

In this article, Dottore Noemi Magri locates Illyria along the southern Adriatic coast from modern-day Dubrovnik in Croatia to Albania. Illyria, also known as Epirus, had been ruled by Dukes called Orsino.

Oxford and Illyria.

Duke Orsino: Historical Accuracy in *Twelfth Night*

by Noemi Magri



The Venetian Empire and the Adriatic c. 1600

The aim of the present paper is to show the Earl of Oxford's personal experience, to explain the choice of Illyria and its ruler Orsino in the setting for *Twelfth Night*. To that purpose, I will reconstruct his travels along the Adriatic, trace the route he covered, and locate the places he may have visited.¹ I will 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'.

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. Why did Shakespeare choose this setting? Various explanations have referred to literary sources, inn talks with merchants or the dramatist's intention to create a romantic atmosphere, for Illyria may not have been so well known to an Elizabethan audience. Ancient and medieval Illyria was the littoral from Ragusa (Dubrovnik), south along the coast of modern Montenegro (black mountains) and Albania (white, i.e. snow-topped, higher mountains). Owing to the lack of correspondence between the life of William Shakespeare of Stratford and the *Works*, Stratfordian

criticism has always been inclined to disregard the personal experience of the author, his life and environment, and his feelings or thoughts. Of all the major writers of the western world (Europe and the Americas), Shakespeare is the only one whose works have been denied any autobiographical basis.

Firstly, let us consider the literary sources for Shakespeare's play. It is generally agreed that *Twelfth Night* 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 1537.² But *Gl'Ingannati* is set in Modena, northern Italy, 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 any political unity.³ Opinions vary. 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.⁴ Torbarina believes that the dramatist had in mind the seacoast of Croatia and had gathered his information from 'Illyrian sailors and merchants residing in London'.⁵ According to Draper, Shakespeare 'seems to have thought of Illyria as a semi-independent fief of the Holy Roman Empire'.⁶ Leslie Hotson argues that Illyria meant to Shakespeare 'wild riot and drunkenness, and the lawless profession of piracy'.⁷ 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. Stratfordian critics, for obvious reasons, turn only to literature or hearsay. However, direct experience becomes more and more likely when Edward de Vere is taken as the true author of Shakespeare's works.

Twelfth Night 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: a pair of twins are separately stranded on the coast of Illyria. The 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 denouement with a double marriage: the Duke marries Viola, and the Countess marries Sebastian. The secondary plot, the light part of *Twelfth Night*, 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 gentlemen, 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.⁸

Don Virginio Orsini

The name Orsino is not contained in any of the play's sources. Hunter noted 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.⁹ In following Sarrazin and Draper,¹⁰ Hotson argues that 'Orsino' was suggested by the name of the Duke of Bracciano, Don Virginio Orsini (1572-1615). Bracciano is a small town about twenty miles north of Rome. Don

Virginio paid a visit to Queen Elizabeth in January 1601 (new dating) and that *Twelfth Night* was the very play performed at Court on Jan. 6th for the Italian duke and other distinguished foreign guests.¹¹

The Arden editors, Lothian and Craik, are very specific. Firstly, there is no evidence that the play performed on Jan. 6th was Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. 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 *Twelfth Night* there are no dances, nor did Virginio 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 *Twelfth Night*.¹² 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'.¹³ The Lord Chamberlain explicitly mentioned the 'choice of a play', not necessarily 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 *Twelfth Night* 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. [hadn't both appeared? Think this needs rephrasing]¹⁴ 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 nine or ten years.

The various critical studies of *Twelfth Night* 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 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.¹⁵

Because of the many similarities with Shakespeare's early plays - *A Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merchant of Venice* - in theme, plot, mood and verbal parallels, *Twelfth Night*, though probably revised later, is likely to date from the same time of composition as the early comedies. It contains Italian words,¹⁶ Italianisms,¹⁷ possible Anglicizations of Italian regional vernacular,¹⁸ and a reference to the 'zanni' of the *Commedia dell'Arte*: These facts support the attribution of the play to a courtier who had travelled along the Adriatic Sea.

Edward de Vere made his continental journey (1575-76), spending much time in Venice, travelling in a Venetian galley and reaching Palermo in Sicily. 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 (as the Adriatic Sea was known).¹⁹ 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 *Twelfth Night* do not mention the Orsini of Illyria: no doubt it would be hard to evidence how Shakespeare 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.

Oxford could not have composed the play in 1601. Oxford was going through a sad and desperate period of his life: his health was poor, his leg injured 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.²⁰ 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.

Ancient Illyria, Roman Illyricum, Epirus

A historical outline may clarify which period Shakespeare was referring to, and where exactly his Illyria was. Oxford knew well from his reading in the classics²¹ that originally Illyria was the coastal region extending north of Greece along the Adriatic and inhabited by tribes of different languages and customs: Illyrians the largest group; other tribes included the Dalmatians, and the Liburni. The Illyrians were a warlike people, strong and aggressive seamen, and skilled shipbuilders: 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 settle along the coastal region of Illyria and, there, they founded a colony called Apollonia (now an archaeological site known as Valona in Albania), which was a thriving city until adversely affected by an earthquake. Further north, colonists from Corinth founded Epidamnos (later known as Dyrrachium to the Romans, Durazzo to the Italians, and **Durrës** to the Albanians).²² With the Roman Empire expanding into Greece, Dyrrachium became an important strategic port, as the landing place for armies, officials, merchants, and travellers crossing from Brindisi (in southern Italy) *en route* to the East. From here a Roman road, the Via Egnatia, still leads to Thessalonica and Constantinople. Durazzo remained one of the most important trading ports for the on the Adriatic Sea.

At times, the native Illyrians allied with the Greeks. Their greatest king, Bardhyl (385-358 BC) defeated King Perdicca III of Macedonia and ruled Epirus for a while. Shakespeare mentions Bardhyl in *2 Henry VI* (IV. i. 107) as 'Bargulus, the strong Illyrian pirate'.²³ Alexander the Great soon recaptured the lost regions. During the Roman Republic, generals such as Pompey and Julius Caesar tried to curb the Illyrian seafarers, who were feared as dangerous pirates. After more than a century of hard fighting, the pirates were suppressed under the Emperor Augustus. The pirates are depicted in *Antony & Cleopatra*: in Act I scene iv, Octavius urgently requires the help of Antony to rid the seas of three pirates, Pompey, Menecrates and Menas. In Act II scene vii, the triumvirs make peace with the pirates. In 9 AD the lands from the Danube in the north to Macedonia in the south became a Roman province under the name of Illyricum. Several later Roman emperors were of Illyrian origin: the most famous was Diocletian (284-305).²⁴ He built the magnificent palace of Spoleto (**Split** in Croatia), still extant though turned into apartments by the Turks. Under his rule, the Roman Empire was divided into two parts: East and West. Illyricum became one of the two Prefectures of the East, with Greek as its official language.

Medieval Illyricum

After the fall of the Roman Empire in the west (476 AD), the Prefecture of Illyricum remained under the jurisdiction of the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire. From that time to 1204 the borders 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: Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Bosnia, Dalmatia and others. An important fact for identifying the setting of *Twelfth Night* is that the littoral with the cities of Dyrrachium and Apollonia remained within the territory of the Byzantine Empire. In 1204 the Crusaders – mainly French and Italian feudal barons – captured Constantinople and divided the Byzantine Empire among themselves. The Republic of Venice thus acquired control of coastal ports along the Adriatic, which they held for almost 600 years against the Slav kings and the Byzantine Emperors.

Shakespeare's Illyria: the Despotate of Epirus

While the port of Durazzo was ruled by the Venetians, the hinterland now known as Albania, and the coastal area of NW Greece became an independent Greek-Byzantine state, Epirus. It was ruled by a despot (the Greek word for master or in this case Duke) from the Comnenus family, who were related to the Emperors of Byzantium. The word 'despot' acquired the meaning of 'tyrant', 'absolute ruler' much later. The language of administration was Greek.

The last despot of the Comnenus family, Thomas I, was assassinated in 1318 by Nicola Orsini, Count of Cefalonia. As a relative of the Byzantine Emperor, Nicola Orsini justified seizing power and was invested as despot, that is Duke of Epirus (ancient Illyria). The Orsini ruled Epirus for 40 years until 1358 when Nicephorus II Orsini was murdered.²⁵ 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, Epirus was seized by the Turks who continued to hold it until it became Independent Albania in 1912. On the coast, the Venetians fortified the port of Durazzo but it finally fell to the Turks in 1501. Nevertheless, Durazzo remained open to traders from Venice throughout the sixteenth century.

Who were the Orsini of Illyria? They were the southern Italian branch of the dominant Orsini family that who had been prominent in the history of Italy, of the Papacy, and of other European states including those in the Balkan peninsula. 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 *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Othello*). It has also been said that he paid little attention to the difference between them. But one detail in *Twelfth Night* 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'²⁶, or in the dramatist's carelessness.²⁷ Torbarina gives a rather odd explanation: in *Twelfth Night*, 'duke' is synonymous with 'count'.²⁸ 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 Cefalonia, Zante and Ithaca. The title passed on to Maio's descendants, including the Orsini of Epirus. The three major Ionian islands, Cefalonia, Zante (Zacynthos) and Ithaca, were ruled by Counts Orsini until the 15th century, when they were seized by the Venetian Republic. In the 16th century. the Orsini family was still flourishing: 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, using historical facts.

'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'. The Arden2 editors, Lothian & Craik, explain 'merry Greek' as 'silly merry-maker', a familiar expression.²⁹ 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 *Twelfth Night*.

Oxford in Illyria

On his continental journey, Oxford had the opportunity to meet scholars and literary men: Sturmius in Strasburg, scholars at Padua University, and to access books and manuscripts in Venice, especially at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana.³⁰ From this library, he might have learnt about the history of Illyria. However, it is also likely that he visited Illyria in the summer of 1575, when he travelled from Venice to Sicily on a Venetian galley. In the ports of the Adriatic, he also had the chance to become familiar with the cultural and political environment of the places. On such a journey, he would have learned the names of various types of ships as shown in the comic interaction between Gremio and Tranio:

GREMIO *Two thousand ducats by the year of land!*

My land amounts not to so much in all:

That she shall have; besides an argosy

That now is lying in Marseilles' road.

What, have I choked you with an argosy?

TRANIO (impersonating Licentio)

Gremio, 'tis known my father hath no less

Than three great argosies; besides two galliases,

And twelve tight galleys: (Taming of the Shrew II. i. 370-75)

'Argosy' was a merchant ship, originally constructed in Ragusa. 'Galley' was the standard Venetian merchant ship; 'gallias' was the heavier Venetian ship that could be mounted with cannons.

Oxford's travels can be reconstructed from the documented evidence of his stays on the Continent.³¹ On April 26th 1575 he left Strasbourg (noted in Burghley's diary) and by mid-May he had safely arrived in Venice, according to Sir Richard Shelley's letter. By mid-September, he was again in that city, evidenced by a letter of Clemente Paretti of the 23rd and another from de Vere on 24th September. There is a gap of four months, during which time the only documented stay was in Genoa. Clemente Paretti wrote to Burghley that they were glad to be back in Venice due to the heat, explaining

'now last coming from Genoa'. Although Parretti was one of Oxford's servants, he seems also to have been an informer for Lord Burghley. Peretti also mentions: "His Lordship hurt his knee in one of the Venetian galleys."³² So in the summer of 1575, de Vere had been travelling by sea. Elsewhere, he is reported to have been in Palermo at an unknown date (Edward Webb, *Travels*, 1590). The only time when he could have travelled to Palermo was the summer of 1575, that is, during the four-month period before he called at Genoa.³³

If we allow him time to find a lodging in Venice from his arrival in mid-May and meet some members of the Venetian nobility, it is probable that he left Venice some time in June and reached Sicily after about one month's navigation. He travelled in one of the many Venetian galleys that regularly transported soldiers, passengers, pilgrims, and merchandise along the customary route southbound, driven by winds along the eastern side of the Adriatic.³⁴ Some of the ports where the galleys docked were Venetian; others were in foreign countries. In the ports, the galleys were kept in dock for a couple of days: the goods were unloaded and disinfected. Oxford would thus have had ~~the~~ some opportunity to visit such places.

What de Vere did in the cities he visited can be inferred from two scenes in *Twelfth Night*, one in Act I and the other in Act III, where the characters show what a learned noble of wide interests would do in a foreign country. Scene 2 of Act I opens with the line: 'What country, friends, is this?' (I. ii. 1). Viola, the twin sister, is speaking to the Captain, who answers, 'This is Illyria, lady.' She laments the death of her brother and the Captain comforts her: he had seen her brother make for the shore; he also says he knows the place because he 'was bred and born not three hours travel from this very place.' At this point, we might expect Viola to ask the Captain to take her in at his home or at least to the nearest lodging. Instead, she asks: 'Who governs here?' and hearing the answer, she says 'I'll serve this duke.'

These are questions which de Vere himself is likely to have asked as he set foot in an unknown city-port in the Adriatic, whether Venetian or any other. He would have tried to meet the dignitaries or rulers of the place, as nobles did when arriving anywhere. In many cases, such people would offer hospitality to the noble traveller. Oxford had a harbinger when he travelled by land, but in the case of a sea journey it would not have been possible for him to use a harbinger.

My second example concerns Sebastian, the twin brother, having safely arrived at a city in Illyria with Antonio, his friend and rescuer, asks him:

Sebastian *What's to do?*

Shall we go see the relics of this town?

Antonio: *Tomorrow, sir, best first go see your lodging.*

Sebastian: *I am not weary, and 'tis long to night.*

I pray you, let us satisfy our eyes

With the memorials and the things of fame

That do renown this city.

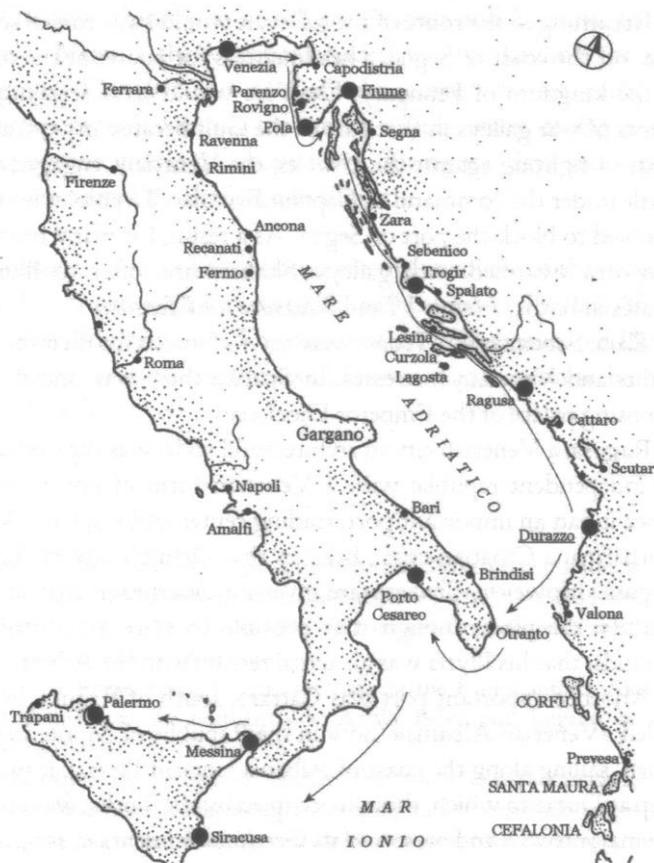
Twelfth Night III. iii. 18-24.

It may be that, in writing those lines, de Vere was recalling his visits. 'Relics' signifies 'ancient remains or antiquities'. All the cities on the Adriatic coast were, and still are, renowned for the palaces and rich homes in Venetian architectural style, and for Greek, Roman and Byzantine monuments. The word 'relic' also relates to the cult of saints. The churches in those cities preserved, and still do, masterpieces of Venetian gold work: reliquaries, chalices, caskets, and monstrances.

Oxford must have been impressed by the ancient monuments, the pleasantness of the coastal region, and by the religious spirit of the inhabitants if he witnessed a procession in honour of a saint or a religious feast.

After leaving the lagoon, a Venetian merchant ship, probably in a flotilla of ships for safety, would have crossed to the eastern side of the Gulf of Venice (as the Adriatic was called), then coasted along the Istrian peninsula, which had been entirely incorporated into the Venetian Empire in 1420.

Oxford's possible ports of call in 1575



Passing around the Istrian peninsula, the Venetian galley would then sail some way off Segna [**Senj** now in Croatia], ruled by the Kingdom of Hungary and a base for pirates at that time. De Vere would have seen movements of war-galleys in that part of the Gulf, because in 1575, it is recorded, after years of fighting against the Uskoks, the Venetians engaged in a battle under the command of Captain Ermolao Tiepolo, who was resolved to block the port of Segna, so for many months that area swarmed with galleys. Mention is made of Illyrian pirates in *2 Henry VI*. The next major port was Zara [**Zadar**, an ancient city with impressive new fortifications against the Ottomans]. Sebenico and Trogir were other towns famous for their Venetian buildings and fortifications. The most impressive town along the coast thus far was and is Spolato [Split] with the enormous palace of the Emperor Diocletian.

Moving south-east, we encounter another fine city: Ragusa [**Dubrovnik**] sits on a rocky outcrop and was an important port and trading centre. The architecture of its buildings and fortifications was also Venetian. Large merchant ships were named 'argosies' after the city because they were first built there. Shakespeare uses the word 'argosy' in three plays.³⁵ In addition, Shakespeare refers to a notorious pirate from Ragusa in *Measure for Measure*.³⁶ Shakespeare gives no description that might identify the place; historically Ragusa lay in Illyria. Josip Torbarina, a Croatian critic, believes that Orsino's city in *Twelfth Night* is Ragusa [as does Richard Malim in 2016].³⁷

From Ragusa began the ancient province of Illyria or Epirus. The next important port was situated inside some fjord-like bays: Cattaro (now Kotor in Montenegro). This marked the starting point of the Venetian Province of Albania, also known as Epirus. Then, sailing along the coast the flotilla might stop at Dulcigno (now called Ulcinj in Montenegro, near the Albanian border). Though under Ottoman influence, Dulcigno was an independent state ruled by a vlàdika (bishop). From here, the Venetians referred to the country as Albania and the flotilla would have moved on to the finest port of the Adriatic, Durazzo (now called Durrës in Albania). Originally part of Illyria and then Epirus, Durazzo was an ancient town with impressive Roman and Byzantine remains. It has silted up and can only be used by small vessels nowadays.

Many of the galleys would have continued south, perhaps stopping at another port in Illyria, which the Venetians called Valona, [Avlona, now known as Vlorë or Vlora, in present day Albania] which was also held by the Turks and had a flourishing Jewish community involved in maritime trade. So it seems quite likely that Shakespeare really was referring to ancient Illyria in choosing the setting of *Twelfth Night*. The ports of Ragusa, Durazzo and Valona were all in Illyria, later part of the Despotate of Epirus and under the Dukes of Orsini. We can see how important it is 'to ask: who governs here?' This question reflects Oxford's experience of visiting places governed by rulers of varying nations and religious affiliations.

Oxford might have proceeded south with calls at Corfu (ruled by the Venetians from 1386 to 1797, and the Ionian Islands such as Zante (Zakynthos). At some point, he crossed to southern Italy, the Kingdom of Naples, which was ruled by Spanish viceroys. In Apulia (Puglia, the heel of Italy), the galley might call at Porto Cesareo, on the Gulf of Taranto, named in honour of Caesar Augustus. If so, it would be further evidence of direct experience: 'Cesario' is the name Shakespeare chose for Viola disguised as a page. The next two likely ports of call are located on the east coast of Sicily (also under Spanish rule): Siracusa (in Latin Saragosa, in English Syracuse), the hometown of the Antipholus twins and their parents Egeon and Emilia in *A Comedy of Errors* and Messina, the setting for *Much Ado about Nothing*, where the Venetians had their own landing-site and lodgings. The first part of Oxford's journey by sea ended in Palermo. It was probably the month of July when, owing to the heat, no-one would go about town during the day, and there was no-one to accept his challenge.³⁸

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 *Twelfth Night* 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. His characterisation of Orsino as 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 showed precise knowledge of Byzantine Illyria.

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ENDNOTES

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- ¹ A great part of Shakespeare's dramatic and poetical production has strong links with France and Italy, as shown by Georges Lambin *Voyages de Shakespeare en France et en Italie* (Geneva, 1962), translated by W. Ron Hess in an appendix to *The Dark Side of Shakespeare*, Vol. I (2002). See also Richard Paul Roe *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy* (2011).
- ² Bullough lists other possible sources may be the various adaptations or imitations of *Gl'Ingannati*: Bandello (1554. Novella II, 36); Cinthio *Hecatommithi* (1565, Novella VIII, 5, the source of Barnabe Riche's *Apolonius and Silla*, 1581) Belleforest (1570, IV, 59); Nicolò Secchi, *Gl'Inganni* (performed 1547, printed 1562): There is also a French version by Charles Estienne, *Les Abuzes* (Paris, 1540), which had immediate success and was determinant in the development of French drama; other French versions were by 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 Queens' College, Cambridge, in 1547, ten years after the first edition of the Italian play. *La Comedia de los Engañados* (1567) is the first of the many adaptations written in Spanish.
- ³ C.Knight (1839); E.Smith (1926) p.11; M.Luce (1929); O.J.Campbell et al. (1964) p.2.
- ⁴ J.M. Lothian & T.W.Craik (1975) pp.8, 10.
- ⁵ J. Torbarina (1964) p.38
- ⁶ W. Draper (1950) p.116
- ⁷ L. Hotson (1954) p.151. Apart from doubtful conjectures, Hotson's book contains interesting documents.
- ⁸ Sir Christopher Hatton was Lord Chancellor under Elizabeth I from 1587 until his death in 1591. See Wallace MacCaffrey 'Hatton, Sir Christopher, c. 1540-1591' *ODNB* (2004) and Malcolm Deacon *The Courtier and the Queen*. Park Lane Press, (2008). The comic scenes of *Twelfth Night* 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 of high status could have written *Twelfth Night*, certainly not Shakspeare from Stratford, who would have been prosecuted for it.
- ⁹ J. Hunter (1845) vol.i, pp.393, 398 quoted in Lothian & Craik (1975) p. xli.
- ¹⁰ G. Sarrazin (1896) p.168; J.W.Draper (1950) pp.113-120.
- ¹¹ L. Hotson (1954) pp.35-64.
- [According to Valerio Morucci, 'Poets and musicians in the Roman-Florentine circle of Virginio Orsini' in *Early Music*, 43 (2015), Virginio was an important patron of music, including composers such as Caccini, Marenzio and Cavalieri, and some prominent singers of that time. His visit to Protestant England followed his attendance at the wedding of his cousin, Maria de' Medici, with Henri of Navarre. See R. Zapperi, *Virginio Orsini: Un paladino dei palazzj incantati* (Sellerio, 1993). *Ed.*]
- ¹² Lothian & Craik (1975) xxiii and xxix. Virginio Orsini's letter is held in Rome, *Archivio Storico Capitolino*. Archivio Orsini. Corrispondenza di Virginio II. SPQR nri. 0394. (Hotson 1954, 226-31)
- ¹³ Hotson (1954) p. 15
- ¹⁴ 1597: Q1 *Romeo and Juliet*; Q1 *Richard II*; Q1 *Richard III*; 1598: *King John* (Meres); Q1 *1 Henry IV*; 1599: *Julius Caesar* (Platter); 1600: *Much Ado about Nothing* (SR); Q1 *2 Henry IV*; 1602: *Othello* (Egerton Papers); 1603: Q1 *Hamlet*.

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- ¹⁵ 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 Thomas à Beckett in Canterbury in 1170/ The historical event was reported by Edward Grim in his *Vita S. Thomae* (written in Latin c. 1180) ed. James Robertson in *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, Pitigliano 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 *1 Henry VI*.
- ¹⁶ 'Madonna', 'cubiculo', 'signior', 'duello'.
- ¹⁷ 'accost', 'sir priest', 'sir knight', 'there's no remedy', 'holy man'.
- ¹⁸ 'Pigrogromitus' (with a Latin ending), 'Vapians'
- ¹⁹ "The Gulf of Venice [Adriatic Sea] runs for 800 miles between Italy and Esclavonia [Yugoslavia], and at the end of it is the island of Corfu, which the Venetians call their door, although Venice is in fact 800 miles away." Pedro Tafur in 1436.
- ²⁰ Hotson (1954) pp.176-82
- ²¹ 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 authors included Pliny, Suetonius, Livy, Justinus.
- ²² In Dyrrachium (Durazzo), the Romans built temples, a library, an amphitheatre, an aqueduct, and villas. Their houses were 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'.
- ²³ In *2 Henry VI*, Suffolk notes that "Small things make base men proud: this villain here, Being captain of a pinnacle, threatens more Than Bargulus the strong Illyrian pirate." (IV. i. 106-08). Ronald Knowles, editor of the Arden 3 edition of the play (1999) believes that the name came ultimately from Cicero. The allusion to an Illyrian pirate is obscure and unnecessary to the plot.
- ²⁴ Claudius II (268), Aurelianus (270), Protus (276-282)
- ²⁵ The Orsini of Epirus were ruthless tyrants who 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.
- ²⁶ Lothian & Craik (1975) p.xix-xxii
- ²⁷ J.W. Draper (1975) p.115
- ²⁸ J. Torbarina (1964) p.34
- ²⁹ Lothian & Craik (1975) p.117. They cite M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 1950 (entry no. M901, p. 458)
- ³⁰ 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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- ³¹ See Philip Johnson's article 'De Vere on the Continent' in the DVS Newsletter of December 2005. Mark Anderson "*Shakespeare*" by *another Name* (2005) discuss the travels in detail, 79-104.
- ³² Letter from Clemente Peretti to Lord Burghley dated 23 September, from Venice. Cecil Papers, 7/100. A galley was a large, heavy ship used at sea. So Oxford must have been sailing in the Adriatic at least.
- ³³ How he returned to Genoa can only be conjectured. However, since he was in Palermo (or at least in Messina), it is most likely that, from there, he travelled in stages along the west coast of the Italian peninsula, with stops in Naples and Rome before arriving in Genoa.
- ³⁴ It may be asked whether he might have travelled along the Italian coast of the Adriatic rather than the eastern side, thus stopping at Ancona to visit the courts of Pesaro and Urbino. That western course can be excluded on the grounds of navigability. In the summer, galleys travelling from Venice to the south would take the eastern route because of the favourable winds, whereas the winds off the Italian coast, at a suitable distance for the galleys to travel safely were northbound. Only merchant ships with a shallow draught could sail close to the Italian coast. Such ships were called *marviliane*, and were mainly used for the transport of salt.
- ³⁵ Shakespeare mentions 'argosy', a type of merchant ship associated with Ragusa (Dubrovnik) at *3 Henry VI*, II. vi. 36; *Taming of the Shrew* II. i. 370-75; and four times in *The Merchant of Venice* I. i. 9; I. iii. 18; III. i. 92; V. i. 276.
- ³⁶ In *Measure for Measure*, a provost announces to the Duke: "Here in the prison, father, There died this morning of a cruel fever One Ragozine, a most notorious pirate." (IV. iii. 65-68). The name and the allusion to piracy are obscure and unnecessary to the plot. The name Ragozine is taken to mean a person from Ragusa (Dubrovnik), taken with the mention of piracy suggest that the original draft of the play was based in Venice not Vienna.
- ³⁷ Richard Malim in 'Twelfth Night: How Much Did De Vere Know of Dubrovnik?' *The Oxfordian* 18 (2016, 55-65). Malim likewise identifies Shakespeare's Illyria with Ragusa (Dubrovnik) with a study of its rulers: the title of Duke of Illyria was used by the Hapsburgs in the sixteenth century; in 1575, it was one of the subsidiary titles of Archduke Charles (1540-90) the Emperor Ferdinand's third son.
- ³⁸ For further discussion about Oxford's stay in Palermo, see the Afterword in 'Shakespeare's Bohemia' by Noemi Magri.