

PETR OSOLSOBĚ

HOW COULD SHAKESPEARE KNOW THERE WAS A ST. LUKE IN PADUA ?

The present Bishop of Padua, Antonio Mattiazzo, was very surprised when in 1992 he received a letter written in Greek from the Archbishop of Thebes, Hyeronimus, dated 18th October 1992. The Greek metropolitan asked the Bishop of Padua to donate to him a significant part of the relics of St. Luke which rest in the Basilica of St. Justine in Padua. In this way, a Roman Catholic authority was reminded of the presence of the Apostle's relics which after centuries had fallen into oblivion. Were they really the legendary relics in the custody of the Benedictine church of St. Giustina? In order to confirm or refute the supposition, the bishop of Padua asked the Archbishop of Prague in 1993 to lend him the skull removed from the skeleton in 1354 by order of Charles IV, Roman Emperor and the Czech king, and transported to the cathedral of St. Vitus in Prague. The skull was conveyed back to Padua and subjected to a paleoanthropological examination performed by Prof. Vito Terribile Wiel Marin from the University of Padua and by Prague anthropologist Prof. Emanuel Vlček. The skeleton and skull belonged to (the same of) a man who died at the age of between seventy and eighty five. He was 163 cm tall, robust in build. Results of C-14 dating indicated the first century A.D.¹ Since that time, many experts, ecclesiastical authorities and ordinary believers have rediscovered the fact of St. Luke's presence in Padua.

Surveys of Shakespeare's topographical knowledge are numerous and well-elaborated, nevertheless they do not always succeed in distinguishing an ordinary, easily retrievable intelligence from remarkable tokens demanding a deeper explanation. These alone are the relevant point of departure for any interpretation. In my article I shall concentrate upon an example of this kind, namely Shakespeare's allusion to St. Luke in Padova, because I find it unique from many perspectives.

The comedy *The Taming of the Shrew* is rich in toponyms of Italian cities (Mantua, Verona, Venice, Pisa, Bergamo, Florence, Rome). The main dramatic

¹ See <http://www.abbaziasantagiustina.org/abbazia/santi.htm>

plot takes place in Padua, which Shakespeare seems to have thought of as being in Lombardy, while Lucentio says in his prologue *I am arrive'd for fruitfull Lombardy* (I, 1, 4), but the other descriptions of Padua are quite fitting. There is the importance of its famous university, founded in 1228, a well-known centre of Aristotelianism, whose philosophy of virtue Lucentio is eager to study there (I, 1, 17–20)²; the fact that Padua was a port at the time (I, 1, 42: “come ashore”), which can be interpreted either as a sign of Shakespeare’s topographical ignorance, since Padua never was a maritime haven; or conversely, as proof of particular knowledge that Padua was connected by a network of canals and waterways much used by travellers with Venice and with other cities.³ Finally, the most remarkable fact, knowledge of which is considerably rarer, is to be found in the fourth act of the comedy, representing the hasty preparations for Lucentio’s wedding to Bianca.

1. The Cult of St. Luke in Padua

In the scene situated in front of Signor Baptista’s house, Lucentio (craving for his daughter Bianca) is advised by his servant Biondello that: *The old priest of Saint Luke’s church is at your command at all hours* (IV, 4, 84–85). And after his master’s consent Biondello repeats: *...My master hath appointed me to go to Saint Luke’s, to bid the priest be ready...*(IV, 4, 98–99). At first sight, the patronage of St. Luke is not so obvious as that of others (e.g. St. Mary, Peter, Paul, John, both Baptist and Evangelist, or James) and for a dramatic author without definite knowledge of the place it would be safer to omit mention of it and to risk being reproached for ignorance. Padua, then, was in the sixteenth century, as it is today, broadly and predominantly associated with the cult of Saint Antony, but even if Shakespeare had known this, it could have hardly come to his mind to set the hasty and clandestine wedding in St. Antony’s church on the advice of a cunning servant, because St. Antony was too public a place. We can guess, according to the intentions of Lucentio and his servants, that “the old priest of Saint Luke’s church” is meant to indicate a hidden place, an inconspicuous church or a chapel where a service is performed and the chapel maintained by a sole “old” priest so that the total discretion of the ritual is granted by his supposed loneliness and senility.

Surprisingly enough for the contemporary researcher, a church dedicated to St. Luke really did exist in Padua at the time when the comedy was written. St. Luke’s chapel was an integral part of the romano-gothic church of Santa Giustina. It was built up after 1177 when the relics of Saint Luke the Evangelist

² Cf. Sells, *The Italian Influence in English Poetry* (1955), pp. 82–84. I quote according to B. Morris edition of *The Taming of the Shrew*, op. cit., p. 173.

³ Elze, *Essays*, trans. 1874. *The Supposed Travels of Shakespeare*, pp. 295–296; Sells, *The Paradise of Travellers*, 1964, pp. 114–115. In Morris, *ibid.*

were discovered under the ground of the churchyard of Santa Giustina (Justine). The circumstances of the discovery of its significance for the religious life of the city I will return to later. After its construction, St. Luke's chapel served as a parochial church up to the 17th century. Today, it is a rectorate of the parish of *Santa dei Servi* on the street of the *XX settembre*. The church was visited by the confraternity of painters for a long period and it is not at all beyond the bounds of possibility that in the time that interests us, there could have been an old priest known and respected by people.⁴

The special devotion to Saint Luke in Padua, as we have said above, was a result of the discovery of his relics in the graveyard of Santa Giustina in 1177, where many other relics from the former basilica were hidden in the ground to protect them from barbaric depredations. A lead coffin containing his bones was found among them. Nowadays, it is generally accepted that the remains reached Padua long before the sack of Constantinople in 1204, probably during the 8th century, in the times of the iconoclastic riots (741–770 A.C.). The presence of Saint Luke in Constantinople is in full accordance with St. Jerome's words relating to him (*De vir.* III, 7): "*Sepultus est Constantinopoli, ad quam urbem vigesimo Constantii anno, ossa ejus cum reliquiis Andreae Apostoli translata sunt*". Oral tradition recalls the name of Urio, priest and custodian of the Basilica of Saint Apostolis in Constantinople who, fearing the unwelcome attentions of iconoclasts, had the relics removed to Padua.

Even if the tradition is not entirely certain, what is quite certain is that the Holy Roman Emperor and Czech King Charles IV, opened the marble arch (made in 1313), extracted the lead coffin and in 1354 (9th November), ordered the skull of Saint Luke to be removed from the skeleton and the precious reliqui to be transported to Saint Vitus Cathedral in Prague, where it remains up to the 'present day (a fact generally unknown even to contemporary Czech Catholics, including ecclesiastics). The last examination ascertaining the division of both parts of the same body was made in 1997–1998 when the skull was loaned by Prague to Padua.⁵

A second recognition after 1354, took place in 1463. A commission had to decide if other relics, in the custody of Venice, belonged to Saint Luke. After many sessions and examinations, the process acknowledged the verity of Padua's relics while those of Venice were attributed to a man of the age of twenty deceased no more than two hundred years before the examination.

⁴ Trolese, Francesco: *Il culto di San Luca in Santa Giustina a Padova*. In: Luca evangelista. Parola e immagine tra Oriente e Occidente. Padova, Museo diocesano 14th October 2000 – 6th January 2001, catalogue made by G. Canova Mariani – P. Vettore Ferraro – F. Toniolo – A. Nante – A. De Nicolo Salmazo (Padova, Il Poligrafo, 2000), pp. 123–130.

⁵ The results of the anthropological research made under the head of Vito Terribile Wiel Marin, University of Padua, has been already published. Here, I quote from his article: *Gli indizi che confermano l'antica tradizione*. In: 30 giorni, n. 11, novem. 1998, pp.75–77.

In 1562 (March 15) a solemn procession across the large square in front of the new church (Prato della Valle) with the relics of Saint Luke transported from the old to the new church of Santa Giustina, certainly must have made a great impression on on-lookers, citizens as well as travellers, and on the international flocks of university students from all European nations. On that occasion, the lead coffin was left open and the relics were exposed to public veneration. The impact of the religious event was intense and it lasted for many years in the memory of those who witnessed it. Could it have reached England in Shakespeare's times? What if we work on the assumption of a provisional conclusion, that the mention of the church of Saint Luke in Padua in *The Taming of the Shrew* (IV, 4) is by no means a casual accessory device of landscape imagery, but an indication betraying deeper knowledge of and commitment to religious affairs? Shakespeare knew at least, that Saint Luke was not a minor cult in Padua, and he probably had not forgotten the principles of devotion to saints and their relics, their intercession for the living and the dead.⁶ Moreover, he knew their role in concluding contracts, as we see from the example of oath-swearing from the same play: *Yes, by Saint Anne, do I. (Taming, I, 1, 249).*⁷

2. Who could describe Italy, its saints and relics ?

Now, let us once again raise the same question: how could Shakespeare ever have got to know about the cult of Saint Luke in Padova and about the existence of his chapel, about which most of his compatriots and contemporaries were so completely in the dark ? If we deny as improbable the possibility that Shakespeare have been travelling in Europe or Italy, there had to be a good informer or passionate narrator (one or many) who had had direct experience, knowledge and a suggestive eloquence. Infatuation by Italy, then, is in the whole work of W. S. so apparent, intense and constant that it embraces his dramatic beginnings and his ends too, and – last but not least – it shows Italy in so lovable a light (in contrast to its representation as a bulwark of obscurantism, papacy, corruption and crime so frequent in the dramaturgy and homiletics of his time). It would seem that his love for Italy dates from an earlier time, probably from his boyhood. Could he possibly have met a former student from Padua ? The Veneto was never a part of the Papal State and Padua still remained the goal of English students into the time of Elizabeth's reign. But the traditional significance of the university of Padua for English religion, law, culture and letters (epitomized by

⁶ Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

⁷ Saint Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, though non mentioned in the Bible. The cult of Saint Anne, reminds Brian Morris in the Arden edition, "was specially attacked by Luther and the Reformers. Cf. *Twelfth Night* II, 3, 111, the only other occurrence of this oath in Shakespeare." In: W. Shakespeare: *The Taming of the Shrew*, by Brian Morris (London: Arden edition 1997 [first ed. 1991], Methuen and Co. Ltd.), p. 183.

the figure of Cardinal Reginald Pole) was overshadowed by German schools (Hamlet's Wittenberg among them).

It would seem that Shakespeare, like many people of his time, knew Italy much more from narratives than from usage maps. No good and reliable map of the time puts Padua in Lombardy but under the jurisdiction of the Dukedom of Venice under to which it had always belonged. On the other hand, the detail discussed (St. Luke in Padua) cannot be found on any map of the region, even on a map of the city of Padua itself, because the antique chapel of St. Luke was, as we remarked upon above, located in the romano-gothic church of Santa Giustina and that is why it was not usually either marked or mentioned.⁸ Finally, our supposed narrator on Italy whom Shakespeare should have met, directed his attention to details of a kind in which a religious person, pilgrim or a priest, would be deeply interested. These are the cases of saints, relics or images important to Catholic spirituality. It was especially Jesuits, as Alison Shell⁹ has observed, who developed sophisticated imaginative techniques for stimulating bravery. Their consistency in behaving like the saints they venerated, on trial, in prison and on the scaffold, was perhaps the supreme achievement of the controversial imagination, turning worldly defeat into spiritual success.

At this point, I would like to recall the Lancastrian hypothesis concerning Shakespeare's "lost years", an explanation opened by Oliver Baker¹⁰, substantiated by Chambers¹¹, developed by E. Honnigman and recently enriched by R. Wilson.¹² The Jesuits had their residence in Padova from 1542 to 1606, the date of their first expulsion by the Republic of Venice. They were able to return only in 1657 and remained in Padua up to the suppression of the Company in 1773. At the time that interests us here (1550–1600), they resided in the mansion of The Knights of the Teutonic Order (*Magione dei Cavalieri teutonici*) situated near the *Ponte Pedocchioso* or *Ponderoso*, on the crossroad of today's *Via Ospedale* and *Via N.A. Giustiniani*.¹³ Were there also English Jesuits at the same place ?

From a geographical perspective, Padua is half way from Vienna to Rome, and it was always a station for pilgrims coming from Middle-European regions,

-
- 8 Savioli, P.: *Thesaurus urbis Paduanae*. Patavii, typis Petri Mariae Frambotti, 1682, p. 141–147. – Cavacijs, J.: *Historiarum coenobii D. Ivstinae Patavinae libri sex*, Venetiis, ex typographia Andreae Muschij, 1606, p. 278–282.
- 9 Shell, Alison, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
- 10 Baker, O., *In Shakespeare's Warwickshire and the Unknown Years*. (London: 1937), p. 297.
- 11 Chambers, E. K., *William Shakeshafte*. in: *Shakespearean Gleanings* (London: 1944), p. 52.
- 12 Wilson, Richard, 'Shakespeare and the Jesuits', *Times Literary Supplement* (19 December 1997)
- 13 Zanardi, M.: *I domicilia o centri operativi della Compagnia di Gesù*. Atti di convegno di studi, Venezia, 2–5th ottobre 1990, Gregoriana libreria editrice, Padova 1995, p. 95.

where Jesuits took roots in Bohemia (Prague college since 1557), then in Moravia in Olmutz and Brunn (today's "Brno", where there was a novitiate from 1572), in Austria in Vienna and Graz. In Henry More's *Historia Provinciae Anglicanae Societati Jesu*¹⁴ the position of Padua in an itinerary of this kind is confirmed by a mention that a member of the society *Richard Tancred (...)* a young man of 22 did his studies in Olmutz and Prague, and then taught Greek for two years at Vienna. He was summoned to Italy, and died at Padua on 13 September 1596.¹⁵ More refers to one of the most influential English Jesuit writers, Robert Persons (mentioned as "Master Parson" in *The Twelfth Night* IV, 2), that in the period 1576–1578 he stayed at Padua for spiritual exercises: *He should do an eight-day retreat.... With this end in view, Persons set out for Padua with a few like-minded companions (...)* He had now set his mind on a more spiritual life, and in his fresh awareness of the transitoriness of things took a new and strange delight...Persons stayed for a time at Padua¹⁶ We also know, that Persons could have been familiar with the the waterways and canals of the region, for More observes that *after journeying to Venice, and taking ship for Piave without mishap, he came to Ferrara.* After his being received into the Society in Rome (July 4, 1578), *Persons was transferred to Padua to join the novices.*¹⁷ On the point of joining then, his closest friend, Luke Astlow, was suddenly snatched by untimely death in Padua. It seems improbable, that Jesuits, having been in Padua at the precise moment of Luke Astlow's death there, should have missed the awareness of overlooked a topical coincidence with the place where St. Luke is fervently venerated.

3. Edmund Campion in Padua with a copy of *Salus Populi Romani* attributed to St. Luke

In the frame of the Lancastrian hypothesis, E. A. J. Honigmann¹⁸ and others have seriously scrutinised the possibility of Shakespeare's personally meeting with Edmund Campion in winter-spring 1580/81 in Houghton Tower near Pre-

14 Henry More: *Historia Missionis Anglicanae Societatis Jesu* (1660), edited and translated by Francis Edwards, S.J. (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1981). I use Edward's translation for the purpose of my article.

15 More, op. cit., p. 28.

16 More, op. cit., p. 49.

17 More, op. cit., pp 52–3.

18 Honigmann, E.A.J.: *Shakespeare: the "lost years"*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 3rd edition, 1998, p. 11. – Richard Houghton clearly acted as "business manager" for his exiled brother, and may have been the most committed Catholic of the brethren who remained in England: when Edmund Campion was captured by the authorities in 1581 it was reported that the Jesuit had stayed with leading Catholics in Lacashire, whose houses were searched by order of the Privy Council – "and especially the house of Richard Houghton, where it is said the said Campion left his books. – Reference to Acta of the Privy Council – APC, XII, 149.

ston, before Campion was betrayed and captured by the authorities on Sunday the 16th of July 1581. It was reported that the Jesuit had stayed with leading Catholics in Lancashire, whose houses were searched by order of the Privy Council – “and especially the house of Richard Hoghton, where it is said the said Campion left his books”.¹⁹ In Alexander Hoghton’s will made in the same year (1581) the owner of Hoghton Tower asks Sir Thomas Hesketh “to be friendly unto Fulk Gillam and William Shakeshafte now dwelling with me”.²⁰ For further information regarding Shakespeare’s stay in Lancaster during his “lost years” I enclose some bibliographical data.²¹

Now, Campion would have fulfilled at least some of the conditions for being a person who might have cultivated in the young Shakespeare his subsequent love for Italy: he was a man of great knowledge and eloquence and he was sensitive to the spirituality of saints and he took great interest in the local saints (in Prague, for example, he composed *Oratio de S. Wenceslao*; or when he writes to Gregory Martin from Rome, asking himself what remains from that Imperial City...*But what men have stood firm in these miserable changes, – what things ? The relics of the Saints, and the chair of the Fisherman. O prudence !*²²). Moreover, we definitely know that he twice visited Padua. On the first occasion, Campion left Rome for Vienna in June 1573, where he travelled together with Magius, the Austrian provincial. Their way to Vienna led inevitably through Padua. This time, Campion might have had a particular reason for venerating the relics of St. Luke there. He was transporting a copy of the legendary St. Luke’s Madonna from *Santa Maria Maggiore* in Rome, where the icon of the Blessed Virgin is enshrined. Legend claims that it was made by none other than St. Luke the Evangelist, but this is clearly not true. It is difficult to date, but the icon is at least a thousand years old. She is called “*Salus Populi Romani*”, “Well-being of the Roman People”. Several copies of the icon had been commissioned by Francesco Borgia, third general of the Jesuit order, and transferred personally by Edmund Campion as head of a group of novices coming from Rome to Prague and to Brno in 1573. The image brought by Campion is still treasured as an altar piece in the Jesuit church of the Assumption of St. Mary in Brno up to the present day. We can, therefore, maintain with certainty that Campion, much devoted to the cult of Jesus’s Mother²³ was well-acquainted with the personality of St. Luke, author of the third gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles who only left

19 APC, XIII, 149. I quote according to Honigmann, op. cit., p.155.

20 Honigmann, op. cit., p. 24.

21 Simpson, Richard, *Edmund Campion: Jesuit Protomartyr of England*, (2nd edn, London: John Hodges, 1896), p. 343; Waugh, Evelyn, *Edmund Campion* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1935); Wilson, Richard, ‘Shakespeare and the Jesuits’, *Times Literary Supplement* (19 December 1997).

22 Campion’s letter from the College of the Society of Jesus, July 3, 1577. In E.C. *Opuscula*, p. 389. Simpson’s translation in his *Edmund Campion*, op. cit., p. 127.

23 In Brunn, Campion had a vision of St. Mary (1573) fortelling him his future martyrdom. In Prague Jesuit college, Campion has found the first *Sodalium of St. Mary*.

us a testimony of the circumstances of Angel's annunciation and of Jesus' birth. Medicus by profession (*Col* 4, 14) and painter according to the old tradition, he became patron of all artists, primarily painters. The fact that in the same journey he was entrusted to convey to Bohemia a copy of the most famous Marian icon of Western Christianity, a picture attributed to St. Luke himself, undoubtedly must have fired his imagination, devotion and piety. When in 1573 Campion was passing through Padua, the solemnities of the invention of St. Luke and other saints exposed, transferred and venerated in 1562 still must have been fresh in the memory of its inhabitants, clerics, religious communities and university members.

Campion's second visit to Padua dates from April 1580. After almost seven years spent as a teacher of rhetoric and philosophy at the Prague college of St. Clement (*Clementinum*), he was called to Rome. He left Prague on March 25, 1580 and went as far as Munich with Ferdinand, second son of Albert, Duke of Bavaria.²⁴ *Then I drove in the carriage of Prince Ferdinand as far as Innsbruck, thence I walked to Padua...At Padua I was shown about by young Matthias Melchiarus, who scarcely left my side.*²⁵ At this time, I deduce, Campion took a little rest in Padua after the long journey from Prague and before he took off for Rome.

4. Conclusion

I must not conclude this little study without a caveat: it is both all too easy and too difficult to claim Campion's influence on Shakespeare and almost impossible to prove it by means of primary sources. (The only secondary source remains the death-scene of Catherine Aragon based on Holinshed's description of the event taken from Campion's *History of Ireland*.²⁶) It goes without saying that Campion is not the only candidate for somebody who initiated Shakespeare into the mysteries of Italian geography, institutions and other details. Notwithstanding, Campion, as we have tried to prove, had many advantages for the reasons we stated above. I maintain that Shakespeare's knowledge of the cult of St. Luke's and his chapel in Padua is exceptional and in urgent need of explanation. The redoubled mention of St. Luke in Padua in the comedy *The Taming of the Shrew* functions for creating the atmosphere of the place, but at the same time, I would argue, those reminiscences of old traditions and the "old priest" were attempting to appeal to the Catholic memory and imagery of the public. This tendency is more obvious in *Measure for Measure*, where a votarist of St. Clare is made a heroine of purity and faith and the monastic attributes are presented without the slightest mockery. A remarkable detail: the seat of the repudiated

²⁴ Simpson, R., op. cit., p 135.

²⁵ From Campion's letter from Bologna to Prague, In: *Opuscula*, p. 40. In: Simpson, op. cit., p. 155.

²⁶ Campion, Edmund, *Two Bokes of the Histories of Ireland*, ed. by A.F. Vossen (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1963).

Angelo's wife Mariana is situated at *the moated grange at St. Luke's* (act 4, scene 1) and Isabella announces her intent to visit her (III, 1, 277) – *I will presently to St. Luke's; there at the moated grange resides this dejected Mariana.* Here again, the close juxtaposition of the names of Luke, Mary and Ann (= Mariana) brings to the mind of a reader imbued with the religious sensibility of Shakespeare's times the association of the author of the "Marian" Gospel (*Annuntiation, Visitation, Magnificat, Birth in Bethlehem*) and her legendary painter.

