

Loretta Johnson is a lawyer with a strong interest in the cultural transmission of ideas through literature, politics and art. Her work in the legal area has included commercial and contract law, intellectual property and the interface between technology and legal principles.

This book is her first publication and grew from research submitted for a thesis at the *Australian National University Canberra*, Australia, in 2007. She has prepared and delivered student tutorials and play readings while at the University, and in 2006 presented a short paper at the *Humanities Research Centre's "Shakespeare and Political Thought"* conference in Canberra. In 2015 she presented a paper on Shakespeare at the *University of Urbino* as part of the summer school "Court and City".

Loretta is a member of the *Renaissance Society of America* (USA) and the *Medieval Academy of America* (USA).

Marcello Corrente works at Politecnico di Milano. He has extensive experience in *Literary translation* and *Literary criticism*. His research activities are focused on *English literature of the sixteenth, seventeenth and twentieth centuries, Cultural studies and Gender studies*.

In 2001 he published a critical edition of William Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, which includes a complete Italian translation of the lyrical collection. In 2005 he published the first Italian translation of two important collections of John Donne's poems under the title *Liriche d'Amore e Sonetti Sacri*. In 2008 he wrote and edited the first Italian translation of Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, in 2010 the first Italian translation of the love and occasional poems of Edward Herbert of Cherbury, in 2011 the first Italian translation of Andrew Marvell's lyrics, metaphysical, pastoral and celebratory poems; and, most recently, in 2012 a new Italian translation of George Meredith's sonnets collection *Modern Love*. All these books include: a wide critical introduction for a better comprehension of the work; a rich array of explanatory notes; a biographical profile of the author with a chronological list of the main historical and cultural events of the time; and, finally, a complete and updated bibliography with critical works (books, articles, PhD theses, etc.) published in Italy and abroad since the beginning of the twentieth century to the present.

He is also the author of two critical essays, *Semiotica dell'Eros Maschile: Rivelazione e Sublimazione del Desiderio Fisico nel Soggettivismo Lirico di Philip Sidney, John Donne e William Shakespeare* (2010) and *Destruction, Dissolution e Regeneration in Women in Love di David Herbert Lawrence* (2012) written with Maristella Foglia. In 2014 he was the general editor of the text-book in two volumes *Traversing the Centuries: A Lively and Entertaining Students' Guide to English and American Literature* (vol. 1, *From the Anglo-Saxon Period to Romanticism*; vol. 2, *From the Victorian Period to the Contemporary Age*).

At present, he is a member of the *International Shakespeare Association* (GB), *British Shakespeare Association* (GB), *John Donne Society* (USA), *International Sidney Society* (USA), *Andrew Marvell Society* (USA), *D. H. Lawrence Society* (USA), *Modern Language Association* (USA), *Cultural Studies Association* (USA), *Associazione Italiana di Anglistica* (IT), *Italian Association of Shakespearean and Early Modern Studies* (IT) and *European Society for the Study of English* (EU).

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OF NATION OR NO NATION? SHAKESPEARE'S INTERROGATION OF ENGLISH IDENTITY THROUGH EXCLUSION OF THE OTHER

Loretta Johnson



NATION OR NO NATION?
SHAKESPEARE'S INTERROGATION OF ENGLISH IDENTITY
THROUGH EXCLUSION OF THE OTHER
with a preface by
Marcello Corrente

Nation or No Nation? Shakespeare's Interrogation of English Identity through Exclusion of the Other

Nations and individuals have been constructing and dissolving identities for millennia across all cultural endeavours such as art, architecture and drama. Identity formation is most easily done by articulating, then excluding, the "barbarian" whether it is Moslem, female, black or refugee. These ideas are rich sites for dramatic commentary.

Shakespeare's keen observation of his society's cultural and political fault-lines go to the heart of much of his work. This book is about the extent to which Shakespeare's performative expressions of primitive and barbarian characters in Elizabethan England were metaphors for his interrogation of an emergent national identity. It asks whether there is a connection between excluding the barbarian, and nascent national awareness. It explores the question of whether societies define what they *are*, by declaring what they *are not*, and focuses on two themes that have not been discussed together in great detail till now, although each one has been the subject of long-standing academic debate: the theme of the "barbarian" and the growth of national identity prior to the eighteenth century.

Ancient Greek and Roman models of the barbarian theme are explored as they emerge in classical drama. Cultural transmission of this barbarian theme through the Middle Ages (where it was pervasive in the visual arts in particular) and on to Shakespearean drama is central to understanding negative identity-formation through excluding the Other. But there is no discrete line of influence from antiquity to Renaissance. Such a narrative ignores the numerous complexities in the history of textual transmission. These ideas are reviewed in detail through two plays, *Titus Andronicus* and *Othello*, written at least a decade apart. These two performative representations of Goths and Moors draw on classical and medieval prejudices against the "barbarian" as a polluting and transgressive influence on so-called civilised society.

Shakespeare never delivered neat answers to political and moral dilemmas. While drawing on classical prejudices against the Other, his performative expressions of the theme neither confirm nor reject these old prejudices: his appropriation of the "barbarian" surfaces as ambiguous, often positive, portrayals of characters traditionally stigmatised as inferior by the Renaissance imagination.

If the exclusion of the barbarian Other was a constitutive method of national identity, it is at least arguable that in *not* portraying an unequivocally negative view of the barbarian Other, Shakespeare asks us to question the human cost of our assumptions that identity can be constructed by excluding Outsiders.