

University of Ottawa students' comments.  
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Guest lecturer Dr. Lamberto Tassinari put forth his hypothesis that the work of the world's most celebrated playwright William Shakespeare can, in fact, be attributed to the Jewish-Italian writer John Florio. Pointing to biographical inconsistencies in the life of Shakespeare, the Jewish sensibility in his alleged works, the dominance of Italy and Italian themes in Shakespeare's work, and the similarities in the language of Florio and the plays of Shakespeare, Dr. Tassinari's hypothesis becomes increasingly credible. However, in highlighting the contemporary view of Shakespeare's work, as a product of individual, inexplicable genius, Dr. Tassinari also underlined the continued dominance of Anglo-American culture.

While continental Europe, by the 16th century, had experienced great progress in culture, science, and technology, England remained locked in a cultural void. The influence of the Italian Rinascimento was marked upon the English Renaissance which was to occur later than that of Continental Europe. However, in the centuries which have followed, the orthodox view seems to be to downplay this influence.

Despite the great influence of European thinkers, including Italians, on modern thought and culture, Anglo-American culture continues to dominate. This domination is problematized very literally in the domination of the English language in global affairs of finance, economics, politics, and culture. The domination of cultural products of Anglo-American origin, think television, music, movies, points to not only a process of linguistic imperialism, but imperialism of thought and of cultural values. This

problem of English language dominance was pointed to by Dr. Tassinari's quoting of John Florio, who suggested that if we were to strip the English language of all of its words of non-English origin, there would remain only a handful of words.

More troubling about this type of orthodoxy which continues to dominate academic consideration is the inability to give recognition to the wide reaching contributions of Italians to global culture. In preferring the mainstream view that Shakespeare was a lone genius, mainstream thinking has again insisted upon the hegemony of Anglo-American values and cultural heritage. This hegemony continues to stress the importance of contemporary Anglo-American cultural icons and, perhaps more alarmingly, a reverence of Anglo-American intellectual thought. The contributions which continue to be made by contemporary European thinkers is hardly mentioned in the parts of the World, think Western Europe/North America, where this hegemony is unquestioned. The contribution to the global knowledge forum of such formidable recent Italian thinkers such as Antonio Negri or Umberto Eco remains low in comparison with their English language counterparts. This type of lack of recognition of continental European ideas stems from a system of practice advanced since the days of John Florio.

2.

Dr. Lamberto Tassinari's presentation on October 29th provided me with a new perspective on the works of William Shakespeare, or rather, the works attributed to Shakespeare. I had never realized how high the proportion of his plays set in Italian cities was or the how many references to Italian culture were woven into his writing and what that would mean in terms of clues to the identity of the true genius behind the scenes.

Prior to this lecture, I had never heard of John Florio and had no idea of his central role in the literature circles in England. What I found most interesting was the fact that Florio, of Italian-Jewish heritage, as well as all the other authors of the era published their works anonymously; adding to the mystery of authorship of Shakespearian works even at the time they were both alive. Although I knew there were some doubts as to who the true author of these great sonnets and plays was, I had never considered the fact that the ghost writer could be an author who was already famous in his own right. However, the motivations Dr. Tassinari explained for Florio using Shakespeare's name such as wanting to enrich English language heritage and upgrading English culture seem very selfless, but given that he himself was born in London, I am still unclear as to how works published under his own name would not achieve the same ends.

Florio's bilingual dictionary compiled in 1598 was a testament to his linguistic prowess and his strong attachment to Italian culture. This first modern bilingual dictionary illustrates the eagerness of Florio to introduce knowledge of Italian language and, by the same token, bring Italian culture to the English masses. This is a trait he seems to have had in common with the author of Shakespearian works as sixteen of his plays were set in Italy – making him a very likely candidate for being the true author.

3.

I always knew that there was a great debate regarding the great playwright, William Shakespeare. Several specialists have all agreed that the individual or group of people

responsible for the various works had to have knowledge of Venice because the details are impeccable. Dr. Lamberto Tassinari's hypothesis is plausible and is convincing regarding the identity of Shakespeare. John Florio is a possibility but there are some inaccuracies that lead me to believe something different. In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare speaks against Jews, depicting a grim outlook on Shylock. Since John Florio is an Italian Jew it would seem strange for him to speak against his religion.

There are also other poems and sonnets that Shakespeare had written that were in praise of other men, which seeds the idea that Shakespeare was a homosexual but this of course is interpreted by today's standards, assuming that Shakespeare was a man and not a woman. Professionals often "jump the gun" on what they believe is fact based on today's standards. The same goes for Alexander the Great, professionals often thought that he was a homosexual based on the written relationship with his best friend yet Alexander the Great was documented to be not a sexual man, only driven by expanding his territory.

There are several theories that exist about significant people in history but the truth is that we don't know and we may never know. Shakespeare could have been one man, a woman, a group of men, a group of women, or a mixed group of men and women using the same "nom de plume" to protect themselves and their families if the works were not accepted by the Monarchy. Anything is possible; the only thing that's certain is that the name "Shakespeare" is anonymity. I'll end my journal entry with an ironic quote from *The Tempest*: "I will here shroud till the dregs of the storm be past."

4. The presentation made by Dr. Tassinari was very interesting and really caught my attention. I have seen and read many of Shakespeare's plays before. They all use very complex wording and are crucial to literature as we still study them today. Dr. Tassinari really got me thinking when he proposed that Shakespeare's great writing was really that of an Italian-Jew, John Florio. He had some really persuasive arguments such as how Florio had made a dictionary with the language used throughout Shakespeare's works. Another is the continued use of Italian themes, places and names. Would a non-Italian writer use so many things from another nation, not his own?? All in all I really enjoyed this guest speaker who really kept me interested and covered many interesting writers, not just Shakespeare.

I also thoroughly enjoyed the reading on Florence during the Renaissance. Having been to Florence, it was nice to read about some of the history as some things still remain to this day. It was interesting to read how much of an influence Florence had during the Renaissance. Throughout this period the city-state was an economic power, partly due to their successful banking system and also the merchants which were first recorded in Florence. It's always nice to read about the history of places you have seen as you can almost relate to the reading.

5. Last Monday our class had to pleasure of having yet another guest speaker who was able to offer their view on a topic of Italian culture. Dr. Tassinari discussed his take on if the man known as William Shakespeare was responsible for creating some of the most, if not the most, famous plays in literature. According to Dr. Tassinari a

man by the name of John Florio, an Italian-Jewish man could have very well written the works rather than Shakespeare.

One piece of evidence presented was that Shakespeare's daughter was illiterate but I do not think this is grounds for proving Shakespeare is not the author. Hypothetically, if Shakespeare did in fact write all those works, just because he was a gifted writer, does not mean he was a good father and imparted literature on his children. Also this was a different era where women were not seen as equals so I do believe it could be true that Shakespeare was the author and had an illiterate daughter. Another point brought up by Dr. Tassinari was Shakespeare's signatures and how messy they were but I think we have all learned from doctor's prescriptions that penmanship and intelligence are not correlated with one another.

What I did find as valid evidence for Florio as the real author was all the references to Italy in 'Shakespeare's' works and the lack of mention of Stratford, Shakespeare's hometown. Many of Shakespeare's plays involve Jewish characters and take place in Italy. Looking at Shakespeare's birthplace and lifestyle, he most likely would not have had much exposure to other cultures like those describe in his plays. As Dr. Tassinari said, the style of writing would seem akin to that of someone from the Mediterranean, such as Florio.

I found his lecture to be quite eye-opening since I had heard about theories stating that Shakespeare was not to author of the plays but I had never been informed of one with such amount of proof to back it up. Big thanks for Dr. Tassinari for his fascinating lecture!

6. In high school you are taught that Shakespeare is the greatest writer of all time, and study his work immensely. Hearing Dr. Lamberto dispute the fact that Shakespeare wasn't a real person was really interesting to think about. His arguments for this seem very valid and fit together very well. As in the facts that John Florio was the real Shakespeare stating that there was only ever one picture of him, no legal documents other than marriage and birth certificates, and no one wrote letters to him. He also argued that every signature that they have from Shakespeare are all different and that they look like they were written by someone who was illiterate; if this was so, how could someone write all the beautiful stories that they did? The last argument – and I think the most convincing – was the fact that John Florio wrote a dictionary with all the same words that Shakespeare uses in his plays; if these men never have a record of meeting – and Shakespeare “revolutionized” the English language – how is it possible that Florio knew the meaning of these words and was literate enough to write them down? After hearing these arguments, it could be possible that Florio was the real Shakespeare because of his high status in society and relationships with poets, printers, and other high class figures – such as the Earl of Southampton.

After reviewing some peer journals, I came across one written by Tristan McIntosh, who states that in Shakespeare play “The Merchant of Venice”, Shakespeare speaks against the Jewish religion and depicts a grim outlook on Shylocks. I have not had the chance to read this play before and didn't know of this fact. This gives an interesting twist on who Shakespeare was because Florio was a Jewish man so why would he want to speak out

against his religion? However to this I say, during this period in history, it was not acceptable to speak out against ones religion because it was the governing body in state. Maybe Florio, changed his mind about which religion he wanted to follow - being in Italy maybe he wanted to become Catholic - so in order for him to be able to speak this way of such things, he needed a disguise. Therefore, to be safe from harms way he created a character, which he used to write his thoughts and opinions down. Since no one knew of this character he used, and no one ever met him - it would be safe for him.

After thinking about this more, what if it wasn't only Florio, but a group of people who came together to think of universal feelings and opinions of things, while Florio took those feelings and made them into a play? What if this group of people was made of all kinds of men and women? That would explain the different signatures that have been recorded to be Shakespeare's and would also give validation to the fact of "him" writing out against the Jewish religion because its not only the opinions of Florio but of the whole group, who come up with the play. There have been and continue to be many conspiracy theories of famous people and if they actually died or not or if they are the person they say they are. So until there is definite proof that Shakespeare was Florio, a group of people, or someone else then all we can do is make what we can of the facts given to us.

7. The lecture on the true identity of Shakespeare was both compelling and eye-opening. As is the case with most students, I have had the pleasure of studying several of Shakespeare's works during high school. I had researched the widely-accepted theories of Shakespeare's biography

but had never been exposed to the ‘conspiracy theories’ of Shakespeare’s true identity. In my previous research of his life I had found it surprising that there was so little concrete information on this prominent historical figure. Now I have a much better understanding of why that might be. The guest speaker discussed how England in Shakespeare’s time was very young from a historical and cultural perspective. This is very similar to much of North America today; we ‘borrow’ much of our historical culture from various countries throughout the world to make the mosaic/melting pot of our relatively young culture. It makes sense that England in its youth would have done the same to begin to develop both its language and depth of art and culture through building upon the classics from countries like Italy. Florio translated books of essays from Italian to English, which places him perfectly at the forefront of this cultural education: he spoke both English and Italian and identified with both cultures. He also had an exquisite talent for articulation and language, and his translations of Montague’s essays are by some considered second only to certain translations of the Bible. He was exposed to a university education at a very young age and is positioned historical and geographical at the center of the British literary world, unlike the William Shakespeare of Stratford. His connections as the tutor of the Earl of Southampton and the eerily appropriate name “Shakespeare” for someone who wanted to create change (cultural and literary change in this case) and use writing as their weapon further emphasize the likelihood of Florio being the man behind the name.

8. Dr. Lamberto Tassinari’s lecture on Monday October 29th was a very intriguing lecture which questioned the identity of Shakespeare. Many people are unaware that the

identity of Shakespeare is questioned and has been the subject of much debate since as early as the 17th century. The mainstream theory argues that William Shakespeare from Stratford-Upon-Avon was the Shakespeare. However, Dr. Tassinari argues that the insight, personality and human face of the author cannot be found, just as the biographical features that usually accompany authors of similar relevance are missing.

Dr. Tassinari compared both Italy and England during the Renaissance period in terms of advancement, claiming that England was lacking in many ways and had to import from other countries. He argues that John Florio is the real 'Shakespeare', citing Florio's linguistic and creative capabilities. The example of Florio's "First Fruits" is cited as an example of Florio's writing about the English language. Dr. Tassinari also suggested that the massive presence of cultural traces of Italian books in Shakespeare's theatre as well as the verbal similarities point to the notion that Shakespeare was Italian. The Queen Anna's New World of Words by John Florio utilized many of the same words Shakespeare used and showed Florio's in depth control of language.

Dr. Tassinari acknowledged the question of why John Florio would hide himself if he was indeed the veritable author, stating many reasons. Among these reasons is that England was at a very different point in its development than Italy or other countries such as France and Spain. He also suggested that Florio's position as a man involved in the court could have impeded his ability to make his work known. Although Dr. Tassinari's lecture was very insightful, it would have been interesting to find out more on what other scholarly sources have put forward as their suspects for who Shakespeare truly was.

9. Last week, our class was honoured with a lecture by Dr. Tassinari. He presented his hypothesis that the famous William Shakespeare was in fact a persona created by Jewish-Italian writer John Florio. I had never thought of a possibility that Shakespeare was not in fact a man from England, so I found Dr. Tassinari's presentation particularly interesting and was fascinated by his evidence supporting his hypothesis.

For example, Dr. Tassinari discusses how little is known of the author Shakespeare. Evidence of his personality, and human face are missing. There are no works found to this day on his biographical life, either. There are no documents showing evidence of anyone meeting Shakespeare the writer, and little is known of his family. Dr. Tassinari believes that John Florio is truly Shakespeare because so many of Shakespeare's works take place in Italy, and the language and style of his plays are very similar to those of John Florio. He wrote the "New world of words", where Italian words are directly translated to a "Shakespearean English".

Dr. Tassinari also educated me on the state of England, a currently quite powerful country, during the Renaissance when Italy was striving. His details on the culture of the time, as well as his presentation on Shakespeare, were quite astounding, and helped me to understand the time even more. I am very grateful for his eye-opening presentation!

10. I have to say to date we have had some pretty interesting guest lectures who have introduced new understanding and ways of interpreting Italian culture. This past week, guest lecturer Dr. Lamberto talked of a

topic I thought I knew a lot about: Shakespeare. I have to admit I was hooked into the lecture the moment when Dr. Lamberto first stated that he believed the real Shakespeare was not in fact the Shakespeare that is so commonly known in history. As I grew up and was taught in high school that Shakespeare was in fact from England this caught me a little surprised.

I admit I was very skeptical of Dr. Lamberto's lecture and his statements that Shakespeare was not from England but was in fact Italian however he made some very good points. I do not know enough on what is known of Shakespeare but just listening to the lecture made me convinced that Shakespeare could easily have been this John Florio that Dr. Lamberto mentioned. It was also very interesting to hear that not much is known on Shakespeare and those famous portraits and sculptures of his face could indeed simply be caricatures and not how Shakespeare looked at all. What really got me thinking was when Dr. Lamberto mentioned Shakespeare's name was the perfect pen name. I believe I will be doing more research into Dr. Lamberto's claims and I look forward to his theory gaining more interest in the public sphere.

11. Shakespeare is such a big deal in high school and one of his plays is read every year for most even though to many it's virtually unintelligible. I was fortunate to have a teacher that decided to place less emphasis on Shakespeare one year saying that he is not the only great playwright and we were not properly exposed. Instead of reading Merchant of Venice like everyone else, we read A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams. This was a great experience and a nice change.

I enjoyed hearing a different view on Shakespeare again while listening to Dr. Tassinari's theory; it was refreshing and eye-opening. I did not know that Shakespeare's identity was questioned nor did I realize the Italian influence on his writing whoever he was. For me, the most interesting part of the presentation was the theory that John Florio was the Shakespeare that we have all studied.

Dr. Tassinari made some very compelling arguments to support his theory. One of these arguments are that the William Shakespeare of Stratford seen in the records had an illiterate family. It is also significant to consider that John Florio wrote in both English and Italian. Although it may sound like a conspiracy theory and I am not completely convinced, I am definitely intrigued and would like to look into the theory further.

12. I really enjoyed Dr. Lamberto Tassinari presentation on Shakespeare's identity. Before this presentation, I hadn't heard any discussions about the real identity of Shakespeare. Thus the whole topic of the presentation was very interesting and informative to me. Through Doctor Tassinari's presentation you could see his enthusiasm and love for the subject and this is something that is becoming more and more uncommon.

I found all the connection between Shakespeare and John Florio very interesting and during the presentation, it was clearly argued why the Doctor believe that this man was Shakespeare. This was a subject that I found fascinating and I may have to do some more research for my own personal interest.

However, there was only one downside to this presentation

which was it was sometimes difficult to understand the Doctor when he was talking because of his accent. Other than that, this presentation was excellent.

13. On Monday, guest speaker Dr. Lamberto Tassinari brought up a hypothesis about Shakespeare's identity and the fact that he might only be somebody's pen name "Shake-Spear" as we saw many different signatures on his plays. According to Dr. Tassinari, English literature was behind in its progress, it was described as weak as opposed to the Italian literature which was considered strong and one of the most advanced in writing. John Frolio is the suspected Italian identity behind Shakespeare's pen name for having the all-around knowledge of European diverse cultures such as Jewish as he had been in contact in Italian reality as we have seen in class and previous guest speakers that the Jews and along the Medici family was breaking through with their financial banking systems. Shakespeare from Stratford would not have been able to have earned this knowledge from his village unless he would have had foreign visitors but Dr. Tassinari mentioned that there are no records of anybody meeting with Shakespeare nor written letters to him. I do think that Dr. Tassinari has a relevant point although, as having studied a few Shakespeare plays throughout high school, we have also learned a little bit of his biography and I have to argue that William Shakespeare has a birthdate along with a record of baptism and a grave which we can visit. We also learned that his plays were loved by Queen Elizabeth therefore he might have also been invited to have dinner in her Castle. I obviously don't have the tools to conduct such a research but I do believe Shakespeare is real, perhaps his signatures varied to show at what time and point he wrote his plays

or was afraid to have somebody write under his name. We know one thing for certain is that he is an admired writer, centuries beyond his death and he upgraded the English literature to a very high standard.

14. I found Dr. Lamberto Tassinari's presentation to be very interesting. Like others, I spent most of English classes throughout high school reading and analyzing Shakespeare's plays. Before this presentation, I have never heard of the conspiracies concerning the true identity of the author behind these works. Dr. Tassinari's explained that while there are many possibilities as to who is the real Shakespeare, an Italian by the name of John Florio is a likely candidate.

This presentation was very eye-opening, and its topic is one that I would like to do further research.

15. Anyone who was present for Dr. Lamberto Tassinari's lecture will likely find the last bit of his lecture to be the most thought provoking. The theory put forth by Dr. Tassinari was that : William Shakespeare may not only not be a real person, but possibly may not have written the works accredited to him. I feel that I am a logical person, and if logical facts are presented to me, I am easily able to see how such an argument might be made. So, while I can easily see how Dr. Tassinari may be inclined to believe that William Shakespeare may be a disguise for the Italian John Florio, what interests me is not the truth itself, but what would happen if this truth got out.

Sometimes, things happen that us mere citizens hear about in the media – like September 11, for example, or the first landing on the moon. Such a huge event to occur,

so tragic... and then we hear rumours (with how much truth, I don't know) being circulated about how maybe it was propagated by the U.S government, or how the first moon landing was a hoax. Hearing about things like this always make me wonder about what else I am not being told... For example, is Heath Ledger secretly on a secluded island where he can live out the rest of his days happy and undisturbed... or perhaps, there is a whole 'ex-celebrity' island with Elvis, Courtney Love and Whitney Houston, just wanting to live out the rest of their days as 'normal'. Just a thought.

What would happen if it was discovered that John Florio is indeed William Shakespeare? The English wouldn't be very happy I'm sure; And the Italian, ecstatic. I think that older generations and Shakespeare admirers would be more affected by such news obviously.

If I found out that this was true, that Shakespeare was actually just a pen name for Florio, I don't think I would give it more than a "oh, that's interesting", and I would want to more about the 'Why' - something the guest speaker didn't have time to go deeper into- rather than the who. Is it my generation ? That cares less about the who than the why? I asked my grandma what she would think if she found out, and she said "I would feel like I had been deceived all this time" - which is exactly the answer I would have expected from someone from an older (not old - oldER) generation. I feel like if it wasn't John Florio disguising his writing as Shakespeare, but a woman, or a black man, there would be more 'outrage' at the deception.

16. J'ai trouvé très intéressante la leçon donnée par le

docteur Lamberto Tassinari. Je l'ai trouvée particulièrement intéressante, parce qu'il s'agit d'un sujet dont je n'avais absolument jamais entendu parler. Cependant, il s'agit d'un phénomène encore plus intéressant du fait que Shakespeare consiste en un auteur dont l'oeuvre est extrêmement étudiée dans les écoles, autant à l'école secondaire, qu'au cégep et à l'université. Son importance dans la littérature est grande, mais, pour une raison ou une autre, il s'agissait de la première que j'entendais la problématique concernant son identité. Étant donné la grandeur de la popularité des oeuvres, je trouverais très pertinent qu'une telle leçon soit donnée lors de l'étude des textes. La littérature n'est même pas mon domaine et je trouve effroyable n'avoir jamais entendu parler du conflit identitaire troublant de Shakespeare. Le docteur Tassinari a soulevé des arguments importants dans sa présentation et je dois dire qu'il a piqué ma curiosité, j'aimerais bien consulter l'ouvrage qu'il est en train d'écrire, une fois qu'il sera terminé. La possibilité que le véritable auteur de ces chef-d'oeuvres littéraires soit un certain John Florio est plus que plausible. Reste à savoir si cette hypothèse sera reconnue ou si elle sera, plus réalistement, condamnée à jamais (surtout par les Britanniques).

17. In regards to Mondays lecture from Dr. Tassinari, I was truly shocked and also fascinated that an Italian John Florio could be behind the writing of all of Shakespeare's work. I was thrown back because all throughout high school, teachers never mentioned that there could be a possibility Shakespeare wasn't the author of all of his famous plays. When Dr. Tassinari started talking about why Shakespeare wasn't the real author, it made me really start to believe that it was Florio. The fact that

Shakespeare had many different signatures and that no letters were ever written to him was very strange. Also, the fact that Shakespeare's two daughters were analphabet didn't make sense considering who their father was. Something else that I thought to be very interesting was that "Shake-Spear" could have possibly just been a pen name. The fact that Florio compiled a dictionary and added words to the English language make it very likely that he is the one behind Shakespeare.

This possibility to me is very fascinating. I really enjoyed the presentation by Dr. Tassinari, it was very eye opening.

18. Professor Lamberto Tassinari gave a very interesting lecture on his hypothesis on the identity of the author of the Shakespearean corpus. This is clearly a subject very dear to his heart, and he presented his ideas quite well. He did not, however, give an adequate account of why John Florio would use a nom de plume: I suspect this omission was on account of a lack of time, however.

Whatever the truth in the question of authorship, the heart of his presentation, and that which was most enlightening for me, was the interconnectedness of cultures in Renaissance Europe, and the central rôle played by Italy in that intercultural web. I had not realised how reliant the ignorant north and west of Europe was on the glorious patrimony and deep, rich cultural life of the Italian peninsula. I had not realised how inadequate and incompetent the French and German (let alone the miserable English!) writers of the Middle Ages were, especially in comparison with the learned gentlemen that composed the splendours of Mediæval Italian literature. Indeed, as Professor Tassinari put it, English literature had yet to reach its splendid apex; Italian literature, however,

sprang up at the very beginning in the fruitful minds of Italy, and in the vernacular, no less. For learned writing in England up to that time had been in French or Latin, rather than in the English tongue itself, because English was the language of the commoners, the Romance languages those of the élite.

The state of affairs being thus, it does make good sense for the Shakespearean author to be John Florio, rather than the poor English actor from Stratford-upon-Avon: who better to elevate the English language from the pigsty to the theatre, from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, from the garbled Anglo-Saxon mouth to the slender nib of the pen? Who better as a candidate for the authorship of the corpus? Who, indeed, can be better than a man whose name and descent bind him to that blessed land of Italy where history and actual creativity seem to seep from the earth itself: who else, indeed, than Giovanni Florio himself?

And so, to conclude, I gained a better understanding of European culture from the lecture, together with a better understanding of England and Italy's respective places in that culture.

19. On Monday October 29th 2012 Guest speaker Dr. Lamberto Tassinari was presented to our class with a thesis that William Shakespeare as we know today could in fact be John Florio. He presented to us many facts that to me at least made a lot of sense and was very believable. His lecture really caught me off guard. To think that I had been studying Shakespeare, as a real person all thru out high school and spend so much time believe he was a great writer is hard to imagine. I was a little confused on

this subject of Shakespeare real identity. Why isn't this something people are discussion everywhere? Why are we being taught in high school that William Shakespeare is real? I found this subject very weird and very hard to understand. Even though the professor had very good arguments, I was still very confused and could not get my head around why all of the sudden we were told about this truth? After the Professor went through comparing both characters, Shakespeare and John Florio he explained to us how similar both were. But my biggest question is what was the purpose of leaving us with the thought of maybe? This lecture just left me with so many questions and such a confusion that I can not even get around to talking about anything else. One quote from his slide that I really enjoyed and got me thinking a lot was "The theory proposing John Florio as Shakespearian Universe, the one capable of solving all doubts, answering all questions still pending today. But it is also the vehicle of a theoretical revolution which is, implicitly, political well beyond the literary and theatrical fields." It was really interesting to read because it showed me a whole new way of thinking towards a situation.

20. Guest speaker Dr. Lamberto Tassinari lecture was interesting for me in a way the other guest speaker's lectures were not. I am a theatre student, so I found his theories something to think about. It started when to me he was suggesting that England could be seen as 'backward' because Italy was much more advanced than them when it came to literature. I never knew that Italy was so advanced, so that was something new I learned. I don't even know what to make of the Shakespeare authorship question. I had never heard this theory before, and I don't like the theory. I can understand why the

theory is about, but I really do not believe that Shakespeare didn't exist, and that John Florio was the one who wrote those works. It just doesn't make sense. Shakespeare has been known about, studied, and idolized for centuries. I'm pretty sure if he didn't exist we would have figured that out years ago. Centuries even. I don't believe he could have been made up. During the time of Shakespeare author's and playwright's were notorious for plagiarizing from each other. That's just how the times were. Even if Shakespeare's work seemed very Italian or whatever, his would not have been the only works to seem so. People just chose Shakespeare to theorize about because he was such a literary genius and so famous.

21. My first introduction to Shakespeare was in grade three when my class put on the production of Romeo and Juliet. Since this young age I have been taught that William Shakespeare is an English poet and playwright, widely known as the greatest writer in the English language. What I didn't know was that this was simply the mainstream theory as Dr. Lamberto explained during his lecture. It turns out some people question who the real Shakespeare is, as there are many missing pieces to his identity. Dr. Lamberto had several arguments to present, which supported this idea of Shakespeare not being a real person. To begin there is no legal documentation of the author aside from marriage and birth certificates and there was only ever one picture of him. These ideas lead to evidence that a man names John Florio was the real Shakespeare. John Florio wrote a dictionary with all the same words Shakespeare uses in his plays, however there is no evidence or record of the two meeting. Shakespeare was known to have created and brought about many of these words to literature, so how was it that John Florio

could write this dictionary? In additional support to this theory, John Florio had a higher societal status, and therefore had many relationships to high class individuals such as poets and printers. The last piece of evidence that was touched upon was the fact that each of Shakespeare's signatures were different and seemed to look as though they were messy or illiterate. Dr. Lamberto's lecture certainly opened my eyes to a different perspective of Shakespeare. Now that I look back when studying the famous author I realize have only learned about his plays, never about the biography of Shakespeare him self. Over all I enjoyed the lecture and was able to ponder about which theory I believed was true.

22. In this journal I will focus a little bit on Shakespeare and Florence during the Renaissance. The guest speaker left me with a lot of questions that I am sure a lot of people are wondering. Throughout high school every year in English class I would read one of Shakespeare's plays and I had a teacher who was extremely passionate about Shakespeare and thought he was the God of literature. Never was I taught about these hypotheses surrounding Shakespeare's existence and whether or not he was who we all think he was. The guest speaker definitely brought up a lot of facts that were interesting and made you really think and question who Shakespeare was. John Florio was a name I had never heard before and it was neat to learn about him especially how crucial he would be regarding Shakespeare. The guest speaker opened up your mind and made you think beyond the facts that I was usually being taught.

In our textbook the reading of Florence in the Renaissance was very interesting. It brought out Florence's influence

during the Renaissance and how it was such an importance and influential state during this period of time. Florence was known for the trade in wool, linen, etc which made them a desirable place to live. Also, Florence was very known for construction and architecture. During this period Florence was able to flourish as a city-state and gave birth to a new merchant class who were proud of living in Florence especially for the success in government. Florence was also a huge banking spot therefore, helping the economy to flourish.

23. I found last class's lecture on European Renaissance writers, in particular Shakespeare, to be very interesting. I enjoyed how knowledgeable the guest lecturer was on the subject and how passionate he was in regards to these writers. I had only ever read a handful of Shakespeare plays in high school English classes, without ever really having been provided a background of him. I was unaware that there was such an international level of skepticism over who was really Shakespeare and what works could be credited to him (The Shakespeare Authorship Question). I was unaware that there were no actual records of any one man, Shakespeare, that can be actually matched to the great number of plays and sonnets he was assumed to have written. I was also interested to hear of other writers such as John Florio and Violet Jeffery, as these were names I had never heard before, and learned that they had contributed to the beginnings of certain types of literature. Overall, I appreciate how the lecturer tried to cover a variety of writers, some who we had previous knowledge of and others who may have been new names to most people, and provided us with an interesting background on each.

24. I enjoyed professor Tassinari's presentation talking about Shakespeare Italy during the Renaissance age. I read many of Shakespeare's plays in school and I never thought about whom the man behind the stories was? Did Shakespeare write all those famous stories? Professor Tassinari's lecture brought up some interesting questions about who Shakespeare was, and was his work really written by him? Professor Tassinari really got me thinking when he brought up the idea that all of Shakespeare's great work was actually written by John Florio, a Italian Jewish person who is thought to have posed as Shakespeare's anonymous writer. This brings a lot of controversy about who was Shakespeare then? And did the work that we all know and read about is really his own? These are questions that Professor really made me think about. In the end we will never truly know who wrote the works of Shakespeare, but he will always be known as one of the greatest poets of his time. Professor Tassinari also spoke about Italy during the Renaissance age, and the difference in social and economic status between Italy and England during that period. England was at a different time than Italy was. Italy was very much during the time in the baroque style very lavish and extravagant, whereas England was captured as empty and weak. Professor Tassinari's lecture was very insightful and educational I enjoyed listening to him.

25. Dr. Tassinari's lecture about Shakespeare helped me clear out some doubts I had about this English author. Even more interesting was the fact that Shakespeare never wrote a letter, in spite of being known as one of the greatest writers from all times. I did not know that a lot of his inspiration for his plays came from Italian culture, and that the cultural exchange between Italy and England was

so great that John Florio decided to create a dictionary of the English spoken by Shakespeare and Italian. I also did not realize that there was no official portrait of Shakespeare until Dr. Tassinari mentioned that Samuel Shoenbaum wrote about this fact. Moreover, his official portrait shows him in a caricaturist style and it is not sure if it is completely accurate. I guess that Shakespeare wanted to hide his face from the public eye to avoid being approached by people, since he had contact with high-profile people such as those in the Queen's court.

26. Pour continuer les lectures des invitées les uns toujours plus intéressants que les autres, nous avons eu la chance d'assister a un dialogue du Dr. Lamberto Tassinari. Je dois avouer que quand vous nous avez fait par que le prochain invité discuterai de William Shakespeare, j'ai eu un peu de mal trouver le lien entre la culture italienne et puis cet écrivain anglais (je savais tout de même qu'il y touchait a travers ses histoires, mais mon ignorance me disait que c'est la que ca se terminait). Mais je n'ai jamais eu si tord ! Je sais maintenant que cette lecture m'a encore plus bouleversée que la lecture du Dr. Mingarelli sur Machiavel (ce n'est surtout pas pour dire que sa lecture n'était pas intéressante !).

La thèse du professeur Tassinari était que William Shakespeare n'était pas l'homme dont la plupart des gens semble "connaître". D'après ses recherches, qui me semble totalement légitime, il croirait que Shakespeare serait plutôt un pseudonyme pour l'italien-juif nommé John Florio, qui, grâce a son père, avait de vastes connaissance en linguistique et qui faisait, plus tard, partie de l'aristocratie Anglaise. A cette époque, l'Angleterre était dans un vide culturelle. Ils aimaient biens la culture, mais ils devaient l'importer de la France, l'Italie ou d'Espagne.

John Florio désirait apporter une identité à l'Angleterre, et vu qu'il avait "a way with words" il décida d'écrire des pièces, qu'il signa William Shakespeare, l'homme de plume, pour que la population croient qu'un Anglais les a écrits.

Ceci dit, je ne crois pas que nous savons assez pour dire que John Florio était certainement William Shakespeare, mais je crois, comme le Prof. Tassinari, que nous devons absolument ouvrir le débat.

27. I enjoyed Dr. Tassinari's lecture on Shakespeare. I thought his hypothesis and issues raised on the true identity of Shakespeare were very interesting, particularly how he described "Shakespeare" as the perfect pen name. As Shake meaning writing and Speare meaning pen this name would appear perfect to an author. Dr. Tassinari put forward other arguments to raise doubt in the existence of a man named William Shakespeare. These included no testimonies of meeting Shakespeare, how he never mentions Stratford, how he never wrote or received a letter, the issues of inconsistency in his signature, etc. I was inspired to research further on this issue and I have discovered that there are many who support Dr. Tassinari's hypothesis as well as many who oppose it. I have discovered that there have been videos made regarding this debate. I also discovered that there have been articles and books, such as "Italian Culture in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries" by John Roe, that have been published regarding Italian Culture and its relation to Shakespeare. I found this lecture very inspiring and eye opening due to the fact that I had never before heard of people questioning the existence or identity of Shakespeare

28. The guest presenting the European Renaissance writers was very interesting. He presented a lot of facts I have never really thought about. The part that surprised me the most about his presentation I have to say is the end. For couple of years now, in high school we use to study Shakespeare work. For him to bring up that MAYBE it's not him who wrote it was weird. It was the least I expected to hear but it was interesting to hear how Dr. Tassinari thought John Florio actually wrote all the work seen. I think it is very difficult to judge who actually wrote the work since it's been so many years but to hear a different point of view was much unexpected.

Also, the link he did between Italy and the work was very obvious. Shakespeare mentioned Italy in his work MANY times therefore the link was quite easy to say. But the observation Dr. Tassinari made between where Shakespeare is from and Italy was very interesting. How Shakespeare NEVER mentioned his home town in any of his work compared to Italy, which is in most of them.

29. In Dr. Tassinari's presentation I was surprised that Shakespeare may have a different identity. The one thing that I was not surprised by much was the fact that Dr. Tassinari theorizes that Shakespeare's identity is Italian. I say this because I know that in Shakespeares written he shows great knowledge of Italian. Shakespear had impressive familiarities with stories by Italian authors such as Giovanni Boccaccio, Matteo Bandello, and Masuccio Salernitano.

So, to me it was a surprise that Shakespeare identity was another since I never though of it but it did make sense to me that Dr. Tassinari claims that Shakespeare may be

Italian.

Furthermore, I never heard of John Florio. But after hearing what Dr. Tassinari said about this author and the story of his family, I think it is very likely that Shakespeare could be Florio.

This presentation opened my mind by knowing that maybe everything we know about history, authors, arts may not always be true. That we must not only believe the things people say, but question everything in order to know the truth.

30. Throughout high school, I studied many of Shakespeare's plays in my English classes. Like most other students, I found it very hard to interpret the dense pieces of writing that Shakespeare 'supposedly' came up with and wrote. I use the word supposedly because of my new realization that had never struck my thoughts before - introduced to me by Dr. Tassinari. Could there actually be a different author rather than Shakespeare for all of those famous plays? Why would the REAL author of these plays want to keep it a mystery? These questions were in my mind throughout the day after his lecture.

What interested me the most in this lecture was the reasons behind the plays not being written by Shakespeare. I never knew that there were even beliefs that he wasn't real - because of the lack of evidence that existed. Through all the reasons, no testimony of someone meeting him, no letters received or sent by him, etc., I found one in particular very intriguing. The fact that his daughters could not read or write seemed peculiar because he was so advanced with writing. A part of me

feels as if this was purposely done by William – possibly to enhance his “talents” or make sure that his daughters did not write better pieces than him. Another side of me feels that it wasn’t his plays because his daughters must have picked up on his skills. The name John Florio also interested me, because I have never heard of it as being a candidate for true author. The fact that he had so much background information and experience from travelling with his father, makes it seem pretty true. In order to write plays and sonnets that are that powerful and make such a impact on literature, you would have to have the credentials that obviously John Florio exhibits. The only thing keeping me from this side of the story if it is truly him who wrote the masterpieces - why would he want it a secret? Would he not want total credit? Why would he use someone else to possibly 'cover it up'? A reason that I thought about after the lecture was that possibly John didn't want the fame because of past occurrences in his life, or he did not believe they would become as powerful as they did. Dr. Tassinari definitely mind-boggled me through his lecture, and by explaining both sides of the hypothesis, has left me wondering.

31. I thought that Prof. Tassinari's lecture was quite interesting and very different from what i've heard. I've never heard anyone doubt that Shakespeare wrote all his plays and that John Florio actually might have wrote all of them. Thats exactly what prof. Tassinari believes, he explained to us that he believes that John Florio was behind all of Shakespeare work and that Shakespeare took credit for it. Prof. Tassinari also discussed some of the reasons why he believed this theory. He explained some examples such as the fact that there is never any proof that Shakespeare even wrote a letter, that no ever in

history said they got together with him for coffee as an example as well as in all the portraits of Shakespeare it seems as if he was made up because both his eyes are the profile of two right eyes and the last reason is John Florio let Shakespeare take credit for his work because he thought that England needed the popularity more than he did. He knew in the end it was more beneficial for England to have this famous writer. There are many reasons behind prof. Tassinari`s theory but i still have my doubts about it. It`s hard to forget everything you learnt about Shakepeare and put it aside because a new theory comes along regardless of how interesting it actually is.