



“Dammi un bacio” and “Ulciscar”: Loving in Italian and Killing in Latin in John Marston’s *Antonio* plays

Janice VALLS-RUSSELL

IRCL, UMR 5186, CNRS/Univ. Paul Valéry, Montpellier

Melly Still’s production of *Cymbeline* for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2016 probed questions of identity, individual and national, exploring the play’s multi-temporal and multi-spatial overlayings. The design drew attention to cultural differences between Romans, Italians and Britons through sets, costumes and language. The overall effect was of clearly identified markers for the Roman army on the one hand, the Italian socialites on the other, against a sense of confusion for the Britons that nonetheless suggested, as the plot unfolded, a potentially fecund hybridity.

Within the set of markers Still used, language featured prominently. Posthumus arrived in a polyglot (Renaissance) Italy where characters spoke in Italian, mostly, but also some French, Spanish and Dutch. Similarly, the opening speech of Caius Lucius, arriving at Cymbeline’s court, was in Latin. Each time, Shakespeare’s (English) text was projected on the backdrop. Besides foregrounding the variety of cultural identities, this unexpected use of different languages highlighted the main challenge Cymbeline faced: communication between co-existing linguistic and cultural worlds. It also created a sense of alienation and discomfort for the Stratford-upon-Avon audiences, especially those of the main house who are generally used to enjoying their Shakespeare in English. Exposing them to a multilingual performance in the anniversary year of his birth, in a context of post-Brexit blues, served as a tangential critique of Anglo-centrism by recalling that the origins of Britain and its identity, ethnic and linguistic, have been fashioned down the century by complex legacies of cultural and demographic interactions. This history is encapsulated in the onomastics of the play, especially the names of its two central figures, Innogen and Posthumus, whose youthful love and reconciliation invite hopes of an inclusive future.

In Shakespeare’s time, of course, the play would have been performed in English. Yet, as *Henry V* enduringly illustrates in its final scene between the English king and the French princess, which elaborates on the game of conquest and submission that is played out on the battlefield and on the diplomatic front,¹ Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences were

¹ This volume, *Arrêt sur scène/Scene Focus* 10, 2021, *Scènes dans la langue de l’Autre/Scenes in the Other’s Language*, ed. Sujata Iyengar and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin, includes three articles on the wooing scene in *Henry V*, by Amina Askar, Jean-Christophe Mayer and Mylène Lacroix; and an article by Nathalie Rivere de Carles on the use of Latin and other languages in diplomacy.

accustomed to hearing other languages – regional, national, scholarly – on the stage, whether in public theatres, private playhouses or at court. Plays in Latin continued to be written and performed. And a quick survey of Richardson and Wiggins's *British Drama 1532–1642: A Catalogue* shows that the number of plays using a variety of languages is far from negligible. This ranges from occasional words to phrases, soliloquies and dialogues. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia almost seems proleptically to have the scene between Henry and Katherine in mind when she mocks Falconbridge for having “neither Latin, French, nor Italian” and points out the difficulties of communicating with him insofar as she herself has “a poor pennyworth in the English” (I.ii.51–52).² French and Italian were languages associated with courtly elegance which, in addition to Latin, a young female aristocrat like Portia could be expected to know. The scene also suggests a humorous *mise en abyme*, raising the question: in which language is Portia speaking?

Portia perceives monolingualism as an inability to cross the threshold into the Other's world, and the languages she mentions provided opportunities for mediation and courtship, since, with the exception of English, they constitute from her perspective not so much the Other's linguistic identity as a middle-ground to encounter that Other. The use of such languages in the predominantly Anglophone theatre of early modern Britain thus offered opportunities to stage scenes in the Other's language, as in *Henry V*, but also to craft encounters in a language other than the one habitually spoken (on stage) by the characters and to explore thereby the metatheatricality of drama. It is a selection of such instances, less frequently examined in discussions of languages on the early modern stage, that this article proposes to survey, focusing on the use of Italian and more especially Latin, principally in John Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* and its sequel, *Antonio's Revenge*.

Construing Latin and “double-tongued” love

In *What You Will*, Marston stages one of early modern drama's many schoolroom interludes, a Latin lesson, which reflects a focus on grammar rather than meaning. Written, like the *Antonio* plays, for the Children of Paul's, in the first decade of the seventeenth century, the play offers insights into the life of boys recruited to sing in the cathedral choir, who were provided with an education, received musical training, and performed in plays. The schoolmaster (Pedant) tells the lords that he “was solicited to grant [Holofernes Pippo] leave to play the lady in comedies presented by Children” (II.ii.103–4). He asks the boys to recite their lesson by rote, in a kind of grammatical joust. This is illustrated by a play on the name of one of the boys, Battus, which in the vocative becomes “Batte”, and the word “Batalarius”, meaning, as Juan Luis Vives explains in one of his dialogues, one who has mastered the art of disputation:³

PED. Batte, mi fili, mi Batte!

BAT. Quid vis?

PED. Stand forth: repeat your lesson without book. (II.ii.3–5).⁴

² All references to Shakespeare are to Gary Taylor, John Jowett et al., *The New Oxford Shakespeare*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017 [2016].

³ Juan Luis Vives, “Dialogue XIII, Schola”, *Linguae Latinae Exercitatio*, Lyon, Gryphus, 1542, p. 53. Available online: http://www.bvh.univ-tours.fr/Consult/index.asp?numtable=B721816101_BL8_383_3&numfiche=1413&mode=1&offset=53&ecran=0&url=/Consult/index.asp. Accessed 20 August 2021. Jean Lambert discusses this scene and the teaching of grammar in *Teachers in Early Modern English Drama: Pedagogy and Authority*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2020, chapter 4.

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all references to Marston's plays are to Arthur Henry Bullen (ed.), *John Marston: The Works*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag, [1887] rept 1970. Readers may usefully prefer to read the plays in

It is precisely the parrot-like approach parodied in the rest of this scene that drives Will Summer to prefer the hedges to the classroom, in an earlier play, Thomas Nashe's *Summer's Will and Testament*, which offers much Latin:

when I should have been at school, construing *Batte, mi fili, mi fili, mi Batte*, I was close under a hedge, or under a barn wall, playing at span Counter, or Jack in a box. (lines 1460–62)⁵

While proposing a similar scene in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (IV.i), where Mistress Quickly “fails to realise that the Latin spoken by Evans and William Page [...] is not English”,⁶ Shakespeare offers a more sophisticated lesson in *The Taming of the Shrew*, which recalls the long passages from the classics that students were expected to learn by heart and translate into English, then back into Latin. One favourite selection of texts was Ovid's *Heroides*.⁷ While providing an entertaining interlude, the scene is primarily intended to move the plot forward: Bianca's proficiency in Latin and insistence on organising her lessons as she pleases clearly establish that she is “no breeching scholar in the schools” (*Shrew*, vi.18).

In *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, Roland Barthes writes: “Je veux analyser, savoir, énoncer dans un autre langage que le mien”.⁸ Where Henry and Katherine approach sensuality through the erotics of translation,⁹ in a mutual exploration of each other's bodies through word and gesture, Lucentio and Bianca turn to Ovid's epistolary exchanges between mythological lovers to fashion the terms of their own courtship, during a mock Latin lesson. The exchange goes as follows:

BIANCA. Where left we last?

LUCENTIO. Here, madam.

[reads] *Hic ibat Simois, hic est Sigeia tellus,
Hic steterat Priami regia celsa senis.*

BIANCA. Construe them.

LUCENTIO. “*Hic ibat*”, as I told you before – “*Simois*”, I am Lucentio – “*hic est*”, son unto Vincentio of Pisa – “*Sigeia tellus*”, disguised thus to get your love – “*hic steterat*”, and that Lucentio that comes a-wooing – “*Priami*”, is my man Tranio – “*regia*”, bearing my port – “*celsa senis*”, that we might beguile the old pantaloon.

[...]

the following editions: G. K. Hunter (ed.), *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*, Regents Renaissance Drama Series, London, Edward Arnold, respectively 1965 and [1965] 1966; W. Reavley Gair (ed.), *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*, The Revels Plays, Manchester, Manchester University Press, respectively 2004 [1991] and 1999 [1978].

⁵ Thomas Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, London, Simon Safford for Walter Burre, 1600 (first performed 1592). Available online from The Folger Shakespeare Library, <https://emed.folger.edu/slwt>. Accessed 20 August 2021. The line references are to the Folger Encoding Version 3.0; 07/21/2017.

⁶ Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare's Accents: Voicing Identity in Performance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020, p. 165. Massai mentions this in her discussion of Anglo-Welsh exchanges on the Shakespearean stage.

⁷ Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994 [1993], pp. 21–22.

⁸ Roland Barthes, “Comprendre”, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, Paris, Seuil, 1977, pp. 71–73, p. 72. Richard Howard translates this as “I want to analyze, to know, to express in another language than mine” in R. Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. R. Howard, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978, p. 55.

⁹ I discovered after writing this that the notion has been studied by Kevin West, “Translating the Body: Towards an Erotics of Translation”, *Translation and Literature*, 19:1 (2010), pp. 1–25. West is writing about the experience of literary translation. His case study centres on examples, annotated by Umberto Eco, from William Weaver's translations into English of Eco's works, principally *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum*; and his discussion considers George Steiner, Georges Bataille and Roland Barthes, drawing my attention to *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*.

BIANCA. Now let me see if I can construe it. "*Hic ibat Simois*", I know you not – "*hic est Sigeia tellus*", I trust you not – "*hic steterat Priami*", take heed he hear us not – "*regia*", presume not – "*celsa senis*", despair not. (vi.26–35, 39–41)

Lucentio, as the audience knows, is impersonating the role of tutor in order to woo Bianca, using Ovid as a coded language. Unintelligible to the other character on stage, Hortensio, Latin establishes a form of connivance with the audience, at least with those playgoers who could draw on their own knowledge, learned from schoolmasters or private tutors, to trace the way the young couple "construe" their mutual interest as they read Penelope's letter to Ulysses (*Heroides* 1). The lines Lucentio and Bianca quote (33–34) are excerpted from a passage in which Penelope reconstitutes scenes from the Trojan War as narrated by returning Greeks who have preceded Ulysses. A few lines earlier, as she hopes for Ulysses' safe return, she expresses mingled feelings of impatience and dread in what amounts to a warning for all lovers which Bianca indirectly echoes, "*Res est solliciti plena timoris amor*" (Love is a thing full of fear and anxiety, line 12). One can almost guess which edition Lucentio and Bianca are using: the "small packet of Greek and Latin books" offered by Tranio (v.95) could have included a volume published a few years earlier, in 1583 in London, by the French Huguenot printer Thomas Vautrollier, which included the *Heroides, Amores, Art of Love* and *Remedy of Love*.¹⁰ Even those in the audience who had little Latin understood that the Latin quotations serve as a decoy to allow a parallel dialogue, and quite a few would have been sufficiently familiar with Priam, almost a household name on London stages, to enjoy the "translation" of the Trojan king into the servant Tranio. Those who were more familiar with Latin would have noted how the reference to Priam's age – "senis" – inspires the jump to "the old pantaloon", Baptista. This unflattering portrayal of Bianca's father not only recalls the subplot's possible Plautine and Italian sources, it also suggests how learning languages such as Latin could constitute a space of agency for daughters, beyond the control both of their parents, especially those aspiring to gentrification like Baptista, and of importune suitors such as Hortensio, who resembles Falconbridge in his lack of linguistic proficiency and sophistication. Bianca "construes" her Latin with a better grammatical understanding than Lucentio, confirming that her books indeed are her "company, / On them to look and practise by [her]self" (iii.81–82). Her handling both of Latin and of the situation suggests a poised confidence and holds out hopes for a marriage in which she will have her say.

The transition of a Latin lesson to a courtship scene is parodied two decades later by Thomas Middleton in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. In IV.i, a Latin "disputatio" between Tim and his tutor on whether or not "stultus [...] est animal rationale" (a fool is a rational animal, IV.i.2) is followed by what is supposed to be a courting scene between Tim and a young Welsh woman, whom his parents have arranged for him to marry.¹¹ Tim addresses her in Latin precisely because he does not wish to communicate with her, and she responds in Welsh. It takes some persuasion from Tim's mother to reassure her that he is no stranger speaking some alien language and can be safely married. In using Latin not as a middle-ground for mutual discovery but as a protective barrier, Tim expresses his hostility to this marital transaction, which is motivated by parental interest in the fact that the Welsh

¹⁰ *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Heroidum epistolae. Amorum, libri III De arte amandi, libri III De remedio amoris, libri II Aliaque huius generis, quae sequens pagella indicabit. Omnia ex accuratiss. Andreae Nauigerij castigatione. Guidonis Morillonii argumenta in epistolas*, London, Thomas Vautrollier, 1583.

¹¹ References are to Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, ed. Alan Brissenden, The New Mermaids, London, Ernest Benn, 1968.

gentlewoman "has mountains to her marriage, / She's full of cattle, some two thousand runts" (IV.i.92–93).

In *Antonio and Mellida*, John Marston builds a recognition scene between the two lovers around an Italian song. Throughout the play, characters use mainly Italian and a little Latin, mostly one-liners that tend to serve as aphorisms to nail down a soliloquy or demonstration. The Duke of Venice, Piero, father of Mellida and enemy of the Duke of Genoa, Andrugio, and his son Antonio, is a Machiavellian character who unleashes his Senecan violence in the sequel to the play, *Antonio's Revenge*, only to be outdone by his intended victim, Antonio. The presence of Italian in the play does much more than provide local colour. Piero's use of Italian gives a *commedia dell'arte* tone to his scheming nature in the first play, somewhat understating its threatening undertow, appropriately enough in the context of a comedy which ends on a tentative reconciliation that nonetheless carries the seeds of the ensuing tragedy.

Antonio and Mellida are both in danger. Banished from the court of Piero after impersonating an Amazon to try and approach Mellida, Antonio escapes disguised as a sailor. Mellida has fled the court to avoid a forced marriage. Antonio despairs of ever seeing Mellida again: his emotional state conflates Romeo's on learning that he is banished and Orsino's at the beginning of *Twelfth Night*. He calls upon his page to choose an appropriate song, whereupon Mellida enters, disguised as a page (IV.i.132sd). On recognising her, he abruptly switches to Italian as he might break into a song: his four lines, each ending with "Mellida", are matched by the four ensuing lines she speaks – or sings – which end with "Antonio" (182–89). A stichomythic exchange of four lines is rounded off by each of them speaking three lines:

ANT. O svanisce il cor in un soave bacio.
 MEL. Muoiono i sensi nel desiato desio:
 ANT. Nel cielo può esser beltà più chiara?
 MEL. Nel mondo può esser beltà più chiara?
 ANT. Dammi un bacio da quella bocca beata,
 Lasciami coglier l'aura odorota
 Che ha sua seggia in quelle dolci labbra.
 MEL. Dammi per impero del tuo gradit' amore
 Che bea me con sempiterno honore,
 Così, così mi converrà morir. (IV.i.190–199)

(ANT. O dissolve my heart in a sweet kiss.
 MEL. Let the senses die in fulfilled desire.
 ANT. Can there be a purer good in heaven?
 MEL. Can there be a purer good on earth?
 ANT. Give me a kiss from your blessed mouth.
 Let me gather up the perfumed air
 Which nests up there in these sweet lips.
 MEL. Give the empire of thy consenting love
 Which blesses me, with an eternal honour,
 For true, thus it is fit that I should die.)²²

The whole exchange is framed by Mellida's passionate kissing – in English. Before the duet, as she claims to be talking about her mistress, she embraces Antonio: "she would sigh / O, dear Antonio! And to strengthen thought, / Would clip my neck, and kiss, and kiss me thus"

²² The translation is from Hunter (ed.), *Antonio and Mellida*, note to 191–208, p. 58.

(173–175). Switching back to English at the close of the duet, she illustrates how the meaning of the poem could have been conveyed on stage, with gesture serving as punctuation: “we’ll point our speech / With amorous kissing, kissing commas, and even suck / The liquid breath from out each other’s lips” (205–206).

It would seem that this “melodious” love duet was written by Marston, seemingly “the only contemporary playwright” to use more than “the odd word or phrase” and to have composed in Italian before Milton.¹³ No onstage translation is provided. The effect is to jolt the audience into attention and momentarily to isolate Antonio and Mellida from a hostile environment: combining Petrarchan tropes and an operatic musicality, the shared verse serves as a vehicle for their passion and marks a break with the frivolous, English banality of court banter that has preceded. Stepping out of the world of the court sartorially and linguistically, Antonio and Mellida aurally and visually fashion an affective bubble for themselves in much the same way as Romeo and Juliet do by jointly composing a sonnet during the ball at the Capulets’ house.

As in Shakespeare’s play, the scene ends on an initially comic note. Having just witnessed this love duet in Italian between his master and Mellida, Antonio’s page echoes perhaps the puzzlement of some spectators, when he wonders at this “confusion of Babel” that leads them to “change their language” and become “double-tongued” (also a lewd pun on all the kissing?),¹⁴ a linguistic instability he perceives as a trait of (female) deceptiveness which, in his view, Antonio has (unfortunately) acquired by disguising as an Amazon (IV.i.210–219, 210, 211, 214). This light-hearted moment soon gives way to a sense of oppression, since moments later Piero and his retinue arrive, recognize Mellida and oblige her to return to the castle.

“Ulciscar”: I’ll be revenged

While the Italian interlude in *Antonio and Mellida* seems appropriate in a comedy that ends with the reconciliation of the two fathers and a wedding, the sequel, *Antonio’s Revenge*, plunges its roots in the murky subsoil of Senecan family tragedies such as *Thyestes* and *Agamemnon*. Premonitions of the ensuing tragedy may already be traced in the framing of *Antonio and Mellida* by a few lines in Latin which intimate that any happy resolution may only be temporary. In the opening scene, Piero reveals his god-defying ambition and malevolence by borrowing a line from Atreus, who has just fed Thyestes with his sons (*Thyestes*, 888): “dimitto superos, summa votorum attigi” (*Antonio and Mellida*, I.i.60: I discharge the gods: I have reached the pinnacle of my prayers),¹⁵ which Jasper Heywood translated as “I nowe lette goe the gods: for all my wil I have obtaynde”.¹⁶ What Piero cannot know is that he will endure a fate similar to Thyestes’ at the end of *Antonio’s Revenge*. When Antonio rises from the coffin, alive, in act V, Mellida, again combining gesture and text, kisses him as she says, “sic, sic, iuvat ire sub umbras” (*Antonio and Mellida*, V.i.340: Thus,

¹³ Jason Lawrence, “Who the devil taught thee so much Italian?” *Italian Language Learning and Literary Imitation in Early Modern England*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005, p. 130. Lawrence discusses Antonio and Mellida’s Italian love-duet on pp. 130–131.

¹⁴ I am grateful to Sujata Iyengar for suggesting this in the course of our light-hearted exchanges on this scene, with its “doubling” between kissing and play on languages which suggests once again the transgressing erotics of courting in an “other” language.

¹⁵ Unless otherwise indicated, translations are from the Loeb Classical Library: Seneca, *Tragedies*, vols I and II, ed. and trans. John G. Fitch, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2018.

¹⁶ Jasper Heywood, *Thyestes*, sig. F3v. First published individually in 1566, Heywood’s translation was included in *Seneca his Tenne Tragedies*, London, Thomas Marsh, 1581, from which I quote.

thus, I go gladly in the dark). This is an ominous choice, since those are the last words spoken by forsaken Dido before she kills herself (Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV.660), which playgoers would have heard on her lips in Christopher Marlowe's *Dido Queen of Carthage* (V.i.313) – and from Thomas Kyd's Hieronimo (*The Spanish Tragedy*, II.v.78).¹⁷

In the tragic sequel, Antonio's premonitions of his father's murder at the hands of Piero even as he prepares to marry Mellida – or so he thinks – and the terror they inspire (I.ii.105–143, esp. 112–115) are reminiscent of moments when Aeneas is powerfully affected in Virgil's *Aeneid* (III.175–176 and II.792–793). Henceforth, Antonio is bent on revenge. In keeping with the tragic mode and the genre of the revenge tragedy, Seneca predominates. The philosopher and dramatist was familiar to English playwrights, in editions printed on the continent; his plays, as well as Neo-Latin imitations, were staged at Oxford and Cambridge; philosophical writings available in English included *De remediis*, published in a bilingual Latin-English edition with Robert Whytton's translation as early as 1547, and three translations of *De beneficiis*;¹⁸ and English versions of his plays appeared in 1581 in *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies*, a collective volume compiled by Thomas Newton, which included translations that had already appeared singly in print.¹⁹ The debt to Seneca is written into *Antonio's Revenge* in a number of ways, in the play's structural disjunctions between moments of stoical detachment and the relentless drive of revenge, and in a rhetorical style that combines echoes of the translations of his tragedies, borrowings from the translation of *De remediis*, and Latin quotations from *De providentia*, *Thyestes* and *Agamemnon* as well as *Octavia*, a play attributed to Seneca in the Renaissance.

The plot also carries evident reminders of *Hamlet*, especially in III.i,²⁰ which takes place at night. In this scene, Marston successively stages: the appearance of Andrugio's ghost, who calls upon Antonio to "Revenge my blood!" (III.i.36, repeated at 37); Antonio's confrontation with his mother, whom Piero intends to marry; and Antonio's murder of Piero's young son Julio. Latin is used almost as a series of cues, or to strengthen resolve. The line "Non est mori miserum, sed misere mori" (What is miserable is not to die, but to die miserably) rounds off Antonio's tribute (in English) to his father (III.i.31). Andrugio's ghost enters at that point and he in turn ends his call for revenge by quoting Atreus (*Thyestes*, 195–196), as Piero had done at the beginning of *Antonio and Mellida*, "Remember this: / Scelera non ulcisceris, nisi vincis" (51, You do not avenge crimes unless you surpass them).

When Antonio's mother enters, her unkempt appearance – "*Her hair about her ears*" (52sd) – earning her stern reprobation from her servant Nutriche, her restless language as she looks for Antonio ("Where's my boy?" 59) is rich in ambivalence suggestive of conflicting loyalties, since she is about to marry Piero: she likens her anxiety to that of Agave and Medea, an unfortunate comparison since both of them killed their respective children. This inappropriate classical allusion could also suggest Antonio's mother's second-

¹⁷ References are to: Christopher Marlowe, "*Dido Queen of Carthage*" and "*The Massacre at Paris*", ed. H. J. Oliver, *The Revels Plays*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1974 [1968]; Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. J. R. Mulryne, *The New Mermaids*, London, Ernest Benn, 1970.

¹⁸ *Lucii Annei Senecae ad Gallioneni de remedis fortuitorum. The remedies against all casual chaunces... Lately translated out of Latyn into Englishe by Robert Whytton*, London, William Middleton, 1547. On *De beneficiis*, see Hunter (ed.), "Introduction", *Antonio's Revenge*, p. xiii.

¹⁹ See Janice Valls-Russell, "Even Seneca hymselfe to speke in englysh': John Studley's *Hippolytus* and *Agamemnon*", *Translation and Literature*, 29 (2020), pp. 25–43.

²⁰ On the precedence of Marston's or Shakespeare's play, the possibility of one play deriving from the other, or parallel debts to a lost *Ur-Hamlet*, see Hunter, pp. xviii–xxi, and W. Reavley Gair (ed.), "Introduction", *Antonio's Revenge*, [1978] 1999, pp. 12–13, 18.

hand, rather than first-hand, familiarity with the stories, especially those of Ovid and Seneca.²¹

On finding Antonio, she tries to persuade him to go to bed, whereupon he replies in Latin, again quoting *Thyestes*:

ANT. O quisquis nova
Supplicia functis durus umbrarum arbiter
Disponis, quisquis exeso jaces
Pavidus sub antro, quisquis venturi times
Montis ruinam, quisquis avidorum feros
Rictus leonum, et dira furiarum agmina
Implicitus horres, Antonii vocem excipe
Properantis ad vos – Ulciscar! (III.i. 66–72)

(Whoever you are that allot new penalties to the dead, harsh judge of the shades [...] all who lie in terror in hollowed caves, fearing the mountain's imminent collapse, all who tremble in bonds at the fierce jaws of avid lions and the dread troops of Furies [...]: take in [Antonio's] words as he hurries to you – [I will be revenged])

Antonio here defies both the fates and all those around him, conflating and appropriating lines spoken in Seneca's play by the ghost of Tantalus (13–14 and 75–81), grandfather of Thyestes and Atreus. This choice of Latin, and of those lines, suggests that he is not so much speaking to his mother as to his father's ghost. By turning to Seneca and ghosting a ghost he chooses a language that enables him to mediate between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Antonio's mother, however, does not understand Latin and is visibly unfamiliar with Senecan rhetoric, which she mistakes for symptoms of the folly that Antonio will go on to feign in the next act: "Alas, my son's distraught! Sweet boy, appease / Thy mutining affections" (73–74). This leads Antonio to relate what he has just said in Latin to his father's fate, and end with a translation of "Ulciscar", "I'll be revenged!" (75–78). Nevertheless, the mother is not entirely wrong: the use of Latin in this scene also suggests a form of mental alienation, that resurfaces later in the scene, when another phrase from Seneca again acts as an address to Andrugio and a structural pivot shortly before Antonio kills Piero's young son Julio. On hearing the child say:

Brother Antonio, ...
Why do you frown? ...
... Buss me: good truth,
I love you better than my father 'deed (142–146),

Antonio exclaims:

Thy father? Gracious, O bounteous Heaven!
I do adore thy justice: *venit in nostras manus*
Tandem vindicta, venit et tota quidem (III.i.147–149)

(She has come into my hands, at last revenge has come, yes in her entirety.)

This adapts *Thyestes*, "Venit in nostras manus / Tandem Thyestes, venit et totus quidem" (494–495). Like Maria, Julio does not understand the words, which may here again be received as intended for Andrugio's ghost, but the child senses something is wrong and closes his affective framing of Antonio's exalted state with: "Truth, since my mother died, I

²¹ Euripides' play, *The Bacchae*, which tells the story of Agave and her son Pentheus, was available in Latin translation. Shakespeare and many of his contemporaries more frequently knew the stories of Agave and Medea from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Arthur Golding's translation.

loved you best. / Something has angered you: pray you, look merrily" (150–151). The semantic and linguistic disruption powerfully underscores the affective disjunction in this moment of tension, which Phoebe S. Spinrad sees as resulting from opposing theatrical traditions: "while Antonio's voice is Senecan, Julio's is straight out of the medieval play tradition, and the visual impact of the scene is uncannily close to that of the biblical illustrations and the mystery play enactments".²² Certainly, the discordance between Julio's homely, affectionate words and Antonio's exclamatory and sententious phrasing in English and Latin deepens Antonio's alienation from those around him. Julio's concern about Antonio parallels Maria's about her son's mental health, but the effect is all the more powerful in that it stages a young child about to be murdered; this scene may have inspired a similar, albeit more protracted, moment adapted to a classical context, in Thomas Goffe's *Orestes*, written and performed sometime between 1613 and 1618.²³

It also connects with an earlier instance of semantic contrast, in the preceding scene, when Antonio rejects the consolation of Senecan stoicism as a form of disembodied, "static patience".²⁴ Antonio enters dressed, like Hamlet, "in black, with a book" (II.ii.1sd) which turns out to be Seneca's *De providentia*, from which he reads:

Ferte fortiter: hoc est quo deum anteceditis. Ille **enim** extra patientiam malorum, vos supra [...]. Contemnite dolorem: aut solvetur, aut solvet. Contemnite fortunam: nullum [...] tellum, quo feriret animum **habet**. (*Antonio's Revenge*, II.ii.46–48)

Ferte fortiter. hoc est quo Deum anteceditis. Ille extra patientiam malorum est, vos supra patientiam [...]. Contemnite dolorem: aut solvetur, aut solvet. Contemnite fortunam: nullum illi tellum quo feriret animum, dedi. (*Controversiae disputatio ... cum senecae de providentia... 1594*)²⁵

(endure with fortitude. In this you may outstrip God; he [indeed] is exempt from enduring evil, while you are superior to it. [...] Scorn pain; it will either be relieved or relieve you. Scorn Fortune; [she has] no weapon with which she may strike your soul. Seneca, *De providentia*, cap. VI.6–7).²⁶

Antonio then goes on:

Pish, thy mother was not lately widowed,
Thy dear affièd love lately defam'd
With blemish of foul lust, when thou wrotest thus;

²² Phoebe S. Spinrad, "The Sacralization of Revenge in *Antonio's Revenge*", *Comparative Drama*, 39:2 (2005), pp. 169–185, p. 178.

²³ Thomas Goffe builds up anticipation by first showing the child with its mother, Clytemnestra, and the nurse, and having Orestes' friend Pylades plead with him to spare the child. On the similarity with Marston, see Norbert F. O'Donnell, "Shakespeare, Marston, and the University: The Sources of Thomas Goffe's 'Orestes'", *Studies in Philology*, 50:3, 1953, pp. 476–484.

²⁴ For a discussion of Stoicism in Marston's plays see Donovan Sherman, "Stoic Embodiment in Marston's Antonio plays", *English Literary Renaissance*, 48:3, 2018, pp. 291–313, p. 297. Sherman argues that Marston satirises the idea of disembodied Stoicism, exploring instead its theatrical essence, and viewing the play against Stoicism in its classical and Renaissance forms.

²⁵ *Controversiae disputatio habita, cum senecae de providentia librum interpretaturus esset I. Annaeus Seneca a M. Antonio mureto correctus et notis illustratus*, Heidelberg, Hieronymus Commelinus, 1594, USTC 671329, p. 200, lines 44–47.

²⁶ In all three quotations, elision in square brackets indicates missing elements from Seneca's text, words in bold indicate Marston's additions. In the translation, words in brackets translate Marston's additions. The translation is from Seneca, "De providentia", *Moral Essays, Volume 1*, trans. John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1928.

Thou wrapt in furs, beaking thy limbs 'fore fires;
Forbid'st the frozen zone to shudder. (II.ii.49–53)

Here, Antonio is not paraphrasing the Latin, but responding to it, as a commentator like Muretus (Marc-Antoine Muret) did, taking to task "intoleranda Stoicorum arrogantia" (the intolerable arrogance of the Stoics) in this passage,²⁷ or as if engaging in a scholar's or lawyer's rhetorical debate. The main difference is that Antonio challenges Seneca's Stoicism in a direct, colloquial style, favouring one- and two-syllable words that contrast with the abstract, multi-syllabic Latin terminology, in which non-Latinate members of the audience could recognise anchor words such as "patientiam", "dolorem", "fortunam". The contrast serves to enrich the semantics of the play in offering multiple, simultaneous levels of language; it also shows that Antonio is unable to respond to what he previously hoped might provide solace: "Alberto, see, / I am taking physic, here's philosophy" (41–42).

Having found no comfort in Seneca the Stoic, Antonio turns to Seneca the dramatist, quoting him directly, as if drawing strength from the power of the Latin verse, finding in his tragedies templates and a fitting rhetoric. Where the context of a comedy like *The Taming of the Shrew* draws on Ovid's Latin as a bonding lovers' language, the use of Seneca's Latin, principally of excerpts from *Thyestes*, emphasises the revenge genealogy of Marston's play, and underscores both varying degrees of communication and the inability to reach through to the Other. The Latin from Seneca's tragedies also constitutes a bridge between the Hell where ghosts tread restlessly because unavenged, and the Hell on earth endured by the victims of tyrants to the extent of imposing it in turn on the tyrants' relatives. In this respect, the play belongs to the tradition Shakespeare (possibly in collaboration with George Peele) also explored in *Titus Andronicus*, in the wake of Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* – two plays which may have inspired some of this tragedy's more lurid torments, as well as the moments when Pandulpho, whose son has been murdered, teeters on the verge of folly, recalling Hieronimo and Titus, after struggling to cultivate a form of Stoic disengagement.

In a play fashioned by a "density of literary allusion",²⁸ the Latin quotations, mostly from Seneca, function like tips of icebergs, drawing attention to Marston's inscription of his play in a dramatic tradition that embraces both recent and classical instances and elicits a twofold movement from the audience, of surprise (not to hear English) and recognition. Where Seneca is not quoted directly in Latin, the play's characters – Antonio, Pandulpho, Maria – also turn to Robert Whytton's translation of Seneca's *De remediis* (especially in IV.v).²⁹ Text and visual images, rhetoric and performance are all the more intimately linked since Marston was writing for young people who displayed multiple talents and performed before what he alludes to as their "choice audience" (*Antonio's Revenge*, V.II.181), many of whose members prided themselves on being *au fait* with contemporary dramatic and literary trends. Referring to the final scene, where a dumb show precedes the appearance of Andrugio's ghost and his speech, W. Reavley Gair writes: "Marston has here organically related a mime, and the rhetorical commentary which stems from it, to the unfolding of the plot".³⁰

²⁷ "Notae M. Antonii Mureti", *Controversiae disputatio*, p. 501.

²⁸ Reavley Gair (ed.), *Antonio's Revenge*, p. 19.

²⁹ Reavley Gair (ed.), *Antonio's Revenge*, p. 19.

³⁰ Reavley Gair (ed.), *Antonio's Revenge*, p. 32.

"Scenes, invented mainly to be spoken"

In his address to the reader in the 1604 edition of *The Malcontent*, Marston expresses concern about the transition to the page of "scenes, invented mainly to be spoken".³¹ Marston wrote *Antonio and Mellida* and its sequel for the Children of Paul's. Like those he went on to write for the Children of Blackfriars, or Queen's Children, the plays showcased the talents of those young people's companies for knowledgeable audiences from the Inns of Court and the entourage of Queen Anne. Marston's comedies and tragedies are laced with references – quite a few of them tongue-in-cheek – to plays being performed, or having recently been performed, by adult companies on the public and private stages. In this respect, his plays provide insights into the contemporary scene, rather as play reviews do for us today, highlighting what could have struck performers, audiences and playwrights. Marston, of course, was not the only one to do this. Identifying plotlines, situations and character types from the plays performed on London's public and private stages was very much a part of the early modern spectating experience.

Similarly, the use – and misuse – of Latin played with and upon the spectators' knowledge of the classics, while providing the young players with an opportunity to display a linguistic versatility – extended to Italian and mock-Dutch in Marston's plays – that paralleled their talents as singers and performers. In *Antonio and Mellida*, the page – and through him, Marston – anticipates a possible critical reception of the Italian love duet, hoping that it may "be pardoned by the auditors" (IV.i.217) and invoking "some private respect" (218), or motivation: Marston may be referring here to his mother, who was at least half-Italian.³² Just as the use of Italian creates an appropriate ambience for the lovers, the use of Latin provides insights into the character's mental state and reinforces Marston's take on the genre of the revenge tragedy, with its resulting "idiosyncratic combination of savagery and black humour" that is not devoid of aesthetic concerns.³³

As we have seen in the discussion of the Italian love duet, the framing in English provides the mood, invites a romantic reception, with suggestions of how it could have been performed. Similarly, Antonio's comment on the passage from *De providentia* indicates that what he reads does not suit him, while his glossing of the passage from *Thyestes* for his mother provides, with "I'll be revenged", the clue to the meaning of the emphatic, "ulciscar", which echoes the ghost's "ulcisceris". Where some dramatists opt for onstage translation, Marston chooses to provide indirect clues which enable audiences not overly familiar with the foreign language being spoken to have a gist of the meaning, without alienating those spectators sufficiently acquainted with the text to appreciate its aptness – or lack thereof.³⁴

So what happens on the present-day stage when it comes to performing scenes that include passages in a language such as Latin, with which audiences may be unfamiliar? As discussed in the opening section, a director like Still deliberately chooses to create a reverse process of estrangement by "translating" Shakespeare into Italian, French and, more

³¹ Marston, "To the reader", *The Malcontent*, ed. Bullen, vol. 1, p. 198.

³² On other instances of Marston's self-projection, see Charles Cathcart, "The Insatiate Countess: Date, Topicality, and Company Appropriation", *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in English*, 16, 2003, pp. 81–100, 87–88.

³³ Clare Smout, "Antonio's Revenge, by John Marston, directed by Perry Mills for Edward's Boys, Middle Temple Hall, London, 13 March 2011, traverse centre", *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 80:1, 2011, pp. 59–60.

³⁴ On different strategies used by early modern dramatists for marking linguistic difference, see Andrew Fleck, "'Ick verstaw you niet': Performing Foreign Tongues on the Early Modern English Stage", *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 20, 2007, pp. 204–221.

unexpectedly, Latin, letting her audience wonder at this deliberately artificial new-old “confusion of Babel”. Unlike performances that are multi-lingual because the cast is multi-national, these were “English actors pretending to be from elsewhere”, as Holger Schott Syme noted in his blog:

I'm not sure anyone was a native speaker of Italian or French (let alone Latin!) in this show — in other words, I don't think anyone spoke *their own language* (other than English) even though that language wasn't the character's as written by Shakespeare. The complex (and intriguing) reflection on appropriation and cultural colonialism that multi-lingual performance can often lead to, then, wasn't really at issue here. But what exactly was? It certainly didn't help the actors to have to speak in an unfamiliar language, especially in the Latin scenes. Ironically, although they were released from the shackles of Shakespeare's lines in those scenes, they were instantly robbed of that freedom by the even more alien language of ancient Rome.³⁵

This of course has nothing to do with nationalist agendas such as Mussolini's *Ventennio fascista* (the two Fascist decades), when a poem might be written in Latin to promote a new Fascist Catholic Rome.³⁶ Rather, as Carole Sauvageot reflected in her review of Still's production:

Language also helped to define identities. Romans spoke Latin, Italians Italian, the Frenchman French. There were at least two ways of understanding this choice (resented by some). Listening for a few minutes to foreign languages and having to grapple with them (even though subtitles were projected onto the screen) conveyed a sense of alienation, Posthumus's as he arrived in Rome. It also showed how some characters could reach across languages and engage with the Other (by using his/her language), as demonstrated by Cymbeline back in Britain.³⁷

Still does not provide integral bilingual or multi-lingual scenes. While the use of Italian is extensive in I.iv, Iachimo soon reverts to English. In III.i, only Cymbeline's opening greeting and Caius Lucius's first lines recalling Julius Caesar's presence in Britain are in Latin. The formality of this moment, appropriate for the arrival of an ambassador, is thus underscored; the rest of the scene is in English. The two scenes thus contrast different instances of “two-tongued” ability: Iachimo's linguistic smoothness and social ease are in keeping with his duplicity, whereas Cymbeline signals a royal ability both to greet the Other in his language – which Cloten, certainly, is devoid of – and ultimately to negotiate a diplomatic resolution to the crisis in Roman-British relations. Simultaneously, this sampling of other languages reconnects with the textual practices of an Elizabethan playwright like Marston, where specific moments are singled out through the use of Italian and Latin.

The 2018 production of *Antonio's Revenge* by the adult ensemble of The American Shakespeare Center (ASC, Staunton, VA) opted for a variety of approaches to the Latin text: cuts of single lines that either introduced or closed a character's speech; translation; and retaining edited passages. Antonio (Benjamin Reed) read the passage from *De providentia* in English, as if the book he held were an English translation. His Latin address to his mother was shortened to the last two lines, “Antonii vocem excipe / Properantis ad vos – Ulciscar!”

³⁵ Holger Schott Syme, “Cymbeline (Shakespeare, directed Melly Still) RSC, August 2016”, posted 1 August 2016, *dispositio*, <https://www.dispositio.net/archives/2289>. Accessed 20 August 2021.

³⁶ Nicolò Bettegazzi, Han Lamers and Bettina Reitz-Joosse, “Viewing Rome in the Latin Literature of the Ventennio Fascista: Francesco Giammaria's Capitolium Novum”, *Fascism*, 8:2, 2019, pp. 153–178. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00802002>. Accessed 20 August 2021.

³⁷ Carole Sauvageot, “Cymbeline, directed by Melly Still for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 12 May 2016”, *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 91:1, 2016, pp. 125–128.

(3.1.71–72), Reed's voice rising to a shout and detaching the syllables of "Ulciscar". This single use of Latin, coming moments after the ghost of Andrugio had risen from his coffin, which lay in the central recess of the Elizabethan stage, underscored a turning-point in the play. Piero might have directed events in the first half of the play, but henceforth the director was clearly the ghost: very much the Senecan *umbra*, wearing a dark robe reminiscent of Roman togas, unlike the modern dress of the other characters, he roamed the stage, overlooked events from the central gallery where Feliche's body had hung until the scene in Maria's bedchamber, or shared the audience's viewpoint from a front-row seat in the pit.³⁸

A few years earlier, Edward's Boys, the all-male student company of King Edward VI School, in Stratford-upon-Avon, performed *Antonio's Revenge*. The production was directed by Perry Mills, who rarely modernises the dialogue and encourages his company to play on linguistic otherness: during their performances in English of Francis Beaumont's *The Woman Hater* when they toured the South of France in 2016, the Boys peppered their dialogues with improvised phrases such as "tête de poisson": both the words and the accent in which they were spoken evidently delighted their local audiences, especially the younger spectators who received these attempts at French as "rewards" for their own efforts to follow the English playtext.³⁹ Given that Latin is still taught at their school, Mills chose not to cut or translate the Senecan passages in *Antonio's Revenge*, considering that it would take more than that to faze his young actors and their "choice" audiences of fellow students, parents and academics. Already, in the early 2000s, approached by Michael Woods for his BBC2 series, *In Search of Shakespeare*, he had rallied "some of his pupils to produce a series of short scenes from Elizabethan schoolroom interludes, as well as some of the Latin orations by the wronged women of classical literature that he almost certainly would have studied".⁴⁰

Mills notes that doing a scene in Latin is

not so very different from some of the textual challenges we face even when the text is in English. Some of it is archaic and odd. One of the exercises I sometimes carry out with younger company members is to work on some (literal) nonsense text. The task is to treat it as though it means something. [...] The job is to use all your resources – facial expression, gesture, tone, etc. to get the story across. And that's how it often works when we are doing bits in Latin.⁴¹

The effect of this in the scene between Julio and Antonio, he remembers, was immensely powerful:

the murder of Julio – was terrifying. It was stylized. Grandiloquent. Operatic. Marston is great with sound and the Latin here works a bit like music. It creates an effect.

One of the spectators, Peter Kirwan, concurs:

[The] murder of the tiny Julio (George Hodson) was one of the production's most powerful moments, the terrified child pleading with Antonio while the Ghost of Andrugio, standing

³⁸ I wish to thank ASC and more especially Lia Wallace, for kindly sharing with me electronically an archival recording of the performance.

³⁹ Florence March and Janice Valls-Russell record reactions from the French audience in their review, "The Woman Hater: Francis Beaumont & Perry Mills for Edward's Boys, Chapelle Maison des Chœurs, Montpellier, 23 March 2016 (centre front) and Théâtre sortieOuest, Béziers, 24 March 2016 (central stalls)", *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 91:1, 2016, pp. 130–133.

⁴⁰ McCarthy, *Performing Early Modern Drama*, p. 10.

⁴¹ For this and the following quotation: email exchanges with Perry Mills, July 2021.

behind Antonio, screamed "Revenge!" It was in moments like this that the relative size of the boys became hugely important, adding pathos to the death; and Julio himself joined Andrugio in ghostly form, silently accusing his murderer.⁴²

Having Andrugio's ghost oversee the murder, here as in the ASC production, visually reinforces the sense that, indeed, Antonio is addressing him when ventriloquising Seneca and staging the child's murder for his benefit. The use of a language other than English fully participates in this ongoing interaction of speech and performance and contributes to the "grandiloquent" and "operatic" effect. In Shakespeare's time as in ours, the actors' ability to switch languages is part of a wider ability to shift from one register into the next as well as to use mime and music, and create a performance that draws on different genres to transcend them. In plays where language and plot are shaped by the use of music,⁴³ Italian love poetry and Latin verse contribute to what Reavley Gair describes as "a hybrid that has obvious affinities with opera"⁴⁴ – and songs and music were effectively used in both the ASC and Edward's Boys productions, heightening moments of tension, enriching the affective moments that pull the play away from parody and enriching its aesthetics.

Inviting additional levels of interaction with the audience that challenge expectations while inviting connivance, the interpolation of passages in Italian and, even more so, Latin functions rather like the songs and music: it plays on modes of intertextuality that reinforce the theatricality of the performance and its aesthetics. The action, scene structures and character types suppose a familiarity with contemporary plays that is further explored through rhetorical and visual metatheatrical effects. Similarly, Senecan tropes are present in multiple ways, in addition to self-conscious emblematic poses on Antonio's part.⁴⁵ Visual citations simultaneously recall Seneca's own tragedies as well as plays by Marston's contemporaries: the ghost, of course; and the dumb show at the end of *Antonio's Revenge*, when Piero is served his son in a dish before having his tongue pulled out, a moment that, Barbara J. Baines notes, "serves to emphasize the Senecan revenge conventions as well as the emblematic, ritualistic nature of the play".⁴⁶ A rhetoric of revenge underscored by Latin lines lifted from *Thyestes*, *Agamemnon* and *Octavia* is offset by discussions of stoicism and a direct quotation from Seneca's philosophical writings. Acknowledging a diachronic and synchronic heritage, the Latin excerpts in Marston's plays position the "scant" (*Antonio and Mellida*, v.i.73) performance space within a larger dramatic tradition and inscribe the

⁴² Peter Kirwan, "Antonio's Revenge (Edward's Boys) @ King Edward VI Grammar School", 11 March 2011, The Bardathon, University of Nottingham Blogs, <https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/bardathon/2011/03/11/antonios-revenge-edwards-boys-king-edward-vi-grammar-school/>. Accessed 20 August 2021. Edward's Boys productions provide insights into the multiple levels of reception which performances by boy companies could invite. Besides enabling them to display their multiple talents, productions of plays such as *Antonio's Revenge* drew attention to the gap between the body of the young actor and the character he impersonated, as noted by contemporary dramatists such as Ben Jonson, which heightened "the productive tension between performer and text". See Jeanne McCarthy, "Disciplining 'Unexpert People': Children's Dramatic Practices and Page/Stage Tensions in Early English Theatre", *Shakespeare International Yearbook*, 10, 2010, pp. 143–164, pp. 153–154. Simultaneously, the poignancy of a scene such as the murder of Julio was heightened by casting a younger, smaller boy. Perry Mills's casting choices importantly remind us of the range of ages and sizes in boy companies.

⁴³ On the importance of music in the language and action of Marston's plays, see Stephen O'Neill's three articles, "The Influence of Music in the Works of John Marston I, II and III", *Music & Letters*, 53:2, April 1972, pp. 122–133; 53:3, July 1972, pp. 293–308; 53:4, October 1972, pp. 400–410.

⁴⁴ Reavley Gair (ed.), *Antonio's Revenge*, p. 39.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of Antonio's aesthetic construction of revenge, and the way he, Mellida and others define their roles emblematically, see Barbara J. Baines, "Antonio's Revenge: Marston's Play on Revenge Plays", *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, 23:2, 1983, pp. 277–294, esp. 285–290.

⁴⁶ Baines, "Antonio's Revenge: Marston's Play...", p. 290.

dramatist himself within that tradition, rather in the way that his use of Italian may be a tribute to a family history and another literary heritage.

Atypically in a revenge tragedy, Antonio not only survives, he is given the privilege of speaking the epilogue and so steering the play yet further away from moral to aesthetic considerations. “Revenger-protagonist” turned “revenger-artist”,⁴⁷ Antonio invites a rewriting of the tragedy someday, centred on Mellida’s death, in a genre that would “have gentle presence, [...] the scenes suck’d up / By calm attention of choice audience” (v.ii.180–181) and reinvent the revenge tragedy by moving towards the more affective mode of the complaint, reconnecting with Dido’s fate, closer perhaps to Euripides’ *Trojan Women* and Ovid’s *Heroides* than, henceforth, to Seneca. Ghosting the action on stage, serving as prompters’ or directors’ cues and as spotlights picking out key moments, the Latin in *Antonio and Mellida* and its tragic sequel suggests a form of collaborative writing down the centuries, with Marston glancing around him at his contemporaries and back to his classical forebears – with whom, possibly, he shared an eye on a posterity which might embrace new productions and adaptations in present-day theatres: “fac quod nulla posteritas probet, sed nulla taceat” (*Thyestes*, 192–193): do what no future age will endorse, but none fail to talk about.

⁴⁷ Baines, “*Antonio’s Revenge: Marston’s Play...*”, pp. 293–294.