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*... perché i re granchi
D'oppugnar l'abbicì non fur mai stanchi.*

Giacomo Leopardi

La rivista si propone di concretizzare, in un numero annuale, ricerche che spaziano nell'ambito della Linguistica storica e della Letteratura comparata senza preclusioni geografiche e temporali, secondo una rigorosa impostazione di analisi testuale e semantica svolta su testi in lingua originale. Essa intende proseguire il magistero e l'attività di studio di Enrica Salvaneschi, classicista e titolare della cattedra di Letterature comparate dell'Università degli Studi di Genova. L'idea di unire linguistica e letteratura, classicità e modernità, va incontro sia a esigenze di tipo scientifico (interdisciplinarietà) sia alla necessità di ricucire uno strappo immotivato tra le varie materie.

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The Usury's Children: The Market of Democracy between Plato's *Republic* and *The Merchant of Venice* by W. Shakespeare

Massimo STELLA*

The substance, the body clothing, the spirit of money is not money, paper, but instead it is my personal existence (Dasein), my flesh and blood, my social worth and status. Credit no longer actualizes money-values in actual money but in human flesh and human hearts.

(Karl MARX, *Excerpts from James Mill's Elements of Political Economy*)

In his delirium he [the Rat Man] had coined himself a regular rat-currency, and converted into this all the accumulation of interests around his father's legacy.

(Sigmund FREUD, *Notes upon a case of obsessional neurosis*)

Against the background of the financial turbulence that has so deeply afflicted our European Union, I'll ask you to play a game with me: there is a girl, an incredibly rich one, who lives in a fabulous and faraway country. She is fatherless—her father having died—but at the same time, she is still under his parental authority, since to comply with the terms of his will, she must marry the suitor who will be able to win her in a gambling competition, a lottery, by choosing from among three caskets, of gold, silver, and lead, one of which contains the girl's portrait.

In another town, meanwhile, a young adventurer, a squanderer of his fortune, asks for a loan from a friend, a merchant who loves him deeply,

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Il presente saggio è la rielaborazione dell'intervento che pronunciai in occasione del convegno dal titolo *Usury: the Forgotten Sin* (12-13 aprile 2012, Instytut Studiów Klasycznych, Śródziemnomorskich i Orientalnych Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego [Institute of Classical, Mediterranean and Oriental Studies, University of Wrocław]).

so that he can go to the girl's town to vie with her suitors and win the challenge together with the money that will free him from all his debts and give him a spouse as well. His loyal friend gives him the loan, but since he is temporarily insolvent, he must in turn go into debt to a rich creditor who imposes on him a bond, backed not by money or by other material assets, but by a pound of his own flesh.

Let's review the scenario: a bettor, the gambler of the story, aiming to pay off his debts by trying his luck at a game of chance, asks for a loan from a creditor who, lacking the sum he needs to lend, borrows it from another, who issues a bond that implies a collateral of human flesh. Let's solve the riddle: this game is precisely the plot of *The Merchant of Venice*: Bassanio is the young gambler; Antonio is his loyal friend and first creditor and issuer of the original bond; Shylock is the one who purchases the bond as an investor/speculator and hence is, we would say, the usurer because of the terms he set. But we must not be too hasty in calling Shylock the usurer, or, better, the only usurer. I would say instead that Shakespeare raises the curtain on "a theatre of collective usury", where everyone is, somehow, implicated. I have said "somehow." We will try to understand what this "somehow" implies and if the different levels of responsibility have a name.

Now, let's see how the play ends, and in particular where the money goes. Where does the gold go? Bassanio obtains his loan, the sum that enables him to sit at the gaming table of the three caskets: he chooses the lead one, he finds the portrait, and, literally, "breaking the bank", he wins everything: he wins the fortune—Shakespeare insists on a huge sum—that has been put on the market since it is without its owner, the father of the girl, Portia. The sum of money lent to Bassanio was the key to the lottery. The most indebted, the biggest spendthrift, the riskiest of all becomes, at the end of the play, the richest of all. Shylock, the one who has accumulated most of all, the money-lender *par excellence*, ends up as the most impoverished, since, in the meantime, his daughter Jessica and her lover, Lorenzo, elope with the treasure hidden in Shylock's house. But, above all, the bond in flesh that he owns works against him: Antonio, when the bond is about to expire, declares his inability to repay his loan because his ships appear to have been wrecked. Shylock goes before the Court in Venice to collect his bond and then everything reverses: an unknown lawyer of genius (Portia, the girl, dis-

guised as a man), obliges him to forfeit his fine, and she charges him with conspiring to murder a Venetian citizen, sanctioning, as the law requires, the forfeiture of all his wealth; half is to go to Venice and the other half to Antonio, the issuer of the bond, the indebted¹.

What about Antonio, then? At the beginning it seems as if he is to lose everything, even his life; to draw a pound of flesh would kill him. Then he earns half of Shylock's fortune to enjoy till the latter's death, and, in the end, his remaining ships unexpectedly arrive. Antonio's final balance is, therefore, a bit fortuitously, equal to zero, or at least he has lost little, but he has earned little as well. There is another young man who, out of thin air, has actually got incredibly rich: it is Lorenzo, who by kidnapping and marrying Shylock's daughter, Jessica, has obtained at present, thanks to a theft, a big treasure, and moreover, in the future, all Shylock's fortune, after his death: that is, the half now in Antonio's possession and the other half that the same Antonio has obliged Shylock to bequeath to his son-in-law and his daughter².

It seems a very complicated game, and it is actually a very elaborate play, in its dynamics, that results in a very simple synthesis. Thanks to a very risky bet (by Bassanio) and a kidnapping/theft (by Lorenzo), the Young (Bassanio and Lorenzo) become rich at the expense of the Old (Antonio and Shylock). Now, what is the meaning of all this? Or how could we define all this? There is a straight interpretation, the anthropological one: in a match full of twists, the *adulescens* wins treasure against the *senex*. Shakespeare is therefore the heir of Menander's and Plautus' anthropological plot, that represents an archaic social and parental structure—derived from fables—where the woman is the inter-

¹ «It is enacted in the laws of Venice, / If it be proved against an alien / That by direct or indirect attempts/He seek the life of any citizen, / The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive,/ Shall seize one half his goods; the other half / Comes to the privy coffer of the state;/And the offender's life lies in the mercy / Of the duke only, 'gainst all other voice. / In which predicament, I say, thou stand'st:/For it appears by manifest proceeding, / That, indirectly, and directly too, / Thou hast contriv'd against the very life / Of the defendant; and thou hast incur'd / The danger formerly by me rehears'd. / Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the duke» (*The Merchant of Venice*, 4.1. 360-375).

² «So please my lord the duke, and all the court / To quit the fine for one half of his goods; / I am content, so he will let me have / The other half in use, to render it, / Upon his death, unto the gentleman / That lately stole his daughter; / Two things provided more,—that for this favour, / He presently become a Christian; / The other, that he do record a gift, / Here in the court, of all he dies possess'd, / Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter» (*The Merchant of Venice*, 4.1. 392-402).

mediary of the exogamous exchange that always goes against the father and the ancestors, even in the final conservative balance³.

This explanation, however, does not take into consideration the interest—that is, the usury—of the speculation. Let's make a fresh start, then. Why does Bassanio, the young unreliable squanderer⁴, get his loan against any reasonable logic? Why is he so loved by Antonio to the point that Antonio risks his life for him, and why do Antonio and Shylock hate each other to death? This irrational play of love and hate represents a strategic web of relations⁵. Antonio and Shylock hate each other because one is a Christian and the other a Jew; one lends money without interest and the other, instead, with interest. Antonio and Shylock embody, therefore, two different monetary and cultural policies that, however, coexist in the same symbolic town, the Community. And they are functional to the system of the Community itself. Liberality and speculation turn on one another and show their "political" nature: the bond in flesh does not make any sense from a business point of view, and neither does Antonio's loan. It is precisely here, in this clash and meeting of positions, that the comedy reveals its political profile. Let's not forget another fundamental political element represented by Shakespeare through the character of the girl/lawyer: the shrewd use of the law, if not the manipulation of it, to prevent some earnings and favour some others.

Let's try, then, to reformulate the previous question, enhanced by this additional element: how can we define this play of and among generations (fathers and sons), families (the nuptial theme), and political choices (to love/to hate), in which the circulation of money as interest takes a pivotal role?

³ See Maurizio BETTINI, *Verso un'antropologia dell'intreccio e altri studi su Plauto*, Urbino: Quattroventi, 1991; Gioachino CHIARINI, *Introduzione a Plauto*, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1991.

⁴ «'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio, / How much I have disabled mine estate, / By something showing a more swelling port / Than my faint means would grant continuance: / Nor do I now make moan to be abridg'd / From such a noble rate; but my chief care / Is to come fairly off from the great debts / Wherein my time, something too prodigal, / Hath left me gag'd» (*The Merchant of Venice*, 1.1. 123-130).

⁵ On the relationship of symmetry and reciprocity between Antonio's love and Shylock's hate considered as a network of cultural (both political and socio-economic) issues, see Alessandro SERPIERI, Bonds of Love and Death in *The Merchant of Venice*, in Michele MARRAPODI and Giorgio MELCHIORI (eds.), *Italian Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999, pp. 44-56.

I'll therefore invite you to move to an archetypal scene of Western political thought: that is, *The Republic* of Plato, and in particular the scene in Book VIII where the philosopher imagines the cycle of the so-called decadence of the constitution of the *polis* from its ideal form to its absolute corruption, through the cycle aristocracy-timocracy, democracy and tyranny. I have said “so-called” because I do not think Plato, in Book VIII, is describing different systems of ruling but rather a single political form, the one he knows and lives—that is, “democracy”, considered from different points of view and according to different perspectives to which he gives different political appellatives. I believe, therefore, in other simpler words, that Plato wants to show, through that hocus-pocus of institutional “labels”, that democracy is the set of all possible games, as he specifically says in par. 557d, when he defines democracy as «a market (or a bazaar) of governments» (*pantopolion ton politeion*) where everyone can choose the one he likes best.

Because, thanks to its license, democracy contains all species of regimes, and it is probably necessary for the man who wishes to organize a city, as we were just doing, to go to a city under a democracy. He would choose the sort that pleases him, like a man going into “a general store of regimes”, and, once having chosen, he would thus establish his regime⁶.

There is, anyway, a basic factor that triggers the democratic movement or upheaval: the circulation of money/gold as an interest-bearing capital.

SOCRATES Doesn't the transformation from an oligarchy to a democracy take place in something like the following way, as a result of the insatiable character of the good that oligarchy proposes for itself—the necessity of becoming as rich as possible? GLAUCON How? SOCRATES I suppose that because the rulers rule in it thanks to possessing much, they are unwilling to control those among the youth who become licentious by a law forbidding them to spend and waste what belongs to them—in order that *by buying and making loans on the property* of such men they can become richer and more honored⁷.

⁶ *Republic* VIII, 557d (translation by Allan BLOOM). Ὅτι πάντα γένη πολιτειῶν ἔχει διὰ τὴν ἐξουσίαν, καὶ κινδυνεύει τῶ βουλομένῳ πόλιν κατασκευάζειν, ὃ νυνδὴ ἡμεῖς ἐποιοῦμεν, ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι εἰς δημοκρατουμένην ἐλθόντι πόλιν, ὃς ἂν αὐτὸν ἀρέσκη τρόπος, τοῦτον ἐκλέξασθαι, ὥσπερ εἰς παντοπόλιον ἀφικομένην πολιτειῶν, καὶ ἐκλεξαμένῳ οὕτω κατοικίσειν.

⁷ *Republic* VIII, 555c (translation by Allan BLOOM). Οὐκοῦν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, μεταβάλλει μὲν τρόπον τινὰ τοιόνδε ἐξ ὀλιγαρχίας εἰς δημοκρατίαν, δι' ἀπληστίαν τοῦ προκειμένου ἀγαθοῦ, τοῦ ὡς πλουσιώτατον δεῖν γίνεσθαι; Πῶς δὴ; Ἄτε οἶμαι ἄρχοντες ἐν αὐτῇ οἱ ἄρχοντες διὰ

But who are the actors on the Platonic stage? They are some of them elderly and some young, some fathers who hold power in the city, seduced by money, and some their corrupted children:

for all these reasons, the rulers in the city treat the ruled in this way. And as for themselves and their own sons, aren't their young luxurious and without taste for work of body or of soul, too soft to resist pleasures and pains, and too idle? [...] And haven't they themselves neglected everything except moneymaking and paid no more attention to virtue than the poor?⁸

Why are their children corrupted? Because the fathers' thirst for money has replicated itself in them, creating debt and thus allowing usury to flourish. It is important to note that, in Greek, 'interest' is *tokos* (555e5), a term that also means 'son', 'offspring'—and Plato, moreover, in the same passage I am citing, plays on the metaphor of father/principal capital:

And these money-makers, with heads bent down, not seeming to see these men, wound with injections of silver any man among the remainder who yields; and carrying off from the father-capital a multiple offspring in interest, they make the drone and the beggar great in the city⁹.

Well, all these children, exactly like the interest of the loans, are already, each of them, little tyrants, consumed by their greed and debts—accu-

τὸ πολλὰ κεκτῆσθαι, οὐκ ἐθέλουσιν εἶργειν νόμῳ τῶν νέων ὅσοι ἀνάκόλαστοι γίγνωνται, μὴ ἐξεῖναι αὐτοῖς ἀναλίσκειν τε καὶ ἀπολλύναι τὰ αὐτῶν, ἵνα ὠνούμενοι τὰ τῶν τοιούτων καὶ εἰσδανείζοντες ἔτι πλουσιώτεροι καὶ ἐντιμότεροι γίγνωνται.

⁸ *Republic* VIII, 556b-c (translation by Allan BLOOM). Νῦν δὲ γ', ἔφην ἐγώ, διὰ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα τοὺς μὲν δὴ ἀρχομένους οὕτω διατιθέασιν ἐν τῇ πόλει οἱ ἄρχοντες· σφᾶς δὲ αὐτοὺς καὶ τοὺς αὐτῶν—ἄρ' οὐ τρυφῶντας μὲν τοὺς νέους καὶ ἀπόνους καὶ πρὸς τὰ τοῦ σώματος καὶ πρὸς τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς, μαλακοὺς δὲ καρτερεῖν πρὸς ἡδονάς τε καὶ λύπας καὶ ἀργούς [...] Αὐτοὺς δὲ πλὴν χρηματισμοῦ τῶν ἄλλων ἡμεληκότας, καὶ οὐδὲν πλείω ἐπιμέλειαν πεποιημένους ἀρετῆς ἢ τοὺς πένητας.

⁹ *Republic* VIII, 555e-556a (translation by Allan BLOOM). Οἱ δὲ δὴ χρηματισταὶ ἐγκύψαντες, οὐδὲ δοκοῦντες τούτους ὄραν, τῶν λοιπῶν τὸν ἀεὶ ὑπεῖκοντα ἐνιέντες ἀργύριον τιτρώσκοντες, καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκγόνους τόκους πολλαπλασίους κομιζόμενοι, πολὺν τὸν κηφῆνα καὶ πτωχὸν ἐμποιοῦσι τῇ πόλει. Regarding the Platonic metaphor father-capital-Good-Sun in the *Republic* in relation to the word-play *tokos*/children-interest, Jacques DERRIDA comments: «La figure du père, on le sait, est aussi celle du bien (*agathon*). Le *logos* représente ce à quoi il est redevable, le père qui est aussi un *chef*, un *capital*, un *bien*. [...] En tant que produit, le *tokos* est aussi bien l'enfant, la portée humaine ou animale, que le fruit de la semence confiée au champ, que l'intérêt d'un capital». See DERRIDA, *La pharmacie de Platon*, in Id., *La dissémination*, Paris: Seuil, 1972, pp. 100-101.

mulation and usury are two sides of the same coin—till one, the worst of all, the biggest gambler of all, becomes the Tyrant. It goes without saying that no trace of young girls waiting for marriage, like Portia and Jessica, is found in the Platonic scene of Book VIII: we nevertheless can find therein women “after” marriage, wives and mothers, thirsty for more and more money as well as for social success, corrupting their sons and inciting them against the fathers!

He [the son] listens to his mother complaining. Her husband is not one of the rulers and as a result she is at a disadvantage among the other women. Moreover, she sees that he isn't very serious about money and doesn't fight and insult people for its sake in private actions in courts and in public but takes everything of the sort in an easygoing way; and she becomes aware that he always turns his mind to himself and neither honors nor dishonors her very much. She complains about all this and says that his father is lacking in courage and too slack, and, of course, chants all the other refrains such as women are likely to do in cases of this sort¹⁰.

We are dealing, therefore, with a veritable dark family-romance, most probably inspired by the comic archetype of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, where, as well as it occurs in the Platonic scenario of the *Republic*, squanderer sons, debt-ridden fathers and greedy mothers/wives, like Phidippides (the son), Strepsiades (the father) and his spouse descending from the Aclmeonid lineage, represent the typical wealthy and renowned family lacerated by lavishness and avarice, eagerness for money and usury, in the background of democratic post-Periclean Athens¹¹.

If we wonder, then, why in the Athens of Aristophanes and Plato fortunes are no longer sufficient and people must turn, once they have wasted them, to bonds, the answer is soon given by history: it is the

¹⁰ *Republic* VIII, 549c-d (translation by Allan BLOOM).

¹¹ Aristophanes frequently and insistently refers to the practice of usury in various passages of the *Clouds*, since Strepsiades is hounded by creditors: see 18-34; 739; 1151. See also *Thesmophoriazusae* 843. As it is in Book VIII of Plato's *Republic*, the Aristophanic word for “interest” is *tokos*. It is worth noting that, in the passage of *Thesmophoriazusae* cited, the role of the usurer is attributed by the chorus to Hyperbolos' mother, also accused of prostitution by Aristophanes himself in the *Clouds* (551), and by Eupolis (fr. 209 K.-A.). I have already written on this Platonic-Aristophanic subject: see Massimo STELLA, *Pantopolion ton politeion: pais corruptos, mães perversas, filhos parricidas: filosofia e teatro em torno da democracia entre Platão, Aristófanes e o fantasma de Édipo*, in «O que nos faz pensar» [Revista do Departamento de Filosofia da Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro] 34 (2014), pp.7-30, recently republished in «Lumina» IV, 1-2 (2020), pp. 373-395.

Gambling of Democracy! The majority of rich Athenian families were in debt to finance the growing expenses incurred by the city to support its imperial power and cultural supremacy on the Greek World and, above all, the losing venture of the thirty-year war against Sparta—a veritable abyss where most of Athens' wealth, as well as that of its allies, disappeared¹².

What does this parallel between the Shakespearean and the Platonic scenarios emphasize? Plato's account of the rise of democracy in the *Republic*, on the one hand, and the storyline of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* on the other, seem to be complementary halves of a thousand-year old anthropological and narrative motif: the circulation and redistribution of wealth through marriage (the exchange of women) and intergenerational conflict—what makes difference between the two versions being the alternative political perspective in which the philosopher and the playwright look at the problem as a whole. In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* we find, on the one hand, stingy fathers with their itchy daughters and, at the opposite side, troubled sons, with their friends and supporters, in search of love and money. In Plato's Book VIII we find squanderer fathers with their even more corrupted sons and dangerous mothers. Both contexts are based on the closed connection between generation and profit, or better, generation of children and generation of money. As Marc Shell wrote about *The Merchant of Venice*:

Generation, or production, is the principal topic of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. In this play the quest for material and spiritual riches—for money and love—involves two related conceptual difficulties: the similarity between natural sexual generation and monetary generation, and the apparent commensurability (even identity) of men and money. The revelation of these difficulties depends for its dramatic expression on a series of bonds in which individuals and properties are exchanged for each other. The play generates a grand political and economic critique of human production that, in a few hours, runs through the whole gamut of familial and political associations¹³.

¹² Geoffrey E.M. DE STE. CROIX, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient World*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981; Alexander FUKS, *Social Conflict in Ancient Greece*, Jerusalem–Leiden: Brill–Magne Press, 1984.

¹³ Marc SHELL, *The Wether and the Ewe: Verbal Usury in The Merchant of Venice*, in ID., *Money Language and Thought. Literary and Philosophic Economies from Medieval to the Modern Era*, Baltimore–London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, p. 48. The crucial passage of *The Merchant of Venice* (see 1.3. 69-88) on which Shell's observations are founded, is Shy-

Similarly, in Plato, children and interests, *tokoi*, move and are exchanged along the same “trading route”. Nevertheless, in his reshaping of the narrative archetype, the philosopher draws our attention to the picture of the family circle, while Shakespeare insists on the nuptial adventures of the younger generation¹⁴. What’s more, Plato focuses on the political aspect of the entire question, that is to say “democracy”, while the poet stages in his play the dynamic of a typical commercial city. In Shakespeare, the game of political reasons—Shylock’s hatred, Antonio’s love, the shrewd use of Law by Portia—is so intrinsically mixed with the circulation of money on the wings of interest to be almost invisible, even if it exists and makes the whole event possible. On the contrary, in Plato’s *Republic*, the subject wants to be mainly political, or rather philosophico-political, but then it turns on itself, gradually sinking in the spiral of financial movements, till the issue of power and that of “who should have the power” turns into the market of debt and credit, of accumulation and usury. Plato defines all this as the degenerate cycle of democracy, the market of governments—that is, the play of “as you like it” within which hides and flourishes the other play

lock’s account and recollection of Jacob’s story in *Genesis* XXX. It is worth quoting the text: «SHYLOCK When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban’s sheep / This Jacob from our holy Abram was, / As his wise mother wrought in his behalf, / The third possessor; ay, he was the third. ANTONIO And what of him? did he take interest? SHYLOCK No, not take interest, not, as you would say, / Directly interest: mark what Jacob did. / When Laban and himself were compromised / That all the eanlings which were streak’d and pied / Should fall as Jacob’s hire, the ewes, being rank, / In the end of autumn turned to the rams, / And, when the work of generation was / Between these woolly breeders in the act, / The skilful shepherd peel’d me certain wands, / And, in the doing of the deed of kind, / He stuck them up before the fulsome ewes, / Who then conceiving did in eaning time / Fall parti-colour’d lambs, and those were Jacob’s. / This was a way to thrive, and he was blest / And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not».

¹⁴ We can’t forget, however, that the nuptial theme plays a remarkable role in Book VIII of Plato’s *Republic* as well, in the form of the so-called “nuptial number” the violation of which corrupts the ideal city producing bastard children and, finally, democracy. See 546a-b: «Since for everything that has come into being there is decay, not even a composition such as this [the ideal city] will remain for all time; it will be dissolved. And this will be its dissolution: bearing and barrenness of soul and bodies come not only to plants in the earth but to animals on the earth when revolutions complete for each the bearing round of circles; for ones with short lives, the journey is short; for those whose lives are the opposite, the journey is the opposite. Although they are wise, the men you educated as leaders of the city will nonetheless fail to hit on the prosperous birth and barrenness of your kind with calculation aided by sensation, but it will pass them by, and they will at some time beget children when they should not. For a divine birth there is a period comprehended by a perfect number; for a human birth, by the first number in which root and square increases, comprising three distances and four limits, of elements that make like and unlike, and that wax and wane, render everything conversable and rational».

of making money through any mean. Shakespeare would rather define it as “the theatre of the world”—that is, the world of European commercial capitalism: Venice stands clearly for London¹⁵. We know that commercial capitalism is the most ancient ancestor, far more ancient than industrial capitalism, of the future Western democratic system of government, and Athens in the late 5th century b.C. was an interesting, if short-lived and soon to fail, attempt at democracy. As far as we are concerned, today, when we analyse our world, where the financial and political circles are practically indistinguishable, would we call it “the theatre of the world”, with Shakespeare, or according to Plato, “the market of governments”?

¹⁵ As it concerns the play of reflections between Shakespearean stage and the historical/cultural scene of Elizabethan London, see Nadia FUSINI, *Di vita si muore. Lo spettacolo delle passioni nel teatro di Shakespeare*, Milano: Mondadori, 2010; Stephen GREENBLATT, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, Berkeley–Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989. With regard to commercial capitalism and usury as pre-capitalist relationships as well as the oldest forms of industrial capital, see MARX, *Capital*, translated by David FERNBACH, Penguin, London: 1981, vol. 3, ch. 36. It is worth noting that Marx knew very well Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, and quoted it several times: see for example MARX, *Excerpts from James Mill’s Elements of Political Economy*, in ID., *Early Writings*, translated by Rodney LIVINGSTONE and Gregor BENTON, London: Penguin, 1975; ID., *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, in ID., *Early Writings*, cit.; ID., *Capital*, translated by B. FOWKES, London: Penguin, 1976, vol. 1. III, ch. 8; IV, ch. 9.