable facade."³⁰ In this respect the sets poignantly captured the sense of tranquil and beautiful external reality.³¹ Designer Emanuel Luzzati devised several raked ramps, covered with red granite sand, which crisscrossed the green meadow mound of a stage in the form of a labyrinth. The setting seemed better suited to the game of golf than to the mass slaughter about to take place. It is precisely through this detached, peaceful and charming atmosphere of beauty that Trionfo conveyed his crude irony and apocalyptic vision of the

²⁹Aldo Trionfo, interview [in Italian], Rome, 24 April 1984.

³⁰Italo Moscati, "Spettacoli 'dopo la contestazione'," Sipario 24 (October 1969): 14.

³¹Physical description of the sets and costumes is based on the original sketches and production photographs generously furnished by Emanuel Luzzati.

society we live in.

I did not want to create a world monstrous in its appearance, since it is easy to identify evil in such a world. . . . On the contrary, I sought to capture the world of our parents, prior to the great war, respectable in its ways comfortably situated amidst the green valleys of the ramps. This world is even more monstrous than that of Hitler, precisely because it is not regarded as such. Everything in it is done in good faith, by law-abiding citizens who believe in true ideals, but with a grain of suspicion. . . . The society of Titus, like our own, . . . always understood that its moral code could be applied fully only by those who are either mad or saintly, whereas for the rest of us the mental reservation is an indispensable necessity.³²

In fact, through the very deeds of the mad, conceited morality was brought to crumble and its false values were exposed in the play. To initiate this process Titus was pushed past the edge of sanity by the Goths through physical and mental torture. Reaching into the hollow depths of madness, his rational, socially acceptable acts (including the killing of his own daughter) grew into monstrous shadows of nightmare. "Crimes, generally, do not strike the chords of our compassion," noted Trionfo, "unless they are continuously repeated."³³ Such was the killing of the twenty-two sons of Titus in war. Their deaths were considered an acceptable manifestation of social sacrifice. Only when Titus's sanity was finally shattered by the execution of his other two sons, did the absurdity of that morality strike a crushing blow. Similarly, Trionfo suggested, socially acceptable rape became unbearable when combined with physical mutilation.

What takes place in the course of the play, is not much worse than what is happening in our society. There in a matter of two hours eighteen people die, whereas in the world at large in the

³²Capriolo, p. 37.

³³Ibid.

same period of time many more die and not of natural causes. They die in wars and revolutions rendering Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus a miniscule one-millionth part of the total."³⁴

Consequently, Trionfo concluded, "when one observes society with open eyes and takes it for what it is . . . one realizes that whatever pertains to Western civilization is always and unavoidably wrong."³⁵ The director also rejected any romantic notion of revolution and called upon lucid and decisive individuals to bring about reform. He identified three ways in which to cope with the present social corruption and pretense: 1) to come to terms with this world, as do most Andronici; 2) to physically destroy as do the Goths directed by Aaron; and 3) to explicitly bring the current values to their logical extreme and thus to undermine them from within. This last method, eventually chosen by Titus, Trionfo found to be most appropriate and effective. Aaron's philosophy, in the director's interpretation, served as a catalytic force leading Titus to the resolved, lucid approach, divorced of passion or romantic notions--the only way that might possibly bring about reform.

To realize this philosophy on stage Trionfo applied the canons of Artaud's theatre of cruelty coupled with burlesque irony. All of it was related with the detached, lucid criticism. Roberto Rebora defined the director's approach as a "children's tale" combining "barbaric ferocity and grotesque comment."³⁶ Four girls seated by pianos, in white Sunday dresses, accompanied the massacre taking

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Roberto Rebora, "La fiaba della crudelta," Sipario 23 (August-September 1968): 40.

place on the stage with jolly melodies composed by Sergio Leberovici. "There is an infinite variety of readings to this symbol," wrote Giorgio Prosperi. "Its effectiveness is most remarkable, setting an interplay of cruelty and terror side by side with innocence that is absorbed within the process unconsciously."³⁷ Along the same lines, a group of school children was conducted to the stage by their teacher to learn a valid lesson from the "exemplary behavior" of the protagonists, the pillars of our society, who zealously follow the code of social morality by killing everybody around them. An image of this society, arrested to serve as an educational exhibit, thus lent to the charade of cruelty an extra measure of mockery and sarcasm. Calculated murder was executed with artistic precision and related in a calm manner, as Trionfo put it, most suitable for Granny to teach her grandchildren how to cook.³⁸ It is in this fashion that Titus applied his culinary skills in preparing a gourmet dish for Tamora out of the blood and bone paste of her sons. This ironic tone was further reinforced by staging the killing as a harmless children's game. The extremely young age (between sixteen and twenty) of most of the actors lent to this reading an even stronger impact. It also sharpened the dichotomy between ideals and reality, providing an instant reflection upon the corrupt values the youngsters were encouraged to imitate. On the other hand, Trionfo did not neglect to capture the generation gap, the crucial cog to trigger the mechanism of

³⁷Giorgio Prosperi, "Feroce giuoco del potere nel Tito Andronico di Shakespeare," Il Tempo (Rome), 15 August 1968.

³⁸Capriolo, p. 38.

destruction. "The conflict between the 'adult' protagonists of the story and the young rebels who challenged the system, though still consumed in it, was explicit throughout," noted Alberto Blandi.³⁹ The patriarchal image of Titus desperately trying to preserve outdated moral standards caused nothing but disdain among his children and enemies alike. The total ineptness of these values was demonstrated by the matriarchal Victorian Tamora reaping the bloody harvest of the old beliefs. It is through her very maternal instincts, as it was suggested in the Sipario article, that she found justification for the aggression.⁴⁰ Rebellious against this world that taught them to profit from violence, the young generation perceived the only solution as physical destruction. The statement made by one of the Italian activists of the May 1968 protests expressed the striking resemblance between this philosophy of Titus Andronicus and the actual implementation sought by the student movement: "The system is violence; every day of its life is violence. Reformism is also violence, for it makes for the assimilation of rebellion and renders it vain."⁴¹ Like the students fighting on the barricades of Paris and Turin, Trionfo's characters were consciously destroying the world they were living in. Their youth set them apart, indicating that they had not yet grown into the system. The group of school children conducted across the stage reinforced this idea. Thus, their protest, according to Trionfo, far

³⁹Alberto Blandi, "Scorsci di pioggia e polemiche sul Tito Andronico italiano," La Stampa (Turin), 26 July 1968.

⁴⁰Anonymous, p. 50.

⁴¹Quoted by Statera in Death of a Utopia, p. 108.

from suggesting their revolutionary nature, pointed to their fear of being consumed within the system in a matter of a few months.⁴² And, in fact, their Utopian goals proved short-lived. Summarizing the production, Enrico Groppali thus noted:

In July of 1968, only two months after the 'May,' Trionfo constitutes the futility of the revolutionary aspirations. He proclaims his disenchantment with the protest movement and lets loose the obsessive and taunting phantoms of our trapped metropoli. He gives up upon exorcising the evil spirits of Gomorrah or Mahagonny before they can breed base generations of corruption shielded with the false values of Virtue and Honor.⁴³ corruption shielded with the false values of Virtue and Honor.⁴³

As the play drew to its close and Marcus was wiping off the tears of young Lucius, the shriek of Aaron from under the stage confirmed the indestructible nature of these evil spirits. The cycle of destruction, under the guise of the code of ethics now proclaimed by the next generation of Andronici, was to continue. The sons were to follow the fathers' path.

Among the interpreters, Glauco Mauri in the title role gained by far the greatest recognition. His performance, as it was suggested in a Sipario article, combined "formidable stature with sweetness of tone and the gesture of a grandpa."⁴⁴ Roberto Rebora noted that "a deep sense of irony dominated Mauri's Titus, veiling him with unchallenged authority."⁴⁵ Roberto De Monticelli observed in Mauri's performance "an extraordinary tragic stylization, quite

⁴²Capriolo, p. 38.

⁴³Groppali, p. 65.

⁴⁴Anonymous, p. 49.

⁴⁵Rebora, p. 41.

beyond the mere grotesque."⁴⁶ The critics showered the entire production with similar praise. De Monticelli claimed that "Trionfo's ingenious intuition surpassed his private socio-political-morality and related the tragedy with [benevolent] candor."⁴⁷ Raul Radice admired the director's stylistic encounter, set between the "academic Roman world and ferocity, that could be expressed only through the typical means of a pop art."⁴⁸ Thus, the entire production, according to the critic, remained suspended between "verismo and parody."⁴⁹ This delicate balance between what De Monticelli called "farce and tragedy" produced a sense of alienation which set Trionfo's conception within a Brechtian framework.⁵⁰ Franco Quadri defined it as "a didactic parable presented for the college audience: the parable of violence, played with gentle naturalness in the manner in which our society celebrates its bourgeois rites."⁵¹

A year later Sipario magazine noted that 1968 could be considered the year of Titus Andronicus.⁵² The impact of the production had a far-reaching effect on the artistic life of Italy and also provoked the Mayor of Verona to take some definite

⁴⁶Roberto De Monticelli, "Tutto giocato per te uomo candido," Il Giorno (Milan), 29 July 1969.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Raul Radice, "Titus Andronicus a Verona," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 26 July 1968.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰De Monticelli, "Tutto giocato."

⁵¹Franco Quadri, La politica del regista, p. 554.

⁵²Anonymous, p. 49.

political measures.⁵³ After the dress rehearsal the management of the festival succumbed to pressure of the municipal authorities and censored the production. They demanded that two scenes of the play be restaged, complaining of excessive obscenity in the mutilation of Lavinia and indiscreet lustfulness in the courting between Aaron and Tamora. Trionfo took it as a denial of his artistic freedom and in protest had the actors recite the pertinent lines in a rush and with alienated disinterest. Cutting the mise en scène entirely, he instructed the actors to step forward to the downstage area to recite these scenes. The student activists, on the other hand, in the euphoria of their rebellion, took the government's act of censorship as a political provocation. On the day of the premiere they poured from the streets to the amphitheatre, turning the event into a major political confrontation. Shouts of protest denouncing the authoritarian regime accompanied every performance. At times even the names of Ho Chi Min and Che Guevara were chanted in the auditorium. The production turned into a source of controversy. Having generated support across the country, artists utilized it to voice their dissatisfaction with the system in which they had to operate. In spite of the director's original intentions, Titus Andronicus was turned into a political platform for the student movement; performances were protested and followed with mass meetings and demonstrations, and the municipal authorities even had to arrange a convention hall to host an open debate between the

⁵³The following account is based on the documentation provided in: De Cesco, pp. 206-15; Groppali, p. 70; Rebbora, p. 40; and Blandi.

director, the students and the management of the festival. Although the removal of the two scenes was clearly chosen as a pretext for public disturbance, the association with the revolutionary mood and the publicity the production generated as a result of it cannot be overrated. Trionfo's Titus Andronicus, born in the political climate of unrest and the internal inquiry of the Italian theatre into its goals, raised the banner of the cultural revolution for better or for worse. Beyond its importance as the first staged version of Titus Andronicus in Italy, the production signaled the dawn of a new age for Italian theatre.

Whereas Titus Andronicus foreshadowed the imminent collapse of the revolutionary spirit, Trionfo's King John (Turin: Teatro Regio, 12 October 1973), mounted five years later, manifested his disenchantment with idealism. By accepting the post of artistic director of the Teatro Stabile di Torino in 1972 he compromised with the system; however, a sarcastic undertone continued to mark his artistic work. The increasingly classical choice of repertory allowed him to communicate an incriminating avant-garde message from the very stage of the establishment. King John served the director as a useful tool in further exploring the Elizabethan theatre of cruelty as applied to our own society.⁵⁴ In 1968 Titus Andronicus

⁵⁴Unless otherwise indicated, analysis of the production and the description of the mise en scène are based on the following sources: Lorenzo Salveti, "Note di Regia" in Re Giovanni: La formula informe e la furia di un mondo gigante, Quaderni del Teatro Stabile di Torino, no. 29 (Turin: Edizioni Teatro Stabile di Torino, 1973), pp. 113-23; Lorenzo Salveti, "Re Giovanni di W. Shakespeare," Teatro Stabile di Torino 42 (October 1973): 1-2; Massimo Dursi, "Re Giovanni a Bologna," Il Resto del Carlino (Bologna), 24 December 1973, p. 16; Elio Pagliarani, "Un bastardo re inutile," Paese Sera (Rome), 7 February 1974, p. 14; Raul Radice, "Re Giovanni fastoso e crudele," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 14 October 1973, p. 19;

had exposed the cruelty in the moral code of behavior which our society adopts for its survival. King John mercilessly chastised, ridiculed, and brought to ruin the very essence of our social structure. Lorenzo Salveti, who assisted Trionfo and completed the staging after the director suffered a heart attack during the last two weeks of rehearsals, saw in this endeavor "a methodology for historical analysis . . . and its existential conditions."⁵⁵ He made the following comparison: "Bordering on the absurd, Titus Andronicus demonstrated human cruelty in the rigid enforcement of social laws. . . . King John revealed the basis for this entire process: . . . the responsible and conscious application of cruelty without justification (i.e., by whim)."⁵⁶ The latter Salveti defined as a prominent characteristic of the bourgeois class emerging out of the ruins of medieval royalty. It is the power of this class hiding behind the European monarchs which the director identified as the driving force of modern western civilization.

Largely basing his conception on Sigurd Burckhardt's theory, Trionfo used Shakespeare's play as proof of the major change in the power structure that the Renaissance had brought about.⁵⁷ The collapse of the medieval world was triggered by the challenge to

Guido Boursier, "La storia di Re Giovanni come favola crudele," Gazzetta del Popolo (Turin), 14 October 1973, p. 9.

⁵⁵"Note di Regia," p. 113.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 114.

⁵⁷Sigurd Burckhardt, "King John: Putting Order in Our Modern World," Journal of English Literary History 33 (June 1966): 133-53. This article was quoted in its entirety in the publication issued by Teatro Stabile di Torino, i. e., Re Giovanni: La formula informe., pp. 7-34.

supreme authority. Europe lost not only the regal authority of a king, but also the divine center of gravity, which was gradually being replaced by the supreme bourgeois value of commodity. Elimination of the authority figure naturally led to the escalation of cruelty in a universe deprived of law and order. Thus even the most tragic moments of the play were reduced to a burlesque farce. Where royal power was regarded as no more than a childish game and supreme authority as an infantile deception, there was no place for a lament over the death of the legitimate heir to the throne. Constance's loss was treated in the same fashion as one would regard a child's cry over a broken toy. Instead of embracing the dead body of her son, she recited the passionate soliloquy amidst hundreds of silver dolls scattered across the stage. Even this sincere pain was ridiculed and reduced to an absurd infantile folly. It could be regarded as nothing else by the true worshipers of Commodity.

The advocates of this philosophy became the protagonists of Trionfo's production. Both the Bastard and the Citizen of Angiers represented the ascending bourgeois class. Although the latter plays a rather minor role in Shakespeare's play, his part in this production was clearly viewed as a principal one. His practical common sense prevailed over the regal claims for terrain. His refusal to recognize the legitimate ruler was symptomatic of the situation. "When the subject can no longer recognize his own sovereign," pointed out Massimo Dursi, "something is out of order in the Medieval universe."⁵⁸ As a reminder of this notion, his presence

⁵⁸Dursi, p. 16.

on the stage was constant. In fact, he was the one to open the production. Dressed in a conservative Victorian suit, very much like a bank clerk, he unlocked the proscenium curtain as though he were trying to enter his own office. Seated by a desk on the side of the stage, he remained there throughout the performance, ready and able to manage the busy traffic of world affairs. And indeed, soon the bare stage was invaded by a motley group of wagons designed by Emanuel Luzzati in the fashion of Durer.⁵⁹ Each one of the wagons was surmounted by an individual monarch accompanied by an entourage dressed in splendid Renaissance costumes. It seemed as though the stage was transformed into a gigantic carousel managed by the bureaucrat seated at the desk. His indirect, undetected manipulation of affairs by pulling the strings of profit became symbolic of the change the world was to undergo. The figurative image of a carousel reinforced the principal theme of the production--the reign of Commodity. Today's well-known formula of "money makes the world go around" found its own exponent in the Bastard's philosophy:

Mad world! mad kings! mad composition!

 Made to run even upon even ground,
 Till this advantage, this vile-drawing bias,
 This sway of Motion, this Commodity,
 Makes it take head from all indifferency,
 From all direction, purpose, course, intent.
(King John II, i, 561-80)

The Bastard, the only other character to realize the new resources of power in Commodity and thus appropriately dressed in a business-like contemporary suit, epitomized this ideological worship.

⁵⁹Physical description of the sets and costumes is based on the original sketches and production photographs generously furnished by Emanuel Luzzati and Lorenzo Salvetti.

Consumerism—the very notion that ignited the student movement of 1968—served *Trionfo* as an eloquent allegory to Shakespearean Commodity, still invincibly ruling the world since the rise of its first advocates—the Renaissance bourgeois. As a result, the rest of the characters were portrayed as bloated self-conscious figurines struggling in vain to survive the inevitable hurricane of the carousel ride. And so the carts of the regal thrones were left to stray and roll senselessly on the empty stage of the universe, until control was eventually assumed both from within and from without by the bourgeois representatives, the Bastard and the Citizen of Angiers, respectively. "The stars have returned to their proper spheres," concluded Salvetti. "The Bastard with all the citizens behind him has reestablished order in the solar system."⁶⁰ What transpired in the course of the production, then, could be best summarized as a change of power handed down from the aristocracy to the bourgeois. As Salvetti wrote in the directorial notes,

The fall of the one and the rise of the other world lends an impression of the passage of the last rites between the two. Although neither is superior, the latter is more menacing and dangerous. Its cold, rational, extreme nationalism and apparent respectability constrains freedom and equity. Still trapped in its own system of regulations, laws, and morality it, nevertheless, continues to worship the supreme power which is this time called Commodity, that is concrete and material, and, consequently, harder to corrupt.⁶¹

The theatrical medium provided an imaginative parable for *Trionfo's* conception. An empty stage was enclosed between white backdrops that could be easily transformed with lights into rose, green, blue or amber fairy lands. The merry-go-round of the richly

⁶⁰"*Re Giovanni di W. Shakespeare*," p. 2.

⁶¹"*Note di regia*," p. 122.

ornamented wagons within this undefined theatrical space lent itself easily to a great variety of interpretations. Franco Quadri perceived in Trionfo's vision "a historical map of the Medieval Europe traveled" by the kings of England, France and Austria in pursuit of their royal terrain.⁶² The entire picture, according to the critic, created a motley collage of precious, royal figurines taken from jousting tournaments: "the queens looked like despotic provokers of courtly intrigue, the papal legate was a merchant trading in power, the lords were the charlatan clowns of an operetta or a music hall."⁶³ Arturo Lazzari perceived this vanity fair to represent "the great silver-foiled glory of the feudal world" depicted by the director "with an ironic smile, rather than a smirk of condemnation."⁶⁴ Paolo Emilio Poesio viewed Trionfo's kings as chieftains of gypsy tribes, engaged in the insane circus of the fastidiously baroque wagons, crowded with bastards, prelates, widows and courtesans.⁶⁵ Similarly, Alberto Blandi saw in this figurative representation a ridiculing of the precarious and vagabond existence of the kings who have lost their imperial seat in "the great chain of being" and got caught in the chaos of a universe out of order.⁶⁶ Forced to circle around the authority that no longer exists, Salvetti

⁶²Quadri, La politica del regista, p. 561.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Arturo Lazzari, "Un gioco dei potenti che volge al grottesco," l'Unita (Milan), 14 October 1973, p. 9.

⁶⁵Paolo Emilio Poesio, "Il circo dei potenti," La Nazione (Florence), 7 November 1973, p. 9.

⁶⁶Alberto Blandi, "Re giovanni, gioco dei potenti fra clown e nomadi incoronati," La Stampa (Turin), 14 October 1973, p. 8.

suggested, "they crouched in the cocoon of their stupid humanity."⁶⁷

And finally the official definition of the concept, quoted from the directorial notes:

The empty stage is converted into a planetarium of cosmic space. The constellations of the planets are the clusters of the characters that slide, skid, vault upon the slippery platform of the stage trying to balance in search of the order and stability of a certain system. It is flooded with the gold and silver wagons of fairy kings. They are handsomely decorated with crowns and covered with velvet and ermine. These are the encumbrances of history loaded with trophies, miniature ancestors, everyday props for jousts (including cannons, sabers, guns) and the mortgaged future of the young heirs to the throne.⁶⁸ . These are the gypsy travails of the princes without a land.⁶⁸

By applying the principles of medieval pageantry within the context of an Elizabethan theatre of cruelty, *Trionfo* entertained the modern audience and established the relevance of the classical material. According to Massimo Dursi, the "genius of *Trionfo's* fantasy" enhanced the production with a "wealth of extraordinarily beautifully executed ideas and scenic inventions."⁶⁹ The production gained in irony through the director's contrapuntal use of music. By playing passages from Wagner's operas, the rise of the bourgeois class was invested with the pathos of the Valhalla gods. This close parallel with the inevitable doom of those who aspire for commodity (be they gods, kings or bourgeois) provided a final closing comment on the Nibelungen dream of the new world ruled by the Bastard.

The fascination of Italian directors with Twelfth Night could be attributed to its origin, since it was derived from the

⁶⁷"Note di regia," p. 117.

⁶⁸"Re Giovanni di W. Shakespeare," p. 1.

⁶⁹Dursi, p. 16.

sixteenth-century erudite comedy Gl'Ingannati performed in 1531 by the Accademici Intronati di Siena. Throughout the postwar period it underwent many revisions of which Trionfo's production (Verona Teatro Romano, 5 July 1979) is probably the most biting.⁷⁰ After its performance in 1979, the Italian audience no longer could view the play with the same innocent, joyous notion of Renaissance comedy as before. Its morbid, funereal eulogy to the surviving Shakespearean romanticism was too strong to leave any hope for the gaiety of the comedy ever to revive.⁷¹

Trionfo's approach provided a further exploration of the issues raised by Kott. Having dethroned the great tragic protagonists, he sought to unravel the puzzle of a comedy Shakespeare enigmatically subtitled "What You Will." The bitter Arcadia was turned by the designer Giorgio Panni into a graveyard, inhabited by ghosts rising from their tombs. Incapable of feeling anything but an empty rhetorical eulogy, they existed, as De Monticelli noted, within "a limbo and fed upon the words of love."⁷² In the introductory note to the program of Twelfth Night (1979), Trionfo noted:

Love no longer produces poetry, but rather poetry in itself, is love. The objects of desire no longer count: the flesh cannot be touched, nor the emotions be felt. It is quite sufficient to self-indulge in desires and abstractions, since the inhabitants of Illyria have neither eyes to recognize each other nor senses

⁷⁰For other stage editions of the play see sections on Costa, De Lullo and Strehler.

⁷¹Unless otherwise indicated, analysis of the production and of the mise en scène, as well as the physical description of the sets and costumes, are based on my own personal knowledge having served as Trionfo's assistant director.

⁷²Roberto De Monticelli, "Nel grande limbo del sesso ambiguo," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 7 July 1979.

to feel.⁷³

Guido Bonino called it a "surreptitious Arcadia outside time and place."⁷⁴ Durer's vision of Hell inhabited an Illyria which was filled with vampirical phantoms walking the stage and gradually turning it into a nightmare. Poetry, like an onion peel, surrounded this place with metaphorical reflections of reality which concealed nothing concrete. It was the mad, surrealistic island of Hieronymus Bosch, depicting mankind's folly with grotesque poignance and cruelty. In Illyria, similar to other Shakespearean forests that were discussed by Kott, "life is speeded up, becomes more intense, violent and at the same time, as it were, clearer."⁷⁵ Since Illyria was merely a reflection, the features of its phantoms could be distorted and brutally abused, without causing them any harm, for they were merely senseless reflections of our imagination. True to Kott's definition "the borderlines between illusion and reality, between an object and its reflection, [were] gradually lost. . . . to be oneself means only to play one's own reflection in the eyes of strangers."⁷⁶ The very principle of human folly is based on false pretense. Thus, the ambiguity of love—love that has the three faces of a man, a youth and a woman—played tricks, caused suffering, and entertained. The deceit concealed in the triple role played by the

⁷³Aldo Trionfo, "Note per l'interpretazione" in the program to Estate Teatrale Veronese 1979 (Verona: Stampa Cortella-Verona, 1979), p. 13.

⁷⁴Guido Davico Bonino, "Shakespeare senza gioia per la regia di Trionfo," La Stampa (Turin), 7 July 1979.

⁷⁵Jan Kott, "Shakespeare's Bitter Arcadia" in Shakespeare Our Contemporary, p. 275.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 270.

same actor, Sebastian-Viola-Caesario was a metaphor of our own frailty as well as sensuous self-gratification. The final recognition scene, forced in the production upon a single actor, became a soliloquy in self-revelation. The fusion of the three faces of love literally produced a spinning effect of the loss of one's own identity and diffusion among the spirits. "Illyria is a country of erotic madness," ironically enough impotent to exercise love's pleasures.⁷⁷ Thus, Twelfth Night, according to both Trionfo and Kott, "with all its appearances of gaiety, [was] a very bitter comedy about the Elizabethan dolce vita, or, at any rate, about the dolce vita at all levels and wings of the Southampton residence."⁷⁸ For Trionfo, it was also a figment of the dolce vita consistently omnipresent, pursuing us everywhere and anywhere, wherever we go or live. It was a bitter, sublime fantasy that excluded anyone who was incapable either of adjusting to a purely rhetorical orgy or who recognized that nightmare for what it is.

To these outsiders Illyria was cruel and inhuman, since their feelings and desires were real and thus could be hurt. Malvolio was one of them. He was too old and concrete for this refined world of beautiful neoclassical creatures, dressed in magnificent romantic attire. His costume was of an earlier epoch. Feste's clothes, on the other hand, were of a later epoch. Both were portrayed as fools but it was only Feste who knew how to adapt without being adopted. His critical, ironic comment was all that was left of the empty

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 261.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 284.

dream of romantic illusions.

Ambra Danon's nineteenth-century costumes reflected, as De Monticelli noted, "the pathos and irony of Trionfo's double-faced lyricism, poised between torment and grimace."⁷⁹ They provided a gallery of characters taken from legendary MGM movies. The vampirical Duke Orsino was engaged in a sadomasochistic courting of a Victorian Amazon, Olivia, who always had a whip on hand to straighten out matters. Captain Antonio, a direct descendant from Rhett Butler with a white savannah hat, completed the retrospective of phantoms inhabiting the island. Similarly, sardonic irony was conveyed through music. A great variety of genres were utilized ranging from opera to rock.⁸⁰ Strauss's Thus Spake Zarathustra accompanied the spectacular arrival by boat of the sea captain and Viola. Excerpts from Verdi's La Traviata, specifically "Di prudenza mar e'l sol," were used for the marriage ceremonies. Theme melodies from the motion pictures Close Encounters of the Third Kind and Bilitis served as characteristic leitmotifs for Malvolio and the Duke, respectively. All of it ultimately contributed to what a Sipario review called Pastiche: "a conglomerate of materials of diverse origins creating a higgledy-piggledy of a complicated burlesque kitsch."⁸¹ However, no matter how diverse and sarcastic Trionfo's portrayal of Illyria, there was also concealed a confession of the personal tribulations of the director. An Il

⁷⁹De Monticelli, "Nel grande limbo."

⁸⁰I assisted Trionfo in arranging the soundtrack for the production.

⁸¹Anonymous, "La Dodicesima Notte," Sipario 34 (August-September 1979): 44.

Giorno review noted that "Trionfo lent each one of the characters something of his own, something of his own solitude, of his own unresolved and bitter conflict with love."⁸² Although the statement implies a very strong subjective opinion, its partial validity cannot be denied. Within the delicate balance between parody, farce and satire, in what Sergio Colomba called the "all-embracing autumnal atmosphere"⁸³ of the production, the sentiment of love still remained a mystery, even as the final chilling blackout of the night descended upon the stage.

More than any other Italian director, Trionfo regards the entire Shakespearean heritage as a single work. "For me all of Shakespeare," the director stated in an interview, "is one single unit which ultimately develops the same argument."⁸⁴ He perceived and treated Shakespeare as a dramatic bible. The plays provided a variety of stories, all of which summarized the essence of human thought. Titus Andronicus dealt with the cruelty of the human code of behavior. King John drew a ridiculous caricature of the potent rulers of the world who succumb to the power of Commodity. Twelfth Night sarcastically acknowledged the loss of love amidst empty epitaphs of verbal eloquence. But all were directed to tell a single continuous story of mankind, with all of its hopes and tribulations. In the Elizabethans and the Greeks Trionfo claimed to have found the

⁸²G. B. G., "Un regista si confessa interrogando Shakespeare," Il Giorno (Milan), 8 July 1979.

⁸³Sergio Colomba, "Aldo Trionfo all'Estate Teatrale Veronese: La Dodicesima Notte," Il Resto del Carlino (Bologna), 7 July 1979.

⁸⁴Trionfo, interview.

best material for this undertaking. He contended that reading and studying the two alone would suffice in understanding all of life: "there lies the essence of human thought, philosophy, history. There is everything. The rest are revisions, repetitions, sometimes understood and sometimes misunderstood critiques. These two pillars, however, have understood everything."⁸⁵ Shakespeare provided the director with a palette with which to paint the plight of mankind within an everchanging world. Having worked closely with the director for over a year as his assistant, I came to realize that this philosophy was seminal to his teaching on the art of the stage. It is therefore not surprising that another of his students, Lorenzo Salveti, one of the foremost young Italian directors, expressed very similar thoughts: "Shakespeare has written one single work."⁸⁶ While staging Macbeth (Potenza: Basilicata, 19 July 1978) Salveti capitalized upon the universal problems contained in the play.⁸⁷ He interpreted Macbeth as a drama of coming of age. Intentionally portraying the protagonist as a young man, the director saw in Macbeth an Everyman to be initiated into adulthood. This rite

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Lorenzo Salveti, interview [in Italian], Rome, 20 April 1984. Salveti currently serves as a member of the faculty at Silvio D'Amico National Academy of Dramatic Arts. His translations of Twelfth Night and The Maid's Tragedy were used in Trionfo's productions.

⁸⁷Unless otherwise indicated, analysis of the production and the description of the mise en scène are based on the following sources: Salveti, interview; Egidio Panni, "Splendido Macbeth a Potenza," Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno, 20 July 1978, p. 15; Nicolo Garrone, "Quante pazze idee ha questa lady smaniosa e frustata," la Repubblica (Rome), 1 August 1978, p. 12. Physical description of the sets and costumes is based on the production photographs generously furnished by Lorenzo Salveti.

precluded making a choice, and by choosing, Macbeth, like Oedipus, was violating the balance within the universe. The murder of a king, i.e., the challenge of the old order, became symbolic of the protest through which every generation tries to affirm itself. Eventually succumbing to the ways of the world, like Macbeth and Oedipus, the young generation pays a high price for its courageous transgression. The story consequently bore little importance; however, its lesson implied a universal moral.

The production of Shakespearean Labyrinths (Taormina: Parco Duca di Cesaro, 19 July 1981) best summarized these aspirations set by Trionfo. It was collaboratively directed with Salveti. Serving at the time as a director of the National Academy of Dramatic Arts [which is an Italian equivalent to RADA], Trionfo mounted the production under the auspices of that institution.⁸⁸ Over sixty junior and senior students were engaged in reciting selected scenes from various Shakespeare plays, as well as the sonnets, performing simultaneously at different stations all across an enormous park. In an interview Salveti described the production:

Every performance would start with students lined up on both sides of the entrance gate to the park. After passing between the two lines, the audience would reach an Egyptian statue, at which point the kids would run off and disappear in the woods. Then the audience would be divided into small groups, and each one would be conducted individually by the guides across the vast trails of the park. . . . Having reached a certain station they would observe a ten-minute scene and leave for the next one. When another group reached the station the scene would be repeated.

⁸⁸Unless otherwise indicated, analysis of the production and the description of the mise en scène are based on the following sources: Salveti, interview; Trionfo, interview; Domenico Danzuso, "Fascino della fiaba e peso del tempo," La Sicilia (Catania), 20 July 1981.

And so on and on like in a museum.⁸⁹

The production eventually culminated, after several hours of trailing, the performers and the audience united within the center of the park. Exploring in such a manner, both thematically and structurally, the secrets of the enchanting world of Arcadia (which might also be called Illyria, the Forest of Arden, etc.), Trionfo literally realized his notion of a continuous drama developing throughout Shakespeare's works:

Although different scenes were performed in the course of Shakespearean Labyrinths, the audience combined them all. Shakespeare never contradicts himself. I prepared several itineraries, but the audience also wandered on its own, eventually realizing (along with the students) that no matter which two scenes and in what progression they saw them, it made sense all the same. This could only mean that Shakespeare never contradicts himself. It is a bible . . ., the bible of human history, that even when it appears contradictory is never so, no matter what the story or the epoch.⁹⁰

In 1966, a young though quite experienced actor decided to launch a new career as a director. Within less than three years his work became known across the world and Italian theatre was never the same. That actor-director was Luca Ronconi (b. 1933). The work that secured his international acclaim was Orlando Furioso (1969); however, his directing career was truly launched as a result of his fascination with Shakespeare's contemporary playwrights, starting with Thomas Middleton's and William Rowley's The Changeling (1966) and concluding his first phase with Cyril Tourneur's The Revenger's Tragedy (1970). A few years later, in 1973, Ronconi briefly returned to Middleton to stage A Game at Chess for the National

⁸⁹Salveti, interview.

⁹⁰Trionfo, interview.

Academy of Dramatic Arts. That was the last time (up to now) that the director has approached the Jacobean repertory since his meteoric rise to stardom. In those years, Ronconi produced his only two Shakespearean plays, Measure for Measure (1967) and Richard III (1968), anticipating in the latter the roar of the cultural revolution which followed in July.

The study of theatrical space and the search for external forms to express internal drama singled out Ronconi from the other Italian directors. He sought, as Franco Quadri noted,

to leave the conventional channels of communication, overburdened with habitual forms. His scope was to provide the closest possible or at least homologous reading to that of the times when the texts were written.⁹¹

At the same time, he enhanced this interpretation with means easily understood by the audience. In his staging of The Changeling, for instance, Ronconi transformed, as Mario Prospero noted,

the psychological vraisemblance of the acting into a physical symbolism of moral values. A character's inner vice was represented as a physical deformity: a mask. The narrative structure was represented in its original form, but the expressionistic rendering of the characters as maniacal by the use of a Baroque exaggeration of gesture and speech deprived the narrative of its progressive development.⁹²

Later, in 1968, the critic continued, "Ronconi merged his structuralist ideas with environmental methods in Orlando Furioso,

⁹¹Franco Quadri, Il teatro degli anni settanta: Tradizione e Ricerca (Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1982), p. 145. For a general analysis of Ronconi's work, other than Shakespeare, see Quadri's essays, "Il teatro di Luca Ronconi," pp. 145-57 and "Colloquio con Luca Ronconi," pp. 159-85. The later period of Ronconi's work is thoroughly discussed in Franco Quadri, "Luca Ronconi," The Drama Review 21 (June 1977): 103-18. For a detailed analysis of all of Ronconi's productions through 1972 see: Franco Quadri, Il rito perduto: saggio su Luca Ronconi (Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1973).

⁹²Mario Prospero, p. 26.

an ingenious attempt at audience participation."⁹³ The four protagonists both narrated and participated in Ariosto's romance. Delivering their cantastorie (chanted tales) simultaneously from various stages, some of which were movable, like hawkers at a fair, they were competing for attention. The end result, as Edoardo Sanguineti (who adapted the text for the performance) pointed out, was aimed at "creating a crescendo, a tension of relations but aiming at a real verticality of the text."⁹⁴ Instead of achieving psychological realism in the portrayal of the characters, the event created a reality of its own, true to the Renaissance original and yet extremely meaningful for the modern spectator who came to experience it. To attain this historical fidelity in his other productions and yet clothe them in a meaningful modern form, Ronconi discovered other means to fracture reality and bridge the periods. Thus, in The Revenger's Tragedy all of the characters were played by women, to contrast with the Elizabethan tradition in which all the parts were played by male actors. That exercise posed quite an unexpected dilemma for the modern spectators. As a result, soon after his directorial debut, Ronconi was labeled by the critics, according to Quadri,

"a producer of madness," not only for the themes he chose but for the frenzied characterization typical of the acting. Later, after Orlando Furioso (1969), they saw him as a conjurer of extraordinary medieval festivals, through a play of simultaneous

⁹³Ibid., p. 27. Detailed analysis of Orlando Furioso is provided in Franco Quadri, "Orlando Furioso," The Drama Review 14 (Fall 1970): 116-24.

⁹⁴Quoted by Mario Prospero, p. 27.

scenes that bordered on the "extraordinary and magical."⁹⁵

Ronconi himself defined the aim of his art as "a representation not of a particular culture, but of its aspirations. . . . In a way it is sublimation of that culture."⁹⁶ The experience and traditions of a particular audience served the director as a point of departure for his staging. In effect, he juxtaposed two cultures and arrived at the very core of the dramatic composition. In his work he sought to redefine the structural dramatic components according to a form corresponding to both the authentic play in question, with all of its historical associations, and the modern theatre, experiencing the tribulations of constant change. He stated the following:

Theatre . . . is a violent and traumatizing experience. It does not tranquilize or gratify. I believe that in order to validate its power of aggregation, it is necessary to rediscover ways to traumatize, and forget, as much as possible, the other methods which provide security.⁹⁷

He further explained that every "theatrical word" has no single direction.

One penetrates the heart of the text and serves as an indication of all which is related to the text. At the same time, the other, which affects the perception, is dependent on the public's receptivity. Our work . . . is aimed at successfully splitting every term, every phrase, every concept. . . . One part of it serves the text while the other is independently presented to the audience as a guide-book to the production.⁹⁸

Ronconi's work on Shakespeare provides the most eloquent illustration of this theory.

Ferdinando Scarfiotti's set for the production of Measure for

⁹⁵Quadri, "Luca Ronconi," p. 105.

⁹⁶"Colloqui con Luca Ronconi," p. 164.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 171.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 175.

Measure (Turin: Cortile di Palazzo Reale, 6 July 1967) used elements of the Elizabethan three-level structure, while in its monumentality embraced the audience on all sides.⁹⁹ It was produced as a summer event in the courtyard of Turin's Palazzo Reale. Since the event was attended by audiences of diverse backgrounds, the director sought to simplify, as much as possible, the graphic components of historical accuracy. "Sets and costumes," De Cesco noted, "of undefined period and place," continuously reinforced symbolic associations.¹⁰⁰ The set rendered the impression of a huge anomalous complex in the tradition of the legendary Antigone of the Living Theatre. Franco Quadri described it as follows:

The main action takes place on a huge, entirely circular raked platform. In the background rises a rigid vertical structure. The ladders, attached on its lower levels, lead to the very top— which serves both as a throne and execution gallows.¹⁰¹

Alberto Blandi also suggested that the ladder symbolized a superstructure of "human and divine power: a cross between a throne, an altar and a scaffold."¹⁰² To the above, Raul Radice added that the entire structure resembled a temple "conferring on the production clearly liturgical connotations" and throwing "a tragic

⁹⁹Unless otherwise indicated, physical description of the sets and costumes, as well as analysis of the production and the description of the mise en scène are based on the following sources: Franco Quadri, "Il problema Shakespeare" in Il rito perduto, pp. 41-46; De Cesco, pp. 189-191; Arturo Lazzari, "Manca l'ironia di Shakespeare," l'Unita (Milan), 7 July 1967; Bruno Schacherl, "Misura per Misura," Rinascita (Rome), 14 July 1967.

¹⁰⁰De Cesco, p. 191.

¹⁰¹Quadri, "Il problema Shakespeare," p. 42.

¹⁰²Alberto Blandi, "Misura per Misura di Shakespeare in un vivace spettacolo a Palazzo Reale," La Stampa (Turin), 6 July 1967, p. 5.

shadow over every scene."¹⁰³ At the base, the stage was surrounded by tower walls in a semi-circle. In front of them, Quadri continued,

two slim planks were suspended in mid-air. These aerial rostrums descend from the two sides of the throne beyond the sight lines of the stage. From there, turning a straight angle, in an abrupt symmetry, they end up on the central platform. And here you have a construction of self-contained recessing units leading to the set a series of independent locations in a non-communicable geometry and sharp contrasts.¹⁰⁴

The dramatic action was split between these levels. General action and daily activities took place on the round, central platform. The vertical structure was reserved for Angelo's scenes—to graphically represent his ambition in the form of an ascending ladder of power.

To enhance his concept with additional significance, Ronconi introduced a choir. It was comprised of the populace, nuns, priests, guards and others. The change of costumes by the members of the choir in full view on the stage enabled Ronconi to transform scenes instantaneously from one location to another. This inventive method also produced an immediate projection of the internal world of the characters upon external reality. Franco Quadri suggested that in this manner the choir underscored Angelo's internal struggle and provided a mirror to the protagonist: "through staging devices in the characters, there was condensed the very essence of the tale."¹⁰⁵ The delicate psychological study was externalized through physical gesture and wide tonal variety. This method, according to

¹⁰³Raul Radice, "Misura per Misura di Shakespeare a Torino," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 7 July 1967.

¹⁰⁴Quadri, "Il problema Shakespeare," p. 42.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., pp. 43-44.

De Cesco, enabled Ronconi "to capture the very essence of the play," without setting it in a specific framework.¹⁰⁶ The actual contrast in the costume colors (which were black and white) "along with the unrestrained tumult of voices and movements," Quadri concluded, "translated psychological terms into graphically executed actions."¹⁰⁷ While comprising a general staging concept, all of these elements did not lend a single predominant interpretation to the play. It left the "problem play" intact, leaving it open for all possible readings.

The production of Richard III (Turin: Teatro Alfieri, 18 February 1968) for the Teatro Stabile di Torino, on the other hand, offered a definitive interpretation of Shakespeare's work.¹⁰⁸ Although Ronconi further pursued explorations of his structuralist style of directing and his expressionistic style of acting, the play no longer posed philosophically detached and unanswered questions. It provided a clear perspective on Ronconi's preoccupation with reconstructing "the original rapport between a Shakespearean work

¹⁰⁶De Cesco, p. 190.

¹⁰⁷"Il problema Shakespeare," p. 45.

¹⁰⁸Unless otherwise indicated, physical description of the sets and costumes, as well as analysis of the production and the description of the mise en scène are based on the following sources: Franco Quadri, "Il problema Shakespeare," pp. 47-62, the set is specifically discussed on pp. 56-57 (this source also contains several photographs of the production, plates 3-7); Franco Quadri, "Torino: Sulla scala del potere Riccardo III di William Shakespeare," Sipario 23 (March 1968): 21-24 (this article provides extensive iconographic material); Giuseppe Bartolucci, "Luca Ronconi: maturità di un regista" in Riccardo III di Shakespeare, Quaderni del Teatro Stabile di Torino, no. 11 (Turin: Edizioni Teatro Stabile di Torino, 1968), pp. 24-43.

and the public for which it had been intended."¹⁰⁹ From this perspective, the production indeed revealed the condescending, grim view Queen Elizabeth took of her royal Yorkist predecessors and their court. The modern Italian audience was unequivocally challenged, as Giorgio Prosperi suggested, "with a rigorously and methodically conducted general protest."¹¹⁰ The critic continued: "The production is a revolution in action in which the very fervor of fantasy caricatures the entire concept of the society being represented."¹¹¹

Ronconi chose to view the world of Richard III as a deformed monstrosity in which the satanic nature of the protagonist provided a merely logical resolution to the already polluted infrastructure. In the program notes, the director quoted Murray Krieger's article on "The Dark Generations of Richard III." Specifically, there was underscored the critic's observation that "the evil stems not from Richard but from a history he shares with the others even if it finds its essential representative in him."¹¹² This evil, the malicious social venom, the deformed plagued body of the world, Ronconi graphically depicted through physical means—a technique which became a trademark of his work. The characters wore costumes made of everything and anything but cloth: they included elastic,

¹⁰⁹Quadri, "Il problema Shakespeare," p. 47.

¹¹⁰Giorgio Prosperi, "Come un corte dei miracoli il Riccardo III di Gassman e Ronconi," Il Tempo (Rome), 11 March 1968.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Murray Krieger, "The Dark Generations of Richard III," in The Play and Place of Criticism: (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 43.

ropes, leather, fur, and even metal. The costume designer, Enrico Job, sought to underscore the mechanical, corporeal figures, devoid of any trace of humanity. Richard was wrapped in a cast made out of the remains of metal armor, leather, and bandages. Giorgio Prosperi described him as a "publicity figure for an orthopedic institution, with a tightly mounted prosthesis, stifling braces, and white straps to conceal the hunch."¹¹³ Quadri suggested that Richard was portrayed by Vittorio Gassman as a "beast among beasts, trapped within his own surgical apparatus. Like a 'devouring machine' he was set to gobble down his victims even before killing them."¹¹⁴ Although the costume rendered him deformed, in all other respects he walked and behaved without a trace of physical impediment. He was a symbol for which any realistic characterization would have proven superfluous. The other characters possessed equally shocking grotesque appearances. They were literally turned into physical monstrosities according to the best canons of the expressionistic tradition. The entourage of the court attendants with their bloated bellies, according to Prosperi, unquestionably "symbolized the very essence of greed."¹¹⁵ Even the ladies of the court were deformed under the weight of the heavy costumes. They were turned into "screaming witches."¹¹⁶ The four queens, according to Quadri, evoked a disgust that could be compared only to that of embracing an

¹¹³Giorgio Prosperi, "Come un corte."

¹¹⁴Quadri, "Il problema Shakespeare," p. 53.

¹¹⁵Giorgio Prosperi, "Come un corte."

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

enormous Medusa.¹¹⁷ In place of a sublime image of womanhood, Ronconi rendered Margaret "as a despicably wild and fanatic Bacchae Eumenidean vultress, continuously snatching at others and shrieking curses."¹¹⁸ A low vocal tonality and the rough quality of the interpretation reinforced the marionettization of the characters. Alberto Blandi suggested that the physical style could be compared to that of Grotowski:

agitated in intonation and gesture, at times it probed at and then plunged into the very abyss of grotesque. The actors were forced to exercise continuous gymnastics and vocalize screaming diction. They could be hardly mistaken for anything else but exceptionally able instruments in the hands of a director.¹¹⁹

The setting was equally suggestive. A well-known Italian sculptor, Mario Ceroli, extended the metaphoric images conceived by Ronconi for the characters into the stage design. Side by side with the actors, the elements of the set played an active role in the drama, thus lending to the former an even stronger sense of mechanization. Most remarkable of these images was the last scene of the play. Prior to the fatal battle, instead of surrounding Richard with fantastic theatrical ghosts, the director and designer flooded the stage with enormous (to the height of the proscenium arch), two-dimensional wooden silhouettes of men greeting the king with a handshake. In this manner, the invincible monarch eventually succumbed to his ultimate challenger and was literally crushed under the superhuman power of the set. The props and various elements of

¹¹⁷Quadri, "Il problema Shakespeare," p. 54.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 55.

¹¹⁹Alberto Blandi, "Gassman forte protagonista del Riccardo III di Shakespeare," La Stampa (Turin), 20 February 1968.

the set design became a part of an enormous machinery activated by the play. They underscored the peculiar mechanical relation Ronconi had established between the actors and the stage. Franco Quadri noted:

The interpretators become materials. Only their ability to speak differentiates them from metal and wooden accessories composing the stage. Actors are treated as things. Their rapport reflects the relation of physical forces: activation, repulsion, and reciprocal cancellation.¹²⁰

In fact, the entire stage was turned into an enormous Grand Mechanism. Instead of curtains, on all three sides the stage was surrounded by wooden panels. At the center was placed an angular, cubic structure, which contained a concentric skeleton of the globe. When the curtain rose, Richard was discovered leaning against one of its poles while reciting "Now is the winter of our discontent." For the court scenes, the interior globe was replaced by an enormous staircase. At other times, the inside of the cubicle remained empty, graphically resembling a typical Elizabethan stage. In the second part of the production (i.e., the fourth and fifth acts of the play), after having successfully climbed to the very throne of the grand staircase, Richard was left alone on the bare stage—the lonely king on the deserted stage of his kingdom.

Discussing history plays in his Shakespeare Our Contemporary, Jan Kott stated:

Feudal history is like a great staircase on which there treads a constant procession of kings. Every step upwards is marked by murder, perfidy, treachery. Every step brings the throne nearer. Another step and the crown will fall. One will soon be able to snatch it. . . . From the highest step there is only a leap into

¹²⁰Quadri, "Il problema Shakespeare," p. 48.

the abyss.¹²¹

Although at the outset the visual aspects of the stage in Ronconi's production clearly supported Jan Kott's theory of the Grand Mechanism, the director arrived at them independently through his own structuralist explorations. He stated:

Eventually the play acquires tragic dimensions. However, this process is accomplished not through the dense cruelty of the action but on the contrary: it is due to the progressive mechanization, automatization and depersonalization of the crime. It is realized through the sense of emptiness created in the course of consistent elimination of the participants and the victims of the drama.¹²²

There is indeed a sense of the absurd, mechanical repetition of the events, yet the apathy demonstrated by the participants to the violent criminal acts; the irony emerging out of the cycle of ambitious seduction; the animal-like grimace disfiguring the face of mankind in this parody of a game for power--all of these elements combined, coupled with the graphic structuralism of the set, lent to the production a striking emotional power, vibrant with poetical images of human tragedy.

Although the initial reactions of the critics were quite reserved and often contradictory, in a matter of a few performances the production secured its monumental success.¹²³ It seemed, as

¹²¹Kott, pp. 10-11.

¹²²Ronconi, quoted in Quadri, "Il problema Shakespeare," p. 50.

¹²³For the newspaper reviews see: Sergio Cabassi, "Il Riccardo III con Gassman," Il Resto del Carlino (Bologna), 20 February 1968; Edoardo Fadini, "Un 'eroe' in bilico tra dramma e storia," l'Unita (Rome), 20 February 1968; Roberto De Monticelli, "Nel Riccardo III un Gassman antimattatore," Il Giorno (Milan), 23 February 1968; Raul Radice, "Riccardo III di Shakespeare con Gassman protagonista," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 23 February 1968; Ettore Capriolo, "Minuscoli individui," Vie Nuove (Rome), 29 February 1968; Renzo Tian, "Gassman 'mattatore' alla rovescia nel

Quadri suggested, that at first "the avant-grade critics objected to the excessive use of the exterior elements" whereas the conservatives disliked the exaggerations, the contradictions, the excessive use of objects and the shocking portrayal of the characters.¹²⁴ It is precisely through bridging these two poles of Italian theatre--the resources of the establishment and the rebelling spirit of the avant-garde--that Ronconi introduced the ritualistic, passionate style of his new theatre. Giorgio Prosperi called it "a lucid schematism within a virtually medieval rituality."¹²⁵ It was neither poor, nor spectacular, but extraordinarily powerful in its theatrical simplicity, even though that simplicity often equaled the most colossal spectacles of the past.¹²⁶

As could be seen from the examples of *Trionfo* and *Ronconi*, the

Riccardo III diretto da Ronconi," Il Messaggero (Rome), 11 March 1968; Vincenzo Talarico, "Il mio regno per un cavallo (a dondolo)!" Momento Sera (Rome), 12 March 1968; Achille Mango, "La lotta contro il potere," Mondo Nuovo (Rome), 17 March 1968; Italo Moscati, "Troppo simpatico il Riccardo di Gassman," Sette Giorni (Rome), 31 March 1968.

¹²⁴Quadri, "Il problema Shakespeare," p. 61.

¹²⁵Giorgio Prosperi, "Come un corte."

¹²⁶In its expense and magnitude Ronconi's Richard III could be compared only to Strehler's Gioco dei potenti, which is discussed extensively in the next chapter. The work on Richard III took over three months of preparation. Teatro Stabile di Torino coproduced it with Vittorio Gassman. Besides 47 actors, it involved 19 wardrobe mistresses who worked for over 5000 hours on 58 costumes. It took 2000 man-hours to construct the set which used over 500 square meters of wood and 59 kilograms of glue. There were constructed 46 gigantic silhouettes, 6 wooden horses, enormous lift crates, not to mention the rest of the props. Due to the excessive weight of the costumes, all of them except for that of Richard III were redone two days prior to the opening night. The above data is furnished in Quadri, "Il problema Shakespeare," p. 59.

long-term effect of the 1968 cultural revolution was primarily noted not so much in the confrontation of theatre against society as in theatre against theatre. The reform took place in the unconscious attitude of the directors and manifested itself through their self-evaluation and their approach towards their artistic mission. What emerged was a specifically Italian form of art for art's sake or rather, art to clarify art, to understand universal human aspirations and trepidations. Theatre was no longer applied as a demagogical instrument; rather, it provided a poetic insight within oneself. The revolution did take place. However, its long-lasting impact was not experienced in a social dialectics, but rather in the reevaluation of its own means of expression; hence, the drastic changes in the staging conceptions of such established directors as Strehler and Squarzina, changes from a political theatre to a poetical one, from satire towards a universal conception based on deeply personal feelings and experiences.¹²⁷ This was a theatre of consciousness, as Gilles Deleuze called it, theatre that had nothing to do with psychoanalysis "or political Marxistic awareness."¹²⁸ The aftermath of 1968 produced a new trend that Giuseppe Bartolucci called post avant-garde:

¹²⁷To illustrate the drastic change from political to poetic theatre suffice to compare Squarzina's Troilus and Cressida (1964) and Julius Caesar (1971) and Strehler's Il Gioco dei Potenti (1965) and King Lear (1972). For further information regarding these productions see the respective sections of the dissertation.

¹²⁸Gilles Deleuze, "Un manifesto di meno" in Carmelo Bene e Gilles Deleuze, Sovrapposizioni (Milan: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 1978), p. 92. This is summarized in the recently published article by Mohammad Kowsar, "Deleuze on Theatre: a Case Study of Carmelo Bene's Richard III," Theatre Journal 38 (March 1986): 19-33.

The new tendency is toward deeper self involvement and the extension of private concerns against the social backdrop. . . . The young artists have a romantic need to focus on their own private experiences, though they are fully aware of the non-romantic—that is, political—significance that such experiences are given today.¹²⁹

This "personal exposure" in the form of a confessional found in Carmelo Bene (b. 1937) its most typical exponent. He became the protagonist of the revolution taking place within the Italian theatre. Bene stated: "Losing the tragic, our epoch found desperation. And once the therapeutic virtue of tragedy is lost, there remains only this external human grimace of pain which is the smile of art."¹³⁰ Consequently, he approached drama from the standpoint of a critic and treated it as such. Mario Prosperi wrote:

Like the protagonist in a psychodrama, [Bene] absorbed and transcended the written drama, refusing to follow the development of the play toward "purging the passion" of the character. Rather, he assumed the role to be his own and, by so doing, overtly challenged the spectators on whom he conferred the role of hostile chorus.¹³¹

He made no attempt to redo Shakespeare, as Patrizia Maspero commented, but rather tried to "stage a critical thesis on Shakespeare."¹³² Shakespeare merely served as a springboard for the formulation of the director's own poetical creation, which he considered to be his life philosophy. Since 1968 Carmelo Bene has staged and performed a whole gallery of Shakespearean protagonists:

¹²⁹Giuseppe Bartolucci, "An Auto-interview," The Drama Review 22 (March 1978): 104.

¹³⁰Quoted by Patrizia Maspero, "Otello di Bene: prova di un poeta," Sipario 34 (May 1979): 3.

¹³¹Mario Prosperi, p. 22.

¹³²Maspero, p. 3.

Hamlet, Mercutio (in Romeo and Juliet), Richard III, Othello and most recently Macbeth.¹³³ In all of them, his perception of the theatre as a metaphor for life was quite evident. Most striking were the application of Shakespeare as a stimulus for poetical expression, and the critical capacity of the director himself. Bene viewed theatre in general and Shakespeare in particular no longer as a cultural artifact but as a necessary medium or rather simply an outlet for understanding life. He provided no reverence either for the spectator or the play, but regarded a theatrical situation as the most appropriate setting for public confrontation. The audience was challenged as an antagonist with whom he could share his feelings and thoughts, often in the most biting and cruel fashion. For instance, the director demanded that no critics be admitted to the performance of the 1982 Macbeth, to insure the highly personal nature of the event.¹³⁴ It was not by chance that in all of his productions, Bene assumed the role of the protagonist, to actively participate in the event. He was an actor, a director, a critic and, finally, a poet, all of these functions metaphorically fused in theatre to experience life itself. Hence, the reason for his fascination with a playwright who claimed that "all the world's a stage" is self-evident.

¹³³For a general overview of Bene's productions and aesthetic principles see Franco Quadri, "Il teatro di Carmelo Bene" and "Colloquio con Carmelo Bene" in Tradizione e Ricerca, pp. 309-27; 329-54; Antonio Taormina, "Bene ovvero teatro totale," Sipario 32 (February 1977): 10-12; Roberto Barbolini, "Ritratto da scrittore," Sipario 32 (February 1977): 14-16.

¹³⁴Claudia Provvedini, "Una strana intervista: Carmelo, Principe Scostante," Sipario 38 (March 1983): 39.

Gilles Deleuze differentiated Bene's technique from Brecht's by attributing to the latter merely "a critical operation" on the text, whereas in Bene he saw this operation exercised in regard to the work as a whole.¹³⁵ He suggested that Bene had dissected and transformed every single component of the theatrical event—starting from the text of the play, the portrayal of the characters as conceived by the author-director-actor and all the way through the often shocking choices in language, music, etc.¹³⁶ The plot was abandoned in favor of variations on a theme which produced an unforgettably crude effect of what Bene called his own version of "theatre of cruelty."¹³⁷ Patrizia Maglia defined Bene's unconventional staging of Shakespeare as "an algebra of dramatic operations which not only isolate the fundamental, semantic unity of the text, but also the conventional application of the theatrical medium."¹³⁸ Bene argued in the words of Proust that "great books are written in a certain kind of foreign language."¹³⁹ It is only through such alienation that one could attain the essence of a great work of art. Thus, his work aimed first and foremost at amputating conventional components in order to undermine the audience's comfortably set frame of mind. It also presupposed that a freedom of artistic intellectual endeavor required upsetting the public's

¹³⁵Deleuze, p. 79.

¹³⁶Ibid., pp. 77-81.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 82.

¹³⁸Patrizia Magli, "Il mito negato," Sipario 32 (February 1977): 9.

¹³⁹Bene, quoted by Deleuze, p. 80.

beliefs. Otherwise, Bene felt himself to be constrained in a prison, unable to produce a fruitful dialogue between the stage and the auditorium.¹⁴⁰ Bene eliminated every conceivable traditional element: the story, the text, and above all, the dialogue between the characters, who could no longer communicate with each other. The dramatic structure was entirely reorganized. The characters were the surrealistic and grotesque fictions of the author's state of mind. In place of these elements, he provided what Quadri called a hybrid of sound-tracks, lights, exaggerated and fragmented diction.¹⁴¹ The set became a machine which combined these shattered elements and produced the event. Like Julian Beck he emphasized, as it was noted by Mario Prospero,

the "living" and "present" theatrical act. But very much unlike . . . the Living Theatre, Carmelo Bene did not create new ceremonies in alternative settings, but arranged the setting according to a desecrated image of the original play. He performed a parody.¹⁴²

According to Gian Carlo Dotto, through negation of the text Bene created his own language of "scenic poetry."¹⁴³ It glittered with vitality, as Pierre Klossowski suggested, of "theatrical playfulness."¹⁴⁴ Instead of using the Shakespearean text for its widely recognized values, he rediscovered the principles of its

¹⁴⁰Quadri, "Colloquio con Carmelo Bene," p. 339.

¹⁴¹Quadri, "Il teatro di Carmelo Bene," p. 310.

¹⁴²Mario Prospero, p. 22.

¹⁴³Gian Carlo Dotto, "Carmelo Bene, Shakespeare e l'attore musico nel teatro dell'irrapresentabile" in Carmelo Bene, "Otello, o la deficienza della donna" con interviste di autori vari (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981): 38.

¹⁴⁴Pierre Klossowski, "Cosa mi suggerisce il gioco ludico di Carmelo Bene" in Otello, o la deficienza, p. 16.

dramatic creation and presented them in the first person, as though the play was being written by Bene-Shakespeare right then and there in plain view of the audience.

Above all, Bene sought to reevaluate the use of the voice in theatre and to explore its musicality. Jean Paul Manganaro argued that, besides the obvious cognitive symbols, as an actor Bene found in voice the medium that assumes "the entire repertory of gesture. . . . On its own it could erase the traditional values found in the text . . . and enhance the drama with tangibility emanating with a fragrance of allusions."¹⁴⁵ Music provided the added dimension for this operation. Mario Prospero noted that Bene's

use of music was alogical and nonpsychological. It went beyond the subtle allusiveness of *Trionfo* toward total exaggeration. His soundtracks reached the chaotic frenzy of Dadaist collage; accordingly, the action in the play was often crude and foul.¹⁴⁶

The audience was subjected to shock treatments, thus obtaining insights it had missed in its previous experiences of the classics. Bene claimed that "unless an actor finds himself in conflict with the audience, he remains a jester."¹⁴⁷ Consequently, he exploited every possibility to provoke such friction. Controversy became a tool to undermine the dormant balance of moral values and perceptions. He proclaimed that "to produce Shakespeare one must be

¹⁴⁵Jean-Paul Manganaro, "Il pettinatore di comete," in *Otello, o la difficienza*, p. 67.

¹⁴⁶Mario Prospero, p. 22.

¹⁴⁷Giuseppe Liotta, "L'impossibilita di essere normale" (Opinioni di Carmelo Bene sul teatro, la politica, il pubblico, etc.), *Sipario* 32 (February 1977): 7.

Shakespeare. I am Shakespeare."¹⁴⁸ He expressed a condescending attitude towards the general public while himself searching "after a theatre of the Elite, which is extraordinarily theatrical and thus popular."¹⁴⁹ He questioned the masculine and feminine nature of the actor, claiming that a woman on a stage contradicts the very essence of the theatre.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, he also claimed that male actors should explore their femininity, since only through such a process could the heights of artistic creation be attained.¹⁵¹ Bene's productions, however, manifested his fascination with actresses, who often, as in the case of his Richard III, were central to his very conception. His king realized his own potential and recognized the limitations of his power through a unique encounter with seven naked women who surrounded him. Besides the protagonist they were the only supporting cast present on the stage. Such an unorthodox presentation clearly shocked the audience, but it also shed light upon Bene's highly personal perception of Shakespeare's character. In this manner he expressed his protest against the stagnant, conventional theatre, which he called teatro dei padroni (theatre of the masters).¹⁵² By desecrating the conventional theatre of the establishment he also generated a public stimulus of unprecedented force. Whether one liked or disliked his work, no one could remain apathetic.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁵⁰Quadri, "Colloquio con Carmelo Bene," p. 345.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Bene, quoted by Deleuze, p. 77.

Throughout Bene's career, one could observe the director's particular fascination with two periods: that of the Elizabethans and that of the Symbolists. This clear preference might be attributed to the freedom of treatment in the theatrical medium of both eras. In them, as Bartolucci noted, Bene rediscovered the corporeal expression of the word, but he did so without detriment to its "complex baroque nature and internal eloquence."¹⁵³ This unique similarity in treatment of the Elizabethans and Symbolists was most apparent in Bene's work on Hamlet.

In the course of fifteen years, between 1961 and 1975, he produced six versions of the play, including a television program and a motion picture (Rome: Teatro Laboratorio, 1961; Rome: Teatro Beat 72, 20 March 1967; Prato: Teatro Metastasio, 2 September 1975). He evolved his Hamlets, as Quadri noted, "from the desecrated Shakespeare to the reformulated symbolistic ideology found in Jules Laforgue's adaptation of the turn of the century."¹⁵⁴ Bene incorporated in the text excerpts from Sophocles and psychoanalytic observations on Oedipus. The latter were expressed by Polonius, who bore a striking resemblance to Freud. The Oedipal complex invaded

¹⁵³Giuseppe Bartolucci, "L'avanguardia e gli elisabettiani" in Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, p. 248.

¹⁵⁴Franco Quadri, La politica del regista, p. 31. Unless otherwise indicated, the analysis of the production and the description of the mise en scène are based on the following sources: Maurizio Grande, "L'illusione negata" in Teatroltre, La scrittura scenica, no. 12 (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1976), pp. 56-66; Carmelo Bene, "Amleto di W. Shakespeare," in Pinocchio--Manon e proposte per il teatro (Milan: Lerici Editore, 1964), pp. 101-04; Pasquale Guadagnolo, "Amleto," Sipario 30 (December 1975): 22-23; Anonymous, "Note critiche a margine di quattro messe in scena da William Shakespeare: Amleto 'qualis artifex pereo'," in Otello, o la deficienza, pp. 40-45.

Hamlet's mind. The grotesque and at the same time devastating drama was underscored through direct confrontation with Kate. Her character was first introduced by Laforgue, who intensified the irony by having Hamlet fall in love with the actress who was to play the part of his queen-mother in the play-within-a-play. It was also Kate who spoke Ophelia's lines. Seeking art to denounce power, Bene's Hamlet, devastated by the continuous false pretense, eventually had to succumb. He had to openly denounce the conventions of stage illusion. Theatre could merely provide a parody, a betrayed illusion of Hamlet's personal tragedy as an artist. According to De Monticelli, "Hamlet believes in the poetic value of drama. Thus, he writes it to trap the conscience of the king."¹⁵⁵ In turn, it was Hamlet-Bene's unrealized dream as an artist that crumbled, when confronted with the brute, impersonal power of the state. Figuratively, this theme was depicted through the use of a peculiar setting.¹⁵⁶ The stage was covered with the old trunks of the traveling comedians. The characters would emerge out of them and would be locked into them by Fortinbras, who was nothing more than a robot, an impersonal metal monstrosity climbing the throne of power. Bene's irony was expressed, as Righetti noted, in the form of a "solemn Baroque funeral procession to the theatre--

¹⁵⁵Roberto De Monticelli, "Il Pierrott-Amleto di Bene," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 30 October 1975.

¹⁵⁶Physical description of the sets and costumes is based on the following sources: Donata Righetti, "Il principe triste è diventato un clown," Il Giorno (Milan), 26 October 1975; and production photographs reprinted in the appendixes of Quadri's Tradizione e Ricerca and Lombardo's Shakespeare e Jonson.

once loved, hated, lived through without alternative solutions."¹⁵⁷ Bene's Hamlet was as much a part of Shakespeare or of Laforgue as it was of Bene himself. Bene no longer interpreted the character but rather identified with it and subjected it to self-criticism. In full view, he produced a director's drama, "eventually negating his very own conception."¹⁵⁸ His superior histrionic skills, as Quadri further noted, could be compared only to the great mattatori. His acting rendered the "surrounding crammed props and Baroque sets unnecessarily ridiculous. His performance celebrated the futility of the dead theatrical forms."¹⁵⁹

Similarly, Romeo and Juliet (Prato: Teatro Metastasio, 17 December 1976) became a crossroad for Shakespeare's life-story, his play and the poetic world of the sonnets.¹⁶⁰ It was viewed by Bene as a vehicle for identification with Shakespeare, and consequently a personal, expository statement of himself as an author and an actor. The play was treated as a dream, under the spell of which Shakespeare/Bene, in the guise of Mercutio, explored the essence of life and love. The sonnets were used to create a romantic illusion. Through them, Bene restored to Romeo and Juliet "the drama of love

¹⁵⁷Rhigetti.

¹⁵⁸Quadri, La politica del regista, p. 31.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁶⁰Unless otherwise indicated, analysis of the production and the description of the mise en scène are based on the following sources: Anonymous, "Note critiche a margine di quattro messe in scena da William Shakespeare: Romeo e Giulietta" in Otello, o la deficienza, pp. 45-50; Elio Pagliarani, "L'essere un attore è come non essere," Paese Sera (Rome), 24 January 1977; Piero Perona, "Ah Giulietta, poverina! È Mercuzio il mattatore," La Stampa Sera (Turin), 14 March 1977; Giorgio Prosperi, "L'immagine di un disfaccimento," Il Tempo (Rome), 24 January 1977.

and not of the lovers."¹⁶¹ Like Gulliver, Quadri wrote, Bene found himself seated "at a stage which had been transformed into a giant table. There, he waited for the appearance of the spirits of the great actor and the dark lady from the sonnets."¹⁶² Like Alice in Wonderland he found himself surrounded by the characters of his own creation, floating in a symphony of moonlight and roses. Sergio Colombo thus described the immediate visual sensation:

Carved by light, several objects emerge out of the initial darkness. There appear giant bottles and enormous glasses. In fact, the entire stage is one great table covered with a velvet magenta cloth. Along with the spilled wine and the leftovers spread on the immense plate, it forms a cascade. The color red annihilates and chromatically predominates throughout the performance. It colors the aromas of the dreams, the velvet of the cloth, the crimson flashes that sparkle in the background and the roses that overflow from the ten-meter-high vase. Amidst these leftovers of the giant's funeral feast, Carmelo Bene imagines Shakespeare fallen into slumber.¹⁶³

The story was left to unfold through a sequence of dream-illusions. As if having appeared from a giant storybook, the characters, like lilliputians, wandered around the enormous still-life setting. The champagne glass served Juliet as a balcony. Romeo's lines were often spoken by the pre-recorded voice of Bene, suggesting the direct input by the author-adaptor. These unexpected situations created a fountain of associations. A sumptuous concert of sound and colors, a montage of text, and peculiar situations alluded to the ambiguous triangular relationship between the author, his fair friend, and the dark lady, respectively portrayed by Mercutio,

¹⁶¹Anonymous, p. 47.

¹⁶²Quadri, La politica del regista, p. 32.

¹⁶³Sergio Colomba, "Il sogno di Carmelo Shakespeare," Il Resto del Carlino (Bologna), 24 February 1977.

Romeo, and Juliet. Besides the sonnets, the director also inserted some incidents from Shakespeare's life and sections from Matteo Bandello's original novella which served as a source for Shakespeare's play. Gustav Mahler's music playing in the background provided a sense of the surreal. Tommaso Chiaretti pointed out that the "incongruity of epochs, citations, dialects, and costumes" complemented the created collage.¹⁶⁴ All of these associations floated freely within the confines of the theatre, often stimulating provocative thoughts along with confusion and apprehension on the part of the audience. Such was the dream of illusions imagined and created by Bene-Shakespeare.

Just as Romeo and Juliet possessed the quality of an elated, romantic vision, Richard III (Cesena: Teatro Bonci, 22 December 1977) represented Bacchic ecstasy à la Genet. It was set on a dark empty stage with a huge, white, round bed.¹⁶⁵ Bene's protagonist was surrounded by seven virtually nude, voluptuous women--wives and mistresses of his political victims and rivals. All of the male characters were eliminated from the play. Their lines were spoken by the female counterparts. Richard III was interpreted as a machine of war, confronted with an overpowering female sensuality. Through

¹⁶⁴Tommaso Chiaretti, "E Carmelo-Mercuzio gioca con il teatro," la Repubblica (Rome), 25 January 1977, p. 10.

¹⁶⁵Unless otherwise indicated, analysis of the production and the description of the mise en scène are based on the following sources: Anonymous, "Note critiche a margine di quattro messe in scena da William Shakespeare: Riccardo III 'Io . . . Io sono diverso'" in Otello, o la deficienza, pp. 50-55; Carmelo Bene, Riccardo III in Sovrapposizioni, pp. 5-65 (This source includes a complete text of the production along with numerous stage directions as well as extensive iconographic documentation).

him, as De Monticelli pointed out, "there were crystalized the principles of deformity and destruction as seen time after time in a lover, an assassin, an actor, a conjuror, a tyrant, a machine of war."¹⁶⁶ All of these qualities were comprised in a single character, whom Bene portrayed in the clothes of a nineteenth-century English dandy. The female figures were introduced as mere stimuli for the action to unravel. In a fashion quite unprecedented for the play Bene proposed to examine the nature of the male impulses, and not the "usual" formula of the social Grand Mechanism. Thus, the play no longer dealt with ambition for power, but rather with the sense of desire itself, set on a collision course with various human flaws.¹⁶⁷ Again, as in his other Shakespearean endeavors, after extensive rearrangements and adaptations the play gained a new form and with it astonishing insights.

Provocation, both internal (i.e., dramatic) and external (i.e., theoretical), became Bene's trademark. In an interview given to Claudia Provvedini following the premiere of his production of Macbeth (Florence: Teatro della Pergola, 6 December 1982), he proclaimed: "I don't exist. I'm immortal."¹⁶⁸ The hallucinatory and absurdist roots of this statement not only provoke a strong reaction but also eloquently capture the essence of the production. Its most memorable and solemn moment came at the conclusion, as the actor emerged out of darkness and advanced to the downstage area, where he

¹⁶⁶Roberto De Monticelli, "Carmelo Bene fra le regine nude," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 14 January 1978.

¹⁶⁷Anonymous, p. 54.

¹⁶⁸Provvedini, p. 39.

recited in a measured pace the immortal lines of his protagonist:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

(Macbeth V,v,19-24)

His adaptation of the drama revolved around two characters--the great medieval warrior Macbeth and the voluptuous Lady Macbeth.¹⁶⁹ They alone recited the entire drama confined in a room bathed with bright lights. According to De Monticelli, the situation was reminiscent of a nurse consoling a terminally ill patient.¹⁷⁰ Highly sexual connotations were made quite explicit. The surrealistic treatment of the material was contrasted with a high romanticism represented by the music. Themes from Verdi's opera accompanied the dramatic action. Even the lines from Piave's libretto were incorporated into the text at times. The resulting irony undermined not merely the stagnant theatrical cliches in general, but it aimed, as Bertani suggested, to enhance the production with a post-romantic mood rather than render it in an avant-garde fashion.¹⁷¹ De Monticelli noted that in Bene's application of music, the actor

¹⁶⁹Unless otherwise indicated, analysis of the production and the description of the mise en scène are based on the following sources: Ugo Volli, "Il mondo e così folle: non servono le parole," la Repubblica (Rome), 6 January 1983, p. 21; Enzo Scolari, "Eccomi non ci sono in Macbeth," Sipario 39 (March 1983): 37; Paolo Emilio Poesio, "Il mio regno per quella scena," Nazione (Florence), 6 December 1982, p. 49; Odoardo Bertani, "L'agonia di Bene ha nome Macbeth," Avvenire (Milan), 7 January 1983; Mario Pasi, "La musica a colpi di tempesta e servita dai mezzi elettronici," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 6 January 1983, p. 20.

¹⁷⁰Roberto De Monticelli, "Macbeth, l'angoscia di una voce," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 6 January 1983, p. 20.

¹⁷¹Bertani, "L'agonia de Bene."

"submerged the connotative meanings in a flow of sonority encapsulated phonically by the word which tore it to shreds and pieces."¹⁷² The end result of his work, however, was perceived as metaphysical. Ugo Volli contended that

Carmelo Bene's metaphorical treatment exposes the reverse side of the world—the bare and insensitive slice of reality. His stage consisted of a bed surrounded by closets. The latter were opened from time to time to reveal mirrors or produce thunderbolts, lightning and tempestuous winds. The room resembled the interior of a piece of furniture. It was made out of rough, unpolished pieces of wood. The reversed stage-panels with criss-crossing beams set the frame for the plot to evolve. Confined in this room, the only two characters tossed their parts to each other from a bed, a table and a pair of benches. Everything had about it the insignia of mumbling disarray and overall insignificance. The world was no longer an ordered and beautiful universe, but rather a hallucinatory and delirious stench of sulphur.¹⁷³

Indeed, a certain turmoil and frustration invigorates Bene's conceptions of Shakespeare. They were graphically expressive in his production of Othello (Rome: Teatro Quirino, 13 January 1979). In the compiled critical edition of the production text it was noted that the staging and adaptation of the play provided the best "critical synthesis" of the director's previous work.¹⁷⁴ This generalization could be further extended to include his later productions as well. For this reason I shall discuss the 1979 Othello in greater detail and through it summarize the general principles mentioned previously.

Bene's radical version of Othello opened where Shakespeare's

¹⁷²De Monticelli, p. 20.

¹⁷³Volli, p. 21.

¹⁷⁴Anonymous, "Note critiche a margine di quattro messe in scena da William Shakespeare: Otello," pp. 56.

play ends.¹⁷⁵ It began with the soliloquy from the fifth act ("It is the cause") as the rising curtain revealed a huge bed. Brightly illuminated white sheets emerged out of the vast darkness. On it there were entangled in an orgy all of the main characters, looking extraordinarily alike. The bed remained on stage throughout as a central acting space and a symbol of Desdemona's alleged transgression and her death. Maurizio Grande said that it became "the crucible of the scenic action, of the dramatic interweavings."¹⁷⁶ What followed was a deconstruction of the text, which retained all the episodes and characters, that emerged "more as a presentation of a musical score than as the staging of a dramatic play."¹⁷⁷ Many passages were sung solo and in duet, much of it prerecorded and occasionally mingled with ad-lib remarks. Moreover, characters entered to the accompaniment of signature melodies from Gustav Mahler. Grande concluded that the production realized

the conception of theatre as a place of "nonrepresentation" of characters and situations with sociological and psychological connotations, a theatre where the melodrama of love and betrayal are mocked and scorned by the actors. The play [was] presented

¹⁷⁵Analysis of the production's text is based on Carmelo Bene: Otello, o la deficienza della donna, pp. 78-135 (This source provides the complete text of the play as it was rewritten by Bene and then performed by his company. It also includes detailed stage-directions along with some iconographic material). Unless otherwise indicated, analysis of the production and the description of the mise en scène, besides reference cited above, are also based on the following sources: "Note critiche," pp. 55-59; Maurizio Grande, "Carmelo Bene's Othello," The Drama Review 25 (Summer 1981): 29-34; Patrizia Maspero, pp. 2-5.

¹⁷⁶Grande, p. 31.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 29.

with the aristocratic tone of one speaking to the "people."¹⁷⁸

And indeed, the director treated the play as a means to verbalize his own personal approach to theatre and his own attitude towards life. It was no longer a drama dealing with man's jealousy, deprived love and betrayed honor. His version reduced this emotionally loaded situation into the retrospective irony of an absurdist. The disillusioned spectators were deprived of the expected cathartic relief. A critical, analytic approach prevailed. Instead of being presented in the "flesh" the characters were reported about or conjured up as ghosts. Desdemona's death, for instance, did not take place on stage, but it was narrated. The supporting cast did not appear as themselves but as heavily costumed mannequin apparitions, the phantoms of Othello's and Iago's minds. They were not even able to speak their own lines. Instead, a prerecorded playback done by Cinieri/Iago and Bene/Othello provided their ghostly beings, deprived of human emotions, with a mechanical voice-track. They emerged out of darkness, and faded out into a vast black nothingness. "No one enters or exits in this production," wrote Grande. "They come into the light, into the area lighted by the spots, as apparitions in Iago's plot or in Othello's visions," and equally mysteriously they vanish.¹⁷⁹ The only two live characters during the entire performance were Othello and Iago, but even they were hallucinating, placed in a trance of pathological psychosis on the verge of committing their irreparable deeds. Every scene, every vision carried an imprint of finality and was dissected

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 31.

with detached, almost cruel, psychoanalytic professionalism. Actions were played and replayed, with changes in role and character, to establish the causes that trigger human behavior. The best example is the final scene between Othello and Desdemona, already performed by Iago and Emilia, she in blackface and in Desdemona's clothes. Iago himself, donning blackface, gradually took on the nature and torment of Othello. The accused desperate women, ironically enough, spoke in Bene's and Cinieri's voices. These voices were played "with stylistic and tonal differences" clearly suggesting self-conscious performance and awareness of the audience's presence.¹⁸⁰ The crucial handkerchief, in Bene's version, was no longer an instrument of Iago's manipulation but the key symbol which unleashes the human psyche. It was consistently projected onto the background, growing ever larger, until the disastrous denouement. An experiment, *à la* Pavlov, in cultivating human reflexes upon the stimulation of sound and sight, was thus successfully completed.

Although the lines and scenes were rearranged, the focus remained on Othello and Iago (Carmelo Bene and Cosimo Cinieri, respectively), who spoke not only their own lines, but also those of the others. The rapport between them underscored both their duality and the indivisible link joining them together. It generated an ambiguity in the relation between actor and character, raising the divergence between his self-image and the role man is forced to play. The focus on Iago and Othello brought forth their interrelationship "in the refined game of power, honor, glory and

¹⁸⁰Ibid., p. 33.

the lustfulness of ambition."¹⁸¹ This relation took Othello on a voyage of self-revelation, a white reflection in a black soul and vice versa. To equate himself with the Venetians, Othello literally blackened others with his own hands. The black mask of jealousy, envy, and suffering passed among the characters as each one attempted to stain the white irreproachable figure of Desdemona, lying on her death bed. In Bene's perception, as Doplicher noted, it did not matter "what is the sex of the greed for power, or at which point the tragedy of solitude begins to be stained in black. All of it is a part of the reign of dreams."¹⁸² All of these dreams, filled with strange images and suppressed sexual desires, are the messages sent out for our interpretation. Shakespeare is that stuff as dreams are made on, the clay out of which Bene molded a dream called theatre, which, often turning into a nightmare, astonished the audience with vivid, grotesque, and scary reflections of life.

Summarizing Carmelo Bene's achievements, Jean-Paul Manganaro claimed that after having seen this extraordinary actor, there is no need to see anyone else.¹⁸³ He further wrote that

Italian theatre reaches the end of the twentieth century under the sign of Bene. He had successfully posed and resolved a fundamental problem of the theatre which is a global reevaluation of theatrical language.¹⁸⁴

It is indeed due to this inventive and often shocking application of

¹⁸¹Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁸²Fabio Doplicher, "Prosa recensioni: Otello," Sipario 34 (March 1979): 18.

¹⁸³Manganaro, p. 62.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., p. 65.

the medium that Bene, along with the other avant-garde directors, successfully deprived Shakespeare of his revered and mystical role, and made him into a very real and passionate author for the Italians of today.

CHAPTER VII

GIORGIO STREHLER'S APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

Of all the Italian directors, the one most closely associated with Shakespeare is Giorgio Strehler (b. 1921). Since the inception of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Strehler has produced over thirteen different Shakespeare plays with this company. The most notable of these productions have justly entered the history of world theatre.

Interestingly enough, Strehler's exploration and experimentation with the works of the Elizabethan bard start and end with The Tempest. However, between these two very different Tempests there lies, as if embodied in a single company, the grotesque and rhapsodic, the dreamlike and ironic, the historical and symbolic, but above all, the always turbulent ocean of Shakespearean endeavor on the Italian stage. Here were crystallized the native Italian gems: the pearls, rubies and diamonds of the brave, new conceptions of the immortal plays.

The Tempest produced by Strehler in Boboli Gardens (Florence: Boboli Gardens, 6 June 1948), in its spirit and spectacular theatrical fantasy, most closely resembled the work of Reinhardt in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Commedia masks, fairylike characters wearing the most beautiful costumes and reciting the most beautiful poetry, and a fireworks array of fountains seem to have left no one

indifferent. It was a spectacle for the eyes, and a joy for "children of all ages." Critics unanimously acclaimed that the production "set the stage for the revival of the [Italian] theatre."¹ Corrado Pavolini called it "a precious, shining Renaissance spectacle reflected in the mirrored waters . . . of the Boboli Gardens."² Silvio D'Amico described Strehler as nothing less than a genius and Salvatore Quasimodo claimed The Tempest to be "the most important production that the Italian theatre has offered to the international public in recent years."³ This enthusiastic response may have been largely due to the atmosphere of the Boboli Gardens which was well suited to Shakespeare's poetry. "The green and stagnant waters of the lake," Schacherl noted, "the statues emerging out of it, solemn Giambologna's Neptune at the center of the island, the profound serenity of these florentine nights and the nocturnal rustle of the woods, without a doubt contributed to the spell of magic incantation."⁴

¹Bruno Schacherl, "La magia di Shakespeare rivive sulle acque del lago di Boboli," l'Unita (Milan), 8 June 1948. All of the subsequent newspaper reviews noted in this chapter were obtained from the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro, where they are collected in the clipping-files according to the name of the director, name of the production and the date of the performance. The page numbers are indicated only when they appeared on the clipping.

²Corrado Pavolini, "Chiusa del Maggio Fiorentino," Fiera Letteraria (Milan), 13 June 1948.

³Silvio D'Amico, "La Tempesta di Shakespeare al Maggio Musicale Fiorentino," Il Tempo (Rome), 8 June 1948; Salvatore Quasimodo, "Tempesta in una vasca," BIS (Milan), 15 June 1948, p. 14.

⁴Schacherl; Giambologna (Giovanni Bologna, 1529-1608) was a noted Flemish Renaissance sculptor, who formed a vital stylistic link between Michelangelo and Bernini. He is best known for his Rape of a Sabine (Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence) and Florence Triumphant over Pisa (Victoria and Albert Museum, London). His statue of Nep-

Gianni Ratto, who designed the production, constructed an amphitheatre surrounding the famed lake and the islet of Giambologna.⁵ The audience reached the enclosed area through the long alleys of the garden, sparingly lit by torches. As they approached their seats, spectators were confronted with a magnificent array of fountains, enveloping the island's circumference like a shell and thus providing a natural curtain to the stage. Giambologna's Neptune, along with other majestic statues of the set, were barely visible through the mist of rainbow lights. "Nature has collaborated with the magic of incantation to suspend the scene and the poet's fantasy in a fleeting dream," observed Bucciolini.⁶ Relics of pageantry and chivalry were dispersed along the islet. Thus, one of the most beautiful Renaissance gardens, touched by Strehler's art, came to life, evoking the long neglected and forgotten spirits from their hiding places to recreate "ancient tales in front of our marvelled eyes."⁷ As the lights dimmed and the

tune adorns the area of the Boboli Gardens called Lago dei cigni (The Swan Lake), the place where Strehler's production was actually performed.

⁵The following physical description of the set is based on the iconographic material obtained from the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro as well as material published in Fabio Battistini, Giorgio Strehler (Rome: Gremese Editore, 1980), pp. 61-62. Discussion of the auditorium and the audience entering the area of the performance is based on Raul Radice, "La Tempesta al Maggio Fiorentino," L'Europeo (Milan), 13 June 1948; Romolo Valli, "La Tempesta di Shakespeare al Giardini di Boboli con Strehler," Reggio Democratica (Reggio Emilia), 10 June 1948, reprinted in Gazzetta di Reggio (Reggio Emilia), 4 May 1983, p. 19.

⁶Giulio Bucciolini, "La magica Tempesta nella Vasca dei Cigni," La Nazione (Firenze), 7 June 1948.

⁷Mario Cialfi, "La fiaba piu bella del mondo," Il Popolo (Milan), 8 June 1948, p. 94S.

curtain of the fountains was lowered to reveal the island, the sense of reality was lost and the reign of dreams descended upon the place.

As the play began, a magnificent baroque sailboat made its way through artificially created waves on the clear dark waters of the lake.⁸ Its black silhouette was carved by dim lights and flashes of lightning. The storm was mainly recreated through the playing of the orchestra and the humming of the choir. Visually, the illusion of the tempest could not be well sustained, specifically in view of the clear sky and bright stars of a serene night. Nevertheless, the tempestuous atmosphere was conveyed through sound effects and the desperate cries of the crew members. Even the neoclassical setting of the island with its dispersed pillars, stairs and statues was utilized to underscore Prospero's magical domain. Ariel, for instance, emerged out of the trunk of a tree; other spirits appeared from under stones or through transformations of the bushes. The Masque for the fourth act was performed to the singing of two sopranos dressed as Juno and Ceres in a fashion appropriate to a baroque opera. All of these sequences were carefully choreographed to the music of Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti and were reminiscent of Reinhardt's A Midsummer Night's Dream motion picture.

The cast consisted primarily of very young actors, who within a few years would establish national reputations and who presently

⁸The following description of the mise en scène is based on: Renato Simoni, "La Tempesta di Shakespeare rappresentata nel Giardino di Boboli," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 7 June 1948; Bucciolini; Cialfi, p. 94S; Quasimodo, p. 14; D'Amico; Battistini, pp. 61-62.

lead the mainstream of Italian theatre. The legendary Arlecchino of the Piccolo Teatro, Marcello Moretti, played Caliban with humor and compassion. Quasimodo claimed that this portrayal of "a terrifying and yet pitiful, Shakespearean character" would be hailed even by the English critics.⁹ De Lullo, who later became one of the major directors in the country, distinguished himself as a most eloquent, Romeo-like Ferdinand. Here, for the first time, Strehler experimented with Trinculo and Stefano, endowing these characters with the zanni traits of a Bergamasque servant and Pulcinella, including Venetian and Neapolitan dialects, which made their commedia puns so much more enjoyable. Lilla Brignone, who played Ariel, although forced to tread on the ground, conveyed a sense of evanescence, fluttering around as though she were weightless. The only representative of the old generation of Italian actors was Camilo Pilota who portrayed Prospero with warmth, solemnity and human benevolence. The young cast and their enthusiasm supported a general belief in the bright future of man and the theatre, as Italy was recovering from the ashes of the second World War. The hopeful tone of the production suggested that its director was eagerly awaiting tomorrow. Thirty years later, through the same play, Strehler would look back to observe what had transpired in his life and in his theatre.

Each performance concluded with a standing ovation, leaving

⁹Quasimodo, p. 14. Distribution of the rest of the cast and appraisal of the individual performers is also based on: Ferruccio Troiani, "Al maggio fiorentino magia della Tempesta," Film (Milan), 26 June 1948; Antonio Pierantoni, "Fiaba ideale per gli uomini bambini cresciuti troppo in fretta," Il Mattino dell'Italia Centrale (Florence), 5 June 1948.

even the experienced, skeptical critics enthused and reassured about the newly revitalized Italian "theatre of the director." "An extraordinary experience," Valli noted, "that reconfirms the belief in the intelligence and style of the Piccolo Teatro and the artistic integrity of its leadership."¹⁰ Pavolini wrote,

After this Tempest I've returned home reassured, not only because it was so inspiring, but mostly because this accomplished work was produced by the young generation of artists. . . . The world constantly changes and moves on. The theatre of tomorrow will not be what it was in the past. From what I saw yesterday, most probably it is going to be even better.¹¹

It seemed nothing could top such an impressive start of a career. Strehler, however, thought otherwise and pursued a methodical exploration of the Shakespearean canon. The enchanting world of theatricality would return to the Piccolo again, but first the company had to undergo the long process of reaching maturity. The gems would shine again in the 1978 Tempest. These would be, however, of quite a different quality, no longer the fruits of the spontaneous burst of genius but the carefully cultivated, cut, and polished poetic jewels of the mature master craftsman.

During the first year of the company's existence, Strehler also produced two other Shakespeare plays: Richard II (Milan: Piccolo Teatro, 3 April 1948) and Romeo and Juliet (Verona: Teatro Romano, 26 July 1948). For the latter Strehler collaborated with Renato Simoni, who was actually credited with the production to inaugurate the Shakespearean Festival in Verona.¹² Both directors sought to set

¹⁰Valli, p. 19.

¹¹Pavolini, "Chiusa del Maggio."

¹²The following discussion of the 1948 Romeo and Juliet is based on De Cesco, pp. 72-78; Mario Apolonio, "Intorno a un mito,"

the drama in its authentic Veronese environment. To reinforce this concept, set designer Pino Casarini turned the open stage of the amphitheatre into a typical Veronese piazza. By utilizing the distant vista of the city as part of the background, he broke down the barrier between reality and fantasy, between the present and the past of the legendary town. Thus, the stage for the tale of the two lovers became a metaphor for the Elizabethan theatrum mundi. The director started to actively pursue historical analysis as an inspiration for his future Shakespearean productions.

Indeed, the first period in Strehler's endeavors could be best characterized as an exercise in reconstructing the Elizabethan theatre. Here the director sought to clarify and emphasize the importance of the text and its philosophical value. Very little attempt was made to provide any specific interpretation. The purpose was to produce Shakespeare's drama in its most pure and authentic form. The whole line of productions from Richard II (1948) through The Taming of the Shrew (1949) and Richard III (1950), culminating with Henry IV (1951) clearly followed not merely externally but also in its dramatic presentation, the structural pattern of the Elizabethan theatre. Although all of the above, except for Henry IV, were mounted on the small proscenium stage of

Sipario 3 (July 1948): 4-5; Silvio D'Amico, "Due ragazzi impazziti d'Amore," Il Tempo (Rome), 27 July 1948; Battistini, p. 63. Except for D'Amico, the above sources provide valuable iconographic documentation. In addition to these reviews for further information on the production consult: Renato Simoni, "Brillantissima chiusura delle recite di Romeo e Giulietta," Il Nuovo Adige (Verona), 2 August 1948; Ferdinando Palmieri, "Romeo e Giulietta di Shakespeare al Teatro Romano di Verona," Il Tempo di Milano (Milan), 27 July 1948; Giuseppe Silvestri, "Montecchi e Capuleti rivivono nella rossa Verona scaligera," Corriere d'Informazione (Milan), 21 July 1948.

the Piccolo Teatro, strong allusion to the Elizabethan structure was present in every one of them.¹³ The stage was divided into three levels and its primary function was to provide the actor with a platform for rhetorical discourse. The manner of the production was clearly presentational, placing more emphasis on the word than on stage effects. Emblematic reconstruction of the Elizabethan theatre and the re-creation of all its splendor stimulated a strong critical response. Paradoxically, the very tradition associated with the great individual actors was used to initiate the Italian audience into a theatre that set as its primary goal a critical interpretation of the dramatic work, undermining the cult of the star performer. In producing Richard II, Strehler successfully accomplished what seemed until then impossible.¹⁴ He secured public acceptance for ensemble playing in spite of the cult of the mattatore which was predominant at the time. The theatre of the director was clearly replacing the reign of the actor in Italy. In his succeeding production of Richard III (Milan: Piccolo Teatro, 15

¹³The following physical description of the sets for Richard II, Richard III and The Taming of the Shrew is based on the iconographic material obtained through the generous assistance of the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro. Some of the photographs from these productions are also reprinted in Battistini, pp. 60, 71, 79-80 and Paolo Grassi e Giorgio Strehler, Il Piccolo Teatro: 1947-58 (Milan: Nicola Moneta, 1958), pp. 52-56, 67-68, 90-94.

¹⁴The following sources were consulted for the discussion of Richard II: Battistini, pp. 60-61; Renato Simoni, "Riccardo II di Shakespeare," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 24 April 1948; Raul Radice, "La prima di Riccardo II in Italia," L'Europeo (Milan), 2 May 1948; Gilberto Loverso, "Riccardo secondo Strehler," BIS (Milan), 4 May 1948; Giulio Cesare Castello, "Il Riccardo II di Shakespeare," Il Mattino del Popolo (Venice), 14 May 1948; A. C., "E' arrivato Riccardo II dopo tre secoli e mezzo," Corriere Lombardo (Milan), 24 April 1948.

February 1950), the critics no longer found it necessary even to comment that here Strehler further pursued the reconstruction of the Elizabethan stage and reinforced the idea of a definitive directorial reading.¹⁵ It was taken for granted, and enabled Strehler to shift his attention from justifying the form to underscoring the subtextual cues. The ghostly spirit of death enveloped the history of Richard III. Although the sets were almost identical with those of Richard II, in Richard III their black, silver and grey tones unmistakably conveyed the funereal atmosphere reigning on the stage. In fact, each execution was literally followed by a funeral procession. To the beat of drummers, each recently deposed corpse was driven off the great stage of the Globe with pomp and circumstance. In time a clear pattern emerged. This was indeed the only way the characters were doomed to leave the stage. The directorial reading graphically revealed the mechanism of life itself in which Richard III fulfilled the necessary role of an executioner. The very same metaphor for the English kings was explored in further detail by Jan Kott only much later when he called it the "Grand Mechanism."¹⁶

As part of a continuous effort to combine the exuberance of the

¹⁵The following reviews were consulted for the discussion of Richard III: Orio Vergani, "Alle 2 di notte Renzo Ricci offriva il suo regno per un cavallo," Corriere d'Informazione (Milan), 16 February 1950; Renato Simoni, "Piccolo Teatro: Riccardo III di Shakespeare," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 16 February 1950; Giulio Cesare Castello, "Un funebre Riccardo III ha concertato il pubblico milanese," Pomeriggio (Bologna), 24 February 1950, p. 3; Roberto Rebora, "Nel Riccardo III comanda la morte," La Fiera Letteraria (Rome), 26 February 1950; Dino Buzzati, "Il sanguinario Ricci ha ricordato Frankenstein," BIS (Milan), 4 March 1950, p. 4.

¹⁶Jan Kott, "The Kings" in Shakespeare Our Contemporary, pp. 3-55.

individual actor with a faithful critical reading of a text, Strehler addressed The Taming of the Shrew (Milan: Piccolo Teatro, 17 February 1949).¹⁷ In it he brought to the Elizabethan stage the lazzi and vitality of commedia dell'arte, letting Shakespeare's comedy speak with an authentic Italian flavor, while preserving on the stage the basic structure of an Elizabethan setting. The virtuoso performances of the actors further reinforced this approach. Although not a history, the production clearly underscored a historical study of the Elizabethan theatre, depicting its comic and lewd vitality. Until then the play had been treated in Italy solely as a vehicle for a star performer. Strehler restored literary value to The Taming of the Shrew for the first time. The commedia framework, applied in the production, merely helped to identify the brilliance of Shakespeare's comedy.

Even the 1952 Macbeth, much less Elizabethan in its form than the preceding historical plays, carried many suggestive, fantastic elements, while preserving the same basic structure of the set.¹⁸ The culmination of this period is to be found in the production of

¹⁷The following sources were consulted for the discussion of this production: Battistini, pp. 70-71; Angelo Spadavecchia, "La Bisbetica domata di Shakespeare al Piccolo Teatro di Milano," Grazia (Milan), 2 April 1949; Eligio Posenti, "La bisbetica domata al Piccolo Teatro," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 18 February 1949; Dario Paccino, "Strehler ha messo in scena una vera Bisbetica domata," Corriere di Trieste (Trieste), 27 February 1949.

¹⁸Physical description of the sets and costumes for Macbeth and Henry IV are based on the iconographic material obtained at the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro. Some of the photographs from these productions are also reprinted in Battistini, pp. 115, 106-07; Il Piccolo Teatro: 1947-58, pp. 133-34, 119-22.

Henry IV, Part One (Verona: Teatro Romano, 7 July 1951).¹⁹ For it the designer Pino Casarini constructed in the Verona Roman Amphitheatre a playhouse reminiscent of the Elizabethan Globe. The setting enabled Strehler not only to try out his historical findings but also to demonstrate his theatrical craft. If in the Piccolo he could experiment only with the stage, here, following the footsteps of the bard, he recreated a theatre in its totality. Along with the actors and the play, he took the audience back to the times of Henry IV. The success was enormous. The production charmed the audience with its theatricality and at the same time raised several critical questions about the manner of staging plays in the original Globe. The sets, constructed on the basis of Arendt van Buchell's copy of Johannes De Witt's sketch of the London Swan and the designer's romantic notion of Shakespeare's Globe, enhanced the spectacular nature of the production, but also somewhat undermined its critical goals. Colorful spandierate²⁰ of the Sienese Palio

¹⁹The following sources were consulted for the discussion of this production: De Cesco, pp. 93-98; Battistini, pp. 106-07; Roberto Reborá, "Il formidabile Sir John Falstaff," Sipario 6 (August/September 1951): 4-5; Gino Damerini, "Il King Henry IV di Shakespeare," Dramma (Turin), 1 August 1951; Tulio Cicciarelli, "Problemi di regia contemporanea sullo sfondo di antiche lotte dinastiche," Il Lavoro Nuovo (Milan), 10 July 1951, p. 3; Franco Riva, "Il Teatro Romano di Verona si agghinda per ricevere Enrico IV," Corriere del Giorno (Taranto), 27 June 1951; Silvio D'Amico, "Enrico IV di Shakespeare alla Floridiana di Napoli," Il Tempo (Rome), 2 August 1951.

²⁰Spandierate is a form of waving flags and throwing them into the air while criss-crossing with another partner. It is somewhat similar to baton twirling by cheerleaders. The banner-throwers use one flag in each hand, each one approximately three square feet in size. The spandierate practice originated in Medieval Siena and since then it has passed as a family tradition from generation to generation. It is still an intrinsic component in the Palio festivities held in Siena annually, twice during the summer months.

effectively joined the scenes; however, they had little to do with an historical interpretation of the Elizabethan text. Strehler's initiative in staging Henry IV for the first time in Italy was unanimously applauded; however, judging from the reviews, the major impact of the production was found in its theatricality. Nevertheless, it inspired other directors to follow in Strehler's footsteps. In 1958 Pierluigi Pizzi constructed a typical Elizabethan playhouse for Mario Ferrero's production of The Comedy of Errors.²¹ The model of an Elizabethan stage was also used by Emanuel Luzzati in the productions by Enriquez and Fersen as well as Silvano Falleni for Bepe Menegatti's A Midsummer Night's Dream.²² The Verona Henry IV did not, however, stimulate new approaches to the play by other directors. With it Strehler brought to a close this early period in his career. A month later the director produced Twelfth Night (Venice: Palazzo Grassi, 25 August 1951) to inaugurate the Palazzo Grassi in Venice. Although it is generally considered among his less successful productions, the fresh approach and the commedia elements which enhanced it counterbalanced the shortcomings. Generally negative in tone, the reviews did point out that Strehler's Twelfth Night possessed more vitality than "the perfectly staged rendition of the Old Vic, . . . burdened with icy . . .

²¹For further details regarding this production see De Cesco, pp. 118-23.

²²The Luzzati model for The Merchant of Venice (1967) is discussed in the section on Enriquez. A photograph of the set for Fersen's Volpone is reprinted in Shakespeare e Jonson, plate 65. For further discussion of Menegatti's Midsummer Night's Dream (1963) see De Cesco, pp. 159-61.

mortifying reverence to the bard."²³ Only three years after the Boboli Tempest the audience saw the product of an accomplished master capable of approaching Shakespeare with scholarly accuracy, artistic creativity and characteristically Italian vitality. The chapter of historical explorations and of building an ensemble out of the young company of the Piccolo Teatro was completed. In Henry IV Strehler had already ventured into a new field: presenting Shakespeare as a means to instruct the audience on the crucial issues of contemporary society.

Shakespeare was now viewed by Strehler as a tribune to produce social changes. The succeeding period concentrated on the plays most suitable for accomplishing this goal and for focusing on current political and social issues. The repertory of the Piccolo was enriched with Macbeth (1952), Julius Caesar (1953) and, most memorable of all, Coriolanus (1957).

In Macbeth (Milan: Piccolo Teatro, January 1952) the emphasis was placed upon figuratively expressing the internal world of the protagonist.²⁴ Strehler diverted attention from the usually focal figure of Lady Macbeth to Macbeth himself. The stage was divided

²³Roberto Rebora, "Teatro a Venezia: Shakespeare Edizione Italiana," La Fiera Letteraria (Rome), 2 September 1951. Also see: Silvio D'Amico, "La XII notte di Shakespeare," Il Tempo (Rome), 27 August 1951; Alberto Bertolini, "La Dodicesima notte inaugura il teatro all'aperto di Palazzo Grassi," Il Gazzettino (Venice), 26 August 1951; Battistini, pp. 107-08.

²⁴The following sources were consulted for the discussion of Macbeth: Battistini, pp. 115-16; Renato Simoni, "Stagione Teatrale," Dramma (Turin), 15 February 1952, pp. 42-43; Renato Simoni, "Piccolo Teatro: Macbeth di Shakespeare," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 1 February 1952; Giulio Cesare Castello, "Sulle orme di Orson Welles il Macbeth di Piccolo Teatro," Settimo Giorno (Milan), 4 February 1952, p. 27.

into two levels in order to reflect the tragic vision of the protagonist. The upper world was populated by the ghostly creatures seeking revenge for the injustice they had suffered in real life. The lower level was populated by the criminals performing their atrocious deeds. They were portrayed as vicious, blood-thirsty tyrants who were summoned by their victims for the final judgment. According to Vergani, in the final scene it seemed as though the "heralds of Justice" themselves descended from the upper sphere. "Without trumpets but with enormous branches of trees they enveloped the stage with a growing forest."²⁵ Lady Macbeth was no longer a supernatural force, but a fragile woman capable of indescribable atrocities in order to feed her gluttonous appetite for power. To underscore the internal dialogue with the external forces of nature, Strehler echoed every action with a shattering stage effect. Thus, when Malcolm knelt to be crowned, the skies were bathed in blood, as the cyclorama was illuminated with a burning light. The use of symbolism that would be later fully realized in Strehler's Gioco dei Potenti and clarified in Jan Kott's theory of the Grand Mechanism, was quite explicitly applied in this production. The lighting, the sound, the music, the sets—all served to enhance the atmosphere of this nightmarish anatomy of the rise to power, which was also a descent to the lowest ring of the infernal depths. Strehler's capacity to paint an internal human torment with the pungent metaphoric colors of man's fall confirmed a drastic change in his approach to Shakespeare. The stage was set for dialectical

²⁵Orio Vergani, "Un regista dagli occhi di gatto in una Scozia 'dove non è che luca'," Corriera d'Informazione (Milano), 1 February 1952.

explorations of the human psyche.

With Julius Caesar (Milan: Piccolo Teatro, 20 November 1953) the director continued this gradual process of transforming the Elizabethan stage of the Piccolo Teatro into a generic metaphor for the world. There were reflected human emotions entangled in a web of political events. Even the battle scenes, Vergani noted, were filled with metaphoric suggestions.²⁶ The sets by designer Pierro Zuffi substantiated this sensation with undeniable graphic clarity.²⁷ The rigid three-level Elizabethan structure had now dissolved into a background of a roughly sketched landscape suggesting oppressive emotional tension. As though painted in watercolors, it brought the characters to the fore, accentuating their dialogue and actions. Everything else on the stage merged into the background with the widely scattered elements of the set. In fact, critics noted the extraordinary beauty of the design and the musicality with which the text reverberated in Strehler's production.²⁸ These purely aesthetic aspects of Julius Caesar did not, as one might expect, prevent but rather stimulated the audience to derive a valuable socio-political lesson. On its tour in South America the public readily identified the situation with Peron's regime and invariably

²⁶Orio Vergani, "Giulio Cesare di Shakespeare," Corriera d'informazione (Milano), 21 November 1953.

²⁷Description of the sets is based on the iconographic material furnished by the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro. Some of the photographs are reprinted in Il Piccolo Teatro: 1947-1958, pp. 148-50 and Battistini, pp. 130-31.

²⁸Roberto De Monticelli, "Giulio Cesare di Guglielmo Shakespeare," La Patria (Milan), 21 November 1953; and Vergani. A brief summary of reviews is also provided in Battistini, pp. 130-31.

would start a riot, chanting for the suppression of dictatorship each time the play reached the scene in the Senate. Reminiscing about these performances in Argentina, Strehler noted "the thunderbolt reaction" of those seated in the orchestra to Cassio's "And why should Caesar be a tyrant then?" (I.iii.103) "At the time it seemed quite possible," the director wrote, "that the performance would be suspended because of its pertinence to the situation and revolutionary undertones. . . . Then more than ever I was thinking of Shakespeare as our contemporary."²⁹ And indeed Angelo Falvo stressed in his review that Strehler could be considered "the most able director in having successfully transposed the ancient tragedies into a modern key."³⁰

In Julius Caesar and Macbeth Strehler had begun gradually to abolish the strict three-level construction of the sets. The lines were no longer that clear. They were diffused with the rest of the sets and staging. More and more emphasis was placed on the thematic and dialectical analysis of the text. In Coriolanus (Milan: Piccolo Teatro, 1957), the process was completed. The stage was free from Elizabethan conventions and ready for new experiments. Acting moved away from the formalistic mode of reciting. There could be observed a strong increase in the use of visual elements which no longer complimented the text but became an end in themselves. The actors' body language acquired an essential precision and expressive vigor

²⁹Giorgio Strehler "Inscenare Shakespeare [sic]," in Agostino Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, p. 293. The incident was also reported in Mirella Acconciamezza, "Shakespeare nella lezione di Strehler," L'Unita (Milan), 31 March 1978.

³⁰Angelo Falvo, "Giulio Cesare al Piccolo," Vie Turistiche (January 1953): 59.

as it moved towards Brechtian gestus. The stage was set for epic Shakespeare in Italy.

During these years, there developed a true bond of friendship between Brecht and Strehler, making Strehler's production of Coriolanus a natural outgrowth of their mutual discussions of the play. Brecht wrote his own version of Coriolanus while Strehler independently staged Shakespeare's play applying Brechtian methodology. Contrary to Brecht's approach, Strehler did not alter the original text. Nevertheless, both the German playwright and the Italian director defined the story of the Corioli savior as a political tragedy which graphically depicts in dialectical terms the movement of history. The director stressed that his "approach was mainly dialectical rather than epical," hence finding the treatment of the Piccolo Teatro more profound than that of the Berliner Ensemble.³¹ He argued that Coriolanus becomes a typical catalyst in the dialectical process of history "by the mere fact of . . . realizing the tragic deed as designed by the poet."³² The political tragedy treated in the drama was considered by Strehler as being representative of

politics as a movement of history, and history as a rapport between groups of people and their interests. This relation is further underscored through . . . the dynamics of the classes, . . . the rapport of the single man with himself and all the contradictions that stem from it.³³

³¹Strehler, cited in Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, pp. 294, 296.

³²Giorgio Strehler, Per un teatro umano (Milano: Fetrinelli Editore, 1974), p. 313.

³³Strehler, Il Piccolo Teatro: 1947-58, p. 224.

There was a constant, strong critical element omnipresent in both the staging of the production and the acting itself.³⁴ The rational alienation from emotional involvement on the part of the actors succeeded in preserving for the audience a needed critical perspective, and set in bold relief the eternally violent social conflict between those in power and the masses. Thus, the dramatic characters were utilized as a function in the consequent dialectical relation between the stage and the audience. Strehler noted:

Hence we see that the discontent among the plebeians stems from the state of submission . . . resulting in a search for the justice which the dominant class denies to the dominated one. The patrician's discontent, on the other hand . . . originates from the conflict of personal interests, which from a historical point of view, are much less justifiable.³⁵

This dichotomy was even further emphasized in the two-act division, which was supposed to correspond to the duality of the same reality as seen through the needs of the society and the individual. The first act Strehler defined as a tragedy contained within a historical context, thus essentially political. The second act, on the other hand, revealed the characters internally, exposing their psychological conflicts, but above all their common humanity. Coriolanus first appeared as an irrational being, absolutely alienated from people, social responsibilities, and recognition of the threatening political dangers. In the second act he appeared as an enraged warrior who is tormented by his social conscience. The

³⁴The following analysis is partially based on the detailed discussion of Strehler's directorial conception and the mise en scène provided in Gabriella Fogli, "La fortuna di Shakespeare in Italia: Strehler interprete del Coriolano e de Il Gioco dei Potenti," (Tesi di laurea, Istituto Universitario di Bergamo, Academic Year 1979-80), pp. 73-108.

³⁵Strehler, Per un teatro umano, p. 315.

combination of his human vulnerability and hubric stature eventually caused his enemies to crawl back and surround Coriolanus at his victorious death. Much the same was the dialectical analysis of the other characters, in whom private rage succumbed to public needs in the ultimate realization of the historical momentum. The unity of plebeians and tribunes was seen as a natural resolution to the thesis and antithesis. Thus, the production sought to graphically depict a phase in the development of history. To this effect, the audience was expected to derive a valuable moral and reevaluate their own political and social responsibilities.

Strehler's theatre became a tribunal where current issues were tackled and examined with methodical consistency. Preceding every scene, in a typical Brechtian fashion, on a gray backdrop cyclorama there was projected a sign which briefly summarized and moralized on what was to follow.³⁶ The constant, unchanging bright light illuminating Luciano Damiani's simple, stylized sets, eliminated even the shadow of illusion and clearly set the prevalent didactic mood of the production. The spectators were preached to and instructed but also always entertained. More than anything else, as Strehler summarized this period himself, "the attempt to interpret Coriolanus in the form of an epic drama signified for us . . . a

³⁶The following description of the stage design is based on the extensive photographic documentation of the production published in the program notes of the Piccolo Teatro which accompany the audio recording of the performance released by Cetra discs: William Shakespeare, Coriolano: Piccolo Teatro della Cita di Milano (Turin: Cetra, 1957). The changes of the scenes and the application of the elements of the set as part of the mise en scène are also thoroughly discussed by Fogli, pp. 110-13.

severe and honest lesson in morality."³⁷

Although the critics were divided as to the directorial concept, all of them agreed on the profound critical study that the production demonstrated and the eloquent performance of all the actors, especially praising Tino Carraro's portrayal of Caius Marcius. Ripamonti noted that Carraro succeeded in presenting his character with a certain critical perspective, thus not merely evoking the human emotions of the Corioli savior but also bringing him onto the stage to be judged publicly.³⁸ Although able to alienate himself from the character, at the same time Carraro succeeded in painting a most colorful human portrait of the protagonist. As Vergani noted, "through Carraro's voice Coriolanus reaches the depths of the human experience."³⁹ Portrayed with every possible antiheroic trait, found guilty on all counts by the director, the actor, and the audiences alike, he still won our sympathy. Thus, Prospero concluded that although "being in error, Caius Marcius in Carraro's rendition ultimately acquires even greater humanity."⁴⁰

The critics' disagreement stemmed primarily from the treatment of Shakespeare's play as a political drama and its subjugation to the rules of epic theatre. The right wing attacked the one-sided

³⁷Strehler, Per un teatro umano, p. 318.

³⁸Icilio Ripamonti, "Coriolano di Shakespeare," Avanti (Milano), 11 October 1957, p. 3.

³⁹Orio Vergani, "Un Coriolano ad 'alto livello'," Corriere d'informazione (Milan), 11 November 1957, p. 3.

⁴⁰Giorgio Prospero, "Il Coriolano di Shakespeare applaudito dal pubblico milanese," Il Tempo (Roma), 11 November 1957.

didactic reading of Shakespeare, calling it a textual rape in which the characters are depicted as caricatures to convey a reactionary Marxist message.⁴¹ "What we witnessed the other night," wrote Possenti, "was not Shakespeare's Coriolanus but one according to the taste and intentions of the director."⁴² Although Marx's writings on historical materialism were definitely studied by the director, Vergani noted with sarcasm that "it's a pity that in the time of Shakespeare's glory, the world did not see a trace of Marx."⁴³ And still in spite of these furious attacks the same critics had to acknowledge that "Strehler's stage conception was brilliantly executed and demonstrated intelligent research."⁴⁴ Thus, while contesting the very idea of the production like many others, Rebora had to admit "the undeniable seriousness of the undertaking and of the method of its execution."⁴⁵

The left-wing critics, on the other hand, applauded Strehler's courage and admired his ability to reconcile a typical Elizabethan protagonist with the historical figure which Coriolanus represented,

⁴¹Carlo Terron, "C'era forse Hitler nel 495 avanti Cristo?" Corriere Lombardo (Milan), 11-12 November 1957; ; Valentino Fusi "Coriolano, Stalin, Hitler e una fuori serie tutta rossa," Corriere dell'Adda (Lodi), 7 December 1957; E. Ferdinando Palmieri, "Coriolano di Shakespeare ha riaperto il Piccolo Teatro," La Notte (Milan), 11 November 1957; Franco Cologni, "I redivivi: Fedra e Coriolano," Vita e Pensiero (Milan), January 1958.

⁴²Eligio Posenti, "Coriolano di Shakespeare," Corriere della Sera (Milano), 10 November 1957.

⁴³Vergani, p. 3.

⁴⁴Posenti, "Coriolano di Shakespeare."

⁴⁵Roberto Rebora, "Un Coriolano alla Brecht," Sipario 13 (January, 1958): 13.

namely an ambitious and arrogant despot.⁴⁶ They welcomed the director's treatment of Shakespeare's text which exposed and historically reevaluated the Roman patrician, applying the dialectical methods of the epic theatre. "If the theatre indeed finds its most profound significance in a polemical treatment of the material," Ripamonti wrote, "then Coriolanus presented an exquisite theatrical event: . . . this was a fierce, sensitive and vital cultural and social event."⁴⁷ Buttafava even claimed that although the production offered a somewhat unconventional treatment of the text it is the very nature of Shakespeare's work which "lends itself to various possible readings."⁴⁸ The character was judged first and foremost by his public record. His individual heroic or human traits were of secondary importance. Hence the tragic action developed, as expected by the supporters of the political theatre, according to the principles of dialectical materialism, thus it presented a valuable lesson in history and social duty.

Whether one agreed with such a rendition or was diametrically opposed to it, the recognition of the director's work as a major artistic accomplishment was unanimous. In the final analysis, Strehler in fact did emerge as one "who has discovered an ingenious

⁴⁶Angelo Frattini, "Coriolano di Shakespeare al Piccolo Teatro," Il Sole (Milano), 10 November 1957; Paolo Radaelli, "Coriolano," Il Veri 1 (January 1958): 157-62; Raul Radice, "Il Coriolano ha riaperto la stagione del Piccolo," L'Europeo (Milan), 17 November 1957; Luciano Codignola, Il teatro della guerra fredda e altre cose (Urbino: Argolia, 1969), pp. 163-67.

⁴⁷Ripamonti, p. 3.

⁴⁸Vittorio Buttafava, "Il reazionario Coriolano e la romantica Fedra," Oggi (Milano), 21 November 1957.

way to render Shakespeare always modern."⁴⁹

After this Coriolanus, Strehler did not return to Shakespeare for almost seven years. This interruption was a natural break. With Coriolanus, Strehler reached a logical resolution of his epic view of the Elizabethan bard. He exhausted all of the possibilities of the sort and could not find another Shakespearean play in which the didactic social connotation was that explicit. As for the company of the Piccolo Teatro, in the director's own words, there "was found the most distinct identification with the epic theatre," which was to be pursued further in Brecht's plays.⁵⁰ When, in 1964, he started working on The Game of the Powerful (Gioco dei potenti) it did not signify merely a return to Shakespearean drama in its pure original form, but rather a collage of various scenes which formed a complete unit. This new creation was not a didactic piece; neither was it a renewed fascination with historical drama. The Game of the Powerful combined both trends and more. It introduced Strehler the poet.

The Game of the Powerful (Il Gioco dei Potenti, Milan: Teatro Lirico, 19 and 20 June 1965) comes at the turning point in Strehler's career. It is a profound artistic and political manifesto foreshadowing the cultural revolution of the late sixties, which shook Italy along with the rest of the European continent. The production was based on the three parts of Henry VI and freely incorporated several famous soliloquies and lines from other plays,

⁴⁹Vittorio Vecchi, "Coriolano fuori dalla confusione," Dramma (December, 1957).

⁵⁰Strehler, cited in Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, p. 296.

mostly histories. To mount this epic in its full proportions there were employed over 120 actors and extras; over 200 costumes were sewn, 46 pageant wagons were built, 150 rehearsal days were spent and each complete performance lasted over 9 hours of playing time spread over two days.⁵¹ Such a monumental undertaking of Shakespeare's histories was not singularly an Italian phenomenon. In the early sixties, as it was noted by Ossia Trilling, the cycle of Shakespeare's Wars of the Roses

has attracted a number of directors of particular sensibility to the audience's political leanings. I refer to Peter Hall and John Barton in Stratford, to Jean-Louis Barrault in Paris (who made the first attempt I have ever seen to convert the old Théâtre de l'Odéon, a typical "théâtre à l'italienne", into an arena-stage, and had the audience wholly involved at times by placing his actors on an approach-ramp to the stage, constructed down the centre-aisle of the stalls and raised above the spectators' heads), to Peter Palitzsch in Stuttgart, and to Giorgio Strehler in Milan. The topicality of the subject-matter, treated variously by the several directors, could hardly have been more striking, and the Elizabethan attitude to violence was found to translate easily into contemporary consciences without resort to anachronistic innovations in the actual staging of the plays.⁵²

In Il Gioco dei Potenti Strehler chose to depict graphically Jan Kott's theory summarized in Shakespeare Our Contemporary. Like the work of Trionfo and Squarzina, who respectively presented the stage conceptions of "the bitter Arcadia" and "Troilus and Cressida," Strehler undertook Kott's chapter dealing with the kings.⁵³

Strehler's production concept emanated from the phrase "All

⁵¹Edvige Piccinelli, "Le regie teatrali di Giorgio Strehler al Piccolo Teatro di Milano, 1955-1969," (Tesi di Lauria, Università degli Studi di Roma, 1976), p. 412.

⁵²Ossia Trilling, "Directors Who've Set the Pace," World Theatre 17 (Summer 1968): 71.

⁵³Kott, pp. 3-55. For a discussion of Squarzina's and Trionfo's productions see the appropriate sections in Chapters V and VI of this dissertation.

the world's a stage."⁵⁴ The public came to the theatre anticipating a traditional performance, but when the curtain rose they found themselves observing a bare octangular stage with an illuminated miniature model of the Globe. After the lights dimmed and came back up again, the spectators found themselves inside that theatre, where the actors were set to perform a play. This play represented real-life events: wars, struggles for power, romance and lust. But in fact all of these wars and intrigues were perceived as nothing more than a politician's game, which is again theatre on a grand scale. Thus, the spectators journeyed through a theatre-within-a-theatre within still many other theatres to confront Strehler's vision. The production style resembled a slow and unending cinematic zoom-in. The audience and the stage were counterpoised like two huge mirrors, producing an innumerable series of recessed reflections. The effect of such an extended metaphor was the complete diffusion of the borderlines between illusion and reality. Taking the principle of alienation to its extreme, Strehler transcended his favorite Brechtian device and made clear his view on violence, death and the central metaphor of this production, the Grand Mechanism.

The idea of the Grand Mechanism was introduced by Kott. He argued that "for Shakespeare history stands still. . . . [It] turns

⁵⁴Unless otherwise noted the physical description of the *mise en scène* is based on the iconographic material obtained from the Piccolo Teatro Photo laboratory, Photographer Luigi Cimanaghi and the following sources: Giorgio Strehler, "Appunti di regia per *Il gioco dei potenti*," *Regiebuch* typewritten manuscript available at the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Milan, 1964-1965; Strehler, *Per un teatro umano*, pp. 320-21; Arturo Lazzari, *Programma Piccolo Teatro di Milano 1947-1967*, p. 90; *Il gioco dei potenti*, The Program of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Stagione 1964/5; Battistini, pp. 194-98.

full circle, returning to the point of departure."⁵⁵ In this cycle, an exile is summoned to free the oppressed nation from the usurper and then himself mounts the throne of tyranny. There he is absorbed by the mechanism, losing his identity to his ambitions. He is no longer an executioner, but a victim, caught in the cogs of history. "There are no bad kings or good kings; . . . [but] there is only the king's situation and the system [with] . . . no room for freedom of choice" or moral order.⁵⁶ According to Strehler, this is the game of the powerful, intensified by a magnifying glass of theatrical metaphors. Like Kott, Strehler saw the timeless issues raised in the histories. Accustomed to cruelty and mutual slaughter in the struggle for power, our modern spectator views these events with calmness equal only to that of the Elizabethans. Elizabethan costume and the bare stage provided the director with the appropriate setting for the playground on which the actors were to play the game of the powerful.

The actors pretended that all that surrounded them was real: curtains were the skies, lighting instruments were the stars. The setting was comprised of a small number of movable, flexible, interchangeable pieces, as well as pageant wagons. These set elements seemed ridiculous and at the same time terrifying within the context in which they were used. Colors, wigs and masks--all were expressive and grotesque. Simultaneous actions underscored the theme. For example, counterpointing the funeral procession of Henry

⁵⁵Kott, p. 6.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 17.

V on stage left, children sang and played on stage right. While one boy dressed in the robes of Henry VI, others put on the attire of cardinals and noble ladies. This travesty took place behind white curtains, upon which there were reflected the children's shadows. The funeral services ended and the shadows grew into monstrosities. The dark colors of the previous scene changed into festive gray, gold and white. As Henry VI ascended the throne, the ruling class suddenly aged and succumbed to the new generation beginning a new cycle of the Grand Mechanism. The new monarch assumed power, but nothing changed. Only the innocent children's game grew into a monstrous and dangerous game for power. Strehler used the same symbols, often contrasting them against one another, searching for their reflections from different angles. The images were sometimes crooked and gruesome but were never false. The gallery of distorted mirrors only sharpened the acute irony of the situation and the merciless law moving the Grand Mechanism. Strehler's theatrical depiction of the Grand Mechanism thus joined with theatrical invention, dialectic analysis and historical criticism, to create a production that was filled with imagination and bitter irony.

The multiple connotative meanings of the "game" were thoroughly explored by the director. He drew a continuous analogy between the children playing with toy castles and tin soldiers, and politicians totally submerged in their bloody ambition for power and everlasting wars in conquest of new lands. Miniature models of houses, cathedrals and palaces were brought onto the stage by the children. In the very next scene they were used by the scheming lords and generals to satisfy their greedy appetites. With these miniatures, the military experts examined chess moves and tactics for the

upcoming battles. The models also provided a background for Jack Cade's uprising, representing the lands of England that had temporarily fallen into the hands of the rebelling people. The stage was literally transformed into a gigantic playground for the rival players: the men in power and the actors alike—to demonstrate their expertise in skill and imagination.

To underscore this theatrical analogy, Strehler introduced the character of an Actor who magically emerged from inside of the miniature Globe in the prologue to the performance. He played a commentator in the tradition of the Greek chorus. He was also an arbitrator, a supreme universal intelligence, in the game for power fought on the stage. But above all he provided that ever-present link between the audience and the fiction of the theatre that enabled the spectators to judge the events with a somewhat alienated perspective. His interjections were designed as interludes and were used to express some of the greatest Shakespearean insights on the state of humanity and its ambition for power. Largely taken from the later works of the bard, these passages included soliloquies from Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, Timon of Athens, The Tempest, Pericles, As You Like It, some sonnets and other chronicle plays.⁵⁷ They provided a more mature, universal and pensive perspective on history than the three parts of Henry VI could, since those plays were composed in the early period of Shakespeare's career. The staging of some of these interludes lent even greater power to the overall

⁵⁷The textual composition of the production is acknowledged by the director himself in Giorgio Strehler, "Nota sulla traduzione del Gioco dei potenti," manuscript available at the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Milano, 1964-1965. (Typewritten), p. 4.

production concept. After one of the many bloody battles, the Actor, wrapped in a black cloak, advanced downstage, stepping over the soldiers as they fell, while reciting with great pathos young Clifford's soliloquy:

O war! thou son of hell,
Whom angry heavens do make their minister,
Throw in the frozen bosoms of our part
Hot coals of vengeance! Let no soldier fly:
He that is truly dedicate to war
Hath no self-love; nor he that loves himself
Hath not essentially, but by circumstance,
The name of valour.

(Henry VI, Part 2: V, ii, 33-40)

As he was approaching the proscenium, a forboding grey drape descended behind him upon the stage, covering the dead bodies of the slaughtered soldiers and kings alike. He then crossed the stage, dragging behind him the deadly cloth filled with the bodies and cleared the space for the next scene. When the last of the corpses was pulled off, with a shattering power he pronounced the verdict of the ages:

Hence death equates and mocks us all!⁵⁸

In another scene, while the deposed Henry VI, seated on his golden throne, was enveloped in oblivion upstage, the Actor at the proscenium recited Richard II's musings on the frailty of a king's crown:⁵⁹

within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of the king
Keeps Death his court, and there the antick sits,
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp;
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchise, be fear'd, and kill with looks,

⁵⁸"Appunti di regia," Parte II, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 5.

Infusing him with self and vain conceit
As if this flesh which walls about our life
Were brass impregnable; and humour'd thus
Comes at the last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!
Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence: throw away respect,
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,
For you have but mistook me all this while:
I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus,
How can you say to me I am a king?

(Richard II: III, ii, 160)

The Actor could be easily identified with both Shakespeare and Strehler. He was their reflected shadow on the great stage of the Globe--the man who fused the perception of the three distant realities, that of the fifteenth, seventeenth and twentieth centuries. No matter how far apart the age of the English kings and Italy of the 1960s were in reality, the Actor unified the aspirations of both epochs to understand single, timeless universal truths. In her dissertation "La fortuna di Shakespeare in Italia," Fogli wrote on the subject:

Strehler derived from the complex English history a universal drama posing pertinent questions for today and learning valuable lessons for tomorrow. The Actor has presented the atrocities of our times, the destiny of man and his universe: the world powers that could have coexisted in peace, which nevertheless engage only in self-destruction.⁶⁰

Both Shakespeare and Strehler perceived history as artists and in turn reflected it, like their Actor, through a prism of their stagecraft. For both, Henry VI was still a fruit of "fever and folly", not yet seasoned with the wisdom of age.⁶¹ The profound

⁶⁰Gabriella Fogli, "La fortuna di Shakespeare in Italia," p. 145.

⁶¹Strehler, cited in Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, p. 298.

understanding of the human condition, filled with desperation and optimism, came only much later, at the evening of their careers, with Prospero. Before that, through the aging and agonized tribulations of King Lear, they had to fully comprehend the power contained in playing a fool. Only by gaining this wisdom could the Actor eventually grow up and become a Director who fully understands the laws of the Grand Mechanism moving the world.

Il gioco dei potenti fills in the missing pieces in the puzzle of Shakespeare's histories, a project which was first undertaken by Strehler in the very beginning of his career. It provided the link and resolved the riddle posed in Richard II, Henry IV and Richard III. As though to summarize these explorations the production of Il gioco dei potenti opened with the Actor's invocation to the "Muse of Fire" (from the prologue to Henry V) and concluded with a sinister soliloquy by the future King Richard III, foreshadowing the inevitable continuation of the murderous cycle. This closing epilogue was one of the most memorable scenes of the production. Poesio even called it "among the most beautiful and pure pages of Strehler's art."⁶² It started when Edward IV ascended the throne in a fashion reminiscent of the coronation of Henry VI in the beginning of the performance. As the court, all dressed in white, was led in a dance to celebrate the newly crowned monarch and the long awaited peace, the Duke of Gloucester, attired in black, approached the proscenium. His costume and a spotlight sharply

⁶²Paolo Emilio Poesio, "La partita senza fine," La Nazione (Florence), 23 June 1965. Physical description of the epilogue is primarily based on "Apunti di regia," Parte II, p. 12; and Piccinelli, p. 436.

separated him from the rest as he affirmed his aspirations for the throne in the famed "Now is the winter of our discontent" speech. To the sounds of the minuet, the lights in the background dimmed, leaving him alone, the future monarch, the bloodiest of them all, in a bright spotlight. "Thus the game of the powerful," as De Monticelli aptly put it, "and the scenic illusion that has represented it, dissolves itself within a grotesque final dance in a round, which, as it seems, could never end."⁶³ The Grand Mechanism started a new cycle of murder. Unlike his first Richard III (1949) in which the anatomy of power was merely indicated, the later fully cultivated monster in the long succession of kings confirmed the inevitability of the dreadful cycle. The production comprised all of the emblematic elements used by Strehler in his previous work. On an Elizabethan stage, with spectacular pageantry epic in its proportions and dialectical in its approach, there was summarized Kott's chapter on the rise to power. There was also further explored the constant conflict between those in power and the people.

The excessively sociopolitical treatment of the text, glorifying Jack Cade's rebellion as one of the central themes of the play, received a rather unfavorable response on the part of the critics. Francis Lane wrote in the London Times that:

Mr. Strehler is not at all concerned with helping Shakespeare but rather with using the English dramatist to help him expound his own social and aesthetic philosophy. . . . It is very arbitrary to try and see in Jack Cade's rebellion the stirrings of popular revolt. . . . Certainly one sympathizes with the underdogs and the way the common man was used as a pawn by the potenti in their game. The people could protest because they were hungry but they had no civic sense. . . . This forcing of the ideological content

⁶³Roberto De Monticelli, "L'annientamento del re-simbolo," Il Giorno (Milan), 23 June 1965.

only causes aesthetic confusion.⁶⁴

De Monticelli also joined in criticizing the director's Marxist approach to the relation of the masses and the lords:

Although it is legitimate to treat Jack Cade's rebellion in modern terms the sporadic addition of typically Brechtian scenes and class-conscious considerations are definitely dissonant in the edited version of otherwise strictly Shakespearean themes and language.⁶⁵

On the other hand critics enthusiastically applauded Strehler's talent for transposing textual metaphors into theatrical language. The director's free interpretation of Shakespeare, wrote Guglielmino, enhanced an episode in history with the "art and fantasy of a universal tale, thus mobilizing the critical attention of the spectators."⁶⁶ In spite of the potential danger for the spectacular elements to overpower the critical intent of the production, Strehler succeeded in sustaining Brechtian alienation and even ideological controversy. The above-quoted critical polemic and Sacchi's comments demonstrate this achievement:

A colossal production. Colossal because of the conception and the number of the participants, because of the different media applied and the mass scenes, because of the grandeur and violence. And yet a very closed, chamber piece, precious, personal, filled with allusions and sharp, underlying meanings, worthy to serve as an aesthetic example.⁶⁷

Bruno Schacherl, on the other hand, clearly perceived the didactic

⁶⁴Francis Lane, "Strehler's Brechtian 'Muse of Fire' Fails Him This Time," Times (London), 5 July 1965.

⁶⁵Roberto De Monticelli, "Il tragico girotondo dei potenti intorno alla corona," Epoca (Milan), 4 July 1965.

⁶⁶Gian Maria Guglielmino, "La spada della poesia si affonda nel nero groviglio della storia," Gazzetta del Popolo (Turin), 22 June 1965, p. 7.

⁶⁷Cecilia Sacchi, "Strehler 8 1/2," Sipario, 20 (July 1965): 35.

historical purpose of Strehler's undertaking.

Affirming its veracity and the inevitability of its course, history sweeps away even those who make it. It transforms men in power into ferocious puppets. Conceived in this light Il gioco dei potenti presents a parable of power as part of the process in man's alienation from his own feudal class, which is engaged in self destruction. To serve this historical need, victimised corpses serve as a foundation for the new world. . . . Hence the power which no longer can or still cannot change the world, indeed, remains a sterile game, unless one recognizes the ultimate purpose it serves.⁶⁸

The director's fascination with history, myth and popular theatre, almost Wagnerian in its scope, triumphed side by side with Brechtian skepticism and the clarity of the didactic purpose. The anatomy of power which Strehler started in Richard II and then elaborated in view of the sociological interactions between the masses and their rulers in Coriolanus found in Il gioco dei potenti its ultimate comprehensive expression. "Strehler is not too preoccupied with the story of single characters," wrote Radice. "Even less is his interest in the mechanism of history. His attention rather centers on the inexorability and inevitability of the contagion stemming from power."⁶⁹ It is the desire to illuminate this theme that led Strehler to subject Shakespeare's text to major reductions, more than he had ever done before. Somewhat reminiscent of Brecht's practice with Coriolanus, his directorial notes read that "Shakespeare's text is utilized in a manner similar to the way Holinshed's chronicles were utilized by Shakespeare. . . . Accurate Shakespearean 'reading' is far less important than the

⁶⁸Bruno Schacherl, "Il gioco dei potenti," Rinascita (Rome), 26 June 1965.

⁶⁹Raul Radice, "Presentato Il gioco dei potenti (prima parte) al Teatro Lirico," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 22 June 1965.

interpretation it could receive."⁷⁰ The whole episode of Joan of Arc was thus eliminated, and some characters or their lines were replaced with those of the Actor. Also utilized were excerpts from other Shakespearean works. All of these reductions emphasized two main imperatives of the production: its thematic purpose--the anatomy of power, and its theatrical medium and epic alienation and symbolism. Thus, the ultimate result, as Melchinger stated in his review, "surpassed the structural pattern of an Elizabethan tragedy transforming it into a sacra rappresentazione, or rather a morality-play with a Brechtian inflection."⁷¹ Arturo Lazzari added to this criticism that

ample Shakespearean work utilized by Strehler in the production, resulted in a series of scenes arranged in sequence. All of them were recited with an extreme sense of alienation, immersed in virtually ritual theatricality, declaredly expressive and deliberately performed to the point of exasperation.⁷²

From the above analysis the emerging picture clearly indicates the consistent mythical application of the theatrical medium. Through the dialectical approach to history as fused to mass spectacle the production acquired the force of a highly spiritual experience. The action that consistently emanated from the pageant wagons brought on and off the stage; the colorful carnival atmosphere dominating the popular market scenes; the grotesque, blood-stained massacres--all of these and more underscored the medieval, primitive, or for that matter simply ceremonial, almost

⁷⁰"Nota sulla traduzione," pp. 5-6.

⁷¹Siegfried Melchinger, "Il Gioco dei Potenti," Stuttgarter Zeitung (Stuttgart), 3 July 1965.

⁷²Lazzari, p. 90.

sacramental nature of the performance. The game of the powerful played on the stage evolved into an elaborate ritual, employing a complex symbolism derived from various types of theatre and eras of history. It grew into a consecration rite of man and power, devoid of any reference to time or space, with the Actor serving as its high priest. In Strehler's own words it rendered "the story of Henry VI and that of the War of the Roses as a game of a massacre: the power that corrupts."⁷³ And all of it was for a crown, "a foolish emblem of authority made of a miserable piece of paper" and used by the kings and circus clowns alike.⁷⁴ Indeed this rite of murder, the folly of history, the human comedy by far surpassed the strict genre criteria applied by Strehler in his previous productions. It was no longer an Elizabethan, nor purely a Brechtian treatment of Shakespeare. Neither was it simply Kott's theory in practice, but rather a return to the original function of the theatre: its purgative, emotional as well as highly emblematic treatment of reality in order to fulfill the consistent public need for a mythic liturgy. Thus, Ruggero Jacobbi concluded his review:

In the course of the two evenings at the Lyric Theatre we have witnessed the immense audience cry, laugh, get annoyed, applaud, in other words do all that is expected from it at a theatre; and decree upon this 'monstrosity' of a production success based solely on emotion, expressed to fulfill a need beyond any didactic goal or abstract assumption.⁷⁵

In The Game of the Powerful, the social and political

⁷³Strehler in Lombardo, p. 297.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ruggero Jacobbi, "La tetralogia del giovane Shakespeare e il duplice spettacolo di Strehler," Avanti (Milan), 22 June 1965.

considerations of the director were set aside. His main concern was with the basic human situation. Trapped in the cogs of the Grand Mechanism man was suspended in a moral vacuum and lonely in his senseless struggle in a vast cosmos deprived of its gods. In this production Strehler was no longer merely a socially aware critic. With it he gradually assumed the role of the poet-philosopher. The director reflected on life with the bitter, pensive sensitivity of the mature artist, rather than with the unrestrained ardor of the young, passionate fighter eager to right the wrong and change the world for the better, preaching from the book of Shakespeare. It is from this perspective the director approached his new project on King Lear once, as he noted, "The Game of the Powerful initiated a certain way of doing and thinking of Shakespeare."⁷⁶

The production of King Lear (Milan: Piccolo Teatro, 4 November 1972) was Strehler's first work formulated from the perspective of an older man painfully observing the rise of the new world. If in The Game of the Powerful, produced at the dawn of the cultural revolution of the sixties, Strehler schematically depicted the process by which rulers succeed one another, in King Lear the process itself had long since been explored and consequently was of no interest. The revolution was over and the director returned to the establishment. He resumed his past duties as artistic director of the state theatre. The blazing fire of youth succumbed to the wisdom of age. The histories belonged to the past and thus the director addressed non-historical Shakespearean material. The only surviving element was the dialectical methodology which still served

⁷⁶Strehler, cited in Lombardo, Shakespeare e Jonson, p. 299.

as a necessary tool in self-exploration. Looking back provided a perspective on that "tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury" which we call life. When the leaves fall and the robes are torn away, one is left to face the naked truth of who and what man is. Hence, Lear became, in Strehler's own words, "a tragedy of existence, of man, of the credulous generations and many other things."⁷⁷ According to Renzo Tian, Strehler's Lear was "a parable of a man searching for clairvoyance, through pain and madness, on the path to absurdity."⁷⁸ But above all, it was a voyage toward the realization of man's own nature.⁷⁹

To obtain this result, the director undertook a close textual analysis, incorporating in it even things that may seem to be insignificant. He avoided taking any strong stands. Quite the contrary, the material was presented in a rather suggestive, obscure

⁷⁷Giorgio Strehler, "Appunti per la regia," in Il Re Lear di Shakespeare (Verona: Bertani editore, 1973), p. 31.

⁷⁸Renzo Tian, "Angoscia e mistero nel Lear di Strehler," Il Secolo XIX (Genoa), 7 November 1972.

⁷⁹Unless otherwise noted, the physical description of the mise en scène and the conceptual interpretation are based on Strehler's Regiebuch for the production published as "Appunti per la regia," in Il Re Lear di Shakespeare, pp. 21-47. The same publication also contains the production diary "Cronaca delle prove," as recorded by Strehler's assistants, pp. 213-55; there is also an introductory note by Luigi Lunari as well as the complete text of the translated play by Luigi Lunari and Angelo Dallagiaco, and an extensive photographic documentention of the performance. Also consulted were Stephen De Lannoy, "Le Roi Lear de Shakespeare dans une mise en scène de Giorgio Strenler," in Jean Jacquot, ed., Les Voies de la creation theatrale, No. 6 (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1978), pp. 397-456. Besides the above sources, the following analysis of the production is also based on my own personal impressions of the performance and on the program that was circulated in the auditorium, Programma Piccolo Teatro di Milano 1947-1977: Re Lear.

form. King Lear, Strehler noted, "should be clear and mysterious at the same time."⁸⁰ In the introduction to the text, published shortly after the monumental success of King Lear, Luigi Lunari suggested that Strehler had accomplished a virtually impossible task. He translated physically unrepresentable textual complexities of King Lear into a comprehensible theatrical language.⁸¹ The delicate Shakespearean balance between the sublime and the ridiculous which Henry James claimed as unstageable, Strehler proved to be not merely highly poetical, but theatrical at the same time.⁸²

Strehler's theatrical language and the superb Italian adaptation of the text, which was made by Angelo Dallagiaco and Luigi Lunari, succeeded in conveying King Lear's poetic eloquence and profundity of ideas to even the least sophisticated audiences. Performed in the remote districts, it astonished the public with the unexpected power "the laborious classical work" possessed. Among the specialists and Shakespeare lovers, it stimulated new insights and brought to the fore the underlying meanings of the play. As Lunari stated:

⁸⁰Strehler, Per un teatro umano, p. 324.

⁸¹Luigi Lunari, "Introduzione," in Re Lear, p. 16.

⁸²Henry James, The Scenic Art, ed. Allan Wade (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1949), pp. 178, 190. Reviewing Salvini's 1884 performance in London Henry James thus described Shakespeare's King Lear:

King Lear is not a play to be acted. . . . Lear is a great and terrible poem,--the most sublime, possibly, of all dramatic poems; but it is not, to my conception, a play, in the sense in which a play is a production that gains from being presented to our senses. Our senses can only be afflicted and overwhelmed by the immeasurable complexities of Lear. . . . Such an attempt leaves the vastness of the work almost untouched. . . . it is, in my opinion, impossible to imagine a drama that accommodates itself less to the stage.

Applying an objective methodology, Strehler's staging succeeded in preserving both the innumerable variety of interpretations of the text and the clarity. This was achieved through balancing and integrating all of the components, instead of "popularizing" them. This directorial reading found even stronger support in the effective visual translation.⁸³

The designer, Ezio Frigerio, surrounded a slightly elliptical stage with a tightly stretched tent and converted it into a circus arena, a true and original podium for the theatrum mundi, a place for what Kott (speaking of Richard III) calls "gigantic buffoonery."⁸⁴ Stripped of unnecessary props, it was left empty with several boards spread out all around. Covered with sand, the cold empty space, desolate and deserted at the same time, suggested the infinite possibility of life. This "contrast of the limited theatrical space" reflected, as Strehler suggested, "the limitless cosmos of the planet, to be conceived within this primordial emptiness."⁸⁵ In fact, since the events were based on one of the oldest stories in Western civilization, the pertinence of the issues raised in it rendered King Lear timeless. There, in an empty space full of cold indifference and contradictions, lay death and rebirth, symbolizing the eternal passage from ashes to ashes, from dust to dust. "When deserted it is atrocious, but how overflowing with life and human happiness it becomes when the actors who tread on

⁸³Lunari, p. 16.

⁸⁴Kott, p. 54. Physical description of the sets and costumes is based on: photographic documentation in Il Re Lear di Shakespeare; Stephen De Lannoy, section on "Decor et costume," pp. 403-16; iconographic material obtained from the Piccolo Teatro Photo Laboratory, photographer Luigi Cimanghi and my personal impressions.

⁸⁵Strehler, Per un teatro umano, p. 332.

it . . . create with it, stir it up, defend it and render it alive."⁸⁶ The stage is a "wasteland" where the blind and the mad move around, where the tempests roar and dissolve their anger. This is nature itself in its primordial state, the only place where Lear can find an outlet for his confusion, anger and pain. Only here, alone with himself and nature can he realize his own true self.

Strehler staged the opening sequence as a mysterious fable, "something in between a performance and a liturgical ritual, in which all believe and at the same time, do not."⁸⁷ It could be seen as a morality play in which Everyman, the old wise man of us all, comes to grips with the world. Veiled in a transparent half-curtain, limiting our vision to what appears to be a primordial womb, the whole first scene of this ritual progressed with increasing contradictions until it finally burst open, as Lear tore the documents and with them the veil of illusion. From then on, the passage to the core of reality was initiated. This half-curtain was clearly derived from the experiments of Brecht, providing the sense of alienation. It also strengthened the sense of mystery, the sense of theatrical poetry. The torn curtain not merely separated theatrical convention from the spectator but it also absorbed the audience into the world of stage illusions, more real than reality itself. Epic theatre and poetry fused critical objectivity and make-believe.

After the "love contest" was over, Edmund, who was seated all this time among the spectators, arose and climbed up to the stage.

⁸⁶"Appunti per la regia," p. 34.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 33.

In cold irony and cynicism, he observed the first scene of the human comedy. In time, he too would be consumed in the passionate tale of the fool but until then he could view the situation objectively with the eyes of an outsider. A similar loss of critical perspective gradually took place among the spectators as well, as some of the other characters stepped on and off the stage, bridging the gap between the two worlds. Agostino Lombardo later noted:

The Fool is in constant contact with the audience. The actors become stagehands and vice versa, lifting and lowering in front of us, the boards and the platforms, stools, cheap pieces of wood that were to represent many different things Strehler not merely consistently and vigorously follows the "epic" conceptions assimilated from Brecht . . . not only expresses the relation between the theatre and life which is the constant motif of Shakespearean poetry, but above all individuates one of the positive values discovered by Shakespeare in his research, all of which together render this exploration called theatre possible.⁸⁸

Alienation effects were applied throughout, both in the manner of reciting and in the use of light that carved the characters in profile, molding them into black and white graphic figures. This very dialectic interpretation, however, characteristic of past productions, no longer carried its didactic message. It rather forged a single unit, one universe enveloping the whole theatre in a fantastic veil of inner reality. In a dark corner of our minds live all: villains, innocent children, conceited kings, foolish old men and wise fools. All of them were found reflected on the stage, only in this case some of the images were doubled, tripled, divided between the sexes and reflected among themselves. These polar forces were in constant friction which acquired greater danger with

⁸⁸Agostino Lombardo, "Irrapresentabile o illeggibile" in *Il Re Lear*, p. 266.

every act, thus bringing the play closer to the inevitable resolution. Edgar and Edmund could be mistaken for twins who were literally placed in the ring at the center of the stage to fight the eternal battle, as in a medieval morality play depicting the forces of good and evil. Gloucester and Lear appeared as virtually identical old men always surrounded by an ample number of fools, those who pretended to be so or those who were forced to be by circumstances. Even the Master Fool himself was split with the character of Cordelia in Strehler's staging. In the final scene of the last act, Lear laments over the dead Cordelia: "my poor fool is hanged." This figurative suggestion was interpreted by the director literally. In fact, to support his notion Strehler contended that in the original Shakespearean production the roles of both the Fool and Cordelia were played by a single boy-actor, Robert Armin.⁸⁹ Thus, one character appropriately complemented the other. In it there was personified the persistence of good which is constantly driven away by Lear, who nevertheless cannot detach himself from it. According to Strehler:

the Fool serves Lear only during his negative phase, as a comment on the negativity of Lear's character For the new Lear, the Fool should have transformed himself into a new entity, probably all filled with compassion, sweetness, tender affection, trepidation There is no need for him but for another term of affection and presence—which is Cordelia.⁹⁰

The Fool-Cordelia is the toy, the object of love, the reflection of the bitter truth, the true companion, the source for Lear's wisdom. The complex relationship between the two—the father and

⁸⁹"Appunti per la regia," p. 42.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 44.

the daughter, the old man and his fool--was underscored through visual images in the production. As a father, Lear banished his daughter; as an infant born to the world again out of the insanity of the storm, he was cared for by the eternal mother Cordelia. And then, in a pose identical to that of Cordelia, Lear knelt in front of his dead daughter. This final, ironic joke of life, was played on an old man laying to rest the flower in its blossom of youth. Ripping a hole through the center of the tightly stretched tent, Cordelia's head fell down, disclosing the rest of her body carried by the old man lamenting his terrible loss. The sound of the torn curtain struck with penetrating force the very chord of human suffering and made one cringe from the inflicted pain. Only then could Lear die side by side with his daughter, symbolizing "the two points where life meets."⁹¹

This conception of the play clearly grafted onto Tino Carraro's interpretation of Lear, was enhanced and graphically brought to the foreground by Ottavia Piccolo as Cordelia. The intimate relation between the two--the father and his daughter, the king and his fool, the old fool and the clown apprentice--through extraordinary performances by the two actors, attained the heights of human drama and conveyed the very essence of Shakespeare's play. Ottavia Piccolo, as De Monticelli noted, torn between Cordelia and the Fool, touched "the serene and lunatic, senseless and tender grace comparable only to childhood memories."⁹² Tino Carraro also received

⁹¹Ibid., p. 29.

⁹²Roberto De Monticelli, "La rinascita di Lear al Piccolo," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 19 November 1977.

the highest praise from critics, who marked his performance as a historic interpretation of the King. With this portrayal, Radice wrote, Carraro "joins the ranks of the great interpreters."⁹³ Calendoli admired Carraro's perseverance and force "in sustaining the dangerous, under all circumstances," in the portrayal of folly.⁹⁴ Both Fadini and De Monticelli claimed that in this role Carraro reached "the peak of acting"⁹⁵ and offered "a crowning performance to his artistic career."⁹⁶ "When he needs to give the tragic verse thunder, Carraro has few equals in Italy today," Francis Lane noted in his review for the Daily American.⁹⁷ And indeed the actor mesmerized the audience as he recited the lines of Shakespeare's masterpiece. Particularly impressive was the wide spectrum of vocal intonations used by Carraro to paint the legendary King. At times his Lear howled with pain, competing with a tormented nature exasperating itself in a raging storm, while in the very next moment the intimate dialogue between the actor and the spectators struck the chord of a most personal nature. Balancing the traditional interpretation of Lear with the modern alienated, grotesque approach to the character, Carraro achieved an unprece-

⁹³Raul Radice, "Con Strehler la Tragedia delle Tragedie nella sua totalita," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 7 November 1972.

⁹⁴Giovanni Calendoli, "Strehler ha scelto il teatro," Vita (Rome), 18 November 1972.

⁹⁵Roberto De Monticelli, "Il Re Lear di Strehler al Piccolo: un spettacolo da meditare a lungo," Epoca (Milan), 19 November 1972.

⁹⁶Edoardo Fadini, "Un nuovo Strehler alla prova della maturità," Rinascita 44 (10 November 1972): 23.

⁹⁷Francis Lane, "A dazzling new King Lear in Milan," Daily American (Rome), 10 November 1972.

dented quintessence of emotional, aesthetic and absurdist insight into the tragedy.

From its opening night Strehler's King Lear enjoyed tremendous success among critics and audiences alike. It was unanimously acclaimed the best production in years. Jan Kott, in an interview given to Laura Caretti, claimed that it was the best that European theatre currently had to offer. In his opinion it was even superior to the legendary 1962 production by Peter Brook. "Strehler's King Lear is more effective and cruel," the critic noted. "In Brook's staging King Lear is a story of flesh and blood" whereas in Strehler's version "it is a true metaphysical drama."⁹⁸ Francis Lane joined the Polish scholar in recognizing the production as superior not only to that of Peter Brook but also to the acclaimed Penchulescu rendition at the National Theatre of Bucharest. Strehler's King Lear, the critic wrote, "is a remarkable achievement in that it succeeds in saying something new about Shakespeare's tragedy in a period of theatrical history when we have seen several outstanding productions of the tragedy."⁹⁹ And indeed it continued to be performed with great success for over five years not only in Italy but also all across Europe, including Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Geneva, Munich, Zurich, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, and Hamburg. The continuous run that concluded in January of 1978 enjoyed over four hundred performances, including a telecast over an Italian national

⁹⁸Laura Caretti, "Jan Kott e re Lear," Paese Sera: Supplica Libri (Rome), 2 March 1973.

⁹⁹Francis Lane, "Milan," Plays & Players (April 1973): 62.

network.¹⁰⁰

Old age is an accomplishment for Lear, something he had to fight for and conquer. His drama is not that of a single king but of a whole generation that steps aside to let the younger one assume power. The dichotomy between the old and the young found very strong polarization in the production. The constant juxtaposition of the two was recurrent in virtually every single scene, starting with that of the "Love contest" in which Lear, Gloucester and Kent, huddled together, were surrounded by the brave young world, and ending with Lear's death. To underscore the cruelty of the situation in which the old were persecuted by the young, Strehler dressed Lear and Gloucester in ragged mantles which resembled clown costumes rather than royal robes. In sharp contrast, the rest of the characters wore black leather. At times it almost seemed, as Edoardo Fadini noted, that the poor naked old men were being tamed in a circus ring by the animal trainers, or even worse: a motorcycle gang was taunting and making fools out of defenseless old men.¹⁰¹ Jan Kott once said that "the most terrifying kind of a tyrant is he who has recognized himself as a clown, and the world as a gigantic buffoonery."¹⁰² In Strehler's treatment, Lear's and Gloucester's tragedies indeed literally stem from a failure to recognize their clownish existence in a world which is but a circus arena.

Strehler used light to stress the contrast between the alter-

¹⁰⁰Videotape of this production is available at the Theatre Archives of the Piccolo Teatro and RAI DUE.

¹⁰¹Fadini, p. 23.

¹⁰²Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, p. 54.

egos of each generation, something they cling to and try to attain. The image of the boyish Fool side by side with an exhausted old man could hardly leave anyone ambiguous about the symbolism implied. In this image lay Strehler's own personal lament. He who had striven with Shakespeare to conquer the world, through the same Shakespeare now pensively began to reflect the shadows of life. The cosmic vision was narrowed to that of an individual man, but in him Strehler found the universe still unexplored. Reviewing the production, Lunari stated:

King Lear is a "historical" production; "historical" in the most broad and radical sense of the word; historical by virtue of itself, by the historical nature of the very material; because of the tangible exactness of the dialectical relations between the old and the young, between the rich and the poor, between the oppressors and the oppressed, between reason and passion, between wisdom and sheer folly. It is "historical" due to the fact of it not being attributed to a specific moment of a particular period which could be identified In King Lear the situations and the historical mechanisms do not figure as an example but—paraphrasing Shakespeare's own text—as a thing in itself.¹⁰³

Thus, above all, Strehler was concerned with expressing and creating poetry. "This is his debt to the past and the cornerstone for the future. This is his contribution to the art of living."¹⁰⁴

Strehler's final Shakespearean work concluded the cycle where it had started at the beginning of his long career. Thirty years separate the two Tempests, thirty years of experience of over two hundred productions and a drastic change in perspective. Strehler returned to Shakespeare's last masterpiece after having successfully tackled twelve other texts of the bard and having developed his Piccolo Teatro into one of the foremost European theatrical

¹⁰³Lunari, p. 20.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

institutions. He was returning to the play to explore what seemed invisible in the creative fervor of his twenties. Strehler had decided, as Kott put it, "to bring the English Tempest back to its Italian lineage: Prospero was to return to Milan for the second " and almost only time in all of these years.¹⁰⁵ Since 1948, due to the great impact of Strehler's original production, very few Tempests had been produced in Italy. It is quite likely that the 1978 Tempest (Milan: Teatro Lirico, 28 June 1978) will have the same long lasting effect.

The production opened with a colossal storm that astounded the audience for over twenty minutes with sound, music, and stage movement.¹⁰⁶ The spectacle was not realized through mammoth sets, numerous extras, moving platforms, colorful costumes or even lights. True to Serlio's dream, as Kott stated, "the Baroque machina was

¹⁰⁵Jan Kott, "Prospero or the Director," Theatre (Spring, 1979): 117.

¹⁰⁶Unless otherwise noted, the physical description of the mise en scène is based on my personal impressions of the production that I have seen several times in Milan and New York, and the following sources: Iconographic material obtained from the Photo Laboratory of the Piccolo Teatro; Production programs for 1978 (Milan), 1982 (Paris), 1983 (Rome), 1984 (American Tour); Luigi Lunari, "Appunti per una interpretazione della Tempesta di Strehler," typewritten manuscript available at the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro, Milan, 1978; Giorgio Strehler, "Shakespeare oltre La Tempesta," Nuova Rivista Europea (May/June 1978): 22-40 (This article was especially helpful in obtaining a detailed account of the director's stage conception, which was related prior to the opening night); Annamaria Cascetta, "Una lettura 'pacificatrice' della Tempesta di Shakespeare," Comunicazioni Sociali (March 1979): 84-90; Nicola Marrone, "The Tempest: il testo e la scena," Quaderni del CUT 20 (December 1978): 97-109; Odoardo Bertani, "L'artista si interroga sulla sua presenza come uomo e sull'uso della sua vocazione," Il Dramma 54 (October/November 1978): 37-40.

moved by human hands."¹⁰⁷ The effect was achieved through a simple movement of the actors and several mimes. As the public entered the theatre it was confronted with a bare stage in the middle of which there was suspended a huge, white sail attached to a mast. The upstage cyclorama was lit in blue. The orchestra in front of the stage was eliminated and in its place several blue plywood boards (a few feet high) were lined up across the width of the proscenium arch. The boards and the entire stage were covered with a single square piece of material, which was made out of two and a half miles of blue silk. As the audience was comfortably seated and the house lights dimmed, a terrible crash of thunder and lightning rolled right over everyone, leaving the theatre drowned in total darkness. Another flash of lightning from behind the spectators, then from the stage, then again from the balconies, echoed by fear-evoking rolling peals of thunder, and the tempest started. The sail was animated as the blowing wind tore it to pieces. The huge mast carrying it bounced with vigor from side to side, as if it were a straw. The blue material covering the boards (managed from behind by the skillfully trained mimes) was transformed into the most threatening waves of a fury-possessed sea. The crew of the ship, trying to tame the sails, was constantly thrown from one side to the other. There was no doubt left in anybody's mind that they were caught in the midst of erupting natural forces, which were literally conducted by Prospero standing in the middle of the stage. "The catastrophe seemed so imminent," Chiaretti noted, "that the audience . . . collectively panicked, quite ready to fall on their knees to appease

¹⁰⁷Kott, "Prospero," p. 118.

the Master of raging forces in the hope of being spared from the impending flood, since they honestly paid for their safe conduct on Strehler's Ark."¹⁰⁸ The scene was so thrilling and awe-inspiring that according to some rumors, a woman present at one of the performances was thrown into convulsions and had a miscarriage. In any event, one could draw appropriate conclusions from the sensational theatrical display achieved through a very simple and at the same time extraordinarily inventive technique. In the words of Kott "the director of The Tempest did not disclose his art, yet he did not conceal his power" either.¹⁰⁹

As the tempest gradually subsided and the torn-away sail revealed the rest of the bare stage, transforming it into an island, the actual play began.

Prospero's island is a platform built of wooden boards nailed together, surrounded on two sides by the sea. . . . The wooden deck which, when cut in half and placed at a slant, becomes "another place" on the island, is at the same time a raft on the sea and a platform of a popular theatre. . . . [It] is also a prop room [when needed].¹¹⁰

Equipped with this raft-stage the production proceeded with no other major special effects. Occasionally, the center platform was lowered or raised diagonally, sometimes followed by pauses for the ebbing and flowing of the sea. Only in the second act was the audience, along with the court of Alonso, subjected to a similar fear-evoking scene. The sky turned black and Ariel, with shrieks and

¹⁰⁸Tommaso Chiaretti, "Nell'isola di Shakespeare c'è un naufragio di troppo?" La Repubblica (Rome), 30 June 1978.

¹⁰⁹Kott, "Prospero," p. 118.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

a roaring wind, swooped down "like a huge virulent bat," snatching the golden banquet "out of the hands of Prospero's enemies."¹¹¹

Although illusion was one of the more important elements of the production, most of the text was recited in a rather epic manner, making Strehler's fascination with Brecht quite apparent. Some of the characters, mostly Prospero, stepped from the stage into the audience to comment on the action taking place. The platform on which the play was performed was both an island in the midst of a sea and a stage for the display of the director's craft. The correspondence between the time of the plot and the time of its performance was stressed. Prospero was both a character in the play and the director of the production. The illusion turned into reality as the theatre touched its own extreme limits. The Tempest "is life which is the theatre," wrote Strehler, "but which supercedes the theatre."¹¹² Hence the process of making the world a better place to live was to be initiated right there in the theatre. "We have always tried--without illusion but with some certainty--to create a kind of a theatre whose intention might be to modify the world," wrote Strehler in the American program notes. "We have never before felt, as in the case of this Tempest, the fallible, despairing, triumphant greatness and responsibility of our profession."¹¹³ The magical island was indeed governed by the high social responsibility

¹¹¹Dan Sullivan, "Piccolo Teatro Offers a Tempest at Twilight," Los Angeles Times, 9 July 1984, Part IV, p. 7.

¹¹²La Tempesta; Piccolo Teatro program at SUNY Purchase Summerfare (1984), p. iii.

¹¹³La Tempesta; American Tour Piccolo Teatro program (1984), p. 18.

of an artist. The various staging methods explored by the director in the course of this production served a single purpose: a Brechtian reading on the Elizabethan stage, and the bitter arcadian perspective of Jan Kott interwoven with an almost childlike fairy tale à la Reinhardt, produced theatre that triumphed in the face of the desperate times, offering its support "to a society which is losing the sense of human coexistence."¹¹⁴

The success of Strehler's production, wrote Scorrano, "is due in part to the sets of Luciano Damiani, infused with simplicity, a poverty of materials and a wealth of theatrical symbolism."¹¹⁵ Carpi's music suggested the unreal sensation of a dream and added to the lucidity of the production. To emphasize the apparent bareness of the stage, theatrical devices were made quite explicit. Ariel, suspended by a visible wire, floated all over the stage. Prospero commanded every single movement of the spirit by literally pulling him by the string. Finally, when Ariel was to be freed, Prospero simply detached the wire from his back and, exalted with happiness, the spirit vanished among the audience. The spectators were left with a final theatrical stunt as Prospero stepped down from the stage to recite his farewell soliloquy and for the last time to observe the magic created by him in the theatre. With a solemn air he broke the staff and at that very moment the whole stage collapsed, revealing unattractive brick walls; shabby, torn curtains and the sewn-together strips of the waves. The spell of magic was

¹¹⁴Purchase, p. iii.

¹¹⁵Oswaldo Scorrano, "Dopo la tempesta la vita e il teatro (inquieti)," Corriera del Giorno (Taranto), 27 November 1983.

broken. Things were not what they seemed. The enchantment of the theatre dream was over. What remained was crude and bitter reality. Kott, in his book, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, called the play "the great Renaissance tragedy of lost illusions."¹¹⁶ The dreams of grandeur and illusion were stripped away not only from the humanists of the Renaissance, but also from the actors and the spectators alike. "Only the bitter consciousness of lost illusions remained The world remained as cruel as it had been 'and our little life is rounded with a sleep'."¹¹⁷ Strehler carefully preserved this analogy of the Theatrum Mundi. On the raft of his Tempest there was conceived what Kott calls

a wonderful, cruel and dramatic world, which suddenly exposed both the power, and the misery of man; a world in which nature and history, royal power and morality, have for the first time been deprived of theological meaning.¹¹⁸

Even Strehler's personal protagonist, Prospero, his own reflection on the great mirror of the Theatrum Mundi who desperately clung to the sanctuary of theatrical illusion, had to give up and reveal the stage tricks that kept the audience in awe of his magic. Through this act he also stripped the exterior facade from reality. In the epilogue, Prospero stepped downstage, recognizing in both life and theatre the vanished art of illusion. He walked down to the audience "not to ask for applause, but to pray for absolution, mercy and release from the theatre. He returns not to people, not to the

¹¹⁶Jan Kott, "Prospero's Staff," in Shakespeare Our Contemporary, p. 327.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 326-27.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 295.

audience, but—to seclusion in Milan.¹¹⁹

Long discussions with Jan Kott preceding the production enabled the Polish scholar to make his own directorial statement on theatre through Strehler's work.¹²⁰ In Strehler's opinion

every critic defines a specific idea of a production, to the same extent as any director provides its stage realization. Kott has been an illuminator and an illuminating challenger at the very moment of work on The Tempest: the main difference with the other critics is that he was present in person, physically, whereas Auden and Coleridge could make their presence felt only through a written word.¹²¹

Thus, although in Kott's perception The Tempest marked the end of Elizabethan tragedy where Shakespeare had to admit that theatre cannot change the world, Strehler's belief in the supreme power of art remained unshattered. The collapsed sets, through the power of the audience's applause, were instantaneously restored, reaffirming Strehler's belief in the dreams which make life liveable.

The collaboration between Carraro and Strehler, which covers a span of over thirty years, found its crowning in the conception of Prospero. In this Shakespearean protagonist both artists found their true alter-egos, and through mutual understanding reinforced the dual perspective of a character and a director, which Prospero possessed. Through the eyes of Strehler, Carraro reenacted Prospero the director, the magician of the show. Through Carraro's presence on the stage and the extraordinary sensitivity of the accomplished actor, Strehler could relive the agony of a Renaissance humanist

¹¹⁹Kott, "Prospero," p. 123.

¹²⁰The transcript of some of these discussions is available through the archives of the Piccolo Teatro.

¹²¹Giorgio Strehler, "Come a teatro: A colloquio con Giorgio Strehler," L'Opinione (Rome), 20 June 1978.

fighting the corrupting forces of society. Since for all three of them, Strehler, Carraro and Prospero-Shakespeare alike, theatre was their only release, The Tempest truly became a tour de force, an exorcism of the tormenting powers contained within themselves. Moreover, in the figure of Prospero there was reflected an extraordinary constellation of the accomplished actor, director and Shakespeare himself. For all of them the play provided a highly personal vehicle of expression, primarily because all three, to a greater or lesser degree, considered The Tempest to be their swan song.¹²² And, indeed, the portrayal of Prospero deservedly received unanimous praise. "Tino Carraro seems to have superseded himself," Vigorelli raved in his review.¹²³ "Carraro's measured, attentive, richly shaded performance . . . fascinates the audience and transcends even the magic of the protagonist whom he portrays," wrote Scorrano

¹²²For a brief period following the production Strehler retired from the theatre to pursue a political career, in the capacity of an Italian representative to the European Parliament. Strehler's conscious attempt to mirror himself and his personal views on theatre in Prospero is thoroughly examined in Lunari's manuscript, pp. 9-16. According to Lunari, the fusion of Strehler's personal ego with the dramatic and epic egos of his protagonists evolved gradually throughout the director's career, and culminated in Prospero. "Prospero is Strehler," not only in terms of what Strehler is as director and as a human being, but also in terms of "what Strehler thinks as a man of letters, as a politician, as an artist and as a philosopher." (p. 14) In his article "Prospero or the Director" Kott also suggested that Strehler identifies himself with Prospero and with him prays "for release from the theatre" to return "to seclusion in Milan." (p. 22) As for Tino Carraro, the actor stated that in the robes of Prospero upon breaking the magic wand he also bids his personal farewell to the theatre and intends to retire. (Interview with Tino Carraro, Purchase, New York, 23 July 1984.)

¹²³Giancarlo Vigorelli, "Ora il ritmo è perfetto," Il Giorno (Milan), 29 October 1978.

in Corriera del Giorno.¹²⁴ And Stephen Holden, reviewing the production for the New York Times, stated that Carraro "imbues the character with a fine measured dignity balancing vengefulness and compassion, majesty and canniness, to suggest an artist who has sadly probed the depths of his artistic vision as he has entered the twilight of his years."¹²⁵

Perhaps the most memorable performance was given by Giulia Lazzarini, whose interpretation of Ariel not only rendered the spirit evanescent, but also enhanced it with penetrating melancholy. Her airy creation sparkled with the innocent awe of a child and transcended the wisdom of the ages. Its soul ached from the pain of captivity and rejoiced in the pleasures of life. After the opening night, Bertani stated that he could hardly imagine anyone even daring to recreate Ariel in the footsteps of Lazzarini. She combined in her character, he wrote, "the image of an angelic messenger, composed of uncontaminated light and air, . . . fantasy, humor, musicality and miracle." She was the "clown of the production that possesses all of the melancholy of the last adieu."¹²⁶ Although no blood streams through Ariel's veins, De Monticelli wrote, the soul of Lazzarini's divine creation is forged out of music "with desperation, tenderness and hope painted all over her face, reminiscent of Laforgue's Pierrot."¹²⁷ "Made corporeal only because

¹²⁴Scorrano, "Dopo la tempesta."

¹²⁵Stephen Holden, "Italian Tempest Opens at Summerfare," New York Times, 27 July 1984, p. C3.

¹²⁶Odoardo Bertani, "L'Isola della conoscenza," Avvenire (Milan), 30 June 1978.

¹²⁷Roberto De Monticelli, "Nella Tempesta il mago Strehler,"

of a theatrical necessity," Scorrano noted, "Lazzarini tiptoes across the earth and the air, suspended upon a single cord, ethereal, light and impalpable, negating all the principles of gravitation."¹²⁸ She was as mischievous as a little minx, with the playfulness of a child. Seemingly weightless as a feather, she glided and swayed with such free abandon not only in the air but also as she pranced and tumbled across the stage and dived in and out of the water. Holden called her luminous Ariel "a harlequin-wraith who swims deliriously through the air, sings like an angel and toe dances on Prospero's hands."¹²⁹ Francis Lane admired Lazzarini's "grace of a prima ballerina, the whimsical impishness of a Gelsomina [in Fellini's film La Strada] and the mimic pathos of Barrault's Baptiste in Les Enfants du Paradis."¹³⁰ Her flowing white costume added to the aura of the spiritual nature and enhanced it with sweet warmth and innocence.

In contrast to this evenascent pure spirit suspended in midair Michele Placido carved his character of Caliban out of the dark shadows of the night. Emerging out of the earth, with glowing eyes sparkling like two bright sapphires against the blackness of his body, tormented by the encroachment of western civilization, his Caliban won over the sympathy of the audience and confirmed the uncontaminated superiority of his primitive being. Sullivan called

Corriera della Sera (Milan), 30 June 1978.

¹²⁸Scorrano, "Dopo la tempesta."

¹²⁹Holden, "Italian Tempest."

¹³⁰John Francis Lane, "La Tempesta," Plays & Players 26 (May 1979): 39.

him "a tragic figure, all confusion and pain."¹³¹ "Rather than representing mankind's inherent brutish side," Holden stated, "he seems to be an emblem of man's inhumanity to man in the form of slavery."¹³² This idea was further underscored by placing this suffering creature at the mercy of hilarious and at the same time cruel commedia dell'arte pranks that were played again, as in the 1948 production, in the Venetian and Neapolitan dialects. Just as the stage effects were reminiscent of the great era of Serlio's spectacles, the entertaining lazzi of Stefano and Trinculo recaptured the glorious art of the commedia actors themselves. Adapted to the taste of the modern spectator and with regained vitality, the Italian theatre of the Renaissance triumphed on the stage in Strehler's Tempest.

In the midst of the general praise following the opening night there were also heard some voices of discontent. Sandro Dini criticized the cinematic quality of Strehler's spectacle and had great difficulty in justifying the spontaneous applause throughout the performance and the twenty-minute ovation at its end.¹³³ Gastone Geron was annoyed with the excessive noise generated by the tempest and the unnecessary collapse of the sets in the course of the final scene.¹³⁴ Alberto Abruzesse objected to Strehler's lack of fidelity

¹³¹Sullivan, "Piccolo Teatro."

¹³²Holden, "Italian Tempest."

¹³³Sandro Dini, "Tempesta in un teatro sordo," Il Tempo (Rome), 30 June 1978.

¹³⁴Gastone Geron, "Un'antologia di Strehler per l'ultimo Shakespeare," Il Giornale Nuovo (Milan), 30 June 1978.

to the original text, but failed to substantiate his position.¹³⁵ Giorgio Prosperi severely criticised the production for its slow tempo, excessive spectacle and lack of coherence in staging styles.¹³⁶ However, six years later, after The Tempest triumphantly returned from Paris, the critic praised the production and attributed his former remarks to having been influenced by the cold reception of the audience.¹³⁷ Edoardo Sanguineti, who disliked both the theatrical treatment and the theoretical concept, attributed the enthusiastic reception by the audience to the inherent merit of the play.¹³⁸ In response to these attacks Agostino Lombardo published an article denouncing the vicious nature of the expressed criticism.¹³⁹ In his article Lombardo examined the attack of "Sanguineti and company" section by section, suggesting that those critics wrote their reviews prior to seeing the actual performance. Lombardo concluded his response by expressing his sorrow over some "so-called neo-critics" who are annoyed when Shakespeare's theatricality is explored to its full potential on the stage and

¹³⁵Alberto Abruzzese, "La nostalgia dell'incanto teatrale," Rinascita (Rome), 7 July 1978, p. 33.

¹³⁶Giorgio Prosperi, "Nella Tempesta l'inventario delle regie di Giorgio Strehler," Il Tempo (Rome), 1 July 1978.

¹³⁷Giorgio Prosperi, "La nuova Tempesta diretta da Strehler," Il Tempo (Rome), 27 November 1983, p. 13. The critic also claimed that major revisions had immensely improved the production. Having seen the performances both in 1978 and 1984, I also noted that some changes were made, but they were very minor (i. e. insignificant cuts in the text and a change from three acts to two, which shortened the performance).

¹³⁸Edoardo Sanguineti, "Dentro La Tempesta," l'Unita (Milan), 30 June 1978.

¹³⁹Agostino Lombardo, "Dietro La Tempesta," l'Unita (Milan), 12 July 1978.

leaves no room for the few snobs to rejoice in their superior understanding of the drama over the "uneducated" masses.

Eight years after the premiere of The Tempest these few negative reviews have duly sunk into oblivion. Since then the production has toured all over Italy and across the world. It was performed in Paris, at the Los Angeles Olympic Festival, at the State University of New York at Purchase, and in Moscow. In Paris virtually every performance was followed by almost half an hour of applause culminating in a rhythmic chant, "Bravi!"¹⁴⁰ In Germany the audience stamped their feet. A fifteen minute standing ovation crowned every performance in Los Angeles and New York.¹⁴¹ And in spite of the initial reservation by the press, the Italian audience even interrupted many of the performances with a hurricane of applause to show their appreciation of the sensational theatrical magic.¹⁴² This "rough magic" which Francis Lane praised as touching

¹⁴⁰Reported by Ugo Ronfani, "Tutto bene, carrissimo Strehler," Il Giorno (Milano), 21 January 1984; Paolo A. Paganini, "Undici sostituzioni nella Tempesta tornata, dall'altro giorno, al Lirico," La Notte (Milan), 16 January 1984.

¹⁴¹The account of the audience reception in France, Germany and the USA was related by Giulia Lazzarini. (Interview with Giulia Lazzarini, Purchase, New York, 21 July 1984). I have personally witnessed standing ovations in New York and Milan.

¹⁴²The interruption of the performances in Milan by spontaneous applause and the twenty minute ovations were reported, as stated above, even by those critical of Strehler's production: Sanguineti, Dini, Geron and Abruzzese. It was even further elaborated upon by those who praised the production: Marone, p. 107; Pasquale Guadagnolo, "La Tempesta della ragione," Attualita e Cultura (Rome), 30 June 1978, p. 9; Roberto De Monticelli; Renzo Tian, "Primi passi nella vita del mago che abdica al regno degli incanti," Il Messaggero (Rome), 30 June 1978; Carlo Brusati, "Tutto Strehler in 4 ore di Tempesta," Informazione (Milan), 29 June 1978; Giancarlo Vigorelli, "La prima dello spettacolo di Strehler a Milano, avvenimento dell'anno," Il Giorno (Milan), 30 June 1978, pp. 1, 17.

the heights of the sublime, in the opinion of some critics was mocked as a spectacle to make P. T. Barnum envious, but disappointing for true theatre connoisseurs.¹⁴³ These few reviews now seem embarrassingly irrelevant, especially in view of an obvious misperception of the wealth of The Tempest's visual symbolism. When the wire was detached from Ariel in full sight of the audience and sprang "like an elastic into the flies above with a resounding twang," the usually cautious Francis Lane called it "a moment of great theatre [that] sends shivers of excitement through every member of the audience."¹⁴⁴ In contrast, George Armstrong from the Manchester Guardian concluded the twang to be a true "dialogue killer" and "out of place on [Prospero's] island."¹⁴⁵ And finally, what was unanimously praised as a coup de théâtre, the most exciting tempest ever created within the walls of a theatre by "fifteen industrious youngsters maneuvering yards of blue silk,"¹⁴⁶ was reduced by the "sensitive" criticism of Armstrong to the exploited labor of Strehler's eighteen "young actor slaves" who were neither heard nor seen.¹⁴⁷ It should be mentioned though, that the first few performances, even in the opinion of Luciano Damiani and the actors themselves, admittedly had some problems which were gradually

¹⁴³George Armstrong, "Tempest Tossed," The Guardian (Manchester), 12 August 1978.

¹⁴⁴John Francis Lane, "Tempest Reborn under Strehler," International Daily News (London), 10 December 1978, p. 11.

¹⁴⁵Armstrong, "Tempest Tossed."

¹⁴⁶Lane, "Tempest Reborn," p. 11.

¹⁴⁷Armstrong, "Tempest Tossed."

overcome, as is the case of any new production.¹⁴⁸ In time, even those who had first criticized the production joined the unanimous praise, in part because of some minor revisions and in part because they gained a certain perspective by seeing it for the second time after several years. Some of the negative reactions were probably also due to the great publicity preceding the premiere. For several months all of the Italian newspapers discussed in great detail the rehearsals and the preparations going on at the Piccolo Teatro.¹⁴⁹ Some of them, like La Repubblica, Il Giorno, La Notte even dedicated entire pages to reporting the latest developments in Strehler's work on The Tempest. Lack of surprise and impossible expectations may have somewhat spoiled the opening night. Nevertheless, the 1978

¹⁴⁸G. M., "'Tempesta' anche per Strehler," Paese Sera (Rome), 30 June 1978.

¹⁴⁹The following material appeared prior to the opening night and was consulted in the course of my research: "La Citta' Al Neon: Nel cuore della Tempesta," La Notte (Milan), 29 June 1978, p. 12 (this entire page was comprised of seven articles on Strehler's Tempest, covering a wide spectrum of areas: preparatory work, critical reading, synopsis, costs, sets, actors, special effects, etc.); "L'Occhio della Tempesta," La Repubblica (Rome), 25 June 1978, p. 15 (this entire page was comprised of six articles: detailed critical analysis of the play, an interview with the translator, preparatory work on the production, elements of the staging, excerpt from Jan Kott's "Bitter Arcadia," historical background and the synopsis of the play); "La Ciurma del Piccolo nella furia della Tempesta," La Notte (Milan), 6 June 1978, p. 14 (the entire page was comprised of four articles: first impressions of the rehearsal, special effects, interview with thirteen-year-old Fabiana Udenio who played Miranda, excerpts from the transcript of Strehler's instructions for interpretation). All of the above were crammed with production photographs. The following article and two interviews with Strehler provided major critical insights for the upcoming production: Tino dalla Vale, "Isola incantata in un mare di poesia," Il Resto del Carlino (Bologna), 13 June 1978; Giancarlo Vigorelli, "Strehler nella tempesta: intervista con il regista . . .," Il Giorno (Milan), 24 June 1978; Roberto De Monticelli, "Strehler: il teatro è una Tempesta/ A colloquio con il regista," Corriere della Sera (Milan), 27 June 1978.

Tempest eventually gained its due recognition. Recently it was even broadcast by Italian Television and is currently available on a videotape through RAI and Piccolo Teatro di Milano. The enthusiastic reviews still continue to pour in as the production is now starting its eighth season. "This Tempest is the most awe inspiring Shakespeare production I have seen since Peter Brook's Midsummer Night's Dream," wrote Francis Lane in 1978.¹⁵⁰ At that time Lunari stated that it "will indisputably enter the history of the theatre."¹⁵¹ And indeed it is already regarded as a historic production. But it also remains a dream more real than reality itself, created with theatrical imagery which only a very few ever succeed in achieving.

Strehler did not stage The Tempest. He has transcribed his dreams, and every evening, with every performance these dreams come to life. . . . It . . . is a magic of the theatre, created out of nothing by an experienced master-craftsman

wrote Ronfani in 1984.¹⁵² The most amazing thing about that magic—the unforgettable tempest animated by the mimes, the collapsed sets at the end of the performance or Ariel suspended in midair—is that it was created by what Strehler calls "handmade theatre."¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰Lane, "Tempest Reborn."

¹⁵¹Luigi Lunari, "La tempesta è sempre un ottimo spettacolo," Avanti! (Rome), 1 November 1978.

¹⁵²Ronfani, "Tutto bene."

¹⁵³Quoted by Kott, "Prospero or the Director," p. 22.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Reviewing postwar Shakespearean productions in Italy, we can observe several changes in staging style and focus of interest. At times, these changes were characteristic not only of a single work by a single director but evolved into a generic trend. Discussing Strehler's work, Luigi Lunari observed five distinct stages in the director's career which are particularly evident in his approaches to producing Shakespeare.¹ A description of these major trends in Strehler's career is particularly relevant because some of these stages appear to be applicable to the other directors as well.

Luigi Lunari suggested that the first period in Strehler's career, spanning from 1947-1954, can best be defined as an exploratory phase. That period was characterized by frequent inclusion of Shakespeare in the repertory. In these productions, the plays were interpreted in their own right, and without reference to a particular ideology. Here the director was primarily interested in the aesthetic value of the plays, the

¹Luigi Lunari, "Apunti per una interpretazione della Tempesta di Strehler," Milan, 1978 (Typewritten Manuscript), pp. 3-9. This portion of the article was also published in Avanti as Luigi Lunari, "La Tempesta continua la meditazione sul potere e la storia," Avanti (Rome), 28 October 1978.

historical background of their composition, their characters and their dramatic structure. The purpose was to introduce the dramatic material to the audience in as accurate and exciting a manner as possible. In this period, Strehler directed eight of Shakespeare's plays, and each production was aimed at clarifying and exploring a particular aspect that would render the bard more effective for the Italian audience. His methods included: experimentation with spectacular elements, emphasis on aspects of the traditional Italian theatre, and reconstruction of Shakespeare within a replica of the Elizabethan stage.

Lunari claimed that the second phase began with Strehler's production of Coriolanus in 1957. He characterized it as experimentation with Brechtian epic methodology. Here the director's interest was not devoted to the study of history, or historical theatre (as might be the case with the reconstruction of the Elizabethan stage), but primarily with the study of the historical mechanism. Applying Marxist principles of historical materialism, Strehler utilized Coriolanus as a model to illustrate the inherent conflict of opposing social classes. Theatre became a vehicle for the social instruction of the audience attending the performance.

In the third phase, initiated in 1965 with The Game of the Powerful, the principles of historical materialism and class struggle evolved into the generic scheme of Kott's Grand Mechanism in which the lines of demarcation between classes and the concept of social right and wrong were no longer so clearly drawn. The object of the analysis here was life and history in all of their complexities.

In 1972, with King Lear, the focus shifted to the metahistorical elements of drama. King Lear, in this fourth phase, was presented as the ultimate and definitive reality of human existence. Man was removed from his social setting and was forced to confront nature itself and the questions of his own existence. No longer interested in morals or ideological positions, Strehler placed Lear in the position of confronting profound mysteries and the indisputable truth of human nature. The emphasis shifted from sociological/historical to poetical/mysterious.

In the final phase, theatre itself returned as an object and subject of the director's investigations. The theatrical medium became a means and a metaphor to explore the director's own perception of his plays, his career and place in our universe. It was a metaphysical meditation on mysteries and magic and the human desire to master them all.

Besides dividing Strehler's career into these five phases, Lunari also noted the director's growing tendency to identify with the characters of the plays. Through the protagonist, Strehler tried to convey his own personal views. The notion began to evolve after 1963 and was particularly evident in his Shakespearean productions between 1965 and 1978. "As a director, Strehler assumes the role of a narrator (das epischer Ich), which is perfectly indivisible from the narrated events and characters."² The Actor in The Game of the Powerful, whom Strehler invented for this express purpose, conveyed lyrical asides on the state of man, history, and theatre. The director thus suspended the action of the play and

²Lunari, p. 10.

through this protagonist, brought himself into direct rapport with the audience. In The Tempest, Prospero was not merely the protagonist of the play, but also the director of the production. From time to time, he literally stepped off the stage to conduct the performance from the auditorium. He was the character, the author, and the director combined. He conveyed not merely Prospero's and Shakespeare's philosophies, but above all, those of Strehler himself. Lunari suggested that this gradual identification with the protagonists in Strehler's productions "expresses the desire to establish the most immediate and personal rapport with the community--the public. By overcoming the traditional role of an interpreter and then assuming the more 'respectable' one of an actor and an author [Strehler conveyed] . . . in the first person the message of the play itself (with its poetical and political moral)."³ From the ideas by Strehler in the earlier productions, the emphasis shifted to the ideas about Strehler in the later ones, about him as a thinker, politician, artist, and human being. The passage from the epischer Ich to the dramatischer Ich thus was completed.

As previously noted, this formula devised by Lunari in evaluating Strehler's work encompasses some general trends in staging Shakespeare common to the other postwar Italian directors. Although some themes are more characteristic of Strehler than of the others, the dating of the periods and the notion of the director's personal identification accurately reflect the major stages in the

³Lunari, p. 14.

development of the Italian theatre of the director as related to Shakespeare.

The first exploratory phase (1947-1954), in which Strehler experimented with such diverse forms as spectacle, commedia dell'arte, and the Elizabethan stage, also characterizes the work of other directors of the period. However, unlike Strehler, this period lasted well into the mid-1960s with the rest of the Italian theatre. The search for similar theatrical forms that would attract Italian audiences were at the foreground of the productions by Visconti, Costa, Enriquez, De Lullo, and Zeffirelli. Visconti's Rosalinda (1948) and Troilus and Cressida (1949) epitomized the striving for the spectacular. Costa's production of Twelfth Night (1950); Enriquez's Taming of the Shrew (1956, 1962), Love's Labour's Lost (1961), and As You Like It (1966); and De Lullo's Twelfth Night (1961) and The Two Gentlemen of Verona (1964) all capitalized on the commedia dell'arte aspects of the plays. National folklore and local Italian traditions were also stressed by Zeffirelli in his 1960 and 1964 productions of Romeo and Juliet. Most of these productions were also set within a beautiful scene design that impressed and fascinated the audiences. A typical Elizabethan stage was reconstructed in Costa's 1953 production of Macbeth and Enriquez's 1961 The Merchant of Venice. Since this exploratory phase was extended well into the mid-1960s, the epic tradition is virtually absent from the Shakespearean productions of these directors. The epic approach played a more significant role in the work of Squarzina, but even here only single, specific elements were utilized by the director. Productions of Hamlet (1952) and Measure for Measure (1957) emphasized the expressionistic nature of the

conception through lighting and stage design. Squarzina's productions of Julius Caesar (1971) and Measure for Measure (1976, 1979) focused on broader political implications. The multimedia, Lehrstück-like aspects of Julius Caesar and the choruses from Brecht's Die Rundköpfe und Die Spitzköpfe, along with a revolving Tower of Babel incorporated in the production of Measure for Measure, effectively applied some of the formulas from the epic theatre, but never attempted to present a thoroughly global Brechtian interpretation of Shakespeare. Also unlike Strehler, Squarzina applied certain elements of epic theatre throughout his career. This style had never characterized one particular phase of his work on Shakespeare or other dramatists. Besides Squarzina, fascination with Brecht in the period 1955-1965 is observable in the tremendous popularity of his plays in the repertory of the Italian theatre; however, a full-fledged application of epic principles combined with a Marxist treatment of Shakespeare remained unique to Strehler.

Of all the themes the most persistent in the Italian productions of Shakespeare is the application of Jan Kott's theories. First introduced by Squarzina in his 1964 production of Troilus and Cressida, these ideas were rapidly applied in staging a wide variety of Shakespeare's plays. The most popular of all were the concepts of the Grand Mechanism and of the bitter Arcadia. Whereas fascination with the Grand Mechanism characterized the earlier period (1964-1968), which virtually coincides with the Kott segment in Strehler's career, the bitter Arcadia captured the interest of the Italian directors only after 1971 and remains a predominant

theme in many productions of Shakespeare's comedies today. Besides Strehler's The Game of the Powerful, the most eloquent stage realizations of the Grand Mechanism could be found in De Bosio's Richard II (1965) and Ronconi's Richard III (1968). Whereas in De Bosio's production the emphasis was placed on the more philosophical aspects of the theory, juxtaposed and compared with John Palmer's interpretation of the changing medieval world (as presented in Palmer's book Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare), Ronconi explored the structuralist aspects and inadvertently produced a most striking visual parallel to Kott's theory. The interest in the bitter Arcadia was focused primarily on three comedies, with a particular emphasis on Twelfth Night. This play also provided an indication of a clear break from the commedia dell'arte treatment of Shakespeare in favor of the use of sarcasm and irony typical of Kott's theories. It is interesting to note that the very exponents of the commedia treatment of Twelfth Night, Costa and De Lullo, restaged the play (in 1971 and 1979 respectively), shading their productions with the biting irony and bitterness of Kott's Arcadia. A delicate balance between spectacularly theatrical burlesque and bitter melancholy was struck by Calenda in his productions of As You Like It (1977) and A Midsummer Night's Dream (1982). However, the most prominent application of Kott's theory was executed by Trionfo in 1979. In Trionfo's production of Twelfth Night even the comic aspects of the play resounded with profound melancholy and sarcasm. The overall pattern of all these productions suggests a shift in staging Shakespeare's comedies from the traditional Italianized staging abundant with commedia lazzi and merriment to the somber mood of

irony as it emerged after the cultural revolution of 1968. Extraordinary theatricality, however, remained the common denominator throughout.

Enthusiasm and constructive social criticism characterized the productions which preceded the cultural revolution of 1968. This sense of optimism and belief in theatre's ability to re-educate society and right the wrongs of social and political injustice virtually vanished after 1968. Following the turbulent events of the student movement, the century-old relation between the Italian theatre and politics (which could be traced back to the times of the Risorgimento) ended. In its place came the pensive introspection of the generation that matured during the years of revolutionary fever. Trionfo's 1968 production of Titus Andronicus delineated this shift particularly harshly. Recognizing the inherent hypocrisy in the code of human morality as a cause of social injustice, Trionfo directed the focus of his production and those that followed to reflect on the broader philosophical perspective of the condition of humanity. This phase, which Lunari referred to in Strehler's career as metadrama, acutely reflected the general trend of Shakespearean productions of 1971 to 1976.

Frustrations with the unresolved cycle of human existence in which man, unable to conquer History or Nature, is forced to succumb to the laws governing the universe, became both a plea for mercy and a vehicle for the protagonist/director to grow into a tragic figure through a better understanding of those conditions. Thus Squarzina's production of Julius Caesar (1971) used documentary flashes of actual twentieth-century events to tell the history that

"many ages hence" will be "acted on/ In states unborn and accents yet unknown" (Julius Caesar III, i, 111-13). Interestingly, another production of Julius Caesar staged by De Lullo in the same year treated the play as a Senecan tragedy to illuminate its subtle poetic nuances. The 1971 Enriquez production of Macbeth depicted man's struggle to break through the shell of mystery in the timeless universe, which eventually forced him to succumb and recognize that "life's but . . . a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury/ Signifying nothing." (Macbeth V, v, 24-28). Set on a whirlwind carousel ride, in a universe out of order, the characters of Trionfo's 1973 production of King John manifested their disenchantment with idealism. In all of these productions, the world of absolutes and supreme ideals came to an end. What emerged was man's profound desire to adapt to this new situation and reflect on those conditions that were out of his control. Having literally undergone the phase of anagnorosis, Italian directors now began applying Shakespeare to express their own personal views and their disillusion with the world in which they lived. The emphasis thus shifted from highly motivated constructive criticism to a highly personal and poetic introspection on human existence.

The final phase of "magic and metaphysics" (1977-present) as defined by Lunari to describe the work of Strehler on the 1978 production of The Tempest, is also reflected in Squarzina's productions of Measure for Measure (1976, 1979), and Calenda's productions of As You Like It (1977) and Richard III (1979). The period was characterized by the directors' attempts to use the medium of theatre as a metaphor to express universal concerns. In Squarzina's Measure for Measure, the Duke became the director of the

production who handed the script of the play (i.e., the book of laws governing Vienna) to the protagonist of this performance, namely Angelo, and stepped down to observe the action from outside. The Duke's occasional intercessions in the events of the play also underscored his role as the director of this human comedy played on this grand stage of the world. In Calenda's production of Richard III, the closing curtains eliminated the King's opponents one by one until eventually he was left alone on the bare stage to face his own fate, that of an actor playing the role of a superhuman, unable to prevent the closing curtain from ending this travesty. In the 1977 production of As You Like It, Calenda turned the enchanted Arcadia into a grotesque cabaret where, as in a Theatrum Mundi, behind the grossly exaggerated role-playing one could perceive a deeper sense of reality. Theatre in all of these productions became the mirror graphically translating the universe into a theatrical vocabulary of images, each one of which was pregnant with symbolism. In this discourse of theatrical symbols, with all of their ambiguity, the role a theatre personality plays as an author, a director, or an actor was also questioned. Who and what are we seeing on the stage? Where do the borders separating fiction and reality lie? Where does the stage become the world we live in? Who is the author and who is the director? Who is the character and who is the actor? What separates the indifferent audience from the indifferent community? What is the responsibility of a man of theatre towards such a society?

These questions were also of primary concern in the productions and philosophy of Carmelo Bene. Through him the Italian theatre

reached deep into its conscience to reflect on what it has achieved and on its goals for the future. Through Bene, the process of the director's identification with the author, the character, and the actor was completed. It exposed the most private and personal views held by the artist in front of the gathered audience. The theatrical event turned into a confessional in which Bene, using Shakespearean material, piously revealed the most horrid truth about himself and by doing so, about those who came to view the performance. When Bene declares "I am Shakespeare," it is no longer a delusion of an artist full of himself but rather a realization of the ultimate truth, true for all—Shakespeare, Bene, Elizabethans, our society, theatre, audience, the world at large.

Thus, we can observe a general shift in the treatment of Shakespeare from a concentration on global aspects of the production toward expression of a highly personal interpretation reflecting virtually autobiographical views of the director/actor. One could almost conclude that from the theatre of the director, Shakespearean productions returned to favor the theatre of an actor. Italian theatre completed a full cycle, or rather a spiral. Having inherited the dominion from the mattatori, the director gradually emerged as the protagonist. Sometimes even assuming the role of an actor, he secured undivided personal attention and rapport with the audience. In contrast to the mattatori, however, director/actors, even in cases as extreme as that of Carmelo Bene, avoided sacrificing the overall conceptual interpretation which was directly derived from the original text. Although Shakespeare's text was sometimes adapted and rearranged, such an operation was recognized from the outset (in the program notes, play-bills, etc.) and was subjected to a high

degree of critical scrutiny. The common practice of the mattatori of enhancing the prominence of the protagonist by eliminating entire sections of the play was totally rejected in spite of the still pervasive cult of the star-actor who might surround himself with a poor supporting cast. It is a commonly known fact in Italy that such actors as Gassman and Albertazzi would sell out a theatre even if they were to recite a telephone directory. That is perhaps another reason for the extraordinary popularity of Carmelo Bene, who effectively combined the roles of director, author, and actor.

Throughout the history of Shakespeare in Italy, the peaks of literary criticism alternated with the innovations in performance practice. The first fifty years of the nineteenth century were characterized by the critical study and translation of the plays, culminating in the romantic polemic. In the second half of the century Shakespeare was popularized by the mattatori. The turn of the twentieth century saw the beginnings of the critical interpretation and scholarly analysis of Shakespeare, initiated by De Sanctis and then promoted by Croce, Praz, and their followers. A significant decline in production signaled the end of the era of the legendary mattatori. Immediately prior to World War II, in the midst of Fascist repression, Shakespeare was rediscovered as a vehicle for spectacle, which in effect launched the theatre of the director. After the war, with Strehler's productions of The Tempest, and Visconti's Rosalinda and Troilus and Cressida, Shakespeare gained prominence as one of the most frequently produced authors in the country. Unlike those of other periods, the postwar Shakespearean productions merged the efforts of literary scholars

and theatre practitioners. Theatre became a vehicle for mutual exploration. Thus, it was only natural for a director to embark on a dialectical and poetic treatment of the plays. The objectives set by the teatri stabili to educate the public by exploring the classics of dramatic literature were greatly aided by the translations furnished by the leading Italian Shakespearean scholars. Theatre became a testing ground for literary research and performance alike. Such collaborations as Strehler-Lunari, Strehler-Lombardo, De Bosio-Luzi left their indelible mark not only on theatre history, but on the history of literary criticism as well. Particularly evident is the case of Luigi Squarzina. Besides his contributions as a director, playwright and literary scholar in his own right, he produced some of the most accurate and theatrical Italian versions of Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida and Measure for Measure. These translations by Agostino Lombardo, Luigi Squarzina, Mario Luzi and Luigi Lunari became the standard Italian texts for Shakespeare. The theatre of the director thus contributed to literary criticism as well.

A tremendous boost in Shakespeare's popularity in Italy is clearly reflected in the statistical data compiled from the newspaper clippings and other documentation obtained from the theatre library of the Italian Society for Authors and Editors (Biblioteca del Burcardo in Rome) and the archives of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano. The cumulative results of this data are demonstrated on the table of "Shakespearean Productions in Italy for the Years 1945-1983." From it the following conclusions can be derived:

1. In this period, 212 productions of Shakespeare's plays were performed. This number includes thirty-seven major adaptations (i.e., productions in which entire scenes or sections were moved from one play to another and replaced with additional text or entirely eliminated). The productions mounted by Carmelo Bene (discussed in Chapter Six) are examples of such adaptations.
2. Since 1945, sixteen plays by Shakespeare were produced for the first time in Italy, thus completing the entire Shakespearean canon. Besides these plays, five productions on Shakespearean subjects were performed, in which the authors utilized certain materials derived from Shakespeare's work (plays, sonnets, poems, etc.) to create entirely unique texts for these productions. Shakespearean Labyrinths, which was staged by Trionfo and Salveti in the city parks (also discussed in Chapter Six), provides a good illustration of this trend.
3. The first major adaptation of a Shakespeare play was introduced by Carmelo Bene when he mounted the 1961 production of Hamlet. Since then, twelve adaptations of Hamlet, six of Macbeth, three of Othello and The Tempest, two of King Lear, and one of A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night, Romeo and Juliet, Richard III, both parts of Henry IV and all three parts of Henry VI were produced. Most of these adaptations were inspired and mounted by the avant-garde directors, among whom Carmelo Bene by far exceeds the others with seven adaptations to his credit, followed by Leo De Bernardinis, Andree Ruth Shammah, and Mario Santella, each with two adaptations, and several other directors with one adaptation. It should be

noted that Strehler's production of The Game of the Powerful which is primarily based on the three parts of Henry VI, is also considered a major adaptation.

4. Of all the plays mounted, Hamlet was by far the most produced (twenty-three times), followed by A Midsummer Night's Dream (sixteen productions), Macbeth (thirteen productions), Twelfth Night (twelve productions), and Othello and The Tempest, tied for the fifth place with eleven productions each.
5. The most popular year for Shakespeare was 1982, when twelve productions were mounted; in 1979 there were ten; and in 1972, 1974, and 1977 there were nine. Except for 1945, when only one play was produced, the minimum number per year was two. An average number per year amounted to a mode of four and a median of six.
6. The first five plays produced in Italy (Hamlet in 1793, Othello in 1810, Romeo and Juliet in 1820, Macbeth in 1837, and King Lear in 1858) were all among the first seven to be adapted as well (Hamlet in 1961, Macbeth in 1968, King Lear in 1970, The Tempest in 1973, Twelfth Night in August of 1974, Othello in November of 1974, Romeo and Juliet in 1976).⁴
7. Most interestingly, the sample of fifty productions that grossed the most money for the years 1961-1976 places Shakespeare second only to Pirandello as the most popular author, based on both the number of tickets sold and the number

⁴For further information on the first productions of Shakespeare's plays in Italy, see the complete listing in Appendix B.

of performances.⁵

8. In all, over ninety-six directors worked on the 212 Shakespearean productions.⁶ Among them, Franco Enriquez, who mounted sixteen productions of twelve different plays, and Giorgio Strehler, who mounted twelve productions of thirteen plays (three parts of Henry VI that comprised The Game of the Powerful were counted as a single production), have the most to their credit. They are followed by Carmelo Bene and Luigi Squarzina, each one of whom staged five plays in seven diverse productions.

Because of the limitations of this dissertation, of these ninety-six directors the work of only twenty has been examined; i.e., seventy-three Shakespearean productions mounted between the years 1945 and 1983. This sample of thirty-four percent of the productions was intended to provide the reader with a relative perspective on staging Shakespeare in Italy. Future study of some other major directors would compliment the present findings and provide the first comprehensive history of Shakespearean productions in Italy for this period. The list of such directors should include Mario Ferrero, Alessandro Brissoni, Gabriele Lavia, Bepe Menegati, Virginio Puecher, Fantasio Piccoli, Leo De Bernardinis, Maurizio Scaparro, Tino Buazelli, Mario Missiroli, Giancarlo Nanni and Meme Perlini. Their contributions by no means should be underestimated, even though their work was not included in the present study.

⁵For the complete listing of "The Ten Most Popular Authors for the Years 1961-1976," see Appendix A.

⁶A complete listing of the directors who staged Shakespeare's plays in Italy since World War II is provided in Appendix C.

The development of Italian set design as applied to Shakespearean productions deserves a voluminous study on its own. It is probably one of the most important Italian contributions to world theatre. The work of some of the more fascinating designers discussed in this dissertation, such as Mario Ceroli's sets for Ronconi's 1968 production of Richard III; the spectacular, yet bare and simple stage designed by Luciano Damiani for Strehler's 1978 production of The Tempest; or the multifaceted, ingenious application of the design elements invented by Emanuele Luzzati, merely indicate the wealth of material to be examined.

It would also be useful to survey and critically evaluate Italian translations of Shakespeare. Although such a study would be of particular interest to linguists and literary scholars, it might also reveal the influence of the directors on standard Italian texts. The scope of this dissertation allowed only a brief discussion this vast area of research. The close collaboration between the directors and the translators, and the role Italian theatre played in popularizing lesser-known Shakespearean plays left their marks on the commonly used Italian translations today. Some of the better known examples are the translations by Lombardo and Squarzina, who without removing the beauty of Shakespeare's poetry managed to make their language speak directly to the modern Italian audience.

In the course of tracing the development of the theatre of the director in Italy as it related to Shakespeare, it became particularly evident that his popularity seemed to overshadow the work of the emerging young playwrights. The overly zealous attempts of the Italian theatre to shift the interest of its public from the

mediocrity of the contemporary plays to the classics of world literature thus virtually paralyzed the development of postwar native Italian dramaturgy. Further study of this phenomenon might even establish a correlation between the popularity of Shakespeare's plays and the relative absence of major new Italian plays from the theatre repertory. Here a comparative analysis with other countries might prove particularly illuminating. In all of these investigations, however, what remains undeniable is that in Italy during the postwar years Shakespeare has indeed become "our contemporary."

APPENDIX A

THE TEN MOST POPULAR AUTHORS FOR THE YEARS 1961 TO 1976

Findings of the following chart were calculated on the basis of the data derived from the listing of fifty productions that grossed the most money which is provided in the Annuario del Teatro Italiano, published annually since 1934 by the Italian Society of Authors and Editors (SIAE). The following results cover only the years 1961 to 1976 because the listing which included non-Italian authors was published only for this limited period. Since I was unable to locate the issue for 1969, this year has been omitted from the chart. It should also be noted that the listings for 1961/62 and 1962/63 cover theatrical seasons from the 1st of September to the 31st of August. From 1963 on, the data reflect the calendar year. Because my findings are based on information derived only from the fifty productions that grossed the most money, cumulative calculations of all of the productions for every single year might improve the actual standing of the classical dramatists. For instance, in the years 1970 and 1971, Shakespeare is placed No. 12 and No. 21 according to the number of tickets sold. These findings, however, comprise only 2 productions for 1970 and only 1 for 1971. Actually, 4 productions were mounted in 1970 and 8 productions in 1971. Individually they did not gross as much as the others. The cumulative result, however, should improve Shakespeare's standing for those years.

YEAR		TICKETS SOLD	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES
1961/62	1. L. Pirandello	168,473	389
	2. G. Marotta & B. Randone	88,045	109
	3. D. Fo	82,151	171
	4. M. Achard	80,012	158
	5. J. Kitty	77,569	108
	6. W. SHAKESPEARE	54,903	97
	7. E. Ionesco	51,940	119
	8. B. Brecht	43,767	124
	9. F. Sagan	41,661	119
	10. E. Bassano & D. G. Martini	40,439	102
	Total	1,597,628	5,381
1962/63	1. C. Goldoni	109,000	157
	2. F. Valeri	101,793	172
	3. B. Brecht	97,007	190
	4. M. Ayme	77,139	234
	5. W. SHAKESPEARE	61,648	149
	6. J. P. Sartre	46,141	68
	7. G. B. Shaw	45,532	82
	8. F. Billeldoux	43,369	99
	9. E. Ionesco	43,260	156
	10. L. Squarzina	31,014	68
	Total	1,591,682	5,244

1963	1. C. Goldoni	148,629	260
	2. B. Brecht	130,791	279
	3. W. SHAKESPEARE	82,316	146
	4. F. Valeri	71,492	116
	5. J. P. Sartre	67,038	109
	6. M. Ayme	49,562	149
	7. S. Ambrogi	40,162	108
	8. F. Brusati	35,574	88
	9. G. Patroni Griffi	34,069	77
	10. M. Dursi	32,259	79
	Total	1,519,557	5,229
1964	1. L. Pirandello	195,193	312
	2. W. SHAKESPEARE	123,845	236
	3. B. Brecht	91,802	193
	4. C. Goldoni	71,073	100
	5. A. Miller	61,079	69
	6. J. P. Sartre	55,908	91
	7. E. Albee	39,158	60
	8. F. Goodrich & A. Hackett	29,582	56
	9. R. Goering	29,220	58
	10. G. B. Shaw	29,106	73
	Total	1,655,284	5,682
1965	1. C. Goldoni	147,239	265
	2. L. Pirandello	133,586	376
	3. A. Chekhov	101,168	174
	4. W. SHAKESPEARE	93,263	169
	5. F. Schiller	80,459	92
	6. V. Broncati	80,051	137
	7. E. De Filippo	74,471	168
	8. R. Lavagna	65,443	189
	9. S. Beckett	60,258	98
	10. A. Miller	56,051	58
	Total	2,173,008	6,787
1966	1. L. Pirandello	274,578	504
	2. W. SHAKESPEARE	180,660	317
	3. R. Lavagna	115,002	209
	4. M. Schisgal	89,081	128
	5. C. Goldoni	55,548	59
	6. G. Verga	54,191	71
	7. F. Brusati	47,592	66
	8. F. Schiller	47,230	55
	9. N. Simon	44,779	51
	10. E. O'Neill	40,925	75
	Total	2,273,829	6,428
1967	1. L. Pirandello	220,559	405
	2. N. Simon	200,703	248
	3. A. Miller	100,265	133
	4. P. Weiss	99,384	126
	5. W. SHAKESPEARE	82,868	125

	6. C. Goldoni	78,771	170
	7. D. Fabbri	65,272	118
	8. G. B. Shaw	47,644	108
	9. P. Shaffer	46,446	114
	10. E. Albee	44,980	81
	Total	2,437,480	6,866
1968	1. L. Pirandello	208,944	381
	2. A. Miller	144,824	212
	3. W. SHAKESPEARE	79,026	105
	4. N. Simon	69,779	84
	5. K. Waterhouse & W. Hall	67,818	194
	6. D. Fo	63,888	94
	7. R. Anderson	63,699	89
	8. E. De Filippo	62,055	111
	9. A. Copel	58,834	75
	10. G. Testoni	57,133	110
	Total	2,562,948	6,837
1970	1. A. Strindberg	233,293	196
	2. N. Simon	161,733	204
	3. B. Brecht	153,880	255
	4. C. Collodi	123,676	187
	5. I. P. Gredy & P. Barillet	85,274	122
	6. E. De Filippo	80,018	127
	7. B. Manhoff	72,127	101
	8. T. Frisby	69,549	112
	9. A. Ayckbourn	69,405	117
	10. V. Brancati	67,304	105
	11. M. Amendola & B. Corbucci	66,496	87
	12. W. SHAKESPEARE	62,628	143
	Total	3,436,353	8,903
1971	1. B. Brecht	137,709	189
	2. N. Simon	133,462	207
	3. C. Collodi	128,356	214
	4. D. Fabbri	81,624	128
	5. L. Pirandello	80,535	159
	6. A. Bracchi	78,684	168
	7. M. Resnik	73,670	120
	8. E. De Filippo	70,911	130
	9. I. P. Gredy & P. Barillet	70,591	130
	10. L. Gershe	70,524	201
	11. M. Amendola & B. Corbucci	69,490	98
	12. R. Marasco	66,996	107
	13. A. Camus	66,690	131
	14. G. Arout	64,616	135
	15. M. Costanzo	64,578	193
	16. Molière	52,825	132
	17. P. Luke	51,748	85

	18. M. Gorky	49,838	110
	19. T. Williams, J. Cocteau & J. Renard	47,606	82
	20. A. Dumas, père	44,531	127
	21. W. SHAKESPEARE	42,617	101
	Total	3,573,031	9,660
1972	1. D. Miraglia	184,200	304
	2. L. Pirandello	179,461	300
	3. R. Clark, S. Dobrick & J. Caci	154,362	241
	4. M. Amendola & B. Corbucci	152,750	236
	5. D. Faobri	138,607	211
	6. B. Brecht	131,757	161
	7. W. SHAKESPEARE	121,251	178
	8. C. Goldoni	104,053	231
	9. E. O'Neill	95,700	142
	10. G. D'Annunzio	73,548	129
	Total	3,886,085	9,747
1973	1. W. SHAKESPEARE	244,641	436
	2. A. Marriot & A. Foot	237,599	230
	3. L. Pirandello	231,163	375
	4. B. Brecht	210,779	289
	5. M. Costanza	127,591	231
	6. E. De Filippo	111,139	144
	7. A. Ferrari & M. Silveri	97,239	192
	8. D. Fabbri	87,944	180
	9. G. Albertazzi	81,400	146
	10. M. Amendola & B. Corbucci	68,682	98
	Total	4,517,073	12,047
1974	1. B. Brecht	242,524	344
	2. W. SHAKESPEARE	200,544	308
	3. A. Marriot & A. Foot	161,860	140
	4. L. Pirandello	156,378	245
	5. W. D. Home & M. G. Sauvajon	143,353	178
	6. D. Fabbri	99,702	144
	7. M. Amendola & B. Corbucci	93,917	125
	8. G. Feydeau	85,633	139
	9. I. Svevo	67,552	107
	10. E. De Filippo	66,696	75
	Total	5,083,872	13,733
1975	1. L. Pirandello	284,597	406
	2. M. Amendola & B. Corbucci	191,763	239
	3. B. Brecht	179,359	349

4. W. SHAKESPEARE	137,109	234
5. C. Goldoni	123,783	274
6. D. Fabbri	116,233	231
7. Molière	112,790	180
8. F. Brusati	94,772	117
9. A. Miller	88,713	125
10. H. Ibsen	85,802	130
Total	4,873,348	14,895

1976	1. M. Amendola & B. Corbucci	197,564	295
	2. H. Ibsen	173,177	359
	3. L. Pirandello	168,617	331
	4. W. SHAKESPEARE	154,048	176
	5. A. Chekhov	106,944	174
	6. A. Ayckburn	97,318	226
	7. A. Pugliesi & E. Porta	92,217	167
	8. R. Viviani	85,960	153
	9. E. De Filippo	83,236	115
	10. N. Milazzo, M. Marchesi, G. Palazzo & E. Macario	79,696	106
	Total	5,190,478	16,867

Cumulative Results for the Years 1961 to 1976

1. L. Pirandello	2,327,473	4,265
2. W. SHAKESPEARE	1,721,367	2,920
3. B. Brecht	1,449,902	2,414
4. C. Goldoni	1,156,457	2,012
5. M. Amendola- B. Corbucci	840,662	1,178
6. N. Simon	813,657	1,200
7. E. De Filippo	780,877	1,312
8. D. Fabbri	692,618	1,296
9. A. Miller	477,481	653
10. A. Chekhov	410,913	712

APPENDIX B

FIRST PERFORMANCES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS IN ITALY

The data for the productions prior to 1945 were derived from the chronological listings in the following sources: Hilary Gatti, Shakespeare nei teatri milanesi dell'ottocento, pp. 185-223; Anna Cavallone Anzi, Shakespeare nei teatri milanesi del novecento, pp. 281-82; and Leonardo Bragaglia, Shakespeare in Italia, pp. 167-78, 227-31. In the case of The Comedy of Errors, the cited information was derived from Bruno De Cesco, Un quarto di secolo con Shakespeare, p. 122. When there was a discrepancy in the date of a performance, the earliest one was cited. Data for the performances after 1945 were derived from the daily newspaper clippings and playbills obtained at the Archives of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, and Biblioteca Burcardo, Rome. An attempt was made to provide as complete a citation as possible; however, in some cases certain pieces of information could not be located.

1793		<u>Hamlet</u> , Florence: Teatro di Borgognissanti, Compagnia Antonio Morrocchesi
1810		<u>Othello</u> , Naples: Teatro San Ferdinando, Comp. F. Lombardi
1820		<u>Romeo and Juliet</u> , Milan: Anfiteatro Giardini Publici, Comp. Colonesi
1832	Mar 10	<u>Macbeth</u> , Milan: Teatro Re, Comp. S. M. Re di Sardegna
1858	Jul 22	<u>King Lear</u> , Milan: Teatro Stradera, Comp. Boldini
1858		<u>Merchant of Venice</u> , Milan: Teatro Re, Comp. E. Rossi
1860		<u>Julius Caesar</u> , Venice: Teatro Malibran, Comp. E. Rossi
1862	Oct 12	<u>Coriolanus</u> , Milan: Teatro Re, Comp. E. Rossi
1865		<u>The Taming of the Shrew</u> , Milan: Teatro Re, Comp. T. Salvini
1865		<u>Anthony and Cleopatra</u> , Milan: Teatro Re, Comp. E. Rossi
1867		<u>Richard III</u> , Venice: Teatro Goldoni, Comp. E. Rossi
1890		<u>Richard II</u> , Turin: Teatro Carignano, Comp. G. Emanuel
1894	Sep 14	<u>Much Ado About Nothing</u> , Milan: Teatro Manzoni
1918	Jan 16	<u>Twelfth Night</u> , Milan: Teatro Manzoni, Comp. G. Tumiatì
1921	Jan 21	<u>The Merry Wives of Windsor</u> , Rome: Teatro Argentina, Comp. Chiarelli/Falconi
1928	Nov 21	<u>As You Like It</u> , Milan: Teatro Lirico, Comp. Sem Benelli
1933	Jun	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> , Florence: Boboli Gardens, Dir. M. Reinhardt
1942	Dec 12	<u>The Comedy of Errors</u> , Bologna: Teatro del Corso, Dir. A. Brissoni
1943	Sep	<u>The Winter's Tale</u> , Rome: Teatro Argentina, Dir. P. Sharoff
1948	Jun 6	<u>The Tempest</u> , Florence: Boboli Gardens, Comp. Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Dir. G. Strehler
1949	Jun 21	<u>Troilus and Cressida</u> , Florence: Boboli Gardens, Dir. L. Visconti

1951 Jul 7 Henry IV, Part One, Verona: Teatro Romano, Comp. Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Dir. G. Strehler
 1957 Dec 22 Measure For Measure, Genoa: Piccolo Teatro, Comp. Teatro Stabile di Genova, Dir. L. Squarzina
 1958 Summer Love's Labour's Lost, Ostia Antica: Teatro Romano, Dir. F. Enriquez
 1960 Summer Pericles, Pontedera: Palazzo Vecchio, Dir. M. Sartarelli
 1960 Jul 10 The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Fiesole: Teatro Romano, Dir. B. Menegatti
 1964 Apr 23 All's Well That Ends Well, Florence, Comp. Teatro Stabile di Firenze, Dir. B. Menegatti
 1965 Jun 19/20 Henry VI, Milan: Teatro Lirico, Comp. Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Dir. G. Strehler
 1967 Oct 28 Henry V, Bologna: Palazzo dello Sport, Comp. Teatro Stabile di Bologna, Dir. V. Puecher
 1968 Jul 23 Titus Andronicus, Verona: Teatro Romano, Dir. A. Trionfo
 1969 Dec 30 Timon of Athens, Milan: Piccolo Teatro, Comp. Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Dir. M. Bellocchio
 1970 Jun 29 Henry IV, Part Two, Verona: Teatro Romano, Dir. T. Buazzelli
 1971 Feb 6 Henry VIII, Milan: Teatro Uomo, Comp. I Rozzi, Dir. G. Merlo
 1972 Aug 3 King John, Verona: Teatro Romano, Dir. F. Simone
 1977 Aug Cymbeline, Verona: Teatro Romano, Comp. La Fabbrica dell'Attore, Dir. G. Nanni

APPENDIX C

ITALIAN DIRECTORS OF SHAKESPEARE FOR THE YEARS 1945 TO 1983

The following is an alphabetical list of the directors who produced Shakespeare's plays in Italy after the Second World War. "Prod" refers to the number of the productions; "Plays" refers to the number of plays produced; "Adap" refers to the number of adaptations produced which were based on Shakespeare's plays or other work (sonnets, poems, etc.); and "Diss" refers to the number of the productions discussed in this dissertation.

Directors	Prods	Plays	Adap	Diss
Albertazzi, Giorgio	1	0	1	0
Baseggio, Cesco	1	1	1	0
Bellocchio, Marco	1	1	0	0
Bene, Carmelo	7	5	7	7
Bernardi, Marco	3	3	0	0
Bolchi, Sandro	1	1	0	0
Bonacci, Flavio	1	1	1	0
Brissoni, Alessandro	5	2	0	0
Buazelli, Tino	2	2	0	0
Calenda, Antonio	4	4	0	4
Castellani, Renato	2	2	0	0
Castri, Massimo	1	1	1	0
Censi, Cristiano	1	1	0	0
Cervi, Filippo Corradi	1	1	0	0
Chiavarelli, Lucio	1	1	0	0
Cobelli, Giancarlo	6	4	1	0
Compagnia del Collettivo	1	3	3	0
Colli, Giacomo	1	1	0	0
Costa-Giovangilli, Orazio	5	4	0	5
Cutrufelli, Giovanni	1	1	0	0
D'Amato, Enrico	1	1	0	0
De Anna, Roberto	1	1	1	0
De Bernardinis, Leo	3	2	2	0
De Bosio, Gianfranco	2	2	0	1
De Lullo, Giorgio	4	3	0	4
De Marchi, Michele	1	1	0	0
Di Leo, Accursio	1	1	0	0
Di Leva, Giuseppe	1	1	0	0
Enriquez, Franco	16	12	0	10
Ferrero, Mario	5	5	0	0
Fersen, Alessandro	1	1	0	0
Fino, Claudio	1	1	0	0
Frosi, Claudio	1	1	1	0
Gagliardo, Marco	1	1	1	0
Gaskill, William	1	1	0	0
Gassman, Vittorio	3	3	0	3
Gazzolo, Nando	1	1	0	0
Gazzolo, Virginio	1	0	1	0
Giacomin, Giorgio	1	1	0	0
Giannini, Ettore	1	1	0	0
Graziani, Sergio	1	1	1	0

Guicciardini, Roberto	2	2	0	1
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Jacobi, Ruggero	1	1	0	0
Karlsen, John	1	1	0	0
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Sepe, Giancarlo	1	1	0	0
Serra, Gianni	1	1	1	0
Shamah, Andree Ruth	2	2	2	0
Sharoff, Pietro	2	2	0	1
Simone, Fortunato	1	1	0	0
Simoni, Renato	1	1	0	0
Squarzina, Luigi	7	5	0	7
Strehler, Giorgio	12	13	1	12
Torriero, Filippo	2	2	0	0
Tonti, Fulvio	1	1	0	0
Trionfo, Aldo	4	3	1	4
Valenti, Giancarlo	1	1	1	0
Vannucchi, Luigi	1	1	0	0
Visconti, Eriprando	1	1	0	0
Visconti, Luchino	2	2	0	2
Zeffirelli, Franco	3	2	1	2
Zucchi, Augusto	2	2	0	0

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