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## Cultural entrepreneurship in Shakespeare's Italy

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### Abstract

This study deals with Shakespeare's work in Italy and how it has been used today in the form of cultural entrepreneurship. The three famous works he inspired and wrote about the Veneto region, namely "The Merchant of Venice", "Romeo and Juliet", and "The Taming of the Shrews" have been a trigger for many travelers to visit Italy since ancient times even in the context of the "Big Tour". Today the cities mentioned in the works and especially Verona have developed cultural entrepreneurship in the footsteps of "Romeo and Juliet".

**Keywords:** Cultural entrepreneurship; Italy; Berona; Romeo and Juliet; Shakespeare

### 1. Introduction

The term "travel literature" refers to texts in which the authors describe a place they visited. Travel literature reached its peak in the 19th century as it was one of the most popular literature genres. According to Bracewell, Chirico and Drace-Francis (2008), despite the questioning of the validity of this form of literature in relation to novels and poems, important texts of this form have been translated for the international public (Typical case are Goethe's calendar notes entitled "The Journey to Italy" (1786-1787) or as regards Modern Greek literature, later in the interwar period, the travel texts of Nikos Kazantzakis). The event of this success contributed significantly to the "custom" of traditional travel to Europe between the 17th to 19th century mainly young and noble Europeans, the so-called Grand Tour (According to Kefalas (2012) the "Grand Tour" basically included a long trip to Italy mainly in Venice and Rome.) . Through this, people who belonged to a higher social stratum came into contact not only with masterpieces of antiquity and Renaissance but also modern cultural elements, such as opera and of course they met the aristocracy of their time.

### 2. Historical review

This "tradition" extends from the middle of the 17th century to the middle of the 19th and constituted an important transition period. The Grand Tour develops into a more formal tourism industry.

Through this "Big Tour" a large volume of literature was born in many genres and forms. Some of these different kinds are adventures, autobiographies and even travel guides. Traveller's trips were recorded as notes, since the writing of their travel experience was considered an essential element of intellectual self-development, and even letters are often encountered, there are travel memoirs are found, of course, which were either collected as material and made up the books, or were intended to be published as books to begin with.

In addition to the obvious reasons why Italy was the centre of this tour art, cultural education, and recreation there were also practical reasons for travellers, the majority of whom were British, chose to visit this particular Italian province.

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According to Black (1996), in the 16th and 17th century, the English Reform (This is a series of historical events in England during the 16th century in which the Church of England was detached from the power of the Roman Catholic. A political issue rather than a theological dispute based on Henry VIII's desire to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon and to marry Anna Boleyn, mother of Elizabeth I.), the cities of Veneto, were characterized by the absence of religious fanaticism. Therefore, it was less of a risk for the British who, in the case of a violation of the bans from their home country, would be faced with the consequences. Many British permits to travel abroad explicitly prohibited travel to Rome, while, for example, Padua, as Woolfson (2013) reports, and its educational institutions, which were held by Venice, reproduced the relative tolerance of the state towards religious heterodoxies. This was the reason why this area was flooded by a crowd of travellers with a wide range of attributes, with the majority of them originating in Britain.

According to Dennis Kennedy (1998:179) "if tourism can turn the explorer into a minor historian, the expansion of material suitable for writing history constantly creates new locations for tourism promotion". Such an extension was also achieved by Shakespeare, knowingly or even unknowingly, when creating his works that are unfolding in Italy, which shaped the image of the country in the 16th century in Europe.

The glorious past of the Veneto region, dominated by the expansionist power of the Venetians, established it as a historical site that inspired poets such as Shakespeare who urged foreigners and especially British writers to visit. Jeremy Black (1996: 541) points out that "the re-perception of Italy, which was such a powerful feature of the imaginative treatment by the British traveller of the 18th century remained strong and dominant ever since."

So, both Shakespeare and travel literature within the Grand Tour shaped the literary tourism in Veneto. Indelible remained the stigma left by writers, poets and editors who visited the area, as well as the Italian writers who provoked and invited with their impressions. Tourists in this part of Europe encouraged the adaptation of their works which were often transferred to the theatre scene, making them areas widely known in more popular masses through the theatre.

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### 3. Shakespeare's Italy

William Shakespeare, poet and playwright whose works during the 16th century, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Taming of the Shrew* unfold in Verona, Venice and Padua respectively, laid the path to Italy for his literary successors, inspiring them to leave behind their own masterpieces.

Although William Shakespeare sets three of his most famous works in Veneto, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, he himself had not visited Italy. However, it was a trigger for young writers to visit the country. Writers, such as John Ruskin, who admired Shakespeare and wrote the book *St. Marks Rest: The History of Venice*, marched in the poet's footsteps of imagination and found their way to this country.

Shakespeare's play "*The Merchant of Venice*" takes place in the city of Venice, as the title suggests, and concerns a Veneto Merchant, Antonio, who was unable to repay a large loan he took from the Jewish loan shark, Shylock, because his friend Bassanio begged him for a loan. The book *Tales from Shakespeare* states:

«Whenever Antonio met Shylock on the Rialto (or Exchange), he used to reproach him with his usuries and hard dealings, which the Jew would bear with seeming patience, while he secretly meditated revenge» (Every time Antonio met Sylock in Rialto, he'd lie to him about his philandering and transactions, in which the Jewish reacted with apparent patience while secretly thinking about revenge.) (Lamb & Lamb, 1991, :.96).

As a result of the reputation of this novel, tours were created in Venice that tour the Ghetto of Venice, the Rialto Bridge and the Doge's Palace, where the scenes take place of Antonio's (Mentioned: «Il mercante di venezia - itinerario per le scuole secondarie superiori» Available at <http://www.guidedvenice.com/itinerari>) trial. (Manola, Kouni, 2020)

The tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, one of Shakespeare's most famous works, takes place in Verona, and it's about the love of two young people of the Montegons and the Capoulettes who defy the animosity of their families that found tragic death. The reputation of his work established Verona as the city of lovers and turned into a tourist attraction the so-called house of Kapoulettes and the balcony of Juliet. The following excerpt of the text from the book *Tales from Shakespeare* mentions:

It being midnight, Romeo with his companions departed; but they soon missed him, for unable to stay away from the house where he had left his heart, he leaped the wall of an orchard which was at the back of Juliet's house: here he had not been long, ruminating on his new love, when Juliet appeared above at a window, through which her exceeding beauty; (It was midnight, Romeo with his comrades left, but soon they lost him, because he couldn't stay away from the

house where he had left his heart, jumped off the wall of an orchard located at the back of Juliet's house: and it wasn't long before she whispered words of love until Juliet appeared high in a window, where she exaggerated in beauty ) (Lamb & Lamb, 1991:249).

In fact, on the wall of the entrance to the yard of the so-called "Home of Kapoulettos" it has become a tradition for tourists to stick love notes and when entering the yard, one will see the balcony of Juliet which was added following a decision of the Municipality of Verona to give substance to the myth and attract visitors and, as Dennis Kennedy (1998:182) states, "blatantly fake sights do attract many tourists". In the yard, there is also the bronze statue of Juliet, built by Nereo Costantini in 1989 (Costantini (Italian sculptor 1905-1969) is the creator of the bronze statue of Giulietta Capuleti in front of Casa di Giulietta in Verona. The statue is 2.65m high. Built there from the municipality of Verona in 1972 and since then has been a very photographic object for tourists) and has since become the symbol of Verona, but because of the tourist tradition which wanted a rub on her chest to bring luck, the statue was replaced in 2014 to repair the hole that had been caused. The book *Tales from Shakespeare* mentions: «...;but Lord Montague said he would give him more, for he would raise her statue in pure gold, that while Verona kept its name, no figure should be so esteemed for its richness and workmanship as that of the true and faithful Juliet.» (But Lord Montague said he would give him more, because he would make her statue in pure gold, and as long as Verona retained her name, no figure should be more valued for its richness and quality as much as that of true and faithful Juliet.) (Lamb & Lamb, 1991, σ.265)

Countless tours have been based on the history of Romeo and Juliet (Mentioned: « Un Itinerario Sui Luoghi Di Romeo E Giulietta In Centro A Verona» διαθέσιμο στο <https://www.montagnadiviaggi.it/2017/08/itinerario-romeo-e-giulietta-verona.html>), which, among other attractions, lead the tourists in the before mentioned so-called house of Juliet, the so-called house of Romeo, Porta Leoni, the ancient Roman gate of Verona from which we assume that Romeo would have to pass when he was expelled from Verona and went to Mantua, and the grave of Juliet at San Francesco al Corso monastery.

There is a city between Venice and Verona- Padua, the city in which Shakespeare's comedy *The Taming of the Shrew* evolves. This work recounts the flirtation of Petruchio from Verona and Katherina, the stubborn and unfrosted vixen that Petruchio attempts to turn into a submissive and obedient woman. Katherina is originally from Padua, as Charles and Mary Lamb (1991) typically mention in the following excerpt of their book *Tales from Shakespeare*:

Katherine the Shrew was the eldest daughter of Baptista, a rich gentleman of Padua. She was a lady of such an ungovernable spirit and fiery temper, such a loud-tongued scold, that she was known in Padua by no other name than Katherine the Shrew. (Katerina the shrew was the eldest daughter of Batista, rich gentleman of Padua. She was a lady of such unrivalled spirit and fiery temperament, with such a strong voice, that she was known in Padua by no other name than "Katherine the shrew".)

One of the most popular attractions visited as part of the Shakespearean routes in the city is the University of Padua, attended by Lucentio, who in Shakespeare's work fell in love with Bianca, sister of Katherina. In the first scene of the play Lucentio exclaims: "For the great desire I had/To see fair Padua, nursery of arts, I am arrived for fruitful Lombardy/The pleasant garden of great Italy" meaning, "For the great desire I had to see the festival of Padova, an art nursery, I arrived in the fertile Lombardy, the pleasant garden of Italy" according to Meacham (2016), with this phrase Shakespeare made Padua known not only for its art, but also for its Botanic gardens that are one of the oldest in the world and have been designated as a Monument of Global Cultural UNESCO Heritage.

Also known is the work of Thomas Starkey (Thomas Starkey (approx.1495-1538) English politician, theorist and humanist), a *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, which preceded *The Taming of the Shrew*. It was written during his stay in Padua in the 16th century as it has been popular ever since as a learning center and became one of the most important political-thinking works in English of the time.

We conclude, therefore, that these three cities of Veneto, two of which, Venice and Verona, are also Monuments of World Heritage (World heritage monuments should be "Special Global Value" and meet at least one of the ten UNESCO criteria), gained international fame through Shakespeare's works and shaped both the tourist attractions and the profile of the tourists who chose to visit the specific cities, who, especially between 17th to 19th centuries were mainly scientists, writers and enthusiasts of literature and art with a "classical" education.

#### 4. Grand tour and travel literature

Grand Tour's cultural programme was considered the final stage of the raising of a gentleman (Bailey, 2018). Especially any British noble man in the world of the 18th century shortly after its coming of age and the end of his studies, before taking up his social or public duties he had to do the so-called Grand Tour in order to expand his "classic" education (Kefalas, 2012). Such a journey was tiring and costly at the time and was therefore carried out by privileged social classes, which produced scientists and authors (Soarabella, 2003). (Manola, 2022b) (Manola, 2022c)..

Despite the modern critics who claim that Grand Tour's tendency to keep travellers together led to their insufficient insight, there is an astonishing variety in the written remains that such travellers left behind.

Many men describe their impressions in autobiographies and their memoirs from the Grand Tour (Kefalas, 2012). Because of this era, the number of women who dared on such a journey was not great, although after the invention of organised excursions by Thomas Cook (Thomas Cook can be regarded as the 'father' of global organized travel'. Until then, the trip was the exclusive prerogative of some daring explorers, a few wealthy people or individual travelers who had to organize individually, in unimaginably adverse conditions, their acquaintance with a foreign country. Thomas Cook has made a significant contribution to mass tourism in Italy. With "circular tickets" the excursionists could use them on ever almost Italian railroad. These tickets allowed them to travel by train for a predetermined number of days at predetermined routes. Cook also designed a series of vouchers that, in combination with tickets, could be exchanged for accommodation and meals in designated accommodation.), which caused many British tourists to pour into the continent, the traveller's image was often represented by female writers and explorers (Mary Shelley and Madame de Staël are now one of the most famous). Italy in particular was seen as a country that the females could safely visit (Baumgartner, 2015).

By studying travel writings, we observe that this is a purely British phenomenon as the examples of travel literature by other Europeans who have become globally known after such a trip are few. Among the other Europeans are mainly Germans, Scandinavians and Americans.

The first daredevils laid the foundations for the Grand Tour, one of them Thomas Hoby, English diplomat and translator, who attempted the most extensive Italian tour by an Englishman of the 16th century, which he recorded in his autobiography. This tour can also be considered as a pioneer. Evident is the influence he exerted in England with the translation of works by poets such as Shakespeare and Sir Philip Sidney, who had travelled to Italy.

Most travellers had waded into Italian writings as bibliophiles, such as Samuel Rogers, were already based on Greek and Latin literature, since as a member of privileged social classes had gone through high-level of education. A typical example is Robert Browning, an English-based and playwright author, who from the age of fourteen knew fluent Greek, Italian and Latin.

Seeking a background for Sordello's poem, Robert Browning visited Italy in 1838, a move made by many, inspired by Italian poets. This specific poem refers to Verona:

Sordello, compassed murkily about

With ravage of six long sad hundred years.

Only believe me. Ye believe?

Verona ... Never, —I should warn you first, —

Of my own choice had this, if not the worst

Yet not the best expedient, served to tell

A story I could body forth so well (Browning, R., 2012)

Its extremely difficult and lengthy poem consists of a fantastic version of the life of Sordello da Goito, a 13th century Lombard troubadour described by Dante Alighieri in Purgatorio, the second part of his famous poem Divine Comedy: (Genesini,2020)

Tal era io in quella turba spessa,  
volgendo a loro, e qua e là, la faccia,  
e promettendo mi sciogliea da essa...  
Venimmo a lei: o anima lombarda,  
come ti stavi altera e disdegnosa  
e nel mover de li occhi onesta e tarda! ...  
E se licito m'è, o sommo Giove  
che fusti in terra per noi crucifisso,  
son li giusti occhi tuoi rivolti altrove? ...

(Dante Alighieri)

Dante was an inspiration to a number of writers before Robert Browning, as well as Italian writers Salernitano, Da Porto and Badello from which William Shakespeare inspired his work of Romeo and Juliet, since the earliest reference to the Capoulettos and Montegosis done again was in the Purgatorio of Devine Comedy:

Vieni a veder Montecchi e Cappelletti,  
Monaldi e Filippeschi, uom senza cura:  
color già tristi, e questi con sospetti!

Italian poets gradually gained fame under the Grand Tour and encouraged visits to the country. This extension of reputation of Italy as a literature destination is most likely due to the frequent occurrence of the purchase of books by Italian writers as souvenir which were given as gifts. In addition, works by travellers, such as Samuel Rogers' "Italy: A Poet", were a popular gift for anyone who had cultural ambitions to plan a European tour (Spear, 1984). This gift was also given by a family friend to the author John Ruskin on his 13th birthday, which has since determined the main direction of his life.

Venice, Verona and Padua held a special place in the hearts of writers and travelers and thus formed a background for their diverse works. Some of these form of writers of the Grand Tour travelers, who later helped further disseminate the reputation as a literary destination with their writings are as follows:

- Thomas Otway: Venice Preserv'd: Otway was an English dramatist. His work Venice Preserv'd was the most important tragedy of the English scene in the 1680s. His most famous works were standard Shakespearean works.
- Joseph Addison: Remarks on several parts of Italy, &c., in the years 1701, 1702, 1703: Addison was an English journalist, poet, playwright and politician, who travelled to Italy. His travel diary describes life there, but his main purpose was to apply to the life of the English reader the lessons from his experience in the country (Johnson, 1976).
- James Boswell: On the Grand Tour, Italy, Corsica and France 1765-1766: Boswell was a Scottish biographer and lawyer who was also writing diaries. He is best known for his biography of the English writer Samuel Johnson, which is said to be the greatest biography written in English. His fascinating adventures in Italy took part in the 18th century, where he went without an academic advisor, which increased the charm of his calendars.
- Samuel Rogers: Italy: A Poem: Rogers was an English man who was praised in his times, but his reputation was overshadowed by his romantic colleagues and friends, such as Byron. In 1814 he made a European tour, where he visited Italy, while 7 years later he returned and visited Byron and Shelley. From the first tour emerged the work Italy: A Poem.
- Germaine de Staël: Corinne, ou l'Italie: Germaine de Staël was a French writer with Swiss origin. The main character of her novel, Corinne, seems to have been based on Italy, her family and her erotic life. The novel still

attracts readers for a variety of reasons, among them the reflections of the literary comparison of unwritten gender norms in Europe (Simpson, 2012).

- William Hazlitt: *Notes of a Journey through France and Italy* (CHAP. XXII. & CHAP. XXIII.): Hazlitt was an English essayist, a critic of drama and literature, painter, social commentator and philosopher. He is considered one of the best critics and essayist in the history of the English language and is recognised as the best critic of art for his time. He also expressed in writing the great admiration for Dante's works, which he described as "The father of modern poetry" (Hazlitt, cited in Bandiera & Saglia, 2005, p.72).
- Lord Byron *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (CANTO IV): George Gordon Byron was an English aristocrat, famous and successful poet, politician and one of the most important figures of romanticism. His highly controversial personality and fickle economic and love life forced him to leave England and travel to Italy, where he lived in cities such as Venice. He was considered one of the greatest British poets and still remains popular to this day.
- Percy Bysshe Shelley: *Julian and Maddalo*. Shelley was an English poet, a key representative of romanticism. He met Lord Byron when he moved to Geneva and visited him many times in Italy, where mainly for medical reasons started a trek through the cities. Julian and Maddalo's work began to be written in Venice inspired by his conversations with Byron.
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *Italienische Reise* (A journey to Italy): Goethe was a world-class German writer, novelist, dramatist, theorist of art and naturalist. A Trip to Italy, which he wrote during his stay in southern Italy is one of his most important works.
- Washington Irving: *The Tales of a Traveller*: Irving was an American writer, essayist, biographer, historian and diplomat in the early of the 19th century and admired writers like Byron. For health reasons, he organised an extensive tour of Europe from 1804 to 1806, through which, as he describes in his work, he visited cities in Italy such as Venice, however, deviating from the common Grand Tour.
- John Ruskin: *St. Mark's Rest: The History of Venice*: Ruskin was an English writer, painter and a critic of art. The critical depth of his spirit influenced later the Victorian Art. *St. Mark's Rest: The History of Venice* mentions how he wrote it for them who still care about the monuments of Venice (Ruskin,2012).
- Robert Browning: *Sordello*: Browning was an American writer and a playwright author whose mastery in drama monologues established him as one of the most important Victorian poets. When he got married, he moved to Italy, a country he describes as his university.
- George Simmel: *The Art of the City: Rome, Florence, Venice*: Simmel was a German sociologist, philosopher and critic. As a pioneering thinker, whose broad lectures were held across Europe, he co-wrote this quartet of essays in a book that includes dazzling portraits of iconic cities of art and history of Italy, including Venice.
- Thomas Mann: *Death in Venice*: Mann was a German writer, award-winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1929), deeply influenced by the work of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. He was one of the most important writers of the 20th century. One of the most important works is *Death in Venice*. From 1895 to 1954 he had made more than 20 separate trips to Italy.
- Ernest Hemingway: *Across the River and into the Trees*: Hemingway was one of the most important American writers of the 20th century, award-winner of the Pulitzer Prize and Nobel Prize in Literature. He passionately loved travelling and after meeting Ezra Pound at the Shakespeare and Company bookstore he toured in Italy with him. *The Across the River and Into the Trees*, which deals with a romantic story unfolding in post-war Venice he co-wrote it after his trip and critics have even noticed parallelisms with Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*.
- Ezra Pound: *The Cantos*: Ezra Weston Loomis Pound was an American poet and essayist and is considered one of the most important poets of the Anglo-American literary current of modernism. He moved to Italy and there he wrote his work *The Cantos*. He even helped to discover and shape the work of contemporary writers, such as Ernest Hemingway.
- Henry James: *The Aspern Papers-The Wings of the Dove*: James was one of the most important American writers of the 19th century, from the main representatives of realism in literature, while also set the foundation for criticism of literary works and encouraged authors to present their point of view for the world through their works. At a very young age, he travelled to Europe and learned alongside popular teachers of the time.

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## 5. Cultural entrepreneurship and Shakespeare

Cultural entrepreneurship can be defined as the specific activity of establishing cultural enterprises and marketing cultural and creative products and services that contain a cultural value but also have the potential to generate financial income. The organization of the cultural points of a city or a region in cultural routes is a form of cultural entrepreneurship. (Mitoula&Maniou 2024) (Maniou, 2023)

The cultural routes organized by the Italians entitled "Verona: In the footsteps of Romeo and Juliet with a local" they are an important development factor for the city and for the region. They attract visitors and enhance the development of the areas, ensuring the benefits that this form of tourism entails such as promoting cultural heritage, strengthening the local economy, creating jobs, etc. At the same time, however, they reduce the environmental impact of other forms of tourism, thereby enhancing sustainable development) (Economou & Mitoula 2018) At the same time, they are a form of cultural entrepreneurship since the ticket ranges from 79 euros to 158 euros depending on the duration of the tour and the walk. A visit to the house of "Romeo and Juliet" is also a profitable form of cultural entrepreneurship since the ticket costs 6 euros, while a guided tour costs 12 euros. (Maniou, 2024b). Maniou et al.,2024)

This cultural route is based on the theme of "Sypiers" and related activities and focuses on the history and culture of this name and specifically on the play "Romeo and Juliet". It also combines elements of cultural and natural heritage. Similar forms of cultural entrepreneurship in the name of Shakespeare have been developed in England with the "Shakespeare Park" as well as the Shakespeare Theater located inside the park with thousands of tickets from fans of the famous playwright. Apart from the financial contribution, these activities have an educational and recreational nature and are formed based on the principles of sustainable and sustainable development in the context of responsible tourism. (Maniou 2024a) (Maniou 2024c) (Manola, 2022c). (Manola et al., 2023).( Koltsikoglou et al., 2022)

Entrepreneurship, and especially the cultural part of it, has changed radically in the last decade. This is so because of the widespread usage and penetration of digital technologies in all domains of life, of education, as well as in entrepreneurial life. The usage of digital technologies in education facilitates education itself but at the same time it produces citizens that rely more on ICTs for their daily life and for consumption of cultural products and goods. The ICTs today are the vehicle for acceleration of all the aspects of citizen's life including education, wellbeing, culture and entrepreneurship [31-42]

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## 6. Conclusions

From the above it seems that the Veneto region has been a conscious choice for Shakespeare.

This Italian region known for its tolerance and wealth functions as a multicultural matrix that generates attitudes to imitation for Elizabethan England, could hardly be replaced with other regions.

The author's great appeal provokes a large current during the Grand Tour season, as the experience of the trip is studied in relation to the social, economic, cultural and historical information of interest to the public of the time. This was also the basis for a series of newer literary works that even today are of interest to readers and is the main tool for experiential activities, such as special excursions, even nowadays. The Italians seem to have taken advantage of the tourist product that you call Shakespeare in the context of cultural entrepreneurship with actions related to cultural routes in the footsteps of Romeo and Juliet.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

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