

## Shakespeare's Knowledge of Illyrian Rulers. Duke Orsino: Historical Truth in *Twelfth Night*

by Noemi Magri

Illyria is the place where the action of *Twelfth Night* is set and Duke Orsino, the main male character, is the ruler of that country.

Certain Italian, French or Latin comedies may be the source of Shakespeare's play, but it is generally agreed that *TN* is derived from an Italian comedy *Gl'Ingannati*, written and first performed in Siena by nobles and humanists of the 'Accademia degli Intronati', and first published in Venice in 1537.<sup>1</sup> But *Gl'Ingannati* is set in Modena and the name of the main character is Flamminio.

Why did Shakespeare set his play in Illyria and why did he choose the Italian name 'Orsino'? And where was his Illyria?

Various editors of the play agree that for his romantic comedy Shakespeare may have wanted to create an atmosphere of phantasy or evoke an imaginary world, so he chose a remote setting, a distant, almost unknown place which in his time had no physical borders nor political unity.<sup>2</sup>

Arden editors refer to Greek romances or Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (the latter mentions the 'coast of Illirie') as Shakespeare's possible source of the geographic name.<sup>3</sup> Torbarina opines that the dramatist had in mind the seacoast of Croatia and had gathered his information from 'Illyrian sailors and merchants residing in London'.<sup>4</sup> According to Draper, Shakespeare 'seems to have thought of Illyria as a semi-independent fief of the Holy Roman Empire'<sup>5</sup> and Hotson argues that Illyria meant to Shakespeare 'wild riot and drunkenness, and the lawless profession of piracy'.<sup>6</sup>

Opinions vary. In any case, Stratfordian critics, for obvious reasons, turn only to literature or hearsay, never to the author's direct experience, which last is essential when Edward de Vere is taken as the true author of Shakespeare's works.

Because Shakespeare does not describe the place, and because some of the comic characters are modelled on real personages of the English court, and the atmosphere of the play, with its melancholic love and 'music from the spheres', is typically Shakespearean, critics contend that Illyria is a 'nowhere' country, a place of the imagination, and its ruler, Duke Orsino, a mere invention.

The present paper purposes to answer the questions 'Why Illyria?' and 'Why Orsino?', and to substantiate, with reference to history, that Shakespeare's Illyria was a precise, well defined region on the Adriatic, ruled in the past by a historically real 'Duke Orsino'.

*TN* contains two plots: the shipwreck of the twins and the satire of Court personages, - connected to each other by rather weak links, which may suggest that Shakespeare had conceived the two parts in different times.

This is, in short, the content of the play: Twin siblings are separately stranded on the coast of Illyria. The twin sister Viola, disguised as a page, enters the service of Duke Orsino under the name of Cesario. Orsino is in love with Countess Olivia and sends his page Viola/Cesario to court the lady and bring her presents on his behalf. But Olivia, mourning the recent loss of her father and brother, refuses his love.

Here Shakespeare develops one of his peculiar themes - ambiguity: Olivia is conquered by the refined, courtly manners and witty speeches of Cesario, and, in the same way, Orsino is attracted to the noble mind of his affectionate page - meanwhile, Viola has at once fallen in love with the Duke. The arrival of Sebastian, the twin brother, brings in the final denouement with a double marriage: the Duke marries Viola and the Countess Sebastian.

The secondary plot, the light part of *TN*, focuses on satirizing personages of the English Court: it forms a separate unit and is linked to the Orsino story only by the fact that the satirical characters are gentlemen belonging to Olivia's household. Malvolio, one of the gentleman, is in love with Olivia and dreams of marrying her and becoming 'Count Malvolio': he is presumed to be a caricature of Sir Christopher Hatton, faithful to Queen Elizabeth throughout his life.<sup>7</sup>

There must be a reason why Shakespeare/Oxford set his play in Illyria and named his character 'Orsino'. Lord Oxford's journey in the Adriatic was an essential cultural source to him and probably had the greater part in forming his choice. The references to the place, though few, are evidence that he was well acquainted with the eastern side of the Gulf of Venice.

His Illyria is not a phantasy land.

Then, - most importantly - Orsino as 'Duke of Illyria' is no invention. In placing a 'Duke Orsino' at the head of that country, Shakespeare did not create an imaginary world ruled by an imaginary lord: he merely followed local history: in the 14th century the rulers of Illyria were the Orsini family.

The critics of *TN* do not mention the Orsini of Illyria: no doubt it would be hard to evidence

how Shaksper from Stratford could have possibly learnt the name of those rulers. No 'travelled friends' - in Stratfordian opinion the source of so much of his knowledge - are reported to have visited that place.

### 'Don Virginio Orsini' confuted

The name Orsino is not contained in any of the play's sources. Hunter found out that 'Orsino Innamorato' is a character in *Il Viluppo*, a comedy by Girolamo Parabosco (1547) but he agreed that there is no evidence that Shakespeare ever read or saw that comedy.<sup>8</sup> In following Sarrazin and Draper<sup>9</sup>, Hotson argues that 'Orsino' was suggested by the name of the Duke of Bracciano, Don Virginio Orsini (1572-1615), old alternative spelling 'Orsino' who paid a visit to Queen Elizabeth in January 1601 (new dating) and that *TN* was the very play performed at Court on Jan. 6th for the Italian duke and other distinguished foreign guests.<sup>10</sup>

Arden eds. admit that Shakespeare's choice of the name may not be accidental; however, they rightly refute Hotson's arguments on the ground that they are purely conjectural.<sup>11</sup>

Arden refutations are very specific. Firstly, there is no evidence that the play performed on Jan. 6th was Shakespeare's *TN*. It is true that in a letter from London to his wife in Florence Virginio Orsini wrote that he had seen '*una commedia, mescolata con musiche e balli*', 'a comedy, containing pieces of music and dances', but in *TN* there are no dances, and then Virginio Orsini did not give the title or the author of the play. Therefore, the mere mention of '*una commedia*', 'a comedy', is simply too vague to be taken as evidence that the play was *TN*. (Arden translation of Virginio Orsini's phrase into 'a mingled comedy with pieces of music and dances' would better correspond to the Italian original if it were as follows: 'a comedy, mingled with pieces of music and dances': syntactically, the word *mescolata* goes with 'con musiche e balli', not with 'commedia'.)<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, in his memorandum regarding the arrangements for Virginio Orsini's visit, the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Hunsdon, wrote that he would 'confer with the Lord Admiral and the Master of the Revels in order that the players should make a choice of a play with such apparel and great variety of music and dances and of a subject most pleasing to her majesty'.<sup>13</sup> The Lord Chamberlain explicitly mentioned the 'choice of a play', not the staging of a 'new' play. Even supposing, as reported by tradition, that Shakespeare could have

written a play 'in less than a fortnight', the actors would not have had the necessary time to rehearse for the Jan. 6th performance, because the date of Orsini's visit was notified to the Lord Chamberlain only on Dec. 25th, 1600.

Moreover, on the basis of the analysis of the mood and content of the play, it is evident that *TN* was written much earlier than 1600/01 - a time when Shakespeare's serious, 'dark' plays or great tragedies, not conventional comedies with comic situations and playful characters like the present one, had already appeared.<sup>14</sup> Since Malvolio, as generally agreed, is a caricature of Sir Christopher Hatton, a play ridiculing him is unlikely to have amused the Court in 1600/01, for by that time Hatton had been dead for 9 or 10 years.

Because of the many similarities with Shakespeare's early plays - *Err. TGV MV* - in theme, plot, mood and verbal parallels, *TN*, though probably revised later, is likely to date from the same time of composition as the early comedies. It contains 15 Italian words, 16 Italianisms, 17 possible Anglicizations of Italian regional vernacular, and a reference to the 'zani' of the *Commedia dell'Arte*: all that places *TN* some time after de Vere's continental journey (1575-76).

In 1600/01, Oxford was going through a sad and desperate period of his life: his health was poor and he was in no condition to travel from his house in Hackney to the Court. That he did not take part in the Jan. 6th entertainments is substantiated in the notes of Lord Hunsdon containing lists of names of lords and ladies present at the dinner and performance of the play at Whitehall. The first on the list of ladies is 'the Countesse of Oxford', whereas the name of Lord Oxford is not recorded in the list of lords. It is true that de Vere may have learnt from his wife about the Italian guest, but it is also true that on Jan. 6th he was not at Court.<sup>18</sup>

Hotson's hypothesis, in spite of its too many conjectures, may sound acceptable to Oxfordians since it would establish another link between de Vere and Italy. However, given the arguments above and historical evidence, 'Orsino' is likely to have been suggested by Illyrian history, not by the name of the Italian visitor.

The various critical studies of *TN* reveal that commentators have restricted their investigation of 'Orsino' to Elizabethan England, and to the English court and its environment with the conclusion that the Duke of Bracciano's name seems to be the likelier source of Shakespeare's 'Orsino'.

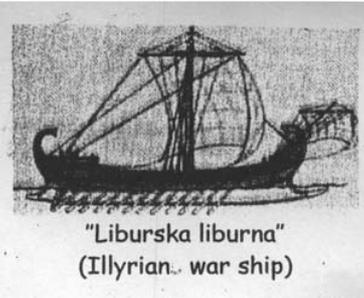
Instead, for the choice of the duke's name - just the name, not the character - we must turn to history, even though various other 'Orsini' had been involved in the political and religious history of England, and were certainly known to Shakespeare. But, however famous or infamous they may have been, those other 'Orsini' had no connection with Illyria.<sup>19</sup>

A historical outline may clarify which period Shakespeare was referring to, and where exactly his Illyria was.

### Ancient Illyria, Roman Illyricum, New Epirus.

Shakespeare/Oxford would very well know from his reading in the classics<sup>20</sup> that originally Illyria was the region extending north of Greece and inhabited by tribes of different languages and customs, known as Illyrians from the largest group. Other tribes were the Dalmatians, and the Liburni. The Illyrians were a warlike people, strong and aggressive seamen, and skilled ship-builders: they constructed a new type of galley, the 'Liburna' (named after the tribe), a swift ship later constructed also by the Romans, which moved easily between the many rocks and small islands off the Adriatic coast.

In the 7th century BC the Greeks started to invade the coastal region of Illyria and, there, they founded the colonies of Apollonia (present Valona) and Epidamnus (Latin Epidamnus, later called Dhyrrachium by the Romans, now Durrës), in present Albania.<sup>21</sup> The Illyrians at times allied with the Greeks, at times with their enemies,



Illyria in ancient times (303 BC)

reached maximum power with their greatest king, Bardhyl (385-358 BC) who conquered Macedonia, Epirus and Greek territories, having defeated King Perdicca III of Macedonia.

Shakespeare mentions Bardhyl in *2HVI* (IV.i.107) as 'Bargulus, the strong Illyrian pirate'. Alexander the Great soon recaptured the lost regions.

The Roman ships became prey to the Illyrian seafarers, and the coasts of Italy and Sicily were raided by various Illyrian tribes which became known and feared as dangerous pirates. After more than a century of hard fighting, the aggressive invaders and pirates were finally subdued, and in 9 AD under Emperor Augustus the peninsula from the Danube in the north to Macedonia in the south became a Roman province under the name of Illyricum.

Several Roman emperors were of Illyrian origin: the most famous is Diocletian<sup>22</sup> (284-305 AD): he built the magnificent palace of Spalato (Croatia), still extant though turned into lodgings by the Turks. Under his rule, the Roman Empire was divided into two parts: East and West, and into four Prefectures. Illyricum became one of the two Prefectures of the East: it included ancient Illyria, now called 'Epirus Nova', New Epirus, - its capital was Dhyrrachium - and Greek Epirus, now called 'Epirus Vetus', Old Epirus.

### Medieval Illyricum

After the fall of the Roman Empire (476 AD) the Prefecture of Illyricum fell under the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire of the East (the Byzantine Empire). From that time to 1204 the layout of Illyricum often changed in consequence of barbaric and Slav invasions (5th-10th centuries). The Slav tribes, that had settled there, founded new states and Illyricum was divided into various kingdoms: Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Bosnia, Dalmatia and others; therefore that region took various names. An important fact for identifying the setting of *TN* is that the littoral of New Epirus with the cities of Dhyrrachium and Apollonia remained within the territory of the Greek-Byzantine Empire and, there, the official language was Greek.

In 1204 the Crusaders - French and Italian feudal barons - captured Constantinople, so the Byzantine Empire and the Slav kingdoms were divided among the conquerors. Also the Republic of Venice had sent armies and occupied coastal territories. New states with foreign rulers, called 'the Latins', in juxtaposition with 'the Greeks',

were founded, and consequently there started a long period of struggles between the invading 'Latins', the Venetians, the Slav kings and the Byzantine Emperors.

### Shakespeare's Illyria: the Despotate of Epirus

In the aftermath of the conflict, the port of Dyr-rachium (called Durazzo from then) was occupied by the Venetians while the rest of Epirus (Old and New) became an independent Greek-Byzantine despotate, that is, a state ruled by a despot (from Greek called δεσπότης: duke, prince, ruler) un-



The Despotate of Illyria ruled by the Orsini family

der the Comnenus family related to the Emperors of Byzantium. (The word 'despot' acquired the meaning of 'tyrant, absolute ruler' much later.)

Fortified by the Venetians, Durazzo was a prosperous port of the Republic until 1501 when it was occupied by the Turks. After then, it lost its importance but in the second half of the 16th century the Venetians still traded there.

The Epirotic line of Comnenus became extinct when, in 1318, the last despot Thomas I was assassinated by Nicola Orsini, Count of Kefalonia. On the pretext of being a relative of the Byzantine Emperor, Nicola Orsini seized power and was invested as despot, that is duke of Epirus (ancient Illyria). The Orsini ruled Epirus for 40 years until 1358 when the last despot Nicephorus II Orsini was murdered.<sup>23</sup> For a long period the despotate was disputed by Byzantium, Serbia, and Albania until the beginning of the 15th century when it was again ruled by the descendants of the Orsini, - the Tocco-Orsini, a collateral branch. In 1468 it was occupied by the Turks and after five centuries, in 1914, it became the independent state of Albania.

Who were the Orsini of Epirus? They were members of a southern Italian branch of the dominant Orsini family that, with its numerous lines, had for centuries made the history of Italy, of the Papacy, and of other European states including those in the Balkan peninsula, since late Roman times. The name Orsino belongs to the history of Epirus, that is, of Byzantine Illyria.

### Orsino, Count and Duke: no error

Shakespeare has unjustly been criticized for his (alleged) limited knowledge and incorrect use of royal titles (see *TGV, Oth.*). It has also been said that he paid little attention to the difference between one or other of them.

But one detail in *TN* is evidence not only of his knowledge of the existence of the Orsini of Epirus but also of their heraldic titles.

In the Stage Directions, speech heading, and four times in Act I, Orsino is called 'Duke', but throughout the play the various characters refer to him as 'Count': a detail that has been taken as an example of inconsistency or a discrepancy 'originating in the error of some scribe copying Shakespeare's foul papers'<sup>24</sup>, or in the dramatist's carelessness.<sup>25</sup> Torbarina gives a rather odd explanation: in *TN*, 'duke' is synonymous with 'count'.<sup>26</sup>

The use of both titles for Orsino is no inconsistency nor error: it is, instead, a precise historical detail. In history, the Orsini of Epirus had the title both of 'despots', i.e. 'dukes', and, since 1194, of 'counts', when Maio (Matteo) Orsini, their forefather, was created Count Palatine of Kefalonia, Zante and Ithaca. The title passed on to Maio's descendants, including the Orsini of Epirus. (Except for some intervals, the three major Ionian islands, Kefalonia, Zante and Ithaca, were ruled by Counts Orsini until the 15th century, when they became territories of the Venetian Republic. In the 16th century the Orsini family was still flourishing: it is recorded that in 1588 one Nicola Orsini still claimed the title of Count of Kefalonia.)

In calling Orsino both 'count' and 'duke', Shakespeare merely drew on history: it is undeniable that he is criticized for blunders and inaccuracies that are, instead, exact historical facts or references.

### 'Foolish Greek'

A phrase in Act IV.i.18 may be another element that corroborates the identification of Illyria as

New Epirus, a Greek-speaking country: the phrase becomes consistent only if we refer to the Greek-Byzantine Despotate.

This is what happens in the scene. Feste, the Clown in Olivia's service, meets Sebastian, the twin brother, in the street and, believing that he is Cesario, urges him to go to Olivia's house. Of course Sebastian does not understand that he has been mistaken for somebody else and tries to get rid of the Clown. But Feste goes on pestering him, so Sebastian bursts out in irritation and says, 'I prithee, foolish Greek, depart from me'.

There must be a reason for the use of the phrase 'foolish Greek'. Arden eds. explain it as 'silly merry-maker' in reference to 'merry Greek' in M.P.T. Tilley (m.901, p.458).<sup>27</sup> But that does not appear to be consistent with the scene: firstly, Shakespeare uses the word 'foolish', not 'merry'; then, to Sebastian, Feste is not an amusing, joking fellow: on the contrary, he is a cause of annoyance, of vexation: the twin brother is now hastening to the inn where he is to meet his friend Antonio and does not like to be delayed.

Why Sebastian calls the Clown 'foolish' is self-explanatory, but why the Clown should be a 'Greek' is not made clear. However, we understand the use of the phrase if we accept that Shakespeare had in mind the inhabitants of a Greek-speaking country, that is of Byzantine Illyria (or Epirus) once ruled by the Orsini and where Greek was the official language. The phrase 'foolish Greek' supports the argument that medieval Illyria (Epirus) is the place that Shakespeare was thinking of as the setting of *TN*.

### Lord Oxford in Illyria

On his continental journey, Oxford had the opportunity to meet scholars and literary men (Sturmius, the scholars at Padua University), and to access books and MSS in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice<sup>28</sup>. This may have satisfied his cultural interests and made him acquainted with the history of Illyria. In the summer of 1575, the evidence suggests that he travelled from Venice to Sicily on a Venetian galley and visited the various cities where the galley stopped. There, too, he would have the chance to become familiar with the cultural and political environment of the places.

'Who governs here?' asked Viola as soon as she reached Illyria: it is a question which, if uttered by Oxford, would reveal his intention

to meet the local authorities but also his desire to know who the actual rulers were in the places where he had just landed. The question 'who governs here?' is absolutely relevant and consistent, in consideration of the political layout of the states on the Adriatic in Shakespeare's times.

The Venetian galley would have stopped in Venetian ports in Istria, then in Fiume, an independent city under the control of the Habsburgs, then it would pass off Segna, - the pirates' headquarters in the kingdom of Hungary, - and stop in several ports in Venetian Dalmatia, in the independent Republic of Ragusa, in Venetian Cattaro, in Dulcigno, a Venetian port until 1571 (battle of Lepanto) when it was occupied by the Turks; in 1575 Dulcigno, though under Ottoman influence, was in the independent state of Montenegro ruled by a *vlàdika* (bishop), a religio-political authority. The galley may have stopped in Dhyrrachium/Durres in Albania (ancient Illyria), another state, under the Turks, and finally in several ports in the Kingdom of Naples and in the Kingdom of Sicily, ruled by Spanish viceroys.

We can see that the question 'who governs here?' is a most pertinent one, since it reflects Oxford's experience; on such a journey he would have travelled to places governed by rulers of varying nations and affiliations.

Oxford had the same interest in monuments and antiquities that he makes Sebastian show on arrival in the Illyrian city:

'Shall we go see the relics of this town?'

'Let us satisfy our eyes with the memorials  
and the things of fame that do renown this  
city' (III.iii)

Lord Oxford, too, knew of the existence of ancient monuments in the coastal region of the Adriatic, and it had been his intention to see as much as he could.

To conclude, the history of Illyria is strictly connected with the Orsini: in the 14th century they ruled that country for 40 years. In setting *TN* in Illyria, Shakespeare/Oxford did not intend to create a phantasy world; Illyria was not a remote country to him: it was a familiar place because he had visited it. In calling his character Orsino and in making him 'Duke of Illyria', Shakespeare did not make an imaginative association between a name and a place. On the contrary, his choice of Orsino as the ruler of a state that in his time was known as Illyria (or Epirus or Albania), is deeply rooted in history: it is a precise reference to historical events,

though his Orsino, a love-stricken, melancholy lord of noble mind, so similar to the male characters of the early plays, has no resemblance to the ruthless despots of Epirus.

The name Orsino has a historical origin: dukes of that name did exist in history and Shakespeare had a precise undeniable knowledge of Byzantine Illyria.

#### NOTES

1. Other possible sources may be the various adaptations or imitations of *Gl'Ingannati: Bandello* (1554, Novella II, 36); *Cinthio* (1565, Novella VIII, V: the source of Barnabe Riche's *Apolonius and Silla*, 1581) Belleforest (1570, IV, 59); Nicolò Secchi, *Gl'Inganni* (performed 1547, printed 1562): There are also French versions: Charles Estienne, *Les Abuzes* (Paris, 1540): it had immediate success and was determinant in the development of French drama; Jacques Grévin, *Les Esbahis* (performed 1560); Jean de la Taille, *Les Corrivaux* (1562). *Laelia*, a Latin version of *Gl'Ingannati*, was performed by the university students of Queen's College, Cambridge, in 1547, ten years after the first edition of the Italian play. *The Comedia de los Engañados* (1567) by Lope de Rueda is the first of the many adaptations written in Spanish.
2. C.Knight (1839); E.Smith (1926) p.11; M.Luce (1929); O.J.Campbell et al. (1964) p.2.
3. J.M.Lothian & T.W.Craik (1975) pp.8, 10.
4. J.Torbarina (1964) p.38.
5. W.Draper (1950) p.116.
6. L.Hotson (1954) p.151.
7. The comic scenes reveal that the author, no matter who he was, took the liberty to treat his characters in an impudent, disrespectful, though amusing, way without incurring the Queen's indignation. Only someone like Lord Oxford could have written *Twelfth Night*, certainly not Shaksper from Stratford, who would have been prosecuted for it.
8. J.Hunter (1845) vol.i, pp.393, 398 quoted in Lothian & Craik (1975) p. xli.
9. G.Sarrazin (1896) p.168; J.W.Draper (1950) pp.113-120.
10. L.Hotson (1954) pp.35-64.
11. Lothian & Craik (1975) pp.xxviii-xxxiv. Apart from the arguable conjectures, Hotson's book contains interesting documents.
12. Ibid. pp.xxiii and xxix. Virginio Orsini's letter is held in Rome, Archivio Storico Capitolino. Archivio Orsini. Corrispondenza di Virginio II. SPQR nri. 0394. It is published in Hotson (1954) pp. 226-31.
13. Hotson (1954) p. 15.
14. 1597: Q1 *R&J*; Q1 *RII*; Q1 *RIII*; 1598: *KJ* (Meres); Q1 *IHIV*; 1599: *JC* (Platter); 1600: *MAdo* (SR); Q1 *2HIV*; 1602: *Oth* (Egerton Papers); 1603: Q1 *H*.
15. 'Madonna', 'cubiculo', 'signior', 'duello'.
16. 'accost', 'sir priest', 'sir knight', 'there's no remedy', 'holy man'.
17. 'Pigrogromitus' (with a Latin ending), 'Vapians'.
18. Hotson (1954) pp.176-82.
19. a) Rinaldo Orsini (or Raynaldus de Ursinis, d.1173), or Reginald Fitzurse as given in an English translation of a contemporary Latin chronicle, was one of the four knights who

killed Archbishop Thomas à Beckett in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170. The historical event was reported by Edward Grim in his *Vita S.Thomae* (written in Latin about 1180) edited in James Robertson, *Materials for the Life of Thomas Beckett*. London. Rolls Series, 7 Vols. 1875-1885, Vol.II.

b) Romano Orsini (d. after 1326) 2nd Count of Nola, Pitiigliano and Soana, was related by marriage to King John: his wife Anastasie de Montfort, daughter of Guy de Montfort 1st Count of Nola, was the granddaughter of Princess Eleanor of England. Eleanor, King John's daughter, married Simon V de Montfort and was Guy's mother.

c) Cardinal Giordano Orsini (d.1438) of the Bracciano line, Archbishop of Naples, was Papal Legate to England (and France) in 1425-26 when the king on the English throne was 4-year-old Henry VI and the country, ruled by the rival parties of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, John of Lancaster Duke of Bedford and Henry Beaufort Bishop of Winchester, was still at strife with France. Cardinal Orsini had been assigned to bring peace between the two contending countries. Shakespeare dramatized the historical events of the period in *IHV*.

20. See E. Jolly & P. O'Brien, 'Shakespeare's Sources: Sir Thomas Smith's Library' in *Great Oxford* (2004) pp. 22-5; E. Jolly, 'Shakespeare's Sources continued: Lord Burghley's Library' *ibid.* pp.26-30. The Greek authors were: Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, Appian, Strabo; the Latin ones: Pliny, Suetonius, Livy, Justinus.

21 In a strategic position, Dyrrhachium soon became one of the most important ports on the Gulf of Venice: it was the landing place for passengers, merchants and armies travelling from Brindisi (southern Italy) to the East. The town was the starting point of the Via Egnatia, the Roman military road to Thessalonica and Constantinople. In Dyrrhachium the Romans built temples, a library, an amphitheatre, an aqueduct, villas and houses embellished with mosaics, frescoes and statues (see the works of Pomponius Mela, Dion Cassius, Claudius Ptolemy, Pliny). Cicero sojourned there and described it as 'admirabilis urbs'.

22. Claudius II (268), Aurelianus (270), Protus (276-282).

23. All the Orsini of Epirus were ruthless rulers and met tragic deaths. Nicola, the usurper, was deposed, then murdered by his brother Giovanni II in 1323. Giovanni II was poisoned by his wife. He was succeeded by his son Nicephorus II who was assassinated in 1358.

24. Lothian & Craik (1975) p.xix-xxii.

25. J.W.Draper (1975) p.115.

26. J.Torbarina (1964) p.34.

27. Lothian & Craik (1975) p.117.

28. The library, housed in the Renaissance palace on St. Mark's Square, was planned by Sansovino (1566) with the purpose of holding the legacy (1468) of about 1000 Greek and Latin MSS of Cardinal Bessarione (d.1472).

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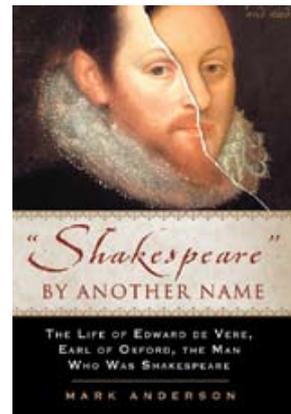
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